

The Sandpiper

Dec. 2021 / Jan. 2022



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

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A Humboldt Goose Tale

(With apologies to Clement Moore)

'Twas twilight in Humboldt, the stars just aglow,
 Not a birder was birding, not even ROFO.
 The feeders were hung near the chimney with care
 In hopes that a Brambling (or two) would be there.
 The Godwits were roosting, the Willets a-snooze
 Next to Plovers and Turnstones and Long-billed
 Curlews.
 We birding folk too snuggled warm in our nests
 With brews and remotes, for a long autumn's rest.
 When out from our phones there arose such a clatter
 We woke from our naps to see what was the matter.
 We muted the Giants, eschewed our dessert,
 For those warbling chimes meant a rare-bird alert.
 The words that appeared caused such dropping of jaws
 We knew in an instant 'twas from Santa Slaus.
 More rapid than Merlins his message it came,
 And he pished and cajoled as he called us by name:
 "Now Leah, now Ian, now Jeff and Mark C.,
 On Russell, and Garys L., F., yes, and B.,
 Now Alex and Jude, George and Chet and Elyse:
 There's a bean-geese, it seems, 'midst the Cackling
 Geese.
 To the bridge o'er the slough where the currents
 meander—
 For a goose in a million, come all, take a gander!"
 As we gathered our wits, donned our coats, grabbed
 our gear,

The Slaus dropped a pin and a map did appear.
 Away to the Bottoms we flew at top speed,
 To the posted speed limit we paid little heed.
 Past rough-coated cattle afield in all weathers
 O'er potholes that jolted us down to our nethers
 To a lush verdant grassland replete with high hopes
 And a mob of keen birders adjusting their scopes.
 Then what to our wondering eyes should emerge
 But a Tundra Bean-Goose from the pastoral verge.
 It was chubby and stout, that Siberian fowl,
 And we zoomed in as far as our lens would allow.
 Its color was brown, somewhat dull, even bland
 And its stubby bill showed a subterminal band.
 Its legs were bright orange, almost pumpkin in hue,
 And white-edged wing coverts were evident, too.
 It gave nary a cackle, nor even a hiss
 As we marveled at that Anser serrirostris.
 In fact in the meadow the only thing heard
 Was the growth of life-lists as we added that bird.
 Then the birders as one gave a round of applause
 And tweeted forthwith, "Many thanks, Santa Slaus!
 For the holiday doldrums you've found the solution:
 A single brown head in a sea of Aleutian."
 The Slaus sprang to his car, to his team gave a yell,
 And away they all flew like a bat out of—well,
 But I heard him exclaim, as we hollered and hooted:
 "Happy birding to all! May your next be Pink-footed!"

— Sarah Hobart



Above: Tundra Bean Goose (front) in Arcata Bottoms, by Sarah Hobart.

Annual Christmas Bird Count

Submitted by Tony Kurz, Arcata CBC Compiler

The 2021 Arcata Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on Sat., December 18th. It covers the heart of Humboldt County, starting from south Eureka, to Humboldt Bay, Mad River bottoms, and north to McKinleyville. There is a good mix of species with the count usually averaging 166 species. I encourage all seasoned regulars to participate again and anyone else who may like to help. Please email me at tonyk_71220@hotmail.com if interested. We have recently gone over to digitally recording species using eBird as a group and I'd like to continue this method as it's a great way to learn eBird, and to collect and arrange data. As we get closer to the Count I will update everyone participating on the eBird sign-in protocol.

Happy birding!

RRAS Field Trips in December and January!

