



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

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Update on the East Sweet Springs Project *Building Support Through Outreach and Understanding* *Q&A Session on November 19 at East Sweet Springs*

To provide background information on this important project, in 2008, MCAS was deeded an 8-acre parcel by the Trust for Public Land. The parcel, now known as “East Sweet Springs,” is adjacent to the existing Sweet Springs Nature Preserve. The State Coastal Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and the US Department of Fish and Wildlife provided funding for the \$2,000,000 purchase. The goal of purchasing this property and deeding it to MCAS was for MCAS to protect sensitive biological and cultural resources found on the land, to restore the habitat for the benefit of sensitive species, and to provide compatible public access. MCAS began conducting the necessary surveys and studies required by the county. Since Morro Shoulderband Snails, a federally endangered species, were found on site, MCAS was required to prepare a Recovery Action Plan (RAP) that would improve habitat quality and quantity for the endangered species. Hence, MCAS hired the SWCA Environmental Consultants to prepare the plan, which was accepted by the MCAS Board and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. To assist the MCAS Board (all of whom volunteer their time), MCAS hired the SLO Land Conservancy to help prepare the application for a Minor Use Permit (MUP) required by the county. Finally, on September 2, 2011, the application for the MUP was filed with the county.

Today, community members appear to endorse the project for access improvement including trails (some built in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards), benches, signage, a viewing platform overlooking the shore, removal of exotic vegetation (veldt grass) and restoration of native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees. There is disagreement and confusion, however, about the planned gradual removal of the eucalyptus trees found on site.

Clarifications:

- (1) The eucalyptus trees slated for removal are ONLY those on the new never-been-open-to-the-public 8-acre parcel. The project does NOT include any tree removal on the existing Sweet Springs Preserve.
- (2) The eucalyptus tree removal is called for as part of the RAP to aid habitat restoration for the Morro Shoulderband Snail and to accomplish the goals set forth for the project.

As this edition of the newsletter goes to press, MCAS is planning an open house for the public to answer important questions about the project. The open house will be held at East Sweet Springs on November 19. MCAS is also preparing additional documents requested by the county before the project is heard by the Planning Commission sometime this winter. The MCAS board is confident that, with increased understanding that the tree removal is necessary to accomplish the goals of both the project and the RAP, the community will embrace the project as it moves forward through the permitting process.

For more information about the East Sweet Springs project, please visit:<http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/ess.php>, and be sure to sign up for the MCAS Alert! to receive updates about the project.

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BULLETIN

Welcome to Our New MCAS Members!

Arroyo Grande

Cindy Fear
James Galusha
Glenn Johnson
Gladys Pratt
Patty Wagner

Atascadero

Steven Campbell
Keri French
Priscilla Larson
Fredric Miller
Paulette Smith

Bradley

Sheryl Quails

Cambria

John W Dickason
Jane I Gibson
Carolyn Shepherd
Samuel A Youngman

Grover Beach

Theresa
Stallings-Drew

Los Osos

Suzanne
Dannenbring

Robert M Dodge

Alice Hamrick
George Marchenko
Mike Morgan
Jason & Justine
Schneider

Morro Bay

Erwin L Bauer
Ian Erickson
Shirley F Hudson
Victor Mueller
Erin S Pearce

Nipomo

Jackie Allison
Bill Smillie

Paso Robles

Tina Meehan
Wallace Ohles

Redwood City

John & Caroline
Munger Jr

San Luis Obispo

Mary K Eltzroth
Antonia Williams

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thanks to individuals, PG&E, and Chevron, the fund drive total reaches \$37,776

Early Christmas Present from Chevron

Suzanne Parker, Public Affairs Manager for Chevron, briefed board members on the progress of the project to restore and develop portions of the 320-acre tank farm in San Luis Obispo. The site was previously owned by Unocal and suffered major damage in a lightning storm in 1926. A lightning strike sparked a massive fire that lasted for five days and ruptured the tanks. The remnants of the tanks were subsequently removed and the land abandoned in the 1990s. Chevron now hopes to clean up the site of remaining oil residues and designate 85% of the property as open space. The proposed open space contains a large wetland, which is heavily used by a wide array of birds. The balance of the property will be used for commercial development. An EIR for the project is in its final stages and will likely be released early next year.

