



The Sandpiper

APRIL/MAY 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. April 1: Carol Wilson; April 8: Chet Ogan; April 15: Ken Burton; April 22: Christine Keil; April 29: Samantha Bacon.

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, April 8: Willow Creek Birdwalk. 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 (530-859-1874; willowcreekbirdwalks@gmail.com).

Sunday, April 9: 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.

Sunday, April 16: 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, May 13: Willow Creek Birdwalk. See April 8.

Sunday, May 14 : Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See April 9.

Saturday, May 20: Crescent City. Join us on an exploration of good birding sites in Crescent City. We'll visit coastal and upland sites for a diversity of habitats and birds. There will be short walks at most sites. We'll be looking for Gray Jay among other species. Take a lunch and plan to be out until mid-afternoon. Meet leader, Ken Burton (707-499-1146), at the Crescent Beach Picnic Area at **8 a.m.**

Sunday, May 21: Eureka Waterfront. See April 16.



Redbud & Madrone near Willow Creek, , © Gary Bloomfield

APRIL PROGRAM: FRIDAY, APRIL 14

I'M FOR THE BEACHES AND THE BIRDS: MANAGING U.S. EAST COAST BEACHES FOR PEOPLE AND PIPING PLOVERS



Image Courtesy MDF. From Wikipedia, GFDL

Long stretches of pristine sandy beaches are highly coveted by sun-lovers who make the annual migration to the U.S. Atlantic Coast from Maine to South Carolina. Are these sun-seekers shorebirds or people? They're both! Beaches along the Atlantic Coast contain many important shorebird breeding sites, and simultaneously are some of the most valuable recreational beaches in North America. Maintaining these often contradictory uses requires a detailed understanding of shorebird ecology, and rising sea levels. **Dr. Katherina Gieder**, lecturer in the Wildlife Department at Humboldt State University, will introduce us to the Piping Plover, a small shorebird whose presence compels beach managers to balance its needs along with those of human sun-seekers on these beautiful beaches.

MAY PROGRAM: FRIDAY, MAY 12

THE TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM



Yellow-breasted Chat, © Ken Burton

The Trinity River has an impressive history of human impacts including intensive gold mining, timber harvest, dam construction, flow regulation, and water diversion. Native populations of salmon and steelhead have declined significantly since dam construction. Restoration efforts to improve the native fisheries started in 1976 and have progressively evolved into the modern Trinity River Restoration Program. **Andreas Krause**, an engineer and geomorphologist with the Yurok Tribe, and **Dr. Sarah Rockwell**, a research biologist with Klamath Bird Observatory, will talk about the river's history, modern restoration efforts, and the current status of the river's birds.

The programs start 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.

CHAPTER LEADERS OFFICERS

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 Vice President— Ken Burton..... 707-499-1146
 Secretary Pro Tem —help needed
 Treasurer—Gary Friedrichsen..... 707-822-6543

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Harriet Hill..... 707-267-4055
 Syn-dee Noel707-442-8862
 Susan Penn..... 707-273-5200

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 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)

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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! We had another successful banquet, meeting old friends and making new ones! Matthew Betts gave an inspirational talk on the importance of connections between pockets of trees frequented by hummingbirds. He noted that they chose to fly near vegetation and not over open spaces, even if food is available in the form of hummingbird feeders! Other terrestrial wildlife have this same affinity for cover! Gary Bloomfield was also recognized as Volunteer of the Year. Thank you, Gary, for all the time you spend helping RRAS!

RRAS's yearly elections are over. Susan Penn and Harriet Hill will continue on as directors at large, Syn-dee Noel will become a director at

large, while Gary Friedrichsen takes over the position of treasurer. Ken Burton is now the vice president, and I will remain president for another year. Thanks to all of the people who serve on the board or volunteer their time to RRAS! We are currently without a secretary to take notes at the board meetings. We also need someone to chair the program committee. Please contact me, or another board member, if you are interested or know someone who might fill either of these positions.

We are working with the City of Eureka, the North Coast Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and other groups to enhance the new portion of the Waterfront Trail behind the Bayshore Mall. We are considering which native vegetation to plant, how to

incorporate a demonstration bird- and butterfly-friendly garden, accessory trails, and a possible elevated viewing overlook. Please contact Jim Clark if you are interested in this process.

We are busy planning the Third Annual Tim McKay Birdathon for May 6-14 this year. This is a fundraiser for both NEC and RRAS. Start forming your groups, soliciting donations for each bird species you find, and thinking about where to bird on any of these days! Register your team at www.yournec.org/birdathon.

We will be involved with Godwit Days, April 19-25, and running the Godwit Café on April 22-23. Come in and see us!



