



# Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 46 Issue 1, May 2011

## Congratulations to Andrea Jones, ACE Award Winner!



Andrea Jones, photo courtesy of Greg Smith.

ACE stands for Audubon Cares about Excellence. The ACE Program is the one opportunity the National Audubon Society staff has each year to recognize and celebrate the efforts and accomplishments of their peers. A committee consisting of staff from all over the country reviews nominations and makes the decision about who will be recognized. This year, 25 individuals and 11 teams were nominated, and a total of 10 ACE Awards were presented across the country. And one of those 10 award winners is Andrea Jones, outgoing MCAS Conservation Chair and Audubon California Important Bird Area (IBA) Director. As an Individual Achievement Award winner, Andrea demonstrated "outstanding performance by an individual staff member that enhanced the National Audubon Society's internal and / or external image and advanced the mission of the organization."

Since joining the Audubon conservation network in April 2006 as the Director of the Important Bird Areas Program for Audubon California, Andrea has demonstrated leadership, initiative and team spirit in advancing the conservation of Important Bird Areas of California, including at places such as Owens Lake, San Pablo Bay, and Santa Ynez River. She has been exemplary in her coordination efforts with the national IBA office, and other conservation partners throughout the state and region. Andrea demonstrates how valuable it is to place local conservation efforts in the context of broader efforts in advancing the program and bird conservation.

We, at MCAS, are truly proud of Andrea and honored to have had her share her expertise with our organization as the MCAS Conservation Chair for the past five years. Again, congrats to ACE winner, Andrea!

## Welcome to Our New MCAS Members!

### *Arroyo Grande*

A H Bradley  
Dennis Peters  
Delpha Tracy

### *Atascadero*

Joe Jordon  
Shirley Smith

### *Cambria*

Patricia R Brownhill

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Cindi & Henry Jones  
Sandra Martin  
Valerie H Ratto

### *Creston*

Anna Rapp

### *Morro Bay*

Barbara Ramsdell

### *Nipomo*

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### *Paso Robles*

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Tammy Lauinger

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Jude Saffas  
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# BULLETIN

## Thank You MCAS Donors!

Loisann & Ralph Cass

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## Thank You to Our Hi Mountain Lookout Project Donors!

### FINANCIAL DONATIONS

Sam Essex, Albany

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Cambria Community Council

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### SUPPLIES MATERIALS & LABOR

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Donations can be made to Hi Mountain  
Lookout Project by writing a check to:

Morro Coast Audubon Society  
c/o Hi Mountain Lookout Project

PO Box 1507

Morro Bay, CA 93443-1507



# SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

## MCAS Supporters!

Spring is here and so are Earth Day celebrations, community events, and other outdoor festivals. MCAS will have an educational booth at many upcoming events, and we seek your help! We need volunteers to help us set up and break down our booth and staff the events by signing up for a shift. By attending these events, MCAS is able to educate the public about our organization and Sweet Springs, sell MCAS merchandise, accept donations, collect email addresses for MCAS Alert!, gain volunteers for work-days, and find new members. Upcoming events are posted to our Facebook page, emailed to our members in our MCASAlerts! and added to our website. Please contact Aurianna Woodson at [auriannaw@gmail.com](mailto:auriannaw@gmail.com), or call 805-202-9724 if you can help out for any length of time during an upcoming event. It would really make a difference!



*Aurianna Woodson (right) and other local volunteers at a recent event, photo courtesy of Jennifer Little*

## A Show Not to be Missed!

Monday, May 16 at 7:00pm

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

Dave Keeling returns for this Part I installment (Part II having been shown at the February program) of our most popular program. Come see awe-inspiring photos by our county's best birding photographers. The splash of color and light awaiting you are some of the most magnificent natural scenes and wildlife spectacles of San Luis Obispo County. You may enjoy this program as a bird identification challenge. Or you may sit back and experience the many beautiful photographs. Some endearing, some funny, and some sensational, they will capture your eyes and heart. The images are like a rare sighting on a bird trip....times 1000! For a far more accurate preview, just enjoy this tiny sampling of images you'll see. This is a show you won't want to miss!

