



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 46 Issue 5, October 2011

MCAS Members Appear Undaunted by “Daunting Challenge”

The MCAS 2011 fund drive began with an unprecedented start for the first week. Faced with needing to raise over \$100,000 to open the East Sweet Springs property to the public and make it accessible to all while still protecting the biological and archeological resources, MCAS members donated \$7,656 in the first ten days, which is about 8% of our goal! THANK YOU MEMBERS!

Included in this group are eight “Sweet Springs Circle of Friends” donors, who have contributed at least \$500, adding to an endowment to care for Sweet Springs in perpetuity. Also included are several “in kind” or “pro bono” offers and commitments to “work at Sweet Springs” as volunteers in the restoration efforts.

If you have not received the MCAS 2011 fund drive letter, please visit the MCAS website at www.morrocoastaudubon.org or call 805-772-1991 for additional information. Donations of any amount are appreciated and offers of pro bono work and volunteer labor are welcome. Again, THANK YOU MEMBERS! Let's rise to this challenge!

Donors thus far include:

Barbara Barnes	Heather Heaps	Joyce Seligson	Mike Stiles
Lou Bartfield/ La Serena Inn	Judy Iden	George & Barbara Sewell	Charles Templin
Dr & Mrs Joseph Boone	Joanna Iwanicha	Glenn Silloway	Dirk & Bonnie Walters
William Bouton	Andrea Jones & Tom Maloney	Betty Smay	Lisa Winn
Elizabeth Brousse	Sandra Davis Lakeman/ Natural Light Books	Terry & Pebble Smith	Aurianna Woodson
Patricia S Brown	Anna Marie Bovill Lea	Gary Stein/ Stein Garden Service	
Ed & Anita Carson	Stephanie Little		
Susan & Casey Case	Susanna Novy MacDonald		
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Cheryl Dove	Michael Miller		
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Aron Green	Dr & Mrs Paul Pobor		
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Davud Gurney	Alan Schmierer		
Joy Hanson	Elizabeth Scott-Graham		
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MaryAnn Otter & Patrick Smith
Michael Post
Jan Surbey & Mike Cook
Bert & Elaine Townsend
Rosalie Valvo
Eric Wier &
Laura Frank

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Lisa Winn - kingfisher40@live.com

Director at Large

Kali Beard - 712-8295, slokal@att.net

Newsletter Editor: Jennifer Little, jenlittle3@hotmail.com

Newsletter layout: Jessie Skidmore, jessieskidmore@hotmail.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

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BULLETIN

Bird Fun Fact

CAMP ROBBER"?

A common name for the Gray Jay, and sometimes used for the Steller's Jay, because of their habit of raiding one's camp or picnic food supply. I have seen two jays working on dog food from different directions, one diving in and having the dog chase it off, while the other ate the food, doing this in turns. I have also seen them learn that, if they pull up a bean sprout in the springtime, there is a yummy bean at the bottom end and work down a whole row of beans in a morning. - Alan Schmierer



Steller's Jay (above) Western Scrub Jay (below.) Photos courtesy of Alan Schmierer



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

MCAS Business Spotlight Clinton Iwanicha, Architect (Extraordinaire)

Clinton Iwanicha, Architect (Extraordinaire) has donated thousands of dollars of pro bono work that MCAS by providing the necessary architectural drawings for the minor use permit that MCAS applied for regarding opening East Sweet Springs to the public.

Clint's company, based in Morro Bay, designs custom residential and commercial projects for multi-family, industrial, restaurant, retail, and mixed use. Clint says, "No project is too large or too small."

Clint, originally from Saskatchewan, Canada, spent his early life building snow forts and enjoyed a life filled with wild animals. Looking for a warmer location, his family transplanted to the Central Valley in California. Clint received a Bachelor of Science degree from Cal Poly and eventually mentored under an architectural firm in San Luis Obispo. Then, in 2007, Clint ventured out as an independent architect.

Somewhere during those years, Clint managed to marry the current MCAS programs chair, Joanna Iwanicha. Yes, that may be where you heard that name before. Yet Clint claims that in addition to Joanna's wishes, he chose to support MCAS with his pro bono work because he enjoys visiting Sweet Springs, and the idea of making it accessible for everyone to visit sounded like a project he wished to be a part of. So, Clint, your wish has come true and MCAS thanks you a MILLION times over! Please consider Clint for any architectural needs you or your friends and acquaintances may have. For more information, visit Clint's website: www.cmiarchitect.com.



