



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 43 Issue 3, July-August 2008

MCAS Receives Two New Grants to Benefit Sweet Springs

Thanks mainly to the efforts of MCAS Lands Coordinator Holly Sletteland, MCAS has been awarded two new grants totaling \$14,000. The first is from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the form of a *Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program* grant. The grant program offers financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property. The \$7,000 grant to MCAS will be used to enhance and restore the coastal scrub habitat near the entrance to Sweet Springs.

The second grant is one of a series of *Together Green* grants offered from a collaborative partnership between Toyota and National Audubon Society. This grant, called *Together Green Volunteer Days*, has also awarded MCAS \$7,000. The funds will be used to reformulate and reenergize a volunteer program to help with restoration and upkeep at both the existing Sweet Springs and the additional adjacent acreage (known as East Sweet Springs) which MCAS hopes to acquire by the end of June. This volunteer program will provide a forum to educate and train community members (like you!) in restoration benefits and

practices. Congratulations go out to Holly, MCAS, and the larger community who will all benefit from these much needed grant funds. And, of course, thank you to our funders.

Sweet Springs Work Days: July 12th and August 9th, 9am

It may be the lazy hazy days of summer, but there's still work to be done on the Preserve. A few hours of your time can truly enhance habitat for local wildlife including several special status species.

If it's hot, (is it ever hot in Los Osos?) we'll do some weeding and clean-up in and

around the ponds! Who knows? We might even catch a glimpse of the elusive Southwestern Pond Turtle.

Meet at the main entrance on Ramona between 4th and Broderson in Los Osos. Need more info? Contact Holly at hslettel@calpoly.edu or 239-3928.

Audubon Adventures Ahead for Local Students

Morro Coast Audubon would like to thank Art Applebee, Dick Davis, Marcia Walker, and Jan Surbey for sponsoring an *Audubon Adventures* kit for use in a local elementary school. Their generous contributions from will help Central Coast students gain greater appreciation for birds and their habitats.

If you know a 3rd-6th grade teacher, please introduce them to this fabulous resource. *Audubon Adventures* is a curriculum enhancement program offered by National Audubon that supports science education. The materials are written and developed by professional educators and offer scientifically accurate facts about birds, wildlife and their habitats. Thanks to MCAS and our donors, kits are provided free to local teachers.

Teachers who have used this kit in their classrooms have said great things! One teacher said, "I love the curriculum! The newspapers were such an awesome tool. We broke up into study groups and each took a newspaper to read. We had discussion questions, written responses and research projects that branched off of the topics. My class really enjoyed using them again this year."

Ten additional sponsors are needed and the cost is only \$50 per kit. If you are interested in this program or would like to sponsor a classroom kit, please contact Stephanie Little at 610-6229 or stephjoy13@hotmail.com.

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The Peregrine Falcons of Morro Rock



MCAS member and past president Steve Schubert, is pleased announce that it is easier than ever to get your own copy of his book titled *The Peregrine*

Falcons of Morro Rock: A 40-year History from 1967-2007.

Paperback copies may now be ordered through Amazon (www.amazon.com/dp/143484823X) or CreateSpace.com (wwwcreatespace.com/3338535).

For all orders placed by the end of July, 2008, 40% of sales proceeds will be donated to the Hi Mountain Condor Lookout Project (at www.condorlookout.org).

This fabulous book focuses on the Peregrine Falcons of Morro Rock. The Morro Rock nesting sites have been admired and observed by travelers and visitors from around the world, and is one of the most well-known Peregrine Falcon nesting sites in North America. The 40-year history chronicles yearly efforts of nest site attendants and endangered species management techniques - captive breeding, double clutching, captive hatching of thin, fragile wild eggs, and fostering falcon chicks into the wild nests - that have assisted in the recovery of a once imperiled species. The book is 44 pages, with color and black and white photographs. Cover image (above) is by John Schmitt.

