



The Sandpiper

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 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.

Sunday, October 5: Willows, Alders, and Birds (INSECT TRIP!)

What makes willow thickets and alders such great places for birds, winter or summer? Join expert entomologist Pete Haggard for an insect walk at the Arcata Marsh to try and answer this question. Meet at 2 p.m. at the first parking lot on South I Street in from Samoa Boulevard. Plan to finish around 3:30 p.m. Contact Pete (707-839-0307) or phaggard@suddenlink.net for more information.

Saturday, October 11: 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 park in search of land- and seabirds. Wear sturdy shoes. Meet in front at the Park entrance at 9 a.m. Free parking is available along Patrick's Point Drive; please mind the posted signage.

Sunday, October 12: 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 off the Hookton Road exit from Hwy 101 at 9 a.m. Call Jude Power or David Fix (707-822-3613) for more information.

Saturday, October 18: eBird Site Survey-Shay Park.

Join Rob Fowler (707-616-9841) to help survey the extent of Arcata's Shay Park for 1-3 hours and count every species present. For more info on the eBird site survey, visit this link at eBird.org: http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/eBird_Site_Survey. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Shay Park parking lot at the eastern end of Foster Avenue. Waterproof shoes are recommended, as we typically walk through a grassy field off-trail.

Sunday, October 19: Southern Humboldt Community Park.

Tom Leskiw will guest lead this monthly walk along with Jay Sooter (707-444-8001) and/or John Gaffin. 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 bring your own if possible. Steady rain cancels. Meet at 9 a.m., parking by the kiosk near

the farmhouse at the main entrance. Shade-grown coffee usually offered.

Sunday, October 19: Hikshari' Trail, Eureka. Meet at 9 a.m. at the end of Del Norte Street in Eureka, where we will scope birds off of the public dock here until the group assembles. We'll then drive to the Hikshari' Trail entrance at Truesdale Street and bird along the trail to the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary. Leader: Ralph Bucher (707-499-1247; thebook@reninet.com).

Sunday, November 9: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See October 12.

Saturday, November 15: eBird Site Survey-Shay Park. See October 18.

Sunday, November 16: Southern Humboldt Community Park. See October 19 (without guest leader).

Sunday, November 16: Hikshari' Trail, Eureka. See October 19.

Sunday, November 23: Bear River Ridge. Tour the open prairies and forest edges in search of rough-legged hawks, golden eagles, horned larks, and bluebirds. Dress in layers and expect to return between 1 and 2 p.m. Meet across from Fernbridge Market at 8:30 a.m. Rob Fowler (707-616-9841) will lead.

OCTOBER PROGRAM FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10TH

BIRD CONSERVATION IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Virtually unknown to ornithologists, the Central African nation of Equatorial Guinea has vast tracts of pristine Congolese forest, home to a dizzying array of wildlife. Recent discovery of oil there has turned one of the world's poorest nations into the richest one (per capita) in Africa. Rapid development is occurring and bird populations, subspecies, and species are at risk of being lost before they're even discovered. A group of ornithologists, funded by the National Geographic Society, have begun a long-term partnership with the Equatoguinean government to document unknown and sensitive avifauna. Jared Wolfe—research scientist with the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station and member of the Equatorial Guinea Bird Initiative team—will introduce you to the birds, forest, and people of Equatorial Guinea, arguably the country least known to science.



NOVEMBER PROGRAM FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH

RAT POISON KILLS MORE THAN RATS

Secondary poisoning of wildlife through use of rat poisons—whether residential, governmental, commercial, or at illegal marijuana grow sites—is a growing problem (all puns intended), resulting in death of beneficial predators. Some call rat poison the “new DDT.” Lack of action by government agencies often leads to grassroots groups forming in an effort to induce change in other ways, such as through education. What is secondary poisoning? What can small groups of concerned individuals do to help beneficial predators thrive, so they can continue to provide free, natural pest control? Are rats really so scary and dangerous to our health that we have to poison entire ecosystems? Can an economy be green if it leaves behind environmental carnage? Maggie Rufo, a volunteer with the Hungry Owl Project (www.hungryowl.org) and steering committee member for RATS (www.raptorsarethesolution.org), will speak about these two grassroots groups that share a common goal: eliminating secondary poisoning of beneficial predators like owls, hawks, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, and the Pacific Fisher.



