



Pacific Flyway

Newsletter of the Morro Coast Audubon Society

Volume 46 Issue 4, September 2011

MCAS Embarks on Daunting Challenge Important Milestone Planned for September 24

After 45 years of successfully continuing its mission of conservation and restoration of ecosystems, MCAS now faces what may be the most daunting challenge of its existence. The "crown jewel" of MCAS, the Sweet Springs Nature Preserve in Los Osos, is expanding to include the additional 8 acres (currently known as East Sweet Springs) MCAS acquired in 2008. Although permitting requirements needed to open the property to the public have slowed the process, MCAS is now moving forward to implement a number of access improvements including trails, benches, signage, a viewing platform overlooking the shore, removal of exotic vegetation and restoration of a variety of native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

The daunting part of this plan is the price tag, which MCAS estimates will be in the neighborhood of \$200,000. While some of these costs will hopefully be covered by existing and future grant monies, MCAS is looking for at least half of this amount to be raised in another manner. Hence, the focus of the 2011 fund drive will be raising funds for East Sweet Springs enhancements.

In addition to monetary donations, which are always welcome in any amount, MCAS is staging a grant-funded event called "Together Green-Act Today to Shape Tomorrow" on Saturday, September 24, from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. This event will mark an important milestone: the beginning of restoration efforts on the East Sweet Springs addition. You can be among the first to help rescue this imperiled habitat from invasive weeds, so that native flora and fauna can thrive once again and our children and grandchildren will have a healthy, coastal refuge well into the future. Enjoy speakers, raffle, food, drinks, and plenty of camaraderie. Bring gloves, trowels and shovels if you can and wear layers, sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen. More importantly, be there to celebrate this milestone as MCAS embarks on the challenge of its life!



Sweet Springs duck and turtle pond. Photo courtesy of Mike Baird

For more information call 239-3928 or email mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org.

MCAS 2010-2011 BOARD

President

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

Past President

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

Treasurer

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

Secretary

Elinore Cottrell, ehcottrell@gmail.com

Programs Chair

Joanna Iwanicha - jiwancha@gmail.com

Field Trip Chair

Jen Moonjian - jmoonjia@gmail.com

Membership Chair

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

Educational Outreach Chair

Aurianna Woodson - auriannaw@gmail.com

Lands Chair

Eric Wier - 543-8769, frankwier@gmail.com

Communications Chair

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

Conservation Chair

Mary Ann Otter - 481-7985, otterenterprise@sbcglobal.net

Fund Development Chair

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

Printed on recycled paper

BULLETIN

Thank You MCAS Donors!

Nita Kenyon
Trinity United Methodist Church
John Myers
Donna O'Shaughnessy
Michael Post for Daphne & Jerry
Freedman
Mary Watt
Steven Willison for Eileen Shedleski

Welcome to Our New MCAS Members!

Atascadero
Barbara Drury

Oceano
Fred Ramirez

Cayucos
Janeen Cooper

Paso Robles
Diane Rochelle
Roberta F Widmer

Los Osos
Marla Morrissey

San Luis Obispo
Virginia M Crook

Morro Bay
Nancy D Chow
Chalice M Markowitz

L Ekegren
Michael Hawes

Nipomo
Thomas Beckenhauer
Sandra Hemreck
Barbeur G Wise

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

MCAS Business Spotlight: La Serena Inn Calling all Birders

How about a complimentary breakfast served in an “Aerie?” But instead of the usual mice, rabbits, and rodents served in most aeries, you get waffles, hardboiled eggs, fruit, pastries, and cereals? Sound appetizing? Wait until the evening brings cider, cookies and tea served “downstairs” from the Aerie! To experience this aerie, you and/or your family friends should consider making the La Serena Inn in Morro Bay your “nest” for a few nights. The Inn has 38 rooms with a wide variety of options: some with ocean views and balconies and all with a refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker and hair dryer.