Photo of Clinton Iwanicha, courtesy of Joanna Iwanicha

To receive additional information on becoming an MCAS Business member, visit the MCAS website, http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org/business_membership.php or call 805-772-1991.

Welcome to Our New MCAS Members!

Arroyo Grande
Holly Sigman

Donald R MacLaine

Cambria
Hilary A Holt
Caroline Phillips

Morro Bay
Helene Montgomery
Sharon Olson

Cayucos
Garrett Essres

Nipomo
Philip Mountrose
Jan Tabarez

Creston
Penny Roe

Paso Robles
Virginia Fontes
Richard Mason
Louise Zimmer

Grover Beach
Michael Phillips

Pismo Beach
Diane Dannells
Natalie Sawyer

Los Osos
Lawrence H Balthasar
Ray Bracken
Marsha Houston
Charles R Hutchins
Virginia Jensen
Margaret Levine

San Luis Obispo
India D'Avignon
Barbara E Freeman
Eric Zeeb

LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

Montaña de Oro Bird Walk

Sunday, October 2, 7:00am - 12 noon

Join Jim Royer on a walk through Montaña de Oro State Park looking for seabirds, gulls, shorebirds and possibly some vagrant passerine species. The trip is approximately 2-4 miles of walking in sand and up hills, including the area around the campground, Spooner's Cove, and scoping off the bluff trail. Please meet at 7:00am at the Spooner's Cove parking lot in Montaña de Oro State Park. Wear appropriate shoes, and bring layered clothing, water, and snacks.

Bring a scope if you have one. If you have any questions, please contact Jim Royer at jrmotmot@gmail.com.

MCAS Community Program

Presented by Bob Stafford

Monday, October 17, 7:00pm

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

As more lands are converted for human uses, maintaining biodiversity becomes increasingly complex as smaller reserves are being managed for multiple species which often have conflicting needs. Bob Stafford, Associate Biologist with California Department of Fish and Game, presents an excellent case study for this phenomenon: the Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve, which provides habitat for over 60 species of plants and animals considered to be rare or declining. A management plan for the reserve is currently being prepared which addresses the challenges and opportunities to maintain or enhance native biodiversity in a relatively unfragmented landscape.

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



*Mosaic of habitat types within the Cuyama Valley.
Photo courtesy of Ken Hickman*



Leconte's Thrasher. Photo courtesy of Morgan Ball

Christmas Bird Count, 2011

Saturday, December 17 - Save the Date!

The 2011 Christmas Bird Count and annual pot luck dinner will be conducted by MCAS on December 17, 2011. Please circle and save the date! Many sighters and counters are needed to achieve a good count and maintain our high nationally-accredited standing. The count is part of a continent-wide effort with the published results used to assess the distribution and population of wintering birds. The November Flyway will include enrollment forms and instructions. Non-members are welcome to participate, but all counters must be enrolled.

-Elaine and Bert Townsend, coordinators

LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS- cont.

Fall Migrant Fieldtrip

Details to be announced on MCAS Alerts

Migrants in the fall are rewarding and fun to see but also very unpredictable. This year, Maggie Smith will be keeping her eye out for a good birding opportunity and will announce the trip on MCAS Alerts. This allows us to adjust the trip to fit the birds' schedule, rather than the other way around, so keep your eyes posted to MCAS Alerts this October.



White-Faced Ibis flock. Photo courtesy of Alan Schmierer

Annual "Big Sit" at Elfin Forest

Sunday, October 9

Pre-field trip on Saturday, October 8

Join local birders on October 9 for the Elfin Forest Big Sit, which is part of an international green one-day event where people count all the birds they hear or see from their chosen seventeen foot diameter circle. Birders count in one hour shifts and any experienced birders are welcome to sign up for a shift or two. We usually have over 100 species from this location on the day of the Big Sit, and we have had unusual species in the past such as Sabine's Gull, Palm Warbler, Eurasian Wigeon, Blackpoll Warbler, White-faced Ibis, Pectoral Sandpiper, Black Rail, and Red-throated Pipit. Less experienced birders can just come out to the overlook at any time after 8:00am. Please meet at Bush Lupine Point, the overlook straight out from the north end of 13th in Los Osos, off of Santa Ysabel. If you would like to participate or for more information, contact Jim Royer at 748-7895 or email at jrmotmot@gmail.com. Big Sit website: <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/bigsit/index.php>.

