



Volume 41 Issue 9 Morro Coast Audubon Society

March 2007

Our 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"

The 11th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, held over the Martin Luther King Holiday weekend, was again highly successful. The 106 events presented ranged over a myriad of subjects and activities from Big Days to Bats in the Belfry, from Pelagics to Peregrines, from Drawing to Dunes Ecology. The plenary speakers, Pete Dunne on The Twenty Things That Changed Birding and Irene Pepperberg on Intelligence and Communication In Parrots gave outstanding presentations. The registrants numbered 527, many were local, many were from more distant parts of California and a number from other states. As every year, we were concerned about weather since it is the winter storm season. Mercifully, no such storms occurred. However the weather was by far the coldest experienced for the MBWBF. Folks shivered a bit, but were good sports. A total of 220 species of birds were recorded on the field trips.

We are especially grateful to the *people* that made the Festival a success. This includes the field trip leaders, both local and from afar; the presenters many of whom traveled considerable distances to participate, and the volunteers who handled the registration process, helped set up and manage the meeting rooms, helped with the opening reception and many other tasks. In all more than one-hundred people were involved.

The sponsoring organizations are to be congratulated for making the Festival possible. These are: The Morro Coast Audubon Society in collaboration with California State Parks, Central Coast Natural History Association, Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Friends of the Estuary. In addition, many of the trip leaders, presenters and volunteers come from their ranks.

Planning for the Twelfth Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is under way!

- Dick boyd

Mark your calendars: on **Saturday, March 3rd**, there will be a ceremony to dedicate the bench honoring the late **Morley and Douglas Weir**, long-time activists and supporters of Morro Coast Audubon Society. The bench is between the two bridges at Sweet Springs. The Weir sisters invite all Audubon members, even if you did not know their parents, to join them at 2:00 P.M. on that Saturday.

On the following Saturday, the 10th, at 10:00 A.M., John Nowak will plant a tree in our "memorial grove" at Sweet Springs to honor **John Perkins**.

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<u>RARE BIRD ALERT</u>		
Monterey	831 375-9122	
Northern California	415 681-7422	
Los Angeles/Southern California	323 874-1318	
Santa Barbara	964-8240	

To report a sick or injured wild animal including birds:

Pacific Wildlife Care 543-WILD

Reporting Marine Mammal Problems:

To report a dead sea otter south of Cambria 772-1135

To report a dead sea otter north of Cambria 927-3893

To report a live stranded marine mammal (415) 289-7325

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Thank You for Your Response

by Rosalie Valvo

We asked you to consider changing your Pacific Flyway subscriptions to e-mailed PDF files, and we got a tremendous response. I'll now be sending out over seventy electronic Flyways this month! I even received an inquiry from another conservation group about how we manage this, because they want to cut back on paper too.

If you haven't switched over yet, you can simply by e-mailing me at rvalvo@kcbx.net. You will need Adobe Reader on your computer, but if you don't yet have it you can download it free at www.adobe.com.



MCAS ALERT!

Get the latest Morro Coast Audubon news by joining our new email announcement service. Members will receive timely notices of general meetings and programs, field trips, and other MCAS happenings.

To join, go to the website at <http://morrocoastaudubon.org> and click on the MCAS Alert! link. There you can sign up with an online form. You can also join by sending an email to Mike Stiles at mstiles@calpoly.edu and ask to join MCAS Alert

Our Website

www.morrocoastaudubon.org

Past issues of the *Flyway* are available at the website

e-mail:

mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org

The notice at the bottom of p 1 also appeared in the February issue and was submitted to the Flyway with first names for the Weirs that differ from the ones in this issue.-Editor.

Two General Meetings in March!

General Meeting in Atascadero Morro Coast Audubon Society *presents*



Resources, Research, and Radio Telemetry on Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve by Bob Stafford

CA Department of Fish and Game
Join Morro Coast Audubon Society and your neighbors for this FREE community presentation and learn how radio telemetry is used to study tule elk, western pond turtles, western rattlesnakes and more out on the Carrizo Plain.

Monday, March 12th at 7pm
Atascadero AARP Clubhouse
7848 Pismo Street

A FREE hospitality warm-up dinner of homemade chili, cornbread and assorted beverages will be served at 6:30pm. Everyone is welcome...bring along your family and friends!

Need help finding the AARP Clubhouse? Pismo Street is one block south of the Charles Paddock Zoo entrance and the Clubhouse is near the Pavilion. For more information about this event call the MCAS office at 772-1991.

