

The Sandpiper

April 2025



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

Join us Thursday, April 18, at 7:00 p.m. for a presentation by Tom Wheeler on **Barred Owl Removal: What Led Up to It and What to Look for Going Forward**

Should we kill non-native Barred Owls to save the native Northern Spotted Owl? Animal rights groups are in court to challenge the US Fish and Wildlife Service's "Barred Owl Management Strategy," which proposes Barred Owl removal in strategic areas of the Northern Spotted Owl's range. The Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) and other traditional conservation organizations have intervened in these lawsuits to defend Barred Owl removal. Tom Wheeler, executive director of EPIC, will present on the impact of Barred Owl invasion on Spotted Owls, the results of experimental Barred Owl removals, EPIC's litigation to protect habitat and to forward Barred Owl removal, and why he (a vegan for over eighteen years) supports Barred Owl removal.

Tom graduated from the University of Washington School of Law with a concentration in Environmental Law, where he was president of the Environmental Law Society, served as articles editor of the WA Journal of Environmental Law & Policy, and defended old-growth and endangered species at the WA Forest Law Center. He began working for EPIC in 2014 as the Program & Legal Coordinator, and has since moved up the ranks to Executive Director. When he's not nerding out over the Endangered Species Act (his all-time favorite law), Tom is probably plunking the banjo, playing pickleball with his wife Jenna, or petting his cats.

Programs are held on the third Thursday of the month, September through May, at Six Rivers Masonic Lodge, 251 Bayside Road, Arcata. Drinks and goodies are served at 7:00 p.m., the program begins at 7:30.

Photo of Tom by Clary Zulette



RRAS FIELD TRIPS IN APRIL

Every Saturday, 8:30-11am. Join RRAS at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary for a free guided field trip with an experienced birder. The meet-up spot is the parking area at the end of I St. (Klopp Lake). Bring binoculars and scopes if you have them.

Trip leaders for April: April 5, Dan Greaney ~ April 12, Janelle Chojnacki ~ April 19, Bill Rodstrom ~ April 26, Michael Morris

Sunday, April 13, 9-11am. Join trip leader Ralph Bucher for a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This two-mile walk is along a wide, flat, gravel-packed trail easily accessible on foot. Sign up for Ralph's walks at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

Sunday, April 20, 9-11am. Ralph Bucher leads a walk on the Eureka Waterfront Trail, starting at the foot of Del Norte Street and continuing on a flat, paved trail that is **wheelchair accessible**.

Saturday, April 26, 9-11am. Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Join a fun group of volunteers to create bird-friendly habitat in a section of the bay trail behind Bayshore Mall. Bring water and gloves. We provide tools and snacks. Contact Susan Penn at susanpenn60@gmail.com for more information.

Saturday, April 26, time TBD. Join RRAS in Southern Humboldt for a free guided bird walk led by Tess McGuire. Contact Tess (tmcquire9130@gmail.com) to confirm date, meeting time, and place.

Looking ahead to May: Friday, May 9-Sunday, May 11: Eel River Canyon Preserve. Ken Burton will lead a three-day trip to this new Wildlands Conservancy preserve on the Mendocino-Trinity County line, where we can expect to see species typical of interior oak woodlands, chaparral, and mixed-evergreen forest. Full description to come in May *Sandpiper*. You may contact Ken (shrikethree AT gmail.com) for more information or to reserve a space.

Check rras.org for trips planned after the Sandpiper deadline.



