



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 44 Issue 4, September 2009

Sweet Springs Work Party Saturday, September 12th, 9am-Noon

Help us continue our restoration work at the Sweet Springs Preserve. We are currently working on a project to restore the upper marsh area at the east end of the large pond and the coastal scrub area at the southeast corner of the preserve. Our work is sponsored by the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP).

The first phase of the project involves removing invasive plants that have taken over the area. Periwinkle (*Vinca major*), a popular ornamental groundcover originally from South Africa, is quite dominant in this area. There is also a considerable amount of veldt grass (*Erharta calycina*), also from South Africa, particularly in the coastal scrub area. Our goal is to remove 100% of the non-native plants and prepare the ground for planting native plants this November. We will be planting relatively densely in this area, in hopes that the natives will have a better chance of competing against the invasives and dominate the area. We plan to put in 400 plants.

This project has important ramifications for the future survival of one rare plant and a number of aquatic animals. A number of years ago, the US Fish and Wildlife Service transplanted the endangered marsh sandwort (*Arenaria paludicola*) to the inlet of the large pond in hopes of establishing another viable population. It is doing well, but needs protection from invasives like *Vinca*. Other threatened species that live in the pond include the Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata pallida*) and Red legged frog (*Rana draytonii*). Both the turtle and the frog spend a portion of their lives in upland habitat, so restoration of the area should benefit them as well. Finally, many



Invasive Periwinkle (Vinca Major)

birds forage and nest in this type of habitat, and the project should result in improved food sources and cover for them too.

Please join us in helping to complete this important project. Although MBNEP is providing funding for plants and supplies, it is incumbent upon us to provide the volunteer labor. There is a job for everyone - young, old, experienced, novice. We need all MCAS members to do their part to help care for our preserve.

- Holly Sletteland, Preserve Manager.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members!

Atascadero

David Black
Myra Johnson
Lisa Rivers

Cayucos

Ivan Lacore

Los Osos

Dianne Fowler

Bakersfield

Jennifer Keller

Morro Bay

Phyllis Mina

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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

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Thanks Go Out to the Following Donors

J Brock "Pat" Diener
"In honor of Jan Surbey, Past President"

Katherine Lynn Elswick

D A Sprague

Jeanne Bruenecke
"Thank you ever so much!"

Jean H Kuntze



Brown Pelican photo courtesy of Greg Smith

SEPT. FIELD TRIPS

There will be several field trips in September: They will be announced via the "MCAS Alert!" system. To be placed on this email notification system, please email Mike Stiles at mstiles@calpoly.edu.

In addition, we will list these trips under Field Trips on www.morrocoastaudubon.org as time permits, and as they are confirmed.

Community Program and Fall Potluck

Presented by Lisa Andreano

Monday, September 21st

Fall Potluck 6pm - Program 7pm

SLO Botanical Garden Oak Glen

Pavilion, in El Chorro Regional Park

Join us for our annual potluck and an informative presentation by Lisa Andreano. Lisa has completed 3 years of Avian flu monitoring on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, and studied subsistence hunting of the Siberian Yupik. Concurrently, she was involved in seabird monitoring for 3 years in that area of Alaska. Her work focused on Crested and Least Auklets, Common and Thick-Billed Murres, and Black-Legged Kittiwakes. She will present a summary of that work.

Bring your own place setting (including a cup) and food to share for the potluck!

Refreshments will be provided by MCAS.



Lisa Andreano graduated from Cal Poly SLO with a degree in Ecology and Systematic Biology and is now working towards a Master's in Biology. Lisa currently works for California State Parks as a Resource Ecologist.

13th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

It's party time again - November 19-22, 2009

The 13th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium will be held November 19-22 in Stockton, CA, at the Hilton Stockton.

Attend workshops with raptor expert Bill Clark, birding pros Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan, as well as other informative folks. Our evening programs include Murrelet Halterman on Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Stephen Shunk on "The Magic of Birding." There will be drawing and digiscoping workshops, the always popular and informative ID Panel with guest experts,

programs for beginning birders, and more. The many Field Trips frequently turn up chasable goodies. The Birder's Market is full of artists and vendors with a wonderful selection of bird and nature related items.

For more info, check the website at www.cvbs.org, or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net or (209) 369-2010. Please note that the 2009 schedule of events (at the time of print) is not yet listed on the website.

Request Less Paper from National Audubon Too!

As MCAS transitions to an "almost all" electronic newsletter distribution system in an effort to save resources and money, you might want to ask National Audubon to follow our lead.