- Sat. Dec. 4th** – 8:30-11am. Arcata Marsh, led by Gary Bloomfield.
- Sun. Dec. 5th** – 9-11am. Our monthly **Women & Girls' Birding Walk** will be led by Jaime Carlino and Laura Echávez, both of whom have extensive experience with **raptors**. *For reservations and meeting location contact our Field Trip Chair, Janelle Chojnacki, at janelle.choj@gmail.com.
- Sat. Dec. 11th** – 8:30-11am. Arcata Marsh, led by Jude Power.
- Sun. Dec. 12th & Sun. Jan. 9th** – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk at the Humboldt Bay Nat. Wildlife Refuge.
- Sun. Dec. 12th** – 9am-12pm: Trip leader Jim Clark will lead a walk exploring Eureka's urban interface, including the redwood/spruce forest, and a historical farm and slough.
- Sat. Dec. 18th** – 8:30-11am. Arcata Marsh, led by Larry Karsteadt.
- Sat. Dec. 18th** – Beginning Birdwatching & Project FeederWatch. **Drop-in** 10-12 every 3rd Saturday at the Jacoby Creek School Garden. Bring binocs! Contact Denise Seeger, at daseeger@gmail.com.
- Sun. Dec. 19th & Sun. Jan. 16th** – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk on the Eureka Waterfront. This trail is paved and **wheelchair accessible**.
- Sat. Dec. 25th** – Xmas morning walk at Arcata Marsh, led by Michael Morris.
- Sat. Jan. 1st** – 9-11am. New Year's Day! Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. We will provide tools and packaged snacks: Contact Jeremy Cashen at jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com or (214) 605-7368.
- End of January:** Gary Friedrichsen will lead a walk at the Humboldt Lagoons – watch our website! **Trip leaders for January's Saturday morning, Arcata Marsh walks will be announced on our website at rras.org/home.aspx.** *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 all other walks. State and local COVID protocols apply to all RRAS events; see our website for more details.

RRAS Virtual Programs for December 2021 & January 2022

December, 2021 – Holiday Photo Contest and Winter Bird Counts

Join RRAS on December 10, 2021 at 7 pm for the final program of 2021, entitled "Holiday Photo Contest and Winter Bird Counts" with Andrew Orahoske and guests. Covering all five regional Christmas Bird Counts, and other upcoming winter bird surveys, this program will also include an interactive photo contest with prizes, one entry per person. Contact: andrew.RRAS@gmail.com for details!

January, 2022 – Loleta-Ferndale Winter Raptor Survey

With Ken Burton and Holli Pruhsmeier

Humboldt County hosts an impressive diversity and number of raptors in winter. Ken Burton will present the results of the winter raptor count he has been conducting in Loleta and Ferndale since 2007. He will discuss spatial and temporal patterns and trends he has observed over the years, including within- and between-year fluctuations in numbers and demographics as well as raptor distribution in relation to habitat and responses to habitat changes. He will include results of GIS analyses conducted by HSU graduate student, Holli Pruhsmeier.

Ken Burton is an ornithologist, tour guide, and author who has lived in Humboldt County since 2005. He is a past president of RRAS and author of *Common Birds of Northwest California* and *A Birding Guide to Humboldt County*, both published by RRAS.

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President's Column

By Gail Kenny

eBird is a powerful resource I use to keep up to date on local rare birds and for researching birding hotspots when I travel. However, I have been unsuccessful in consistently contributing data to eBird. When the eBird app became available I added it to my smart phone. Using it in the field proved challenging when the app would need to update when opened while my cellular data signal was weak or non-existent. I ended up not using it. Then I would feel guilty for using other people's eBird data to find birds when I wasn't also contributing. A few times I made a paper list and later uploaded the data.

I had an aha moment recently when I chatted with a birder in the field and observed him using one those of little 3" x 5" spiral bound notebooks to mark his observations. I decided to try it. It works better for me than using the eBird app in the field. This older "analog" way of collecting data doesn't require a smart phone, an internet connection, or a charged battery. I have since added a few checklists to eBird from my paper lists and I'm determined to continue.

eBird is now the go to for rare bird alerts. When I started birding seriously in Humboldt County in 1990, there was no eBird or birdbox (a recorded phone messaging system) to find out about rare bird sightings. We had a phone tree for a select group of people who wanted to be notified about rare bird sightings. Doc Harris also kept a rare bird list on his office door at Humboldt State University and

the Sandpiper ran lists of monthly rare bird sightings. The birdbox replaced the phone tree, but you had to call into it and listen to recordings people posted.

RRAS abandoned the birdbox service a couple of years ago when it was replaced with eBird and list serves. The list serve sends out rare bird emails to subscribers. The list serve is rarely used since anyone can subscribe to eBird rare bird alert emails. The best way to report a rare bird is to submit a bird list to eBird. When you submit a list, you can limit it to one or a few species by not checking a box saying you are reporting all the birds you could identify. When you sign up for eBird rare bird alerts you have the option of being emailed once a day or once an hour for rare bird reports. This is now the main option for the public to report and be notified of local rare birds. There are other exclusive rare bird groups on various social media apps, but you have to be connected with someone to be included in these. More people submitting bird sightings to eBird is better for science even though it takes time and effort to learn how to use it. It also takes the responsibility off individual groups to provide rare bird sighting notifications and makes the information available to anyone who wants it.

