



The Sandpiper

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2014



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 leaders: 2nd: Jude Power; 9th : TBA; 16th: Rob Fowler; 23rd: TBA; 24th: TBA; 30th: Carol Wilson.

Sunday, August 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 **9:00 a.m.** Call Jude Power or David Fix (707-822-3613) for more information.

Sunday, August 17: Southern Humboldt Community Park. Jay Sooter (707-444-8001) and/or John Gaffin will lead this monthly walk. 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 provide your own if possible. Steady rain cancels. Meet at **8:00 a.m.**, parking by the kiosk near the farmhouse in the main entrance.

Sunday, August 17: Hikshari' Trail, Eureka. Meet at **9:00 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 Area. Leader: Ralph Bucher (707-499-1247; thebook@reninet.com).

Saturday, August 23: eBird Site Survey-Shay Park. Join Rob Fowler (707-616-9841) as we survey the extent of Shay Park in Arcata for 1 to 3 hours and count every species present. For more info on the eBird Site Survey, visit http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/eBird_Site_Survey. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the Shay Park parking lot located at the east end of

Foster Avenue. Waterproof shoes are recommended as we typically walk through a grassy field off-trail.

Saturday, September 13: eBird Site Survey-Shay Park. See August 23.

Sunday, September 14: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See August 10.

Sunday, September 21: Southern Humboldt Community Park. See August 17. Meet time changes to **8:30 a.m.**

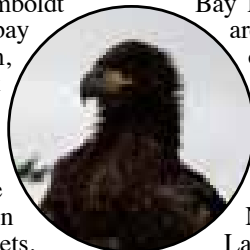
Sunday, September 21: Hikshari' Trail, Eureka. See August 17.

Pelagic Trip. No Humboldt County pelagic trips are scheduled for this fall. There will be a fall pelagic in Mendocino County out of Fort Bragg, led by Jon Dunn and Rob Fowler, probably late September. Contact Rob Fowler (migratoriusfwlr@gmail.com) for more information when it comes available.

AUGUST PROGRAM FRIDAY, AUGUST 8TH

EAGLES IN YOUR HOME

If you're lucky when you look to the skies over Humboldt Bay, you may get a glimpse of "Mr. and Mrs. HBE [Humboldt Eagle pair that have made our bay decade. A remote camera system, live video through the internet (http://www.iws.org/hbe.html), provides an intimate view of the daily activities of this eagle pair as they raise their chicks high in a treetop nest overlooking the bay. Since 2013, the HBE nest cam has streamed to more than 2.5 million viewers online and has been featured on national and local news outlets. Last year a worldwide audience watched live as Mr. and Mrs. HBE successfully raised 2 female eaglets, Kyle and Stormy. This year our famous eagle parents were at it again, raising a male and a female eaglet, named Mist and Angel. Local wildlife biologists Sandra Hunt-von Arb and Jim Campbell-Spickler share their experiences of helping to bring the HBE nest cam to the community and also look to the future with educational outreach and citizen science opportunities.



SEPTEMBER PROGRAM FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH

THE HUMBOLDT MARTEN

The Humboldt marten (*Martes caurina humboldtensis*) is a cat-sized mammalian carnivore of the weasel family (Mustelidae) that was historically distributed throughout coastal forests from the California-Oregon border south to Sonoma County. This unique subspecies was considered potentially extinct as recently as 1996 and is currently known from a single population of <100 individuals. Keith Slausen, a research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station and science coordinator for the Humboldt Marten Conservation Group, will focus on research on the natural history of this unique north coast carnivore since its rediscovery and highlight the conservation challenges and opportunities for restoring this carnivore to its former range.



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.

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LOOKING TO VOLUNTEER?

RRAS is looking for someone to serve as a Hospitality host for our monthly Friday night meetings. This person would be in charge of (with a budget, of course) providing coffee, tea, and refreshments. Be quite possibly the most popular person in the room for an evening! RRAS member meetings occur the second Friday of every month. If needed, coffee-making instructions will be provided. It's easy! It's fun! It's also essential. For more information, contact C.J. Ralph (707-822-2015) or Jill Demers (707-667-6163).

