

Volume 40 Issue 1 Morro Coast Audubon Society

May 2005

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"

MCAS SUPPORT DRIVE 2005

It's that time again. **The 2005 Support Drive for Morro Coast Audubon Society.** You know that this drive is the time we come directly to you to ask you to support your Chapter. Please watch your mailbox for the letter and return it with your donation. Last year we raised over \$7,000. Let's do it again, or even better!

Questions? Rosalie Valvo at 772-1429, rvalvo@slonet.org



Field Notes & Musings, MCAS Winter Loon Survey

Henry Pontrelli

March 24, Morro Estuary, 25-meter radius of channel marker 17.

1706- 2% cloud cover, force 3-4 wind, mid 50F, tide incoming

Put canoe in at municipal launch, paddled with wind, adult COLO [Common Loon]. Flies over boat, lands 20 meters from boat, orange on right leg, red on left seen in air. Blue band on left leg picked up as bird preens.

1715- 2 more unbanded adult COLO join "our" bird. White stripe discerned on orange band (rt. leg). So it goes, on March 24, Keith Miller and I positively identified an adult, female Common Loon on our bay, for the last time, this winter. She was banded on Lower Stillwater Lake in Montana last summer and spent her winter here.

FAST FORWARD...

March 31, Lower Still Water Lake, Montana.

0930 - Arrived at inlet of Lower Stillwater and immediately saw "our" loon. The ice on the lake has receded a slight amount. Loon did lots of diving. Bruce arrived about 10 am with spotting scope and we watched her for another 45 minutes--mostly at 250 yards. All three of us saw a reddish band on the right leg--and she preened extensively--then saw another reddish band on the left leg. It's a bright, sunny, calm morning **turn to page 6!**



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RARE BIRD ALERT

Morro Coast Audubon	528-7182
Monterey	831 375-9122
Northern California	415 681-7422
Los Angeles/Southern California	323 874-1318
Santa Barbara	964-8240
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

PACIFIC FLYWAY is published ten times per year. Deadline for copy submitted is the 1 st Monday of the Month. Printed at Hay Printing, Morro Bay, on recycled paper. Labeled & mailed at Achievement House.

Subscriptions are available to non-members at \$12 /yr. Send check payable to The Morro Coast Audubon

Photos p4, p6.-Dick Boyd

Electronic Subscription

Morro Coast Audubon Society's newsletter *Pacific Flyway* is available in electronic form as a .PDF file that is distributed by e-mail. You must have an e-mail address and you must have the program Acrobat Reader in order to read it. (If you don't have the program, it is easily downloadable for free.)

The .PDF versions are being archived on the Chapter's Website(see bottom of page). After looking at a .PDF version and if you are a **member of the Audubon Society or otherwise regularly receiving the Flyway in the mail**, and you decide that you wish to no longer receive the printed version, and instead have the PDF version of **each issue** sent to you **automatically** by e-mail, then e-mail Rosalie Valvo at rvalvo@slonet.org with the name that your *Flyway* is mailed to. (Your e-mail address on the message to Rosalie will be used for the electronic subscription). The mailing of the *Flyway* will be discontinued, but your membership will not be otherwise affected.



CHECK IT OUT!

Next General Meeting Monday May 16

“Raptor Reproduction”

Kara Hagedorn and “Sunshine”page 3

Three field trips:

**Hi Mtn,
 Mojave Desert,
 Santa Rosa Creek Roadpage 4**

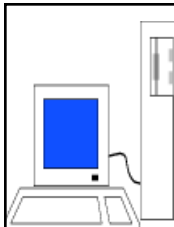
Our Website

www.morrocoastaudubon.org

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

e-mail:

mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org



MCAS BOARD MEETING

Monday May 2 , 2005

6:45 P. M.

The Board Meetings are held at the Los Osos Community Center off of Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos. All interested members are invited to attend

GENERAL MEETING

May 16, 2006 at 7:00 PM
The Congregational Church
11245 Los Osos Valley Road
San Luis Obispo



Kara Hagedorn and Sunshine

Raptor Reproduction

Learn how raptors define their territory, woo a mate, and copulate. How do they choose a nest tree and carry sticks? Anatomically, how do birds lay eggs? What's involved with incubation and raising young? Join zoologist Kara Hagedorn and Sunshine, a Red-tailed Hawk, for an up close program on raptor reproduction. Sunshine was shot and unable to survive in the wild, but every year she exhibits breeding behavior and lays eggs. Hear the comical story of how Sunshine's April Fool's eggs became chicks that celebrate Earth Day as their birthday.

Members and friends are cordially invited. Stay afterward for refreshment and sharing. Raffle.

Information: contact Rosemary at 528-8193

BIRDS AT EBB TIDE

Over for the Summer. Will continue next Fall when the migratory birds return.



