

Volume 41 Issue 1 Morro Coast Audubon Society

May 2006

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"

From Allen to Dickinson to the Senate floor.

"Hope is the thing with feathers", said Emily Dickinson. How true.

In the early 80s, Woody Allen published a collection of short stories called "Without Feathers", a satirical view of the human condition, our weaknesses, our unreal expectations and our ability to laugh at ourselves. In one story, Johan Needleman dies by suffocating under a roll top desk while searching for rhyming dictionary. Mr. Needleman always said he wanted to die "quietly surrounded by his books and papers".

In my experience, the best negotiators, those accomplishing the most important work, understand their own weaknesses and have the ability to laugh at themselves. Conversely, those that take themselves too seriously tend to be the most difficult and face the greatest obstacles in working with others.

MCAS' work is serious, our goals and connections with other conservation groups are of grave importance. In many cases, the health of future generations relies on our foresight and volunteer hours. We take our work very seriously. With this month's Flyway is a letter sent to Senator Kuehl (on April 2) to voice our support of SB 1799, limiting logging of old-growth forests. Through our conservation chairman, Dominic Perello, our board is constantly aware of important conservation issues in California and all over the country. This is one example of one of the phone calls, faxes and e-mails that MCAS uses to affect conservation policy.

The Morro Coast Audubon board is working hard to make our voices heard on serious issues. None of us however, are beyond laughing at ourselves.

Dear Senator Kuehl,

As president of the Morro Coast Audubon Society (1000 members, San Luis Obispo County), I urge you to support SB 1799 when it is heard in your Committee on Tuesday, April 4th. Especially important to us, this bill would prohibit the cutting or damaging the some of our largest and oldest living Giant Sequoias, Coast Redwoods and Douglas firs on private lands.

Only three percent of the old-growth trees remain for our grandchildren to see. Since the current federal administration appears comfortable with logging regardless of habitat degradation and disruption to the ecosystem it causes, SB 1799 is more important than ever!

These forests provide not just beauty, but habitat for numerous wildlife and birdlife species that are finding less habitat in which to live as our population escalates.

A healthy planet for birds is a healthy planet for humans as well. We would appreciate learning of the final outcome of the committee's deliberations so we may inform our members.

Sincerely,

Henry Pontarelli, President, Morro Coast Audubon Society

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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

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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!

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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 1, 2006
6:45 P. M.

Community Center off of Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos. All interested members are invited to attend.

GENERAL MEETING

Morro Coast Audubon Society
presents...



“California and Beyond: Migration and Conservation of the Sooty Shearwater”

By Hannah Nevins, Seabird Ecologist

Sooty Shearwaters are one of California's most abundant seabirds during summer; yet few appreciate the great migration this species makes each year from New Zealand, Chile, and Australia to the west coast of California. Hannah Nevins, from Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge and Moss Landing Marine Laboratories will discuss aspects of the ecology, natural history of California's most abundant migratory seabirds: the Sooty Shearwater. Nevins was awarded the NOAA Environmental Hero Award in 2004 for her BeachCOMBERS research project of Monterey Bay. Join us for this thrilling adventure.

Monday, May 22, 2006 at 7:00 pm
Monarch Grove Elementary School

348 Los Osos Valley Road, Los Osos, CA
This presentation is the seventh in the Natural History Series of MCAS brought to members and the general public FREE of charge. Information: 528-8193

Note the temporary change of venue! ↑
Also there are 5 Mondays in May, this meeting is on the 4th rather than the third. Also officer elections

AUDUBON LOSES A FRIEND

One of Los Osos most respected citizens recently passed away. Alfred L Switzer, 94, died on March 13 in San Luis Obispo. Al, as he was known in Los Osos was best known in Audubon circles by his actions when he donated the land we now know as Sweet Springs Nature Preserve. **As part of the normal Second Saturday at Sweet Springs on May 13 we will plant a specimen size oak tree in his memory.** Come out and help us celebrate Al's life.



SECOND SATURDAY AT SWEET SPRINGS

April 8, 2006 9:00 AM - 12 Noon
SECOND SATURDAY AT SWEET SPRINGS
9:00AM – 12:00 NOON, 13 MAY 2006

In another month it will be the beginning of summer and many of us will be taking our vacations. May is usually the last chance for most of us to spend a couple of hours keeping Sweet Springs beautiful. Everybody come on out and help us do a little weed pulling or maybe just sprucing up the trails. Additionally we will be planting a specimen size oak tree in memory of Al Switzer. We all remember Al as the person that gave us Sweet Springs. Refreshments will follow.

