



The Sandpiper

July 2022



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

Tales from the Trails – 7th Annual Tim McKay Birdathon

Submitted by Gary Friedrichsen

The ten-day period, April 30th through May 7th, was chosen for this year's Birdathon that raises money for both Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS) and the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC). This year five teams took part in the event and, although dealing with some less than perfect weather, had astonishing results! The five teams, divided in two categories as "Bird Curious" and "Papi-Dori's Budget Birding," chose the 6-hour blitz format, and the "White-Crowned Spotters," "No (R)Egrets," and "Wandering Talliers" took the more traditional 24-hour period.

The "Bird Curious" team" consisted of Carlrey Arroyo, Caroline Griffith, Ivy Munnerlyn and Jasmin Segura. Made up primarily of NEC staff, they ventured fourth from their office on I St. and walked to the Arcata Marsh. Unfortunately, the rains came during count week and they had to seek shelter throughout their entire time at the marsh. They still enjoyed a massive swarm of swallows on Mount Trashmore, ducks, shorebirds, and LBJ's that call this amazing place home. A bit soggy but no worse for wear they returned to the office having ticked 41 species for their outing.

"Papi-Dori's Budget Birding" was helmed by Jose Luis Sandoval, a student in environmental studies at Cal Poly Humboldt. Jose hails from Panama and had to squeeze his Birdathon into a busy class schedule. He began at 4 a.m. to get a jump on the birds. He enjoyed the dawn calls of the Tree Swallows. In Eureka he had good looks at a Bald Eagle. Very tired after his early start he had to quit by 10am to get to class. But he knocked out 56 species for his efforts and is now contacting his donors for their pledged amounts.

Team "No (R)Egrets" consisted of Gary Falxa and his wife Gayle Garmen. This team had the good fortune to pick a day more amenable to this activity and they made hay while the sun was

shining. Their first bird was a singing White-crowned Sparrow in their yard. Their route took them to the Blue Lake Cottonwoods and the Mad River Fish Hatchery. By 9am they had logged 40 species. Then on to Elks Head near Trinidad and Trinidad Harbor for a few marine birds including Black Oystercatchers, Common Murres, and three species of Cormorants. Hiller Park, the must stop Arcata Marsh and the "V St. loop" were next. On around the bay looking for more gulls, terns and other water birds they encountered their only White-tailed Kite. Off to Freshwater Farms Reserve, then a quick stop at the Sequoia Park Pond for the nesting Wood Ducks. Success, with adults with six ducklings. Without venturing into higher habitats, the No(R)Egrets came in with 101 species.

The "Wandering Talliers" consisted of Laurie Lawrence, Greg Chapman, Bill Rodstrom, and myself. Much to our chagrin, the weather gods were against us and we had to persevere under marginal conditions throughout the day. We began in Willow Creek at the east side of Friday Ridge Road. The path would be as follows: Willow Creek area, Titlow Hill in the snow, Trinidad, King Salmon, Samoa peninsula, V Street, and ending at the Arcata Marsh. We felt fortunate for many sightings but also bemoaned the several misses along the way. Among the many highlights were a very distant Bald Eagle, a single Western Kingbird, and a pair of Peregrines swooping on a lone Willet. We were still pleased with the one 116 species.

(Continued on next page)

RRAS Field Trips in JULY!

- Sat. July 2nd** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Chet Ogan.
- Sat. July 9th** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Larry Karsteadt.
- Sun. July 10th** – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk at the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Fri. July 15th** – 5:30-8pm. Join trip leader Andrew Orahoske at the Mad River fish hatchery in Blue Lake for a weekday evening birding excursion. The hatchery area includes extensive riparian habitat with an abundant diversity of species that take advantage of this insect-rich environment. This trip will focus on searching for Willow Flycatchers and Purple Martins, both of which have been reliably found here in the past.
- Sat. July 16th** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Ken Burton.
- Sun. July 17th** – 9-11am. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk on the Eureka Waterfront. This trail is paved and is *wheelchair accessible*.
- Sat. July 23rd** – 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.
- Sat. July 23rd** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Kathryn Wendel.
- Sat. July 23rd** – 9-12 pm. Join Redwood Region Audubon Society 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 (Andrew.RRAS@gmail.com) to reserve your spot.
- Sat. July 30th** – 8:30-11:00am. The July Women and Girls' Birding Walk will take place in the forests of the College of the Redwoods campus and will be led by Forestry instructor Valerie Elder. This walk will focus on learning about the trees and forest ecosystems that support birds, including large native species like Sitka Spruce, redwoods, and Douglas Fir as well as willows, maples, and other species on campus. Email janelle.choj@gmail.com to reserve your spot!
- Sat. July 30th** – 8:30-11am. Birding tour of Arcata Marsh, led by Elizabeth Meisman.

