

The Sandpiper



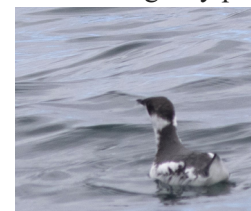
March 2024

Redwood Region Audubon Society

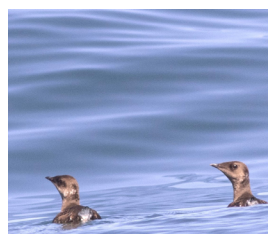
www.rras.org

Join us on Thursday, March 21, at 7:00 p.m. for a program on: **Life Among Marbled Murrelets**, by Craig Strong

Craig Strong first went to the Farallon Islands at age 12, under the guidance of Dr. David Ainley. Since then he has been a naturalist and scientist in learning about marine life. His education at Evergreen State College and UC Santa Cruz earned a bachelor's degree in biology, and at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories he completed an MS in marine sciences. Craig has been focused on seabirds in the California Current since 1976, and more specifically on Marbled Murrelets since 1992. For the past 24 years he has been the sole independent researcher on the Northwest Forest Plan's Marbled Murrelet effectiveness monitoring team, among a host of dedicated agency personnel.



Craig will talk about his life among the Marbled Murrelets off our coast, and the most recent abundance estimates and population trends. Mysteries still abound about the Fog Lark, and Craig will also discuss some of the learned "native knowledge" from his years at sea.



Programs are held at Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata, or go to rras.org for the Zoom link. Drinks and goodies are served at 7:00 p.m., the program begins at 7:30.

Photos by Craig Strong: top, left to right, Darell Warnock, Moe Morrisette, Craig; lower left, juvenile Marbled Murrelet, right, Marbled Murrelet pair.

Godwit Days Spring Migration Festival, April 18-21

Registration is open--go to godwitdays.org for details.

The annual Godwit Days birding festival offers over seventy events for both experienced birders and those new to birding. The Arcata Community Center serves as the central location for the festival, which runs from Thursday through Sunday.

We are excited to have internationally famous birder and author, Alvaro Jaramillo, and a team of experts from the Sequoia Park Zoo as keynote speakers! Jaramillo will be presenting "Birding Fast and Slow," and speakers from the zoo will share "Stories from the Nest: Sequoia Park Zoo's Conservation Partnerships."

As for the events, some have already sold out, but many opportunities remain. There is still space on Friday to see the shorebirds and gulls at the Hikshari and Eureka Waterfront Trails. Freshwater Farms Reserve Trail has space, and that event is FREE. Birds of Horse Mountain and High Elevations can welcome you on Saturday. Also on Saturday, Ocean Ranch is again open to the public to view shorebirds, and there might be time to visit the South Spit.

In addition to birding field trips, Godwit Days offers an opening reception, Saturday night banquet, children's workshops, and fifteen free events. **Don't miss it!**

Submitted by Bridget Dory

Artwork by Josh Overington



RRAS FIELD TRIPS IN MARCH

Every Saturday, 8:30-11am. Join RRAS at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary for a free guided field trip with an experienced birder. Spring is starting to arrive and many resident birds may be singing, nesting, and showing signs of breeding activity! Shorebirds will likely be quite abundant as well so keep an eye and ear out for willets, godwits, sanderlings, avocets, and curlews in the tidal areas, the islands in the ponds, and the mud around the marsh. Bring binoculars and meet the trip leader at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

Trip leaders for March: March 2, Bill Rodstrom ~ March 9, Chet Ogan ~ March 16, Mark Colwell ~ March 23, Rob Fowler ~ March 30, Kathryn Wendel

Sunday, March 10, 9-11am. Join trip leader Ralph Bucher for a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This two-mile walk is along a flat, gravel-packed trail easily accessible on foot. Just outside of town, this refuge offers access to tidally influenced habitats that host ducks, raptors, and shorebirds during the winter. Email Ralph to sign up at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

Sunday, March 17, 9-11am. Ralph Bucher leads a walk at the Eureka Waterfront starting at the foot of Del Norte Street. This walk is on a flat, paved trail that is **wheelchair accessible**. Be on the lookout for shorebirds, cormorants, loons, and grebes. Email Ralph to sign up at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

Saturday, March 23, 9-11am. Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Help restore a section of the bay trail behind Bayshore Mall. Bring water and gloves, we provide tools and snacks. Contact Jeremy Cashen at jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com or 214-605-7368, for more information.

