



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 44 Issue 9, March 2010

A Show Not to be Missed "Birds of SLO"

Monday, March 15th

7pm at El Chorro Park, SLO Botanical Garden Oak Glen Pavilion (across from Cuesta College)

What do you get when over a dozen of the most talented bird photographers in the county contribute 1100 of their best bird photos? The answer is "Birds of SLO" slideshow, the program for the March 15th MCAS meeting. The majority of photos were taken locally in 2009, but there are a few from outside our county line or taken prior to 2009. The presentation will include over 200 species. You'll be amazed at the beauty and the diversity, just take a look at a few samples below. This is a show not to be missed! ~Dave Keeling, program coordinator



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Name of Bird, Photographer

- 1. Brown Pelican, Richard Mittleman
- 2. Blacklegged Kittiwake, Bill Bouton
- 3. Acorn Woodpecker, Teddy Llovet
- 4. Rock Wren, Roger Zachary
- 5. Whitefaced Ibis, Linda Tanner
- 6. Sharpshinned Hawk, Alan Schmierer
- 7. Redtailed Hawk, Marlin Harms
- 8. Coot, Mike Baird

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BULLETIN

Thank You MCAS Donors!

Richard & Brenda Allman

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In memory of Don Parham

David Eckstrom

Joanna Frawley

In memory of Donald S Parham

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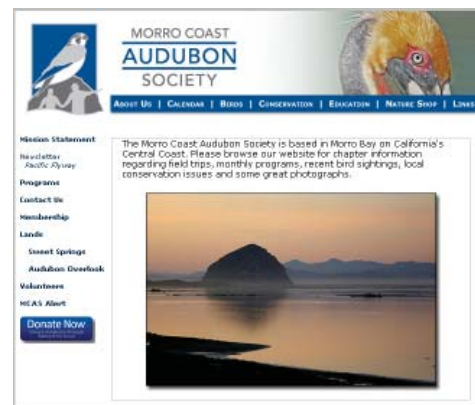
Spencer's Fresh Market

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Fred Wadsworth

MCAS Website Has a New Look!

Check out: www.morrocoastaudubon.org



Bird Fun Fact

HOW DO OWLS "SEE" AT NIGHT? Many owls (such as the Barn Owl) can hunt at night in complete darkness. They can do this because of a system of astoundingly developed hearing receptors, reflectors and a complex neural auditory mapping system. They can hone in within 1.5 degrees vertically and laterally to a faint mouse noise in 100% darkness!

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

April Membership Meeting: Board Nominations

In preparation for the annual MCAS membership meeting on April 19th, the nominations committee has selected the following slate of candidates for terms beginning May 1st.

President: Stephanie Little*
Secretary: Elinore Cottrell
Conservation Chair: Andrea Jones
Field trips Chair: Alan Schmierer
Programs Chair: Joanna Iwanicha *

Education and Outreach Chair: Aurianna Woodson *
Fund Development Chair: nominee still needed
Director-At-Large: nominee still needed
* new in this position

The Fund Development Chair is responsible for planning and implementing membership drives and giving, grant opportunities, donations, bequests, business memberships, merchandise inventory and sales, special events, and other fundraising activities. Help with any one of these tasks would be appreciated. The Director-At-Large is a one-year position to be filled by someone new to the Board who will work with at least one committee.

Please consider lending your time and expertise to join the fun-loving Board and committees as leaders in MCAS! Contact Stephanie Little if you are interested. Additionally, the Board is fine tuning some changes to the by-laws with the goal of making Board meetings and voting more efficient by slightly reducing the number of voting Board members. Look for these specific changes on the MCAS website beginning in April.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members!

Arroyo Grande

Dorothy Montgomery
Carol S Onge
Ina Zigelman

Atascadero

Lynn Ayers
Freddy Gier
Jennifer Little
Rita Robinson
Ross Schaefer
Vernetta Semon
Jan Tartalia
Sharon White

Cambria

Gwynne C Beatty
Robert Bell
Charlotte O'Keefe
Benavides
Loretta Howard

Cayucos

Shirley Lyon

Davis

Neil Clipperton

Los Osos

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D Nigel Lock
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Nova C Poff
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Morro Bay

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Sandy Christey
Joyce Halley
Don Maruska
Lori Pacido

Nipomo

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Allice Torres
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Oceano