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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 Arcata Bird Alert707-822-LOON (707-822-5666)

The Sandpiper is published six times each year by
 Redwood Region Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502.

NEW MEMBERS

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

Canton, OH – David Gill
Arcata – Lena Ashley, Breken Davis, Richard Day, Marsha Eagles, Susan Holt, James Lowe, Jared Wolfe
Bayside – Sam Gregerson
Blue Lake – Ellsworth Pence
Crescent City – Bobby Price
Eureka – Margaret Augustine, Ed Cook, Susan Hesse, Kara Lynn Klamer, Linda Miles, John Morrison, Stephen Nielson, Donald Podratz, Linda Sullivan, Kathleen Timm, Cathy Vicory
Fortuna – Jack Guccione, Naomi Mayo, Carol Slack, David Stockton
Garberville – Kurt Volckmar
Gasquet – Jeanne Clement
McKinleyville – John Brimlow, Matthew McConnell, Cyndi Mills, Susan Daniel, Anne Weiss
Redway – Jeanette Dwyer
Salyer – Gloria Fulton
Smith River – Rochelle Odom
Trinidad – Mark Pringle, Joyce Rodgers
Whitethorn – Tobe Halton

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



Sue "Batgirl" Leskiw & Jim "Rockhopper" Clark in 2013

RRAS VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT OCT 24

If you are among the 50+ people who have volunteered for RRAS in the past 12 months, you soon will receive an e-mail invitation to our Fourth Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event. It will be held at the Humboldt Area Foundation on Indianola Cutoff from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Friday, October 24. Eligible volunteers include Board members, field trip leaders, Sandpiper contributors, and helpers at special events (e.g., Wildlife Camp, Godwit Days). Significant others are welcome.

Because the event is so near Halloween, we hope attendees will get in the spirit and dress up. Sue Leskiw will again bring her vast collection of kooky hats, if you want to borrow a look for the evening. Invitees are reminded to RSVP to Sue at sueleskiw@suddenlink.net or 707-442-5444 by Monday, October 20 with their choice of beverage and number attending (even if zero), so we can plan the food and libations. Also let us know if you can arrive early to help set up.

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 C1ZC240Z

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

I am writing this in early September so you can read it in the October/November Sandpiper. Even with our technology, it still takes time to get all the information to the printers and send it out to you in a predictable, timely manner! I want to say thank you to all who help get the Sandpiper out to our members. It takes time and energy to compose articles (many folks), edit the articles (Jan Andersen and this issue, Sue Leskiw), make articles fit on 4 pages (Gary Bloomfield), and get the issue to the publisher in the correct format (Gary and the EcoNews staff). Thank you!

In early September, RRAS is holding a board and committee chair retreat to see where we are now, what we want to accomplish in the near and distant future, and how we plan on reaching those goals. Outcomes from the retreat will be the subject of the next president's column.

When I joined RRAS many decades ago, I was, of course, interested in birds, but more importantly in conservation issues. Just as important today, I implore all of you to volunteer, vote, inform, etc. to help protect and preserve our natural environment. The RRAS Conservation Committee meets the second Wednesday of each month at noon at the Golden Harvest Café in Arcata. Please attend and learn what we are doing. While there may be a project that fits your interest and motivates you to volunteer, just your informed outreach could bring in another volunteer to assist with these projects. I hope to see more of you at the Golden Harvest!



GODWIT DAYS FALL PREVIEW OCT 4 & 5

For the third year, Godwit Days is offering a Fall Preview. Join experienced leaders on any of 10 small-group (maximum 10 attendees) trips selected to cover the area's best birding locations. Held at the end of the peak period for migrating birds, the Fall Preview is intended to give registrants a taste of Humboldt and Del Norte counties during this time of year with high potential for rare bird sightings. Trips range from the Arcata Marsh to Lake Earl, from Blue Lake to Petrolia, with prices from \$25 to \$50. To register or get more info on trip times, leaders, geographical areas, and expected species, visit www.godwitdays.org and click on the link in the right-hand "Special Events" column.