Saturday, March 23, time TBD. Join RRAS in **Southern Humboldt** on the fourth Saturday of every month at Tooby Park, 1 mile west of Garberville on Sprowl Creek Road. These walks will be easy, lasting 2-3 hours each. *Trip leader for this walk is TBD*, heavy rain cancels, call Ann Constantino for start time at (707) 296-8720.

Wednesday, March 27, 5:30-7pm. Let's take advantage of the longer days and explore the marsh in the evening! Meet at the end of I Street (Klopp Lake) and join trip leader Janelle Chojnacki for an easygoing marsh evening walk. The tide will be fairly low, so we will hope to see some shorebird action in the muck, and we may see the Black-crowned Night Herons take off in the evening.

Sunday, March 31, 8:30-11:30am. Loleta Bottoms with Ken Burton. This portion of the Eel River floodplain is very productive for birds, including raptors, shorebirds, and grassland passerines. The amount of rainfall before the trip will determine how far out we can get. Meet Ken (shrikethree@gmail.com) in front of Loleta Grocery; we will caravan carpool from there.

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President's Column

By Gail Kenny



Kathryn Wendel is our new RRAS President. I asked her some questions so we can all get to know her better. I am continuing on the board as Immediate Past President and will be assisting Kat in getting up to speed in the President position.

How do you introduce yourself? Kathryn Wendel, but many people also know me as Kat.

What is your birding origin story? As a Wildlife student at Humboldt State University. Before then I had no idea bird identification as a game or sport was even a thing, and so going out with my ornithology class and having the professor get excited over a Solitary Sandpiper or the grad students always having their binoculars and birding while on field trips opened my eyes to birding. Then after I graduated and started working in the field and seeing my coworkers go birding for fun after work reinforced the idea of birding can be fun and not just a job.

But what really sparked me was after my first baby, I was alone in the Bay Area while my husband went back to school, and this was when the eBird app came out on phones, and I started birding every day for something to do while taking care of a baby. She went with me to every neighborhood greenspace, park, hiking trail. This was also the beginning of

my interest in local patch birding, which eventually morphed into the 5-mile radius.

What attracted you to volunteer with RRAS?

I had been volunteering with local Audubon chapters since those Bay Area days, when on the weekends I could leave the baby with her father, and I would go do Burrowing Owl habitat restoration. After we moved back to San Diego, I started volunteering with the San Diego Audubon Society leading field trips and working on the committee for the bird festival. I knew once we moved up to Humboldt that I would get involved with the local Audubon chapter up here, although I thought mostly for leading field trips. I had no idea I'd be on the board let alone president!

What are your favorite things about RRAS? The birding community that RRAS supports is my favorite thing about it, it's the people that make RRAS such a great little chapter.

What do you hope to accomplish as RRAS President this year? I'd like to continue fostering the birding community, getting people more involved and connected and out birding. I'd like to continue to foster the relationship between Godwit Days and RRAS, as well as have RRAS host the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) compilation party once a year, like the San Diego Audubon Society does for their CBC. This once-a-year event is sometimes the only time other birders get to meet and connect, and I think that's a great thing.



Volunteers Needed!

Godwit Days wouldn't be Godwit Days without our wonderful volunteers. We need your help hanging the student art entries and staffing the RRAS table in the Bird Fair open Friday through Sunday at the Arcata Community Center.

Join us on Friday, April 19, from 1-3 p.m., to hang all of the entries in the student art contest on the walls of the center's entryway. It's a fun way to see the colorful and charming work by these grade K through 12 students. Bring a light hammer and a pouch to hold pushpins. RSVP to Sue Leskiw at sueleskiw1@gmail.com.

At the RRAS table in the main room we answer questions, sell merchandise, or just greet and chat with attendees. There are two- or three-hour shifts on Friday from 3-7 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. RSVP to Gail Kenny at gailkenny@gmail.com.



Sunrise at the Refuge

Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge invites you to *Sunrise at the Refuge*. Every Saturday and Sunday in the month of March the entrance gate will open 45 minutes before sunrise, rain or shine, to allow visitors the opportunity to view the habitats of southern Humboldt Bay at sunrise and quite possibly witness thousands of Aleutian Cackling Geese fly off their night-time roosts.

