



# Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 44 Issue 2, June 2009

## TOGETHER GREEN VOLUNTEER DAYS

### The Grand Finale is June 13th

We will be hosting our final Together Green Days at the Sweet Springs Preserve on Saturday, June 13th, from 9 am to noon. Since last September - when we kicked off Together Green Volunteer Days - more than 150 volunteers have contributed in excess of 500 hours of their time making Sweet Springs a better place.

Some of our notable accomplishments include:

- Planted, mulched & watered over 300 native plants

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*Together Green volunteers at Sweet Springs*

## As MCAS Matures, New Board Members Get Younger

The year 2009 marks the 42nd anniversary for MCAS, originally formed in 1967 to protect Peregrine Falcons nesting at Morro Rock. This was long before the birth of the new President Christy Holmes who, at age 28, is the youngest MCAS President ever!

As former Programs Co-chair, Christy demonstrated skills in management and organization and was “able to play well with others.” These are two skills the Board recognized as necessary in a successful chapter President. Christy graduated from Cal Poly with a degree in wildlife biology and is currently employed by a consulting firm where her job ranges from monitoring Snowy Plovers in Guadalupe Dunes to ensuring compliance with County regulations in oil fields.

As well as facing numerous challenges as MCAS President, Christy is challenging herself by preparing to run a half marathon in late June to benefit cancer research. She is happily married to an equally friendly person, Mike.

Along with Christy, the 20-member MCAS Board now boasts numerous members younger than the organization: Ron Mercer (new conservation co-chair), Andrea Jones (conservation co-chair), Jen Moonjian (field trips co-chair), Stephanie Little (education chair), Cheryl Lesinski (newsletter editor), Sarah Bryant (fund development chair). Congratulations and thanks to all of our MOST AWESOME BOARD MEMBERS, regardless of age.

*-Jan Surbey, Past President*



*Past President Jan Surbey passes the gavel to President Christy Holmes as new Board looks on*



*2009-2010 Board, l-r, back row: Priscilla Akin, Nina Richert, Sarah Bryant, Dick Boyd, Dave Keeling, Jen Moonjian, Ron Mercer, Alan Schmierer, Mike Stiles, Rouvaishyana; front row: Rosalie Valvo, Jan Surbey, Christy Holmes, Holly Sletteland, Andrea Jones and Bryan Brown. Not pictured: Greg Smith, Stephanie Little, Dawn Williams and Cheryl Lesinski.*

# MCAS 2009-2010 BOARD

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## President Elect

Vacant

## Past President

Jan Surbey - 772-7273, jansurbey@earthlink.net

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## Field Trip Co-chairs

Alan Schmierer - 772-2026, aaschmierer@yahoo.com

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## Hospitality Chair

Nina Richert - 234-0972, ninarich2000@yahoo.com

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## Education Chair

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## Lands Chair

Greg Smith - slobird@aol.com

## Communications Co-chairs

Newsletter: Cheryl Lesinski - aarski@sbcglobal.net

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## Conservation Co-Chairs

Andrea Jones - 772-1995, ajones@audubon.org

Ron Melcer - rmelcer@calpoly.edu

## Fund Development Chair

Sarah Bryant - 528-8215, ssbryant@yahoo.com

## Directors at Large

Priscilla Akin - 534-0280, pakin@charter.net

Dawn Williams - 545-8412, slodawn1@att.net

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## Morro Coast Audubon Society Office and Outreach Center

601 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, upstairs in Marina Square  
(805) 772-1991 mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org