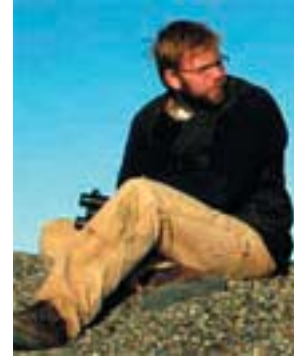
MCAS BOARD MEETING

Monday March 5

6:45 PM

MCAS office, Marina Square Bldg. Morro Bay.
All interested members are invited to attend.

General Meeting Morro Coast Audubon Society *presents*



eBIRD: CITIZEN-SCIENCE IN ACTION **Find out how you can become part of the big picture!**

with

Brian Sullivan

This talk will focus on eBird (www.ebird.org), the dynamic online citizen-science project developed by Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. eBird not only allows you to keep track of your bird observations, but it also makes your data available to scientists and conservationists protecting birds and their habitats. This program will focus on the eBird concept and provide a demonstration on how the program works. *Learn how birding and bird counts in Morro Bay can be viewed through ebird!* Brian Sullivan is project leader for eBird and photographic editor of the Birds of North America Online at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Monday, March 19th at 7:00 pm
Los Osos Middle School ~ 1555 El Moro, Los Osos

(located off S. Bay Blvd. nr. Santa Ysabel)

For more information call 772-1991 or visit www.morrocoastaudubon.org

This year's community programs are partially funded through a Morro Bay National Estuary Program grant.

Photo by John Van de Graaff

TO ALL MCAS MEMBERS:
THE MCAS YOUTH MENTOR CHALLENGE!

There is the realistic fear that the youth of today are being progressively deprived of experiences in the world of their natural surroundings. It is a psychological fact that fast-moving electronic devices demand more attention than serenity and contemplation. This new faster-paced world is a fact and it is here to stay ... and will progress. This trend is inevitable, and is perhaps positive.

What may also be inevitable, however, is that it is hard to love what you do not appreciate or understand. And it is hard to conserve what you do not love nor understand. I am not alone in my fear that youth of today may neglect an irreplaceable and necessary world of wild things and places.

Be a small part of the SOLUTION! It is easy! Accept the "MCAS YOUTH MENTOR CHALLENGE"! All you have to do is to personally identify one youth of any age, and share some part of the natural world with them at least six times in six months. It might be an hour or it might be a half-day at a time, depending on age. Take them birding, have them help you with a nature project like a survey or bird banding, take them on a wildflower walk, do a tide pool thing, accompany them on an MCAS Field Trip, etc. The youth might be a child, a grandchild, a motivated student, a neighbor, Share a part of nature that you are passionate about, and they will be sparked by that passion!

For each of you who completes the challenge, I will give you and the youth each a bird photo of your choice (dry-mounted, laminated, approx 5x7 to 8x10 in size) as a reminder of the experience.

ALAN SCHMIERER aaschmierer@yahoo.com
772-2026



BE A MCAS BINOCULARS
SPONSOR

I have purchased ten pairs of binoculars at a special volume price thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited in SLO. These binoculars are waterproof, rubber-coated and have optics that are quite adequately sharp and comfortable for birders of any age. They will be available for use with the MCAS Youth Mentor Challenge program, for other youth programs, for disabled birders' field trips, for regular monthly MCAS field trips and for other reasonable uses. I will sponsor a pair, and several others of you have promised to do likewise. For a \$50 special donation, please let me know if YOU would be willing to sponsor a pair? If you want to help, but this is more than you want to donate, we need help with the purchase of some bird guides for field trip use also.

Contact me at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026 if you are willing to help. ALAN SCHMIERER

Carrizo Plain CBC Report

The Carrizo Plain Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on December 30, 2006. As with all CBC's, the count area is a 15 mile diameter circle. The center point of the circle for the Carrizo Plain count is at a mid-point on Simmler Road between Soda Lake Road and Elkhorn Road. Thirty-nine individuals participated in the count forming 11 parties during the day. Some of the birders started at 6:00 a.m. looking for owls in the early morning. The rest of the birders met at the Community Center/Fire Station on Soda Lake Road at 8:00 a.m. The count ended at 3:00 p.m. The day was bright and clear with a slight northwest breeze 0-5mph. Temperatures ranged from 15 degrees to 65 degrees F. The total party hours equaled 49.25 hours and the total party miles were 239. A total of **65** species were identified. The total number of birds on count day was **20725** individuals. There were 8 new high count (HC) records. Soda Lake was empty due to low rainfall amounts before the count period. The next Carrizo Plain CBC will be held on Saturday, December 29, 2007. *Roger Zachary, compiler*