HONDURAN STRING THEORY

Part I: Waste Not

February 25, 2011. Sue and I are on the first day of the 1,300-mile return trip to northern California from southeastern Arizona. We make a pit stop at a LOVE'S gas station in Quartzite, a small town known for its legions of snowbirds. I enter the rest room to find a man brushing his teeth, precious desert water spewing from the faucet at full blast. Because I haven't had a chance to brush following breakfast, I pull out my toothbrush and a travel-sized tube of toothpaste. *He's really doing a thorough job on his teeth.* Meanwhile, a forceful stream of water continues down the drain—water that first fell from the skies during the Pleistocene more than 10,000 years ago.

I size the person up. He appears to be in his late thirties. His forearms, below the sleeves of his tattered t-shirt, are festooned with crude tattoos. The man's overall look and demeanor is one my parents used to characterize as "rough." His conspicuous waste of water sends my blood pressure skyrocketing. I begin an internal debate. *I should speak to him about this. What a waste of the desert's scarcest resource!* Then, a voice of reason. *Chill. He's gotten this far in life clueless about conservation. Besides, he looks like the kind of guy whose response... well, our interaction's unlikely to have a happy ending.*

I finish brushing my teeth and make my way to the urinal. Following that, I wash my hands and reach for a paper towel. The guy's faucet is *still* open full-blast. Again, the debate: *Talk to him; we're "mining" this ancient water. There's no way to replenish it. No, on second thought, I don't think you could find words neutral enough to avoid an ugly confrontation. You don't need this. Your wife and dog are in the car and you've got miles and days to go.*

So, I leave, water still pulsing from the faucet like a high-pressure Jacuzzi—unsure if my inaction deserves a medal for discretionary valor... or is simply an act of supreme cowardice.

Part II: Want Not

February, 2002. Copan, Honduras. Sue and I are enjoying our visit to Central America, birding and poking around the fabulous ruins of Mayan temples. One day, while shopping for a memento of the trip, we come across a vase. The designs etched into the painted vase—birds, palms, flowers, and mountains—resonate with us, so we buy it. The shop owner finds a suitable used cardboard box for our fragile purchase. Cradling the box, we stroll through a small park in Copan's

central plaza. The scene is an indelible one: music, families picnicking under shade trees, and flocks of Great-tailed Grackles underfoot, their cacophonous caterwauling competing with the din of diesel trucks. Suddenly, it occurs to us that we'll need string to ready our vase and its cardboard box so that airline officials can open the package for inspection, then re-tie it for us to carry on the plane.

"Sure, we could do it the gringo way: find a store that sells balls of string..." I suggest. "But, the locals down here... well, they do things differently. You know: the original reduce-reuse-recycle folks."

"We've seen scraps of string littering some of the side streets and alleys," Sue responds. "We could do our part to clean things up, while at the same time finding the string we need."

So we begin to walk the streets of Copan, intent on our one-item scavenger hunt. For anyone scrutinizing our efforts, we must have looked strange: *turistas*, surrounded by novel sights, sounds, and aromas, studying the street just in front of their feet. Soon, we located several lengths of brick-colored polypropylene string, not far from a street vendor. As I coil the string and place it in my pocket, he eyes us quizzically. Triumphant at the swift finding of our trophy, we move on, under the street vendor's watchful eye.

Every so often, Sue and I recall our visit to Honduras, laughing about our experience of combing the streets of Copan in search of string. However, such behavior isn't that unusual for us. Sue avidly scopes out yard sales for gently used treasures and bargains.

Advice about the need to save for a rainy day has informed our world view. One look at my garage workshop confirms that at least a vestige of the need to collect bits of string—and wire, rope, and plant twisty-ties—remains with me.

I'm reminded of the Buddhist practice of *mottainai*, that is, not wasting resources and using them with respect and gratitude. Some say that ignorance is bliss. But not for me. I *want* to know where my water comes from... and to use this scarce resource with gratitude. Especially during this time of climate change and wide-scale drought.

Tom Leskiw



photos by Tom Leskiw

"CAPPY" MCKINNEY MEMORIAL TRAIL DEDICATED

By Sue Leskiw

On a gorgeous late summer day, approximately 40 people gathered along the Eureka waterfront to pay tribute to the late Mel McKinney. The September 4 ceremony, emceed by Eureka mayor Frank Jaeger, featured short speeches by Sue Leskiw (North Group Sierra Club), Jim Clark (RRAS), Dan Ehresman and Jen Kalt (NEC), and Maggy Herbelin (close friend).

