



The Sandpiper



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2018

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. Walks led by: Larry Karsteadt (Feb 3); Rob Fowler (Feb 10); Carol Wilson (Feb 17); Moe Morrisette (Feb 24).

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.

Saturday, February 10: Willow Creek Bird Walk. 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.

Sunday, February 11: 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, February 17: Southern Humboldt Community Park in Garberville. All ages and experience levels are encouraged to participate on this easy, 2- to 3-hour walk. Binoculars are not provided (but often shared!). Water and a hat with a brim are recommended. **We will park for our walk at the main entrance (near the playground) on Sprowl Creek Road at 9 a.m.** If you arrive late, we will be heading west past the farmhouse, after possibly checking out the river first. No dogs, please. Outhouses on the trail. For information call Ann at 923-7227. Heavy rain cancels.

Sunday, February 18: Eureka Waterfront. Meet at **9 a.m.** by the fishing pier at the foot of W. Del Norte St., where we will scope for birds until everyone assembles. We will then drive to the base of the Hikshari' Trail at Truesdale Street and bird along the trail through the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary. Leader: Ralph Bucher (707-499-1247; thebook@reninet.com).

Sunday, February 25: College of the Redwoods. The College campus offers a variety of habitats: shrub hedges, fields, forests, marsh, and pond. We are likely to see and hear songbirds, soaring hawks, and wetlands-loving birds. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the flagpole in front of Administration (take the south entrance). Parking is free on weekends! Led by Alexa DeJoannis (202-288-5174).

Saturday, March 3: Mill Creek Acquisition (Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park). Explore this huge area of second-growth forest with leader, Ken Burton (shrikethree@gmail.com, 707-499-1146). We'll be looking and listening for the first signs of breeding from our resident and early migrant birds. Be prepared for up to several miles of walking, perhaps on muddy trails. Meet at the end of Hamilton Road (41.732696, -124.099558) at **9:15 a.m.**

Saturday, March 10: Willow Creek Bird Walks. See February 10.

Sunday, March 11: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See February 11.

Sunday, March 18: Eureka Waterfront. See February 18.

Saturday, March 24: Southern Humboldt Community Park in Garberville. See February 17. This month's walk will be led by Dave Fix.

Sunday, March 25: College of the Redwoods. See February 25.



ANNUAL BANQUET: SATURDAY, FEB 17

HOWLAND, BAKER, AND JARVIS ISLANDS: OUR MOST REMOTE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

These refuges, which Doug managed in the 1980's, lie within 100 miles of the equator in the Central Pacific Ocean, and are separated by over 1100 miles of uninterrupted ocean. Throughout the past 150 years, a couple of million seabirds have managed to nest there despite many man-made hazards such as rats, cats, invasive plants, and contaminants. The islands also have endured a colorful history including being subjected to guano wars, playing a strategic role in WWII, and being the target of biological and chemical warfare testing in the 1960's. Doug will talk about the natural history of the terrestrial wildlife, as well as the colorful marine life of the refuges.



After receiving a Master's degree from HSU, **Doug Forsell** worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 1976 to 2012, reducing threats to sea birds from invasive plants and predators, sand mining, oil spills, habitat degradation, entanglement in fishing gear, and wind power development through knowledge gained from shipboard and aerial surveys.

Place: Arcata D Street Neighborhood Center, 13th and D Sts. Time: Social hour begins at **5:30 p.m.** and dinner at **6:30 p.m.** Meat and veggie options will be offered by Brett Shuler Fine Catering.

Tickets are priced on a sliding scale from \$40 to \$60. To reserve, send a check made out to RRAS to P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502, email gary@jacobycreek.net with Banquet in the subject line, or call 707-496-6581. The last day to make reservations is February 15.

MARCH PROGRAM: FRIDAY, MAR 9

CONSERVATION OF NORTH AMERICAN JAGUARS

"El Jefe" (The Boss) is one of only seven jaguars known to have visited the U.S. in the last 22 years. Jaguars are a top predator, the largest native cat in the Americas, and most closely related to tigers, African lions, and leopards. Once, they ranged far north of the Mexican border, but hunting and habitat loss have all but eliminated them from the U.S. **Dr. Aletris Neils**, founder and Executive Director of Conservation CATalyst and a lecturer at HSU, will talk about the biology and behavior of this spectacular species. She will highlight discoveries her organization has learned from studying El Jefe, and about the research and advocacy they are doing to protect these majestic predators.



Jaguar, the largest American wild cat [Conservation CATalyst]

Programs start at **7:30 p.m.** at **Six Rivers Masonic Lodge**, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata.

