



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 43 Issue 7, Dec 2008/Jan 2009

Honoring our Community with Gratitude

"No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave."

- Calvin Coolidge

Community support is what non-profit organizations are made of, and our community of members and friends has truly shown strong support to MCAS this year. As this issue of the Pacific Flyway goes to press, the 2008 MCAS fund drive total stands at \$11,092. Despite the nationwide economic downturn, many of our friends have given generously.

Many people echoed our excitement surrounding the new 8-acre addition to Sweet Springs Preserve. Fund drive donations that will help us restore and improve this property total more than \$7,000. Much of that \$7,000 is part of a new endowment called the Sweet Springs Circle of Friends. Nine generous people have become founding members of this important endowment that already holds \$5,500.

Unfortunately, donations to our general fund total just over \$3,000. This single fund helps to pay for many ongoing projects, including monthly

community programs, school outreach, the newsletter and office space rent. The general fund is also tapped for awards to programs in need, such as Hi Mountain Lookout, Morro Bay Winter Loon Survey, Western Snowy Plover Recovery and more.

Please consider making a donation to any one of these worthy projects or to our general fund. All donations are tax deductible and greatly needed to keep the wonderful work moving forward. If a search for a postage stamp is holding you up, visit our website at www.morrocoastaudubon.org and donate instantly with a credit card.

Latest Donors to the MCAS Fund Drive

Mike & Heidi Baird
Marsha Karl
Stephanie Little
Vivian & John McNeill
Richard Parker
Joel G Shenum
Mike Stiles

~Jan Surbey, MCAS President

Snowy Plover Habitat Conservation Recovery Program

During 2008, the Habitat Conservation and Plover Recovery Program, sponsored by Morro Coast Audubon and Morro Bay State Park, logged over 500 hours to help protect the Western Snowy Plover. Volunteers filled out Recreational Use Surveys to monitor type, intensity, and distribution of recreational uses at Morro Strand State Beach and Montana de Oro Sandspit, both active breeding sights for the Snowy Plover.

Violations such as trespassing, vandalism, and dogs off leash were reported to State Park personnel. Survey data were synthesized and passed on to State Parks management and included in the 2008 Western Snowy Plover report sent to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Volunteers also kept watch

on plover signage and fencing and contributed to plover habitat protection during all major holidays during the plover breeding season. Volunteers wore jackets identifying themselves with the program. Over a hundred positive visitor contacts were made, educating folks about the Snowy Plover. Thank you to the following volunteers that make this program so successful: Jay Bonestell, Susan Heinemann, Betty McElhill, Suzy Black, Nancy Burke, Diane Clement, Barbara Akle, Pat and Dick Boyd, Lynda Merrill, Sylvia Rosenberg, and Jan Surbey.

For more information about this program please visit www.westernsnowyplover.org. If you would like to volunteer please contact Stephanie Little at (805) 610-6229.

MCAS Contacts

President

Jan Surbey - 772-7273, jansurbey@earthlink.net

President Elect

Vacant

Treasurer

Holly Sletteland - 239-3928, hslettel@calpoly.edu

Secretary

Priscilla Akin - 534-0280, pakin@charter.net

Programs Chair

Rouvaishyana - 534-9867

Christy Holmes - christy026@care2.com

Publicity Chair

Dick Boyd - 772-3993, dickboyd@charter.net

Field Trip Co-chairs

Alan Schmierer - 772-2026, aaschmierer@yahoo.com

Jen Moonjian - jmoonjia@gmail.com

Hospitality Chair

Margie Cush - 801-1426, cushes@sbcglobal.net

Membership Chair

Rosalie Valvo - 772-1429, rvalvo@sbcglobal.net

Education Co-chairs

Dawn Williams - 545-8412, slodawn1@att.net

Stephanie Little - 610-6229, stephjoy13@hotmail.com

Lands Chair

Holly Sletteland - 239-3928, hslettel@calpoly.edu

Communications Co-chairs

Newsletter: Cheryl Lesinski - aarski@sbcglobal.net

Website: Mike Stiles - 528-1515, mstiles@calpoly.edu

Conservation Co-Chairs

Andrea Jones - 772-1995, ajones@audubon.org

Greg Smith, slobird@aol.com

Directors at Large

Carlo Christian - 801-2991, carlocc@sbcglobal.net

Fund Development Chair

Sarah Bryant - 528-8215

MCAS Lands Coordinator

Holly Sletteland - 239-3928, hslettel@calpoly.edu

newsletter layout by FILLERUP marketing communications, brfillerup@

fillerupmc.com | printing by Hay Printing, hayprint@fix.net

Morro Coast Audubon Society Office and Outreach Center

601 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, upstairs in Marina Square

(805) 772-1991 mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org

Hours: Tuesday, 1-3pm & Thursday, 10am-Noon

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443

Website: www.morrocoastaudubon.org

Printed on recycled paper

Following the MCAS CREED: Education and Diversity

As always, MCAS continues work in all 5 areas of the MCAS CREED; special emphasis in December and January is on Education and Diversity. The Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) and the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival offer some of MCAS's best opportunities to learn about birds, meet other birding enthusiasts, share time with others, and reach out to new members and volunteers.

