



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 44 Issue 7, Dec. 2009/Jan. 2010

Cheers for Our MCAS Charter Business Members

Beginning in June 2009, MCAS offered local businesses the opportunity to join MCAS as Charter Business Members. The list of business members continues to grow as these businesses show strong support for the important work that MCAS does to promote conservation of wildlife habitat and educate the community. Please visit our business members and thank them for their support.

If you own a business or know of a business owner who may be interested in joining, our Charter Business memberships will be available until June 2010. Please remember that MCAS is a county-wide organization, with the Charter Business members (so far) being located mostly in Morro Bay. Let's change that to include some North and South county businesses as well!

Each business member is entitled to the following benefits:

- Publicity in the MCAS newsletter twice per year.
- Ongoing recognition on the MCAS website (including a link to their business website) from June 2009 through June 2010.
- A Charter MCAS Business Member window decal to display at their place of business.
- A free subscription to the MCAS monthly newsletter.

Business membership dues are \$100.
For more information, visit
www.morrocoastaudubon.org
or contact Sarah Bryant, ssbryant@yahoo.com

-Jan Surbey, Past President MCAS

2009-2010 MCAS Charter Business Members

Embarcadero Inn, Morro Bay
Estero Bay Graphics, Morro Bay
Gallery at Marina Square, Morro Bay
Hay Printing, Morro Bay
Jenny Brantlee, Realtor, Morro Bay
La Serena Inn, Morro Bay
Seven Sisters Gallery, Morro Bay
Spencer's Fresh Market, Morro Bay
Wild Birds Unlimited, San Luis Obispo
Los Osos Rexall, Los Osos
Northwest Presentation, Goldendale, WA

Please visit our business members
as often as possible and
thank them for their support.

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Vacant

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newsletter layout by Jessie Skidmore, www.jessieskidmore.com

Morro Coast Audubon Society Office and Outreach Center

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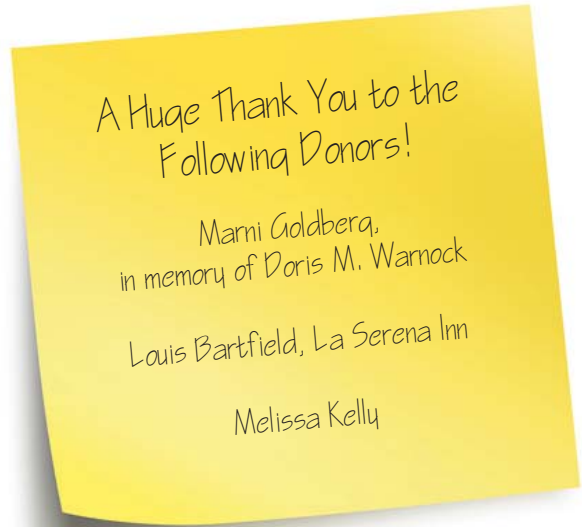
Hours: Thursday, 10am-Noon

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

Website: www.morrocoastaudubon.org

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BULLETIN



Submit your Photos for the "SLO Birds of 2009" Slideshow

The March 2010 MCAS meeting will present a slideshow entitled "SLO Birds of 2009." The coordinator is Dave Keeling, who invites you to contact him (dkeeling@calpoly.edu) if you have bird images taken this year that you would enjoy viewing in the show. Entry deadline is January 15, 2010.

Needed: Bird Records from Carrizo Plain National Monument (CPNM)

The Carrizo Plain National Monument is not a heavily-birded area and statistical records are thin for many species. For those of you who bird at CPNM during the year, please email any E-Bird reports (which all birders are encouraged to use), notes, or lists of sightings with dates and descriptions of rarities to the CPNM publication manager, Alan Schmierer (aaschmierer@yahoo.com). Alan is mainly interested in birds seen on the monument property.

