



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 45 Issue 1, May 2010

MCAS / CNPS Picnic at Santa Margarita Lake

Sunday, May 2nd



Please join us on Sunday, May 2nd for the fifth collaborative picnic hosted by Morro Coast Audubon Society and California Native Plant Society. There will be several field trips and events throughout the day. Daily use fees will be waived for event participants; we welcome members of either organization as well as the general public.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

8:00 - 11:00am

River Road Ramble - Join Alan Schmierer at River Road for a birding walk. Meet at the River Road access for an easy 3 mile walk along the Salinas River before it flows into the lake. Appropriate for all experience levels.

Staging area for all other activities will be the White Oak Picnic area (handicap accessible)

9:00am

White Oak Birding Walk with Mike Stiles. Appropriate for all experience levels.

9:00am

Walk on the Wild Side Hike - Join SLM Ranger Chuck Woodard for a pontoon boat ride across the lake to explore birds and plants on a portion of the new Falcon Trail. Limited to 12 participants.

9:30 - 11:00am

Beginning Birder's Walk - Join Stephanie Little and Jen Moonjian for a fun introduction to the world of birding. Kids and adults welcome. Binoculars will be provided.

10:00am

Paddlepazoola - Join Jack Beigle for kayaking and canoeing. Bring PFDs, sunscreen and binoculars.

10:00am

Plantapalooza - Join David Chipping and Dirk Walters for a plant walk.

11:00 - 1:30pm

Pacific Wildlife Care will be on site with live birds giving informal 15-20 minute "visits" with feathered friends.

12 noon

Lunch Break - Join us for an old-fashioned new-fangled picnic. Bring your own sandwich (or something to grill), a side dish, snack, or dessert to share and your own (preferably reusable) place setting and beverage container. Throw in your picnic tablecloth if possible. Assorted drinks provided by MCAS.

1:00 - 2:00pm

Wildflower Sketching - Join Barb Renshaw and Rachael Yon for an hour of wildflower sketching. Sketchpads and colored pencils will be provided, but bring your own if you have them.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

MCAS 2009-2010 BOARD

President

Christy Holmes - MCASChristy@gmail.com

President Elect

Vacant

Past President

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

Treasurer

Bryan Brown - 528-8137, bryanlives@sbcglobal.net

Secretary

Elinore Cottrell, ehcottrell@gmail.com

Programs Co-Chairs

Rouvaishyana - 534-9867

Aurianna Woodson - auriannaw@gmail.com

Publicity Chair

Dick Boyd - 772-3993, dickboyd@charter.net

Field Trip Co-Chairs

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

Jen Moonjian - jmoonjia@gmail.com

Hospitality Chair

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

Membership Chair

Rosalie Valvo - 772-1429, rvalvo@sbcglobal.net

Education Chair

Stephanie Little - 610-6229, stephjoy13@hotmail.com

Lands Chair

Greg Smith - slobird@aol.com

Communications Co-Chairs

Newsletter: Jennifer Little: jennlittle3@hotmail.com

Website: Mike Stiles - 528-1515, mstiles@calpoly.edu

Conservation Chair

Andrea Jones - 772-1995, savannarum@hotmail.com

Fund Development Chair

Vacant

Directors at Large

Dick Parker- 528-8272, parkerkp47@sbcglobal.net

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

Newsletter layout by Jessie Skidmore, www.jessieskidmore.com

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

BULLETIN

Thank You MCAS Donors!

Carole Maurer

Kathleen Kent

Barbara Burke

"In remembrance of Don Parham"

Sheila Blake

Alta Hall

Judith Obermeier

Elizabeth Scott-Graham

Valerie Endres

Bird Nest Boxes Needed

Like to do simple woodworking? We need volunteers to help build bird nest boxes for the MCAS nest box program. This program provides nest cavities for our breeding birds and much-needed funding for our Audubon programs; 100% of nest box proceeds go into the general fund. If you have basic woodworking tools like a chop saw and a table saw and have some free time, please contact Alan Schmierer at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or call at 772-2026. This is an ongoing project, and can generally be done at very comfortable pace. Thank you!