The decision to move toward a “bird friendly” theme was the idea of the property owner, Lou Bartfield, who read a biography of John James Audubon and became infatuated with the man’s interesting life and diverse accomplishments. An avid wildlife lover himself, Lou thought it would be nice to give the many migratory birdwatchers a comfortable place to roost that catered to their interests. In addition to the Aerie, there is a large meeting room decorated with Audubon prints and a display of bird nests by a Santa Cruz artist and nature enthusiast, and the hallways are decorated with bird images. The Inn displays Audubon books and compiles information on local birds and hiking trails where birders are likely to spot the most birds. Guests can also borrow a pair of high quality binoculars to use as they enjoy Morro Bay’s scenery and wildlife.

Not everyone in your family is a birder? La Serena Inn offers tailored information to guests about things to do in our area, where to eat, and how to get there, in addition to offering several packages, including seaside horseback riding, kayaking, whale watching, and golf.

MCAS wants to take this opportunity to thank and recognize Las Serena Inn for their continuous monthly donations as an MCAS Business Member. To receive additional information about the La Serena Inn, visit their website at www.laserenainn.com or call 800-248-1511 or 805-772-5665.

MCAS Business Spotlight: Science and Environmental Education Development (SEED)

Science and Environmental Education Development (SEED) is dedicated to expanding understanding and awareness of the natural world. SEED develops education products and programs using science-based themes, including biological concepts, environmental education, and marine science. Michele Roest, the founder and principal of SEED, is the daughter of Dr. Aryan and Colette Roest, Charter MCAS members since 1967, with Aryan Roest serving as the first MCAS President. Michele was project manager for the design and construction of the Coastal Discovery Center at San Simeon Bay, and has developed science curricula for the National Wildlife Federation, the National Marine Sanctuary Program, and many regional programs. SEED has been highlighted in “American Landscapes” and “Legacy” magazines. SEED supports the Morro Coast Audubon Society in their mutual goal of conservation and education.

MCAS thanks Michele for supporting MCAS as a Business member and carrying on the “Roest” tradition of involvement with MCAS! For additional information about SEED, visit the website at www.sciencecurric.com or call 805-239-1466.

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

LOCAL EVENTS, FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

MCAS Community Program - How Will Climate Change Affect California Birds?

Presented by Andrea Jones

Monday, September 19: 6:00pm Potluck, 7:00pm Program; SLO Botanical Garden Oak Glen Pavilion in El Chorro Park (across from Cuesta College)

What is the prospect for California birds during a period of climate change? Audubon California has identified 145 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) that provide more than 10 million acres of essential habitat for breeding, wintering and migrating birds. Analysis of future climate models indicates that most IBAs will protect many sensitive bird species, but some species will not prosper. Andrea Jones, Audubon California's IBAs program director, will discuss the most resilient species and how IBAs provide critical habitat and how habitats or bird species may adapt in the future.

An update about the East Sweet Springs project will be provided prior to the program. All MCAS Community Programs are free and open to the public. As always, all ages are welcome. Beverages are provided, but please bring your own mug and place setting. For more information, call 805-772-1991 or email www.morrocoastaudubon.org.

Together Green - Act Today to Shape Tomorrow!

Saturday, Sept 24 from 9:00am to 12:00 noon

Join us for this important milestone marking the beginning of restoration efforts on the new addition to the Sweet Springs Preserve in Los Osos. Be among the first to help rescue this imperiled habitat from invasive weeds, so that our native flora and fauna can thrive once again, and our children and grandchildren will have a healthy, coastal refuge to enjoy long into the future. Savor the outstanding views of Morro Bay, Morro Rock and the windswept dunes along the sand spit. Enjoy speakers, raffle, food, drinks & plenty of camaraderie. Bring gloves, trowels and shovels if you can. Wear layers, sturdy shoes, hat & sunscreen. For more information call 805-239-3928 or email mcas@morrocoastaudubon.org.