Bird Fun Fact

WHAT IS A GIZZARD? All of us who have eaten a turkey at Thanksgiving have run across the gizzard ... pretty tough and not very tasty! The gizzard is a modified part of a bird's stomach. It has a strong muscle and is filled with sand, grit and small pebbles. The muscular contractions grind the food, much like we do when we chew. In a wild turkey, seeds and acorns are effectively ground up. Objects that experimentally require 400 pounds per square inch to crush have been flattened within 24 hours when fed to a turkey. The size of the gizzard varies with species and with season, depending on diet.

Interested in Contributing to the Flyway?

If you have an article, photo or idea you'd like to submit for consideration in the MCAS Flyway, please email Jennifer Little (jennlittle3@hotmail.com).

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

MCAS Receives a Much-Needed Grant

We are pleased to announce that a \$25,000 grant, from the Sempra Energy Foundation, was awarded to MCAS for the continuation of the Snowy Plover outreach program.

This program, since its inception in 2001, has led a dedicated team of volunteers as they help protect nearly eight miles of Snowy Plover nesting habitat within Morro Bay State Park. Morro Bay contains some of the most significant plover breeding and wintering habitat and is one of the biggest Snowy Plover breeding populations along the Pacific coast. Outreach volunteers have increased public understanding and awareness about the magnitude of environmental conservation and the importance of protecting the plover's sensitive nesting habitat. It is because of our volunteers and projects such as the "Share the Shore" kid's signs, the creation of the "Dog on Leash Map," and the plover outreach booth that this program has proven successful to the recovery of the Snowy Plover. If you would like to be a part of the Snowy Plover outreach program, contact Stephanie Little at stephjoy13@hotmail.com or 805-610-6229.



photo courtesy of Stephanie Little

Looking for the Perfect Christmas Gift?

MCAS has an array of merchandise for sale, great for Christmas gifts and stocking stuffers.



1. Hooded Sweatshirts \$40
T-Shirts \$20
2. Hats \$20
3. The Peregrine Falcons of Morro Rock
- A 40-Year History 1967-2007 \$17
4. Bird Boxes \$15
5. The Audubon Society Pocket Guide
- Familiar Birds of North America Western Region \$5
6. The Birds of San Luis Obispo County California \$3
7. Birds of the Carizzo Plain National Monument \$2.50



If you are interested in purchasing any of the merchandise, please stop by the MCAS office located at 601 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, upstairs in the Marina Square. Hours: Thursday from 10am-noon
You are also welcome to email your order to Stephanie Little (stephjoy13@hotmail.com).

LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

MCAS Christmas Bird Count and Potluck Dinner (Reminder)

Saturday, December 19, dawn to dusk
Potluck dinner, 6pm, Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School (Please note the new location.)

For those of you who have signed up for the Christmas Bird Count, your location assignments will be sent in early December and your sector leader will contact you. Bert and Elaine Townsend, CBC Coordinators (805) 543-1373, betownsend@sbcglobal.net

Beginner Bird Walk for Kids a Success!

In October, MCAS Chairs Jen Moonjian, Stephanie Little, and Christy Holmes held the first ever Beginners Bird Walk for kids. During the classroom session, kids learned bird calls, played bird bingo, and painted their own Snowy Plover chicks. Then, the group headed outside to put their new skills to use. If you're interested in bringing your child to the next Beginners Bird Walk, email Jen Moonjian at: jmoonjia@gmail.com

Featured Bird of the Month: Black Brant

If you see a flock of Black Brant (*Branta bernicla*) from the shores of Morro Bay this winter, get personal and take a look at their legs. With a little luck you may notice colored plastic bands adorning those black, scaly legs. These bands were placed on them far from Morro Bay by the groping fingers of arctic biologists.

All Brants receive two bands. One is a long lasting stainless steel identification band issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The other is a colored plastic recognition band which is engraved with three alpha-numeric characters and represents a specific individual. These bands come in different colors signifying different banding localities. Here is a list of the colors we see in Morro Bay:

Red: Wrangle Island and Anadyr River Basin, Russia.

