



The Sandpiper

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2017



REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY www.rras.org

FIELD TRIPS

Every Saturday: Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. These are our famous rain-or-shine, docent-led field trips at the Marsh. Bring your binocular(s) and have a great morning birding! Meet in the parking lot at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake) in Arcata at **8:30 a.m.** Trips end around 11 a.m. August 5: Alexa DeJoannis; August 12: Cindy Moyer; August 19: Jude Power; August 26: Carol Wilson.

For some of our more far-reaching trips we would like to suggest donating gas money to drivers on field trips. A good rule of thumb is \$5 per ½-hour drive time to field trip destination.

Sunday, August 13: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This is a wonderful 2- to 3-hour trip for people wanting to learn the birds of the Humboldt Bay area. It takes a leisurely pace with emphasis on enjoying the birds! Beginners are more than welcome. Meet at the Refuge Visitor Center at **9 a.m.** Call Jude Power (707-822-3613) for more information.

Saturday, August 19: Willow Creek. Meet at Studio 299 (75 The Terrace, Willow Creek) starting at **9 a.m.** We will depart promptly at 9:30 for our destination; carpooling available. Walks generally run 2-3 hours. All ages, abilities and interest levels welcome! For more information, please contact Melissa Dougherty at 530-859-1874 or email willowcreekbirdwalks@gmail.com.

Saturday, August 26: Southern Humboldt Community Park. Redwood Region Audubon Society will hold its monthly bird walk at the Southern Humboldt Community Park in Garberville, led by Tom Leskiw (different guest guides per month). All ages and experience levels are encouraged to participate and revel in the beauty of the park and its avian inhabitants on this easy 2- to 3-hour walk. Binoculars are not provided (but often shared!) Organic coffee and cookies are often provided. Water and a hat with a brim recommended. Bring a snack if you like. Meet at **8:30 a.m. at Tooby Park on Sprowl Creek Rd.** If you arrive late, we will be heading west past the farmhouse, the barn and the horse stable. No dogs please.

Saturday, September 9: Willow Creek. See August 12.

Sunday, September 10: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See August 13.



Elk River Spit, Eureka. Photo by Gary Bloomfield

Saturday, September 16: Southern Humboldt Community Park. See August 26. Kyle Keegan will guest lead. Same start time.

Sunday, September 17: Crescent City. Local resident, Ken Burton (707-499-1146; shrikethree@gmail.com), will lead a half-day trip along the waterfront focusing on seabirds, gulls, and shorebirds. Lunch optional. Meet at the northernmost parking lot on Pebble Beach Dr. (opposite Castle Rock; coordinates: 41.770155, -124.237950) at **8 a.m.**

Sunday, September 17: Eureka Waterfront. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the foot of W. Del Norte St., where we will scope for birds off the public dock until everyone assembles. We will then drive to the base of the Hikshari' Trail at Truesdale Street and bird along the trail to the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary. Leader: Ralph Bucher (707-499-1247; thebook@reninet.com).

Saturday, September 23: North Jetty to Fairhaven. Join Rob Fowler (707-616-9841); migratoriusfwlr@gmail.com) on a ½-day trip out to the north spit of Humboldt Bay. We will start early at the north jetty looking for seabirds and rocky shorebirds and then will hit the various willow patches from the cypress patch to the "Horse Pasture" in Fairhaven, looking for fall migrant landbirds. Meet at **7 a.m.** at the South G St parking lot at the Arcata Marsh for carpooling arrangements. Scopes are recommended for seawatching off the jetty. We will end around noon.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAMS

Please join us when our monthly programs resume in September!

Regular Monthly Program: **September 8,**
The program starts at **7:30 p.m.**
at the **Six Rivers Masonic Lodge,**
251 Bayside Rd., Arcata.

Bring a mug to enjoy shade-grown coffee, and please come fragrance-free.

This month we also have a special program on **Saturday, September 16** when the RRAS Board meets in Del Norte County, followed by a field trip led by Ken Burton on Sunday (see above).

Craig Strong, a seabird biologist who has been studying the abundance and distribution of marbled murrelets for the past 25 years, will present details of his findings on the species' populations in Oregon and California, as well as life history, behavior, and plumages of the small seabird. Since 2000, Strong has participated in the NW Forest Plan, which uses murrelet populations as an indicator of late successional forest health.

Details will be posted at rras.org.