Bird Fun Fact

WOODPECKER "DRUMMING": The rapid "drumming" of a woodpecker is a territorial or mating display. When a woodpecker is gleaning food or making a nest cavity, the bird works slowly and methodically for a soft pecking sound.



Acorn Woodpecker, courtesy of Alan Schmierer

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Being a Green Birder

As birders, we initially became interested in birds for a variety of reasons. Some of us started birding because we were already interested in the natural environment. Others began birding and then became interested in the natural environment. Either way, most of us have a strong appreciation of the environment as a whole. Many of us feel a responsibility to be environmentally aware and to act in an environmentally friendly manner. I have summarized several ways birders can act in an environmentally friendly manner:

1. Reduce fuel consumption when birding. Use fuel-free methods of transportation while birding when possible, like walking, biking, canoeing, etc. Carpooling when chasing rarities or going to popular bird spots is not only better environmentally than driving alone, but it may increase your chances of finding birds.
2. When you do travel, stay in locally-owned lodges and hotels. Ecotourism can be a great way to support local preservation of habitats and species when the local economy is involved.
3. Support conservation organizations, legislation, and education. Work toward preserving critical habitats, protecting threatened and endangered species, and wildlife rehabilitation. Join, contribute, volunteer, and organize.
4. Promote birding and green birding in particular. Lead birding field trips, organize "big sits," and organize and support bird festivals and other birding events. Birding itself is often a first step for many people toward becoming more environmentally aware.
5. Mentor young birders by taking them individually into the field, organizing field trips for youth, and organizing classes for young birders.



Gnatcatcher, courtesy of Jim Royer

6. Plant bird-friendly native landscaping at your home, and encourage such planting at local schools and parks where possible.
7. Keep dogs confined and cats indoors. This is best for birds and other wildlife. Cats kill hundreds of millions of birds annually in the U.S. alone.
8. Avoid using pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers. Use compost and other natural fertilizers. Along with organic soil amendments, try "companion planting" and encourage and introduce natural predators instead of using pesticides. Harmful chemicals concentrate up the food chain and birds are especially susceptible.
9. Practice good birding ethics which includes generally staying on roadways, trails or other established walkways, not disturbing nesting birds, minimizing other disturbances of birds, etc.

10. Contribute bird sighting data by consistently using "eBird" for your daily sightings, by participating in bird counts and surveys. Keep bird lists for birds you have recorded at local spots; they may be used to help preserve or enhance areas in the future.

11. Responsibly feed yard birds. Keep feeders and bird baths clean, don't stop feeding in the middle of a harsh winter, and use recycled materials for feeders and nest boxes. Growing plants, which birds feed on, is preferable to buying seed trucked from where it is grown. If you buy seed, try buying organic seed. Protect birds at your feeders from cats or other predators as well as from windows. Do not feed water birds such as gulls, ducks, geese and pelicans.

12. Try to lead a green lifestyle in general: reduce, reuse, recycle, buy local products

To view the full article visit: <http://greenbirding.blogspot.com/2009/12/becoming-green-birder-as-birders-we.html>
-Jim Royer, guest contributor

Filipponi Ecological Area Walk

Thursday, May 6th from 8:00am -10:00am

Join Alan Schmierer on a walk through the Filipponi Ecological area, which has been restored by The Land Conservancy of SLO County, and is located just south of San Luis Obispo. Alan will lead you through parts of this 50-acre area of creek-side willows, pools, wetlands and weedy fields. Expect a variety of riparian species, including maybe a Yellow-breasted Chat or two. The trail has thick grass and brush, so wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots.

For more information, contact Alan Schmierer at aaschmierer@yahoo.com.