NEW MEMBERS

Redwood Region Audubon Society welcomes the following new members and subscribers:

Arcata — Gillian Black, Barbara Reisman,
 Carol Vander Meer
 Eureka — Dr. Daniel Barton, Amelia Citro,
 Douglas Correia, Susan Halpin,
 Michael Holland, Julie Olsen, Vivien Richards,
 Mike Samuelson, Audrey Sandberg, K. Smith,
 Library of College of the Redwoods
 McKinleyville — Kent Barnes
 Myers Flat — Catharine Juliana
 Petrolia — Marilyn McCormick
 Trinidad — Nancy Hogan, Gail Kenny, Dell Sokol

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

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Hal Genger

I hope everyone is having a great summer and spending some time outdoors. RRAS has been active this summer, although activity in some areas has slowed down due to summer holidays. For example, RRAS is interested in doing some docent work with the large bird collection at Eureka High School, making the collection available to a larger group of K-12 students. This activity was instigated a few months ago, by Dennis Cahill, a retired teacher from Eureka High, but has been put on hold until the school opens again in September. We look forward to getting the conversation started again.

Check out our bird sign! RRAS also received some signs from National Audubon that designate "Important Bird Areas." The City of Eureka has placed one on the boardwalk at the foot of E Street. This region offers views of seabirds in the channel as well as shorebirds on the mudflats. The significance of this spot is that across the channel you can see the cypress trees with its egret and heron roost on Gunther Island. RRAS was formed in 1967 over a successful effort to protect this grove of trees. The Samoa Bridge was originally planned to go directly through this roosting and nesting area. Other areas are also being considered to place signs.

A California Coastal permit has been requested for viewing platforms along the Hikshari' Trail at Hilfiker and along the "Cappy" McKinney trail. Jay Sooter and Eureka Rotary have been working to provide funds for building the viewing platforms along the Elk River.

The conservation committee continues to work on problems encountered on abandoned or operational illegal marijuana cultivation. RRAS's position on recreational use of marijuana is neutral, but its position on illegal grows is not. Fortunately, the state of California banned the use of d-CON, which has detrimental effects on predatory mammals and birds, but the cost of cleaning up these sites still has to be reconciled. Active illegal marijuana cultivation sites are often associated with illegal wells and stream diversions that are even more problematic in drought years like this one.

We support the use of nesting boxes for Barn Owls and Western Screech Owls, which will help decrease the amount of rodents by more natural controls. We have several nesting box plans and are researching sources of wood and nest-building volunteers to make these a cheap, viable option to toxins. Keep this in mind as a future volunteer project!

KEEP UP-TO-DATE THROUGH RRAS LISTSERVE

Be reminded about field trips and programs and learn about upcoming meetings, public hearings, and symposia of interest to RRAS members and other concerned nature lovers. Subscribe in 1 of 2 ways: through a Web page link at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rras> or by e-mail to rras-subscribe@yahoo.com. Postings should have complete information. This listserv is **not** for posting bird sightings.



Bird Walk Participants

photo by Sue Leskiw

RRAS BIRD WALK FOR ARCATA CAMP

By Sue Leskiw

Nearly 20 children, ages 8 to 12, spent the first day of their weeklong Wildlife Biology Camp visiting the Arcata Marsh. On July 7, RRAS volunteers Louise Bacon-Ogden, Tom Leskiw, Chet Ogan, and George Ziminsky led a morning bird walk. After lunch, Friends of Arcata Marsh volunteers led a trek to Butcher's Slough to collect oysters, clams, crabs, algae, and other aquatic critters to study back at the Interpretive Center. Sue Leskiw recruited the volunteers, pulled together lunch for them, and took photos.

This is the 7th year that the 2 organizations have collaborated to host a day during the Arcata Recreation Department's Natural Resources Science Camp, which also will go to Sequoia Park Zoo, Humboldt Bay NWR, and the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center.