All MCAS Community Programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be provided; bring your own mug. As always, all ages are welcome.



*Long-billed Curlew, photo courtesy of Mike Baird*



*Anna's hummingbird, photo courtesy of Dan Morris*

# LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

## Mayday!

Sunday, May 1 (all day)  
Santa Margarita Lake

Notice that this Mayday is not repeated three times, indicating a “grave and imminent danger.” No boats are sinking, but instead are being launched Sunday, May 1, at Santa Margarita Lake as part of the 6th annual collaborative MCAS / CNPS (California Native Plant Society) picnic. In addition to a kayak and canoe tour, activities include various birding trips, plant hikes and walks, artistic pursuits of wildflowers, an optics fest, a “walk on the wild side” (the far side of the lake), and of course, the picnic potluck at noon. Bring your appetites, picnic supplies, and smiles for a glorious day at the lake. Check the MCAS website at [www.morrocoastaudubon.org](http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org) for a complete schedule and directions to the lake. For additional information, contact Jan Surbey at [jansurbey@earthlink.net](mailto:jansurbey@earthlink.net).



*Wilson's Warbler, photo courtesy of Alan Schmierer*



*Lazuli Bunting, photo courtesy of Dave Lawrence*

## Teaming up with Sierra Club - Beginner Birding Fun!

Our Sweet Springs Nature Preserve hosted a wonderful Beginner's Birding collaborative event. Members of both Morro Coast Audubon and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club enjoyed a warm morning birding the preserve. We had a large turnout of birders of all levels - seasoned as well as first-timers. We had young birders in attendance too! We watched a Merlin feasting on a House Finch, a Peregrine Falcon hunting on the bay, a noisy Belted Kingfisher, basking pond turtles, and more. Please stay tuned for more beginners' classes coming this summer. If you'd like more information contact Jennifer Moonjian at [jmoonjia@gmail.com](mailto:jmoonjia@gmail.com).



*Red-breasted Merganser (right), photo courtesy of Dave Keeling*

# Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County - Feb.- Mar. 2011

Migrants and arriving breeders poured into the county in Feb, and especially March. In general swallows arrived in mid to late Feb, followed by kingbirds, orioles, vireos and warblers. With the combination of 5.5 inches of rain in late March, arriving breeders, and the emerging wildflowers, April will be a great time to visit your favorite birding sites. Abbreviations: CPNM = Carrizo Plain National Monument; EBSP = Estero Bluffs State Park; and PPB = Point Piedras Blancas.

**WATERFOWL:** Waterfowl reports dropped off through March. A flock of 34 **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** over the Pecho Road willows on 5 Feb (JSR) provided the highest count; six more were in fields adjacent to Laguna Lake on 20 Feb (TME). A few **SNOW GEESE** remained into Feb with up to two adults on Morro Bay 9-17 Feb (RHZ) and one in the fields adjacent to Laguna Lake on 20 Feb (TME). A banded **BRANT** goose seen on Morro Bay 22 Mar (JSR) has apparently been returning there since at least 1997 (JLR). Counts this winter indicate that Brant numbers are the lowest of the past 14 years (JLR). Five **EURASIAN WIGEON** were at Morro Bay on 17 Feb (RHZ) with at least one continuing through 31 Mar (MDS). A group of 14 **WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS** off the Morro Bay Sandspit on 5 Feb was about average for winter.

**HAWKS THRU ALCIDS:** Migrant **SWAINSON'S HAWKS** were noted in eastern SLO County in March. An adult along Bitterwater Road on 27 May (NG) was followed on 31 Mar by another five at that location, plus two over the CPNM visitor center and four in the Cuyama Valley (TME,MLS). The wintering **COMMON MOORHEN** at Cal Poly was last reported on 11 Feb (JC) while the Santa Margarita Lake bird was last reported on 20 Feb (DB). A count of 300+ **MOUNTAIN PLOVERS** at the CPNM on 7 Feb (MLS,DGS) was the highest this winter. The only **WANDERING TATTLER** reported this winter was at EBSP on 17 Feb (MLS). A basic plumaged **BONAPARTE'S GULL** at Soda Lake on 28 Feb (MB) provided the first record for the CPNM. The only **GLAUCOUS GULL** reported was a first-winter bird seen along the beach in Oceano on 15 Mar (CDL). Reports of nearshore alcids included three **ANCIENT MURRELETS** off EBSP on 12 Feb (TME) and two **MARBLED MURRELETS** off Leffingwell Point in Cambria on 23 Mar (MLS).