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Thomas Key
Steve & Jennifer Martin
Mark Parham
Caroline Stoltenberg
Olie A Tungsvik

Pismo Beach

Rena Dambly
Judy Leonard
Grant Runnerstrum
Ruby Stein
Patricia Strible

San Luis Obispo

Chase Arensdorf
Clifford Cunha
Rob & Sherry Fuller

Brennan Fuller

Pedro Guerrero
Thea Labrenz
Mark Leopold
Tom Ogren
Geraldine Opp
Vera Philbin
Nancy Rodgers
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Dana Wright
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San Miguel

Robert Galbraith

Santa Margarita

Otto R Schmidt

Shell Beach

Beulah Newdoll

Templeton

Dorine Jamason
Thomas A Schoenig

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Morro Coast Audubon Society Receives \$25,000 Grant from the Sempra Energy Foundation for Snowy Plover Recovery



Timothy Mahoney presents Christy Holmes and Stephanie Little a check from the Sempra Energy Foundation

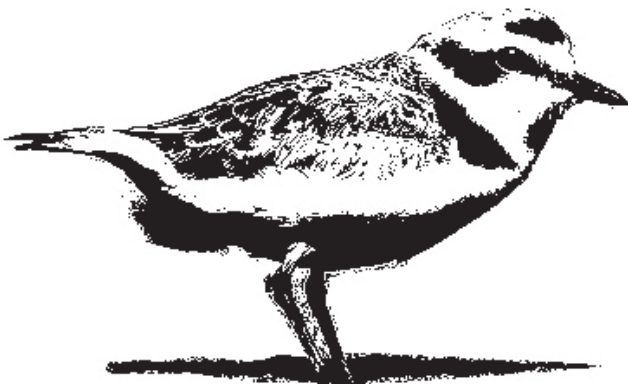
The Sempra Energy Foundation awarded a prestigious Environmental Champions grant to the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) in its mission to increase Snowy Plover recovery within Morro Bay. The grant will go toward strengthening local educational efforts to teach the public to understand and appreciate the fragility of this threatened species, and to foster more responsible behavior when visiting the beaches where the bird lives and breeds. "Once the public knows how and why to reduce impacts on the beach nesting and feeding areas, the plovers have a much better chance of survival," said Stephanie Little, Education Chair for MCAS.

The predominantly volunteer organization has already demonstrated success in educating the public about how recreational activities, dogs off leash, and other human related impacts can threaten the Snowy Plover's existence. Grant monies will help support MCAS's plover outreach booth this summer on the Morro Strand State

Beach. A spotting scope, plover pictures and fun facts, and other information will be available for the public to enjoy this summer. "The key to environmental stewardship is education," said Little. "We're just trying to make people more aware of the importance of conservation."

Since 2001, the Habitat Conservation and Plover Recovery program has educated thousands of school students, residents, and tourists about plover natural history, the importance of habitat conservation, and being more environmentally aware. The snowy plover's outreach program was at risk this year by the drastic cuts facing California. "Sempra's grant came at a perfect time," said Christy Holmes, MCAS President. "We are very grateful that Sempra management saw a unique opportunity to assist this excellent program."

Plover Outreach Docents Needed!!!



Interested in combining birding with habitat conservation? Want to help a threatened species while enjoying the beach? March 1 through September 30 is Snowy Plover breeding season, and this threatened shorebird needs your help! Join the Morro Coast Audubon Society as a plover docent to help protect the remaining plover population and their habitat. Please contact Stephanie Little (805) 610-6229 for more information.

Sweet Springs Restoration Party

Saturday, March 13th
9am to 12pm

All of these wonderful showers have definitely brought us flowers, but some of them happen to be weeds. Come enjoy the splendor of spring at the preserve and give the native flowers a helping hand by removing pushy weeds. Meet at the main entrance off Ramona. Tools, tips and munchies will be provided. Bring gloves if you have them and dress in layers.



Great Blue Heron, courtesy of Alan Schmierer

Featured Bird of the Month: Brown Pelican

Brown Pelicans are found along ocean shores and not on inland lakes. They are the only North American pelican that plunges from the air into the water to catch their food. While the Brown Pelican is draining the water from its bill after a dive, gulls often try to steal the fish right out of its pouch. Pelicans have large flat nests of sticks lined with grasses or leaves. They nest in short trees, shrubs, or on ground. Unlike most birds, which warm their eggs with the skin of their breasts, pelicans incubate their eggs with their feet. They hold the eggs under the webs that stretch from the front toes to the hind toe, essentially standing on the eggs to warm them. This peculiar incubation method made them vulnerable to the effects of the pesticide DDT. The DDT made the eggshells thin, and the incubating parents frequently cracked their eggs.