Beginning birders can be paired with experienced birders for the CBCs and the Winter Bird Festival offers events for birders of all levels of expertise, as well as those folks who label themselves

“not a birder.” Please take advantage of these educational and fun opportunities! Volunteer opportunities are available for both of these projects. For more information, please visit the MCAS website or call the MCAS office.

Conservation
Research
Education
Expansion
Diversity

MCAS Vows to Waste Not!

As part of the MCAS Strategic Plan 2007-2012, MCAS will “set an example of ways to preserve and protect natural resources.” One objective for this goal is to “recycle, reuse, and reduce waste of resources.”

To this end, MCAS provides reusable cups, plates, glasses, napkins, and utensils at all events and encourages members to do the same both at events and at home. This practice reduces consumption of resources and diverts waste from landfills.

Please join MCAS and remember to “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.” To read the MCAS Strategic Plan, visit www.morrocoastaudubon.org.



Welcome New Members

Arroyo Grande
Patricia Price

Atascadero
George & Kathie Asdel
David & Aimee Edsall

Cambria
David & Lois Feleay

Morro Bay
Joe Morris

Santa Margarita
May Deven

Los Osos
Florence & Karl Appel
Hedy Avant
Albert & Claire Downs
Beth Fillerup
Pamela Newman

Out of County
Timothy Duff
Karen Frankel
Tamara & Gavin Kron
John Stoebig

This isn't the long list of new members I promised last month, but National Audubon Society needs a bit more time to complete the "migration" to its new membership system. Meanwhile, we've accumulated a number of people who joined up through the local chapter and are welcomed above.

~ Rosalie Valvo, Membership Chair

National Audubon News

Carol Browner, National Audubon's Board Chair, was appointed to Barack Obama's transition team. Former EPA head under Clinton, she will have a voice in the selection of Obama's cabinet and key positions including the Secretary of the Interior and EPA.

Natural History Museum Offers Lecture Series

A free lecture series will be held at the Museum of Natural History in Morro Bay beginning Monday, January 5, 2009, with a program about the Piedras Blancas Light Station presented by Carole Adams. The lectures are given every Monday through March 30 beginning at 10:15am in the museum auditorium.

Two programs in the series will be of special interest to birders. On Monday, January 19, local Audubon member Dick Boyd will present *Baleen, Boojums and Birds*, a photographic tour of Baja California to visit the wintering and calving grounds of the Gray Whales. Baja provides wintering grounds for many species of birds, some familiar to Central Coast residents, but also different species that travel to the warmer south.

On Monday, March 2, Biologist Kara Hagedorn and her injured Red-tailed Hawk, Sunshine, will present the program *Raptor Brooding and Behavioral Insights*. Every year Sunshine builds a nest and lays infertile eggs. In April, 2008, Kara and Sunshine were given a two-day old Red-shouldered Hawk chick and a peeping egg. Sunshine immediately took on the pair as her own and raised the chicks until they were ready to be released into the wild. Learn the details of raptor reproduction, development and behavior through Sunshine's innate maternal care.

Mark your calendar and join other life-long learners for these fascinating programs. For more information call the museum at (805) 772-2694 or go online at www.ccnha.org.

Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County - October

ABBREVIATIONS: CPNM = Carrizo Plain National Monument; MBSP = Morro Bay State Park; OCP = Oceano county Park; OFL = Oso Flaco Lake; PSBOC = Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground; and MDOSP = Montana de Oro State Park, and WRR = Whale Rock Reservoir. Unless otherwise noted, birds reported as "photographed" can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tedell>.

GEESE THRU GREBES: A total of 21 Greater White-fronted Geese were found with a high of 13 at WRR on 4 Oct (TME). An adult Snow Goose was with Cackling Geese at WRR 25-28 Oct (TME). There were reports of 16 Cackling Geese along the coast during the second half of the month (mob) that most notably included eight Aleutian race birds

at WRR on 25 Oct (TME). Eleven male and two female Canvasbacks at Oso Flaco Lake on 11 Oct (MLS) provided the earliest arrival date for the county. The male Harlequin Duck that summered at Estero Bluffs State Park was seen again on 13 Oct (MLS) and will likely be present through winter.