10th Annual Hi Mountain Condor Lookout Campout and Open House Event

Saturday, October 1, 2011 (all day event)

Hi Mountain Lookout, San Luis Obispo County, Los Padres National Forest

Come and discover one of the largest and most endangered flying birds of North America. California Condors are radio tracked from Hi Mountain Lookout, flying near release sites in Big Sur and Pinnacles National Monument in Central California and Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, the Sespe Condor Sanctuary and Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge in Southern California. This is an opportunity for you to learn more about condor biology and the reintroduction of these magnificent birds back to the wild. The Hi Mountain Lookout Project is a collaboration between Morro Coast Audubon Society, U.S. Forest Service at Los Padres National Forest, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service California Condor Recovery Program, Cal Poly Biological Sciences Department, Ventana Wildlife Society, and the National Parks Service at Pinnacles National Monument.

The open house event will include condor radio tracking demonstrations, native plant identification, bird watching field trips, and a local geology walking stroll. Hands-on activities for kids will be ongoing throughout the day. Hi Mountain Lookout has been restored as a biological field research station and visitor center. Tour the interpretive visitor center with condor and other local wildlife displays and an extensive library of local natural history references. Meet with our staff, college interns, and community volunteers as we celebrate 15 years since the inception of the Hi Mountain Lookout Project. Cal Poly college students will discuss their ongoing field research projects in the Hi Mountain area, including small mammal live trapping results, bird surveys, and vegetation analysis.

Join us for cheese tasting, and a potluck dinner while enjoying the sunset watch. Overnight camping near the lookout is optional. Hi Mountain hats, shirts, and other merchandise will be available for sale and a fundraising auction will be conducted, with the proceeds supporting the lookout project's annual operating expenses. For a schedule of events, driving directions, and other information go to www.condorlookout.org. To RSVP for the event please call Steve Schubert at 805-528-6138 or email s_schub1@msn.com.

Eureka! The Birds of San Luis Obispo County- June-July 2011

Returning shorebirds, gulls, and alcids, lingering waterfowl plus a few late spring migrant and summering passerines dominate this month's report. With creeks still flowing and our smaller coastal lagoons full of water, it should be a good year to find rare (hopefully) shorebirds on our local beaches. The first northern breeders return in mid-August and by the beginning of September our coastal migrant traps will be full of birds. The total number of species reported to eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ca>) from SLO County in 2011 now stands at 287, compared to 293 for the same period last year.

Abbreviations: EBSP = Estero Bluffs State Park; and MSSB = Morro Strand State Beach.

WATERFOWL: **WOOD DUCK** reports included 23 at Santa Margarita Lake (a new high count for that location) on 29 Jun (RHZ); the only report along the coast was a female at Whale Rock Reservoir on 30 Jun (MLS). Summering waterfowl on Morro Bay included two male **AMERICAN WIGEON** 12 Jun-16 Jul+ (TME) that provided the county's fourth summer record and two male **GREEN - WINGED TEAL** on 9 Jul (TME). In recent years 1-2 **HARLEQUIN DUCKS** have been present in summer; this year lone males were recorded at the base of the Cal Poly Pier in Avila on 20 Jul (BCG) and at EBSP on 1-10 Jul (RHZ). Rare on fresh water, especially in summer, a male **SURF SCOTER** was at Oso Flaco Lake on 14 Jun (MLS). Three female **BUFFLEHEAD**, one at EBSP 1-7 Jul (RHZ), one on the rock at the base of the Cal Poly Pier on 4 Jul (MLS), and another at a small roadside pond along Price Canyon Road on 15 Jul (TME), were surprising given only six previous summer records.