Begin at the Shorebird Loop Trailhead located at the Richard J. Guadagno Headquarters and Visitor Center, 1020 Ranch Road in Loleta. For more information, call (707) 733-5406 or [fws.gov/refuge/humboldt-bay](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/humboldt-bay).

Photo courtesy of USFWS

Kid's Korner

WOWZA WILDLIFE!

by Leslie Scopes Anderson



THIS YOGA IS FOR THE BIRDS!

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Red-winged Blackbirds are often seen perching on cattails at the Arcata Marsh. They nest here and in wetlands across North America.

FUN FACTS:

Red-winged Blackbird females and juveniles are a dull, streaky brown for camouflage. Males fiercely defend their territories, and attack even big birds such as egrets and hawks!

Bird Talk Around Town, by Gina Rogers

Featuring interviews with locals on all things bird



There's a new person leading RRAS Saturday morning bird walks at the Arcata Marsh. Meet Dan Greaney, a relatively recent arrival from Redding, who brings expertise from a career primarily focused on outdoor education and a long, strong connection to the Shasta Birding Society.

Gina: Tell us about yourself and your interest in the outdoors (and birds!)

Dan: I was born and raised in Palo Alto, long enough ago that it still had that farmland and fruit tree flair to it. And I just always connected to the outdoors, staying outside and doing things like building an elaborate

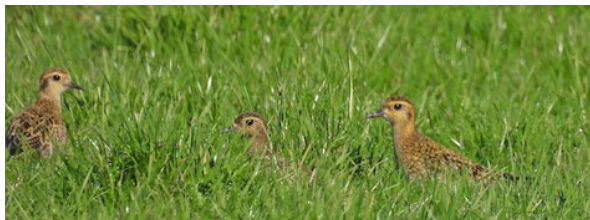
home for my pet turtle. I majored in literature because I valued its revelations about human nature, and carried that sort of interest into looking at wildlife in my career in outdoor education. And I pretty much continued in that vein for the rest of my career, over the years working with youth in the classroom, through outdoor science schools, at summer camps, and with the National Park Service. I worked all over California, including many years in the Redding area.

The outdoor education programs were often week-long experiences for fifth and sixth graders, and I learned that birds can be one of the best teaching tools, because they're viewable, they have emphatic adaptive features, and they're

Jackson Ranch Jaunt

Field trip report by Judith Brown
Photos by Ken Burton

On January 28, Ken Burton led a mixed flock of birders on part chase, part ramble along Jackson Ranch Road in Arcata. We were chasing Greater White-fronted, Ross's, and Snow Goose, Pacific Golden-Plover, Wilson's Snipe, and Lapland Longspur. After greetings and expressions of thanks for a dry morning in this soggy winter, we crossed Samoa Boulevard and headed up the road, expecting to see shorebirds in the first soupy fields alongside. Not many shorebirds, but Brewer's Blackbirds aplenty, along with starlings, dogs, and cows. Ken spotted two Bald Eagles flying over us heading for distant conifers, and not too far away, an American Kestrel allowed us good looks through the scope. Scanning the opposite pasture, we saw a Peregrine Falcon landing on a post, uttering an exuberant cry as it caught its breakfast. After the first sighting of a Savannah Sparrow, they seemed to be



everywhere—31 was the count by the end of the walk.

Around Liscom Slough we started to pick up waterfowl, including American Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, and troops of coots. And shorebirds—big flocks of Willets and many Greater Yellowlegs. We were struck by the variety of raptors. Besides the eagles, kestrel, and peregrine, we saw Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, and Northern Harrier.

Along Foster Avenue, the pasture gave up the bird of the day—Pacific Golden-Plover. Five of them, in their golden finery, looking a bit wary, but staying put for long looks and great photos. A life bird for this writer and others. Turning back at Polaris Road we got a bonus, plus two. A flock of Greater White-fronted Geese flew in with two Snow Geese among them.

beautiful. That interest in birds brought me to make connections with people in the birding community.

Gina: What prompted your move to Humboldt County?