Suzanne also shared information about Chevron's charitable giving program. Much to everyone's surprise and delight, she then presented the board members with a \$2,000 check. The funds will provide a much needed boost for the Sweet Springs East project, as well as the General Fund.



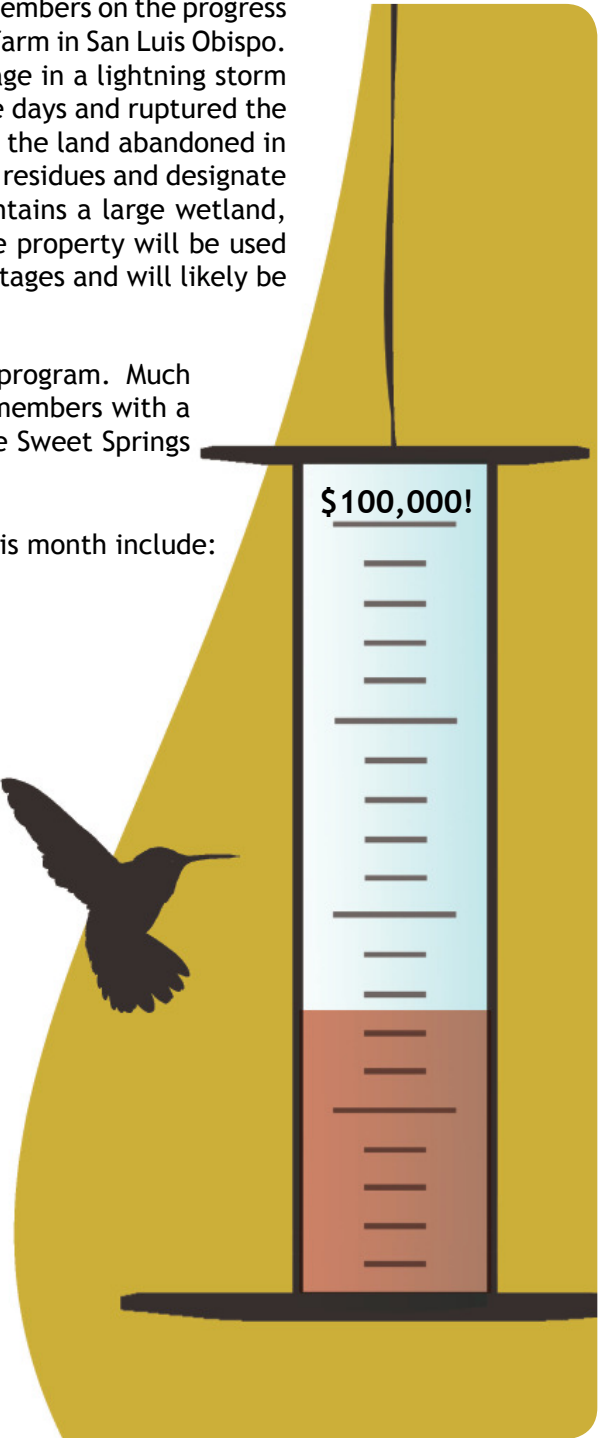
Fund drive donors this month include:

- Roger Carmody
- Pat Diener
- Tom Edell
- Norman Gausman
- Marsha Karl
- Don & Liz Maruska
- Janice Rohn
- John Roser
- Jo-ann Youngner

PG&E Befriends Sweet Springs

Over the past few months, we have had the good fortune to welcome a number of new volunteers from PG&E to the Sweet Springs Preserve. It all started when Natalie Schaefer, a Community Relations Representative at PG&E, responded to an MCAS Alert inviting people to help us collect seed for propagating new plants. Natalie had participated in restoration projects before and immediately grasped the potential for the preserve to be transformed into a thriving coastal habitat. She was especially taken with the new preserve, as it provided an opportunity to start from scratch and see the restoration progress over time. As she collected seeds of

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS- cont.