NEW Monthly Pelagic Birding Trips on the *Stellar Sunrise*, by Sean McAllister

We are pleased to announce the dates for the RRAS 2025 monthly pelagic birding trips! Beginning in May, we will be hosting monthly trips out of Humboldt Bay aboard the *Stellar Sunrise*, a 43-foot US Coast Guard-inspected vessel, with Captain Lowell Wallace Jr. and his crew. The *Stellar Sunrise* is an ideal platform for birdwatching and whale-watching, with a spacious exterior walk-around deck, enclosed bathroom, and heated cabin. Reserve your space for one or more of these trips to search for birds that

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CHAPTER LEADERS

President – Kathryn Wendel president@rras.org
Vice President – CJ Ralph707-822-2015
Secretary – Jolian Kangas
Treasurer – Catherine McNally.....
Past President – Gail Kenny gailkenny@gmail.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE:

Ralph Bucher707-499-1247
Jim Clark 707-445-8311
Gary Friedrichsen707-822-6543
Eric Nelson etn3115@icloud.com
Chet Ogan707-442-9353
Sean McAllister
Samantha Bacon
Tony Kurz

OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS:

Conservation – Jim Clark707-445-8311
Membership – Ralph Bucher707-499-1247
Facebook – Kate Rowe 925-391-0468
Field Trips – Sean McAllister
Arcata Marsh Walks
– Ken Burton shrikeythree@gmail.com
Programs – Eric Nelsonetn3115@icloud.com
Publicity – Kate Rowe925-391-0468
Publications – CJ Ralph707-822-2015
Website – Susan Penn707-672-3346
NEC Representative – CJ Ralph707-822-2015
Historian – Gary Friedrichsen707-822-6543
RRAS Web Pagewww.rras.org
RRAS Listservegroups.io/g/rras
THE SANDPIPER:

Editor Judi Brown
Contributing Writer/Editor Gina Rogers
Proofreader Pia Gabriel
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President's Column

By Kathryn Wendel

Spring has arrived, bringing with it our local celebration of the spring bird migration, **Godwit Days, April 16-20**. I hope you can join RRAS again this year at the Big Sit birding event, held all day at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center on Sunday, April 20, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and help add to our species list. Last year the Big Sit counted 71 species, including some locally rare species, such as Steller's Jay, American Bittern, and Red Crossbill. Refreshments will be provided courtesy of RRAS.

Besides sponsoring the Big Sit at Godwit Days, RRAS also co-sponsors a Birdathon with our partner, the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC). The **Annual Tim McKay Birdathon**, coming up in May, is another major fund-raising opportunity for bird and



environmental conservation efforts, and it's easy to contribute. You can check out the teams on the NEC website (yournec.org) or donate directly to the cause by visiting rras.org and scrolling down to Donate. Enter the amount you would like to contribute, and be sure to note that it is for the Birdathon and for

the team you would like to support. Last year, I led an all-female team along with Jude Power called the BushLists, and we tallied over 100 species on one big day of birding around the coast. Support us again or any of the teams, and all proceeds go directly to us at RRAS and the NEC.

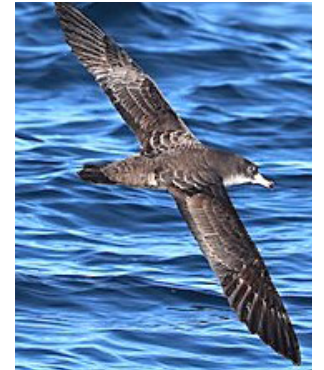
One final reminder: Reserve your spot (or spots!) on the pelagic birding trips planned this year, May through November. Details in the announcement on page 1 and below.

Pelagic Birding Trips, continued

are seldom if ever seen from shore, as well as whales, dolphins, and other marine animals. Shearwaters, albatrosses, storm-petrels, jaegers, fulmars, auklets, and more are to be expected.

The trips will generally depart around sunrise and return in the early afternoon. The following dates (Saturdays) are open for sign-ups: **May 10, June 21, July 12, August 16, September 13, and October 11**. Note that we ask participants to be flexible with the dates so that we can target the best possible conditions. Cost is \$150 per person, and each trip is limited to fifteen participants, so reserve your space soon! As a bonus, stay tuned for a yet-to-be scheduled November combined pelagic birding and Dungeness crabbing trip.

To reserve a spot for any of these trips, contact RRAS Field Trip Coordinator Sean McAllister via email at whiteouters@gmail.com, or call/text (707) 496-8790.



Pink-footed Shearwater, by Sean McAllister

NOTES FROM OUR NEIGHBORING AUDUBON CHAPTERS

Marin Audubon Society and the Northern Spotted Owl

For a look at one Audubon chapter's all-out effort at educating and engaging citizens in the conservation of the Northern Spotted Owl, go to Marin Audubon Society: marinaudubon.org/conservation/northern-spotted-owl.

In addition to a description of the status of the Spotted Owl in Marin County, they provide suggestions for how to distinguish Spotted vs. Barred Owls, how to ethically observe the owls and report sightings, how to get more information, and who and how to contact on any number of topics concerning the owls. They have also joined EPIC in defending the removal of Barred Owls. From their website:

- While Northern Spotted Owls are drastically declining all over the Pacific Northwest, Marin has been able to maintain a stable population up until now. It is said to be one of the last defensible populations.



Northern Spotted Owl, by Brian O'Kelly



It is time we step up as a community to help protect this threatened species before they are gone forever. A diverse ecosystem is a healthy ecosystem, and when we start to see the diversity disappear, we will start to see our ecosystem change in unhealthy ways. Thank you for helping us protect our beloved Northern Spotted Owl.

Barred Owl, by Leah Alcyon

- Marin does not have to worry about the threat of logging, but the Barred Owl has become a large, complex threat to the Northern Spotted Owl, and we should start worrying about them and what their growing presence means to the long-term survival of the Northern Spotted Owl.
- The first known sighting of a Barred Owl in Marin was recorded in 2002, and sightings are rising. They compete with the Spotted Owl's food source, disrupt nesting, and push the Spotted Owls out of their territory. Other owl species at risk of population decline due to the rise of Barred Owls are the Northern Pygmy Owl and Western Screech Owl.

Hal Genger—2025 Volunteer *Extraordinaire* of the Year

By Gina Rogers

Hal Genger has been an active force with RRAS for nearly forty years. His long association with the Humboldt birding scene dates back to 1979, when he took part in the very first Humboldt area Birdathon. His fund-raising skills at that point were somewhat suspect, as he was only able to squeeze \$18 out of his thirteen donors, probably reflecting his college student base. But from there he's gone on to become an indefatigable volunteer supporting a whole range of RRAS activities.

Hal first joined the RRAS board of directors in 1987, brought on (some might say coerced) by current Conservation Committee Co-Chair Jim Clark. Within a year, he was coaxed into becoming board president, a role he has held off and on over the years, as well as serving as secretary, vice president, immediate past president, and as a standing board member. And, although he has moved off the board now, he still actively engages at RRAS meetings, providing insights and historical context on issues as they come up. Last year, when Hal left the board, Past-President Gail Kenny gave some remarks of thanks, highlighting how much she had learned from Hal about running a meeting and staying focused on the item at hand, and noting that "Hal's presence at our meetings makes them more fun, as his dry sense of humor makes us smile."

Hal has put in hours and hours of time helping lead RRAS's volunteer efforts at the Wigi Wetlands restoration site behind the Bayshore Mall. He co-organizes the monthly cleanups and is known for his prodigious work-effort digging out and hauling away the ever-present invasive plants. He borrows his wife's truck to help haul plants and tools, and brings his own chainsaw when serious pruning is necessary. One of his biggest assets there has been the way he encourages new volunteers, getting them engaged and keeping everyone smiling. Hal also was instrumental in recruiting Eric Nelson to be the new Wigi Wetlands Volunteer



Volunteer of the year Hal Genger (center) on a Wigi Wetlands Workday with Jeremy Cashen (left) and Chet Ogan (right)

Crew Coordinator.

