



The Sandpiper



APRIL / MAY 2016

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. Apr. 2: Joe Ceriani; Apr. 9: Jim Clark; Apr. 16: Carol Wilson; Apr. 23: Samantha Bacon; Apr. 30: Larry Karsteadt.

For carpooling to some of our more far-reaching trips, plan to donate gas money to drivers. A rule of thumb is \$5 per ½-hour driving time to field trip destination.

Saturday-Sunday, April 2-3: Lassen County Overnight Field Trip featuring a Greater Sage-Grouse Lek. Elias Elias will guide a group of birders around the sagebrush flats and conifer forests of Lassen county 5 hours east of Humboldt. We will look for ducks and geese in the agricultural fields and wildlife areas of the Honey Lake Valley on Saturday morning. Early afternoon will find us in the conifer forests (Cassin's Finches and Lewis's Woodpeckers) around Janesville. We will end the day in the juniper woodlands (the soon-to-be-split White-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire) in Jack's Valley north of Susanville. On Sunday, we will meet before first

light at the sage grouse lek. This lek will likely be the highlight of the trip. Prepare to be entertained by upwards of 10 Greater Sage-Grouse as they dance and strut and pick and choose. Follow this link for some background: <https://youtu.be/cLnbiTkj1TQ>. We will then bird around Susanville and Eagle Lake before disbanding about 2 p.m. for the drive home.

Please book your own room in Susanville for Friday and Saturday nights. Camping is available at the Fleming Unit, which is where Elias will stay unless the weather is absolutely miserable. Plan on eating in the field for all meals except for Saturday night dinner and Sunday post-lek breakfast. Contact Elias Elias by e-mail or phone at call7076338833@gmail.com for details on meeting times and places.

Sunday, April 10: 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.** For more information, call Jude Power or David Fix ([707] 822-3613).

Sunday, April 10: Patrick's Point State Park. Gary Lester ([707] 839-3373) will lead a 3-hour walk through the forests and along the bluffs of this beautiful local park in search of land- and seabirds. Wear sturdy shoes. Meet at the Park entrance at **9:00 a.m.**; free parking is available along Patrick's Point Drive, but please mind the posted signage.

Saturday, April 16: Southern Humboldt Community Park. Jay Sooter ([707] 444-8001) and/or John Gaffin will lead this monthly walk. Kyle Keegan will co-lead and will focus on bird sounds. 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, and dogs are not allowed; field guides are usually available, but please bring your own if possible. Steady rain cancels. Meet at **9 a.m.**, parking at the Tooby Park parking lot which is about 100 yards past the entrance to the park.

Continued on page 3

APRIL PROGRAM: FRIDAY, APR 8

BARRED OWL MANAGEMENT TO CONSERVE SPOTTED OWLS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



Ryan Banding Owl - photo by Ryan Baumbusch

Northern Spotted Owls face what is characterized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an "extremely pressing and complex threat" posed by Barred Owls. Despite decades' worth of conservation efforts to preserve forest habitat for Northern Spotted Owls, their populations are still in decline, and a recent report (among many others) suggests that the primary cause is likely competition with Barred Owls. Managing this problem will be an incredibly large undertaking. **Ryan Baumbusch**, a graduate student at Humboldt State University in Wildlife, along with colleagues has created a mathematical modeling program that can help evaluate alternative strategies for managing Barred Owls. He will present some of the findings of this research regarding the influence of the size and distribution of management areas on the overall success of the effort.

MAY PROGRAM: FRIDAY, MAY 13

BAT MIGRATION FROM THE HUMBOLDT REDWOODS TO NORTH AMERICA



Hoary Bat - photo by Ted Weller

Bats have evolved 2 primary overwintering strategies, hibernation and migration. Although hibernation in bats is relatively well-studied, our understanding of migration is rudimentary because it has been difficult to generate enough reliable observations of these nocturnal animals to surmise patterns. In recent years, technological advances have opened doors to acquiring new knowledge about seasonal movements, ecology, and connectivity for migratory bats. Coupled with our discovery that redwood forests of Humboldt County are important stopover and wintering sites for migratory tree bats, we have an ideal situation to advance understanding of migration in bats. **Ted Weller**, a Wildlife Ecologist at Redwood Sciences Laboratory, will discuss the process of making such determinations and describe the plethora of tools used to help make sense of the migratory ecology of these bats. His talk will highlight the challenges of studying these cryptic animals and the exhilaration of making new discoveries about their migratory movements and ecology.