2007 KRV SPRING NATURE FESTIVAL

Friday-Monday, April 27-30, 2007, is set for the 13th Annual Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival, centered on Audubon-California's 3200+ acre Kern River Preserve in north-central Kern County. Formerly known as the BioFest, this festival celebrates an area that has garnered international recognition for its natural diversity. The 2007 KRV Nature Fest's web pages may be found by going to: <http://kern.audubon.org/bioregion.htm>. A full slate of field trips is scheduled for all four days of the festival including a record five owling trips. Check out the web site to see what is already scheduled and visit it periodically through to the April 27th start of the festival to see what new has been added.

For more information contact: Alison Sheehy, KRV Spring Nature Festival Coordinator (E-mail: krpfriends@lightspeed.net, Phone: 378-2029), or Bob Barnes, Nature Fest Field Trips Coordinator (E-mail: bbarnes@lightspeed.net, Phone: 375-6140).

*Saving the threatened
Western Snowy Plover
is in your hands*



Volunteers Needed for the Habitat Conservation & Plover Recovery Program

Interested in combining birding with habitat conservation? Want to help an endangered species while enjoying the beach? March 1 through September 30 is Western Snowy Plover breeding season, and this threatened shorebird needs your help. Join the Habitat Conservation & Plover Recovery Program sponsored by The Morro Coast Audubon Society. Volunteers are stationed on Central Coast beaches during nesting season to take "recreational use surveys" and work in conjunction with Morro Bay State Park, City of Morro Bay, and the U.S. Forest Service at Carpoforo to help maintain the integrity of habitat fences and signs. Volunteers play an crucial role in helping to protect the remaining plover population and their habitat.

NEW! Two new training field trips are being organized for volunteers to visit other training programs around the state:

- **Half Moon Bay**, March 10, 9:30 am - 2 pm
- **Coal Oil Point** (UC Santa Barbara), date to be decided

Volunteer Training Lunches

Monthly at Noon:

March 31, April 26, May 31, June 30, July 26,
August 25 & September 22

Meet and greet other volunteers while learning how you can help protect the plovers.

Plovers on the Beach Program

Monthly, 9 am – 12 pm:

April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14 & August 11

Join other volunteers on the beach to learn about this season's nesting plovers while enjoying juice and homemade bread.

For locations and more information, please contact:

Stephanie Little at 805.610.6229 or
stephanie@westernsnowyplover.org

WesternSnowyPlover.org

TOOLS & RESOURCES FOR RECOVERY

MCAS Seeks Graphic Artist

MCAS is in the process of designing a new logo to represent our organization. Artists with experience in graphic design should contact Emily Jagger, Chapter Administrator at mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org by March 15th. Please visit www.morrocoastaudubon.org for more details.

Olympic BirdFest 2007

March 30 - April 1, 2007

Sequim Port Angeles

"Come Bird with Us"

www.olympicbirdfest.org

360-681-4076





To Our Newest Members

Arroyo Grande

Helen Zulewski
Peter Rixen

Atascadero

Pat Jones
Nancy Strauss
Kathy Stewart

Bradley

Jo Geary

Cambria

Donald Grable

Vee Hunter

Shirley Partridge
Marvin Harden

Cayucos

Michael Baxter

Los Osos

Matt Paradis

Myra Strunk

C A Marcus

Morro Bay

Tricia Walthall

Ester Shaw

Bill Woodson

San Luis Obispo

Dorothy Ramsouer

Teresa Larson

Charles Fishman

Simon Avery

Jean Asher

John Ashbaugh

Santa Maria

Greg McGowan

IN MEMORIAM

We have lost three great personages in the past few months. John Perkins was a sitting board member and a community activist. John McDonald was a great birder and very active with the chapter until a few years ago. Mary Coffeen was not a birder, but she was one of the most celebrated MCAS members in the larger community of local nature lovers. This is the third and last in our series of Memorial articles.