There is also a pre-field trip from the Elfin Forest on the day before the Big Sit. Jim Royer will lead this trip, which meets at the end of 15th at 8:30am on October 8 and ends by noon. There is wheelchair access to the count site from the north end of 16th.

Hi Mountain Condor Lookout Project 10th Annual Open House/ Campout

Saturday, October 1, 2011

Schedule of Activities:

Bird Watching Field Trip 9:00am - 11:30am

Meet 9:00am at Pozo Ranger. Car pooling from Pozo is recommended. Easy hiking conditions. Habitats: grassland, riparian woodland (at Salinas River crossing), oak woodland & chaparral. Field trip leader: Michaela Koenig, Hi Mtn. Lookout Project volunteer and past student intern. NOTE: advanced registration is required for participation in the birding field trip. Contact Steve at s_schub1@msn.com or phone 805-528-6138.

Lookout Volunteer Service Project 10:00am

Re-paint the water cistern; meet with Kevin Cooper, 10am at the lookout.

Kids' Activities 11:00am

Meet with Hannah Tillmann, Cal Poly student intern at 11:00am. Condor biology / radio tracking demonstrations, making plaster-of-paris animal tracks, afternoon nature hike on the lookout road down to the gate and back.

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LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS- cont.

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Picnic Lunch 11:30am - 12:30pm

Tour the Hi Mountain Lookout facilities and Interpretive Center. Sign guest register.

Welcoming Comments 12:30pm

Introductions of Hi Mountain Lookout staff, volunteers, and student interns; Steve Schubert, Volunteer Coordinator, Morro Coast Audubon Society; Morning birding field trip report by trip leader; Updates from the California Condor field staff

Geographical Landmarks

A 360 degree view from the Pacific coast to the Sierra Nevada - and demonstration of the original Hi Mountain Lookout firefinder; Kevin Cooper, USFS Wildlife Biologist

Condor Radio Tracking

Demonstrations by lookout staff and volunteers

Kids' Nature Hike

Along Hi Mountain Lookout Road

Native Plant Identification Walk and Geology Overview

On Hi Mountain Lookout Road along the crest of the Santa Lucia Mountains by Dr. Dirk Walters and Dr. David Chipping

Saucelito Canyon Vineyards Wine Serving, compliments of Nancy Greenough

Sunset Watch and Dinner (wear layered clothing)

Gas stove and oven in the lookout facilities are available for cooking and heating food. Participants are encouraged to bring a potluck dish to share with their friends and guests.

Evening Program 7:00pm

Powerpoint slide show presentations by the 2011 Cal Poly student interns - biological field research projects, remote wildlife camera photography and summer internship experiences - followed by a landscape and wildlife photography multimedia presentation by Steve Schubert

Telescopes will be set up in the evening for astronomy observations

Optional Hi Mountain Campout

Camping sites are available Saturday night at 'Cypress Hill' near the lookout. Other vehicle camping sites are located on the ridgeline near the entrance gate on Hi Mountain Rd., with a view overlooking the mountains and coast, and also at the USFS Hi Mountain Campground located one mile down the road from the lookout. There are picnic tables and outhouses at the campground - bring your own potable water.

For additional information about the open house event and driving directions to Hi Mountain Lookout, see our website at www.condorlookout.org and view photos of past open house events at the Hi Mountain Lookout Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Hi-Mountain-Lookout.

Please RSVP if you are planning to attend the open house event and the number of people in your group by contacting Steve Schubert at s_schub1@msn.com or phone at 805-528-6138.



Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County- August 2011

Passerines are now streaming through California. Late September through early October is an especially good time to find rare passerines at county vagrant traps such as the Pismo Beach State Park Ocean Campground, Islay Creek Campground, Santa Rosa Creek. Whatever your favorite birding patch is, this is the best time to find something unusual there. The total number of species reported to eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ca>) from SLO County in 2011 now stands at 292, compared to 307 for the same period last year.

Abbreviations: EBSP = Estero Bluffs State Park; MSSB = Morro Strand State Beach; OFL = Oso Flaco Lake; TRTP = Turri Road tidal ponds; WRR = Whale Rock Reservoir.