The Annual Officer Elections will be held at the May General Meeting, with the slate below

President - Henry Pontarelli
President-elect - No candidate as yet
Secretary - Priscilla Akin
Conservation - Andrea Jones
Membership - Rosalie Valvo
Education - Dawn Williams
Hospitality - Devra Cooper
Programs/publicity - Rosemary Flamion
Field Trips - Alan Schmierer
Directors at Large - Barbara Burke and Cheryl Lesinski

MAY 2006: FIELD TRIPS

MAY 13th-14th (Sat – Sun):MOJAVE DESERT: Join leader Tom Edell for two days of birding in eastern Kern County. The plan is to bird Butterbred 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.

MCAS / CNPS PICNIC AT SANTA MARGARITA LAKE

SATURDAY, MAY 6

Mark your calendar for this FIRST collaborative picnic of **MORRO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY** and **CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**. Activities include informal and guided native plant and wildflower walks, bird walks, hikes, fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, biking, and activities and a playground for kids. Bring a picnic lunch and / or dinner (grills available for BBQs) , kayaks, canoes, spotting scopes, bikes, etc. for enjoying the day at the lake.

Santa Margarita Lake is San Luis Obispo's largest regional park and boasts an 800 acre lake along with oak-woodland, riparian, freshwater wetland, and chaparral habitats. Nesting Clark's, Western, and pied-billed grebes are likely sightings along with raptors including Bald and golden eagles and Peregrine falcons. Native plant inventory at the park includes various species of dudleya, phacelia, and lupine. Chia, wooly blue curls, larkspur and other showy spring wildflowers should be in bloom.

Event staging area will be White Oak Flats Picnic Area. Daily use fees will be waived for event participants. Stay tuned for specific times for guided walks and directed kid's activities.

For more information ccontact:
Jan Surbey <jansurbey@earthlink.net>
Tel: 772-7273

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! FOR THE NEWLY NAMED HABITAT CONSERVATION AND PLOVER RECOVERY PROGRAM

Interested in combining birding with habitat conservation? Want to help the snowy plover while enjoying the beach? March 1st through September 30th is snowy plover breeding season and this threatened shorebird needs your help. It's a perfect time for you to get involved with the **Habitat Conservation and Plover Recovery Program**, sponsored by The Morro Coast Audubon Society. Volunteers are on the beach 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 the fences and signs. Volunteers play an integral role in helping to conserve the habitat and recover the remaining plover population.

Saturday Training Breakfasts

8am - 12pm

May 13th, June 10th

**Get more information while joining me
on the beach for coffee and breakfast.**

Contact me for information or
other available times:
Stephanie Little at (805) 610-6229
or email: Stephjoy13@hotmail.com

Hi Mountain Lookout Project 10th Anniversary Celebration

This is the 10-year anniversary of the Hi Mountain Lookout Project! Join us for a day of celebration and events on Saturday, May 13th. Meet at the Pozo Ranger Station at 9:30am to make carpooling arrangements for driving up to the lookout (driving directions are posted at our website www.condorlookout.org).

Scheduled activities in the morning include touring the lookout and visitor center facilities, enjoying the views from the coast to the snow-covered Sierras, taking a leisurely stroll along the access road astride the crest of the Santa Lucia Mountains (at over 3,000 ft. elevation), participating in volunteer work projects, practicing with condor radio tracking equipment, recording field data, and joining in training sessions for new volunteers who may be interested in helping to staff the lookout in the future.

Also scheduled for the anniversary celebration will be a visit by special guest Don Parham, past-President of Morro Coast Audubon Society. Thirty years ago Don, along with past-MCAS President Hyrum Strong, initiated and organized the Huff's Hole peregrine falcon nest watch from Hi Mountain Lookout, scheduling MCAS volunteers who staffed the lookout several consecutive years in the late 1970's. The peregrine falcon nest site surveillance and protection project occurred at a time when the peregrine falcon was an extremely rare and endangered species in California and elsewhere throughout much of its range. We look forward to interviewing and reminiscing with Don Parham about his experiences at the lookout so many years ago. In our files we still have the original 1970's letters of correspondences and agreements between MCAS and the Forest Service, typed field notes, wildlife sighting reports, species checklists for the Hi Mountain locale, and old black and white photographs of the lookout facilities taken by the MCAS volunteers.

This first MCAS/USFS collaboration more than 30 years ago would years later serve as the inspiration for establishing the present Hi Mountain Lookout Project, a joint venture between several agencies and organizations. The Hi Mountain Lookout Project is a working agreement between Morro Coast Audubon Society, the U.S. Forest Service at Los Padres National Forest, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Condor Recovery Program at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Other important collaborators are staff and students from the Cal Poly Biological Sciences Department, the Ventana Wildlife Society, and the National Park Service at Pinnacles National Monument. Volunteers, college students, and staff are radio tracking California Condor movements and conducting other biological research projects at the Hi Mountain Lookout field research station.