Dark Blue: Banks and Victoria Islands, Canada.

Aqua: Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.

Green: Teshekpuk Lake, Alaska.

White, Yellow, Orange, Gray, Black: Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska.

Annual East County Raptor Trip

Saturday, December 5th, 7AM

Park-and-Ride parking area just east of the Santa Margarita exit off of Rte 101.

Meet leaders Paul Andreano and Nick Todd, professional raptor biologists and seasoned field trip leaders. Birders at all skill levels will enjoy this trip. Bring lunch, water, binoculars, scope and a walkie-talkie radio if you have one (the latter is great for car-to-car communication about directions and birds seen en-route). Be sure to have a full tank of gas. Minimal walking involved. We will return by about mid-afternoon. Contact Paul if you have questions (himountainpaul@gmail.com).



Beginner Bird Walk photo courtesy of Christy Holmes

The banding program has resulted in some very interesting findings: Black Brant can live over 28 years and may migrate over 11,000 miles annually. Male and female pairs follow the creed "Till death do us part" and are side by side, even during nonstop migratory flights from Alaska to Baja. This spectacular flight can be accomplished in less than 55 hours with birds losing over one-third of their body weight. Families stay together for almost a year while Mom and Dad teach their offspring about migration routes and wintering sites. Eelgrass is the main forage for migrating and wintering Brant on Morro Bay.

If we conserve our important and valuable local eelgrass beds and keep human disturbance on the bay within tolerable levels, we will surely be graced by the sight and sounds of these avian arctic travelers for decades to come.

-John Roser, guest contributor

Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County -Oct. 2009

The following are some of the most interesting reports gleaned primarily from the Slocobirding listserv and eBird. Abbreviations used below are: CBRC = California Bird Records Committee; CPNM = Carrizo Plain National Monument; ICC - Islay Creek Campground, Montana de Oro State Park; and PSBOC = Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground.

GEESE THRU SHEARWATER: The first flock of **BRANT** reported this fall involved 68 at Morro Bay on 28 Oct (MLS). Aside from the continuing **CAACKLING GOOSE** at Laguna Lake, individuals were seen at Pismo Beach 10 Oct (CD) and at the Sea Pines Golf Course in Los Osos on 24 Oct (TME). A breeding plumaged male **HARLEQUIN DUCK** with Surf Scoters off Old Creek in Cayucos on 10 Oct (TME) was likely one of the birds that summered locally. On 19 Oct a boat visiting the Santa Lucia Escarpment located about 50 miles southwest of Point Buchon recorded a **COOK'S PETREL**, **WILSON'S STORM-PETREL**, and a **LEAST STORM-PETREL**, plus what would be the county's first live **MOTTLED PETREL** (previous records involved beached birds) if accepted by the CBRC (DB,WF).

EGRET THRU GULL: Currently very rare in our county a lone **CATTLE EGRET** was in a pasture along Los Osos Valley Road 8-10 Oct (JSR). **WHITE-FACED IBIS** continued to be reported in the Morro Bay area with a high count of 18 observed flying over the cloisters Pond in Morro Bay on 23 Oct (NW). The **COMMON MOORHEN** found at PSBOC last month remained through at least 10 Oct (MLS). Our first **MOUNTAIN PLOVERS** (14) were recorded along Panorama Road in the CPNM on 22 Oct (LS). Two **BLACK-NECKED STILTS** at the edge of Morro Bay near Pecho Road on 9 Oct (JSR) were the first in the county this year. A first-year **THAYER'S GULL** at Estero Bluffs State Park on 30 Oct (TME) was the first one found this fall.