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

CHAPTER LEADERS OFFICERS

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

This is my first column as president of the Redwood Region Audubon Society. I'm grateful for this chance to actively support the RRAS mission. Volunteerism allows me to contribute to my community in a way I believe in. RRAS is a valuable, local organization that works to promote wise use and preservation of our natural systems, which is important to me. As Audubon Society members, we use our combined efforts and funds to shape our community and our world. We have a stronger voice when we work together.

The Annual Banquet is our biggest fund-raiser. Please consider contributing either money or your time to make it successful. You can contact our treasurer, Gary Friedrichsen (822-6543), to donate funds or items for auction at the banquet. Donated items may range from works of art to books to handmade crafts to services. If

you have a relationship with a local business, perhaps you could ask for a gift certificate. Donated items may be dropped off at the Arcata Marsh Visitor Center. We will need help preparing and breaking down the banquet. Contact our volunteer coordinator, Susan Penn (672-3346), to spend an hour or two on Saturday, February 17, before or after the banquet.

The banquet is a time for our membership to come together and become reacquainted, and it's an opportunity to express ongoing commitment to our mission. As fortunate residents of the North Coast, we appreciate the value of our natural systems to produce food, filter our air and water, and gladden our hearts. Come and share your love of environmental conservation with other like-minded citizens at the banquet. See you there!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Redwood Region Audubon Society:

When writing about the history of the Centerville Christmas Bird Count, you should note that the concept was brought to the Ferndale area, many years ago from Boston, by two brothers – Bill Crane, the band instructor for the Ferndale Schools, and Dr. Clarence “Tige” Crane, one of the two physicians for Ferndale and my family's doctor – back in the days when house calls were still made.

It was originally the Crane family year-end birding adventure and for many years pursued by those two families, until others joined in and it became what it is today. It started in Ferndale and for a long time, the days' end compilation was held there.

As a side note, my history/natural history boat tours of the Eel River estuary came about in the mid-seventies, after I took Dr. Crane and family out to see the several Snowy Owls there that year.

Afterwards, he recruited me for the Christmas Bird Count, which I have done every year since, barring a couple of flood years, and since then, have offered the boat tours to the general public.

Because interest in outdoor activities has waned considerably since I started doing this, I am retiring Camp Weott Guide Service in January.

Frank M. Chapman may have started the Christmas Bird Count, more than a hundred years ago, but we have the Crane family to thank for bringing the idea to Humboldt County, before the '50s, when I first knew them.

Goodbye and Thanks for all the Fish,

Bruce Slocum
 Ferndale

SUNRISE AT THE REFUGE

by Denise Seeger

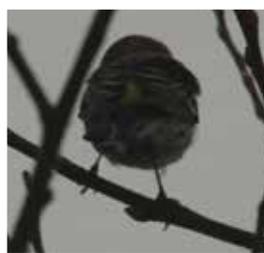
You are invited to Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge for “Sunrise at the Refuge, a.k.a. Aleutian Cackling Goose Fly-Off & Family Fun Weekend”, on Saturday and Sunday, March 3 and 4, rain or shine. Meet at the Richard J. Guadagno Headquarters and Visitor Center, 1020 Ranch Road in Loleta. The gate will open at 6:15 a.m.

View the habitats of southern Humboldt Bay at sunrise. Watch thousands of Aleutian cackling geese fly off their night-time roosts. The fly-off usually occurs within 15 minutes before or after sunrise. Sunrise is predicted at 6:47 a.m.

Family-fun activities at the Visitor Center include bird-silhouette painting, bird-house building, and other arts and crafts from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Bring a mug for coffee, tea, or cocoa.

This is a popular event. We encourage everyone to please carpool to ease parking congestion on the refuge. For more information or special accommodation please call (707) 733-5406 or visit www.fws.gov/refuge/humboldtby/.

WE WANT YOUR PHOTOS OF BIRD TUMMIES



Have you ever stood below or behind a bird, trying to identify it, but the bird won't cooperate? For example, I snapped these birds at the Arcata Marsh at the end of January. Send in your awkward-angle photos of bird butts and tummies for a quiz on bird ID to adejoannis@hotmail.com! Don't

forget to include your name, the location and date, and the name of the bird (or another photo that helps identify the bird).



One of the 2017 RRAS Science Fair Awardees,
Owen Petersen

RRAS TO SPONSOR 14TH ANNUAL SCIENCE FAIR AWARD

RRAS will give an award to the best project related to birds or their habitat at the annual Humboldt County Science Fair in mid-March. The winner will be announced in the June/July Children's Issue of *The Sandpiper*.