Bird Walk Leaders

photo by Sue Leskiw

BAD WEATHER CAN BE GOOD FOR BIRDING



May 9, 2014. The day before Gene Lodes, Cindy Moyer, and I were slated to lead an International Migratory Bird Day walk in Orleans was another day spent dodging pesky spring storm cells. *It's got to clear some day...*

As Gene and I ascended the grade east of Blue Lake, it began to pour. "We're not slated to meet up with Cindy until four," I said. "That means we've got the entire day to bird the Willow Creek area. This looks like one of those days where the coastal slope stays relatively dry, compared to the mountains. What do you say we turn around and linger for awhile to bird the Blue Lake area?" "Sounds like a plan," replied Gene.

As the morning wore on, the storm began to clear, so we headed east again. We spent the majority of the day scouring the Willow Creek area for migrants, but turned up no major surprises. That afternoon, we picked up Cindy and headed for Orleans. The weather forecast for Saturday, so promising several days ago, now called for rain. I first led Migratory Bird Day walks in Orleans about 18 years ago. Of course, birds are the focus of the event, but the chance to experience the warmth of spring—so different from the cool, humid coast—is also what draws me to inland Humboldt County. So in those years where my co-leaders and I have to don rain gear and don't get that little jolt of heat that assures us summer is on the way... well, we miss it.

Following Friday night's community potluck and bird presentation, Gene and I retired to our cabin at Sandy Bar Ranch and Cindy to hers. All that night, rain drummed on the corrugated fiberglass roof that sheltered the back deck. I wasn't looking forward to a rainy bird walk, but consoled myself with the thought that bad weather can make for good birding. *Remember the absence of spring storms last year? And how that may have contributed to our inability to turn up Gray Flycatcher during our search of the Willow Creek-to-Orleans area?*

Then, as if on cue, the rain stopped at 7:30 as we met the walk participants over continental breakfast at the Panamnik Building in Orleans. Our group carpooled to the parking area near Camp Creek and began to walk the road toward the Klamath River. Last year's wildfire had opened up the view, which aided our brief glimpse of a Caspian Tern as it flew downriver. With my binoculars,

Looks like bad weather.
Yes it does,
And I believe it's gonna rain.
—Paul Cotton, "Bad Weather"

I studied four distant specks flying just below the cloud ceiling, concentrating on the two lead birds. Eventually, the two specks resolved into Canada Geese. As the two trailing birds neared us, I was shocked to realize that they were Sandhill Cranes! Our group shouted and whooped as the birds flew directly overhead, with several longtime Orleans residents uttering in disbelief, "I've never seen *those* here before."

We paused at a grove of willows, where I spied a hummingbird... a male Calliope! Then, on the far side of the willow grove, a female-type hummingbird appeared with a striking pale breast and underparts... and flanks that lacked cinnamon color. I studied several other field marks before concluding that it was a Black-chinned Hummingbird!

Slowly our group made its way to a bluff overlooking the Klamath River. A Western-type Grebe floated languidly downstream, repeatedly diving for fish. Eventually we were able to study the bird—the first Clark's Grebe to be reported within the boundaries of Six Rivers National Forest.

A number of other birds were enjoyed by our group that day, but to come away with five species worthy of being reported to the Arcata Bird Box was off the charts. It was re-impressed upon me how storms that occur during the height of spring or fall migration are a boon for birders.

My imagination conjures up an image from IMBD 2014: a burgeoning, black cumulonimbus—rain-bearing—cloud swirling above the mouth of Camp Creek. There's a hole in the cloud; one by one, six birds burst from it, spiraling into view. The combination of condensation nuclei and water vapor + migrating birds + our presence—13 adults and two enthusiastic children peering through binoculars and scopes—has created a synergy. Of course, these birds would have graced the skies over Orleans whether we were there to see them or not. However, our presence *was* crucial to the event... for *us*. For by being there, we took the pulse of the world's renewal: one that occurs each and every spring, and in doing so, realized that we are a part of it.

- Tom Leskiw



A HAWAIIAN BIRD IN ARCATA?

By David S. Price

Perhaps not. But what do you think this bird really is? It is yellow like a goldfinch, but obviously it is a typical, except for its yellow coloration, a House Finch, if an unusual one.