OWL THRU THRUSH: Few **BLACK SWIFTS** are seen in fall making one over Deer Canyon, Arroyo Grande, on 2 Oct (BKS) worth noting. Transient **LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS** were seen over Deer Canyon on 2 Oct (BKS) and at a ranch in the southern CPNM on 17 Oct (KS), plus this species continued in Paso Robles near Golden Hills Road and Dallons Drive (RS). A "yellow-shafted" **NORTHERN FLICKER** seen on 12 Oct (KS) was also in the southern CPNM. Two **TROPICAL KINGBIRDS** were along the coast with one at Morro Rock on 7 Oct (DS) and another at PSBOC 12-19 Oct (DK). The **PLUMBEOUS VIREO** found last month at PSBOC remained through 3 Oct (MDS). One of the rarest birds of the month was a **YELLOW-GREEN VIREO** found a PSBOC 18-19 Oct (JSR,RS,RHZ) that represents the fifth county record. Three **AMERICAN CROWS** were in the southern CPNM on 28 Oct (AFS) where they remain rare. A **PYGMY NUTHATCH** found at PSBOC on 3 Oct (BAB) was clearly a transient as was a **VARIED THRUSH** on a hillside at the ICC on 3 Oct (JSR).

WARBLERS: The second **TENNESSEE WARBLER** this fall was at the ICC on 18 Oct (MT) and a **LUCY'S WARBLER** was at PSBOC 9-17 Oct (TM). A male **NORTHERN PARULA** was found at ICC on 3 Oct and a likely hatching year bird was along Arroyo Grand Creek near Fair Oaks Blvd on 18 Oct (both JSR). A female plumaged **BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** found at PSBOC was seen only on 10 Oct (MDS). Following on last months report, the description of a **PINE WARBLER** at PSBOC on 3 Oct (BAB,MDS) was clearly a different bird; if both reports are accepted by the CBRC they would represent the 7th and 8th county records. Single hatching-year **BLACKPOLL WARBLERS** were found along Morro Creek near Lila Kaiser Park in Morro Bay 6 Oct (AFS) and at PSBOC 15-25 Oct (MLS). Other warblers at PSBOC included what may have been a continuing female **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** 7-15 Oct (DGS) and the second **NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** there this fall 2-5 Oct (LT,JC). A hatch-year male **AMERICAN REDSTART** was along Arroyo Grande Creek near Fair Oaks Blvd on 18 Oct (JSR) and another was at Oso Flaco Lake on 24 Oct (JW). One of this months highlights was an **OVENBIRD** found in a yard in Atascadero 12-13 Oct (RS).

SPARROWS THRU ORIOLE: The only **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** was found along the Morro Bay State Park Marina spit on 17 Oct (TME). Apparently small numbers of **BLACK-THROATED SPARROWS** are regular in fall in the southern Caliente Range where separate adults were found at Semper and Quail springs, CPNM, on 28 Oct; an immature "slate-colored" **DARK-EYED JUNCO** was at Quail Spring the same day (AFS). An early **SWAMP SPARROW** was found at ICC on 12 Oct (JS). Los Osos hosted a splotchy, blue male **INDIGO BUNTING** at the Peco Road willows 6-12 Oct (JSR). Interesting Icterids included two female **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS** at Cal Poly on 15 Oct (TO) and an immature/female **BALTIMORE ORIOLE** at PSBOC (DK).

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: David Bell, Bill A. Bouton, Joyce Cory, Claudia Duckworth, Tom M. Edell, Wes Fritz, Dave Keeling, Todd McGrath, Tom Ogren, Jim S. Royer, Larry Saslaw, Ross Schaefer, Dennis Sheridan, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Jeff Seay, Kathy Sharum, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Doug G. Stinson, Linda Tanner, Mike Tyner, Norma Wightman, Jim Woolf, 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 at (805) 995-1691 or tedell@aol.com.

-Tom Edell

Morro Coast Audubon Society Membership Application

NAME _____ EMAIL _____ PH _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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.

MCAS Membership Details

Please mark all that apply:

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

___ I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities.

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

For questions, contact the Membership Chair. (Contact information on page 2.)

For both membership types, mail form & check to: MCAS, PO 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

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED