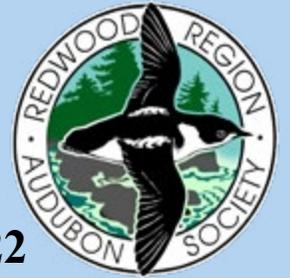


The Sandpiper

September 2022



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org



Please join RRAS for an in-person, and virtual program on:
The Natural History of the Seabirds of Trinidad and Humboldt Bay
~ Recent observations of the effects of predation, oceanography, and climate

Presented by Dan Barton, on Wednesday, Sept 21 at the Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata, this program will be simultaneously zoomed and the link will be available on the RRAS website. Social hour with goodies and hot drinks will start at 6:30 p.m. and the program will begin at 7 p.m.

Dan is an associate professor and the department chair of the Department of Wildlife at Cal Poly Humboldt. He received a B.S. from Evergreen State College in 2001, and a PhD from University of Montana in 2012.

Over the last 8 years, he has observed a variety of chance events – including extreme heat, eagle predation, raven harassment, and rising local sea levels – at colonies of seabirds around Humboldt Bay and Trinidad. Dan will share some of his observations, including aerial photo and video documentation of some of these events, largely through the lens of descriptive natural history – what was seen, when and how, and what might be happening. He hopes to help identify questions for future intensive natural history observation and targeted research on climate, predator, and direct anthropogenic impacts on seabirds in our region.

Left: Little River at Camel Rock, by Dan Barton.

RRAS Field Trips in SEPTEMBER!

- Sat. September 3rd** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Chet Ogan.
- Tuesday, September 6th** - 6-8pm, join trip leader Janelle Chojnacki for a guided walk as part of the monthly *Women and Girls' Bird Walks* series. Spice up a weekday evening with this free guided walk around the Arcata Marsh, where we will likely observe many migratory species including swallows and swifts foraging over the ponds as well as warblers, flycatchers, and maybe some raptors getting a last meal before night comes. We may also see the plethora of night herons take off from their diurnal roosts, and evening walks always carry the possibility of seeing owls out and about! Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one and meet at the south end of I Street (Klopp Lake).
- Sat. September 10th** – 8:30-11am. Join RRAS for a morning bird walk in *Southern Humboldt* along the South Fork Eel River and Southern Humboldt Community Park. Trip leader Ann Constantino will be focusing on riparian species and looking for migrants who might use the abundant food resources that riparian areas can provide. Email Andrew at andrew.RRAS@gmail.com for details, or just show up at Tooby Memorial Park.
- Sat. September 10th** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Kathryn Wendel.
- Sun. September 11th** – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Sat. September 17th** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Michael Morris.
- Sun. September 18th** – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk on the Eureka Waterfront. This trail is paved and is *wheelchair accessible*.
- Sat. September 24th** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Cindy Moyer.
- Sat. September 24th** – 9-11am. Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Help create bird-friendly native habitat and restore a section of the bay trail behind the Bayshore Mall. We will provide tools and packaged snacks. Please bring your own water and gloves. Contact Jeremy Cashen at jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com or 214-605-7368 for more information.
- Sun. September 25th** – 8am. Ken Burton will lead an all-day exploration of the Titlow Hill/Forest Service Route 1 area. This is Humboldt's premier montane birding locale but not visited much at this time of year; let's see what we can find! Meet on Valley West Boulevard in front of Pepper's at 8:00 a.m. to carpool, or at the base of Titlow Hill Road at 8:45am. Contact Ken at 707-499-1146 or shrikethree@gmail.com for more information.
- Sun. September 25th** – 9-12pm. Join RRAS in partnership with local guiding company, Kayak Trinidad, for a morning viewing local seabirds from a kayak. All kayaks and gear are provided. Space is limited and reservations are required. Cost for this trip is \$109/person. Contact Andrew Orahoske at andrew.RRAS@gmail.com to reserve your spot.

*Contact Ralph at thebook@reninet.com for any walks he leads and all Arcata Marsh walks.

*Contact Field Trip Chair, Janelle Chojnacki at janelle.choj@gmail.com for more information on all other walks, unless otherwise specified. See our website for Covid protocols.

Below: Wildlife photographer, Ann Constantino took some stunning shots of Red-Tailed Hawks in Southern Humboldt – see last page for more photos!



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President's Column

By Gail Kenny

Our Sandpiper Editor has done a fabulous job for over two years now, putting together an interesting, informative, and entertaining newsletter for Redwood Region Audubon Society. We are very pleased with the quality of the content and layout, but this is a major monthly task for her to do on her own. We would like to add some Sandpiper Committee members and Gisèle wants to add someone who can regularly write and gather articles by and about groups that are underrepresented in RRAS and the birding community such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), people with disabilities/differently-abled people, youth (with permission of guardian), low income, and immigrants. If you could help or know someone who can, please contact Gisèle at giseleandco@gmail.com.

We are excited to start up in-person hybrid Zoom meetings this month. We have changed our public program meetings to the third Wednesday of the month. Harriet Hill, our program chair, needs help finding speakers for our monthly meetings and help to handle the technology to video stream the meetings. If you can help with either of these tasks or know someone who might be interested in helping with our programs, please email me, or Harriet at harrieth6@gmail.com.

We will be hosting a fall membership potluck lunch on Sunday, September 18 from 11am to 2pm in our treasurer, Gary Friedrichsen's back yard. If you plan to come, please email Gary at gary@jacobyecreek.net and tell him what food you plan to bring and how many people you will bring with you and he will email you directions to his house.

My article on barn swallows was in the August 2022 Sandpiper. I wrote the column in April before the first barn swallows arrived at my house for the breeding season. A pair soon arrived, and they built a new nest in our carport near last year's nest. The female incubated the eggs for

over two weeks and abandoned it when no eggs hatched. A few days later, the pair were in our shop just off the carport building a new nest. This is the first time they built a nest there. They worked on the nest for a week or so then the female began incubation. The male perched on the wire in the backyard singing in the daytime, and at night he roosted in the rafters of the shop near the nest. I would see him there every night when I locked the shop doors. Two weeks came and went, and I finally found a broken eggshell below the nest that looked like it had hatched. But I didn't hear any baby birds begging.

A few days later I found a dead chick on the ground under the nest. It looked like it didn't survive long after hatching. I looked in the nest and there was one unhatched egg there. It's early August when I write this, and the female has abandoned the nest. I saw the male fly up to the nest with bugs in his mouth then fly away again when there was no one to feed. I miss seeing the chicks grow up this year. I wonder why the eggs didn't hatch and the chick didn't survive. Is it something genetic? Did they have pesticide poisoning from where they spent their winter? I will not know. I hope they come back next year.



Above: Barn Swallow nest, courtesy of inthevintagekitchen.com/tag/barn-swallow-nest/.

For the Love of Wildlife! (Part I)

An interview with Monte Merrick, Director of Humboldt Wildlife Care Center, and Bird Ally X

By Harriet Hill

We are most fortunate to have access to this excellent wildlife rehabilitation facility in our small county. I was grateful that there was a place to take the three injured or exhausted juvenile birds I found over the last 15 years: an owl (I don't remember the species), a Common Murre, and a Cooper's Hawk. The owl did not survive but the other two youngsters recovered and were released. In 2012, I volunteered to clean the quarters of some of the dozens of juvenile Brown Pelicans who were recovering from having their plumage fouled with fish oil disposed of by fishers in local harbors and the bay. I was impressed with this extensive volunteer effort that saved hundreds of young pelicans who would likely have drowned if untreated.

Below is the first installment of my interview with Monte (MM), which concerns the history and purpose of the center, and how he and his staff initially got involved in this unusual occupation. Next month's installment will feature many interesting statistics and anecdotes about the patients and staff at the Humboldt Wildlife Care Center (HWCC).

HH: *Tell me about the Center's history – when was it formed, by whom, and how has it grown over the years?*

MM: There are some gaps in my knowledge of who worked here at Humboldt Wildlife Care Center over the years, but the organization was founded in 1979. Many people in

our community have been active with HWCC over the years and still are among our supporters and occasional helpers - like Kathy Pollard out near Carlotta who was the primary caregiver during the 1990s, and Bird Ally X (BAX) co-founder January Bill (who now leads the botulism effort in the Lower Klamath Refuge), was the director of HWCC while she attended Cal Poly Humboldt from 1999 to 2001. In 2006, the then-current board of directors secured our current site, and established an actual facility to receive wild patients. From 1979 until then all of the wildlife rehabilitation work was done at people's homes – at that time it was more of a network of care providers than a center for treatment.

In 2011, the organization of which I [also] was a co-founder, Bird Ally X (BAX), took on the management of HWCC, after leading HWCC through a local Brown Pelican crisis involving juveniles getting into unsecured fish waste. We dealt with the same issue again in 2012 and HWCC became a part of BAX in 2013, and has operated under the BAX 501(c)3 since 2014.

Since 2006, however, at our facility on the Jacoby Creek Land Trust Property, we've been able to develop a treatment center that may be short on beauty, but it's long on functionality. Since 2011 we've added seabird pools, a pelican aviary, a waterfowl aviary, a raptor housing, songbird and swallow housing, and more – including highly effective raccoon housing where orphaned raccoons can learn the wild skills they will need to survive - how to fish, how to dig for insects, climbing skills – in short as much as they can learn even though they are bereft of their mother's care and teaching.

HH: *What's your mission? How do you go about achieving it?*

MM: I really like our prepared statement so I'd like to quote it:

(Continued on next page)

(‘Wildlife,’ continued from previous page)

MM: Bird Ally X is a collective of wildlife care-providers committed to raising the standard of care available for sick or injured aquatic birds and other wild animals.

BAX works to help wild birds and other animals in their efforts to survive the hazards of civilization through:

- the direct action of caring for wild birds and other wild animals in distress
- supporting other rehabilitation groups through workshops and consultation
- generation and proliferation of educational and informational materials and literature, for our colleagues and our neighbors.

BAX will build, strengthen, and further develop the resources available to ensure that excellent care is provided by working with colleagues in wildlife rehabilitation to maintain an environment of mutual aid and benefit.

In all efforts, BAX is committed to continually elevating the quality of available care and providing uncompromising advocacy on behalf of wild birds and other wild animals.

BAX operates the Humboldt Wildlife Care Center, a wildlife rehabilitation facility serving the northwest corner of California. At our center, we admit injured wild animals and provide quality treatment to well over 1000 wild animal patients a year, with the goal of releasing them back to the wild. We also help resolve conflicts between people and wildlife, (such as raccoons denning inside houses, and other situations) with our Humane Solutions Team.

BAX has the expertise to help wildlife affected by oil spills and other emergencies and is part of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network.

Sharing professional knowledge about wildlife care is an important part of our mission. We publish books and other reference literature for our colleagues and neighbors. We offer workshops and consultations for rehabilitators, as well as internships.

Our Promoting Co-existence Team brings presentations to schools and community groups throughout the area.

We advocate for wild animals, addressing issues and public policy from a rehabilitation perspective.”

HH: *How is HWCC funded?*

MM: HWCC/BAX is funded almost entirely by community support, and all other support is in the form of grants from foundations and institutions, such as a grant we received from Coast Central Credit Union to purchase an outdoor walk-in freezer so that we could increase our ability to stock frozen food such as fish, for our many pescatarian patients. Still, the support we receive from our neighbors and supporters



Above top: Red-shouldered Hawk in an aviary at HWCC, recovering from a collision with an automobile.

Above: Orphaned Common Murre chicks nearly old enough to release, in one of HWCC’s purpose built seabird pools. Photos by Laura Corsiglia.



Above: Great Blue Heron being released from HWCC care, by Laura Corsiglia

across the state, nation and world is the lion’s share of our annual budget. It is too small, but our support grows each year, so I remain optimistic for our future.