House Finches (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) are native to western Mexico and United States but are now found throughout the eastern states as well. They are common urban birds in Humboldt County and elsewhere in California, often being the most prominent and "bossy" at garden seed feeders. The vast majority of males are rosy red on the head and upper body parts and females plain streaky brown. Often they're confused with the similar Purple Finches.

Every now and then you'll find a male that is brilliant yellow where it "should" be red, and these birds make for spectacular visitors to the garden. House Finches' coloration is due to the presence of carotenoid pigments in the feathers—red is mostly from astaxanthin and adonirubin pigments and yellows from zeaxanthin (that will be in the exam!). Individuals that are yellow have a greater proportion of zeaxanthin than the others. It is widely thought that the differences in plumage are due to dietary differences between individuals or populations, although this has not been well established.

The proportion of red and yellow individuals varies widely between and among populations but most birds, like those in Humboldt County, are red. Other populations, such as the ones introduced in the Hawaiian Islands, have a greater proportion of yellow birds.

Over the last couple of weeks, a yellow male and his mate have been apparently nesting in the palm tree visible from the front room of our house at the base of Fickle Hill and visiting our garden feeder. They have kept us well entertained, partly because a "normal" red male and his mate are also nesting in the same palm, a little higher and on the other side. The 2 males carry on their fighting with spectacular aerobatics, and the yellow male is obviously winning because he's really roughed-up the left side of the red male's face.

Field Notes

SUMMARY OF NORTHWESTERN CALIFORNIA BIRD REPORTS

By Daryl Coldren

May 1 to June 31, 2014

Field Notes is a compilation of bird-sighting reports for Del Norte, Humboldt, and Trinity counties. Sources include the RRAS Bird Box (707-822-LOON), the online northwestern California birding and information exchange (nwcalbird@yahoo.com), eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/klamathsiskeyou>), and reports submitted directly to the compiler. Reports may be submitted to any of the sources mentioned above or to Daryl Coldren: (916) 384-8089; QuiAvisPetit@aol.com.

HBNWR = Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge; HO = Hold Over from previous period; MOB = Many Observers



White-faced Ibis
Arcata Bottoms., HUM, © Rob Fowler

Humboldt County

Greater White-fronted Goose: 1, *Centerville Wetlands*, 8 May (OH) • **Clark's Grebe:** 1, *Orleans-Klamath River*, 10 May (TL, MOB) • **Laysan Albatross:** 1, *75 km W of Eel River mouth*, 24 May (PLe, MOB) • **Murphy's Petrel:** 3, *Repositioning Cruise-offshore Humboldt*, 22-24 May (PLe, MOB) • **Hawaiian Petrel:** 15, *Repositioning Cruise-offshore Humboldt*, 8-24 May (PLe, MOB) • **Cook's Petrel:** 7, *Repositioning Cruise-offshore Humboldt*, 8-24 May (PLe, MOB) • **White-faced Ibis:** 2, *Arcata Bottoms-Moxon Rd Dairy*, 1-8 May (AF, KO, MOB); 1, *Loleta Pond*, 2 May (LB); 1, *Centerville Wetlands*, 8 May (OH); 1, *Arcata Marsh*, 25 May (AL); ~65 (season high count), *Jacoby Creek Bottoms*, 25 May (DF); 24, *Arcata Marsh*, 29 May (TL); 24, *Mattole River Mouth*, 29 May (BO); 37, *Arcata Marsh*, 30 May (RF); 24, *Ocean Ranch*,