New MCAS Members

Arroyo Grande

Ek Family

Atascadero

Joyceanna Archie

Avila Beach

Kat Sanders

Los Osos

Daniel Berman

Nancy Cooley

Mitchell States

Morro Bay

Donald A Henderson

Tom Keylon

Richard H Sparks

Nipomo

Robert J Mouw

Oceanside

Jim Crawford

Paso Robles

May & Bill Morgan

San Luis Obispo

John P Barrow

Bill Calabrese

Frederick W Clegg

Beverly Cohen

Audree J Hanson

Josephine Laing Zika

Richard Schmidt

Richard Starrett

San Simeon

Ruth Shurtz

JULY and AUGUST BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

San Simeon State Park

Saturday, July 12th, 7am-noon

Meet leader Alan Schmierer at the SW corner of the Morro Bay Spencer's Market (north Main Street, a short distance north of Route 41). We will walk a slow-paced 3- to 4-mile loop through grasslands, pines and willows, finishing around noon or a little after. We will be on trails, partly flat, but with several moderate up-grades. This trip is suitable for birders of all levels, including beginners and youth. Bring water and snacks. (Some may want to have lunch before returning south.) As on most caravan trips, an FRS/walkie-talkie radio will be useful. Please RSVP Alan at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026 if you plan to attend.

Oso Flaco Birding Trip

Saturday, August 2nd, 8am-noon

Our leaders for this trip will be staff for CA State Parks in the Resource Department of Oceano Dunes District: Joanna Iwanicha, Environmental Scientist, and Cheryl Lish, Environmental Services intern. We will walk along the boardwalk trail through the riparian, lake, dune scrub, and shoreline habitats to enjoy the beautiful scenery and look for summer birds. Last year we had good practice identifying swallows perched close to the lake boardwalk. With luck we will see adult and juvenile Least Terns foraging at the lake and see Snowy Plovers at the beach. Wheelchair accessible, and children are welcome. Meet at the Oso Flaco parking lot.

Getting to Know Local IBAs: Lopez Lake

Lopez Lake, located in the hills northeast of the Arroyo Grande/Pismo Beach area, is a significant local IBA (Important Bird Area). The lake, which is actually a reservoir, supports an exceptional diversity of breeding birds due numerous habitat types.

The Lopez Lake Recreational Area (4200 acres surrounding the lake) contains coastal sage and oak woodland habitats. The mountains just east of the lake feature rocky outcrops and rugged canyons with chaparral habitat. Mature riparian habitat runs along Arroyo Grande Creek, which flows southwest from the Lopez Canyon dam. Together these habitats of lake, creeks, riparian woodland, oak woodland, rocky outcrops and chaparral canyons support many

Hummingbirds and More

Saturday in August, date TBD *

We will meet at Cheryl Lish's place in Arroyo Grande for a fun morning of studying hummers and a variety of other birds up close. Fun for novice and experienced birders! Wheelchair Accessible. Young birders welcome. * Date and details to be announced on "MCAS Alert!" Email Mike at mstiles@calpoly.edu to sign up to receive notification by this means.

Annual MCAS Pelagic Trip

Sunday, October 5th, 7am to 3pm

We will head out of Morro Bay toward the Santa Lucia Banks, but go wherever the birds are within SLO County waters. Expect sightings of a good variety of sea mammals, as well.

Boat: The 55-foot "Fiesta." We used this boat last year and although it is smaller than other boats we have used in the past it is substantially faster. (See www.morrobaysportfishing.com for photo.) There will NOT be a "hot galley" this year.

Leaders: Tom Edell and Brad Schram, both expert and experienced pelagic trip leaders.

Cost: \$80 per person. Sign up early; last year we filled up by August.

For more information and an application form email Maggie at milleniummaggs@charter.net or call her at 710-4356.

expected local bird species and as well as several less common species.

The largest population of Yellow-breasted Chat in the county occurs in the riparian habitat along the Arroyo Grande Creek. There also are large numbers of Swainson's Thrush and Yellow Warbler.

In the canyons to the north and east are found the American Dipper (rare in the Coast range) and both Spotted and Long-eared owls. In the summer Olive-sided Flycatcher and Western Tanager appear. Prairie and occasionally Peregrine falcons breed in a massive cliff face known as "Huff's Hole," north of the lake. A visit to this local IBA is worth your time!