In other news, RRAS is seeking a new Publicity Chair. Denise Seeger has been doing a great job of getting our publicity out, but she is ready to pass on the responsibility. It takes a few hours a month to collect information and write press releases to local media. Please contact me (gailgkenny@gmail.com) or Denise (daseeger@gmail.com) if you would like to know more about this volunteer opportunity.

The First Humboldt County Record of a Red-footed Booby

The bird was spotted by Russ Namitz at Wedding Rock, in Sue-Meg State Park on November 10th. According to Rob Fowler this is the fifth, first-county record to be recorded in Humboldt County this year; "it has been an amazing year for rarities here!"

Right: Red-footed Booby at Sue-Meg, by Rob Fowler (eBird).



Bottoms-up! Birds Benefit from Beached Brown Algae

*By Mark A. Colwell, Jayde O. Blair and Hannah M. LeWinter,
 Wildlife Department, Humboldt State University*

Ecologists have long pondered the importance of food (bottom-up) vs. predators (top-down) in structuring biotic communities. Simple trophic ladders associated with algae (compared with complex food webs) have yielded important insights into factors shaping communities. High energy, ocean-fronting beaches accumulate brown algae which originates from rocky intertidal habitats. This organic matter attracts a relatively incomplex assemblage of detritivores (e.g., amphipods or "sandhoppers"), which serve as food for birds. For the past two years, we've collected data to describe relationships among allochthonous algal debris, invertebrates, and birds on Humboldt County's beaches. Here's a summary of what we've found during our July-November fieldwork.

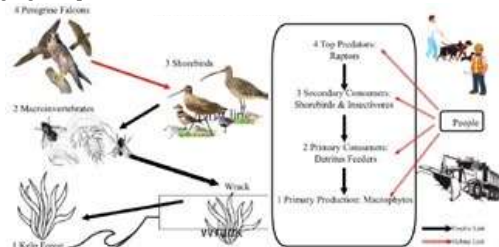
Currently, brown algae continue to recover from overgrazing by abundant sea urchins. Divers report expansive "urchin barrens" in rocky subtidal habitat where numerous brown algae formerly occurred. Urchins are abundant because their sea star predators have been decimated by lasting negative effects of wasting syndrome. Without sea stars, urchin populations explode and overgraze algae; as a result, less algae (i.e., wrack) washes up on beaches. This effect propagates up the trophic ladder to provide less food for detritivores and birds that prey on them.

Brown Algae: Analyses of ~80 km of Humboldt County beaches revealed that more algal detritus accumulates near rocky habitats compared with more distant sites. For instance, beaches near Trinidad and Humboldt Bay's jetties consistently have more wrack than distant locations; these algal hotspots occurred in similar spots both years.

Invertebrates: Year-round, detritivores thrive where stranded algae accumulate; amphipods teem amidst algae within hours of it being cast onto shore. In other words, locations with lots of wrack support more invertebrates. However, our data probably under-represent these relationships because we sampled during the day when amphipods are less active at the surface (they're principally nocturnal) when they retreat into their burrows.

Birds: So, do birds benefit from these hotspots of brown algae and invertebrate prey? In total, we observed 80 species of bird and 1,451 individuals. Most observations (38% of species and 59% of individuals) were shorebirds, which foraged between the swash zone and wrack left by recent high tides. In decreasing order of abundance, the community consisted of Western Sandpiper (28%), Sanderling (7%), Least Sandpiper (6%), Marbled Godwit (5%), and Semipalmated Plover (4%). And, shorebirds "mapped onto" algal hotspots with high invertebrate numbers. The positive relationship between birds and their prey likely varies with foraging behavior. For example, visual foraging plovers searched through wrack whereas tactile feeding sandpipers more often forage in the swash zone. Finally, shorebirds were most numerous near Humboldt Bay, probably because bay tidal flats are critical foraging habitats; this finding corroborates studies of wintering shorebirds. It also parallels a positive relationship between brown algae, invertebrates, and Snowy Plovers year-round.

Our findings emphasize the ecological importance to shorebirds of algal detritus (i.e., bottom-up effects of food) originating from nearby ocean habitats. There is, however, an unexplored top-down component – the influence of predatory falcons that shape the flocking behavior of shorebirds, and cause their instantaneous movements away from foraging hotspots associated with algae. Stay tuned for the rest of the story!



