

# Pacific Flyway

**Volume 39 Issue 10 Morro Coast Audubon Society**

**April 2005**

*Our mission: "To promote the appreciation, conservation and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on the biological diversity of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, particularly in San Luis Obispo County"*

*Jim and Karen Havlena receive certificates of appreciation at the February Board meeting from Chapter President Dick Parker.*



### **Jim and Karen Havlena Leave for Mendocino County**

Sometime in the next two months our good friends and long time Audubon members, Jim and Karen Havlena will leave the Los Osos area for a new home in Mendocino County. They have spent almost eighteen years here as members of Morro Coast Audubon. Jim has been Treasurer and Karen has held many positions including field trip leader. She was the leader on the first Audubon field trip I attended some years ago when I first moved to the area. That one was to the San Simeon Campground area, but I remember other trips she led at Montana de Oro, etc.

Jim was an avid Christmas Bird count enthusiast who hiked the entire coastline from the telephone parking lot to the tip of the sand spit and then negotiated an arrangement for the Morro Bay Harbor Patrol to short cut him back to shore. He was also a field trip leader on the Bird Festival each year. I also remember some of his interesting articles that he wrote for the Flyway years ago.

Karen also has been avid about the CBC and was adept at finding the Short-eared Owl at Morro Bay State Park across from the Tidal Marsh on S. Bay Blvd.

The Havlenas have been dedicated workers for Audubon for many years and will be greatly missed!.....*Dick Parker*

***see page 6*** **Budget Cuts in the Environmental Sector, MCAS Fights Back..... *Henry Pontarelli***

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**RARE BIRD ALERT**

Morro Coast Audubon	528-7182
Monterey	831 375-9122
Northern California	415 681-7422
Los Angeles/Southern California	323 874-1318
Santa Barbara	964-8240
Pacific wildlife Care	543-WILD

**Reporting Marine Mammal Problems**

To report a dead sea otter south of Cambria 772-1135  
 To report a dead sea otter north of Cambria 927-3893  
 To report a live stranded marine mammal (415) 289-7325

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**Electronic Subscription**

Morro Coast Audubon Society's newsletter *Pacific Flyway* is available in electronic form as a .PDF file that is distributed by e-mail. You must have an e-mail address and you must have the program Acrobat Reader in order to read it. (If you don't have the program, it is easily downloadable for free.) The .PDF versions are being archived on the Chapter's Website(see bottom of page). After looking at a .PDF version and if you are a **member of the Audubon Society or otherwise regularly receiving the Flyway in the mail**, and you decide that you wish to no longer receive the printed version, and instead have the PDF version of **each issue** sent to you **automatically** by e-mail, then e-mail Rosalie Valvo at rvalvo@slonet.org *with the name that your Flyway is mailed to*. (Your e-mail address on the message to Rosalie will be used for the electronic subscription). The mailing of the Flyway will be discontinued, but your membership will not be otherwise affected.



**CHECK IT OUT!**

**Next General Meeting Monday April 18 th:**

**“Enigmatic Loons & the Morro Bay Estuary”  
Darwin Long, Field Biologist .....page 3**

**Estuary Volunteer Shorebird Monitoring Program  
.....page 4**

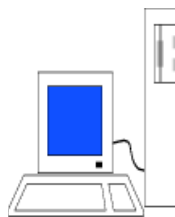
**Our Website**

**www.morrocoastaudubon.org**

Past issues of the *Flyway* are available at the website

e-mail:

**mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org**



## MCAS BOARD MEETING

Monday April 4, 2005

6:45 P. M.

The Board Meetings are held at the Los Osos Community Center off of Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos. All interested members are invited to attend

### GENERAL MEETING

Monday, April 18, 2005, 7:00 PM

The Congregational Church  
11245 Los Osos Valley Road  
San Luis Obispo



“Enigmatic Loons & the Morro Bay Estuary”

Darwin Long, Lead Field Biologist

Did you know that breeding territories of the Common Loon have shrunk by 700 miles? The last reported loon nest in California was on Lassen Lake in 1960s. Loons disappeared as a breeder from Oregon and Idaho about the same time. As they are not a game bird, they have received little attention. The **Biodiversity Research Institute** (non-profit based in Gorham, Maine) is conducting a wintering study in our estuary. Join us as we find out about this study, loon migration, winter rafting behavior, plumage progression as well as toxicology and genetics. For further information: [www.briloon.org](http://www.briloon.org)

#### FORUM (7:00-7:30pm) “Volunteer Opportunities”

- Do you have some time to give to the environment? Be part of the solution. You can help – from habitat enhancement at Sweet Springs, to Snowy Plover Volunteer work, to Hi Mountain Condor Lookout, to Audubon Overlook.