Concurrent with this anniversary celebration on May 13th will be an opportunity to also participate in the annual Pozo Wildflower Weekend field trip, sponsored by the Forest Service and SLO chapter of the California Native Plant Society. This is a "drive and stroll" tour of wildflowers along Hi Mountain Road, including some serpentine rock outcrop areas, concluding at the lookout in time for lunch. Sturdy shoes, lunch and liquids, camera and binoculars are recommended. Call Helen Tarbet at (805) 925-9538 ext.246 or Charles Blair at (805) 733-3189 for details.

After a picnic lunch at the lookout, those who would like to hike down the mountain will be birding, botanizing, butterfly watching, and observing the local geology along the way as we walk the 6 miles on graded Hi Mountain Road back down to Pozo Ranger Station. This is a downhill hike nearly all the way (with one stream crossing)!

Check the Hi Mountain Lookout Project website at www.condorlookout.org for more details as the May 13th event approaches, and for road and driving conditions.

Please RSVP to Steve Schubert if you are planning on attending the Hi Mountain Lookout Project 10-year anniversary event, at home phone #(805) 528-6138 or e-mail to s_schub@webtv.net Hope to see you on the mountain!



Western Snowy Plover Nesting in San Luis Obispo Coast District of California State Parks

- 294 nests Districtwide in 2005
- 50% successfully hatched
- 225 nests at Montana de Oro Sandspit in 2005
- 27 nests at Morro Strand State Beach in 2005
- 37 nests at Villa Creek in 2005
- 5 nests at San Simeon in 2005
- 400 nests Districtwide in 2004
- 48% successfully hatched
- 225 nests Districtwide in 2003
- 53% successfully hatched
- 156 nests Districtwide in 2002
- 44% successfully hatched
- **45% of all snowy plover nests on State Park land in California occur in the San Luis Obispo Coast District**
- Protection measures implemented:
 - Symbolic fencing of nesting habitat
 - Single nest exclosures at Morro Strand
 - Enforcement of State Park policies
 - Monitoring 5 days per week
 - Interpretive & enforcement signage
- Public outreach:
 - Interpretive and regulatory brochures
 - Workshops for local agencies
 - Lectures for local groups

The 2005 Western Snowy Plover (WSP) breeding season was an overall success for the San Luis Obispo Coast District with 294 nests Districtwide. The biggest story of the year was the establishment of San Simeon State Beach as a successful breeding site. After the 2004 season in which no nests were initiated on the beach, all five of the nests found in 2005 hatched. This was a remarkable change and it speaks clearly to the importance of this beach for both breeding and wintering WSP.

In recent years Morro Strand State Beach has experienced dramatically reduced WSP breeding success due to increased nest predation by American Crows. In 2005, intense monitoring efforts and the use of single nest exclosures allowed the WSP to fair much better with 70% of the nests hatching.

In comparison to 2004, Villa Creek Beach experienced increased overall success during the 2005 season. Greater levels of visitor cooperation helped contribute to the success of the season.

The Montana de Oro State Park Sand Spit continues to be one of the largest contiguous breeding sites for the WSP in its range. The long term conservation of this incredible dune complex will undoubtedly benefit the WSP.

This information was provided by Regena Orr,
Environmental Scientist for San Luis Obispo Coast District.



Eureka!