Hi Mountain Lookout Project Volunteer Workday and Picnic

Saturday, May 15th at 9:30am

The Hi Mountain Condor Lookout Project is seeking new volunteers to assist with California Condor radiotracking and staffing the lookout's Interpretive Center. Day and overnight shifts are available and scheduling is flexible. Join us for a day of volunteer training, work projects, birdwatching, wildflower viewing, socializing and a picnic lunch at Hi Mountain Lookout.

Meet at the Pozo Ranger Station at 9am for car pooling arrangements, or meet at the lookout at 9:30am (driving directions are posted on the website at www.condorlookout.org). Enjoy a view from the coast to the Sierras and a picnic lunch with friends and family.

For more information or if you are interested in attending, please contact Steve Schubert at s_schub1@msn.com or phone 805-528-6138.



Birding at Mojave Desert

Saturday & Sunday, May 15th - 16th

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 spring. The group will meet at the Denny's in Mojave early Saturday morning, and 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 is limited to 12 participants.

For more information or to reserve a space, contact Tom Edell at 805-995-1691.

LOCAL EVENTS, ETC.- CONTINUED

Community Program: Morro Bay Loon Study

With Darwin Long

Monday, May 17th, 7pm at El Chorro Park, SLO Botanical Garden Oak Glen Pavilion (across from Cuesta College)

Darwin Long is a field biologist with the non-profit BioDiversity Research Institute (BDRI) and an aviculture intern with Monterey Bay Aquarium. Since 2004, Darwin has paired the efforts of BDRI and MCAS in a joint long-term collaborative project that examines the Common Loon's wintering ecology and maturation biology at Morro Bay and other locales, an area of loon biology that previously received little study. All MCAS Community Programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments are provided. Please bring your own mug!



Common loon, courtesy of Alan Schmierer

Birding at Cal Poly /Stenner Creek Area

Saturday, May 22nd from 7:30am -Noon

Join leader Mike Stiles for a walk through parts of the Cal Poly campus, Stenner Creek and possibly other areas depending on bird activity and recent sightings. Meet at 7:30 am at the large parking lot at the corner of University and Perimeter Road. If you enter Poly on Highland, off Santa Rosa/Hwy1, continue under the railroad bridge and turn right at the second stop sign (University Ave) and make the first right into the parking lot. Turn left in the parking lot to the metered parking slots - no money required on Saturday. If entering on Grand Ave, turn right on Perimeter, right on University, and left into the parking lot. For more information, contact Mike Stiles at mstiles@calpoly.edu.

Featured Bird of the Month: Brandt's Cormorant



Brandt's Cormorant, courtesy of Mike Baird

Brandt's Cormorant is a marine bird that inhabits the Pacific coast of North America. They feed on small fish from the surface to sea floor by using their feet for propulsion to dive to depths of over 40 feet. During the breeding season, adults have a blue throat patch. This species nests on the ground or on rocky outcroppings.

ONGOING EVENTS: (throughout the day)

MCAS Book Sale- Help MCAS clean out the office and pick up some second-hand books.

Waterfowl and Woodpecker Watch- Participate in bird watching around the picnic area.

Fishing- Take your child fishing at Kid's Cove (for kids only) or shore fish around picnic area.

Hiking- Go for a hike at the Grey Pine Trailhead located at picnic area.

Junior Ranger Program- School-age children can participate in self-directed activities.

What to bring

Kayaks, canoes, spotting scopes, binoculars, cameras, field guides, bikes, fishing gear etc, and lunch (see Lunch Break section). The marina store stocks supplies and rents boats.