Bring a friend. Pass the word. While programs are free and open to members and friends, **donations to MCAS to support this study will be greatly appreciated at this presentation.** Stay afterward for refreshments and sharing. Raffle.

*Rosemary Flamion, Program Chairperson*

For more information, please contact Rosemary, 528-8193 after 4:00 pm.

## BIRDS AT EBB TIDE

Morro Coast Audubon invites visitors and newcomers to our area to come to the Audubon Overlook to enjoy the spectacle. Telescopes, binoculars, and bird field guides are available for your use and Audubon members will be there to help with identification.

Wed. April 6 at 12:30 pm

Thur April 21 at 12:30 pm.

The Overlook is in Baywood Park and can be reached by turning west on Santa Ysabel-the traffic light on South Bay Blvd., then going west to Third Street. Turn right on Third to the end of the street, turn right again onto a short dirt lane to the Overlook parking area.. For further information call 772-1413. Heavy rain cancels! *Gloria Rasmussen*



### SECOND SATURDAY AT SWEET SPRINGS

9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

April 9, 2005

We need more help, so come on out and give the “regulars” a helping hand. In addition to doing a little light maintenance on the trails the weed warriors will remove some exotics such as veldt grass.

Meet at the main entrance to the preserve on the 600 block of Ramona in the community of Los Osos. We’ll do a little birding after wards, rain cancels. For more information contact John at 528-0540.

John Perkins  
Chairman, Land Committee



Sweet Springs -- a bit of land,  
Magical and enchanted,  
Birder’s safe haven .....

Rosemary Flamion

**APRIL 2005 FIELD TRIPS**

**APRIL 2<sup>nd</sup> (SATURDAY): “HUMMINGBIRD RANCH”**

Meet leader, Alan Schmierer at 8:30 AM at the Park-and-Ride parking lot immediately after you exit 101 at the Santa Margarita exit. We will visit a ranch about 10 miles east of there in Creston. Bring a lawn chair. No walking! We just sit and study the hundreds of Hummers (of up to 6 species) at the ranch feeders. Number limited. Please RSVP at [aaschmierer@yahoo.com](mailto:aaschmierer@yahoo.com) or at 772-2026.

**APRIL 17<sup>th</sup> (SUNDAY): INTRODUCTION TO BUTTERFLIES**

Meet leader, Bill Bouton, at Starbucks in Marigold Plaza (across the parking lot from Von’s on south Broad Street in SLO). The trip will go to Hi Mountain Road, returning mid-afternoon. We will need to carpool. Participants should bring water and food and close-focusing binoculars if they have them. If we need to capture any butterflies, they will be released unharmed. If participants want to study in preparation for the trip, I will send them a list of potential species and resources if they can write to me at [bbouton@charter.net](mailto:bbouton@charter.net).

**APRIL 23<sup>th</sup> (SATURDAY): “HUMMINGBIRD RANCH**

\_(Repeat of the April 2<sup>nd</sup> trip.) (Let me know if you are interested, but cannot make it on a Saturday and I may be able to arrange a special trip.)

**APRIL 24<sup>th</sup> (SUNDAY): Kayak Lake Nacimiento-- View Bald Eagles**

(NOTE: THIS TRIP IS SPONSORED/LED BY North Cuesta A S ). Meet at 9:00 AM at the French home. 14140 Chimney Rock Rd. Depending on water levels, we will be kayaking the Las Tables Arm of Lake Nacimiento to view a bald eagle nest. Bring a picnic lunch and standard birding gear. Bring your own kayak or canoe. Directions: Hwy 101 north to Vineyard Rd in Templeton, drive west (left). Turn left on Adelaida Rd, and turn left at Chimney Rock Rd. Continue on Chimney Rock Rd. 4 miles past Justin Winery. At “10 MPH” sign turn into first driveway on right. 14140 Chimney Rock Road. Call Roger Zachary 466-6222 for more information.