*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.



Above top left: Lazuli Bunting, and top right; Hermit Warbler; both photos by Gary Bloomfield. Above: The Wandering Talliers persevere through the rain, (L-R) Bill Rodstrom, Greg Chapman, Laurie Lawrence and Gary Friedrichsen.

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President's Column

By Gail Kenny

It takes many hours of dedicated volunteers to run Redwood Region Audubon Society, so as a token of our appreciation, we have an annual tradition of selecting a Volunteer of the Year who is recognized at the annual banquet, usually in February. Since we didn't have a banquet this year due to COVID precautions, we presented the Volunteer of the Year Award at on May 13th at our first in-person general meeting since early 2020.

We have a core group of people who have been volunteering for RRAS since the 1990s or even longer. Jim Clark is one of those people. We realized Jim was long overdue for this recognition when we discovered he had never received The Volunteer of the Year Award.

Jim started birding in 1963 and first joined Audubon as a charter member of the Tulare County Audubon Society around 1975. He continued as a member through his short stay in Calaveras County. Jim became active in the Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS) in 1982 after his final return to Humboldt County. He also was active with the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary task force starting in 1983 until it became Friends of the Arcata Marsh (FOAM).

Jim quickly transitioned from the marsh project to serving on the RRAS board beginning as President-Elect in 1983. From 1986-1989, Jim served as the Conservation Committee Chair. During this time Jim was active in dealing with the proposed ORV park on BLM property on the north jetty while remaining as the Chair for the Arcata Marsh Task Force. Jim served as President of RRAS from 1997-2000 and again from 2004-2007. He resumed the Conservation Committee Chair in 1998 and has stayed active as Chair, Co-Chair or committee member most years since then. Jim is currently Co-Chair of the Conservation Committee along with Chet Ogan, who is also a longtime RRAS volunteer and the person who nominated Jim for this award.

One of the things we most appreciate about Jim is his steadfast attention to local projects that have an environmental impact. Jim worked for the Humboldt County Health Department for many years, and as a result,



he has a knack for reading through project proposals and picking out conservation issues that need addressing. Jim is our longtime representative on the Northcoast Environmental Center Conservation Committee. This helps him keep abreast of the current concerns in the local environmental community and helps focus us on where to put our efforts. Jim also volunteers on the Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Commission which was established to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors in all matters concerning fish and wildlife within the County of Humboldt. In addition, Jim has been active with the RRAS Bird Safety Around Cats Committee, especially helpful with writing letters to the editor, and commenting on changes to the City of Eureka animal ordinance. Thank you, Jim!

On another note, Ron LeValley, one of Humboldt's well-known birders, passed away on June 4, 2022, at age 75. We want Ron's family and friends to know we are grateful to Ron for being an active volunteer with Redwood Region Audubon Society for many years through his service on the board and various committees. We remember him as a cheerful and enthusiastic person and appreciate his contributions to RRAS as well as to ornithology on both the local and regional levels.

Above: Self-portrait of RRAS's 2022 Volunteer of the Year, Jim Clark.

(Tim McKay Birdathon: Continued from previous page)

The "White-Crowned Spotters" consisted of Gary Bloomfield, Ken Burton, Tom Allen, Eric Olson, and C. J. Ralph. Quite wisely, they did not attempt the normal assault of the higher elevations and instead kept to the coast and interior valleys working more hospitable habitats. As the rain came down, they began the day in the Arcata bottoms. A stop at the V St. loop was a good one to see breeding plumage Red-necked Phalaropes and, like the rest of the teams that stopped here, good numbers of ducks and the few remaining shorebirds. Their route was as follows: Arcata bottoms. Marsh Project, Kneeland, Maple Creek, Butler Valley, and around to Mad River Fish Hatchery, Blue Lake Cottonwoods, Trinidad, mouth of Mad

River and back to C.J. and Carol's residence. C.J. was not allowed to count the Peafowl seen on the road but they managed some great finds despite time and weather constraints. A great highlight was an American Dipper, encountered under a bridge in Maple Creek, and the Lazuli Bunting in the cottonwoods. They were extremely proud of their 128 species count, and for good reason.