Hal contributes to RRAS in a myriad of other ways, including leading bird walks, both the regular Saturday morning fare at the Arcata Marsh and special ones at the Wigi restoration site. There he provides a wonderful history of the land and RRAS's involvement creating a more bird-friendly environment. And Hal consistently helps out at the banquet and other special events.

Underpinning Hal's commitment to RRAS has always been the way he shares his knowledge and expertise with others. He arrived in Humboldt in the early 1970s from Southern California to attend Humboldt State, where he studied biology and marine invertebrates as an undergraduate and then went on to obtain his master's with a particular interest in zooplankton ecology. He joined Humboldt's Department of Oceanography working in the Marine Lab, and he also taught at the College of Redwoods.

FUN FACT: It is always a pleasure to be on a bird walk with Hal, who knows his birds but might put in a plug for invertebrates, the most numerous life form by far. Having been required to learn Latin names for them, because very few have common names, he has automatic recall of the Latin for birds as well and is happy to school you in them.

Hal, thank you for your invaluable contributions to Redwood Region Audubon. We salute you!

Kid's Corner WOWZA WILDLIFE!

By Leslie Scopes Anderson

WHAT'S UP WITH YOU?



FUN FACTS

Hooded Merganser has a white 'hood' which it raises if alarmed. It is one of our smallest ducks.

Common Goldeneye does this head-back-kick as a courting move. Its wings make a whistling sound in flight.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Hooded Mergansers and Common Goldeneyes nest in tree cavities or in nest boxes. They may be found in winter in ponds around our area.

Your membership in Redwood Region Audubon supports our field trips, programs, education, and conservation efforts. You may also join us online at rras.org and click the JOIN US! button. We have two different types of memberships:

Local membership For just \$15 a year you will receive *EcoNews*, with the *Sandpiper* inserted. To join locally mail a check for \$15 made out to RRAS with your name, address, and email address to: Redwood Region Audubon Society
PO Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502

National membership Join National Audubon and receive *EcoNews* with the *Sandpiper* along with *Audubon* magazine. Please use our Chapter Code C24 so that we receive our share of your membership.

National Membership Application:

My check for \$20 is enclosed. (Introductory Offer)

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Email:.....

Local Chapter Code: C24

Mail form and check to: National Audubon Society

Attn: Donations

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New York, NY 10014

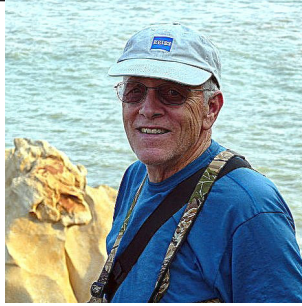
Free Bus Ride and Champagne Brunch

By Jim Clark, Co-Chair of RRAS Conservation Committee

Last month I talked about *wallhecken* (“growing walls”) as a living and beneficial artifact of agriculture and settlement patterns in northwestern Germany. There are many examples of such age-old practices throughout Europe. Similar practices existed throughout North America for millennia but were, with few exceptions, obliterated by European colonization.

Fast forward to the post-World War II boom in North America and we find cities are not healthy or desirable places to live. A combination of prosperity and enterprise created the suburbs just outside the city hubs. A second wave of real estate development in the 1960s and 1970s saw homes in the suburbs as “starter homes” on the way to getting a “home in the country” on a large lot with possible room for a pony. Rural living, once seen as a hardship, was being promoted as part of the American Dream. Clean air and exercise were promoted as benefits of the rural lifestyle even though recent peer-reviewed studies indicate higher levels of morbidity and mortality in rural developments than in urban areas. Free champagne bus rides were offered to pre-purchase lots in these rural developments. All of this was made possible by the automobile. People living there often spent over ten hours per week just driving to and from work. These subdivisions fragmented agricultural land and wildlife habitat, often had no water supply, and were unsuitable for residential development without significant expenditures. This was a contributing factor in passage of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1972.