WATERFOWL THRU GREBE: There were only two **BRANT** reported in August, one at EBSP on 9 Aug (RHZ) and another at the MSSB lagoon on 29 Aug (BAB). Aside from the expected **WOOD DUCKS** at the Atascadero Wastewater Ponds, a female continued at WRR through the month (MLS). The first returning **NORTHERN SHOVELERS** at OFL on 21 Aug (MLS) were slightly later than expected. More interesting were continuing male **HARLEQUIN DUCKS** in eclipse plumage at EBSP 1-16 Aug (DK) and at the base of the Cal Poly Pier in Avila on 10 Aug (MLS) that were most likely the most southerly birds in California. Unexpected prior to early-Sep, a breeding plumaged **EARED GREBE** was off Old Creek in Cayucos 3-14 Aug (MLS) and a winter plumaged bird was off Pico Creek 6 Aug (TME).

EGRET THRU RAPTORS: The county's fourth **REDDISH EGRET**, all recorded since 2003, was found at the mouth of Pismo Creek on 6 Aug (PL). This juvenile bird remained there through 13 Aug and then showed up at the mouth of San Simeon Creek on the morning of 16 Aug (MLS,KLP), but was back at Pismo Creek on that afternoon where it remained until 21 Aug. A juvenile seen at Villa Creek on 28 Aug (JSR,RSc) is presumed to be the same bird. Two adult and two juvenile **BALD EAGLES** at WRR on 1 Aug (MLS) suggested nesting again occurred somewhere in the vicinity of the reservoir; by the end of Aug no juveniles were being reported. For the second straight year **SWAINSON'S HAWKS** pairs raised young near Shandon and Cuyama (mob).

SHOREBIRDS: Lesser Yellowlegs trickled through the county with four reported, the first at Pismo Creek mouth on 7 Aug (JMC). Always rare, a juvenile **RED KNOT** was at Morro Creek mouth 24 and 29 Aug (ES,TME) and an adult was there 25-26 Aug (KLP). Four more juvenile **SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS** along the coast brought this fall's total to six: one continued at San Simeon Creek through 1 Aug (MLS), one was at the Morro Creek mouth 5-6 Aug (RHZ), and two were at the TRTP 5 Aug (KLP). The first two of the nine **BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS** reported were at the TRTP 6-11 Aug

(KLP). Much rarer than a juvenile, an adult **PECTORAL SANDPIPER** was at the TRTP 7-11 Aug (MDS); the first of the two juveniles reported was at EBSP on 20 Aug (BKS). **WILSON'S PHALAROPES** were more numerous than usual along the immediate coast with an exceptional high count of 32 at OFL on 31 Aug (MLS). Also numerous was **RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** with numbers increasing along the coast all month to a high count of 230 at OFL on 30 Aug (MLS). Much rarer onshore, only two **RED PHALAROPES** were reported with one at Santa Rosa Creek on 6 Aug (TME) and another at the TRTP 24 Aug (BAB).

TERNS THRU MURRELETS: An unusually high number of **LEAST TERNS** were at Pismo Creek mouth where a high count of 15 (adults and juveniles) were recorded on 16 Aug (BKS). Three reports of transient **BLACK SKIMMERS** involved an adult at Pismo Creek mouth 7 Aug (TME) with two there 13 Aug (JSR), and one at Morro Bay 30 Aug (KLP). Small numbers of **MARBLED MURRELETS** were recorded along the north coast with a high count of three adults and a juvenile off San Simeon Creek on 6 Aug (TME). One of the more unexpected finds was up to two adult **ANCIENT MURRELETS** off San Simeon Creek 14-16 Aug (TME,MLS) that provided the county's seventh summer record.

RAVEN THRU GROSBEAK: Two Common Ravens seen from Hwy 101 near the Santa Maria Speedway on 27 Aug (JMC) were outside the expected range for this species. A singing **YELLOW WARBLER** at OFL on 24 Aug (MLS) suggested later than expected nesting activity. Early fall dates for "western" warblers included **BLACK-THROATED WARBLER** at Cerro Alto on 18 Aug (MLS), **TOWNSEND'S WARBLER** at Pecho Road willows on 23 Aug (MLS), **HERMIT WARBLER** at the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground on 24 Aug (MLS), and a very early **MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER** at the Pecho Road willows on 7 Aug (RSa). The first "vagrant" warbler of the fall was a first-year female **AMERICAN REDSTART** found at Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground on 31 Aug (MLS).

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings including those cited above: Bill A. Bouton, Jamie M. Chavez, Tom M. Edell, Dave Keeling, Penny Lancaster, Kaaren L. Perry, Jim S. Royer, Rick Saval (RSa), Ross Schaefer(RSc), Brad K. Schram, Steve C. Schubert, Maggie L. Smith, Mike D. Stiles, Emilie Strauss, and Roger H. 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

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

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.

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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