Hours: Thursday, 10am-Noon

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

Website: www.morrocoastaudubon.org

Printed on recycled paper

# Welcome New MCAS Members

## Arroyo Grande

David Gurney

Laurel Hieatt

Rolayne Nelson

## Atascadero

Della Barrett

Virginia Dugas

Karen & Raymond Gordon

Lindsay O Hampton

Chris Nielsen

## Cambria

Marcelle Bakula

Barbara Therault

## Creston

Pardner Hicks

## Los Osos

Jim Barbour

Tammy Dalcin

## Los Osos (cont.)

Evelyn R Donges

L R Erickson

Deanna Ion

Mary C Topp

## Morro Bay

Claire Arthur

## Paso Robles

Jeanne Bruenecke

## Pismo Beach

Gar Salzgeber

## San Luis Obispo

Virginia Bass

Meredith Boyd

Alison Jones

Elena Mckean

Sue Sunderland

L E Telander

## Planned Giving: A Legacy of Support for MCAS and the Environment

Many of us are unable to make major donations to the causes we love during our lifetimes. A planned gift gives us an additional opportunity to make a difference. It is not necessary to make a huge gift; even a modest percentage of an estate can have a major impact on preserving and restoring habitat for birds and other wildlife. What is important is to make a gift that reflects the values you cherish. Your legacy gift to MCAS will enable us to accomplish your goal of permanent preservation and protection for the habitats so essential to birds and other wildlife here in San Luis Obispo County. For more information please contact Jan Surbey at jansurbey@earthlink.net or visit www.morrocoastaudubon.org. We would love to recognize your deep commitment as a legacy donor.

## MCAS Donors and Supporters

Elizabeth Scott-Graham

John & Joy Gault

Jerry & Mary Ann Ambrose

Bryan Brown

Dr & Mrs Joseph Boone

Jo Ann Youngner

Judy Minami In memory of Dr Bill McGehee

Samuel Rapaport MD In remembrance of

William "Bill" McGehee - a "first class" man

## MCAS FIELD TRIPS

### Cerro Alto Campground Road

Wednesday, June 3rd

Leader: Alan Schmierer

Join us for a walk along a great riparian corridor. See a variety of birds and learn bird songs and calls. The 2 miles of walking will be slow and easy on a paved road (and possibly some on a good trail with mild up-and-down slopes). A fun 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 questions contact Alan at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026.

### Cerro Alto Campground Road and Ridge

Saturday, June 6th

Leader: Alan Schmierer

This will be a repeat of the June 3 trip, but a little faster-paced and will continue past the campground and make a loop (by walking up to the AT&T Road, to the 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. For a map visit [www.morrocoastaudubon.org/birdguide.htm](http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/birdguide.htm), click on Morro Bay/San Luis Obispo and then Cerro Alto Campground.

There will be great views, but birding will be much “slower” than along the creek. You will want to bring water and a lunch or snack. Some may want to join for the walk to the campground, then return to the parking area on their own while the rest of the group continues. Weather may cancel or modify plans. For time and meeting place contact Alan at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026.

### Oceano Dunes Western Snowy Plover Field Trips

Sundays, June 14th & 28th, 7-9 am

Leader: Stephanie Little

Join Stephanie Little, State Park Environmental Scientist, for an early morning tour of the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. The tour will begin at the Oceano Campground Nature Center.

The Dunes are a geologically-unique region of sand dunes that serves as a haven for wildlife, rare vegetation, and humans past and present. Field trip highlights will include bird watching at the Arroyo Grande creek mouth, a tour and discussion of some of the park’s restoration efforts, and the opportunity to view the 300-acre seasonal Snowy

### June Year-End Barbecue

Monday, June 15th, 5-8 pm

El Chorro Regional Park, Dairy Creek Group Area

Plan to attend this MCAS barbecue featuring birding, good food, and live music. We’ve got the beat...you bring the meat (or veggies). It will be a fun event for the whole family!

#### Birding and Optics Fest & Field Trip, 5 pm

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.

Live music by Honeyguide, 6:30-7:30 pm

### Dream Vacations Benefit MCAS

Have you ever dreamt of going to Antarctica or South Georgia? Cheesemans’ Ecology Safaris has partnered with our Audubon Chapter to offer two amazing trips to the Southern Ocean: Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia, and the Falkland Islands December 28, 2009 to January 25, 2010, and South Georgia and the Falkland Islands October 15 - November 8, 2009.

For each person who signs up through our chapter, the Cheesemans will donate \$500 to MCAS! Doug, Gail, and Ted Cheeseman are long-time members of National Audubon and have been leading trips to Antarctica since 1984. As biologists and birders, they focus on providing an in-depth wildlife experience with maximum field time and an emphasis on conservation. Visit their website at [www.cheesemans.com](http://www.cheesemans.com).

Plover and Least Tern habitat closure. It is very likely that plover and tern nests and chicks will be showcased on this outing. Participants will also have the opportunity to see what Oceano Dunes is doing to manage and protect breeding Snowy Plovers and California Least Terns that nest within the park from March through September.