CHAPTER LEADERS

OFFICERS

President— Hal Genger 707-499-0887
Vice President— Ken Burton..... 707-499-1146
Secretary — Sierra Huffman..... 707-298-8608
Treasurer—Gary Friedrichsen..... 707-822-6543

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Ralph Bucher.....707-443-6944
Jill Demers.....707-667-6163
Harriet Hill.....707-267-4055
Syn-dee Noel.....707-442-8862
Chet Ogan.....707-442-9353
Susan Penn.....707-273-5200
C.J. Ralph.....707-822-2015
Denise Seeger.....707-444-2399

OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS

Conservation — Jim Clark 707-445-8311
Educatn/Schlrshps — Denise Seeger ..707-444-2399
eBird Liaison — Rob Fowler 707-839-3493
Facebook — Cindy Moyer..... 707-822-1886
— Rob Fowler 707-839-3493
Field Trips— Rob Fowler 707-839-3493
Historian — John Hewston 707-822-5288
Membership — Susan Penn.....707-273-5200
NEC Representative — C.J. Ralph..... 707-822-2015
Nominations — Hal Genger..... 707-499-0887
— CJ Ralph..... 707-822-2015
Programs — Ken Burton707-499-1146
Publications — C.J. Ralph..... 707-822-2015
Publicity — Harriet Hill..... 707-267-4055
Sandpiper (Ed.)—Alexa DeJoannis..... 202-288-5174
Sandpiper (Layout)- Gary Bloomfield ..707-362-1226
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Lake Earl Branch — Sue Calla..... 707-465-6191
RRAS Web Page..... www.rras.org
Arcata Bird Alert707-822-5666

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Thinking of Joining the National Audubon Society?

If so, please use the coupon below. By sending in your membership on this form, rather than replying to solicitations from National Audubon, \$20 is sent directly to RRAS. This is how NAS rewards local chapters for recruiting national members. (Otherwise, the RRAS dues share per new member is only a couple of dollars.) Thank you.

Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed. (Introductory offer)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

email _____

Local Chapter Code: C24

Please make checks to the National Audubon Society.

Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society

P.O. Box 422250

Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

-----LOCAL CHAPTER-----

REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 1054, EUREKA, CA 95502

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Hal Genger

The summer is almost over and it is time to start a new series of tasks. My garden has provided me with fresh vegetables and will continue for a while yet, but September is a good time to plant more native species in my yard that will be watered by the fall rains and look great next spring. The same is true for the newly re-opened portion of the waterfront trail behind the Bayshore Mall in Eureka (currently known as Parcel 4)! We'll put out a call for volunteers when we have a firm date for native vegetation restoration work, perhaps over the coming winter or spring. This September we will also restart our general meetings again on the second Friday of the month; I hope to see you there!

This is the time of year when the nomination committee starts diligently looking for candidates for the next election. Upcoming open positions will be the president, vice president, secretary, and a director or two. Please let me (or any Board member) know if you are interested in any of these positions. If you would like to learn more about RRAS leadership, feel free to attend a Board meeting on the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Northcoast Environmental Center Office, 1385 Eighth Street, Arcata. Your service would be greatly appreciated.

Conservation issues are ongoing; we have national problems like the possible reduction in the number and size of marine sanctuaries or other wild places, and the reduction in the EPA's abilities to complete its mission. Local items include unregulated marijuana grows, appropriate routing alternatives for the "Last Chance Grade" portion of Highway 101 south of Crescent City, bird-friendly areas, etc. Please contact Jim Clark, or better yet attend the conservation committee meetings held the second Thursday of the month at noon at Rita's Margaritas and Mexican Grill, 1111 Fifth Street, Eureka, to help with conservation issues.

Lastly, I want to thank those of you who took part in our Third Annual Birdathon in May. It takes a lot of time and energy to seek donations, figure out a route to find birds (even in the snow, like Ken Burton's team contended with on Horse Mountain,) and then collect the donations. Thank you all for your efforts! I also want to thank all who donated money to the Birdathon. We raised \$7,285.86! This major fundraiser allows NEC and RRAS to carry on their missions to protect the environment and your donations will be well spent in this regard. Thank you!

UPDATES FROM HUMBOLDT BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

by Denise Seeger

Salmon Creek Unit open on Sundays only through August

Due to habitat restoration construction, the Salmon Creek Unit (including the Shorebird Loop Trail and Visitor Center) will only be open on Sundays through August. On Mondays through Saturdays, large dump trucks will be using the entrance road and hiking trail while moving soil as part of the Living Coastline Project to restore tidal salt marsh habitat on Humboldt Bay. For further information,

visit https://www.fws.gov/cno/newsroom/featured/2016/Humboldt_Bay_Shoreline/index.html

Please join us for a free, family-fun event, **Grandparents and Grandkids Day: Wonderful Wetlands!** on Sunday, August 20 from 1 to 4 p.m.