Programs start at **7:30 p.m.** at **Eureka High School Lecture Hall** at the corner of Humboldt and K Streets. Bring a mug to enjoy shade-grown coffee, and please come fragrance-free.

CHAPTER LEADERS OFFICERS

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 Vice President — Jim Clark 707-445-8311
 Secretary Pro Tem — Ken Burton..... 707-400-1146
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 Arcata Bird Alert707-822-LOON (707-822-5666)

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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)

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Local Chapter Code: C24

Please make checks to the National Audubon Society.

Send this application and your check to:

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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

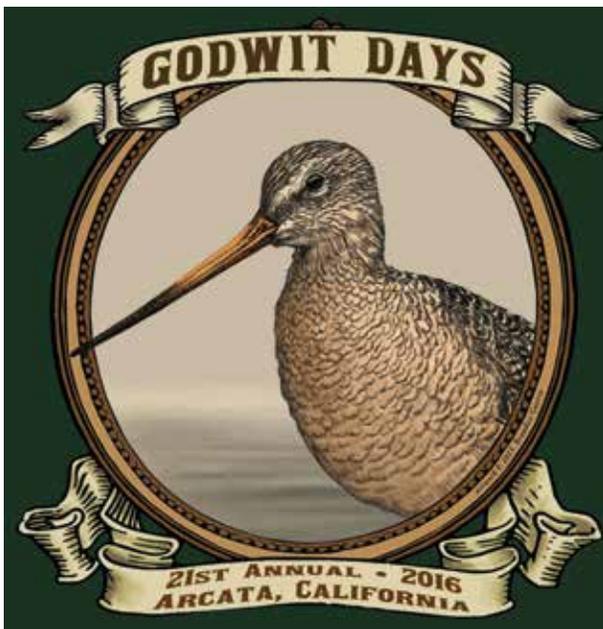
By Hal Genger

Welcome to spring and longer days to watch birds! At our annual banquet, we completed several important tasks. First, we installed our new board members. Jim Clark is the new Vice President and Denise Seeger is a new board member. I am the returning President (for one more year) while Ralph Bucher, Jill Demers, Chet Ogan, and CJ Ralph will continue on as board members for another term. Thank you all for your time and energy working on items important for humans and birds!

Second, Dr. Geoffrey Hill gave a great presentation on the color of birds and how those colors are important to health and mate selection. Third, RRAS received money for donated items to help defray the costs of running the organization. Fourth, Jill Demers received the Volunteer of the Year award for the many additional tasks she does for

our community. Thanks, Jill! Finally, we got to greet old friends and make new ones! Thank you all for attending and helping make the banquet an enjoyable experience for all of us!

RRAS is always in need of more volunteers. We desperately need someone to take over the secretarial duties at the monthly board meetings. We also need someone to help Harriet Hill with publicity. Harriet is doing a wonderful job but may occasionally leave the area, and we need someone to be able to fill in for her. As mentioned in the last issue, we are still looking for someone to take over as the editor of *The Sandpiper*. Please let me (or any board member) know if you are interested in volunteering. Your service would be greatly appreciated! Thank you!



Marbled Godwit © Brandice Guerra

21ST ANNUAL GODWIT DAYS, APRIL 15-17

Godwit Days is excited to have as its keynote speaker David Allen Sibley. Sibley is the author and illustrator of the fastest-selling bird book in history: over 1.5 million copies sold since its release in 2000, with a second edition published in 2014. Many consider *The Sibley Guide to Birds* to be the gold standard for North American field identification in that it can be used by professionals and amateurs alike and equate Sibley's paintings with those of revered artist-naturalists John James Audubon and Roger Tory Peterson. His lecture, entitled "The Psychology of Bird Identification," will explore how our brains both help and hinder our efforts at avian ID. It will be held Saturday, April 16 at 7 p.m. All Basic Festival registrations include a keynote ticket, while the cost is just \$10 for nonregistrants.

