

The Sandpiper

April 2023



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org



Common Paradise Kingfisher
Photo by Bob Lockett.

Please join Redwood Region Audubon Society on Wednesday, April 19, at 7:30 p.m. for a program by Gary Friedrichsen entitled **Wallacea or Just Kicking Around in Indonesia**

Gary will first discuss Alfred Russel Wallace, “The Father of Biogeography,” including his early thoughts on evolution, and his travels in the Malaysian archipelago. The talk will also feature Gary’s recent trip to the islands of Sulawesi, Halmahera, and West Papua with photos of the avifauna and other aspects of Indonesian life.

Gary has lived in Humboldt County since attending Humboldt State College in 1964. From 1970 to 2000 he resided in the famous duck hunting shack at the mouth of Jacoby Creek and served as the duck club’s caretaker. He graduated HSU in 1974 and began working for the National Marine Fisheries Service out of La Jolla, California, first as a biologist aboard tuna seiners working in the Eastern Tropical Pacific, and then as a researcher on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration vessels surveying dolphins in the same area. He also commercial-fished for salmon and crab in the off-season. He has been a member of the Redwood Region Audubon Society for forty years and has served on the Board for seven years.

The live program will be held at the Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata. It will be simultaneously zoomed – please see RRAS.org for the Zoom link. Hot drinks and goodies will be served at 7 p.m., so bring a mug to enjoy shade-grown coffee. Please come fragrance-free.

Godwit Days
Coming Soon!



Join the North Coast’s annual bird festival **April 13 to 16**. Drop in the Arcata Community Center for many happenings, including:

- Join field trips for beginners and experts alike.
- Visit the informative tables of conservation organizations.
- See bird art from local artists and students.
- Hear about the California Condors in Humboldt County from the leaders of the effort.
- Learn the fascinating stories of the birds of an uninhabited Pacific desert island.

Visit the website at godwitdays.org for events and more information.

RRAS FIELD TRIPS IN APRIL

Sat. April 1 – 8:30-11am. Free guided field trip at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. Bring binoculars and scope if you have them, and meet trip leader Kathryn Wendel at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake) for the opportunity to hear and see a diverse range of shorebirds, migratory birds, and resident birds likely engaging in breeding activities. Reservations not required.

Sat. April 8 – 8:30-11am. Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Gary Friedrichsen. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

Sun. April 9 – 9-11am. Join trip leader Ralph Bucher for a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This two-mile walk is on a wide, flat, gravel trail offering access to tidally influenced habitats including mudflats, riparian vegetation, conifers, and bay, which host a variety of geese, raptors, shorebirds, and waders. Email Ralph at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com) to sign up.

Sun. April 9 – 8:30-11am. **Women and Girls’ Bird Walk** at Freshwater Farms Reserve. Trip leader Kathryn Wendel is an experienced guide with strong knowledge of local birdlife, and this location offers access to raptors as well as wetland bird species like blackbirds, wrens, and herons. Meet at the Reserve parking lot near the corner of Myrtle Ave. and Freshwater Rd. Time permitting, the group may also drive over to Fay Slough.

Sat. April 15 – 8:30-11am. Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Bill Rodstrom. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

Sun. April 16 – 9-11am. For a **wheelchair accessible** walk along the Eureka shoreline, join trip leader Ralph Bucher at the foot of Del Norte St. An active

Osprey nest, along with waterbirds, can be viewed from the pier. Email Ralph at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com) to sign up.

Sat. April 22 – 8:30-11am. Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Michael Morris. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

Sat. April 22 – 8:30-10:30am. Join RRAS in **Southern Humboldt** on the fourth Saturday of every month at Tooby Park, one mile west of Garberville on Sprowl Creek Rd. These easy walks last 2-3 hours each. Start time varies, so please text or call Ann at 707-296-8720 for start time each month. Heavy rain cancels.

Sun. April 23 – 9-11am. Cal Poly Humboldt Wildlife Graduate Student Lila Bowen will lead a field trip focused on gulls and seabirds nesting on the rocks off Trinidad Head. Lila’s studies focus on gull breeding behavior and nest fate, and she has been surveying these nesting colonies since early 2022. Meet at the Trinidad State Beach parking lot and bring a scope if you have one.

Thursday, April 27 – 6-7 pm. With the days getting longer, trip leader Janelle Chojnacki offers a midweek evening “bird sit” at Vista Point overlooking the mouth of the Mad River. This bird sit will be highly accessible to folks with limited mobility and offers views of birds and harbor seals. Bundle up, and bring a chair, binoculars, and scope if you have them. Email [janelle.choj\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:janelle.choj[at]gmail.com).

Sat. April 29 – 8:30-11am. Free guided field trip at Arcata Marsh with trip leader Larry Karsteadt. Meet at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake).

Sun. April 30 – 7:30-9am. **Central Arcata Marsh**. Ken Burton will lead an early morning walk focusing on Allen Marsh and adjacent areas in search of spring migrants and lingering waterfowl. Meet Ken (707-499-1146; [shrikethree\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:shrikethree[at]gmail.com)) in the parking lot just north of the gate on South I St.

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President's Column

By Gail Kenny



A highlight of our annual banquet in February was presenting the 2023 Volunteer of the Year Award to Gary Friedrichsen. Gary is a longtime member of the local birding community. I first got to know him in the early 1990s when I joined Redwood Region Audubon Society and served on the board for the first time. At that time, he was living in the little red hunting shack on the edge of the bay in Arcata next to Highway 101. He was often at sea for months at a time working as a marine mammal surveyor on fishing boats often in tropical oceans and enjoying pelagic birding at the same time. Gary is a member of the Humboldt County 400 Club, meaning he has seen more than 400 species of birds in Humboldt County.

Gary has served as RRAS Treasurer since January 2017. He has been instrumental in our major fundraising efforts by volunteering to cater the last three banquets, producing good-tasting food, getting much of the food donated, and getting his friends to help, significantly increasing our net from the events. He also resurrected the joint RRAS and Northcoast Environmental Center Bird-a-Thon originally organized by the late NEC Director Tim McKay. These are our two biggest annual fundraisers, the proceeds of which support RRAS's annual operating expenses and help accomplish our



mission. Part of our income also comes from the banquet silent auction. Gary has played a major role in organizing and gathering donations for it. During the pandemic, he volunteered to help with the online auction we did along with Godwit Days. He gathered donations, took photos for the auction website, and helped distribute the items to the winners, and of course handled the money end of it.

Gary has been a longtime field trip leader for walks at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary along with occasional unique walks like the one he and his co-leaders organized to Big Lagoon last year. This walk was so popular it had a long waiting list. Gary scheduled three more of the same field trips

to accommodate all the people who wanted to go. Every few years, Gary volunteers to give a presentation at our public meeting. This month, he will be presenting on his travels to Indonesia (see page 1). Gary is also our Chapter Historian, the holder of our hard-copy archives. He has opened his house numerous times for RRAS gatherings. He often helps at the monthly Wigi Wetlands restoration days. He participates in our local Christmas Bird Counts, often out in his boat to add pelagic birds to the lists.

In May 2021, Gary appeared on Access Humboldt Community Voices and talked about RRAS and his Treasurer position. You can view it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEJTI_8EXZE

The Annual Godwit Days Bird Festival Is at Hand



Come celebrate the Marbled Godwit and explore the lush Redwood Coast during our annual bird festival, *Godwit Days*. Headquarters are the Arcata Community Center, where you can see informative displays about birds and their habitats and enjoy talks about condors and an uninhabited desert island in the Pacific. Join experienced local guides and observe many bird species and other wildlife through our wide selection of field trips, wonderful talks, and workshops, many of them at no charge.

Highlights include two talks: On Friday evening, April 14, "California Condor Recovery in Northern California: Prey-go-neesh Flies Free," is the story of the 14-year journey of the Yurok Tribe—in partnership with many others—that successfully brought Prey-go-neesh home to the Pacific Northwest. Tiana Williams-Claussen, director of the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department, and Chris West, the condor Restoration Program Manager, will discuss how the Tribe is reintegrating condors into the region, and provide an update on how the newly released population is doing.

On Saturday, April 15, keynote speakers and renowned marine biologists Dr. Lisa Ballance and Robert Pitman will entertain us about perhaps the most isolated island in the world: "Clipperton Island: Booby Research on a Tropical Desert Isle." Tens of thousands of Masked and Brown Boobies crowd the barren shores of this tiny (400 acres) uninhabited desert atoll. Its teeming seabird population has been whip-sawed by human activity over the past 100+ years, and its future remains uncertain. The speakers will introduce us to its cast of feathered and other characters, and summarize some of their fascinating research results, as well as exploring some ongoing conservation efforts on this remarkable piece of land.

Kid's Korner
WOWZA WILDLIFE!
by Leslie Scopes Anderson

IT'S TIME FOR
2ND BREAKFAST!

WHERE IN THE WORLD?
Great Blue Herons
are found in our area all year. They can be seen at the Arcata Marsh around Klopp Lake. They nest in colonies in high trees near water.

FUN FACTS:
Great Blue Herons
are the tallest birds in No. America and have a 6' wingspan. They hunt fish, gophers, snakes, and frogs with their dagger-like beaks. They make a hoarse, raspy croak if disturbed.

Adventures in Bird Photography – Stories behind the shots

By Leslie Scopes Anderson,
with Mike Anderson

A Pastime becomes a Passion

What began as a lark has become an avocation! Soon after Leslie, a long-time film photographer, moved to Northern California from Utah, she and Mike got into digital photography and began taking advantage of the wealth of wildlife found in this area. Our new interest started at the Arcata Marsh, with shots of egrets, and soon escalated to exotic trips to locations around the world. However, we still value the diversity and abundance of bird species in our own backyard. Here are some of our stories about getting the photographs that appear in exhibits and publications. I'm sure many of you can relate to these experiences!

Patience Is a Virtue

While discussing bird behavior at a Humboldt Botanical Gardens lecture, an audience member said "I don't want to learn about the birds, I just want to photograph them!" Of course, knowledge of the subject increases the odds of finding the bird. What I love about this hobby is the hours spent getting intimate with these creatures – observing their habits and behaviors.

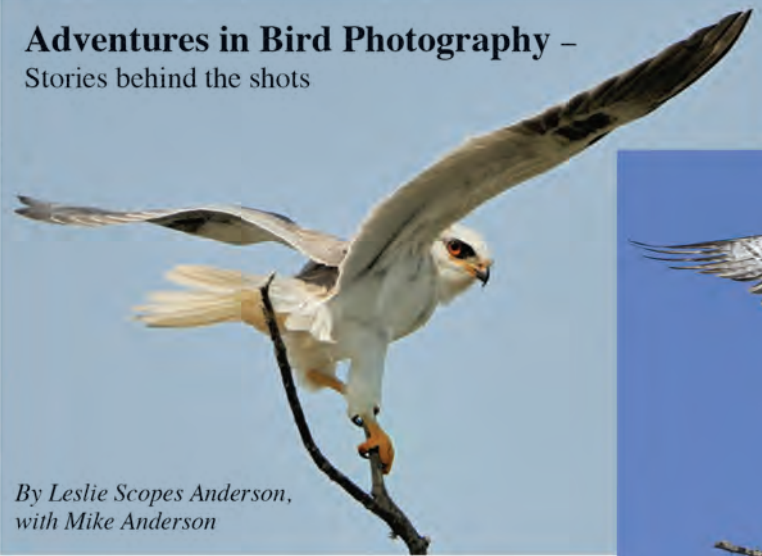
One summer, Mike noticed that a White-tailed Kite frequently came to roost in a particular tree at the Marsh. Knowing how wary these small raptors are, he decided to wait it out. Early in the morning, he brought a stool and camouflage covering, set up his tripod nearby, and settled in. He sat for more than 2 hours until the bird finally landed on its perch. Mike quickly took the shot, just as the kite looked down and spotted the intruder. It instantly flew off again, but its image had been captured in that split second!

On Assignment

Mike and I are usually opportunists – taking advantage of whatever bird appears before us. If called upon to photograph a specific bird, things get more difficult! When I was working with Ken Burton on the Birds of Northern California guidebook, he requested a "dorsal view of a flying Pelagic Cormorant in breeding plumage"! Yikes! Most of my photos in the book had come from my stock, collected over the years. However, this shot was not in my files. Luckily the time of year was right for the specified plumage, so I researched sites that might produce the desired bird. After a few misses, I went out to the North Jetty. Sure enough, a few PECO's were visible on the water in the harbor mouth. After a long wait, they took to the air and I was able to click the correct view!

◀ White-tailed Kite
by Mike Anderson

Osprey at its nest
by Leslie Scopes Anderson



A Fleeting Opportunity

Always on the lookout for possibilities, we noticed an Osprey nest in a dead tree near King Salmon. A nest is a wonderful location for photography, as the birds must return often and are somewhat less wary of humans. Most Osprey nest are on platforms or utility poles that interfere with the natural look of the shot. This one was perfect, and on a trail that allowed for a respectfully close approach. We visited the site several times during the nesting season and were delighted to document the feeding of the chicks and their fledging. Our many hours spent at the site were very enjoyable! We were anxious to return the next year when nesting season rolled around – but, alas, the dead tree had fallen into the swamp!

Instant Gratification

Every once in a while, fortune smiles on the nature photographer and provides a magical moment! Mike and I were scouring the underbrush around our campsite for small birds, and I was coming up with nothing. Mike, however, had better luck. After a short pursuit, this fast, elusive kinglet landed right in front of him, with a clean background, and with its fiery crown showing! He was ready for it and got the shot!



Ruby-crowned
Kinglet by Mike
Anderson



Pelagic Cormorant in breeding plumage
by Leslie Scopes Anderson

Majestic Waders

On a photo excursion to Cosumnes River Preserve near Lodi, CA, we had been scouting all day for the spectacular Sandhill Cranes that migrate through the area in winter. There were a few in the far distant fields, but none within camera range. Our 500-600mm lenses are good, but not magic! Subjects need to be fairly close to create acceptable images. As the afternoon wore on we were still skunked, until we finally spotted a group just landing along a field pond within reach of the road. Using my best, stealthy creep technique I slowly inched up behind the grasses edging the pond. For a while, the birds simply stood around, but gradually they began interacting and I was able to acquire this shot. It was thrilling to watch their antics as they spread their huge six foot wings! And with the bonus of a reflection in the still pond!



Sandhill Cranes dancing
by Leslie Scopes Anderson

Leslie is a career graphic designer who co-owned an agency in Salt Lake City for 25 years. She has served on several environmental organization boards. Mike is an emeritus professor of Environmental Resources Engineering with 40+ years of teaching at Cal Poly Humboldt. Both have a life-long love of the wonders of Nature. They offer pro bono use of their photos to further conservation efforts.

Their photographs have appeared in Audubon, Nature Conservancy, and National Wildlife publications, etc., and in local guidebooks. They currently have an exhibit at the AMIC during March and April, 2023.

“Bird Talk Around Town,” by Kathryn Wendel

Featuring interviews with locals on all things bird!

Richard Haberman is a former chairman of the Yurok Interim Council, and he was instrumental in setting up the governing documents of the Yurok Constitution to receive formal federal recognition of the Yurok tribe in 1992. Amos Albers is a member of the Karuk and Yurok tribes and an avid fisherman.

Kathryn: Hello, and thank you both for speaking with me today about birds. Would you please tell me your thoughts on local wildlife conservation?

Richard: I’m certainly FOR conservation, but I definitely think that the use of resources should not be confused with the abuse or overuse of resources. For instance, I’m a waterfowl and deer hunter, but I don’t take more than I need, and concerning the Klamath River in particular, I’d like to see Humboldt more in alignment with Yurok tribe values. I’m very against the overharvesting of fish in the Klamath River, and I feel that any fishing in the Klamath River should be subsistence, not commercial.