If you do NOT want to receive multiple renewal notices, sample holiday cards, and other promotional materials from National Audubon, all you need to do is call 1-800-274-4201 and request to be placed on the Paper Free Renewal Program. Only ONE renewal reminder will be sent that will arrive approximately

two months before your expiration date.

I called and requested this service almost one year ago and have been totally pleased. I have NOT received any promotional materials. I still receive my Audubon magazine (which I love), but you can delete that also, if you so choose. So **WASTE NO TIME or FURTHER RESOURCES:** call today.

Jan Surbey
MCAS Past President

Help California Coastal Cleanup Day Celebrate Its 25th Anniversary!

Saturday, September 19th, 9am - Noon

This year marks the 25th anniversary of California Coastal Cleanup Day, which is a rather bittersweet milestone in some respects. Wouldn't it be nice if we could look at Coastal Cleanup Day as an anachronism - something we no longer needed to worry about? Unfortunately, we're not there yet. But with each successful cleanup effort, we get a little closer.

Coastal Cleanup Day is very much about getting the trash off our beaches. But it's more than that. It's about accepting responsibility for keeping the beaches clean, even if the trash is not our own. It's about identifying what kind of trash is out there and trying to figure out where it came from. It's about going to the source and finding effective ways to stop the flow, whether that be through education, ad campaigns, product redesign (think flip-top cans), incentives (return deposit), disincentives (fines) or other options. The ultimate goal is to make Coastal Cleanup Day a thing of the past by stemming the flow of marine pollution, but until we get there, we need you.

Help Scientists Study Birding Behavior at CamClickr.org

As you may know, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has live cameras positioned at active bird nests all around the country. Since 1999, they have archived more than eight million images from these NestCams. To help sort through the images, they developed CamClickr—an online tool you can use to view the images and sort them into albums, then tag each image by the type of behavior you see: preening, eating, feeding chicks, etc.

What's in it for you? NestCams allow you to peek into the nests of Barn Owls, bluebirds, Wood Ducks, and other birds for an up-close look at fascinating bird behavior.

CamClickr will appeal not only to bird lovers, but to people who enjoy testing their skills with online games. When you help sort and tag the camera images, you collect points and compete for prizes such as binoculars, DVDs, books and posters.



Image courtesy of Mike Baird

The success of Coastal Cleanup Day can be directly attributed to the tens of thousands of volunteers who

have generously given of their time - many year after year - to clean up our shorelines. In 2008, almost 75,000 volunteers turned out to Coastal Cleanup Day, a 20 percent jump over 2007. Last year's volunteers removed a record 1.6 million pounds of debris, of which almost 200,000 pounds was recycled, both record numbers for the Cleanup Program. In San Luis Obispo County alone, almost 1300 volunteers collected over 4500 pounds of trash and recyclables.

All you need to do is show up at your favorite beach on September 19th at 9am to do your part. For more information, refer to the California Coastal Commission's website at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html or ECOSLO at www.ecoslo.org.

Why is your help needed? By using CamClickr to help tag and sort the NestCam images, you help scientists studying breeding bird behavior. The more we understand about bird behavior, the better equipped we are to understand how birds are responding to threats in their environment.

Just visit www.camclickr.org to create an account. This allows you to chat in the NestCam forums, tag photos, and track your stats in CamClickr anytime. You can check your rankings in "my sessions" to see how you stack up against other taggers. The redesigned CamClickr home page also provides the latest Twitter feeds. Educators will appreciate the newly developed lesson plan, appropriate for all ages, and easily modified for individualized instruction. You can watch videos of fascinating nesting behaviors from the Lab's Macaulay Library.

Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County -June/July 2009

WATERFOWL: Both the long-staying **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** and the **ROSS'S GOOSE** at Oceano County Park were last seen on 1 Jun (MLS), which is surprisingly late for these birds to depart. A small Branta goose at Laguna Lake on 31 Jul (TME) appeared to be a **CAACKLING GOOSE**, a very rare species in summer. A male **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** discovered at Oso Flaco Lake on 20 Jun-3 Jul (MLS) was going in eclipse plumage when it vanished. Other summering ducks included a male **NORTHERN SHOVELER** found at the Arroyo Grande Creek mouth on 23 Jul (MLS), a male **GREATER SCAUP** 23 Jun-19 Jul (MLS) and a male **BUFFLEHEAD** 13 Jul-25 Jul (TME) at Morro Bay, and female plumaged **RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS** at Morro Bay 13 Jun (1) (TME) and at Estero Bluffs State Park 12 Jun-2 Jul (2) and 25-31 Jul (1) (TME). For the second year in a row, male **HARLEQUIN DUCKS** are summering at Estero Bluffs State Park 7 Jun-31 Jul (RA) and at the Morro Bay Harbor mouth 12 Jun-31 Jul (TME).