Annual Fund Drive Donors Thanked with Events Funded by a National Audubon Grant

A great round of applause to all of you who contributed to our successful 2007 annual fund drive, which raised over \$7000 for the organization. Thanks to a collaborative grant offered last fall from National Audubon Society (NAS), MCAS received funding enabling us to “thank” donors and stage events in their honor.

Donors who contributed at marked levels have been invited to attend a variety of thank you events. Categories include Plover Pals (\$50), Loon Lovers (\$100), Brant Flyers (\$250), Peregrine Family (\$500) and Condor Club (\$1000). MCAS has donors in all categories and the “thank you donor appreciation events” will conclude on June 28th. On this day, ALL donors (\$5-\$1000) are invited to join board members and fellow donors for a morning of birding and breakfast bites at Sweet Springs Nature Preserve.

In addition to having fun and thanking our donors, the National Audubon grant is helping MCAS to showcase our organization, its current projects, and the MCAS owned lands. MCAS hopes to build membership activism and diversity and attract new volunteers and new leadership into the organization. So far, so good. MCAS has four new dynamic Board members, new interest in committee participation, and new volunteers eager to give of their time and expertise to the organization.

However, these efforts are ongoing: we are seeking a President-elect, a Treasurer, two Board members-at-large, committee members for all committees, and help with Lands restoration efforts. Please contact me if you would like to be (a little or a lot) more active with MCAS.

- Jan Surbey
MCAS President

Help save resources by switching to an electronic subscription to the *Pacific Flyway* newsletter.

Simply email Rosalie at rvalvo@sbcglobal.net and request the change. You will receive the newsletter via email as an attachment in Adobe Acrobat. Size is generally less than 2MB.

Did You Know the MCAS Office and Outreach Center has a Library Available for Members?

Going to Egypt? Costa Rica? Canadian Rockies? Hawaii?? The birding information you seek in preparation for travel to these fabulous destinations may well be found at the MCAS Office and Outreach Center. Thanks to generous donations from many of our MCAS members, our “library” has expanded and we are now able to offer books for loan and exchange.

Stop by during our office hours if you’d like to “browse” or check out any of our books or magazines. Office hours are Tuesday from 1pm to 3pm and Thursday from 10am to noon.

PLEASE NOTE...

We do need help organizing and keeping track of these materials. An hour or two on a weekly or bi-weekly basis would be greatly appreciated.

If you would like to help in this effort, please contact Jan Surbey or leave a message on the MCAS phone 772-1991.

Share Your Love of Birding with the Community

Help MCAS reach one of our most important goals: sharing our knowledge and passion for birding with follow community members.

We are in need of friendly volunteers to staff our booth at a variety of fun, community events. This is a great volunteer opportunity because it is very flexible - you tell us where and for how long you can help staff our booth. An hour or two is plenty!

Charter members of the brigade include Stephanie Little, Priscilla Akin, Sarah Bryant, Rosalie Valvo, and Jan Surbey. If you may be able to help out, simply email Jan at jansurbey@earthlink.net and provide your contact information. We will give you a call next time we need volunteers for an event. One of our upcoming events is Oktober Fest in Los Osos.

Eureka! Birds of San Luis Obispo County - May 2008

ABBREVIATIONS: MDOSP = Montana de Oro State Park; and OFL = Oso Flaco Lake.

WATERFOWL: Lingering geese at the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground were a Greater White-fronted Goose that remained through the month (MLS) and a calling Cackling Goose that flew over the lagoon on 16 May (MLS). A single Blue-winged Teal at Cuesta Inlet on 22 May (JLR) is probably one of the birds that wintered on Morro Bay. Always rare in SLO County, a female Redhead was on OFL (MLS). Apparently the male Harlequin Duck reported last month is a sub-adult and has remained to summer at Morro Bay where it is being seen in the harbor mouth and along the north side of Morro Rock. Two female Long-tailed Ducks were reported in May with one in almost full alternate plumage at Morro Bay on 5 May (MLS) and a basic plumaged one at Port San Luis 25-27 May that may summer locally. A female Greater Scaup on Whale Rock Reservoir on 18 May (TME), later than expected.