MCAS Business Spotlight: Curran Business Consulting and Tax Preparation Service

Yes, it's tax season again! MCAS suggests taking the stress out of tax preparation and use the services of one of our business members. Maureen Curran, owner/consultant, has over 28 years of experience in business, financial management and consulting. She had 12 years of agri-business experience as an owner and manager of a commercial walnut ranch in San Luis Obispo County prior to earning an MBA degree with specialization in finance, accounting and marketing. She then spent 7 years in the San Francisco Bay area where she was the financial manager for the west coast division of a large corporation. She purchased her Baywood home in 1997 and was able to move to Baywood full time in 2003 when she started her own tax preparation and consulting business. Maureen is a registered tax preparer and authorized IRS e-file provider for individuals, sole-proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, estates, trusts and tax exempt organizations.

Maureen's interest in Audubon was inspired by her mother, who was an Audubon member and an amateur wildlife photographer and artist. Maureen's parents introduced her to hiking, camping and enjoyment of nature at an early age in wilderness areas of central Oregon where she grew up. Maureen appreciates the work that many other Audubon volunteers and contributors have done over the years to assure that Sweet Springs Nature Preserve continues to be a unique and very special sanctuary to wildlife and people who love nature. So no need for taxes to "tax" you, contact Maureen at cbctax@sbcglobal.net or phone 805-528-9726.

MCAS Business Spotlight: Morro Photo Expo

MCAS realizes that birds, birders, photos and photographers all mix quite well, as indicated by the popularity of the "5 good minutes" photo show preceding our monthly programs. MCAS is delighted to welcome Morro Photo Expo as a business member and urges members to register ASAP for this upcoming event in spring 2012. Following are the description and details:

Photographing Birds in Morro Bay: How to Improve Your Skills

If you've been birding for any time at all, you've no doubt heard of Arthur Morris. Arthur, also known as Artie, is widely recognized as one of the world's premier bird and nature photographers and educators of our time. His first major book, "The Art of Bird Photography," quickly became the go-to reference on bird photography.

During Morro Photo Expo, March 30-April 1, 2012, Artie will present an information-packed lecture, illustrated with his technically perfect, artistically designed images. He will also present a hands-on presentation on Photoshop for Birders. These lectures are presented as part of Morro Photo Expo, a three -day learning event for beginning to advanced photographers who love nature, own a digital camera, and want to improve their skills.

The Morro Photo Expo volunteer team is in the third year of presenting the Expo, moving to Spring to enjoy migrating birds and wildflowers in the area. Over 30 classes will be available, including Morro Bay Bird Photography, Photographing Critters, Shooting from the Water, A Butterfly Photography Walk, and a Wildflower Photography Field Trip.

The Morro Photo Expo operates under the auspices of the Morro Bay Art Association, a non-profit 501(c)(3) California corporation. Proceeds from the event directly benefit the Graphic Arts Department at Morro Bay High School, providing a scholarship for a college-bound senior and cameras for student use.

The expo is a great value at \$149 for the three-day event. Registration begins December 1. Be sure to register early as some classes are limited in size.