Signs erected on both ends of a shoreline loop segment of the Hikshari Trail south of the main Hilfiker parking lot now proclaim it the Melvin "Cappy" McKinney Loop. The proposal to honor Mel in this fashion originated with RRAS and Sierra Club, two groups to which he dedicated many hours as a volunteer. The Eureka City Council had voted unanimously in August to approve the naming, following a recommendation from City staff and positive votes by Eureka's Space, Parks, and Recreation Committee and Planning Commission. Representatives of RRAS and Sierra Club had attended all three meetings to testify in favor of the recognition.

Cappy, who passed away in June 2013, spent much of his retirement protecting the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary. He worked with various agencies to identify appropriate uses and preserve the natural habitat, patrolling the area on a regular basis to report problems. Mel's persistence led the City of Eureka to upgrade what had been the Elk River Wildlife Area to Sanctuary status in 2003.

Sue, Maggy, and RRAS Board member Susan Penn planned the event. Sue and Maggy handled the refreshments, underwritten by RRAS and Sierra Club. Tom Leskiw led an RRAS bird walk through the sanctuary prior to the ceremony.



Field Notes

SUMMARY OF NORTHWESTERN CALIFORNIA BIRD REPORTS

By Daryl Coldren

July 1 to August 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/klamathsisiskiyou>), 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.

MOB = many observers

Black Scoter: 1, *Crescent City Harbor*, 29 Jul (LK, RF, CD); 2, *Patrick's Point*, 17 Aug (JW, LP); 1, *Stone Lagoon*, 22 Aug (ML) • **American White Pelican:** 1 (continuing since 29 Nov. 2013); *Smith River Bottoms/Lake Tolowa*, 1-30 Jul (LB, CR, MOB) • **Laysan Albatross:** 1, *Offshore Humboldt-HSU Pelagic*, 30 Aug (RF, SM, MOB) • **Black-vented Shearwater:** 1, *Offshore Humboldt-HSU Pelagic*, 30 Aug (JH, RF, SM, MOB) • **Ashy Storm-petrel:** 1, *Offshore Humboldt-HSU Pelagic*, 30 Aug (RF, SM, MOB) • **Golden Eagle:** 1, *Dyerville Rd*, 5 Jul (JG) • **White-faced Ibis:** 1, *Smith River Bottoms*, 1 Jul (LB); *Lake Tolowa*, 20 Jul (LB) • **Black-necked Stilt:** 1, *Arcata Marsh*, 31 Aug (AL, MOB) • **Ruddy Turnstone:** 1, *Woodley Island*, 30 Aug (RF, SM, MOB) • **Red Knot:** 3, *Jacoby Creek Mouth*, 25 Aug (BE) • **Stilt Sandpiper:** 1, *Lake Tolowa*, 21 Aug (LB); 1, *Centerville Wetlands*, 27-29 Aug (EF, MOB) • **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** 1, *Centerville Wetlands*, 26 Aug (BE, AL) • **Semipalmated Sandpiper:** 1, *Smith River Bottoms*, 2 Jul (TK, CR); 1, *Gold Bluffs Beach*, 10 Jul (CR); 1, *Smith River Bottoms*, 21 Jul (LB); 2, *Lake Earl*, 29 Jul (RF, CD, LK); 1, *Smith River Bottoms*, 29 Jul (RF, CD, TK, CR); 1, *Clam Beach*, 4 Aug (ML); 1, *Hiller Park*, 11 Aug (RF); 1, *Arcata Marsh*, 20 Aug (AL); 1, *Salt River-Riverside Ranch*, 28 Aug



Baird's Sandpiper, © Rob Fowler
Centerville Wetlands, Humboldt County

(SM); 1, *Elk River*, 30-31 Aug (BE) • **Wilson's Phalarope:** 8-30! (including Del Norte high count on 10 July by LB), *Smith River Bottoms*, 1-21 Jul (LB, CR, TK); 7-9, *Ocean Ranch*, 4-7 Jul (BE, EF, RF, AL); 1-15, *Arcata Marsh*, 7 Jul-3 Aug (TL, GZ, CO, BB, RF, CB, IG, MOB); 53! (a new high count for Humboldt), *Ocean Ranch*, 11 Jul (BE, AL); 33, *Ocean Ranch*, 29 Jul (BE); 2, *Lake Earl*, 29 Jul (RF, CD); 1-3, *Ocean Ranch*, 3 Aug (CR); 1-6, *V St Loop*, 12-14 Aug (SB, EF, AL, BB) • **Laughing Gull:** 1, *Elk River*, 29 Aug (SM, EF)