Above Diagram: Sandy Beaches: Trophic Relationships, by Jayde O. Blair.

Shining a Light

By Jessie Bunkley

My fingertips grip the slender edge of the console as we race along the surface of the ocean. Eyes scanning air, water, horizon—I search. Despite keeping my knees bent to absorb the shock, I am still caught off-guard when the boat becomes out of synch with the waves and falls unexpectedly beneath me, pounding hard against the water below. Eyes scanning air, water, horizon, they catch on a dark shape emerging from behind a wavelet: a common murre. I pick up my recorder and press the button with a large red circle to take a verbal note. “7:21, Common Murre, one, adult.” I am looking for everything—birds, marine mammals, fish, other vessels.

The reason for our excursion onto this watery plane is the rare and elusive Marbled Murrelet. Inland, researchers were awake long before dawn, listening for the calls of these seabirds as they leave their nests in the forest and head to the ocean to feed. Here on the open water, they are more visible and easier to count. Their distinctive shape—a small form with a short bill and upturned tail—along with their characteristic quick wingbeats and marbled brown plumage during the breeding season create my search image. Scanning air, water, horizon.

A series of Brown Pelicans pass overhead. They are grace personified, with long, elegant wings and formidable bills. I count them quickly and note the individuals with the white plumage of maturity, and those with the brown plumage of youth. I press the record button and save the valuable data. Despite the clear safety glasses, the wind pulls tears from my squinting eyes. My warm hat is pulled low over my ears and one hand is wrapped in a glove. Requiring dexterity to operate the recorder, my other hand is naked to the air, with the cold slowly seeping in.

These surveys require a state of true and total mindfulness—a form of meditation, though not in the traditional sense. All my attention is entirely focused on one thing. If I am observing, I am only observing. I try to let all else fall away: the discomfort of the deck beating the ocean surface, sending shockwaves up my spine; the bite of the wind on my face; the heavy weight of fatigue after nights of poor sleep and early mornings departing unfamiliar harbors—Bandon, Crescent City, Albion, Sausalito. I try to detach from the organic and leave my body behind. Right now, all my energy is in my eyes and brain. Searching, discerning, documenting.

To my right I see a patch of still water. A flukeprint! The circle of calm contrasts sharply with the otherwise textured skin of the sea. I call it out and, though our speed and course do not alter, we are all now on heightened alert for a whale. A blow 20 meters to the starboard bow! A slender, grey form surfaces for an instant and slides back into the dark, liquid world below. A minke! How amazing for our paths to cross, even

momentarily. I report the sighting and continue to scan. Air, water, horizon. Soon we come to the end point of this survey segment. We slow to a stop and in chorus report to our future selves, details about the weather and ocean conditions.

I feel the breeze on my face and estimate the wind speed. I take in the massive sky above to determine cloud cover. The words will echo in our ears in coming days and be transcribed into numbers, populating the clean and organized world of a spreadsheet. Those numbers will be analyzed and from these cool mornings on the water a picture will start to emerge. Population counts, reproductive success. Management decisions will be based on the charts born from these data. Human behavior may or may not be altered by the findings. The fate of at least one species is in the balance. We must look to be able to see. Only by collecting data and monitoring changes can we hope to have some understanding of what is happening in the world. The data compiled on trips like this form thousands of small flashlights illuminating reality. Without them we are blind.

After this segment of the survey, we rotate positions, moving awkwardly around the small cockpit of the 19-foot-long Boston Whaler in our bulky, bright orange float suits. I take the helm, reference the map, and input the next point into the GPS unit. This is the only field job I know of where the purple line that shows a direct path to the waypoint is actually useful. Aside from sea stacks, the occasional submerged rock, and kelp beds, there are few obstructions to our movement across the silver face of the sea.

I am still acclimating to driving across a surface that is in constant motion. Once the observers have again recorded the weather and sea conditions, my left hand firmly grasps the wheel and my right finds its way to the

throttle at my side. I push in the safety button with my thumb and ease it forward. We accelerate. My eyes flick between the speed and direction on the GPS, the depth-finder, and the sea all around me. Sometimes we are so close to shore that the wave action and shallowness of the route make the constant vigilance and intense attention of driving a draining experience.