Dan: There had been so many wildfires in Shasta County, and the smoke accompanying them was terrible. I could take the heat, but I wanted to enjoy breathing, too. My wife and I had been to the coast, including on a field trip to the Arcata Marsh and Bottoms (led by Ken Burton), and the area offered so much—cooler temps, clean air, and yes, the birds! So when it came time to move, this is where we looked. It took a while to find a place, largely because of the tight housing market, but we finally got lucky with a place right above King Salmon.

Gina: How did you come to write your book *BirdWords*?

Dan: I was very active with the Shasta Birding Society, and was always looking for ways to introduce more people to the pleasures of being out in nature. So one strategy I hit upon was to write a short column in the Redding newspaper. These articles were informed by my personal observations, connecting an individual bird species to its environment, but also reflecting on broader natural history and conservation issues. The goal is to invite others to enjoy and understand birds better.

I started writing the articles in 2014 and continued through 2023. At that point I decided to try to pull them together into a book, and was lucky enough to find Living Gold Press, a publisher willing to work with me to make it happen.

Congratulations to Dan on the book, and thanks for leading RRAS walks. It's wonderful to have someone with a strong focus on education in our ranks.

Photo by Gina Rogers

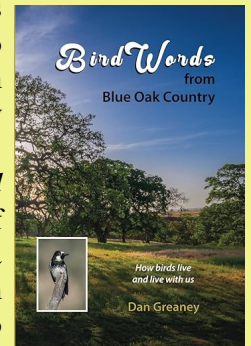
BirdWords from Blue Oak Country, by Dan Greaney, is a collection of articles that originally appeared in the *Redding Record-Searchlight*. Brimming with vignettes on bird behavior, bird language, and the interconnections between birds and their habitat, and also touching on natural history and conservation issues, this collection is a testament to the joy that watching birds can bring.

The book's tagline – *how birds live and live with us* – provides a good snapshot of what is in store for readers. You will find a series of short musings on different birds with accompanying photographs, divided into four sections, one for each season of the year.

There is a chapter titled "Go Listen to the Cattails!" as a cry to find the marsh wrens lurking within, one on thinking about a Cinnamon Teal as "Spice on the Water," and one laughing at how "Shovelers Don't Shovel."

While the focus is on birds from blue oak country (especially in Shasta County), most of the birds described can also be seen here in Humboldt County, and the warmth of the writing brings out the marvels and pleasures seen in the wide diversity of bird behaviors and features.

Copies of the book are available at bookstores in Arcata and Eureka and at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center, as well as through online booksellers.



Bird Names for Birds

By Ken Burton



The year is...oh, let's say 2027. I have just submitted an eBird checklist that includes Black-crested Jay, Chaparral Wren, Lyrical Thrush, Masked Oriole, and Black-capped Warbler. Where am I?? Well, it could be Blue Lake or Fortuna!

As you likely have heard by now, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) has announced that it will be renaming all North American (and eventually Latin American) birds named after people, starting this year. Some 152 species in the US and Canada will be affected, including several dozen found in our area. This move falls under the broader push towards greater inclusivity in many facets of society (nearly all such honorific names refer to white men, some of whom are known to have been racists, slave owners, and/or Confederate soldiers). More specifically, the bird renaming movement was galvanized by the Central Park "Battle of the Coopers" and George Floyd's death, which happened to take place on the same day in 2020.

Bird names get changed every year – we expect that – but generally because of taxonomic revisions and never before at this scale. No official bird name had been changed for "PC" reasons since Oldsquaw became Long-tailed Duck in 2000; but in 2020, John McCown, a Confederate general, lost "his" longspur, now called Thick-billed Longspur. The debate progressed from there to John James Audubon himself; even for his day, Audubon had some pretty racist views, not to mention shady business practices, and he owned slaves. Scores of Audubon Society chapters have changed their names in response. As the movement gained momentum, some folks began proposing that *no* bird be named after *anyone*. And here we are.

If you've been paying any attention, you already know that this is an extremely divisive issue, perhaps the most divisive in birding history. A lot of people have asked me what I think of it all. Suffice it to say that at this point, the process seems inevitable (though there is a protest petition circulating that is garnering a lot of signatures), so there seems little point in bemoaning it. If any of these names are going to be changed, perhaps it makes sense to change them all rather than have some group of people centuries after the fact decide which historical figures merit birds and which don't.