Townsend's Warbler in cascara,
Fortuna, 10/20/17; by Lina Carro

MARCH 23 DEADLINE FOR NATURE WRITING CONTEST ENTRIES

RRAS is sponsoring its 13th Annual Children's Nature Writing Contest. Up to six cash prizes will be awarded for the best essay(s) or poem(s) on "What Nature Means to Me" by Humboldt or Del Norte County students in grades 4 through 12. Winners will be published in the *Sandpiper* and on the RRAS website (www.rras.org), with awards presented at the 23rd Annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival in Arcata on Saturday, April 21 at 10 a.m.

Entries should be no more than 450 words in length; we will accept one entry per person. Topics suitable for exploration include, but are not limited to: bird feeding, duck hunting, animal rescue, and observations of the natural world. A flyer with complete rules is posted on the RRAS website (link can be found in right column on home page). Entries must include student, teacher, and school names, grade, address, and phone number and/or e-mail. Deadline for receipt is Friday, March 23, 2018.

Send submissions to tomleskiw@gmail.com with "Nature Writing Contest" in the subject line. Submissions can be attached Word documents or text within the body of the e-mail (no Google docs); or mail a printout to Tom Leskiw, 155 Kara Lane, McKinleyville CA 95519.

MARCH 23 DEADLINE FOR STUDENT BIRD ART CONTEST ENTRIES

For the 15th year, RRAS and Friends of the Arcata Marsh are co-sponsoring a student bird art contest in conjunction with the 23rd Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival. At least \$550 in prizes will be awarded to Humboldt County students from kindergarten through high school who submit drawings of one of 40 suggested species or another common local bird. Prize(s) also will be awarded for the best rendition of a bird in its natural habitat.

Entries will be judged by local wildlife artists and educators. Awards will be presented at Godwit Days on Saturday, April 21 at 10 a.m. All entries will be displayed at the Arcata Community Center during the Festival and copies of winning artwork will be shown at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center during May and June. A downloadable booklet of winning artwork and photos from the awards ceremony will be posted at www.rras.org by mid-May.

A flyer with complete rules and a list of suggested birds is posted on the RRAS website (link can be found in right column on home page) or can be picked up at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center, 569 South G Street, Arcata. Flyers have been mailed to all schools in Humboldt County.



Cedar Waxwing by October Mintey,
Grade 3-4, Freshwater



Common Yellowthroat by Catarina Frietas,
Grade 3-4, Mattole Valley Charter



Western Meadowlark by Saanvi Virnave,
Grade 4, Fuente Nueva Charter



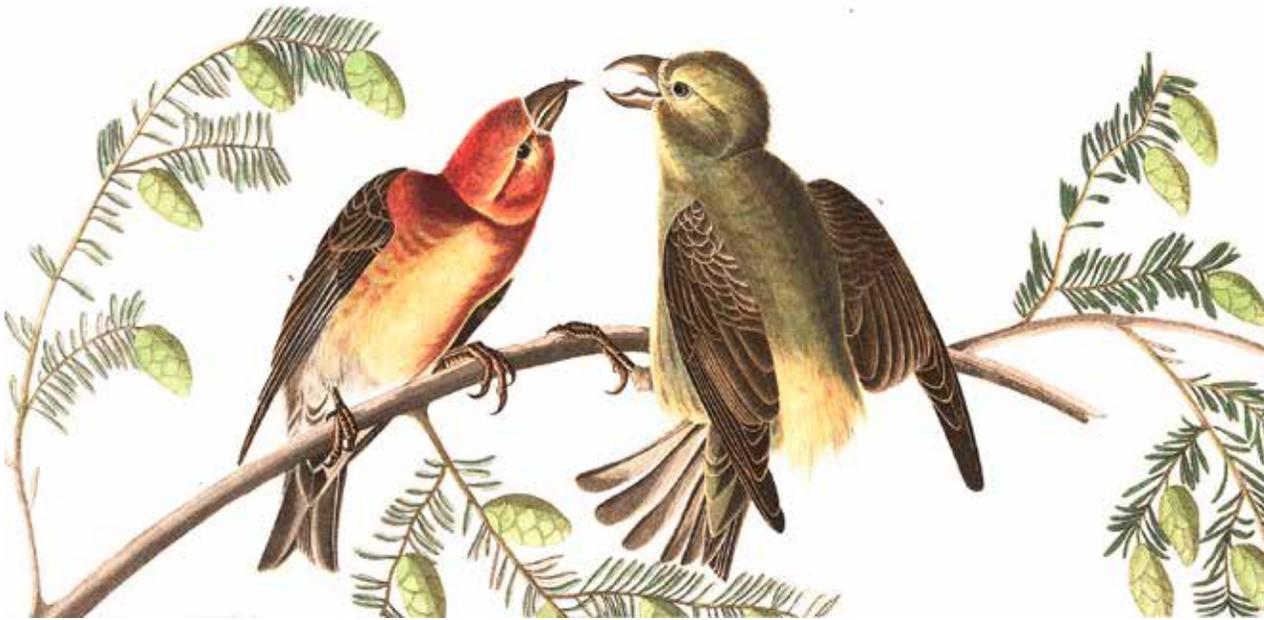
Snowy Plover by Eleanor Abell,
Grade 1, Arcata Elementary