Gather up your friends and family and bring a picnic (and your rubber boots!) out to the refuge for the afternoon. Explore the wetland habitats of southern Humboldt Bay through fun, hands-on science activities, and arts and crafts. Everyone is welcome.

Take the Hookton Road Exit (#696) off Highway 101 and meet at the Richard J. Guadagno Headquarters and Visitor Center, 1020 Ranch Road in Loleta.

For more information and special accommodation call (707) 733-5406 or visit www.fws.gov/refuge/humboldt_bay/

NEW MEMBERS

RRAS welcomes the following new members and subscribers:

New National Members

Arcata - Debra Burstiner, Emma McCallum-Spalaris, Paul Tuzzolino

Belmont - Michael Academia

Blue Lake - Greta Box

Burnt Ranch - Tom Weisend

Eureka - Susan Hesse

Fortuna - Buch Cornelius, Carolyn Eldridge

Garberville - Herb Schwartz

Orleans - Francis Lambert

Smith River - Edris Edgar

Renewing Local Members

Rise Ann Borges, David Dickinson, Michele Driscoll,

Jeff Jacobsen, David Jensen, Kate McClain,

Diane Ryerson, Philip & Beth Schafer, Deanna Thrift

We look forward to seeing you on field trips and at our monthly programs.



Virginia Rail at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge
May 10, 2017, by Gary Bloomfield

PARCEL 4 GETS A NEW NAME



by Alexa DeJoannis

The RRAS board of directors voted this week on a new name, “Wigi Wetlands”, for the parcel of City of Eureka land on which the chapter holds a conservation easement. The City has agreed to adopt the new name on interpretative signs. Wigi Wetlands is the shoreline area behind the Bayshore Mall, which is a mixture of fresh and salt water marsh, vegetated with willow scrub, saltgrass, sedges, and other water-loving species.

The RRAS’ conservation easement on the property allows the chapter a say in how the parcel is used. The City has extended the Eureka Bayshore Trail through the parcel, and in concert with RRAS and other agencies, is restoring the property as a park and wildlife habitat. The area’s history includes a lumber mill and was originally occupied and used by Wiyot people. “Wigi” is a Wiyot word for Humboldt Bay.



LOCAL AUTHOR PREPARES NEW BIRD-FINDING BOOK

The author of RRAS’s *Common Birds of Northwest California* and RRAS’s vice president, Ken Burton, is working on another book, a bird-finding guide to Humboldt County. RRAS has received a \$750 grant from the Humboldt Area Foundation’s Gerald O. & Susan Hansen Family Fund to offset some of the cost of

printing. Ken is working with Leslie Scopes Anderson, his collaborator on *Common Birds*, on the new book, which RRAS aims to have available by Godwit Days, 2018.

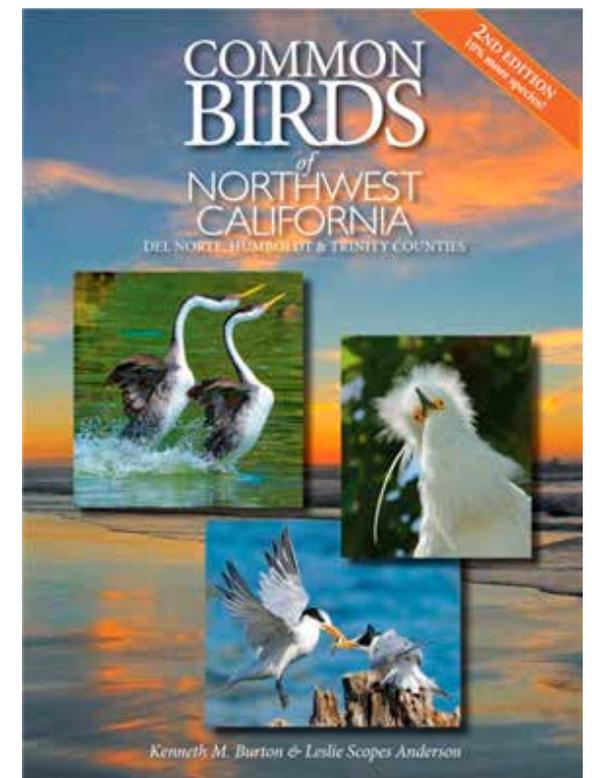
Ken is a well-known and respected birder and member of the birding community in Humboldt County. He was selected as the May 2017 eBird Birder of the Month (based on submitting a certain number of checklists to the citizen science birding database), from which website the following is reproduced.