For additional information, visit www.morrophotoexpo.com

LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

SWAP Calendar Raises Funds for Elfin Forest

In the past few years SWAP (Small Wilderness Area Preservation) has assisted with improvements to the Elfin Forest, such as extending the Boardwalk into Rose's Grove and installing benches so that everyone can appreciate the beauty, sounds, and smells in nature. A display board that posts current natural history and SWAP information was recently purchased. SWAP also continues to offer monthly walks and develop education programs for school children so that they can grow up to understand and enjoy the beauty and wonders of the Forest. Our conservation efforts to maintain a healthy environment continue with removal of invasives and erosion control SWAP invites you to support these goals and much more by purchasing the 2012 Elfin Forest calendar featuring lovely photos by 21 photographers. The calendar also contains informative and educational text. The cost is a mere \$15.00 donation to SWAP. See SWAP's web site, www.elfin-forest.org for a list of places to purchase the calendar.

MCAS Christmas Bird Count and Compilation Potluck

Saturday, December 17

There is still time to register for the Christmas Bird Count, which will be held on Dec 17, 2011, dawn to dusk, rain or shine. A registration form was included in the November edition of the Pacific Flyway, or you can register on-line. Go to <http://morrocoastaudubon.org/cbc.php> where you can download maps and forms. There you will also find the address to submit the \$5.00 registration fee or a paper form. Your participation is needed. More counters means more species seen, which will help this area maintain its national ranking. Be part of this annual citizen science event.

As in previous years, our compilation potluck will begin at 6:00pm at the San Luis Obispo County Botanical Garden's Oak Glen Pavilion. To find the Pavilion take the turnoff from Hwy 1, across from Cuesta College, into El Chorro Regional Park. The Pavilion is on the right, past the entrance to the Botanical Garden. Parking is across from the pavilion.

For more information, contact compiler Tom Edell at 805-995-1691 or coordinators Bert and Elaine Townsend at 805-543-1373.

Monarchs and Birds

Saturday, December 3, at 9:00am
Pismo Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove

Meet Jessica Griffith, the Monarch Alert Coordinator, at the Pismo Beach Monarch Butterfly Grove on Hwy 1. While walking around and observing clustering monarchs, Jessica will discuss monarch biology, migration, and how they are being studied. Jessica will also demonstrate Monarch Alert's technique for counting monarch clusters using binoculars, and folks on the walk can try it for themselves. We will do some birding as well, so bring binoculars. Depending on weather and group consensus, we may visit another overwintering site with a different habitat. Participants are encouraged to carpool as parking space is limited. Rain will cancel. If you have any questions, please contact Jessica at jessica.l.griffiths@gmail.com.

16th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

January 13-16

Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival over 200 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

Our keynote speaker Saturday, January 14, will be Jon Dunn, presenting a program on the diversity of Wood Warblers of North America. Jon is one of the primary experts on field identification in North America and is a tour leader for WINGS Birding Tours.

To register, and for more information about the Festival, check out the website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org. The deadline is December 31, 2011 but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

Carrizo Plain Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 31

The Carrizo Plain CBC will be held on Saturday, December 31, 2011. We will meet at the Community Center/Fire Station on Soda Lake Road at 8:00a.m. There is a \$5.00 fee for each participant. Depending on the weather conditions, some participants might want to camp out or stay at California Valley Lodge the night before. No official arrangements have been made at this time. A few of us usually scout the area the day before and get up early on the count date to look for owls and watch the sunrise over the Tumbler Range. Be prepared for all weather conditions.

The group will be split into 7-8 parties in the morning. We will each lunch at 1:00pm and count the number of species observed. Section leaders may be assigned to those who are knowledgeable of certain areas. Bring your own food and water, and come with a full tank of gas. Several parties bird in the afternoon depending on what we need to find or confirm. Look forward to a productive count and great day of birding.

If you would like to participate, please contact Roger Zachary at rzachary@charter.net or 805-466-6222.

FUND DRIVE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

native shrubs, she could readily envision them flourishing where invasive veldt grass now stood. The following month she was back, but this time, and every time since then, she has been accompanied by other folks from PG&E. Natalie has recruited an increasing number of her colleagues to lend a hand at the preserve and their collective efforts have made a huge difference!