Photo by Gary Friedrichsen

THIRD ANNUAL TIM MCKAY BIRDATHON IN SUPPORT OF REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY AND THE NORTHCOAST ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

By Gary Friedrichsen

The dates are set and the birds are waiting. May 6–14 is the period set aside for this year's fundraiser for these two great organizations. Sure, we could hold a bake sale, or put up lemonade stands around the county, but we get to have more fun tracking down and counting our avian quarries and racking up the numbers. The only difficult part is getting out the word and signing up supporters that turn those bird sightings into dollars. Tim McKay, a past director of the NEC, had the unabashed style that we all should copy. He understood the art of "pan-handling" for a good cause and as he went through his address book every year around this time, he would invoke a good-natured but firm request as he lined up sponsors for his "big day."

Tim knew he was asking his friends, family, and business associates to pony up for a good cause since he knew first-hand how much work went on behind the scenes of EcoNews and RRAS to keep the public aware of the constant threats to our environment and the plants and animals that have no voice in the greedy workings of mankind. Both of these organizations work tirelessly on behalf of our resources and do amazing jobs here locally with mostly volunteer staff.

Here are the nuts and bolts of how you can participate and take personal responsibility to fight back against our new president's backwards agenda:

- (1) Sign in and register yourself or your team at yournec.org/birdathon;
- (2) Download the Sponsor Sign-up Sheet;
- (3) Get out your address book and/or e-mail list and contact your friends, family members or favorite businesses asking for as little as a nickel a bird (they add up!);
- (4) Pick a day during the week from May 6th to May 14th to get out and see as many different species as you can (this is really the fun part!);
- (5) Then get back in touch with your Sponsors so they can send their donations to you;
- (6) You'll have about a month to hound the slow pokes, but with a little prodding they will come through and you can take your checks or cash down to the NEC office (415 I St. Arcata, CA 95521; 707-822-6918) and they will split the donations with RRAS;
- (7) Sit back with a smile knowing that you did something good for our bird friends and hurled a rock at "the Donald."

COUNTY LIBRARY RAISES MONEY VIA STUDENT BIRD ART

By Sue Leskiw

Last July, I was contacted by the vice-president of the Humboldt Library Foundation. She asked if that nonprofit group could feature some winning artwork from the 13th annual Student Bird Art Contest -- cosponsored by RRAS and Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM) -- on bookmarks to raise money for the children's nonfiction collection.

I said sure, as long as the students approved of their creations being used in the "Buy a Book" campaign and credit was given to the contest's sponsors. I sent samples of artwork from which the designer could select, along with artist contact information, helped write the permission letter, and reviewed the final results before printing.

It turned out to be a lengthy process, but in January, the two organizations' boards of directors received samples of the three colorful bookmarks that featured a Pileated Woodpecker, American Crow, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. The bookmarks are available for free at all 10 branches of the Humboldt County Library. If you would like to help update the children's nonfiction collection, donations can be made at www.humboldtlibraryfoundation.org.



RRAS GODWIT CAFÉ

RRAS will open the Café again at the Arcata Community Center during the Godwit Days Festival. Coffee and pastries will be available from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, and we will be serving pizza for lunch on both days. If you need coffee before an early trip, Chet will have it ready to go around 7 a.m.

We still need your help to run the Café! Your help would be appreciated anytime between 9 and 3. Please contact Chet Ogan oganc@sbcglobel.net to volunteer. Provide the hours you can help, your name, phone number, and email.

NEW MEMBERS

RRAS welcomes the following new members and subscribers:

Arcata - Margaret Cole, Kathie Kelly
Blue Lake - Susan Barnstein
Canton, Ohio - David Gill
Crescent City - K Brown
Eureka - Doug Correia, Ana J, Leila Nunemann, Stuart Mair, Carol Scher, Vivien Richards, Andrea Taylor, Anna Wooten
Ferndale - Joyce Sinclair
Fortuna - Kenneth Fisher, Gary Meunier
Garberville - Bruce Barkley, Robert Froehlich, Laura Sweet
McKinleyville - Heidi Andrews, Gale Hawkins, Thomas Lisle, Cooper Miles, Laurie Sanders, Joseph Sylvia
Redway - Arleen Olson
Samoa - Hal Grotke
Trinidad - Cheryl Kelly, Gail Kenny, Mary C Nordstrom

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



Cliff Swallows © Alexa DeJoannis

THE BEGINNING OF SWALLOW SEASON

By Alexa DeJoannis

I have been seeing Tree Swallows streaking across the sky here and there. Rob Fowler heard a Cliff Swallow overhead last week, and we are also starting to see some Violet-Greens return. Along the North Coast, we are used to seeing seven species from this group: Tree Swallows, Violet-Green Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Barn Swallows, Cliff Swallows, Bank Swallows, and Purple Martins. According to sightings reported on eBird.org, swallows appear locally beginning in April and May, having migrated from Central and South America!

