



# Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 46 Issue 8, February 2012

## East Sweet Springs Project Update

Right now, our project is at County Planning awaiting a date to be heard by the County Planning Commission. As requested by Planning, MCAS is now conducting butterfly surveys and re-designing the ADA parking space. Meanwhile, opposition to the planned gradual eucalyptus removal continues.

Unfortunately, we're up against a well-organized disinformation campaign using various tried-and-true tactics. These tactics can be very effective. We've witnessed how "a lie told often enough becomes the accepted truth." But we can't let that happen this time. There is far too much at stake.



*Killdeer at Sweet Springs Nature Preserve.  
Photo courtesy of Mike Baird.*

We urge everyone who has played a role in helping to restore the preserve to health, to become a part of this current struggle. While we prefer confronting veldt grass any day, it is the megafloora towering overhead that is the far bigger challenge. We cannot fully restore the preserve and insure the survival of its full complement of species if we allow the eucalyptus to remain.

Towering canopies rob restored plants of sunlight essential for healthy growth and flowering. Branches, leaves, bark, and pods rain down from above, smothering plants in leaf litter. Expansive root networks exhaust soil nutrients and ground water, starving neighboring plants.

In short, eucalyptus readily outcompetes and overtakes native plant communities, yet they fail to provide an adequate substitute habitat for most native animals. Yes, Red-shouldered Hawks and Great Horned Owls - both magnificent birds that have a wide distribution across the country - are quite happy nesting and roosting in eucalyptus groves. However, such is not the case for many of the animals that have a very limited range, such as the Morro shoulderband snail, Morro blue butterfly, Coast horned lizard, Silvery legless lizard, California Quail, Oak Titmouse, California Towhee, and dozens more. We have an obligation to protect these species by restoring their favored habitats.

We hope you will get involved in whatever way you feel comfortable, whether that be writing a letter to local officials or a letter to the editor, passing out flyers, staffing a booth at farmers market, or turning out for a public hearing. It is imperative we win this struggle if we truly want to fulfill the vision we have been working toward for so many years of fully restoring Sweet Springs to its full potential. It is a future which can become our legacy, but only if we push hard to bring it about. As author Alan Thein Durning noted, "There may not be any ways to save the world that are not, first and foremost, ways for people to save their own places."

-Holly Sletteland and the MCAS Board

# MCAS 2010-2011 BOARD

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Printed on recycled paper

## BULLETIN

MCAS Awards 2011  
Volunteers of the Year!

Clint Iwanicha  
Dave Keeling  
and Marshall Ochylski

see page 3

## Welcome to Our New MCAS Members!

### *Arroyo Grande*

Larry O'Donnell  
Barbara H Reed  
Margaret Snider  
William Steinke

### *Atascadero*

Sylvia Belsky  
Barbara Blumberg

### *Cambria*

Mary Delbono  
Ann Pope

### *Grover Beach*

William Graham  
Martha Miller

### *Laguna Woods*

Dale Elliott

### *Los Osos*

Mike Bush &  
Jeanne Miller  
Anthony Lucero  
Kathleen McHugh  
Donald Quintana

### *Morro Bay*

Edward Griggs  
Kenneth S Lidoff  
Scott McCreery  
Kathleen Oehler  
Cynthia Sutter  
Robert G Wilson

### *Nipomo*

Susan L Wishner

### *Oceano*

Lois Richerson

### *Pismo Beach*

Kris Jacobsen  
Robert Whittier

### *San Luis Obispo*

Allie Bisson  
Mary Breen  
Melanie Lakin  
Terry Pierce

### *Templeton*

Genevieve Viescas

# SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Sweet Springs Circle of Friends Plaque Dedication

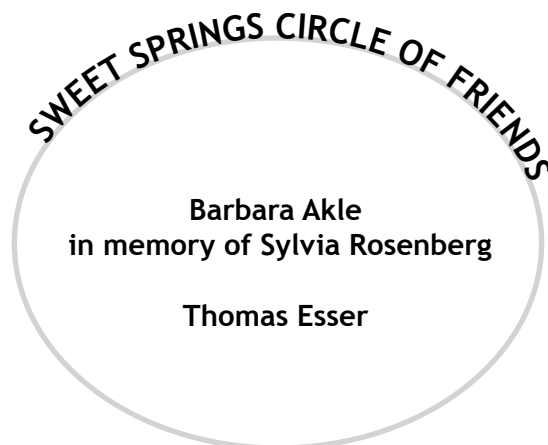
Saturday, February 11 at 12:00 noon  
Sweet Springs Nature Preserve, Los Osos

Thanks to our many fund drive contributors, our current total stands at \$44,774. We will continue this drive in 2012, hopefully adding “seed money” to our feeder each month.