Currently in Humboldt County about 75 percent of greenhouse gas is



generated by transportation, and most of that is from personal vehicles. It is more difficult to calculate the additional public expense and carbon footprint caused by sprawl compared to compact development. What we can say is that sprawl is a major factor in greenhouse gas emissions, environmental fragmentation, social isolation, and public expense. Reducing sprawl is also a socially difficult issue since many of us are still hobbled by the dream of the “rural lifestyle.”

If we really want to do something about climate change, let’s work collectively to achieve the following goals:

- Make urban areas a better place to live.
- Keep nature close.
- Encourage walkable and bikable compact development.
- Downsize.
- Move to town if you don’t make your living off the land.

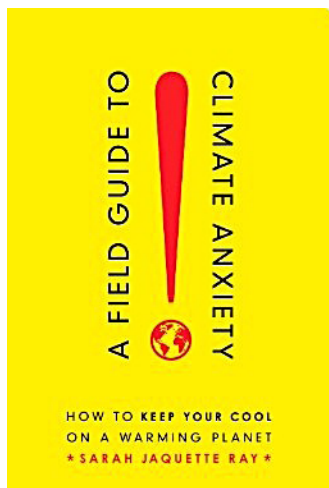
AUTHOR DISCLOSURE: I am a “boomer.” My parents grew up in the Los Angeles area, and our family moved to two-and-a-half acres outside a small town in central California in 1956. My parents moved to Ashland, Oregon in 1982, despite my advice to the contrary, to a rural area outside of Talent, Oregon. They experienced difficulties in property maintenance and social isolation. Their experience mirrored my research while I helped to write the peer-reviewed study “Humboldt County General Plan Update Health Impact Assessment,” March 2008. I also worked as an Environmental Health Specialist in Tulare, Calaveras, and Humboldt Counties dealing with the aftermath of pre-CEQA rural subdivisions.

Collective Action for the Environment, by Gail Kenny

A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety by Cal Poly Humboldt Professor of Environmental Science Sarah Jaquette Ray is a supportive resource in these difficult times. Published in 2020 with a tagline reading “How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet,” the book was motivated by the despair Professor Ray observed in her students who were feeling helpless in the wake of the constant barrage of negative news about climate change and the environment.

I too have had cycles of despair regarding the environment. I became interested in wildlife biology in the late 1970s and transferred to Humboldt State University where I earned my BS in wildlife management. Though I never worked in the field, I retained my love for the natural environment, became a birder, and did my best to be politically active in support of environmental protections. Since the 1980s I have been discouraged several times. For all our collective efforts, we are losing ground on preserving a healthy planet. I was burned out and became pessimistic about our future.

After Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, I got active again with the Redwood Region Audubon Society for the strong advocacy for protecting birds and the habitats they depend on. Participation in the Conservation Committee was key to making a difference. Eight years later, the Trump Administration is coming down even harder on environmental protections.



For those who are lying awake at night gripped with panic about the future, Professor Ray’s book provides key strategies. Recognizing the role of emotions in climate justice advocacy is an important first step; you cannot build resilience until you let go of the paralyzing impacts of eco-guilt, the feeling of guilt that arises when you think of all the ways you could have done more to help the environment. She also covers ways to promote effective communication, build coalitions with people who disagree on important things, and visualize a positive future. Collective action is one of Professor Ray’s primary tenets. She recommends people join groups to help stay in the fight and avoid burning out. In a group, you can share the work, which allows you to rest and recharge. A big challenge is more doable when the work is shared.

Instead of shutting down and tuning out, I invite you to join RRAS or other like-minded groups. We are stronger together. If you are interested in joining RRAS in our efforts to protect the natural environment, email me at gailgkenny@gmail.com.



Did You Know?

From the CatBird Committee

Free-roaming cats are dangerous to us as well as to birds. Public health scientists, agencies, and professional organizations, such as the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, recognize that cats roaming outdoors are harmful to human health. For everyone’s sake, please keep your cuddly pet inside, in a catio or carrier, or on a leash. Our birds thank you!