Swallows are aerial foragers, and they are easy to spot soaring through the sky at the height of the tree canopy or lower in pursuit of flying insects. The best spots to see them foraging are areas where their prey will be dense, which is generally true of wetlands. Any wet ground, from boggy spots in residential yards to creeks to the Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Bay, supports insect life. Some insects favor trees and shrubs, so habitats with a variety of vegetation standing around shallow water are excellent places to look for swallows. Swallows may also repond to dense clouds of insects found in early morning or in the evening. Sometimes swallows forage in mixed flocks, so that we might see Tree and Violet-Green Swallows hunting together, with a few Barn Swallows thrown in, for example. If you're lucky, you might also see swifts foraging with swallows!

Swallows, like many of our familiar songbirds, are returning to their summer habitats to breed. Though the species forage in similar ways, they are somewhat different in their nesting preferences. They are typically seen foraging near their nests.

According to *The Birder's Handbook*, Martins, Violet-Green, and Tree Swallows like cavities in snags (standing dead trees). Sometimes these may have been removed for human safety reasons, and they might choose alternative nesting sites. For example, I have seen several Purple Martin pairs using cavities in the tall posts of docks, which function as artificial snags, and are conveniently close to harbors where there is excellent foraging. All three of these species readily take advantage of nest-boxes when offered, and I have noticed that Violet-Greens are particularly fond of openings in buildings.

Rough-winged and Bank Swallows favor burrows in steep banks, which are also used sometimes by Violet-Greens. Where a river or creek has cut a bare slope in its banks, look for a collection of similarly sized round holes, forming a swallow nesting colony. Rough-wings usually choose to nest singly.

Cliff and Barn Swallows collect mud in their beaks to build nests. Cliff Swallows look for overhangs formed by buildings, bridges, or cliffs, and attach characteristically gourd-shaped nests made of mud. Barn Swallows mix the mud they collect with plant fiber, and build open cups atop small ledges. We often see them on the horizontal beams inside barns, or on ledges under the eaves of buildings. They line these open nests with the feathers of other birds, which they find discarded nearby. Since they frequent barns, they often use chicken feathers, for example.

Once they get their nests started, it's important that their nesting areas go undisturbed. Breeding is a period of high energy expenditure, and breeding adults will be very busy. Make sure to get your nest-boxes placed early (by March) for swallows to investigate. After two weeks of incubation (which the parents share), we'll get to watch parents feeding their young in the nest for about a month. This is a very exciting time to watch a swallow colony, so locate a good one and sit down quietly at a short distance. Swallows are superb aerialists. I have spent many happy hours watching their effortless flight as they zoom (seemingly) almost through my hair. Each species also has a distinct vocalization, which they sing out fairly regularly while in flight during breeding season. And, of course, they are the more enjoyable to watch because we know they are vacuuming up a lot of pesky insects that would have come to buzz round our heads if given the chance. Swallows are a welcome sight as they return to their summer homes, and if their energetic colonies leave behind a sprinkling of whitewash, I can easily remove this with water and a broom after the young swallows have been safely fledged. It's a small price to pay for skies filled with swarms of these magnificent fliers!



Northern Rough-winged Swallow © Alexa DeJoannis

USING eBIRD TO SEE TRENDS IN YOUR OWN YARD

By Gary Bloomfield

eBird, the public repository of bird data hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is an incredibly useful resource available to all birders, researchers, resource managers, as well as ornithologists. One can not only find out where a certain species has been seen recently, or check out any Hotspot in the world to see what birds are there at any given time, but even if one's only interest is in the birds around one's feeder, eBird is still a powerful tool. The simple act of submitting observations results in your own yard becoming a source of valuable data for yourself as well as others, even future generations. You can even create your own "home site guide!"

Below, for example, is a [bar graph](#) I generated by selecting all of the data entered for my "Personal

Location" (a "non-public Hotspot") of our yard in Arcata, California, to show the seasonal abundance of all the birds I've recorded at our yard. "Yard" lists are rather individual and subjective, but many birders define them as something along the lines of "all birds detected from one's property."

By the time a few years' worth of data are entered, the resulting bar graph really does give a good indication of what someone could expect to find at any given time of year. Obviously, this is not an immediate gratification project, but it is remarkably rewarding and satisfying.

The red text boxes give some examples of how to read the stories embedded in the data.



eBIRD QUICK START GUIDE

Unfamiliar with eBird?
This is a helpful direct link to help you set up an account and start using it.

<http://help.ebird.org/customer/en/portal/articles/973977-ebird-quick-start-guide?t=435217>