SECOND SATURDAY AT SWEET SPRINGS 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon May 14, 2005

We need more help, so come on out and give the "regulars" a helping hand. In addition to doing a little light maintenance on the trails the weed warriors will remove some exotics such as veldt grass.

Meet at the main entrance to the preserve on the 600 block of Ramona in the community of Los Osos. We'll do a little birding after wards, rain cancels. For more information contact John at 528-0540.



Why is it called a
Great Blue Heron when it is
Shades of foggy gray?

Haiku by Rosemary Flamion

MAY 2005 FIELD TRIPS

MAY 7th (Saturday): HI MOUNTAIN AREA

Meet leader Alan Schmierer at 6:30 AM at the Rte 101 Santa Margarita exit Park-and-Ride parking lot, immediately on your right after you exit. Exact destination(s) will depend on weather and where the birding will be most interesting, but it is likely that we will car-pool to the Hi Mountain ridge top and hike for several miles along the road. Walking will be slow-paced, along a somewhat uneven-surfaced and hilly dirt road for a total of up to 2 miles. Bring water and lunch, although we may finish by noon.

Questions:

aaschmierer@yahoo.com or at 772-2026.

MAY 14th-15th (Sat – Sun):MOJAVE DESERT

Join leader Tom Edell for two days of birding in eastern Kern County. The plan is to bird Butterbredt Springs, California City and the Silver Saddle Resort at Galileo Park. We will catch the height of western migration, and there is always potential for something unexpected in the desert during the spring. The group will meet in Mojave early Saturday morning. It is suggested that participants arrive in Mojave on Friday night. (For more information on this area, consult pages 74-79 of the ABA/Lane A Birder's Guide To Southern California, by Brad Schram.) This trip will be limited to 12 participants.

Please call or email Tom at 805-995-1691 / tedell@aol.com, to reserve a space and/or for additional information on where to stay and meet.

MAY 15th (Sunday): SANTA RITA CREEK ROAD TO CAYUCOS: (Sponsored by North Cuesta A S)

Meet at the Rideshare lot at southwest corner of Hwy 101 and Vineyard Rd. to car pool. Bring lunch, water and birding gear. We'll bird along Santa Rita Creek Rd. looking for Lazuli bunting, blue grosbeaks and other migrants and summer nesting birds.

Call Roger Zachary 466-6222 for more information.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

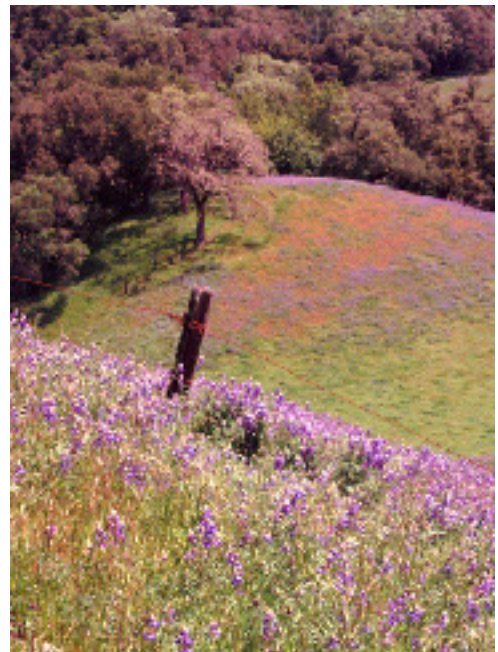
MCAS Oso Flaco Lake

On March 19 it was raining as I headed down to Oso Flaco Lake. I could see small patches of blue sky in the distance as I topped the Nipomo Mesa, but was still sure no one would show up for the field trip.

Laury Lotz did show up ready to bird and together we spent four hours meandering through the four habitats of willows, marsh, chaparral and seashore. All the usual suspects were in their places singing, foraging, diving, courting and skulking, just waiting to give us good looks and the opportunity to identify them by sight, sound and behavior.

Perhaps the highlight was when Laury spotted an American Bittern in the reeds on the big island. We also had the mini drama of ongoing quick glimpses of a Sora. Finally the rail ventured out into the open giving us great views and a fitting end to a very satisfying field trip. Fifty eight species were seen or heard. Laury racked up seven life birds.