SHEARWATERS THRU RAPTORS: The chapter-sponsored offshore boat trip on 5 Oct traveled north to off Arroyo de La Cruz. Along the way a single Flesh-footed Shearwater (BKS) and 35-40 Buller's Shearwaters (TME) accounted for some of the highlights. However, the rarest pelagic species for the month was a Manx Shearwater seen from the

LOCAL EVENTS, PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

Christmas Bird Count and Potluck Dinner

Saturday, December 20, dawn to dusk
Potluck Dinner 6pm

Get ready for the annual Christmas Bird Count! Registration was due by November 29th, but late registrations may be considered. Contact the count coordinators, Bert and Elaine Townsend, at (805) 543-1373 or via email at betownsend@sbcglobal.net. Information is also available on the MCAS website. There is a \$5 fee for each participant.

Even if you can't make the Count, plan to join the potluck that evening. The potluck will start at 6pm and take place at the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden Education Building, located at El Chorro Regional Park, off Hwy 1 across from Cuesta College. Bring a dish to share and your own reusable place setting. Beverages and turkeys provided by MCAS and members.

Carrizo Plain CBC Saturday, January 3, 8am

Join a great group of birders for this annual event. We will be meeting at the Community Center/Fire Station on Soda Lake Road at 8am. There is a \$5 fee for each participant.

Participants can expect to break into 7-8 parties and then re-group at 1pm for lunch and to check the number of species observed. Section Leaders dedicated to and knowledgeable of certain areas may be assigned. Parties may choose to bird the afternoon depending on need.

Bring your own food and water, and come with a full tank of gas. Weather conditions fluctuate. Come prepared for both warm and cold temperatures. **Please contact Roger Zachary (see below) if you are interested and would like future updates.** We look forward to a productive count as well as a great day of birding.

Roger Zachary, Carrizo Plain CBC Compiler
(805) 466-6222 or rzachary@charter.net

Filipponi Ecological Area

Tuesday, December 9, 9-11am

Leaders: Alan Schmierer & Daniel Bohlman

The Filipponi Ecological Area is located just south of San Luis Obispo, and has been restored by The Land Conservancy of SLO County. Alan Schmierer and Land Conservancy ecologist Daniel Bohlman will lead you through parts of this 50-acre area of creekside willows, pools, wetlands and weedy fields.

Expect a variety of wintering sparrows and perhaps waterfowl and raptors. A brief discussion of the site restoration will also be covered. This is a difficult area to bird due to thick grass and brush, and walking conditions may be difficult due to mud. Group size is limited; for info and to RSVP call Alan at 772-2026.

MCAS Seeks Volunteers to Staff Booth at WBF

MCAS has been invited to have a booth at the Morro Bay Winter Festival again this year! The Festival takes place over the Martin Luther King weekend, January 16th-19th.

The MCAS booth will have a prime location in the foyer of the Morro Bay Community Center. Please consider joining the fun by helping us staff our booth. We will be welcoming participants to the Winter Bird Festival, offering information about membership and MCAS projects and programs, and (of course) raising funds through sale of our awesome MCAS merchandise.

The Winter Bird Festival will waive registration fees (\$65 in 2009) for volunteers agreeing to staff the booth for at least 4 hours over the course of the weekend. What better way to save money, attend the Festival, and meet and greet a diverse group of people!

If interested in this MCAS volunteer opportunity, please contact Christy Holmes at christy026@care2.com.

Eureka....continued from page 3

Cayucos Pier on 19 Oct (JSR). The Manx was with Black-vented Shearwaters, a species seen from shore throughout the county during the month with a high count of 2,500 off Cayucos (TME). On 26 Oct an immature Brown Pelican at Lopez Lake accounted for the third record there (TME). A lone White-faced Ibis that flew past the 13th Street Elfin Forest overlook in Los Osos on 12 Oct (BKS) delighted those assembled for the annual "Big Sit" competition. A migrating juvenile Broad-winged Hawk seen from the top of Deer Canyon in northeast Arroyo Grande on 9 Oct (BKS) was the third seen from that location over the past eight years suggesting that there is at least a minor migratory route along the ridge in that area.

GULLS THRU OWLS: A first-cycle Franklin's Gull was photographed at OCP on 9 Oct (B&MB) and a juvenile Sabine's Gull was photographed nearby along the beach on 2 Oct (JKM). One to two South Polar Skuas were seen offshore of Cambria during the Morro Coast Audubon boat trip on 5 Oct (BKS). The two reports of Common Terns involved three juveniles at OFL on 4 Oct (CAM) and a basic plumaged adult roosting with Forster's and Elegant Terns at Morro Bay during the "Big Sit" on 12 Oct (BKS). Three Black Skimmers at Morro Bay on 2 Oct (JC) and 24 Oct (MDH) likely represent the same birds though there were no reports between these dates. Marbled Murrelets continued along the north coast off Arroyo del Osos with 12 on 18 Oct (TME) and at least four remaining on 22 Oct (TME). Three White-winged Doves, one along Hwy 101 in Atascadero on 13 Oct (RHZ) and up to two along Henrietta Ave in Los Osos 23-31 Oct (JSR), is above average for the month. A single Long-eared owl was seen at a remote ranch in the CPNM on 30 Oct (AFS).