“I’m currently working on a birding guide to Humboldt County, based largely on eBird. It will offer 25 driving and walking routes linking eBird hotspots together and calling out noteworthy species along the way based mostly on eBird reports. Some people say that eBird has made birding guides obsolete, but I believe that a birding guide based on eBird can only be good for eBird. We’ll see, I guess!

I work as a wildlife biologist for the Yurok Tribe in California and am currently managing a new bird inventory project associated with prairie fragments, using point counts. I hope to be able to contribute our data to eBird at some point; there’s precious little information out there on the birdlife of the lower Klamath River.”



Author Ken Burton



Second Edition of *Common Birds of Northwest California*

DREAM BIRDS 2017

by Tom Leskiw

For many birders, their quest to locate unusual birds is linked with a desire to tease out patterns relative to time and place. Predicting the occurrence of noteworthy birds can take the form of a game when these predictions are collated and archived. In 1988, Gary Lester queried ten of Humboldt County's most active birders for their predictions on the next five additions to the County's checklist. I repeated this process in 2002. The results of these two polls are at <http://rras.org/redux.aspx>, as is an undated poll John Sterling took at: http://www.sterlingbirds.com/california_county_birding_intro.html

For "Team 2002," Jan Andersen, Ron LeValley, John Sterling, and Matt Wachs are all batting .800 (4 of their 5 predictions have come true).

I queried a cross-section of HumCo birders; here are the predictions from those who responded.

Gary Bloomfield: Reddish Egret, Tricolored Heron, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Grace's Warbler

Ken Burton: Eurasian Dotterel, Bristle-thighed Curlew, White-rumped Sandpiper, Red-legged Kittiwake, Great Shearwater

Lizzie Feucht: White-rumped Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Black-tailed Gull, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Dusky Warbler

Rob Fowler: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Dusky Warbler, Painted Redstart, Grace's Warbler, Ross's Gull

Tom Leskiw: Baikal Teal, White-rumped Sandpiper, Dusky Warbler, Dusky Thrush, Redwing

Gary Lester: Wood Stork, Great Knot, Spotted Redshank, Eurasian Hoopoe, Siberian Accentor

Lauren Lester: Ross's Gull, Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Scott's Oriole, White-winged Crossbill

Deven Kammerichs-Berke: Great Knot, Dusky Warbler, Bluethroat, Bristle-thighed Curlew, Ross's Gull

Jude Power: Baikal Teal, White-rumped Sandpiper, Ridgway's Rail, Red-billed Tropicbird, Baird's Sparrow

With fall migration just around the corner, it will be fun to see whose prediction will be the first to "bear fruit."

ALEUTIAN CACKLING GOOSE POPULATION

Adapted from a USFWS memorandum by Todd A. Sanders

Aleutian cackling geese (*Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*) were federally listed as endangered in 1967, downgraded to threatened status in 1990, and removed from protection under the Endangered Species Act in 2001. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to monitor the population's numbers because of the past listing as endangered, its status as a game bird, and because population expansion has resulted in crop damage complaints.

The large majority of Aleutian geese winters primarily in the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento River Delta areas of central California (San Joaquin Valley region), and stages in the Humboldt Bay and Crescent City areas in spring before making the transoceanic flight to breeding areas in the western Aleutian Islands in Alaska. The birds need to store energy for the long flight, egg-laying, and other breeding activities in the next few months. Their best source for energy is their spring feeding grounds where they add a lot of fat.