Directions

To Santa Margarita Lake White Oak Picnic area:

From Hwy. 101, take the Santa Margarita (Highway 58) exit and drive through the town of Santa Margarita. Turn right on Highway 58. At the junction with Pozo Road (in approximately 2 miles), stay on Pozo Road for approximately 7 miles and follow the signs to the Santa Margarita Lake turnoff. Turn left and drive one mile to the park entrance. Turn right after entering the gate and follow the road for one mile to the White Oak Picnic area. (Allow 30-40 minutes from the SLO area)

To RIVER ROAD access:

Follow the above directions until the Santa Margarita Lake turnoff. Instead of turning, continue driving straight on Pozo Road for approximately 7.8 miles. Immediately after the bridge, turn left on RIVER ROAD and continue another 2.2 miles to the staging area on the left side of the road. (Allow 45-50 minutes from the SLO area)

For additional information contact Al Schmierer at aaschmierer@yahoo.com or 772-2026, MCAS Field trip chair, or Mardi Niles at mlniles@slonet.org or 489-9274, CNPS Field trip chair.



Kayaking at Santa Margarita Lake, courtesy of Mike Baird

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members!

Arroyo Grande

Kelly Wingate Cherry
Carolyn Gill
Alice Hoover
Elizabeth Hornickel
Sumi Huber
Judie Kewish
Elizabeth Lajcak
Pamela Thomas

Atascadero

Robert Friedrichsen
Randall Marrett
Dolores Moura

Avila Beach

David N Burt

Los Osos

Lexie Brown
Charles E Doster
Joseph Frank
Georgia Lee
Peter Mourant
Robert Otto
Mary Richmond
Marilyn Rodacker
Laurel Viola

Morro Bay

Terry Dyksinski
Kate A Lancaster

Nipomo

Amber Clark
Tracey Minero
Alexandra Sparling

Paso Robles

Steve Ela
Jill P Frederiksen
Lorraine Friedman
Susan Larson
Beverly Sayman
Edward Veit
Helen A Way

San Luis Obispo

Marjorie Carroll
Katie Drexhage
Barbara Kalbus
Sterling Van de Moortel
Ayshdov Wygodny

Templeton

Carol Conway

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

Here are some of the most interesting reports gleaned from the Slocobirding listserv and the Cornell Lab's eBird project. A total of 220 species were reported in SLO County during March bringing the county's year total to 255 species. Abbreviations: CPNM = Carrizo Plain National Monument; EBSP = Estero Bluffs State Park.

Early spring arrivals (within 7 days of our earliest record): **CASSIN'S KINGBIRD** north of Cayucos 7 Mar (JSR); **WESTERN KINGBIRD** along Hwy 58 on 4 Mar (MLS); **CASSIN'S VIREO**, Cerro Alto Campground 31 Mar (MLS); **WARBLING VIREO** at Cerro Alto Campground 11 Mar (MLS); **PURPLE MARTIN**, Hwy 41 and San Gabriel Road 17 Mar (RHZ); **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER**, Oso Flaco Lake 23 Mar (RHZ); **MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER** along Santa Rita Road 27 Mar (MLS); **BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK**, See Canyon and Los Berros Road 24 Mar (SB,MLS); **HOODED ORIOLE**, Arroyo Grande and Morro Bay 12 Mar (MLS,KLP); and **BULLOCK'S ORIOLE**, Heritage Ranch 16 Mar (KK).

WATERFOWL: Twenty-two **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** at the Foothill Road Marsh in San Luis Obispo on 13 Mar (TME) was a high count for March. A somewhat late adult **SNOW GOOSE** at Morro Bay 11-12 Mar (TK) was probably a northbound transient. It was followed there by an apparent hybrid adult **SNOW X ROSS'S GOOSE** 25-27 Mar (TME) that showed Ross's characteristics including a blue base to the bill and rounded head, but also a Snow like longer bill with a grin patch and overall larger size than expected. **CAACKLING GEESE** were reported from the San Luis Bay Inn Golf Course in Avila 15 Mar (TK), Franklin Hot Springs in Paso Robles 21 Mar (TME), and Atascadero Lake 21-31 Mar (mob). Up to four male **EURASIAN WIGEON** continued on the Morro Bay Estuary 6-31 Mar (mob). A pair of **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** was seen from Seven Mile Road on the Carrizo Plain 21 Mar (TME) where it is rarely reported. A male **HARLEQUIN DUCK** off EBSP 11-25 Mar (RHZ) may be the same bird that wintered in the Cayucos area. A late **HOODED MERGANSER** was in a secluded drainage at Pismo Beach on 26 Mar (TME).

