



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 43 Issue 11, June 2008

MCAS Receives a Western Snowy Plover Conservation Grant from National Audubon!

MCAS received great news this month! Our chapter has been awarded a \$5,000 grant to fund an ongoing Snowy Plover recovery program.

The grant is from National Audubon's grant program titled "Grassroots Habitat Conservation for Shorebirds at Important Bird Areas on the Pacific Coast of the Americas." Funding for the past 2 years for this program has generously been provided by the Packard Foundation to provide funding to chapters from Alaska to Panama for projects that benefit shorebirds at critical sites along the Pacific Flyway.

Our \$5,000 in funds will be used during the 2009 Snowy Plover Nesting season and allow for implementation of an ongoing program titled "Habitat Conservation and Snowy Plover Recovery

Program." MCAS, in partnership with State Parks, will use this money to fund a program coordinator to help increase Snowy Plover recovery through community outreach and volunteer programs. The project will take place within the Morro Bay Important Bird Area (see article on page 2 for more information about IBAs). The grant comes at a crucial time, when original funding for the program is coming to an end.

If you are interested in helping this tiny shorebird survive, please consider volunteering for the Plovers on the Beach Program. Several volunteer events are planned for this summer! Contact the program coordinator, Stephanie Little, for more information at stephanie@westernsnowyplover.org.



Chimineas Ranch Birdapalooza a Weekend of Fun



Just a recap of the fun weekend of birding we had at Chimineas Ranch on April 19th and 20th. A big "thanks" to Bob Stafford for hosting the 2008 Birdapalooza and to Carrol Comeau for organizing the great food potluck event!

This year the wildflowers made for a beautiful background. The steady wind and the chillier weather however, made birding a little bit more of a challenge. Even so, we still racked up 111 species.

Thanks to all who participated this year - we hope to see everyone out there again next year. And for those who have never seen the beautiful Ranch, please plan to join us next spring for some great birding and great company.

- Jennifer Moonjian, Field-Trip Co-Chair

Bird Sighting Highlights: GREEN HERON, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, COOPER'S HAWK, GOLDEN EAGLE, MOUNTAIN QUAIL, SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (new bird for ranch), CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD, LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, PHAINOPEPLA, CASSIN'S VIREO (new), NASHVILLE WARBLER, YELLOW WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (new), ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER, MACGILLVRAY'S WARBLER, WESTERN TANAGER, BLACK-HEADED GROSSBEAK, GRASSHOPPER SPARROW, TRI-COLORED BLACKBIRD, BULLOCK'S ORIOLE, LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH.

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What is an IBA, Exactly?

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds. They possess a bird community distinct from the surrounding region and include sites for breeding, wintering and migration stop-over.

IBAs usually have natural boundaries such as mountain ranges or wetlands, and some, such as the Channel Islands, are a complex of several sites. All are identified based on their importance to birds.

Since 2006 Audubon California has been prioritizing important bird areas for conservation, connecting with Audubon chapters, public agencies and other conservation organizations to help in conservation, restoration and monitoring. Goals are to determine the areas with the highest biological value, the greatest degree of threats and opportunities to affect conservation at those sites.

Over 148 IBA sites have been identified in California, and six of these are in San Luis Obispo County. These include the Carrizo Plain, Cuyuama Valley, Lopez Lake area, Morro Bay, Santa Margarita Valley and Santa Maria River Valley (which extends into Santa Barbara County).

In the Morro Bay IBA, habitat is divided into four main units: the shallow bay, salt marsh to the east and southeast, patches of oak and riparian woodland and the coast live oak forest (Elfin Forest). Sand dune habitats also are included. Morro Bay estuary is the water bird stopover and wintering location for up to 20,000 shorebirds each winter.