Sixteen new trips were recently added, so even if you are already registered, visit the website to peruse these additional choices. The Arcata Community Center serves as the departure hub for most trips and houses an art show and Bird Fair. Pre- and post-festival trips can extend your experience from April 13 to 19. Website: www.godwitdays.org; phone (707) 826-7050.

RRAS AND GODWIT DAYS NEED YOUR HELP

Godwit Café: Volunteers are needed to staff the Godwit Café in 1- to 2-hour shifts between 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 16 and 17. The café offers breakfast snacks, coffee, tea, and sodas, and delicious homemade soup for lunch. This is a fundraiser for RRAS and a fun place to meet people, hang out, and watch the comings and goings of participants. To sign up for a shift or 2, contact Volunteer Coordinator Susan Penn at susanpenn60@gmail.com or (707) 443-9660.

Student Bird Art: For the 13th year, RRAS and Friends of the Arcata Marsh are cosponsoring a student bird art contest. Over \$500 will be awarded to Humboldt County K-12 students during a Saturday, April 16, ceremony. All entries are posted in the Community Center throughout Godwit Days, with copies of cash winners shown at the Marsh Interpretive Center in May. If you would like to help post the 980 (a new record!) colorful works of bird art at the Community Center on Friday, April 15, starting at 1 p.m., please contact Sue Leskiw at sueleskiw1@gmail.com or (707) 442-5444.



RRAS WEBSITE UPDATED

Check out our updated website (www.rras.org). You'll find it's easier to use and has much updated information about Redwood Region Audubon Society chapter leaders and upcoming programs and field trips. Thank you, Cindy Moyer and Susan Penn, for all your hard work.

THE VERY SPECIAL COTTONWOODS OF THE MAD RIVER

by C.J. Ralph

Where would you say is the most special habitat for birds in the near-coastal areas of Humboldt County? Over the years, when training bird censusers, where do we go that is close to town to see and hear lots of birds? A short way inland is a ribbon of habitat: through the peaceful and sunny hamlet of Blue Lake and on upstream of the Mad River to the fish hatchery.

As the Mad River makes its way from far inland toward its salty destination, it drags along behind it habitat from inland along a narrow band of fertile riverside flora of cottonwoods and other riparian trees and shrubs. Here the delightful songs and sights of inland riparian and deciduous habitat favoring birds come the nearest to the coast and can easily be found in some abundance. This concentration of birds makes it one of the most visited birding sites throughout the year

and a great favorite of Godwit Day trips. Throughout the spring, summer, and autumn, it is likely the best place to see inland birds such as the Purple Martin, California Towhee, Lazuli Bunting, Western Tanager, Western Scrub-jay, and Willow Flycatcher. Aside from this abundance of inland birds are reliably found river birds such as Common Mergansers, eagles, the odd dipper, Spotted Sandpiper, and if you're lucky, the hunky White-throated Swift and the exquisite Green Heron.

Most of the land along the Mad River is private; only a few spots of legal public access are available for enjoying the diverse birds. Those are 2 small parks at water pumping stations: a short mile or 2 along the river bank and near the Blue Lake bridge, and (after a gap) at the state's fish hatchery. Over the years, other

uses have competed with each other for this special corridor of diversity: agriculture, gravel extraction for our county roads, off-road vehicle use, and fishing. The largest remnant patch is just over the bridge from Blue Lake, a triangular area of perhaps a half mile on a side.

Our birds, and bird watching in general, would greatly benefit from increased access and protection for more of this important habitat over about 5 miles of the river. A special task force of RRAS has been formed within its Conservation Committee to explore means to provide such protection and enhancement. If you'd like to be a part of this, please contact Jim Clark at (707) 445-8311 or Chet Ogan at (707) 442-9353.

FIELD TRIPS (CONT.)