Amos: I agree. Managing the fish in the Klamath River along Yurok values will also keep the river healthy for elk, and that will help other wildlife to thrive, especially birds like the condors. The Yurok tribe is the only tribe in the U.S. to have released California Condors back into the wild, and a healthy river will greatly benefit condors.

Kathryn: Many people are very happy to have California Condors back in Northern California, and as apex scavengers they are vital to ecosystem health. As I understand, it’s been over a fourteen year collaboration of the Yurok tribe, with state and federal agencies as well as with both private and public landowners. Are they your favorite bird as well?



Amos: We are very glad to have the condors. But no, my favorite bird is the Canada Goose. They are a main staple in subsistence living, just like elk, clams, mussels and salmon.

Richard: My favorite birds are actually crows. Crows are black because of their jealousy of Pileated Woodpeckers.

Amos: No, crows are black because they tried to take medicine up to the sun and got burned for their arrogance. The only bird worthy enough to make it to the sun was the eagle, for he is the strongest bird.

Kathryn: I expected one of you to say the California Condor was your favorite bird, You both surprised me by choosing ones I never would have guessed, but both those birds highlight the value of our common everyday species which are just as important as the rarer ones. Thank you Richard and Amos for sharing the Yurok story of the crow, and for taking the time to speak with me on birds and your thoughts on local conservation issues.

Kathryn took the photos of Richard (top left) and Amos.



A Small, Pale Sparrow of the Grasslands By Jude Power

A friend once said to me, “When you said you were into sparrows, I knew you had it bad.” Yes, I have a bad case of birding lust, and sparrows are one of my favorite tribes. I’m watching sparrows through the window behind my monitor at this very moment. Did you know that towhees and juncos are sparrows?

For anyone curious about sparrows, it’s a good idea to begin by learning the species seen most frequently in the place you live -- your yard, your street, the trails

you walk. Some of them can be complicated to identify with all those streaks in shades of brown, but there are tricks that can make it much easier.

If you enjoy open, grassy landscapes or saltmarshes, then Savannah is your sparrow. Its plumage does a fine job mimicking the grasses in which it hides, but luckily these timid sparrows will often hop into plain view on a grass stem, barbed wire strand or other low perch to sing or check out a disturbance (you). I often see them darting out from roadside vegetation to peck at seeds or other food on the road, or scurrying around cordgrass in saltmarshes.

So, how to identify them? For starters, if there are other sparrows around, Savannahs will be smaller than most of them. Regarding its gray-brown plumage,

the most obvious feature is that it looks streaky all over, including the head, back, breast, and down the sides. Our local Song Sparrow looks streaky, too, but in addition to being larger it’s a darker, redder brown color and its coarser streaking forms a bold dark spot in the center of the breast (Savannah’s spot is not as obvious).

But there are two simpler secrets for sussing-out the Savannah Sparrow around Humboldt Bay. First, its face is unique among local sparrows in that the area between the beak and eye is yellow. This yellow area can be subtle in some individuals, but it’s there. Look for it this spring as brighter breeding plumage develops. Second, it has snazzy pink legs!

A third secret to finding this bottomland denizen is its distinctive song. Roger Tory Peterson described it as a lisping *sit-sit-sit SEE say*, much like a buzzing insect.

Savannah Sparrow is abundant year-round along the Humboldt coastline and is not endangered overall. However, there are as many as 28 subspecies, and some of these require active management to ensure population stability, mainly in Nova Scotia and Mexico. And, we have our own subspecies – *alaudinus* – which is resident from Humboldt Bay to San Luis Obispo County!

These curious, streaky grassland birds will become enjoyable companions on your walks when you get to know them. Good birding!

Photo courtesy of Audubon.org

DID YOU KNOW? From the Cat & Bird Safety Committee

Did you know that the mere presence of cats can induce fear and alter behavior of native birds? For example, in one study the fear instilled by cats reduced fecundity by one offspring per nest, which can result in up to a 95 percent reduction in bird

abundance over time. When fearful parents take food to nestlings less frequently, young birds don’t gain enough weight. A free-roaming cat doesn’t need to kill or injure birds in order to impact survival. Best to keep cats indoors, on a leash or in a cat backpack!