Space is limited. Please contact Stephanie at [sjlittle@parks.ca.gov](mailto:sjlittle@parks.ca.gov) or 805-610-6229 to reserve your place. Participants will be riding in State Park vehicles and a waiver form will be required.

*Together Green Days...Continued from Page 1*

- Seeded native wildflowers such as poppies, lupine and clarkia.
- Installed over 1500 feet of drip irrigation.
- Removed over 150 cubic feet of invasive weeds, such as veldt grass, brome, & mustard.
- Installed new sitting rounds at kiosk area.
- Spread a new layer of mulch over sitting areas at Ramona & Broderson entrances.
- Removed eucalyptus debris that was filling in the ponds.
- Cleared logs and slash from felled dead and diseased trees.

And these are just the results MCAS achieved! There were 39 other Audubon chapters throughout the nation holding similar events. Collectively, all of the Together Green events brought in over 5,800 volunteers that contributed over 28,000 hours to make the world a greener, healthier place for all of us.

Projects included everything from lakeshore cleanups to planting butterfly gardens to making birdhouses. The events demonstrated that what each of us does as an individual adds up to a bigger difference for our community, our region, our nation and even our planet. We're hoping that others are inspired to get involved when they see just how much can get done when we come together to make a difference for the health of the environment.

There's still time to make your mark! Although some people have volunteered over and over again, we have new faces every time we meet. So give it a try and you'll be glad you did. We provide the munchies, tools and tips on what needs to be done. You'll learn about both native and non-native plants that are common to our area and why restoring natives is so important. We'll be giving away 100% recycled shopping bags, t-shirts and hats to celebrate the occasion. For more information, call Holly Stetteland at 239-3928 or email [hslettel@calpoly.edu](mailto:hslettel@calpoly.edu).

## **MCAS offers "Charter Business Memberships"**

Many businesses have supported MCAS in the past via yearly membership. Now MCAS is making Business Memberships official! Help us spread the word that businesses can show support for local habitat conservation and community education by becoming a MCAS Charter Business Membership.

Business members get plenty in return. Benefits include:

- Publicity in the MCAS newsletter via a Business Members insert twice a year (circulation approximately 900).
- Ongoing recognition on the MCAS website (including a link to the business website) from June 2009 through June 2010.
- A Charter MCAS Business Member decal to display at the place of business.
- A subscription to the MCAS monthly newsletter, *Pacific Flyway*.

For a minimum of \$100, business members have an opportunity to let people know that their business supports local conservation. In return, businesses gain increased publicity and attract customers.

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### **YES! I want to become a Charter Business Member of the Morro Coast Audubon Society.**

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a check (payable to Morro Coast Audubon Society) for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$100 minimum)

**Please send the above information and your check to:**  
Morro Coast Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443

# Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County - April 2009

**ABBREVIATIONS:** CPNM = Carrizo Plain National Monument; EBSP = Estero Bluffs State Park; MDOSP = Montana de Oro State Park; PPB = Point Piedras Blancas Light House.

**WATERFOWL THRU TROPICBIRD:** As there were no reports of a **HARLEQUIN DUCK** north of San Geronimo Creek at EBSP this winter, a male observed there 30 Apr (JSR) was presumed to be a spring migrant. Two female **HOODED MERGANSERS** on San Simeon Creek remained later than expected to 3 Apr (TME). Occasionally seen in spring by Gray Whale researchers at PPB, an immature **BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS** was spotted offshore on 13 Apr (RAR). The most interesting report of the period involved an immature **RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD** being pursued by the resident Peregrine Falcon at PPB on 23 Apr (RAR) that provides only the second county record.