Anna's Hummingbird in Henderson area of Eureka,
11/28/17; submitted by a reader

NORTH AMERICA'S DARWIN'S FINCHES

by Alexa DeJoannis



"American Crossbill" (Red Crossbill)
detail from J.J. Audubon's Birds of America

In the cool, northern coniferous forests of North America and Eurasia roam bands of a unique type of finch: crossbills. The tips of their bills are slightly twisted and overlapped; crossbills look snaggle-toothed. These special finches are evolved to feed on the seeds of cone-bearing trees. Because we are lucky enough to live in one southerly extension of coniferous forest, we are also blessed with crossbills.

Finches live off of all sorts of seeds. House finches eat mainly grass and weed seeds; goldfinches relish late-summer thistle seeds. Conifer seeds are located near the "cob" of the cone, at the bases of woody scales, and crossbills need their special bills to extract them.

We welcome many species back to their breeding habitats in the spring, and watch for passing migrants

who pause locally in the spring and fall. Crossbills are more of a challenge to find, because they are following seed abundance that varies over years. Conifers produce heavy crops in response to a combination of climatic and soil conditions, offering unpredictable food resources. Rather than following seasonal prescribed movements over the landscape, as we see in groups like swallows and phalaropes, crossbills are nomadic.

My field guide shows two crossbill species: red and white-winged, but ongoing research shows that crossbills are more genetically divided than this. There are ten documented types of red crossbills, and perhaps three types of white-winged crossbills. Some people call these types species in their own right, since they flock and breed with their own type. There are differences in their

body measurements, bill shapes, and calls, recalling the well documented discoveries of evolutionary dynamism in the finches of the Galapagos Islands (see David Lack's *Darwin's Finches* or Jonathan Weiner's *The Beak of the Finch*). These researchers showed us that the pace of evolutionary change, in contrast to Darwin's idea as a slow process (millions of years), may be very quick (thousands of years). How exciting to be able to watch speciation! In fact, one of the ten red crossbill types was designated as a new species this summer: the Cassia crossbill of Idaho's South Hills region.

For local birder Ken Irwin, crossbills became an obsession as he investigated an invasion in Humboldt County from 2001-2010 of a new group of red crossbills he documented as Type 10. He measured captured birds and made hundreds of flight-call recordings, noting a specialization on Sitka spruce seeds.

But finding crossbills is not as easy as combing through spruce trees; you'll also need some luck. This winter has been luckier than others, with a sprinkling of local red crossbill sightings, and even a few white-winged crossbills! Ken conducted a lot of his work at Patrick's Point and Big Lagoon. Crossbills are known to prefer spruce, pine, Douglas-fir, larch, and hemlock seeds, but not redwood. Like other finches, they live in social groups and vocalize to keep in contact. To learn more about the calls that differentiate red crossbills, you can listen to Ken's recordings at <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/kirwin/> or explore recordings posted at www.xeno-canto.org.



White-winged Crossbill, 12/23/2017,
Redwood NP--Coastal Dr, Del Norte County,
© Lucas Brug

SHARE YOUR RECENT RARITY PHOTOS!

Rarities are exciting! Here are some special sightings from this fall in Humboldt County (images from eBird checklists). Send in your rarity photos to adejoannis@hotmail.com with date and location information.



(Vega) Herring Gull, 01/13-23/2017,
Arcata, Humboldt, © Rob Fowler
Unusual occurrence of this Siberian subspecies!



Mountain Bluebird, Wintering on Bear River Ridge,
Humboldt, © Ken Burton



Rock Sandpiper, 12/10/2017
North Jetty, Humboldt Bay, Tony Kurz



Prairie Falcon, 01/15/2018
Arcata Bottoms, Humboldt, © Greg Chapman,



Vermilion Flycatcher, 12/31/2017,
Eel River Delta, Humboldt, © Gary Bloomfield
Same location as last Humboldt record 4 years ago!