GREBES THRU MOORHEN: A lingering, alternate plumaged Eared Grebe was on OFL 25-27 May (MDH). Four birders from Texas discovered an alternate plumaged Red-necked Grebe at Morro Bay 7-8 May (JK,TF,AH,GM) that provided a new county late date. A stock pond along Pozo Road near the Queen Bee Mine Road hosted a Clark's Grebe on 25 May (KJZ). The small nesting colony of Snowy Egrets have returned again this year to the eucalyptus trees in front of the power plant along the Morro Bay Embarcadero where up to three nests were seen on 25 May (TME). A report from Lake Nacimiento indicated that Bald Eagles nesting there have produced at least 9 nestlings as of 8 May (CF). An adult and near adult Bald Eagle at Whale Rock Reservoir have occasionally been seen together 8-24 May (TME, JS). Active primary and retriix molt prolonged the stay of a Ferruginous Hawk on the Carrizo Plain National Monument through 4-8 May (MB,JLR). At OFL an adult Common Moorhen was present 7-20 May (MLS).

KNOT THRU SKIMMER: Three basic and one mostly alternate plumaged Red Knots seen 18-26 May (JSR) will likely summer on Morro Bay. A nesting Heermann's Gull pair was found on a rock off Shell Beach on 17 May (SS) and still present 24 May (MLS) was not seen later in the month. This species has attempted to nest here previously though never successfully; further reports of these birds are solicited. Typically absent by May, a year-old Mew Gull was at the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek on 4 May (MDH). Migrants included an alternate plumaged Black Tern was at OFL on 14 May (MLS) and two Black Skimmers skimming over the water near the mudflats just south of the Morro Bay State Park Marina (JK,TF,AH,GM).

DOVE THRU WARBLER: Up to three Common Ground Dove were reported along Dana Foothill Blvd at Clamshell Mountain Way in Nipomo from 4-19 May (RHZ,JS). The Chimineas Ranch hosted a male Calliope Hummingbird at its feeder on 3 May (BWS). One of the rarest birds found during the period was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher photographed south east of Oso Flaco Creek mouth on 5 May (JI) that provided only the 4th county record. Nesting Purple Martins were found at three new locations along Hwy 58 on 12 May between Pozo Road and the Salinas River (DGS, MLS, TME,GW). Though less numerous than last year, a Winter Wren was singing about 1500 meters upstream from the chain link fence near the mouth of the Coon Creek, MDOSP, on 2 May (RM). The only eastern warbler reported for the month was an adult male Black-and-white Warbler found at Spooners Cove Campground in MDOSP on 7 May (JK,TF,AH,GM).

TANAGER THRU GROSBEAK: A singing Summer Tanager was in a eucalyptus grove on the west side of Pecho Valley Road just before Army Road (Los Osos) on 17 May (JSR). Bird of the month honors go to the displaying Cassin's Sparrow found in the California Valley area of the Carrizo Plain 10-19 May (SF,KS) that was subsequently seen by many birders. This is the county's first record and not a species anyone was expecting. Lingering sparrows included a Fox Sparrow at OFL on 2 May (MLS), a White-throated Sparrow coming to a feeder at the end of Canet Road in the Chorro Valley through 8 May (MLS), pugentis race White-crowned Sparrows in Arroyo Grande on 5 May (BKS) and at Canet Road on 20 May (AFS), and one to two Golden-crowned Sparrows at Canet road through the remarkable late date of 22 May (AFS). Yellow-headed Blackbirds continued into May at OFL where 24 were present on 2 May (MLS), five on 14 May (MLS), and three on 15 May (DML). A singing Pine Siskin in Monterey pines along State Park Road near the road up to the golf course on 18 May (JSR) was at a location where this species may occasionally breed. A migrant female Evening Grosbeak found in AG on 12 May (PP) provided one of the county's few recent records.

OBSERVERS: *Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Matt Brady, Eric K. Brunschweiler, Tom M. Edell, Terry Ferguson, Sam Fitton, Cal French, Marlin D. Harms, Ann Hoover, Joanna Iwanicha, Jerri Kerr, Dave M. Lawrence, Ron Melcer, Gail Morris, Patricia Price, John L. Roser, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Kathy Sharum, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Steve Smith, Bob W. Stafford, John Sterling, Mike D. Stiles, Linda Tanner, Greg Wagner, Roger H. Zachary, Kevin J. Zimmer, 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

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

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