To honor our Sweet Springs Circle of Friends donors (those who have donated at least \$500), we will be hosting a plaque dedication at Sweet Springs on Saturday, February 11th at noon. This is immediately following the Sweet Springs work party scheduled for that day, so we are hoping to reward the workers with a little extra nourishment as well as enticing the Circle of Friends donors to join in the labors of the day. All are invited to join us as we thank these special donors and enjoy light refreshments surrounded by the beauty of Sweet Springs Nature Preserve.

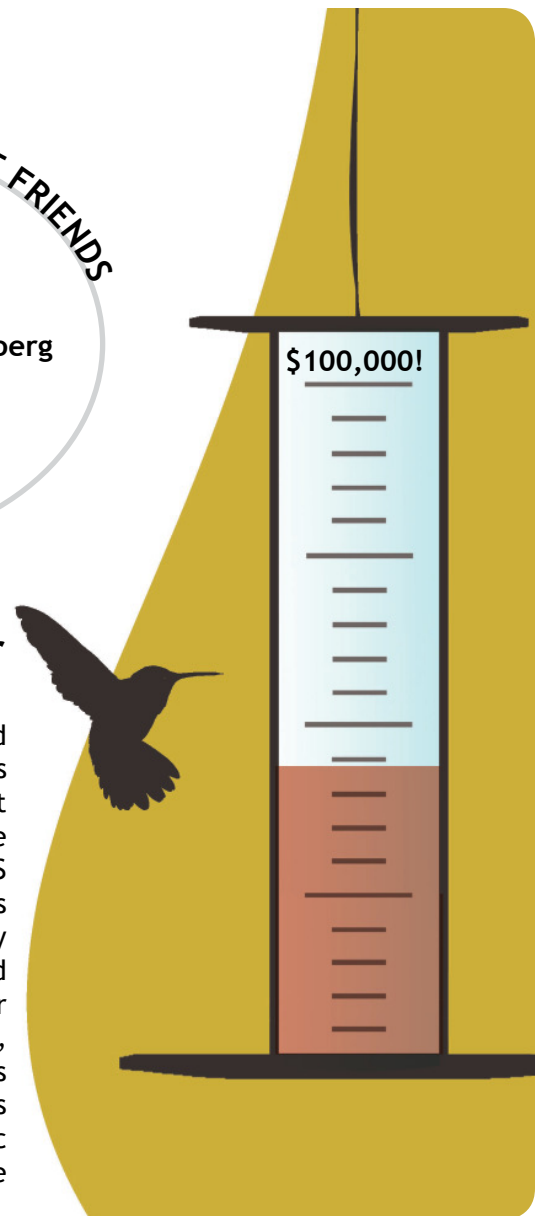
Fund drive donors this month include:

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival in memory of Joanna Frawley  
Paul & Judith Burkhardt  
Liz Curren  
Nathan Everitt  
David & Shanda Gibbs  
Worth Hall  
Michael & Phyllis Hischer  
Judith Iversen  
Steven Jobst  
Marlo Miller  
Wayne & Patricia Morehead  
Dick Parker  
Joel Shennum  
Harry & Shirley Tow  
Julia Westmoreland in memory of Sylvia Rosenberg



## MCAS Awards 2011 Volunteers of the Year

Clint Iwanicha, Dave Keeling, and Marshall Ochylski have been named 2011 Volunteers of the Year! MCAS would like to recognize Clint Iwanicha's outstanding contributions as pro bono architect for the East Sweet Springs restoration and public access project. He has been an invaluable resource and we are most grateful for his hard work thus far. MCAS would also like to recognize Dave Keeling for his excellent contributions creating and implementing “5 good minutes” and the Birds of SLO County presentations. Both programs have helped increase attendance and interest in Morro Coast Audubon. Dave has also been a tireless volunteer at Sweet Springs and was recently promoted to crew leader. Lastly, Marshall Ochylski has been awarded Volunteer of the Year for his tireless work as Morro Coast Audubon's pro bono attorney. He has also served as an advisor and advocate for the East Sweet Springs restoration and public access project. These three wonderful volunteers have helped advance the mission of the Morro Coast Audubon Society and we thank them!



## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS- cont.

### MCAS Business Spotlight: Windows on the Water Restaurant

For fabulous food and spectacular sunsets, Windows on the Water is the place to be. Managing partner Stan Trapp says, "Windows on the Water is proud to be a member of the Audubon Society and provide support for their efforts to sustain healthful habitats. Aligned with that, Windows is committed to do our part by providing our guests with a healthier menu of local and organic produce and sustainably raised livestock and seafood caught under the Seafood Watch Program guidelines."

Located on the beautiful Central Coast of California and nestled in spectacular Morro Bay, Windows on the Water exemplifies the finest in modern California cuisine. Windows has been featured on Rachel Ray's "Tasty Travels," reviewed by Sunset Magazine and Coastal Living, has been the consistent winner of the "New Times" readers poll for "Best North Coast Restaurant," and our Executive Chef Neil Smith was the 2010 Sunset Magazine's "Battle of the Bay" winner.

Special events are: Music and Martini Mondays, featuring musical entertainment and Special Martinis; Oyster Tuesday, with fantastic oyster prices; Wednesday Sliders and Beer, the most delicious sliders around; Thursday, Tacos and Tequila, a great combo also with great musical entertainment.

*"Whether you are traveling to the area, or live down the street, we look forward to having you experience a great evening of food, service, and spectacular views. We look forward to serving you!"*

For additional information, please visit [www.windowsemb.com](http://www.windowsemb.com).



*Chef Smith's Award-Winning Morro Bay Black Cod.  
Photo courtesy of Brian Trapp.*

### SWAP Calendar Raises Funds for Elfin Forest

Over the past few years, SWAP (Small Wilderness Area Preservation) has assisted with improvements to the Elfin Forest. These improvements include extending the Boardwalk into Rose's Grove and installing benches so that everyone can appreciate the beauty, sounds, and smells in nature. They recently purchased a display board that posts current natural history and SWAP information. SWAP also continues to offer monthly walks and develop educational programs for school children so that they can grow up to understand and enjoy the beauty and wonders of the Forest. SWAP's conservation efforts to maintain a healthy environment continue with removal of invasive plants 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 \$15.00 donation to SWAP. Visit SWAP's website, [www.elfin-forest.org](http://www.elfin-forest.org), for a list of places to purchase the calendar.

### In Memory of Joanna Frawley June 2, 1928 to December 2, 2011

Joanna Frawley was the third president of Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society from 1979 to 1982. She moved to San Luis Obispo County in 1984 and immediately became involved with Morro Coast Audubon Society. She was Vice President from 1985 to 1987 and President from 1987 to 1989, and she oversaw the final stages of the acquisition of Sweet Springs Nature Preserve, which was officially deeded to MCAS a few months after she left the Presidency. Joanna was one of the founders of the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, first held in January, 1997. The following year, she became co-chair with Barbara Burke, a position held for several years. Joanna later served as Co-President of MCAS with Barbara Burke from 2001 to 2002. Joanna was a tireless supporter of MCAS and the Bird Festival. Shortly before she died, she became a member of the Sweet Springs Circle of Friends. The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival has donated a tree in her honor at Sweet Springs and dedicated the 2012 festival to her.

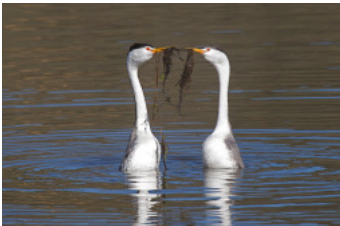
# LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

## A Show Not to be Missed! Birds of San Luis Obispo, 2011

Monday, February 20 at 7:00pm

SLO Botanical Garden Oak Glen Pavilion in El Chorro Park (across from Cuesta College)

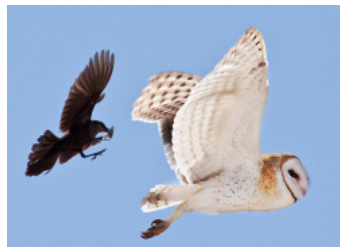
Dave Keeling will again be coordinator for this wildly successful MCAS inaugural event. Aptly named, the presentation will consist of stunningly beautiful images of birds photographed in our county in 2011 by many of our finest local nature photographers. If you love birding, you'll love this presentation. If you've had trouble explaining to anyone why you love birding, bring them to this program. Whether you're an expert birder or just a novice, everyone will enjoy and appreciate the beauty that has been captured. When you bring together a year's worth of the best efforts of over a dozen photographers, it creates a whole that is larger than the sum of its parts. For a far more accurate preview, just enjoy this tiny sampling of images you'll see. All MCAS community programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be provided, but bring your own mug. As always, all ages are welcome.