**HUMMINGBIRD THRU WREN:** **CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRDS** only recently began appearing in Mar and that was the case again this year when males were visiting feeders at PPB on 29 Mar (RAR) and Heritage Ranch on 30 Mar (KIK). The Washburn Ranch, CPNM, hosted an **EASTERN PHOEBE** 26 Feb-1 Mar (RD) that was probably present all winter, and an out of range **YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE** on 28 Feb (KS). Even more impressive for the monument, was a male **VERMILLION FLYCATCHER** photographed at the MU Ranch on 31 Mar (KS). **COMMON RAVEN** reports from

west of the Santa Lucia Range continue to accumulate. The most interesting sighting involved two engaged in pair bonding behavior at Harmony Headlands State Park on 27 Mar (TME). An early migrant **BANK SWALLOW** was observed at Oso Flaco Lake on 26 Mar (MLS). A late **PACIFIC WREN** [formerly Winter Wren] was at the Pecho Road willows on 31 Mar (MDS).

**THRASHERS THRU WARBLERS:** A focused survey for **LE CONTE'S THRASHER** on the CPNM turned up 40 individuals and found four nests in late Feb-early Mar (MB). The survey coincided with the spring movement of **SAGE THRASHER** with 17 recorded during the same period (MB). The male **BLACK-THROATED WARBLER** that wintered in Morro Bay was still present on 14 Feb (KLP). A female **PRAIRIE WARBLER** at Santa Margarita Lake 9-28 Feb (KIK) was completely unexpected and likely present all winter; this is the third winter record for SLO County, but the first record at any time of the year away from the coast.

**SPARROWS THRU BLACKBIRDS:** The status of **BREWER'S SPARROW** on the CPNM in Feb and Mar remains to be clarified. Two seen there on 27 Feb (MB) either wintered locally or were early migrants as were two more detected there on 15 Mar (S&LT). Likewise, six **BLACK-THROATED SPARROWS** at Quail Spring, CPNM, on 13 Feb (RHZ) seem too early for breeding birds and may have wintered locally. It is likely that eight **GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS** on the American Ranch portion of the Chimineas Ranch detected singing 13-22 Feb (CFi) did winter locally. Wintering **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS** continued through at least 8 Feb in Morro Bay State Park (MLS) and 20 Feb at the Haulter Ranch in the Adelaida area (RHZ). A migrant **DARK-EYED JUNCO** of the slate-colored race showed up at PPB on 31 Mar (RAR) for a first record at that location. Two other species that likely wintered locally were a **SUMMER TANAGER** at the Los Osos Oaks Reserve on 5 Feb (CFr) and two female **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS** along Davis Road in eastern SLO County on 12 Feb (MLS).

**OBSERVERS:** Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings including those cited above: David Blue, Bill A. Bouton, Matt Brady, Jay Carroll, Ryan DiGaudio, Tom M. Edell, Craig Fiehler, Claudia Freitas, Noah Gaines, Kathleen I. Kent, Cheryl D. Lish, Kaaren L. Perry, John L. Roser, Richard A. Rowlet, Jim S. Royer, Brad K. Schram, Kathy Sharum, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Douglas G. Stinson, Scott and Linda Terrill, Norma Wightman, and Roger and Ruth Zachary. For seasonal status 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

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

What type of membership would you like?

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(includes the Pacific Flyway newsletter and Audubon magazine)

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Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

**Morro Coast Audubon Society membership only**

(includes the Pacific Flyway newsletter)

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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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