SWIFTS THRU PIPITS: A juvenile Black Swift picked up in the City of San Luis Obispo on 8 Oct and taken to Pacific Wildlife Care where it was photographed before its release (CD-ph). This bird provided the county's first October record. One of the rarest birds for the period was a male Broad-billed Hummingbird photographed at a feeder in Arroyo Grande on 31 Oct (CH, AFS- www.flickr.com/photos/sloalan/sets). It accounted for the third county record and amazingly the second for that location. A migrant Lewis's Woodpecker flew past Deer Canyon in Arroyo Grande on 6 Oct (BKS). Providing only the county's fifth record was a Least Flycatcher found at Spooners Cove Campground, MDOSP on 8 Oct (SS). Nearby, a Tropical Kingbird was at the mouth of Islay Creek, MDOSP on 13 Oct

(JSR). A late Cliff Swallow flew past Deer Canyon on 6 Oct (BKS) and a Sage Thrasher was near the KCL Campground, CPNM, on 20 Oct (AFS). Another very rare species for the period was a Red-throated Pipit seen along OFL Road on 11 and 27 Oct (MLS).

WARBLERS: Eight eastern warblers were reported in October. A female/immature Chestnut-sided Warbler was at PSBOC on 7 Oct (CAM) and a Blackburnian Warbler was there 6-13 Oct 2008 (BED). The willows along Pecho Road held an adult male Prairie Warbler on 13 Oct (JSR) and two Palm Warblers were found during the month, one at OFL on 11 Oct (MLS) and another at Arroyo de La Cruz on 18 Oct (TME). Five Blackpoll Warblers along the coast between 2 and 27 Oct brings this fall's total to 11 or 12 birds. The rarest bird of the month was the Cerulean Warbler at PSBOC on 20 Oct (JL) that is only the second county and the 16th State record. The female Prothonotary Warbler at Islay Creek Mouth, MDOSP, continued through 10 Oct (TME) and the male at PSBOC was last reported on 13 Oct (MLS). A probable female Canada Warbler was at Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria on 7 Oct (BED) and a male was photographed at OFL on 17 Oct (JKM).

SPARROWS THRU ORIOLE: Unusual sparrow sightings along the coast were a late Grasshopper Sparrow at the Arroyo Grande Creek Mouth on 6 Oct (BED) and a Vesper Sparrow near the San Simeon Pier (BED). A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at a feeder in Arroyo Grande on 19 Oct (PP). Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds were along Hwy 166 just east of its junction with Hwy 101 on 30-31 Oct (AFS). Three interesting oriole reports involved a late female plumaged Hooded Oriole heard calling at PSBOC on 31 Oct (MLS), a Baltimore Oriole at Spooner's Cove Campground, MDOSP on 5 Oct (CAM), and a late adult male Bullock's Oriole along Lopez Drive near Hwy 227 on 28 Oct (RM).

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Bob and Mary Bishop, Joyce Cory, Brian E. Daniels, Claudia Duckworth, Tom M. Edell, Marlin D. Harms, Cheryl Lish, Jim Lomax, Curtis A. Marantz, Ron Melcer, Jamie K. Miller, Patricia Price, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Steve Summers, Roger H. Zachary, and mob = many observers.

For information about birds mentioned in this report, consult the Morro Coast Audubon publication "The Birds of San Luis Obispo County, California" or contact Tom Edell (see below).

-Tom Edell, (805) 995-1691 or tedell@aol.com

Morro Coast Audubon Society Membership Application

FIRST NAME _____ LAST NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

What type of membership would you like?

Morro Coast Audubon Society and National Audubon Society combined membership

(includes the Pacific Flyway newsletter and Audubon Magazine).

___ \$15 Students/Seniors

___ \$20 New/Intro

___ \$35 Renew Basic

*Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

Morro Coast Audubon Society membership only

(includes the Pacific Flyway newsletter)

___ \$20 New or renewal

**Make check payable to MCAS.

C18
7XCH

MCAS Membership Details

Please mark all that apply:

___ I'd like to receive occasional "MCAS Alert!" email notifications of news and events.

___ I'd like to receive the *Pacific Flyway* newsletter via email (this saves trees and reduces MCAS printing and mailing costs).

___ I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities.

___ I would like to receive information about the MCAS planned giving program.

**For both membership types, mail form & check to:
MCAS, P O Box 1507, Morro Bay , CA 93443**

To check the status of your National Audubon Society membership or request changes call 1-800-274-4201.



MORRO COAST
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

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.

Morro Coast Audubon Society

P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443

805-772-1991

mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org

www.morrocoastaudubon.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. postage
PAID
San Luis Obispo CA
Permit No. 26