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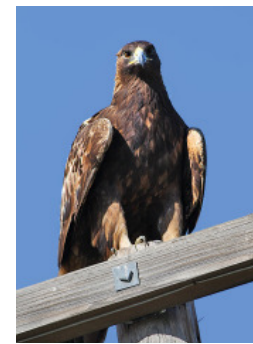
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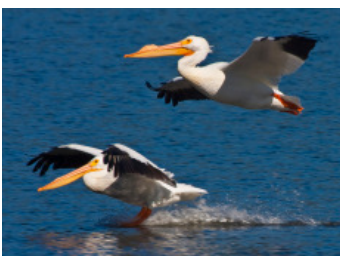
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- 01- Roger Zachary, Clarks Grebe
- 02- Dave Lawrence, Yellow Billed Magpie
- 03- Bill Bouton, Barn Owl
- 04- Marlin Harms, Common Loon
- 05- Richard Mittleman, Acorn Woodpecker
- 06- Cleave Nash, Golden Eagle
- 07- Maggie Smith, Shorteared Owl
- 08- Richard Hansen, Bluewinged Teal
- 09- Donald Quintana, American White Pelican
- 10- Dan Morris, Western Gull
- 11- Dave Keeling, Great Egret

## Annual East-County Raptor Trip

Saturday, February 11 at 7:30am

Meet leader Paul Andreano at 7:30am at the Park-and-Ride parking area just east of the Santa Margarita exit off of Highway 101. Paul is a professional raptor biologist and seasoned field trip leader. We will head into the California Valley, then either out Bitterwater Road or on toward the Monument depending on what the group decides. Birders at all skill levels will enjoy this trip and beginners are encouraged to attend. Bring lunch, water, binoculars, layered clothes, a scope if you have one, and your favorite field guides. Please be sure to have a full tank of gas if you plan on driving, and carpooling is encouraged. Minimal walking involved. We will return mid-afternoon. If you have questions, please contact Paul at [himountainpaul@gmail.com](mailto:himountainpaul@gmail.com).

### 2011 Morro Bay Christmas Bird Count Results

The 58th Morro Bay Christmas Bird Count was held on December 17, 2011. Beautiful weather throughout the day had a positive effect on the number of species and birds recorded. Ninety-two participants were divided into 44 parties to cover the count circle this year. Together the parties spent 67.25 hours driving 258 miles, 200 hours walking 138 miles, 12.5 hours boating and kayaking 10.75 miles, and 6.5 hours and 4.5 miles owling (foot & car). Compared to the averages over the past 30 years, the count total of 52,455 birds was 4,404 more and the total of 201 species was 3 more. A total of 4 species were seen during count week, but not on count day. White-faced Ibis was new to the count this year. The count's cumulative species total (1948-2010) now stands at 313 species.

Thanks to the all the volunteers who contributed to this year's success. A special thanks to Bert and Elaine Townsend for excellently coordinating the count; to the Sector Leaders Maggie Smith, Mike Stiles, Eric Weir, and Bill Bouton for organizing the participants; Connie Harms for help tracking our progress during the day; and again to Maggie Smith for all the effort she put into organizing the count.

The most notable species this year (recorded on no more than 10 counts since 1980) were Long-tailed Duck (10th CBC record), Red-necked Grebe (8th), Bald Eagle (2nd), Elegant Tern (2nd), Black Skimmer (6th), Marbled Murrelet (5th), Northern Saw-whet Owl (10th), Common Raven (3rd), Palm Warbler (9th), American Redstart (8th), Great-tailed Grackle (5th), Hooded Oriole (6th), and Bullock's Oriole (10th).