A Warm Welcome to These New MCAS Members

Arroyo Grande

Rod Goss

Cambria

James R Brownell

Patricia Bathke

Margaret Wilbur

Cayucos

Julie Buller

Grover Beach

Edyth J McClements

Los Osos

David A Sprague

Jessica Cole-Orcutt

Morro Bay

Joan Decker

Nipomo

Thomas Bowers

R A Doryland

Pismo Beach

Dennis Fox

Roseville

Ray Herman

San Luis Obispo

Mary Adams

Jodi Isaacs

Templeton,

Rosemary Erier

LOCAL EVENTS, PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

COMMUNITY PROGRAM

The June Year-End Barbecue

Monday, June 16th, 5-8 pm

El Chorro Regional Park, at the Dairy Creek Group Area

Plan to attend the MCAS barbecue featuring birding, good food, and the good live music! We've got the beat...you bring the meat (or veggies)!

Birding and Optics Fest Field, 5 pm

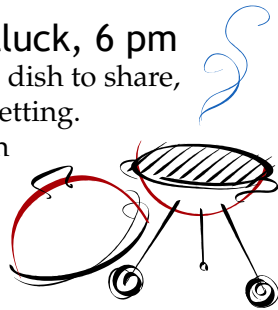
Leader: Alan Schmierer

Test various brands of spotting scopes and binoculars and enjoy a short birding walk

Everyone Loves BBQ Potluck, 6 pm

Bring something to grill, a side dish to share, and your own reusable place-setting.

Throw in your picnic tablecloth if possible. Assorted drinks provided by MCAS hospitality.



Music and dance, 6:30-7:30 pm!

Nature Needs a Hand... Yours & Mine

Have you ever dreamed of having a piece of property by the water, where you could sit and idly watch snowy egrets poised in the marsh or Brant gently bobbing on the bay?

Well, you already have such a property. Each of us does. It's called the Sweet Springs Nature Preserve. As members of Morro Coast Audubon Society, we all collectively "own" it. And certainly each and every one of us should take time to enjoy its quiet splendors, but we must also actively take part in its stewardship.

Preserves can't take care of themselves. They need tending. The amenities we've added for the enjoyment of visitors need to be maintained just like any other type of property – benches need

MCAS FIELD TRIPS

Cerro Alto Campground Road

Wednesday, June 11th

Join Alan Schmierer for a great riparian corridor to see a variety of birds and to learn bird songs and calls. About 2 miles of walking will be slow and easy; on a paved road and maybe some on a pretty good trail (some mild up and down slopes). A fun birding area for birders of all skill levels. We will finish before lunch, but you may want water and a snack. For time and meeting place or other questions contact Alan at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026.

Cerro Alto Campground Road and Ridge

Saturday, June 14th

Join Alan Schmierer for a repeat of the June 11th trip, but a little faster-paced and continued past the campground and make a loop (up to the AT&T Road, to TV Tower Road, north along the ridge and back down the Boy Scout Trail to the parking lot. It is about 5 miles, the trail is steep and rocky and ascends about 1,000 feet to the ridge. Great views, but birding will be much "slower" than along the creek. You will want water and a lunch or snack. Some may want to join the walk to the campground only. Weather may cancel or modify plans. For time and meeting place or other questions contact Alan at 772-2026 or aaschmierer@yahoo.com.

to be water sealed, railings need to be repaired, trails need to be resurfaced, and signs need to be replaced. But perhaps even more importantly, the land itself needs our care if it is to continue to provide a refuge for the wildlife we enjoy observing. The ponds need to be cleared of debris, the willows rescued from eucalyptus detritus, invasive weeds beaten back, eroded gullies need to be tamed and much, much more.

With ownership comes responsibility. We all need to do our part to preserve this critical habitat within our midst. Our next work party is **Saturday, June 14th, 9am-noon**. We hope you'll join us. If not you and me, who? For more information, call Holly at 239-3928 or email hslettel@calpoly.edu.

Send Local Students on an Audubon Adventure!

Morro Coast Audubon would like to thank all of the generous people who have stepped forward to sponsor local classrooms to receive Audubon Adventures Kits.