601 Embarcadero, Suite 11\_ Morro Bay, California 93442

805-772-3834 \_ Fax 805-772-4162

Contact: Ann Kitajima, Program Manager

Phone: 805-772-3834

February 8, 2005

*CALLING ALL BIRDERS...  
YOUR SKILLS ARE NEEDED!*

Break out those binoculars and spotting scopes and join other experienced shorebirders for the Morro Bay National Estuary Program’s Volunteer Monitoring Program (VMP) spring shorebirding effort. The VMP is seeking volunteers with shorebird identification experience for a census on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8:30 am to noon. Under the coordination of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, shorebird surveys were conducted in Morro Bay between April 1988 and August 1994. Using the same protocol, the VMP has continued the effort with spring and fall surveys since 2003. Observers will be observing from land with spotting scopes, from kayaks or canoes on the water, and from the Sandspit and Morro Strand from Morro Rock to the Rocky Point (Northpoint). Collecting these data will provide a view of the variability of shorebird numbers seasonally and annually, with the overall goal of tracking long-term trends. Shorebirds are an important bioindicator of the health of the bay and the Pacific Flyway.

If you are interested in participating, please call Chris Long or Ann Kitajima at the NEP office at 772-3834. Please respond by April 8<sup>th</sup> to participate.

White Pelicans gather  
And talk of uncaught smelt  
And other private things.  
  
.....Rosemary Flamion



*To Our Newest Members*

**Avila Beach**

K. Park  
Phil and Lessa Lowe

**Cambria**

Jesse Arnold  
Damion Markham

Wendi Craig  
Burton Moyer  
Paul Wood

**Arroyo Grande**

Elva Beeks  
Susan Blifeld  
Anna Cross  
Carol Fulmer  
Patricia Lindsey  
Joel Shennum

**Grover Beach**

Jeanette Williams  
Bobbi Daly

**Morro Bay**

Jack Spitzmesser  
Ella Jewell  
Elizabeth Morin  
Vickie Woehrle

**Los Osos**

Mick Aldworth  
Rob Banfield  
Mary Barmore

**Nipomo**

Elizabeth Larsen

\*\*\*\*\*DONATIONS\*\*\*\*\*



The Morro Coast Audubon Society would like to thank the following for contributions received recently.



MCAS Lands / 4thSt Overlook:  
From **Bob Semonsen**

Sweet Springs Endowment:  
From **Judy**, sister of **Heather Johnson**

MCAS General/Support:  
From **Julie & Ray Smith**

If you would like to contribute to one of our funds (such as Hi Mtn Condor Project or Sweet Springs), please send your check payable to Morro Coast Audubon Society, PO Box 160, Morro Bay, CA 93443-0160. All donations are tax deductible under IRS Code 501(c)(3). THANK YOU!

## **Budget Cuts in the Environmental Sector, MCAS Fights Back..... *Henry Pontarelli***

Five months after a presidential commission recommended spending billions more to protect the nation's oceans, the White House proposed a \$100 million cut in the National Marine Fisheries budget. These cuts reduce spending by one half on programs that monitor and protect marine mammals, including whales, bottlenose dolphins and porpoises.

There is a 5.6% cut slated for the EPA, mostly in the area of clean water programs for state and local governments.

The National Park budget is facing a cut from \$2.3 billion to \$2.24 billion. These particular cuts are aimed at programs at the state and local level, not national parks.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy programs face a 4% drop, while environmental management and cleanup programs would receive a 7.8% cut.

The Education Department is even harder hit, facing the elimination of 45 programs.

***Are you as upset as I am? Good.***

In the face of these losses, the Morro Coast Audubon Society is renewing its commitment to fund, promote and raise awareness of local conservation issues. By our actions, our priorities are clear.