The AOS has vowed to engage the public in the process. With that in mind, I compiled a list of northwest California bird names slated to be axed and asked the regional birding community for new name proposals (you may have seen the invitation on our website or elsewhere). I then put the proposals out to a vote. And (drum roll, please), here are the winners! This list will be sent to the AOS for consideration as it deliberates on new names for our birds. We'll see what happens!

- Ross's Goose: Small-billed Goose
- Barrow's Goldeneye: Teardrop Goldeneye
- Clark's Grebe: Yellow-billed Grebe
- Vaux's Swift: Forest Swift

DID YOU KNOW?



From the CatBird Committee

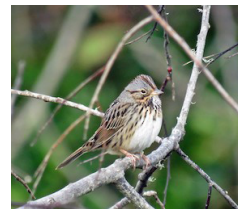
We've all been hearing reports about how many birds are killed by outdoor cats (*Felis catus*) every year (estimated to be 2.4

BILLION a year in North America alone), but did you know those cats are also killing insects? A comprehensive global assessment of species eaten

by cats unexpectedly identified 119 species of insect prey, with the expectation that many more will be identified now that researchers know to keep an eye out for them. This is important because breeding birds have been observed to feed thousands of insects to a single brood of chicks in backyards like yours. The more insect protein there is available for the chicks to eat while in the nest, the more likely they'll grow into healthy fledglings and adult birds. All the more reason to keep your cat indoors or on a leash. Thank you!

Source: Nature Communications, Dec. 2023

- Anna's Hummingbird: Red-fronted Hummingbird
- Allen's Hummingbird: California Copper
- Wilson's Snipe: Bog Snipe
- Wilson's Phalarope: Black-necked Phalarope
- Baird's Sandpiper: Cordillera Sandpiper
- Cassin's Auklet: Gray Auklet
- Scripps's Murrelet: Chumash Murrelet
- Sabine's Gull: Tundra Gull
- Bonaparte's Gull: Boreal Gull
- Franklin's Gull: Spectacled Gull
- Heermann's Gull: Pirate Gull
- Forster's Tern: Masked Tern
- Leach's Storm-Petrel: White-rumped Storm-Petrel
- Brandt's Cormorant: Buff-banded Cormorant
- Cooper's Hawk: Flat-headed Hawk
- Lewis's Woodpecker: Rosy-breasted Woodpecker
- Nuttall's Woodpecker: Bar-backed Woodpecker
- Hammond's Flycatcher: Forest Flycatcher
- Say's Phoebe: Cinnamon Phoebe
- Hutton's Vireo: Oak Vireo
- Cassin's Vireo: Northwestern Vireo
- Steller's Jay: Black-crested Jay
- Clark's Nutcracker: Pine Nutcracker
- Bewick's Wren: Chaparral Wren
- Townsend's Solitaire: Mountain Solitaire
- Swainson's Thrush: Lyrical Thrush
- Cassin's Finch: Crimson-capped Finch
- Harris's Sparrow: Black-bibbed Sparrow
- Lincoln's Sparrow: Buff-breasted Sparrow
- Bullock's Oriole: Masked Oriole
- Brewer's Blackbird: Glossy Blackbird
- MacGillivray's Warbler: Black-bibbed Warbler
- Townsend's Warbler: Northwestern Warbler
- Wilson's Warbler: Black-capped Warbler



Whichever side of this debate you're on, there's no denying that some of the people after whom birds were named were simply friends, colleagues, or family members of those doing the naming and had absolutely nothing to do with the birds themselves. For instance, the fact that Anna's Hummingbird is named for Anna, Duchess of Rivoli, who happened to be the wife of the French marshal who owned the collection that contained the holotype, is an interesting historical anecdote but tells us nothing about the species' appearance or biology. I for one look forward to new names that elucidate unique characteristics of the birds and help beginners associate birds with their names. I will, however, miss Bonaparte, Steller, Wilson, and the other ornithologists of the past who really did advance our knowledge of American birds and paved the way for their conservation. Let's not forget what they accomplished.

Creature Feature

Birders might be told, "keep looking up," but at the RRAS walk on February 10, we were reminded it might pay to look down. As we came around Klopp Lake at the end of the walk, Evelina



Nagornykh spotted garter snakes in the grass at the edge of the lake and without hesitation picked one up for all to enjoy. She provided the photo above, and Ray Coil took one too (left).