Lesser Black-backed Gull (on left, with California Gull)
© Gary Bloomfield, Eureka, Humboldt County

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 (1st confirmed Humboldt record), *Elk River*, 2-22 Aug (TM, RF, DCo, SM, BE, GL, TL, MOB) • **Black Tern:** 1, *Mad River Estuary*, 24 Aug (RF, GL, CD) • **Greater Roadrunner:** 1, *Briceland*, 30 Aug (CR) • **Long-eared Owl:** 2, *Titlow Hill Rd*, 7-11 Jul (AR, EF) • **White-throated Swift:** 2 (1st confirmed Del Norte record), *Klamath River Bridge*, 13 Jun-29 Jul (GL, LL, AB, RF, MOB) • **Costa's Hummingbird:** 1, *Fortuna*, 12 Jul (JI) • **White-headed Woodpecker:** 1-2, *Titlow Hill Rd/Grouse Mt*, 7-31 Jul (GB, CD) • **Red-eyed Vireo:** 1, *Hiller Park*, 26 Aug (TM, ST) • **Mountain Bluebird:** 1 (recently fledged); *Doctor Rock Trail-Gasquet-Orleans Rd*, 21 Jul (LB) • **Oak Titmouse:** 2, *Alderpoint*, 4 Jul (CD) • **House Wren:** 1-3, *Titlow Hill Rd*, 7 Jul-9 Aug (AL, GB, MOB) • **Gray Catbird:** 1, *Hiller Park*, 26 Aug (TM, ST) • **Ovenbird:** 1, *Titlow Hill Rd*, 1 Jul (MT, DCz) • **Northern Waterthrush:** 2, *Humboldt Bay NWR*, 30 Aug (BE) • **Tennessee Warbler:** 1, *Janes Creek-Zehndner & Q St*, 28 Aug (GB, RF) • **Hooded Warbler:** 1, *Sequoia Park Zoo*, 28 Aug (CB) • **American Redstart:** 1 (AHY male), *Mad River Estuary-School Rd*, 24-27 Aug (RF, MOB) • **Vesper Sparrow:** 1, *Ocean Ranch*, 27 Aug (BE); 1, *Bear River Ridge*, Aug 30 (CR) • **Lark Bunting:** 1 (male), *McKinleyville Bottoms*, 11-12 Aug (KS, MOB) •



Tennessee Warbler, © Rob Fowler
Arcata, Humboldt County

Bobolink: 1, *Hiller Park-flyover*, 27 Aug (RF) • **Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** 1, *Bayside*, 11 Aug (JP) • **Yellow-headed Blackbird:** 1, *Arcata Bottoms-Moxon Dairy*, 9-13 Aug (RF, MOB); 2, *Centerville Wetlands*, 27 Aug (AW) • **Hooded Oriole:** 1 (adult male), *Shay Park*, 19 Jul (RF, MOB); 1 (adult female), *Shay Park*, 23 Aug (RF, MOB)



Lark Bunting, © Rob Fowler
McKinleyville, Humboldt County

Cited Observers: Samantha Bacon, Alan Barron, Gary Bloomfield, Bob Brown, Lucas Brug, Camden Bruner, Daryl Coldren (DCo), Dave Czaplak (DCz), Cédric Duhalde, Brad Elvert, Elizabeth Feucht, Rob Fowler, John Gaffin, Ian Gledhill, Jared Hughey, Jon Isacoff, Logan Kahle, Tony Kurz, Alexandra Lamb, Matt Lau, Tom Leskiw, Gary Lester, Lauren Lester, Sean McAllister, Tristan McKee, Chet Ogan, Luke Powell, Jude Power, Angela Rex, Casey Ryan, Keith Slauson, Scott Terrill, Mary Ann Todd, Andrew Wiegardt, Jared Wolfe, George Ziminsky

Thanks to all who have submitted their sightings!