Other rarities of note were Eurasian Wigeon (1 male), Cassin's Kingbird (7), Nashville Warbler (1), Hermit Warbler (1), and White-throated Sparrow (7). Interesting subspecies reported were two "yellow-shafted" Northern Flickers and eastern "red" Fox Sparrow. Species seen during count week, but not on count day, were Redhead, Common Merganser, Pink-footed Shearwater, and Common Poorwill.

Complete count details should be available on the Audubon Website - <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/> after Feb 15th. *Tom Edell, Count Compiler*

### Christmas Bird Count Dinner Filled with Toasts, Thanks, and Traditions

The annual MCAS compilation dinner following the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was again successful in satisfying hungry birders with both food and a long list of birds sighted during the count. The evening was filled with "toasts" to participants, our MCAS Volunteers of the Year, and Frank Chapman. Frank was the gentleman who, in 1900, suggested replacing the "side hunt," in which teams of Christmas revelers had gone out with guns to see who could bring back the biggest pile of dead birds and other animals, with an alternate Yuletide recreation: counting birds rather than killing them.

In that first year of 1900, 27 people went out to count birds at 25 sites, mostly in the northeastern states. This year, an estimated 60,000 people in the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere participated in the 112th Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Each modern CBC occupies a circle with a 15-mile diameter, circles registered in advance with Audubon. MCAS is pleased to host two CBCs covering two circles: one centered around Turri Road and one centered in Carrizo Plain.

Along with being thankful that nowadays birders are counting rather than killing birds, Dave Keeling (one of our MCAS Volunteers of the Year), looked around the room and suggested that it contained a whole "flock" of people who were equally deserving of such an award and, indeed, he was correct. Among this year's participants were several MCAS past-Presidents, board members (past and present), field trip leaders, dedicated Sweet Springs volunteers, hospitality hosts and hostesses, and countless others who have donated time and expertise in order to help MCAS fulfill its mission. Dave suggested that every person present take the time to thank one other person for their service. Hey, that sounds like cause for another "toast." Here's to all of this year's participants and let's consider renaming this event "the CBC compilation dinner and Thankstoasting party!"

# Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County- Nov.- Dec. 2011

The total number of species reported to eBird from SLO County in 2011 was 314 (see: <http://tinyurl.com/836ruwe>), compared to 327 last year. Abbreviations: MDOSP = Montana de Oro State Park; PSBOC = Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground; OFL= Oso Flaco Lake; SLO = San Luis Obispo; SP = State Park; and WRR = Whale Rock Reservoir.

**WATERFOWL THRU PELICAN:** A flock of 12 **TUNDRA SWANS** at OFL on 3 Dec (MM) was part of a pulse of this species through the Central Coast in early Dec. The only report of **WOOD DUCKS** was a flock of eight at WRR on 6 Nov (MLS). A single male **EURASIAN WIGEON** continued on Morro Bay through at least 17 Dec (MLS). A male and female **HARLEQUIN DUCK** were with a scoter flock near the Avila Beach Pier on 29 Dec (VM). Sea ducks included a male **BLACK SCOTER** off Little Pico Creek 26-31 Dec (TME) and a **LONG-TAILED DUCK** seen from the Coast Guard pier in Morro Bay 5-31 Dec (KLP). A **RED-NECKED GREBE** hung around Tidelands Park in Morro Bay 17-31 Dec (LT). Always unexpected away from the coast, an immature **BROWN PELICAN** was at Laguna Lake on 23 Nov (MLS).

**EGRETS THRU GULLS:** A **CATTLE EGRET** was at the mouth of Morro Creek on 7 Nov (DK). Three **WHITE-FACED IBIS** at Cal Poly 11-23 Dec (JM) provided one of the county's few winter records. An exceptional count of 107 **WHITE-TAILED KITES** were returning to roost near San Simeon SP on the evenings of 6-7 Nov (JA,KLP,MLS). Two late **SWAINSON'S HAWK** reports involved individuals at Estero Bluffs SP on 13 Nov (JSR) and at San Simeon SP on 22 Nov (GPS). Two **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS** were along Bitterwater Road on 30 Nov (KJZ) with one to two more at the Carrizo Plain 30-31 Dec (KIK). **COMMON GALLINULES** (previously Moorhen) were at OFL 16-19 Nov (KIK) and San Simeon Creek mouth 6-31 Dec (KS). An adult **BLACK-NECKED STILT** first found at Morro Creek was also at the Turri Road tidal ponds 13-17 Dec (DK). Interesting gulls included a second-year **GLAUCOUS GULL** was at the mouth of Morro Creek on 4 Dec (KLP) and a **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** at the Morro Strand State Beach lagoon on 13 Dec (DK).