THE BIRDS OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY – March 2006

- Greater White-fronted Goose – 19 Mar, the immature continued at a residential pond along Route 58 at postmile 40 on the Carrizo Plain (TME)
- Snow Goose – 10 Mar, the immature continued wintering at the mouth of Pismo Creek (MLS)
- Ross's Goose – 1-25 Mar, this bird also continued at the Hwy 58 pond mentioned above (mob)
- Cackling Goose – 23-31 Mar, an Aleutian race bird was found on the pond along Corbett Canyon Road and Tiffany Ranch Road (CL)
- Brant – 1-28 Mar, one continued feeding with coots on the lawn at Oceano County Park (MLS)
- Wood Duck – 18 Mar, up to two females and two males continued at the upper swine pond at Cal Poly (MLS); 19 Mar, the wintering flock at the Atascadero Sewage Treatment Plant totaled 74 birds (RHZ); 29 Mar, a female flying up Atascadero Creek past San Gabriel Road was likely breeding somewhere along the creek in that area (MLS).
- Blue-winged Teal – 10 Mar, a male and female were at the mouth of Arroyo Grande Creek (MLS) and another male and female were at the San Luis Obispo Sewage Treatment Plant that day (MLS)
- Eurasian Wigeon – 11-19 Mar, a male was in the wetlands along Foothill Blvd between Los Oso Valley Road and O'Connor Way (DML)
- Long-tailed Duck – 1-31 Mar, up to three males continued around the Morro Bay Harbor mouth (mob)
- Hooded Merganser – 12 Mar, two males and two females continued at the pond near the Cal Poly Baseball Stadium (MLS)
- Common Merganser – 1-28 Mar, the male at Oceano County Park is still present after a couple of years (MLS)
- Western Grebe – 11-30 Mar, up to five nests and an adult with a chick were on the Cottontail Creek arm of Whale Rock Reservoir (TME). This is the county's earliest nesting record by at least four months.
- Clark's Grebe -- 30 Mar, one nest and two adults with 3 chicks were on Cottontail Creek arm of Whale Rock Reservoir (TME). This is the county's earliest nesting record by at least two months.
- American Bittern – 10-27 Mar, one was in the bulrush marsh at 1550 S. Thompson Road (MLS); 31 Mar, another was at Shepard Reservoir on the Cal Poly Campus (MDS)
- White-faced Ibis – 1-27 Mar, up to four in the flooded field behind 1550 S. Thompson Road in Nipomo (mob)
- Osprey – 10 Mar, one was seen on the Cal Poly Pier at Avila (MLS); 19 Mar, one was at Atascadero Lake (RHZ)
- Bald Eagle – 13 Mar, an immature was at Arroyo de La Cruz (GH); 26 Mar, an adult was on the ponds just south of the Piedras Blancas Motel (MB)
- Black-necked Stilt – 19 Mar, four at Cholame Valley Road wetland may breed there as in the past (MLS)
- Whimbrel – 19 Mar, three were seen and heard on the Carrizo Plain where this species is rare in spring (TM)
- Laughing Gull – 2 Mar, a second winter/third winter bird was at the mouth of Old Creek in Cayucos (TME)
- Black-legged Kittiwake – 20 Mar, 81 were recorded on a seabird survey of Estero Bay (BKS)
- Pigeon Guillemot – 4 Mar, 7 in Spooners Cove in Montana de Oro State Park were the first for this spring (TM)
- Marbled Murrelet – 16 Mar, one continued nearshore south of San Simeon Cove (MLS)
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 21 Mar, the wintering female continued at Cal Poly (JB)
- Red-naped Sapsucker – 1-18 Mar, the male continued in front of the Cal Poly library (mob)
- Northern Flicker – 26 Mar, a yellow-shafted race bird was east of San Miguel along Cross Canyon Road (TME)
- Gray Flycatcher – 4-5 Mar, the one wintering at the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground may have left early in the month (BKS); 1-28 Mar, the one at Oso Flaco Lake continued through the month (MLS)
- Vermilion Flycatcher – 2-31 Mar, the male at 1550 S. Thompson Road stayed through the month (mob)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet – always rare, individuals were on the north side of Black Hill, Morro Bay State Park, on 7 Mar (MLS), the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground on 8 Mar (RJ), and at the Cerro Alto Campground on 18 Mar
- Sage Thrasher – 19 Mar, seven were along 7-Mile Road near Borenga Road on the Carrizo Plain and two were along Davis Canyon Road in the northeastern SLO County (TME)
- Red-breasted Nuthatch – 7 Mar, some were present on Black Hill, Morro Bay State Park (MLS) and 30 Mar, two were at the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground (MLS)
- Phainopepla – 26 Mar, a trip through the hills east of San Miguel turned up 25 along Lowes Canyon Road and 25 along Ranchita Canyon Road (TME)
- Nashville Warbler – 15 Mar, one at Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground (TME)
- Northern Parula – 1-22 Mar, the wintering male continued at Morro Bay State Park (mob)
- Grasshopper Sparrow – 21 Mar, one singing along Perfumo Canyon Road was the first reported this spring (MLS)
- White-throated Sparrow – 17 Mar, one, possibly a tan-striped individual, was at Morro Bay State Park (DB)
- Golden-crowned Sparrow x White-throated Sparrow – 27 Mar, this hybrid continued its third winter in Deer Canyon, Arroyo Grande (BKS)
- Black-headed Grosbeak – 9 Mar, a male at Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground was very early and may have wintered nearby (CL)
- Great-tailed Grackle – 3 Mar, a male and female were at Laguna Lake where this species may breed (MLS); 19 Mar, a male was displaying at Atascadero Lake (RHZ); 26 Mar, two males were at the Links Golf Course pond in eastern Paso Robles (TME)
- Hooded Oriole – 7 Mar, one in Los Osos set a new spring arrival date for this species (JSR)
- Bullock's Oriole – 8 Mar, female at the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground was early if it did not winter nearby (RJ)

(continued next page)

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Michael Barnes, Dick Barth, Jared Bigler, Tom M. Edell, Gordon Hensley, Ryan Jorgeson, Dave M. Lawrence, Cheryl Lish, Tom Maloney, John L. Roser, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, 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

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

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