Saturday, April 30: Alderpoint. Enjoy the birds, plant life, and reptiles of the Eel River canyon on this full-day trip along Alderpoint Road and south of the town of Alderpoint. We will bird select locations along Alderpoint Road first and then walk the Alderpoint railroad tracks to Cain Rock Trestle to have lunch and look for Rufous-crowned Sparrows. **In 2012 there was a washout along the railroad tracks, and it still takes a bit of work to cross it.** Other species like Oak Titmouse, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and similar birds of dry habitats in southeast Humboldt County can be expected, along with just-arrived summer residents. Diogenes' lantern, interior live-oak, and birch-leaf mountain-mahogany will be seen as well. Take sun protection, layered clothing, and a small pack for carrying lunch and water. Meet in the Ray's Food Place parking lot in Garberville at **8:30 a.m.** We should return to the Humboldt Bay area late-afternoon (~5 p.m.) For more information, contact Tony Kurz ([559] 333-0893; tonyk_71220@hotmail.com).

Sunday, May 8: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See April 10.

Saturday, May 14: Kneeland/Showers Pass. This will be a vehicle-based exploration of the upland prairies and forests of central Humboldt County. Potential "good" birds include Golden Eagle, Sooty Grouse, Ruffed Grouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Kingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Rock Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Lark Sparrow. We'll caravan from Freshwater Corners to Bridgeville and return via Highway 36. Plan on being out all day with no services or restrooms. We'll be carpooling in as few vehicles as possible, so please plan on either transporting passengers or leaving your car behind. Meet leader Ken Burton ([707] 499-1146) on Freshwater Road and Myrtle Avenue at **7:30 a.m.**

Saturday, May 21: Southern Humboldt Community Park. See April 16. The co-leader this month will be Tom Leskiw. Meet time is **8:30 am.**

Sunday, May 22: Eureka Waterfront. See April 17.

Sunday, May 22: Seabirds at Elk Head. We will search the rocky shoreline for shorebirds (oystercatchers, turnstones, tattlers) and the offshore rocks for nesting seabirds (murre, cormorants, puffins). We also will attempt to identify the land-birds and flowering plants encountered along the trail to the bluffs. Take spotting scopes if you have them. Meet Gary Lester ([707] 839-3373; garys.lester@gmail.com) at the Elk Head parking lot in Trinidad at **8:30 a.m.**



Wanted: Sandpiper Editor

Newsletter details: Redwood Region Audubon Society publishes bimonthly (6 issues a year) this newsletter to announce chapter events, monthly programs, Christmas Bird Counts, and other events relevant to current and prospective members and the public at large.

Purpose: Educational and social: lists outings for birders and ways to share experiences with fellow birders. Also provides outdoor adventure opportunities. Monthly programs are educational and entertaining.

Editor's task: Notify contributors of publication dates, and gather articles when they're received. Light editing may be needed. Notify layout editor when all articles are ready for layout. Proof final drafts. Little or no writing required.

Time required: 3-4 hours every other month.

Qualifications: Good English grammar, ability to meet deadlines.

NEW MEMBERS

RRAS welcomes the following new members and subscribers:

Arcata – Farugie Arrio, Debra Hartridge, Alicia Heitzman, Susan Heustis, Linda Mahoney, Archie Mossman, Gregory Pfothenauer, Virginia Plambeck, Penelope Schwartz, James Sorter, Alexandra Stillman

Bayside – Diana Dusheck, John Montague, Thomas Wairns

Blue Lake – Susan Barnstein

Crescent City – Rosemarie D. Afflick, Karen & Mark Davis, Heather B. Hutchinson, Louise Norris, Philip Schafer, Kenneth Sullens, Mary Jean Watson

Eureka – Judith Alexander, Elaine Barnhart, Jyl Hewston, Barbara Hitchko, Ana Jordan, Jo McCutchan, Pam Mohrmann, Richard Moses, Stephanie Moug, Dr. & Mrs. Denver Nelson, Susan O'Connor, Julie Olsen, Andrea Patt, Anne Pierson, Jonathan Weber, H. Lynn Wright, Kevin Yokoyama