Not only are they helping third through sixth grade classes foster an appreciation for birds and other wildlife, but you are helping to defray the costs that Morro Coast Audubon has to cover this year. And we are still in need of sponsors.

Our organization has been a proud sponsor of this program for many years, and now it is your turn to help give back to the children of our community. We appreciate your help in supporting one of the most popular environmental education curricula in the country.

For more information about sponsoring a local classroom (cost is \$50), please contact Stephanie Little at stephjoy13@hotmail.com or call her at 610-6229.

MCAS Chapter Only Memberships Now Offered

Although many of us enjoy receiving the beautiful *Audubon* magazine published by National Audubon Society (National), a few of us would rather NOT receive this magazine for a variety of reasons. And others could do without renewal requests, sample greeting cards and other promotional materials from National.

Although MCAS does receive some funds from National based on membership numbers and chapter grants, MCAS shares a large portion of membership dues money with National.

For these reasons, we are now offering a “chapter only” membership. For \$20 per year, you will receive our newsletter, MCAS voting rights and one annual renewal reminder. MCAS gets to keep ALL of the chapter only dues money to help us fulfill our mission right here in SLO County.

We continue to support National and Audubon CA activities and draw on their expertise to guide the organization; this is merely an option for those folks who prefer their dues money to stay local. Cheers -

Jan Surbey, MCAS President

Morro Coast Audubon’s Planned Giving Program

As members of Morro Coast Audubon Society we share the goals of supporting local conservation, research, and education. Planned giving is a great opportunity to support the conservation of birds and their habitat while possibly improving your overall financial picture.

A planned gift can be any charitable contribution to MCAS that is incorporated into a donor’s overall financial, tax, and estate planning. A planned gift may be a way for you to leave a legacy of conservation by helping MCAS build a lasting endowment and may also provide a tax benefit for you or your designee. Donors at this time may choose to contribute to the MCAS Multi-Focus Fund (for education, programs, research, field trips, outreach, and other needs), or the Sweet Springs Fund.

In an effort to get the word out about our planned giving program, we are reaching out to local estate lawyers and CPAs with information about the MCAS program. We have also posted information about the planned giving program on our website. If you or anyone you know is interested in participating, just visit www.morrocoastaudubon.org or call the MCAS Office and Outreach Center at 772-1991 for a copy and take it to your lawyer or CPA.

If you let us know that you have arranged for a planned gift, we are excited to provide long-term recognition by making you a permanent member of the Peregrine Club and inviting you to all future donor appreciation events.

Please consider MCAS in your estate planning!

Eureka! Birds of San Luis Obispo County - April 2008

June has the unique distinction of being the only month when birders can look for both northbound and southbound migrating shorebirds. Straggling northbound birds can be found through the first week, while early southbound migrants can appear during the third week. A great place to find migrant shorebirds is Morro Bay, where a scope can be handy.

WATERFOWL: Lingerling waterfowl provided several interesting reports in April. A flock of 14 Greater White-fronted Geese at the western end of Laguna Lake on 17 Apr (JSR) were likely migrants, and the second year bird at the Pismo Beach State Park Oceano Campground, which will likely summer, continued through the month (MLS). Still present on 17 Apr was the hybrid Ross's x Snow Goose at Laguna Lake (MLS) and as of 24 Apr the minima Cackling Goose remained at Atascadero Lake (MLS). Staff at Camp Keep spotted a pair of Canada Geese with goslings near the Morro Bay State Park Marina on 23 Apr (SCS); this species first bred at Morro Bay in 2001. Two Wood Duck hens, each with recently hatched chicks in tow at Atascadero Lake on 6 Apr, provided the county's earliest nesting record (TME). The male Eurasian Wigeon lingering at the marsh off Foothill Blvd was last reported on 5 Apr (TME). Since there was no winter sighting on Morro Bay this winter, an actively diving male Harlequin Duck near Target Rock on 13 Apr was presumed to be a northbound migrant (SLG). Two female Long-tailed Ducks continued on Morro Bay where one was last reported on 28 Apr (MDH).