With a \$6000 Wetlands Grant through our partners at the National Estuary Program and almost \$600.00 from our "Lands" fund, we have begun a habitat restoration at the 4th Street Overlook. On the week of February 14, with the California Conservation Core (CCC), we invested almost 300 work-hours pulling weeds, planting natives and spreading mulch. The second phase of the plan includes an ADA-approved boardwalk (from the parking area to the overlook structure) and approximately \$1000 for improvement in our signage. **Six thousand dollars is NOT a budget cut, it is an INCREASE.** There is more work to be done at the overlook (we have almost \$3000 left in grant money). We invite your participation. Contributions are requested and will be used and matched with hard work and sound execution. Call me with questions, Henry 528 4587

We have increased the honorariums we offer the speakers at our monthly programs from \$0 to \$200 (\$100 for local speakers). **This is NOT a budget cut, it is an INCREASE.** Our programs are our most powerful tools. The MCAS has dedicated great care and attention in choosing regionally-significant topics and highly qualified presenters. In February, Dr. Eric Kershner discussed his doctoral work on the Loggerhead Shrike of San Clemente Island. On March 17, our own Pacific Wildlife Care will present a program on Owls and will have 2 live owls at the program. On April 21, Darwin Long will discuss his 18 years of work with Loons and more specifically his findings on wintering behavior of Loons on OUR estuary. The April, Loon program will be a fundraiser. Contributions will be directed toward the Loon study on our bay. Donations of \$10 will be appreciated, those of \$100 or more will include the donor in a "Dinner With the Researcher". Please call me for details, Henry 528 4587

The Morro Coast Audubon is a funding partner in a Cal-Poly / Marine Interest Group pelagic study, investing \$3000.00 to make four boat trips available to our community (see website for dates). We have provided the opportunity for citizens participate in a scientific, Pelagic Bird Survey in Estero bay. **Three thousand dollars for a study of birds on our bay is NOT a budget cut, it is an INCREASE.**

We believe this study, the restoration at 4<sup>th</sup> Street and putting money into the hands of the scientists in the field is our obligation. This is your organization. We are not cutting funding to programs we feel are important, we are increasing these budgets and will continue to do so with your support. In the next two months the board is setting budgets for the next year. Please help us be bullish, fight back and continue to put money where we feel it is needed. There are other IMPORTANT projects in our community we would like to support.

We do not wish to be judged by our words but our actions. Stop by and visit the overlook. Attend our programs. Sign up for one or all of the ocean surveys. Contribute. The board is working for you.