Maggie Smith



View from Santa Rita Creek Road



To Our Newest Members

Arroyo Grande

Jane Campbell
Jessie Lang
Alma Q Pennell

Cambria

George and Terry Finigan
Hazel Benham

Cayucos

Susan Fishman

Grover Beach

Diane Bonior
Betty Dodson

Los Osos

Kitty Thomas
Kathy Kerbo

Marti Lindholm
Marjorie J Lunn
Michael D Utin
David Zarek

Morro Bay

Jenny Brantlee
Joan Decker
Ruth A Korbin
Lynda F Merrill
Linda Richardson

Nipomo

Jackie Allison
Peggy Johnson
Laura Stuhr

Pismo Beach

Wiona Finney

Leslie E Puccini

San Luis Obispo

Lillian Thompson
Christina Coulter
Harriette Brown
Theodora Jones
Lawrence J Wolf

Shell Beach

Joe Angelo
Stella Capanna

Quartz Hill

Pamela Stones

*****DONATIONS*****



The Morro Coast Audubon Society would like to thank the following for contributions received recently.



MCAS General Support:

Theodore Fainstat

David Holmes

Gail Alane

Marjorie Neiswanger

Denise Headtke

Elaine Mermelstein

If you would like to contribute to one of our funds (such as Hi Mtn Condor Project or Sweet Springs), please send your check payable to Morro Coast Audubon Society, PO Box 160, Morro Bay, CA 93443-0160. All donations are tax deductible under IRS Code 501(c)(3). THANK YOU!

Field Notes & Musings, MCAS Winter Loon Survey

continued from page 1

We thank the “Montana Loon Working Group” for their notes on page 1.

Over 1000 miles in 5.5 to 6 days!!! Loons usually start their migrations in the early part of the day. We speculate then, she left on the morning of the 25th or 26th. A large storm front had just moved in and provided the catalyst she needed. How did she go??? Up the coast to the Columbia River Valley and then east? Or did she take a straighter line over the Sierra?

This type of movement has never before been recorded. Most, if not all information on Loons, is based on summer, breeding studies. One of the goals of the Winter Loon Survey is to understand where Loons that use our bay in the winter spend their summers, and if the wintering, Morro Bay birds are related. It takes some researchers years to experience successes like this. We are lucky. We hope to share our luck and shed light on the behavior of these birds and perhaps understand a little more about ourselves.

This is not just a Morro Coast Audubon survey or just a Biodiversity Research Institute Study, **it is a community project**. We thank and share this information with the Morro Bay Harbor Patrol, the National Estuary Program, Morro Bay State Parks, the Natural History Museum, Kayak Horizons, Pacific Wildlife Care, all the live-on-board residents of the bay, all the kayakers, anglers, hunters, sailors, clamdiggers...and anyone who has looked out over the bay and felt a surge of joy.

THANK YOU.

Henry Pontrelli

Call me with questions about the study, to buy a “Winter Loon Survey” shirt or to support this work in any way; Henry Pontarelli, 528 4587



Wintering Common Loon, Morro Bay Harbor 1/22/05

Eureka!