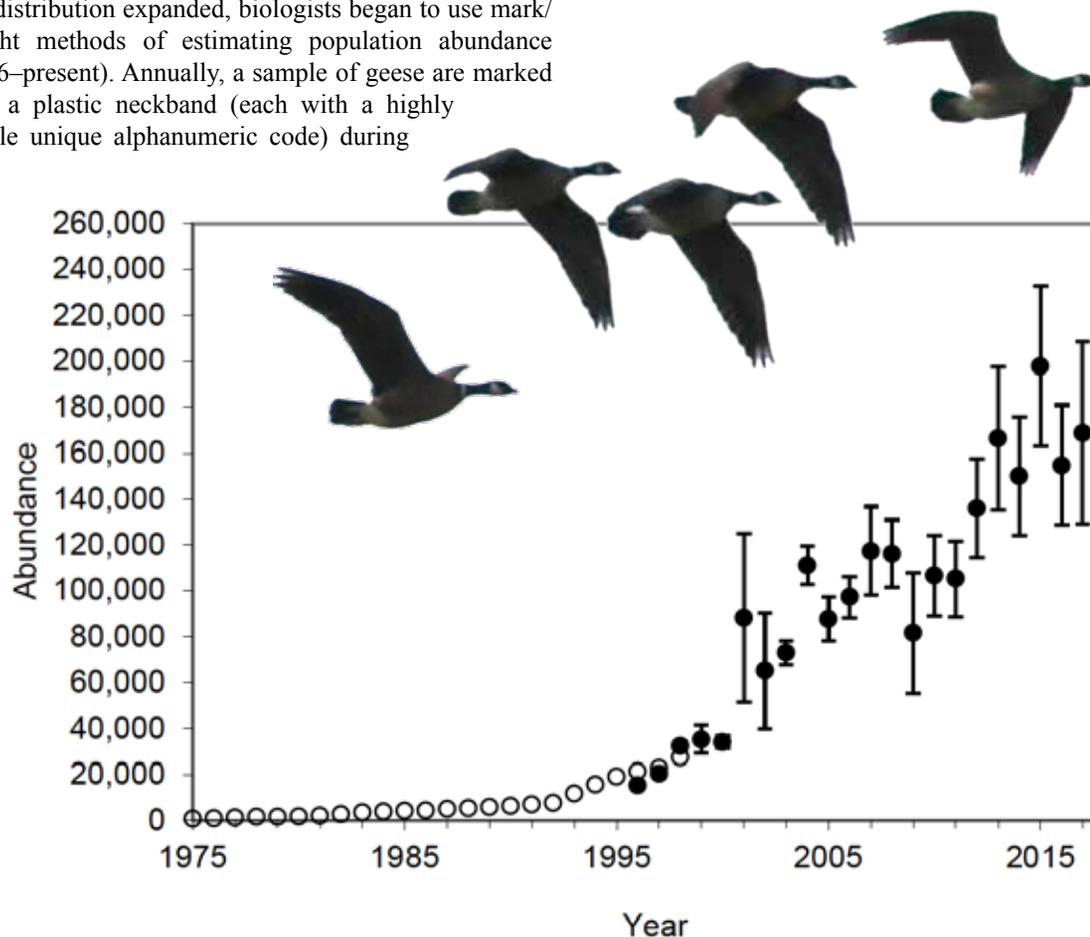
Counting breeding birds on their islands is not a good idea both because of the difficulty of reaching the islands and because human presence there would be disruptive. Therefore, biologists count geese in the winter. At first, they could count every bird when the population was small and concentrated in a few local areas (1975–1998). However, as the population has grown and distribution expanded, biologists began to use mark/resight methods of estimating population abundance (1996–present). Annually, a sample of geese are marked with a plastic neckband (each with a highly visible unique alphanumeric code) during

November–December in the San Joaquin Valley area and these bands are subsequently resighted during January–March in California and Oregon. Biologists estimate the total number of birds using a ratio of marked to unmarked animals. Due to the increasing population, this ratio has been 1–2% in recent years.

The estimated number of Aleutian Canada geese in winter 2017 was 168,548 (95% confidence interval = 128,671–208,424). Abundance of this population has generally increased from 790 in 1975 (see graph). The recovery of this population is considered a success. Geese are so numerous that their grazing has become a significant loss to agricultural crops, and they are included in our harvestable waterfowl list to control their numbers.

Read more about the causes for Aleutian goose population decline at https://www.fws.gov/endangered/map/ESA_success_stories/AK/AK_story1/index.html or find out about Aleutian geese in the Humboldt Bay area at https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Humboldt_Bay/wildlife_and_habitat/AleutianCacklingGeese.html

Many people contribute to Aleutian goose monitoring efforts, including personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Department of Fish and Game, and The Nature Conservancy, as well as volunteers.



Abundance of Aleutian Canada geese from direct counts (1975–1998, open circles) and estimation using mark/resight methods (1996–2017, closed circles with 95% confidence intervals). The two surveys overlapped for 3 years (1996–1998).