We were feeling pretty good about this turn of events when, amazingly enough, things got even better. PG&E recently awarded Morro Coast Audubon a grant of \$10,000 to help underwrite the cost of providing ADA access on Sweet Springs East. They will be funding the new landing platform and boardwalk to access the preserve from Ramona Avenue. This is just one of many projects that PG&E funds in communities they serve, but we are privileged indeed to be among the recipients. Our project turned out to be perfectly aligned with the company's goal of funding projects that enhance environmental sustainability, with an emphasis on providing funding to underserved groups, including persons with disabilities. We are extremely grateful to PG&E for their donations of both time and money!

Holly Sletteland, MCAS lands manager, fills the feeder with additional 'seed' money, including a \$2,000 gift from Chevron and a \$10,000 grant from PG & E.

Free Family Day Fun as Part of Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

According to a recent article in Audubon magazine, wildlife tracking is making a comeback, attracting outdoor enthusiasts and biologists alike. Again this year, wildlife tracking is being offered as one of the free family day events taking place at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History on Saturday, January 14. Other events at the museum include Introduction to Birding and Habitat, Rubbing Noses with Reptiles, a Critter Crawl and a puppet show featuring Great Blue Herons.

Staging at Sub Sea Tours, "Kayaking in the Bay," is planned for 10:30-noon. Participants under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult. The \$10 per person kayak charge is payable directly to Sub Sea Tours on the day of the event.

New this year are the "Bird, Learn, Make, and Take" activities at the Morro Bay Community Center. Stop by any time between 11:00am and 2:00pm for a hands-on experience making items with bird-related themes. A \$2 materials fee will be charged at the door to the activity center. Unlike last year, families need not register in advance. A first-come-first-served policy will be in place as some activities are limited in the number of participants. Adults entering the museum will need to pay a \$3 fee for the day; kids will be admitted free all day.



Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County- October 2011

The total number of species reported to eBird from SLO County in 2011 (<http://tinyurl.com/bs4tctf>) now stands at 309, compared to 322 for the same period last year. Cornell revamped eBird recently and the format is much improved and easier to use. Abbreviations: FOS = first of season; CPNM = Carrizo Plain National Monument; MDOSP = Montana de Oro State Park; PRW = Pecho Road Willows; and PSBOC = Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground.

WATERFOWL: Four **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** flying over Los Osos on 1 Oct (MDS), were the first of the season (FOS) and contributed to the total of 66 in Oct. The first **BRANT** of the season was a flock of 25 on 28 Oct (TME). A flock of six **CAACKLING GEESE** near Laguna Lake on 14 Oct (DGS) were the first of the 23 reported. Other FOS reports included a male **EURASIAN WIGEON** at Morro Bay on 2 Oct (MLS). **REDHEAD** remain very rare in SLO County; the nine in Oct (MLS,TME) though within the expected Sep-Nov window of occurrence were more than typically encountered.

HAWKS THRU KINGFISHER: Adult and sub-adult **BROAD-WINGED HAWKS** over Lopez Lake on 11 Oct (DGS) provided the only report; fall adults are much rarer than young birds in SLO County. The FOS **MOUNTAIN PLOVERS** were along the beach of Oceano Dunes in the ORV area on 27-28 Oct (RHZ,SL). Based on photo comparison, a **SOLITARY SANDPIPER** along Cayucos Creek 17-22 Oct (BAB) was not the same individual seen there at the end of Sep. A first-year **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** made a brief appearance at Old Creek on 28 Oct (GPS). Rarer in south than north county, three **MARbled MURRELETS** flew past the mouth of Oso Flaco Creek on 15 Oct (LB). Eight **ANCIENT MURRELETS** off MDOSP on 2 Oct (JSR) were the FOS. Late hummingbird records were a **BLACK-CHINNED** and a **COSTA'S** in Arroyo Grande 16 Oct (CDL) and a female/immature **RUFOUS/ALLEN'S** in Morro Bay on 12 Oct (KLP). A **BELTED KINGFISHER** on the Carrizo Plain 22 Oct (KLP) provided on the second record for that area.