30 May (BE); 6, *Centerville Wetlands*, 1 Jun (CH) • **Sandhill Crane:** 2 flying overhead, *Orleans*, 10 May (TL, GL, CM, MOB) • **Northern Goshawk:** 1, *Eel Rock Rd*, 23 May (JG) • **Pacific Golden-Plover:** 1, *Centerville Beach*, 4 May (ML); 1, *South Spit*, 12 Jun (EF) • **Red Knot:** 1-2, *Arcata Marsh*, 2-11 May (AL, MOB) • **Wilson's Phalarope:** 1, *Loleta Pond*, 13 May (TL) • **South Polar Skua:** 4, *Repositioning Cruise-offshore Humboldt*, 13-24 May (PLe, MOB) • **Scripp's Murrelet:** 2, *60 km W of Cape Mendocino*, 24 May (PLe) • **Black-legged Kittiwake:** 1, *South Spit*, 18 May (AL) • **Glaucous Gull:** 1, *Crab Park*, 2 May (LB, TL) • **Royal Tern:** 1 (HO), *Humboldt Bay entrance*, 2 May (MOB) • **Flammulated Owl:** 3, *Groves Prairie*, 30 May (KO, AW) • **Black Swift:** Several reports of 1-2, *Blue Lake, HBNWR, Arcata, Humboldt Hill*, 6-25 May (PLo, CO, RF, DC, KO, GB, AL) • **White-throated Swift:** 3 (new location), *Willow Creek-Hwy 299 bridge over Trinity River*, 31 May (EF) • **Black-chinned Hummingbird:** 1, *Orleans*, 10 May (TL, GL, CM, MOB) • **Calliope Hummingbird:** 1, *Orleans*, 10 May (TL, GL, CM, MOB) • **Willow Flycatcher:** 1, *Mad River Fish Hatchery*, 19 May (KS) • **Gray Flycatcher:** 1, *Forest Service Route 1*, 25 May (DC, MOB) • **Rock Wren:** 1, *Horse Mountain*, 12-17 Jun (RF, MOB) • **Northern Mockingbird:** 1, *South Spit*, 16 May (BJS, MS); 1, *Fortuna Middle School*, 5 Jun (IG) • **California Thrasher:** 3, *King Range*, 22 Jun (AW) • **Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** 1, *Jacoby Creek*, 4 Jun (RS) • **Black-and-white Warbler:** 1, *Trinidad-Stagecoach Rd*, 22 May (KI)



Chestnut-sided Warbler
Arcata., HUM, © Rob Fowler

Chestnut-sided Warbler: 1, *Arcata-Shay Park*, 7 Jun (RF, MOB) • **Northern Parula:** 1, *Blue Lake cottonwoods*, 21 May (KS, KI, KO); 1, *Orick base of Bald Hills Rd*, 25 May-1 Jun (GL, CB) • **Rufous-crowned Sparrow:** 1-4, *Alder Point-Cain Rock*, 10 May-28 Jun (BE, CR, TK, MOB) • **Green-**

tailed Towhee: 1, *McKinleyville*, 26 May (GL, LL) • **Baltimore Oriole:** 1 (adult male), *Ferndale Bottoms-Point Kenyon Rd*, 18-19 May (OH) • **Lawrence's Goldfinch:** 1, *Southern Humboldt Community Park*, 18-22 May (JG, JS, MOB).

Del Norte County

Murphy's Petrel: 1, *Repositioning Cruise-offshore Del Norte*, 22 May (PLe, MOB) • **Hawaiian Petrel:** 1, *Repositioning Cruise-offshore Del Norte*, 25 May (PLe, MOB) • **White-faced Ibis:** 1, *Smith River Bottoms-Alexandre Dairy*, 1-7 May (LB) • **Red Knot:** 7, *Lake Tolowa*, 7 May (TK, CR) • **Laughing Gull:** 1 (adult; 4th record for county), *Crescent City Harbor*, 8 May (LB) • **Mountain Bluebird:** 2, *Gasquet-Orleans Rd-Del Norte side*, 11 May (TK).

Cited Observers

Gary Bloomfield, Lucas Brug, Camden Bruner, Daryl Coldren, Brad Elvert, Elizabeth Feucht, David Fix, Andrew Ford, Rob Fowler, John Gaffin, Ian Gledhill, Owen Head, Cheryl Henke, Ken Irwin, Tony Kurz, Alexandra Lamb, Matt Lau, Paul Lehman (PLe), Tom Leskiw, Gary Lester, Lauren Lester, Gene Lodes, Paul Lohse (PLo), Cindy Moyer, Brian Odonnel, Chet Ogan, Kurt Ongman, Casey Ryan, Keith Slausen, Jay Sooter, BJ Stacey, Michaelleen Stacey, Rebecca Stamos, Andrew Wiegardt.

Thanks to all who have submitted their sightings!



House Wren nest
Horse Mountain, HUM; © Gary Bloomfield