THE BIRDS OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY – March 2005

- Clark's Grebe – 19 Mar, a pair with the first nest of the season was on Whale Rock Reservoir (TME)
- American Bittern – 20 Mar, one at Oso Flaco Lake provided the only report this month (LL, MLS)
- White-faced Ibis – 19 Mar, a flock of 25 ibis was seen heading north over Laguna Lake (RMR); 21 Mar, three were in the fore-dune lagoons in the Morro Strand area in North Morro Bay (NW)
- Tundra Swan – 23 Mar, one on Morro Bay provided the county's latest spring date (MLS,DV)
- Canada Goose – 26 Mar, 6 were on Morro Bay (TME) and 31 Mar; two were on the ocean off the Port San Luis Pier (TME)
- Wood Duck – 1 Mar, there were at least 6 pair at the Atascadero wastewater ponds (MLS); 4 Mar, a male was on the lagoon at the Oceano Campground (MLS); and 13 Mar, a pair was on Santa Margarita Lake (SCS)
- Eurasian Wigeon – 12-26 Mar, up to two males were on Morro Bay (RB,MLS,TME)
- Blue-winged Teal – 23 Mar, 50 males with uncounted females around Baywood Cove and off Pecho Road was the high count for the month of March (MDS)
- Long-tailed Duck – 1 Mar, a female was seen west of the Morro Bay State Park Marina (MLS); 31 Mar, the first year bird wintering around the Port San Luis Pier was still present (TME)
- Black Scoter – 26 Mar, a female was off Yerba Buena Street in North Morro Bay (TME); 31 Mar, three females were off the Port San Luis Pier (TME)
- Hooded Merganser – 9-21 Mar, a male and female were on a pond near the Cal Poly sports complex (MDS, MLS)
- Osprey – 8 Mar, one was at Morro Bay (MLS); another was seen at Lopez Lake (DML), and 20 Mar, one was at Atascadero Lake (LT)
- Bald Eagle – 9 Mar, an adult was at Lopez Lake (DML) with **2 juveniles and an adult (often dive-bombed by Ospreys) there on 18 Mar (SH)**; 13 Mar, an adult at Santa Margarita Lake (JLR,SCS)
- Swainson's Hawk – 31 Mar, very rare in SLO County, an intermediate morph sub-adult flew over Deer Canyon in northeast Arroyo Grande (BKS)
- Rough-legged Hawk – 9 Mar, two on the Carrizo Plain were the latest reported (BKS)
- Black-necked Stilt – 6-19 Mar, up to two were in the wetland along Cholame Valley Road where this species bred last year (AFS); 15 Mar, one was at a pond on the south side of Seven Mile Road in the Carrizo Plain (K&BK)
- Lesser Yellowlegs – 6-19 Mar, one was with a Greater Yellowlegs in the wetland along Cholame Valley Road (AFS); 11 Mar, five were seen in the Chorro Creek channel along State Park Road in Morro Bay (GPS)
- Black-legged Kittiwake – 21 Mar, an immature off Point Piedras Blancas provided one of the few this winter (RAR)
- Black Skimmer – 5-26 Mar, up to 9 have been on the inside of the Morro Bay Sandspit across from the boat launch (MLS)
- Marbled Murrelet – 20-26 Mar, groups of 1-3 were almost daily sitting off Point Piedras Blancas during the morning hours in varying shades of dress from full winter to molting into spring breeding (RAR)
- Ancient Murrelet – 20-26 Mar, small numbers have been flybys at Point Piedras Blancas (RAR)
- Lewis's Woodpecker – 6 Mar, one continued to be seen about 1.7 miles south of Hwy 58 along Pozo Road (MDS)
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 10 Mar, a female discovered in the Morro Bay Heron Rookery likely wintered there (BKS)
- Red-naped Sapsucker – 5 Mar, last date the male wintering at El Chorro Regional Park was seen (DML); 9 Mar, a female found in riparian habitat along Pozo Road about a mile beyond Hwy 58 may have wintered there (BKS) as is likely the case with an adult male photographed in an elm tree at the Santa Margarita Lake headquarters building on 13 Mar, (SCS,JLR)
- Pacific Slope Flycatcher – 7 Mar, first of spring, two were heard along the Reservoir Flats Trail at Montana de Oro SP (GPS)
- Cassin's Kingbird – 6 Mar, first of spring, one was in the riparian woodland on San Juan Creek at Hwy 58 (MDS)
- Western Kingbird – 6 Mar, one on a fence along Bitterwater Road provided a new early arrival date for the county (MDS)
- Cassin's Vireo – 29 Mar, first of spring, one was singing along the intermittent oak-lined creek between Rambouillet and Charolais Roads in Paso Robles (MT)
- Warbling Vireo – 9 Mar, first of spring, singing bird along Pozo Road about one mile beyond the Santa Margarita turnoff from Hwy 58 (BKS)
- Varied Thrush – 13 Mar, a male was in Spooners Cove Campground at Montana de Oro State Park (RB)
- Sage Thrasher – 19 Mar, two were along the north end of Elkhorn Road near the first corral (DML); 27 Mar, one was along Hwy 33 at Foothill Road in southeastern SLO County (AFS)
- Le Conte's Thrasher – 13 Mar, two that appeared to be paired were in saltbush south of Panorama Rd, Carrizo Plain (AFS)
- Phainopepla – 1 Mar, one just west of Toro Creek Road along Hwy 41 seemed out of place (MLS)
- Nashville Warbler – 2 Mar, the wintering bird at the Oceano Campground lagoon was still present (MLS)
- Hermit Warbler – 14 Mar, a first winter female was in Monterey pines in the State Park Campground in Oceano (MLS)
- Chipping Sparrow – 29 Mar, individuals in 2 different locations, were both in junipers near Quail Springs in the southern Carrizo Plain National Monument (AFS)
- Lark Bunting – 13 Mar, an alternate plumaged male was along Soda Lake Road about a mile north of the Carrizo Plain National Monument Visitor Center entrance (JH)
- Black-headed Grosbeak – 12 Mar, a second year male at a feeder in Los Osos was exceptionally early (GPS) (*con't next page*) 7

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Richard Barth, Tom M. Edell, **Steve Hampton**, Jim Hardesty, Ken and Brenda Kyle, Dave M. Lawrence, Laury Lotz, John L. Roser, Richard A. Rowlett, Ron M. Ruppert, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Steve C. Schubert, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Bob Stafford, Mike D. Stiles, Linda Tanner, Mike Tyner, Deb Villa, Norma Wightman, and Roger H. Zachary. For information about birds or locations mentioned in this report, contact Tom Edell at (805) 995-1691 or tedell@aol.com....*Tom Edell*

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 160, Morro Bay CA 93443-0160. To check the status of your subscription or request membership changes call 1-800-274-4201

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