WOODPECKERS THRU THRASHERS: A male **RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER** was at the White Oak area of Santa Margarita Lake 15-30 Oct (DGS). The first record of a **HAIKY WOODPECKER** on the CPNM 22-24 Oct (TME) occurred when a male was found at the Saucito Ranch and later the visitor center. Two "yellow-shafted" **NORTHERN FLICKERS** were recorded between 11-28 Oct at Los Osos (GPS) and Lopez Lake (MLS). Four **TROPICAL KINGBIRDS** between 14-23 Oct was about average for the county and all were along the immediate coast where expected (RHZ,LB,MLS,TME). Very rare away from the Carrizo Plain, a well-documented **SAGE THRASHER** was in Arroyo Grande on 9 Oct (CDL).

WARBLERS: As expected most of the "eastern" fall warblers reported were birds hatched this year. Immature **TENNESSEE WARBLERS** were located at PRW on 1 Oct

(JSR) and PSBOC 1-2 Oct (MDS). Above average numbers of **CHESTNUT-SIDES WARBLERS** continued with five in Oct. At least one immature was present at PRW 1-17 Oct, with an immature male present on 5 Oct (BAB), three there on 8 Oct (JSR), and two on 14 Oct (TME). A **MAGNOLIA WARBLER** was found a PSBOC 1-5 Oct (TME) and another was at the Islay Creek Campground, MDOSP, on 16 Oct (DGS). The rarest species reported was **PRAIRIE WARBLER**; one was at Cuesta-By-The-Sea and PRW on 16 Oct (MDS) and another was at PSBOC on 21 Oct (NJM). Four **PALM WARBLERS** is about average for Oct; all were along the immediate coast between 4-21 Oct (JSR,KLP,MLS). Likely the same **BLACKPOLL WARBLER** was at PSBOC 1-19 Oct (MDS) and surprisingly provided the only report. An immature male **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** was at PSBOC on 8 Oct (TME) and there was an immature female at Oso Flaco Lake 23 Oct-3Nov (MLS) that may remain to winter. A **NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** at PSBOC on 4 Oct (JS) was the only one reported this fall. **YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT** is a rare fall transient making one at the PRW on 14 Oct (KLP) noteworthy.

SPARROWS THRU ORIOLES: Five **CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS** reported between 1-17 Oct (MDS,TME,KLP) were all along the immediate coast. Two **LARK BUNTINGS** on the CPNM on 21 Oct (TM) provided the County's first Oct record. A single **SWAMP SPARROW** was in the drainage between Morro Bay High School and the Cloisters on 15 Oct (JSR) and three were along the north coast at Pico Creek 23-24 Oct (RHZ). A brilliant red, male **SUMMER TANAGER** moving around PSBOC from 19-31 Oct (MLS) was best located by its call. The rarest bird reported was a **SCARLET TANAGER**, likely an immature male, at a ranch in the southern CPNM on 28 Oct (KS). The FOS **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** was a tailless bird at a feeder in Cayucos 23-24 Oct (TME). A surprise during the fall "Big Sit" at the Elfin Forest in Los Osos on 9 Oct was a male **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** spotted flying past the overlook. A surprisingly late adult male **HOODED ORIOLE** was at a feeder in Cayucos 2-26 Oct (TME). An immature male **BALTIMORE ORIOLE** flew in and out of the MDOSP native plant garden on 15 Oct (TME,KLP,MLS).

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings including those cited above: Larry Ballard, Bill A. Bouton, Tom M. Edell, Cheryl D. Lish, Stephanie Little, Tom Maloney, Nancy J. Mann, Kaaren L. Perry, Jim S. Royer, Brad K. Schram, Jeff Seay, Kathy Sharum, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Douglas G. Stinson, and Roger H. Zachary. For seasonal status 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

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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