(both images) Brown Pelicans, courtesy of Mike Baird

Don Parham - In Memoriam



Don Parham at the Hi Mountain Lookout Project 10-year anniversary event in May 2006, photos courtesy of Steve Schubert

Don Parham, President of Morro Coast Audubon Society 1977-79, died December 30, 2009. After living in Los Osos for 36 years, he moved to Santa Cruz in 2008. In 1999, he was awarded one of our first Volunteer awards. Following is the article written about that award.

From the October, 1999, Pacific Flyway

When you talk about Don, you talk about many things that Audubon members take for granted these days: The Peregrine Recovery Program, the protection of the Carrizo Plains, the Audubon Overlook, and Sweet Springs Nature Preserve.

Don and his wife, Jo, joined MCAS when they moved to the Los Osos area in the 70's. Hyrum Strong (one of last year's AWARD recipients) was president at the time and asked Don to look into a very small lot at the end of 4th Street that was going for back taxes. Don negotiated with the County and hence the "birth" of the Audubon Overlook. He, of course, says that was just the beginning because it took many volunteers and Wes Felmlee, project supervisor, to bring it to fruition.

One of the proudest efforts that Don talks about during the time he was president of the Chapter was the Peregrine Recovery Program. Our chapter started a Recovery Program before there were any other organized efforts in this area. After proving that the Peregrines nesting on the Rock would care for two Prairie Falcon chicks, the Cornell Ornithological Lab released the first Peregrine chick, to be raised in the wild at Morro Rock. MCAS was there before the Endangered Species Act.

In the 70's, Bud Meyer (another of last year's AWARD recipients) and Don convinced the BLM to keep the property they owned in the Carrizo Plains after a governmentally funded program charged with surveying the most environmentally sensitive spots in California rated the Plains as their number one priority. BLM kept the property and later The Nature Conservancy took an interest and the present partnership was formed.

Sweet Springs Nature Preserve was another crucial issue for Don. Through pointing out the advantages of the tax benefit that the owners of Sweet Springs could enjoy by donating the land to a nonprofit or governmental entity, the land was eventually given to the State Coastal Conservancy, who in turn deeded it to MCAS to be preserved in perpetuity. MCAS was able to assume this responsibility because they had collected a nest egg of funds for just such a project. With the beginning of an endowment fund of \$30,000 from MCAS, Don and Nancy Vaughan formed a committee that successfully launched a campaign to match those dollars with community support. Today the Endowment fund is over \$100,000 and the future of SSNP is assured.

Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County, January 2010

The following are some of the most interesting reports gleaned primarily from the Slocobirding listserv and eBird. A total of 225 species were reported to eBird from SLO County in January.

WATERFOWL: Above average numbers of Geese continued in January. High counts for three species at the Foothill Road Marsh in SLO were: **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE**, 63 on 4 Jan (MLS); **ROSS'S GOOSE**, 11 on 4 Jan (RS); and 30 **CAACKLING GOOSE** on 31 Jan (TME). Always present in low numbers, a single **SNOW GOOSE** was on the Froom Ranch property off Los Osos Valley Road on 1 Jan (DGS). An immature **TUNDRA SWAN** at Oso Flaco Lake on 3 Jan (DGS) provided the second report - both were young birds - this winter. Three **GREEN-WINGED TEAL** intergrades (American x Eurasian races) were found on Morro Bay 15-17 Jan (CAM,TME). All showed the obvious black and white horizontal scapular stripes of a Eurasian, or Common Teal, while the white vertical breast stripes seen on American Teal ranged from faint to bold. Only four **WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS** were reported, two off the Northpoint Natural Area in Morro Bay on 9 Jan (MLS) and two more off Little Pico Creek on 11 Jan (AFS). The male **BLACK SCOTER** continued off Little Pico Creek through January (mob) and was joined by a female 9-11 Jan (TME). The first **LONG-TAILED DUCK** this winter, a likely female, was found off the south end of Cayucos on 15 Jan (TME) and was probably the same bird seen from Morro Rock 23-24 Jan (JSR).