**TERNS THRU SOLITAIRE:** Unexpected after mid-Nov, an **ELEGANT TERN** was present around Morro Rock 4-17 Dec (MLS). Two **BLACK SKIMMERS** were reported on Morro Bay on 13 Nov (KLP) and 1 Dec (MLS), with a single present 17 Dec (BR). A late immature **PIGEON GUILLEMOT** was near the Morro Bay Harbor mouth 8 Nov-10 Dec (RHZ). An **EASTERN PHOEBE** discovered at Cal Poly on 1 Nov (MLS) was never relocated. A singing **TROPICAL KINGBIRD** found at PSBOC 28-30+ Dec (SG) accounts for the county's third winter record. At least three **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRES** were along West Cuesta Ridge on 28 Dec (KJZ) where they are likely wintering.

**WARBLERS:** A **TENNESSEE WARBLER** along North Court in Los Osos on 8 Nov (JSR) was the latest this fall. Wintering "western" warblers included **NASHVILLE WARBLERS** along San Luis Obispo Creek in SLO on 17 Dec (CAM) and in Arroyo Grande on 24 Dec (MS) and **HERMIT WARBLERS** in upper Diablo Canyon 17 Dec (TME), in SLO on 19 Dec (TO), at Morro Rock on 27 Dec (AS), and one along West Cuesta Ridge on 28 Dec (KJZ). A late, bright male **PRAIRIE WARBLER** was found at OFL on 16 Nov (KIK,MLS). **PALM WARBLERS** at North Point Natural Area on 4 Nov (RHZ,RZ) and at Morro Creek mouth 5-10 Nov (with two present 9-10 Nov) (RHZ) were migrants, while one at Morro Creek mouth 28 Nov-17 Dec (KLP) and two along the north coast on 16 Dec (BA) may have been attempting to winter. Other warblers of interest were an **AMERICAN REDSTART** along Brizzolara Creek in SLO on 17 Dec (CAM) and a **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** at OFL 3-19 Nov (MLS) that could be wintering there.

**SPARROWS THRU ORIOLES:** A late **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** visited a feeder along Pecho Road 12-14 Nov (JC). A **GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** photographed along the Morro Bay SP Marina spit on 14 Nov (RHZ) provided the county's first Nov record. A **NELSON'S SPARROW** was found at Sweet Springs Nature Preserve along the path to the overlook on 29 Dec (GPS). "Red" **FOX SPARROWS** were recorded in SLO on 2-19 Dec and in Los Osos on 14 Dec (RMR). A **SWAMP SPARROW** remained at Pecho and Grove in Los Osos 5 Nov-18 Dec with two present 17-18 Dec (JSR). The male **SUMMER TANAGER** found last month at PSBOC continued through 21 Nov (MLS) and a female was at Islay Creek Campground, MDOSP, on 5 Nov (JSR). A young male and female **HOODED ORIOLE** visited a feeder on Henrietta Ave in Los Osos 11 Nov-23 Dec (JSR). Also seen at the same Los Osos feeder was a female **BALTIMORE ORIOLE** on 5 Nov (JSR). A wintering female **BULLOCK'S ORIOLE** was also present at the same Los Osos feeder 3-23 Dec (JSR) and a hatching year male and a female were seen off and on at a feeder on Estero Ave in Morro Bay 6-30 Dec (KLP).

**OBSERVERS:** Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings including those cited above: Joanne Aasen, Bernardo Alps, Bill A. Bouton, Jay Carroll, Tom M. Edell, Susan Grimaud, Dave Keeling, Kathleen I. Kent, Michelle Maani, Virginia Macintosh, Curtis A. Marantz, Jennifer Moonjian, Tom Ogren, Kaaren L. Perry, Bob Revel, Jim S. Royer, Ron M. Ruppert, Ken Schneider, Brad K. Schram, Ali Sheeley, Mitch Siemens, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Linda Tanner, Roger H. Zachary, and Kevin J. Zimmer. 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](mailto: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

P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443

805-772-1991

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