HH: *What got you started in this occupation?*

MM: It’s kind of a cliché in wildlife rehab that everybody who enters the field has some story of finding an orphan or injured wild animal when they were kids, but I didn’t seem to have a story like that. About 16 years ago, I was giving a talk, which my mother attended, in my home state of New Jersey (sponsored by the Cape May Bird Observatory). The talk was on my time in Louisiana, responding to the myriad post-Katrina oil spills. When I was asked this question, I mentioned the cliché, and that I didn’t have such a story, but my mother heckled me with “what about the squirrels?” In a rush I remembered. I’d found several neonatal Gray Squirrels on the ground at the base of a tree during the spring that I was nine years old. I tried to keep them alive on cow’s milk in one of my dresser drawers. They all died over the course of two or three days and then my mother found them. I forgot about them as soon as I could, I guess.

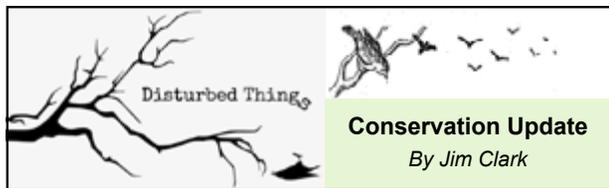
Still, it was my frustration with the lifelessness of ‘book-learning’ that hit me in my mid-thirties which made me seek out something intimate, tangible, and necessary. I lived in Seattle at the time, and when the *New Carissa* came ashore and broke up on the beach just north of Coos Bay, I watched the coverage on the local 24-hour news network and was amazed to see people out there rescuing oiled shorebirds – one person interviewed, Curt Clumpner, was identified as a “wildlife rehabilitator” – a profession I did not know existed! Immediately I began to see ads seeking volunteers to ‘help return an animal to the wild’ at the Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), and fortuitously I met one of their rehabilitators at a party at the same time. She was awesome, a really smart, tough, compassionate person, and she got me to volunteer. That was 1999. I was 37. And proving that the field is indeed a small world, it turned out that Curt Clumpner had launched the wildlife clinic at PAWS two decades earlier.

HH: *What drives others to work there?*

MM: One common thread, or theme, that I’ve seen in my colleagues, both volunteers and paid staff, is a deep feeling that the wild is the highest reality, and that our society, in fact all industrialized societies, cause great harm to the wild as a matter of course. Stopping this harm is too daunting of a task for most people but helping every victim we can is the least we can do. There is a desire to ease the suffering of those who’ve come into conflict with our human mess, sprawl, and despoilment of the environment. There is a common feeling that it is our responsibility as members of that destructive society, to make some kind of amends, even if it’s a gesture as small as caring for a violet-green swallow’s fallen nestlings. This drive to help the wild as much as possible is a common feature of my friends in this field, certainly in the staff and volunteers of Humboldt Wildlife Care Center.

Currently our biggest challenge is moving our facility from our present location in Bayside, to the property we are raising funds to purchase in Manila. A daunting task, especially while continuing to meet our mission – and we won’t be able to do it without the support of our community. We’ll have the details of our funding needs on our website and social media soon. To donate to HWCC/BAX, go to their website at <https://birdallyx.net/humboldt-wildlife-care-center-2/>, or call (707) 822-8839.

(Next month: PART II of, ‘For the Love of Wildlife!’)



In July the Redwood Region Audubon Society's Conservation Committee decided to add our 2¢ on the Nordic Aquaculture Project's Final Environmental Impact Review (FEIR) of their planned fish factory at the former Samoa Pulp Mill. The Humboldt County Planning Commission (HCPC) approved and certified the FEIR at their July 28 Meeting. Since we believe it falls far short of complying with the California Environmental Quality Act, we agreed to join an appeal to the Board of Supervisors on the HCPC's approval. We join in this effort with other organizations including the Humboldt Fisherman's Marketing Association, and Humboldt 350 – a local affiliate of a nationwide effort to “end the age of fossil fuels.” You can read our public comments on the HCPC website at humboldt.gov.org/3218/Nordic-Aquafarms-Project.