GREBE THRU SHOREBIRDS: Morro Bay's elusive immature **RED-NECKED GREBE** was back at the Morro Bay Harbor mouth during the Winter Bird Festival and continued through the end of the month (SS). Rarely reported along the north coast or along the Salinas River, single **AMERICAN BITTERN** were found near the mouth of San Simeon Creek 9-23 Jan (TME) and in Atascadero 11-17 Jan (RHZ). The only **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** reported this month was a female in the Sprague Hill Road area of the Carrizo Plain (AFS). An adult **COMMON MOORHEN** spotted on the north section of Oso Flaco Lake on 16 Jan (JMC) was the first reported this winter. Six to seven **SANDHILL CRANES** were at Soda Lake and along 7 Mile Road on the Carrizo Plain 15-16 Jan (BS,AFS); once numerous there in winter, this species is absent or only present in small numbers most years. The high count for **MOUNTAIN PLOVERS** along Panorama Road on the Carrizo Plain National Monument was 90 on 2 Jan (AFS). Rare in SLO County, a **BLACK-NECKED STILT** was a surprising find on Morro Bay on 16 Jan (REM) as it had not previously been reported on the bay. The wintering **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** continued on the Morro Bay Estuary through the month (JSR). **WANDERING TATTLER** is another rare winter visitor to our county; one was north of Cayucos Point at Estero Bluffs State Park 17-19 Jan (WTF).

GULLS THRU HUMMINGBIRD: A first winter **THAYER'S GULL** at Laguna Lake on 19 Jan (MLS) provided the only report. A **BLACK SKIMMER** at Morro Bay on 31 Jan (KLP) accounted for the fifth year in a row one has been there in Jan. The winter adult **PIGEON GUILLEMOT** first found at the Morro Bay Harbor mouth in early Nov continued thru 17 Jan (MLS). The North Coast provided views of up to five **MARBLED MURRELETS** 27-30 Jan from the north end of Moonstone Drive in Cambria (MLS) and off Little Pico Creek (JSR). The best bird honors for the Winter Bird Festival boat trip out of Port San Luis on 16 Jan went to the two **XANTUS'S MUTRRELETS** observed well offshore (BKS,TM); this species is casual off our county in winter. An **ANCIENT MURRELET** was also seen on the trip (BKS,TM). Though missed on the Christmas Bird Count, the female **COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD** was back at the end of 13th Street in Los Osos 7-13 Jan (MDS).

BLUEBIRD THRU GOLDFINCH: About 20 **MOUNTIAN BLUEBIRDS** were along Van Dollen Road east of Paso Robles on 1 Jan (CF) where they are probably present more often than the few reports suggest and a high count of 15 was made along Turri Road on 19 Jan (LLT). A **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** continued along West Cuesta Ridge where it was photographed on 8 Jan (AFS). Up to two "large-billed" **SAVANNAH SPARROWS** continued along the estuary near the Morro Bay State Park Marina 29-30 Jan (MDS). Three **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS** reported including one inland at the Halter Ranch in Paso Robles on 14 Jan (RHZ). Somewhat scarce in recent years, a "slate colored" **DARK-EYED JUNCO** was seen along Estero Ave in Morro Bay (KLP). The adult male **SUMMER TANAGER** discovered on the Christmas Bird Count continued to be seen at either the Cal Poly library or nearby at the Mustang Village 5-17 Jan (mob). An unprecedented number of **LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH** was present in the eastern county where it is typically absent in Jan. High counts were 30 in California Valley on 10 Jan (MB), 25-30 in the southern Carrizo Plain National Monument on 17 Jan (KMS), and 15 at Shandon on 30 Jan (MLS). Five were also at a residence in Arroyo Grande on 25 Jan (CL).

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Matt Brady, Jamie M. Chavez, Tom M. Edell, Claudia Freitas, Wes T. Fritz, Cheryl Lish, Curtis A. Marantz, Todd McGrath, Ron E. Mercer, Kaaren L. Perry, Jim S. Royer, Sal Salernos, Ross Schaefer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Kathy M. Sharum, Maggie L. Smith, Bob Stafford, Mike D. Stiles, Doug G. Stinson, Linda L. Tanner, Roger H. Zachary 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

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

___ \$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 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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