**EGRET THRU GULL:** A **CATTLE EGRET** eating insects along Soda Lake Road in the CPNM on 11 Apr (KS) was the first reported this year. Flocks of 15 and later 12 migrant **IBIS** (undoubtedly White-faced) that flew north over PPB on 20 Apr (RAR) could have all pertained to the original 15. Migrant **SWAINSON'S HAWKS** were recorded along Soda Lake Road, CPNM, on 18 Apr (DK) and another was along Hwy 166 near the Hwy 33 junction on 27 Apr (MLS,DGS). A lingering **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** remained on the Carrizo Plain to 1 Apr (K&TK). Breeding plumaged adult **FRANKLIN'S GULLS** were found along the shoreline of the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area on 14 Apr (DG) and seen from PPB 17 Apr (RAR). Given the number of **GLAUCOUS GULLS** this winter in Southern California, it's not surprising that many were reported from PPB between 16 Apr (5 birds) and the end of the month when one was at EBSP (JSR). Most have been first-cycle birds, but a few chalky second-cycle birds have been seen too. Rare near shore, adult **SABINE'S GULLS** were observed at Oso Flaco Beach on 23 Apr (JM) and from MDOSP on 30 Apr (JSR).

**DOVE THRU FLYCATCHER:** **COMMON GROUND DOVE** is rarely found away from Dana-Foothill Road in Nipomo, so two that rocketed past PPB on 21 Apr (RAR) were completely unexpected. Uncommon in East County, two **LESSER NIGHTHAWKS** were exhibiting courtship behavior along the Quail-Padrone Springs cutoff road at the CPNM on 14 Apr (AFS) and another was seen flying over Hwy 58 at the Carrizo Plain on 20 Apr (MLS). Following up last months three early **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRDS** was a virtual invasion this month with perhaps 13 birds recorded between the coast and Salinas River 1-28 Apr (RHZ, RAR, CL, BKS, KJZ, MLS). **LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS** continued along the north end of Golden Hills Road in Paso Robles all month with four reported there on 10 Apr (DK). Migrant **HAMMOND'S**

**FLYCATCHERS** were at Cerro Alto 16 Apr (MLS) with another likely one there on 20 Apr (JSR), and one was at the Saucito Ranch, CPNM on 20 Apr (AFS).

**WREN THRU CHAT:** The only known **WINTER WREN** nesting location in the county is along Coon Creek in Montana de Oro State Park where as many as 5 singing birds were heard on 27 Apr (RM). A late **SAGE THRASHER** was observed at the CPNM on 6 Apr (AFS). Aside from several reports of **PHAINOPEPLA** in the Caliente Range, two were along the coast where rare with one at the Elfin Forest in Los Osos (MF) and another at Deer Canyon in Arroyo Grande on 20 Apr (BKS). Vocalizing **YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS** were in suitable riparian nesting habitat at Reservoir Canyon on 13 Apr (RM), Arroyo Grande Creek 14 Apr (MLS) and at the Filliponi Ecological Area along San Luis Obispo Creek on 23 Apr (AFS).

**SPARROW THRU FINCH:** In recent springs **BREWER'S SPARROWS** have been found in ephedra along the Quail-Padrone Springs cutoff road in the CPNM where singing birds were again present 13-27 Apr (AFS,MLS), however breeding has yet to be confirmed in the county. Two singing Bell's **SAGE SPARROWS** at the Queen Bee Campground in the La Panza Range on 13 Apr (KJZ) were at the eastern extent of this subspecies range in SLO County and a location where it overlaps with the Carrizo Plain subspecies *canescens*. Two interesting **FOX SPARROW** reports were of "slaty-backed" or *altivagans* race birds in Deer Canyon, Arroyo Grande on 2 Apr (BKS) and Atascadero on 8 Apr (KJZ). Also at Atascadero was a wintering **SWAMP SPARROW** present thru 16 Apr (KJZ). Of the 14 **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS** reported, nine were flying south past Spooners Cove at MDOSP on 23 Apr (TM). Up to two male **SCOTT'S ORIOLES** were in the Quail Spring vicinity on the CPNM 13-27 Apr (AFS,MLS); this species has also yet to be confirmed as a breeder in SLO County. A female **CASSIN'S FINCH** visiting a feeder in Atascadero on 6 Apr (KJZ) was surprising given that there was no evidence of a movement this past winter.

**OBSERVERS:** Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Bill A. Bouton, Tom M. Edell, Mary Frey, Doug George, Dave Keeling, Kathleen and Tony Kent, Cheryl Lish, Tom Malone, Jamie Miller, Ron Melcer, Richard A. Rowlett, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Kathy Sharum, Maggie L. Smith, Doug G. Stinson, 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**

P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443

805-772-1991

[mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org](mailto:mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org)

[www.morrocoastaudubon.org](http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org)

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