Mary Coffeen (by *Yolanda Waddell*)

Mary Coffeen was born in 1918 in Oklahoma, lived in Michigan and moved to California at the age of 12. She attended Pomona College, and finished her education at Ball State University in Indiana. For one year she taught science and art, and for three years she was a graphic designer at a firm in Chicago. Then the lure of California drew her back to a small town called Wildemar, which is near Elsinore. She married in 1949, and worked as a potter. She divorced when her daughter Marcia was 12, and spent the next 12 years in Claremont, 7 of them as Director of Youth Education at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Eventually, she moved to Morro Bay, in great part because she saw that it had a Museum of Natural History, and she lived on the Central Coast for the next 20 years.

Linda and David Chipping of the California Native Plant Society remember the walks that she led with her dog Little Blue under the auspices of CNPS at Cerro Alto after the Highway 41 Fire in 1994. Her last entry was Easter Sunday in April, 1995, when she reported that Cerro Alto was "gorgeous with green swaths and swales of lavenders, blues and fire poppy reds, plus lots of whites too."

Steve Schubert of Morro Coast Audubon Society, with whom Mary taught natural history classes combined with field trips for Cuesta College Community Programs, said that he was always impressed with Mary's tremendous energy, enthusiasm and stamina. Marcia, Mary's daughter, said that Mary had definite artistic talent, mentioning many trays of slides, as well as paintings and drawings, but Mary didn't want to do things that would keep her inside. She did make the time to sit down and write a book, *Central Coast Wildflowers*. It was first published in 1993, when Mary was 75.

In 2000, Mary moved north to Auburn, California, to live closer to Marcia and Marcia's husband, Steve. Marcia relates that Mary passed away on October 4th of this year, after suffering a stroke two weeks before. There was a memorial service for Mary in Auburn in October, and another will be held in the Spring at the Avenales at Shell Creek Road in eastern San Luis Obispo County, when the wildflowers are in bloom.

Mary wrote in her book about the living "Persian carpet" that she saw in April of 1988, when all of the wildflowers were in bloom in the field at once. She said, "...it came to me that probably I'd died and gone to Heaven. It was so beautiful! But the flowers were alive, growing, being visited by pollinators and making seed to lie waiting on the ground for optimum conditions to come again."

At the very end of her book, Mary wrote the following short "Epilogue," words for us to heed and remember her by: "I indeed see many hopeful signs that we are becoming aware of our dependence on this fragile planet for our own survival and that the rights of other living organisms must be recognized as equal to our own. Stewardship and enlightened exploitation must be the watch words of the 21st century..."

Remembrances may be made to San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden or the Morro Coast Audubon Society.

Eureka!

THE BIRDS OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY – January 2007

The following are the rarest birds reported during the months of November and December 2006. An expanded version of this column with additional sightings and photos is available at: <http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/eureka.htm> .