LOONS THRU MURRELETS: Always unexpected on freshwater, a **RED-THROATED LOON** was at Whale Rock Reservoir on 2 Mar (RHZ) and a **HORNED GREBE** was at Nacimiento Lake on 6 Mar (KK). Our second and third **RED-NECKED GREBES** this year were off EBSP 14 Mar (RN) and the first Vista Point north of Pico Creek 27-28 Mar (TME). An adult dark morph **SWAINSON'S HAWK** photographed along Soda Lake Road on 18 Mar (GPS) was slightly early. An adult **COMMON MOORHEN** at Oso Flaco Lake on 23 Mar (RHZ) may have been a spring transient, but could have wintered at that location. Up to 150 **MOUNTAIN PLOVERS** were at the CPNM 6 Mar (MB), with 50 remaining to the late date of 24 Mar (JD). **BLACK-NECKED STILTS** were also at CPNM with up to four birds recorded around Soda Lake 2-23 Mar (MB). The first-winter **GLAUCOUS GULL** remained at

the elephant seal rookery near Point Piedras Blancas through 20 Mar (mob). Ten **MARBLED MURRELETS** were reported between the Northpoint Natural area in Morro Bay and Little Pico Creek near San Simeon with a high count of six off EBSP 12 Mar (TME).

DOVES THRU THRASHERS: A **WHITE-WINGED DOVE** in Pismo Beach 18-30 Mar (JS) probably wintered in the area. One of the rare, but resident **COMMON GROUND-DOVES** in Nipomo was heard calling along Dana Foothill Road on 4 Mar (MLS). Rare along the coast, two **SHORT-EARED OWLS** were flying low over the Elfin Forest in Los Osos at dusk on 30 Mar (MDS). Two **NORTHERN FLICKERS** - yellow-shafted form - were reported with a female at San Simeon State Park on 8 Mar (MLS) and a male at Heilmann Park in Atascadero on 31 Mar (TME). In addition a hybrid male Yellow x Red-shafted continued at El Chorro Regional Park through 23 Mar (AFS). Rare west of the Santa Lucia Range, a **COMMON RAVEN** was observed from Deer Canyon, Arroyo Grande on 7 Mar (BKS); possibly the same bird was along Orcutt Road on 17 Mar (DGS). Spring is the best time to find **LE CONTE'S THRASHER** on the CPNM so it is not surprising that eleven were reported in March (mob).

WARBLERS THRU SPARROWS: In Morro Bay the wintering **NASHVILLE WARBLER** remained to 26 Mar and the wintering **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** remained to 28 Mar (KLP). A dull female **WESTERN TANAGER** discovered at Morro Bay State Park on 20 Mar (DB) likely wintered in the area as the first migrants typically arrive in mid-Apr. A singing "Bells" **SAGE SPARROW** north of the Montana de Oro State Park sandspit parking lot on 24 Mar (RM) was along the coast where this species has a tenuous presence. Eight **GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS** were recorded in grasslands from Laguna Lake to San Simeon State Park from 7-28 Mar (mob). A **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** in the lower parking lot on Cerro Alto Road on 3 Mar (MLS) probably wintered there.

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders who report their sightings including those cited above: Dick Barth, Sara Bilsten, Matt Brady, Jared Dawson, Tom M. Edell, Kathleen Kent, Tony Kurz, Ron Melcer, Richard Norton, Kaaren L. Perry, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Joe Seals, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Doug G. Stinson, 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

P.O. Box 1507, Morro Bay CA 93443

805-772-1991

mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org

www.morrocoastaudubon.org