GREBES THRU TERNS: Seven Aechmophorus grebe nests were in the backwater of the Wittenberg arm at Lake Lopez on 18 Apr (MLS) where both Western and Clark's are present. Rarely reported in the eastern county, an American Bittern was at the Antelope Grade Ponds along Hwy 46 and an adult Black-crowned Night Heron was at the Bitterwater Road Bridge over Cuyama Creek on 25 Apr (MLS,AFS). A White-faced Ibis found at Villa Creek on 24 Apr (RO) likely accounted for the alternate plumaged one with an unidentified Ibis at Whale Rock Reservoir on 26 Apr (SLG,TME). Two migrant Swainson's Hawks, one a sub-adult over Deer Canyon in Arroyo Grande on 5 Apr (BKS) and the other an intermediate morph adult at Cuyama on 21 Apr (TME), are about average for the month. Additional reports of rare migrants included a Solitary Sandpiper along Walter's Creek in the Chorro Valley on 8 Apr (TME), an undocumented report of an adult Franklin's Gull at the Oceano Dunes SVRA on 19 Apr (DG), and a Common Tern seen during an offshore boat trip on 23 Apr (PEL).

DOVES THRU THRASHER: Because the county's Common Ground Dove population is limited to the orchards at Dana-Foothill Blvd and Clamshell Mountain Way in Nipomo, it is worth mentioning that individuals were heard calling there on 3 Apr and 26 Apr (PR,TME,MLS). Following last spring's banner year, a lone male Calliope Hummingbird at the Chimineas Ranch on 19 Apr (RHZ) was a bit of a disappointment from a numbers standpoint. Hammond's Flycatchers photographed at Cerro Alto Campground on 1 Apr and along Coon Creek in Montana de Oro State Park on 3 Apr (AFS) preceded the county's earliest date for this species; another one was at Cerro Alto on 23 Apr (PEL). Two new potential Purple Martin nesting locations were discovered along Hwy 58 where 2-3 pairs were within 0.6-1.0 mile of the Pozo Road intersection on 28 Apr (MLS,DGS). Apparently the failure of the Le Conte's Thrasher nest reported last month off Van Metre Ranch Road on Carrizo Plain National Monument did not deter the pair as a new clutch of eggs filled the nest on 20 Apr (AFS).

TANAGER THRU BLACKBIRD: A female Summer Tanager at Morro Bay State Park on 4 Apr (RHZ) accounted for this spring's second Morro Bay record. Seven Chipping Sparrows between 4-19 Apr were along west Cuesta Ridge (MLS,AFS), Pozo Road (AFS), and on the southern Carrizo Plain National Monument at the MU Ranch (MLS,DGS) and near Carrizo Canyon (AFS). The last date for the Clay-colored Sparrow in Los Osos was 8 Apr (LT). Three White throated Sparrows remained into April with one at a feeder in Cambria through 4 Apr (EB), another at the Cerro Alto Campground parking area through 15 Apr (AFS,MLS), and an immature at a feeder on Canet Road 16-30 Apr (AFS). Each spring small numbers of Yellow-headed Blackbirds move through the county. In April 14-15 were recorded with all in the eastern part of the county except for an adult male along Turri Road on 19 Apr (DML).

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Eric Brunschwiler, Tom M. Edell, Doug George, Steve L. Griffith, Marlin D. Harms, Dave M. Lawrence, Paul E. Lehman, Regena Orr, Paul Rosso, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Steve C. Schubert, Maggie L. Smith, Doug G. Stinson, Linda Tanner, and Roger H. Zachary. 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 _____ E-MAIL _____

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 "MCAS Alert!" e-mail event and news notifications.

___ 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.

Mail form and check to:
MCAS, P O Box 1507, Morro Bay , CA 93443

C18
7XCH

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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