Ferndale – Dennis Larsen

Fortuna – Dorothy Jennings, C. J. Kasper, Akino Komazaki, Christopher Menzel

Garberville – Kathleen Sweet

Kneeland – Kristina Hall

McKinleyville – Linda Chaffee, John Crater, John Crocker, Richard A. Duning, Mara Galvez, Naomi Hunt, Ange Lobue, Mary Pieratt, Pat Reeves, Deanne Rieder, Rachel Veal, Resi B. Watson

Miranda – Peter Amazing

Petrolia – Angelina Mulkey

Redcrest – Sherry Machado

Redway – Laura Frame

Salyer – Patricia Rosicky

Trinidad – Cynthia Lueck

Willow Creek – Arloa Kupilik

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

Field Notes were not available at publication.
Our apologies--The Editors



© Gary Bloomfield

2ND ANNUAL TIM MCKAY BIRDATHON APRIL 30 TO MAY 8

By Gary Friedrichsen

Once again the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) and RRAS present the Annual Tim McKay Birdathon, a fundraiser for both organizations. The late Tim McKay for whom the birdathon is named was the first executive director of the NEC, a position he held from 1976 until 2006. For those of you who did not have the privilege of knowing Tim, see my article in the 2015 April-May issue of *The Sandpiper*. The following is quoted from that article:

“Being a birder, Tim knew of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory [now Ocean Blue] and was impressed by their Birdathon in 1977. He was taken with the idea of helping not only the NEC but also the local Audubon chapter raise much-needed and hard-to-find funding. . . . The term “Birdathon” was first used in 1976 by *Bird Studies Canada* to describe a fundraising event in which participants solicit pledges from individuals, families, and businesses for the bird species seen during a prescribed time period and in a predetermined area.” Donors sign up to pay a set amount (\$25? \$50? \$100?) or a dime or quarter or more per species, making it more fun for the birdathon team.

It does not require a team or even much travel. One birdathon-er used a bicycle and stayed right around the bay to do his count. One can also pick a spot in your yard and dedicate an hour or 2 ticking off birds at your feeder. The main purpose is to get family, friends, or local businesses to donate, have fun throughout the process, and appreciate the work that is being done for the community by these 2 outstanding organizations.

Please go to yournec.org/Birdathon for sign-up sheets and a list of prizes for the 3 individuals or teams that raise the most funds this coming May. Good birding to all!



Ash-throated Flycatcher © Gary Bloomfield

HUMBOLDT'S GREAT GRAY VISITOR

By Gary Bloomfield

Word broke early in the evening on January 20, 2016 that Humboldt County was being graced by the presence of its second documented **Great Gray Owl**. The first bird remarkably occurred at the exact same location, Elk Prairie at Prairie Creek State Park, 34 years ago, almost to the day. Sadly, she met an unfortunate end within a week when she was struck by a vehicle on the road through the park which, at the time, was a stretch of Highway 101. She now resides in the Humboldt State University Wildlife Museum.



© Rob Fowler



“Birders at the GGOW Incident”, © Rob Fowler



© Rob Fowler



© Jared Hughey

This bird was comfortable (and/or hungry) enough to successfully hunt while being joyfully observed by its many respectful admirers over the next several weeks, having still been seen into March.



© Gary Bloomfield

“This still is from a video clip* I was able to get of the owl hunting in the Elk Prairie.” - Gary Bloomfield

* <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bloomfieldstudio/24539807156/>

... AND ANOTHER EXCITING WINTER OWL!



Snowy Owl © Brad Elvert

“...Snowy Owls are reportedly being seen already well south of their normal range. In invasion years on the Pacific Coast, these birds typically show up on the outer coast at beaches and dunes, so keep an eye out this winter for the big white figures.” - Sean McAllister (November, 2015)

Sean McAllister's prediction came to pass when Brad Elvert and his dog Calle discovered a young male Snowy Owl on the South Spit of Humboldt Bay on February 18, 2016. He quickly got word out and many members of the Humboldt birding community were able to see this beauty before it ghosted away.