- Tundra Swan – 1-30 Jan, a juvenile was at Santa Margarita Lake (JS). SLO County averages less than one bird per year.
- Eurasian Wigeon – 1-31 Jan, up to four males were on Baywood Cove (mob)
- Redhead – 4 Jan, a male and two females at Oso Flaco Lake provided the only report (CH)
- Black Scoter – 6-30 Jan, a female/first year male and an adult male were off the Northpoint Natural Area in Morro Bay (mob)
- Pink-footed Shearwater – 13 Jan, three were seen on a boat trip from Port San Luis to the Lucia Mount (BKS, BAB)
- Short-tailed Shearwater – 13 Jan, three were seen on a boat trip from Port San Luis to the Lucia Mount (TME, BKS)
- Sooty Shearwater – 13 Jan, one was seen on a boat trip from Port San Luis to the Lucia Mount (TME, BKS)
- Black-vented Shearwaters – 1-31 Jan, this species continued off our coast. A high count of ~500 was made on a boat trip from Port San Luis to the Lucia Mount (TME, BKS)
- Cattle Egret – This species is very rare in SLO County in recent years so one at Cal Poly on 3 Jan (RHZ) and another at a pond off Buckley Road in the City of SLO in Jan (HP) are worth noting.
- Rough-legged Hawk – 7-22 Jan, one was at Selby Road and Painted Rock on the Carrizo Plain (RHZ, CH) and 9-31 Jan, one was perched on a utility pole along Cholame Valley Road in northeast SLO County (SCS)
- Black-necked Stilt – 6-8 Jan, one was at the mouth of Morro Creek in Morro Bay (AFS)
- Mountain Plover – 7 Jan, moderate numbers were seen around the Carrizo Plain from California Valley to the southern portion of the National Monument (mob)
- Glaucous Gull – 5-26 Jan, a first-cycle bird was at the Elephant Seal rookery south of Piedras Blancas (MPB)
- Black-legged Kittiwake – 13 Jan, ~15 were seen on a boat trip from Port San Luis to the Lucia Mount (TME, BKS)
- Black Skimmer – 13 Jan, one on Morro Bay provided the county's only report this winter (KW)
- Pigeon Guillemot – 1 Jan was the last date for the immature bird wintering near the Morro Bay Harbor mouth (TME)
- Marbled Murrelet – 14 Jan, one was at Spooners Cove in Montana de Oro State Park (TME) and 24 Jan, six (3 sets of two) were seen along a seabird transect from Cayucos to Point Estero (MLS)
- Ancient Murrelet – 13 Jan, four (two sets of two) were seen on a boat trip from Port San Luis to the Lucia Mount (TME), 14 Jan, five were seen on another boat trip (MDH), and 24 Jan, two were seen along a seabird transect from Cayucos to Point Estero (BKS)
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 1-20 Jan, the male drilling eucalyptus trees along the road to the horse camp at Montana de Oro State Park remained into at least mid-Jan (mob).
- Red-naped Sapsucker – 1-31 Jan, a male continued in the pepper trees in front of the Cal Poly Library (mob).
- Eastern Phoebe – 1-31 Jan, one continues between the Business Building and California Blvd at Cal Poly (mob)
- Barn Swallow – 2 Jan, three were seen from the Northpoint Natural Area (RHZ) and between 5-29 Jan, two were seen off and on at Oso Flaco Lake (SH, mob).
- Black-and-white Warbler – 28 Jan, an adult male along Santa Rosa Creek near the wastewater treatment plant in Cambria (DML) is likely the same bird last reported there in November.
- Western Tanager – 1-12 Jan, one continued at Cal Poly (MDS) and 1-22 Jan, another continued in the Village of Arroyo Grande (BKS)
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak – 14 Jan, a first-year male was found feeding on a pomegranate at Hearst Castle (GPS)
- Orchard Oriole – 5 Jan, this is the last reported date for the male wintering in Arroyo Grande (MS)
- OBSERVERS:** Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Bill A. Bouton, Mark P. Brown, Tom M. Edell, Marlin D. Harms, Cher Hollingworth, Scott Huber, Dave M. Lawrence, Holly Peterson, Jim S. Royer, John Sayer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Steve C. Schubert, Mitch Siemens, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Jan Surbey, Kevin Winfiled, 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*

2006 Morro Bay Audubon Christmas Bird Count Summary

This year marked the 53rd Morro Bay Audubon Christmas Bird Count. There were approximately 41 parties covering the count circle. Together the parties spent 75.5 hours driving 366 miles, 168 hours walking 116 miles, 9 hours boating and kayaking 17 miles, 1 hour bicycling 5 miles, 9.5 hours at a feeder, and 7.5 hours and 13 miles owling (foot & car). The count total of 58,084 individuals was 16,534 greater than the average of the past 26 years and the **total of 207 species** was seven greater than the average since 1980. There were no species new to the count this year, therefore the count's cumulative (1948-2006) species total stands at 312 species. Thanks to the 77 volunteers that contributed to this year's success. A special thanks to Bert and Elaine Townsend for excellently coordinating the count and to the Sector Leaders Maggie Smith, Mike Stiles, and Bill Bouton for organizing the participants. The full count may be seen at WWW.morrocoastaudubon.org

MCAS BY-LAWS REVISION

In an effort to up-date our by-laws, insure compliance with National Audubon policies, and make our document workable and meaningful for MCAS, the MCAS board has approved a set of revised by-laws. These revisions will be voted on by the MCAS membership at the April membership meeting to be held April 16th at Laguna Middle School. For those members wishing to view the complete document, the by-laws revisions are available on our website www.morrocoastaudubon.org or by requesting a copy from the MCAS office (805)772-1991. Please leave a message with your name and mailing address and we will send you a copy. Questions and / or concerns can be directed to Jan Surbey at jansurbey@earthlink.net.

Morro Coast Audubon Society Membership Application

Yes, I would like to join the Morro Coast Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, and receive the Flyway and Audubon Magazine. Enclosed is a check payable to the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY in the amount of:

\$15 Students/Seniors \$20 Introductory \$35 Basic(renewal) Other \$ _____

NAME _____ NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ (E-MAIL _____)

Mail check and coupon to: MORRO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443-1507. To check the status of your subscription or request membership changes call 1-800-274-4201

Check box if you are interested in volunteering or need more information

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