As I thread the needle through a series of sea stacks, eyes constantly searching for breaking waves that might indicate a submerged rock, the observer on the port side calls out “MAMU!” I slow the vessel as they lift their binoculars for a quick, close look to confirm plumage characteristics. Then a litany of detailed information is poured into the recorder: distance from vessel, behavior as we pass, details about molt stage. The first sighting of a marbled murrelet on this transect. An unidentified constriction in my chest subsides slightly and I breathe a little more deeply. I drive us onward, scanning air, water, horizon.

Above: Marbled Murrelet courtesy of eBird.



Letters to the Editor:

Dear RRAS,

Thank you for the murrelet patch!

I am a biologist/consultant and have been working on wildfire remediation in the Santa Cruz mountains this year. I am not allowed to share the location, but a Marbled Murrelet nestling was located in an unburned old-growth redwood tree in an area where 70% of murrelet habitat was destroyed by the fires of 2020. The nestling successfully fledged and made it safely to the ocean!

Before this year, I didn't know much about the Marbled Murrelet, but it is now my favorite bird. I am happy that nature is resilient, and in this case had a happy ending for this small, unique, creature!

Cheers & happy birding!

— Erin Bench

P.S.

Please use the remaining \$15 as a donation to the RRAS - keep up the good work!



KID'S CORNER WOWZA WILDLIFE!

By Leslie Scopes Anderson

A cartoon illustration of a Surf Scoter duck in the water. The duck is dark brown with a white patch on its neck. A speech bubble next to it says "YOU QUACK ME UP!". The background is blue water with several small black birds flying around.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?
Surf Scoters are sea ducks that live along the coast. They ride the swells and dive under breakers. You can see them here from October to May, and some in summer.

FUN FACTS:
Surf Scoter males have colorful, clownish bills and red legs and feet. When flying, their wings make a loud whistling sound. They eat shellfish which they pry off underwater rocks with their strong bills.

Humboldt Pelagic Birding

By Leah Alcyon

When birding on land becomes too easy, go to sea in an 18-foot boat and enjoy three-dimensional movement while looking for unfamiliar birds! The Godwit Days auction gave us that very opportunity, and in September we departed Field's Landing for our first crossing of the Humboldt Bay bar with RRAS Treasurer and Historian, Gary Friedrichsen as Captain. Nervously, I had requested going out on a day the water looked like glass, but the ocean had other ideas, and on this day, there were 6-to-9-foot swells and the notorious bar quickly loomed ahead. My previous opportunity to cross the Humboldt Bay bar had been 40 years earlier on a boat organized by the Audubon Society. We were to go out on a Saturday, but it was canceled at the last minute due to heavy seas which then left me asleep for 48 hours from an antihistamine. Subsequent pelagic trips from Bodega Bay proved seasickness drugs to be unnecessary for both of us so we were finally off to experience the life of birds living at sea off the coast of Humboldt County.

The route for this boat trip extended west and then south to the Eel River basin, or canyon, which boasts a drop off of about 3000 feet, producing a known hotspot for pelagic birds due to the up-welling of cold-water currents and the food associated with it. How does the topography of the ocean floor off the Humboldt coast compare with other areas for up-welling and bird numbers? The Cordell Bank off Sonoma's coast has almost a mile drop, 5250 ft, and is named for a granite seamount that rises to within 115 ft of the surface and attracts birds, fish and other sea life. Possibly because it is a National Marine Sanctuary and closer to a larger population of boat traveling birders there are a number of pelagic tours visiting these waters on a regular basis.

Thanks to Rob Fowler who joined us, I did not have to navigate the E-bird Pelagic Protocols. E-bird specifies "pelagic" birding as two miles or more off shore, and must be recorded at 60-minute intervals, which resulted in five pelagic lists for this particular trip. Having GPS readily available allows for tracking and recording

in E-bird. Reviewing the historical data was somewhat uplifting as I learned that the birds we saw on the trip have at some point been recorded at the North Jetty or on firm land somewhere in Humboldt County and are therefore potentially accessible to those without a boat. However, to make the trip on the ocean is more than recording the usual suspects in a convenient lineup. It is also a sensory snapshot of life on the open ocean and the thrill of seeing the birds in their "natural" habitat.