On another note, the Humboldt and Brookings Wind Energy Areas (WEA) leases by the Federal

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, present a huge series of decisions. We in Audubon have never been faced with deciding whether maximizing wind energy ASAP or going slowly and carefully, will drive fewer bird species to extinction. We have decided to focus on local energy needs for now, but know that State, Federal, and corporate goals are for full build-out of the WEAs and their connection to the western electricity grid. This will involve an 8-fold increase to transmission lines capacity out of the area, and potentially huge impacts to the environment they traverse.

Some good news is that certain non-profit organizations such as, Northcoast Regional Land Trust, Western Rivers Conservancy, and California Trout are working on restoring of the Redwood Creek estuary. The primarily benefits fish, but estuary enhancement benefits all wildlife. Although no details are available now, a significant on-site meeting took place in August. We look forward to supporting this restoration effort. Feel free to take the bait and be hooked!

Please join us at our next Conservation Committee meeting on: September 8, 2022, at 12 pm on ZOOM link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87263853457?pwd=RHNKR0FrWEJ4WHJlcFZFWDB4M0FFZz09>.

KID'S CORNER
Wowza Wildlife!
By Leslie Scopes Anderson

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

European Bee-eaters live in the savannas of Africa, but migrate to sites in Europe to nest in sandy cliff faces. They lay up to 10 eggs in their burrow, and actively defend it.

FUN FACTS:

European Bee-eaters are spectacularly colorful! They catch a bee in flight, bring it back to a perch and thrash it against a branch to remove the stinger. They also eat dragonflies and butterflies.

Above: Cartoon and photography by Leslie Scopes Anderson. See more of Leslie's work at www.flickr.com/photos/72064473@N07/.
Left: Condor sketch, courtesy of freepik.com.



The Second Prey-go-neesh Cohort has Arrived!

The newest cohort of young, California Condors was brought to Yurok Country on August 16th. The Yurok Tribe and the Northern California Condor Restoration Program (NCCRP), provide the standard medical exams, and mount transmitters prior to releasing them individually into the Release and Management Facility. The transfer and preparation work is performed with help from multiple organizations including, the Peregrine Fund, Pinnacles and Redwood National Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Basin Institute, and departments at the Yurok Tribe. The cohort can be viewed live on the Yurok Condor Cam at www.yuroktribe.org/yurok-condor-live-feed. The one-year-old birds (one female and three males), will acclimatize in the facility for approximately one month prior to their staggered release into the wild. Tune in to see A4, A5, A6, and A7, and meet our ever-patient mentor bird, #746. The NCCRP expects to implement a staggered release of the birds this fall and to reintroduce one cohort of prey-go-neesh every year for at least the next two decades. The Yurok Tribe appreciates all your thoughts, prayers, and positive energy. If you'd like donate to the condor recovery program, please go to the Yurok Tribe's Wildlife Department website at www.yuroktribe.org/yurok-condor-restoration-program.
Courtesy of the Yurok Tribe and Northern California Conder Recovery Program.

Did You Know?
Facts shared by the RRAS Cat & Bird Safety Committee

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is promoting responsible cat ownership as part of the Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) North American Songbird (NAS) program. The over 300 bird species that spend part of their annual cycle in North America are in persistent decline due in part to predation from domestic cats. Because citizen action is recognized as an important component of songbird recovery efforts, AZA is promoting that cat owners keep their pets indoors. It's better for birds and better for cats!

Source: www.aza.org/connect-stories/stories/safe-conservation-monarch-songbird-chimpanzee.

Wildlife Photographer Captures Hawks Handing-off a Snake: Southern Humboldt Photographer, Ann Constantino, sent in these amazing photographs capturing two parent hawks passing a snake from one to the other, mid-air! Ann notes: “I saw this Red-tailed Hawk with a King Snake in its claws, and before I knew it, the snake was being handed off to its mate – I’m guessing to be delivered to a juvenile who I could hear crying from deep in the trees beyond. I could not believe my eyes when it was happening – it was so fast I thought I had imagined the whole thing until I checked out my own photographs!”