## Eureka!

### THE BIRDS OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY – February 2005

- Clark's Grebe/Western Grebe – 27 Feb, pairs of both species were doing breeding displays on Whale Rock Reservoir (TME)  
Wood Duck – 4 Feb, 2 males and a female were at Lopez Lake (TME) and a pair was on the Atascadero Sewage Ponds on 7 Feb (RHZ)  
Eurasian Wigeon – 1-24 Feb, a male was seen at several locations around the Morro Bay Estuary (mob)  
Blue-winged Teal – 1-24 Feb, high numbers continued with up to 70 reported on Baywood Cove (mob)  
Green-winged Teal – 1-28 Feb, the Eurasian "Common Teal" was seen off and on at Sweet Springs (mob)  
Redhead – 3 Feb, rare in SLO County, a male was at Whale Rock Reservoir (MLS) with a female there 24 Feb (PR)  
Ring-necked Duck – 24 Feb, rare on saltwater, one was on the Morro Bay Estuary (MLS)  
Long-tailed Duck – 20 Feb, the immature found on the Morro Bay Christmas Count continued near the south jetty in the Morro Bay Harbor mouth (TME) and 25 Feb, the immature wintering in Port San Luis Harbor was still present (BKS)  
Black Scoter – 1-24 Feb, two of the three female plumaged birds off Yerba Buena Street in north Morro Bay since Nov (mob) actually appear to be first winter males on 12 Feb (TME)  
Harlequin Duck – 1 Feb, the male found along Hwy 1 near milepost 59 last month was still present (PR)  
Harlequin Duck – 1-24 Feb, the male wintering along the Estero Bluffs was near the lone cypress tree (MLS)  
Hooded Merganser – 1-27 Feb, up to one male and two females were at Whale Rock Reservoir (PR,TME)  
Common Merganser – 4 Feb, 60 on Lopez Lake was not unusual (TME) and 9 Feb, the male at Oceano County Park since last year continued its stay (MLS)  
Osprey – 4 Feb, one was at Lopez Lake (TME) and 22 Feb, one was on Morro Bay (MLS)  
Bald Eagle – 4 Feb, an adult was at Lopez Lake (TME), an adult was at Whale Rock Reservoir 21-28 Feb (MLS), and 25 Feb, a sub-adult was flying along the coast just north of Point Estero (BKS). A wing-tagged male at Santa Margarita Lake around mid-Feb was hatched at the west end of Catalina Island in 2002. Apparently this bird has frequented Whale Rock Reservoir, Montana de Oro State Park, Lopez Lake, and Santa Margarita Lake this winter. It was seen over Santa Cruz Island on 15 Feb.  
Sandhill Crane – 16 Feb, 14 flying NW from Soda Lake at dawn provided the only report for the month (MLS)  
Mountain Plover – 2 Feb, between 62 and 96 were recorded along San Diego-Simmler Road at mid Carrizo Plain (mob)  
American Avocet – 13 Feb, 402 on Soda Lake provided a high count for that location (TME)  
Black Skimmer – 21 Feb, three were on the inside of the Morro Bay sandspit across from the boat launch (JLR)  
Pigeon Guillemot – 25 Feb, 2-4 off Montana de Oro State Park were early arrivals (BKS,TME)  
Greater Roadrunner – 12 Feb, one was along Hwy 101 between Templeton and Atascadero (AN)  
Rufous Hummingbird – 1-16 Feb, a first cycle male in Nipomo since 24 Jan was early and stayed longer than expected (JA)  
Allen's Hummingbird – 1 Feb, an early nest with eggs was found at Oso Flaco Lake (MLS)  
Lewis's Woodpecker – 2 Feb, one continued to be seen about 1.7 miles south of Hwy 58 along Pozo Road (PR)  
Red-naped Sapsucker – 9 Feb, the male wintering at El Chorro Regional Park was still present (MLS)  
Cassin's Kingbird – 13 Feb, 30+ were along Arroyo Grande Creek in the Arroyo Grande "Village" (MB); 13 Feb, one was on Estero Ave in Morro Bay (MDH); and 20 Feb, one was near the Los Osos Cemetery (RF)  
Mountain Bluebird – 8 Feb; 4 in SLO County at Camp Roberts were along the Salinas River where few are recorded (JM)  
Sage Thrasher – 13 Feb, two were on the Carrizo Plain (TME,DML) with another there on 16 Feb (MLS)  
Le Conte's Thrasher – 13 Feb, four were found in saltbush on the east side of the Carrizo Plain (TME,DML,MLS)  
Nashville Warbler – 1 & 20 Feb, the wintering bird at the Oceano Campground was reported twice (MLS)  
Black-throated Gray Warbler – 4 Feb, latest report of the male wintering at the Oceano Campground (TME)  
Wilson's Warbler – 1-2 Feb, one at Oso Flaco Lake was the sole report for the period (MLS)  
Summer Tanager – 4 Feb, a female in willows along Meadow Creek adjacent to the Pismo Monarch Buttery Preserve was likely the bird first reported on 30 Nov (TME)  
Savannah Sparrow – 6-9 Feb, a single "large-billed" race bird was seen along the edge of Morro Bay near the State Park Marina (TW,MLS)  
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow – 6 Feb, latest report from the edge of Morro Bay near the State Park Marina (TW)  
Tricolored Blackbird – 13 Feb, 1000+ on the North Chimineas Ranch is a high count for the county (BS)

**OBSERVERS:** Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Jackie Allison, Molly Brown, Tom M. Edell, Rosemary Flamion, Dave M. Lawrence, Jennifer Moonjian, Andy Needles, John L. Roser, Paul Rosso, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Maggie L. Smith, Bob Stafford, Mike D. Stiles, Tom Wurster, Roger H. Zachary, and many observers (mob). For information about birds or locations mentioned in this report, contact Tom Edell at (805) 995-1691 or tedell@aol.com....*Tom Edell*

**Morro Coast Audubon Society Membership Application**

Yes, I would like to join the Morro Coast Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, and receive the Flyway and Audubon Magazine. Enclosed is a check payable to the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY in the amount of:

\$15 Students/Seniors      \$20 Introductory      \$35 Basic(renewal)      Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ NEW MEMBER      RENEWAL

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ ( E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_ )

Mail check and coupon to: MORRO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. Box 160, Morro Bay CA 93443-0160. To check the status of your subscription or request membership changes call 1-800-274-4201

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