At a time when the world seems to be shrinking to incredibly small proportions and things far away loom on everyday thoughts, how amazing it is to find a place where the world seems suddenly very, very large! At every peak of a wave the view of surrounding sky and water opens up and scanning for life also peaks. Then the slide

down the backside into the trough limits the view to the boat and a small patch of foam. In one top-of-the-wave moment, two Blue Whales made the Cetacean

list for the day. The Long-tailed Jaegers were the most graceful bird of the day and several individuals sported actual long tails. We saw an abundance of Cassin's Auklets heavy with food and struggling to evade the path of the boat.

It is always fantastic to hear Humpback Whales, and they, too, were out.

The movement of the boat going up the swell and down the trough reduced viewing to short

windows which made the sightings even more exciting. The

photographic record shows far more open vistas than memory serves, which indicates the motion may have had a psychological effect of distorting the view. I admit to not being a boat person, so when the winds shifted after noon and the waves became jumbled, it felt right to turn around and head for solid ground. The ritualistic checking of the fuel before crossing the bar added to the drama. Apparently, it's not a fun experience to run out of fuel just before entering the channel! We enjoyed surfing the waves back into the bay and later at home I read about the skill and knowledge required to avoid the sand and all other hazards. Thanks again to Captain Friedrichsen for making this day possible!

Above: Long Tailed Jaeger by Dave Alcyon.



Tufted Puffins Need Protection

By Gary Friedrichsen

An iconic member of the North Pacific marine bird assemblage, the Tufted Puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*), has been a favorite for many of us here in the Humboldt-Del Norte region. You can count yourself fortunate indeed if you have ever glimpsed one of these comical yet endearing birds off our coast. Puffins, having the ability to both fly and swim, seemingly have it all. As a beginning birder in the early 1970s, I chose this species as my "totem" animal.



Every May I would go with friends out to the point at Elk Head, in Trinidad, to train our spotting scopes on Puffin and Green Rocks to admire the puffins sunning themselves outside their burrows. They spend most of their lives far at sea on or over the continental shelf and only come to shore for nesting so sighting them at this time of year was the best opportunity. If you spent enough time out in the ocean during the summer you could also come upon lone individuals feeding.

Members of a bird group known as alcids, the puffin shares lineage with Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, Murrelets, Auklets and the extinct Great Auk. This latter bird stood thirty-three inches tall, weighed almost twelve pounds and was totally flightless. Alcids are the northern niche equivalent to the penguins of the southern hemisphere. As a group, they can swim through the water with much more efficiency than they fly. In fact, puffins are known to dive over 330 feet where they can pack up to 20 anchovies sideways in their parrot-like bill when feeding young.

Adult Tufted Puffins stand about 15 inches tall with a wingspan of 25 inches. Dapper dressers, they look as if ready for a coat and tie affair in glossy black with a bright white facial mask, stunning orange rings around their yellow eyes, all topped off with a ginormous orange and yellow bill and dashing yellow ear tufts. This

costume is put away for the winter when they fly back offshore. The bill sheath decreases, the feathers forming the white mask are molted, and the plumage turns from black to dark grey.

They nest from Japan, along the Northern Pacific Coast, to and above the Arctic Circle, and south to the Farallon Islands off San Francisco. This is the largest range of their group. Individuals are spotted from time to time as far south as San Diego. Because of their small wings, they require a high nesting area to attain flight once they jump off the nest sites. The female lays just one white egg per season and both parents take turns during the 40-plus days of incubation, rotating to feeding when not in the burrow.

Puffins do not generally breed until their fourth year and even then, the deck is stacked against them. They often fly 30 to 60 miles for feeding. The chick will leave the nest after about forty-five days and escape at night to keep from being eaten by the ever-watchful gulls that would prey on them in the daylight.

The Elk Head population held 8-12 nesting pairs only as recently as 1976 and numbers have declined - possibly due to warming oceans and decreased availability of food. Another possible factor is Western Gulls now successfully nesting in those same islands. It has been more than ten years since observers have seen Tufted Puffins using their historic burrows on Puffin and Green Rocks. All seabirds have declined in numbers but researchers believe we have lost upwards to 90% of the entire puffin population especially off Washington, Oregon and northern California. Sad indeed!

But keep your eyes to the west on the rocky coast and perhaps you'll be lucky enough to see a Tufted Puffin as these beautiful creatures fight for survival.



Above left: Tufted Puffins in Trinidad, by Gary Friedrichsen. Above: Tufted Puffin in winter plumage by Rob Fowler.