IBIS THRU SHOREBIRDS: A **WHITE-FACED IBIS** at Fish and Game's Chimineas Ranch on 17 Jun (BWS) was only the fifth county record in summer. The presence of a juvenile **OSPREY** along Hwy 46 five miles west of Hwy 1 on 3 Jul (TME) begs the question "where did this bird fledge" since there is no evidence of nesting in the county for at least 35 years. **SWAINSON'S HAWKS** returned to breed for a second year in two locations, one east of Paso Robles and another in the Cuyama Valley (TME,MLS,JM). A juvenile **VIRGINIA RAIL** was at Harmony Headlands State Park on 24 Jun (MLS), a location where there is a previous nesting record. The lone **BLACK-NECKED STILT** report for the period was from the Chimineas Ranch on 15 Jul (GB). A **WANDERING TATTLER** at EBSP on 10-14 Jul (TME) and an adult **RUDDY TURNSTONE** at the Northpoint Natural Area in North Morro Bay on 25 Jun (DB) both set new fall arrival dates for the county. Two juvenile **SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS** were recorded along the coast. One at the San Simeon Creek lagoon on 20-23 Jul (MLS) set a new fall arrival date for the county, the other was at Arroyo Grande Creek on 28 Jul (BKS).

GULLS THRU ALCIDS: A **BONAPARTE'S GULL** at the Chimineas Ranch on 1 Jun (CF) was well inland where there are few records. There are only 11 previous records of **MEW GULL** along the coast in summer, so one at MSSB on 27-30 Jul (KLP) is noteworthy. The first **COMMON TERN** recorded this fall was a juvenile at MSSB on 18 Jul (MDH). Single **BLACK SKIMMERS** were recorded at Morro Bay on 14 Jun (JB) and 26 Jul (SCS). The earliest fall date this year for **MARBLED MURRELET** was 15 Jul when one in breeding plumage was off San Simeon Creek (MLS) and another was seen from the end of the Cal Poly Pier (MDS). Eight **RHINOCEROS AUKLETS** seen from the Shell Beach Tennis Courts on 24 Jul (BKS) were in an area that nesting has long been suspected, but never confirmed.

SWIFTS THRU WARBLERS: A single **BLACK SWIFT** was at the Ragged Point Inn, a traditional breeding area, on 11 Jun (TME), with two there on 17 Jun (RS). Even more interesting was the presence of two **VAUX'S SWIFTS** over the ridge line above the Ragged Point Inn on 11 Jun (MDS) and two over the Inn on 17 Jun (RS) as this species as yet to be confirmed breeding in the county. Late spring migrant warblers included **TOWNSENDS WARBLERS** in Los Osos with a female on 5 Jun and a male on 7 Jun (both JSR), a singing male **HERMIT WARBLER** at Sweet Springs Nature Preserve on 1 Jun (JG), an immature male **AMERICAN REDSTART** at the Pecho Road willows on 2 Jul (JSR), and a singing **HOODED WARBLER** (heard only) above the Cerro Alto Campground on 29 Jun (MLS) that may have been attempting to summer, but could not be relocated.

GROSBEAK THRU TANAGER: A male **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** visited at feeder in Arroyo Grande on 10 Jun (JS). A calling male **INDIGO BUNTING** giving its buzzy call was at the Pecho Road willows on 10 Jun (JSR). Two singing males and a female **WESTERN TANAGER** at the Cerro Alto Campground on 22 Jun (MLS) potentially nested there, while singing males in Morro Bay 23-24 Jun (KLP) and Los Osos on 2 Jul (JSR) were most likely summer transients.

OBSERVERS: Thanks to the many birders who report their sightings including those cited above: Jill Baltan, Bill A. Bouton, Dick Boyd, George Butterworth, Tom M. Edell, Craig Fiehler, Bill C. Greene, Jessica Griffith, Marlin D. Harms, Jennifer Moonjian, Kaaren L. Perry, Patricia Price, Jim S. Royer, Ross Schaefer, Brad K. Schram, Steve C. Schubert, Joe Seals, Maggie L. Smith, Bob W. Stafford, Mike D. Stiles, 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.

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