PETREL THRU SHOREBIRDS: An **ASHY STORM-PETREL** observed about 36 miles WNW of Morro Rock during a UC Santa Cruz/Office of Spill Prevention and Response aerial survey on 8 Jul (JND) provided the county's first early July record. **AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS** used to depart the county in mid-Apr and return in mid-Aug, but that pattern is apparently evolving as birds are increasing present in summer. A total of 110 were on Morro Bay by mid-Jun and at least 150 were present on 25 Jul (TME). It is suspected that an injured adult **LEAST BITTERN** picked up near Hwy 1 and Zanzibar in north Morro Bay on 29 Jun (CD, Pacific Wildlife Care) came from the Cloisters Pond where this species bred in 2005. The 45 **SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS** found on Morro Bay on 19 Jun (TME,MLS) provided one of the few mid-summer records and an exceptionally high count. Single adult **RED KNOTS** were found along Morro Strand State Beach in early to mid-Jul (NW). The earliest returning shorebirds reported involved four **WILSON'S PHALAROPES** in Atascadero on 17 Jun (RHZ).

GULLS THRU SKIMMER: A sub-adult **BONAPARTE'S GULL** north of the Cayucos Pier 2-13 Jul (TME) remained through the annual fireworks display. Because there are few summer season **HERRING GULL** records, a worn first year bird at San Simeon Cove on 13 Jun (BKS) is worth mention. The phenomenon of roof-top **WESTERN GULL** nesting continued at Morro Bay this summer. Known for years to use boats and building roofs along the Morro Bay Embarcadero, this year 16 chicks were on the roofs of the Bayshore Condos, three were on a nearby home along Main Street, and two were on the closed Anthony's restaurant building next door to Dorn's Restaurant. A flock of 35 **ELEGANT TERNS** at the Arroyo Grande Creek mouth on 6 Jul was followed by a few scattered reports of birds, but not the expected numbers; other central coast counties have noted the low numbers as well; it is suspected that low anchovies numbers is the

reason. An early fall **BLACK TERN** was spotted feeding at the Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground lagoon 25-26 Jul (DGS). A sporadic visitor, three **BLACK SKIMMERS** were at Morro Bay on 12 Jul (TME) with two remaining through 31 Jul (RHZ).

DOVES THRU TANAGER: A **WHITE-WINGED DOVE** seen flying over the Cloisters Pond in Morro Bay on 3 Jul (JSR,RS) provided the county's third summer record. On 19 Jun, three adult **LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS** near Golden Hills Road in Paso Robles were collecting food and taking it to a valley oak where they presumably fed young (TME,MLS). A total of two **WILLOW FLYCATCHERS** was below average for Jun with singles along Freeman Lane in Los Osos on 5 Jun (GPS) and at Sulfur Spring on the Carrizo Plain National Monument on 7 Jun (AFS). Two **COMMON RAVENS** in the eucalyptus at the north end of West Cuesta Ridge Road on 6 Jun (AFS) were west of the species current range. A female and singing male **NORTHERN PARULA** along the Cerro Alto Campground Road on 3 Jun presented the possibility of breeding, however only the male remained and only through 17 Jun (MLS,AFS). Nearby in the campground a male and female **WESTERN TANAGER** were seen feeding mid-sized young on 4 Jun (AFS); the county's small breeding population is restricted to canyons along the Santa Lucia and La Panza Ranges.

SPARROW THRU SISKIN: A **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** at a feeder at the base of Hollister Peak on 11 Jun was either an out of range *nuttallii* or a very late *pugetensis* subspecies. Speaking of late, a **GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW** remained at a feeder in Deer Canyon, Arroyo Grande, through 4 Jun (BKS). A big movement of **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS** was noted in Southern California this spring. In addition to the seven reported in the May Eureka column, an additional seven (5 males, two females) were reported between 1 Jun and 15 Jul making this the highest spring count for the county (mob). The presence of **PINE SISKINS** at a Morro Bay sock thistle feeder on 12 Jul (TME) where the species is reportedly present year round strongly suggests nesting nearby, possibly in Monterey pines.

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders that report their sightings. The following people are cited above: Rick Austin, Jeff N. Davis, Claudia Dorr, Tom M. Edell, Marlin D. Harms, Jim S. Royer, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Ross Shaefer, Gregory P. Smith, Maggie L. Smith, Doug G. Stinson, Norma Wightman, 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

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Make check payable to MCAS.

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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

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