As the checks and RallyUp donations flow in, I believe we will crest the \$10,000 mark and surpass our last Birdathon by a fair margin. Thanks to all the participants, their donors and special thanks to prize donations from: Out of This World Optics, Tomo Japanese Restaurant, Mazzotti's on the Plaza, Panache Hair Salon, Brio Bread Inc., Redwood Curtain Brewery, Liz Finger CMP, Kayak Trinidad, and Gary Friedrichsen for Pelagic Trips.

Left top: A soggy Wild Turkey found by the White-crowned Spotters, perseveres through the rain.
Left: The White-Crowned Spotters (L-R); Gary Bloomfield, Tom Allen, Ken Burton, Eric Olson, CJ Ralph.
Photos by Gary Bloomfield.



Spring Renewal

By Jessie Bunkley

Spring bursts slowly at first, then suddenly and all at once. All winter, the days were filled with near constant visits of Anna's hummingbirds to the bright red feeder hanging outside the kitchen window. Leaning against the cold, stone countertop, face hovering a few inches from the glass, I would watch the brilliant birds glisten in the morning light, as they drank their fill of artificial, sugary nectar. In so many ways, these tiny members of class aves are superlatives, extreme examples of physiology, with hearts beating 20 times per second and wings beating three times that! My heart quickens whenever I see them.



Not only do I appreciate them for their physical abilities, which are so different from my own, and their essential role as pollinators in the ecosystem we share, their quick buzzing and dazzling plumage always brings my grandmother close in memory. She was also amazed and enthralled by hummingbirds, her house peppered with keepsakes in their likeness, many of which were gifts from loved ones. It is a gift to be reminded of her by the sight or sound of a hummingbird, to be connected with a deeper sense of who I am in relation to the world around me.

Spring is the time of annual renewal and with it the hummingbirds leave my feeder behind, finding nourishment in the blooms and blossoms that erupt across the landscape. Cream-colored elderberry and

Take Flight

A flight of geese calls brightly, their rowing wings beating steadily northward. The sight and sound tears at the roots of my feet, calling me to the wilderness, calling all who can hear to wander. The full-throated bugling elicits a deep and particular sense of freedom, a feeling that home is ever-changing, defined by presence, not place.

The calling of geese is a harbinger of winter and a breaking of spring - a marker of season and time. In a Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold contends, "One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring. . . His arrival carries the conviction of a prophet who has burned his bridges." Such a powerful and distinct sound punctuates time, marking a moment, if you listen. The annual repetition of this punctuation connects us to the cycling of the world and roots us in the movement of life.

In Mary Oliver's poem, *Wild Geese* ("Dream Work," Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), these "harsh and exciting" calls provide context to time and space, and entwine our experiences to the wild, world, and family. Her words draw us over the landscape - a goose's eye view of forests, prairies, rivers, and mountains. Our lungs pump the clean blue air in a one-way circuit. Our throats reverberate with the echoing sound. The cry of a goose is powerful.

When it touches my ears, my face lifts, breath quickens, and eyes search sky and cloud for a familiar vee. When I see those long necks striking out firmly and strongly, I break into a smile and wave without abandon, sending my spirit up with them, to the wild.

This window to the world is open to all of us; this string to the web of life is buried deep within. It resonates with the call of a goose. Without this connection and context, a sense of family can be lost, a sense of oneness never experienced. As I think of my own place among the family of wild things, my own moment in the cycle of life, I feel the wild call to throw open windows and tug the twine that binds.

~ Jessie Bunkley

Watermark photograph: Cackling Geese by Jeff Todoroff.

Top: Ella Swanson, Grade 7, of Zane Middle School, won a Best Habitats Award for her painting of an Anna's Hummingbird in the 2022 RRAS- and FOAM sponsored Student Bird Art Contest.

brilliant pink red-flowering currant. Salmonberry, salal, lupin, a sweet buffet rolls out across the land and ancient ecological interactions revive as pollen and nectar are exchanged and birds and flowers perpetuate one another.

Ecosystems are complex wholes comprised of every living species, geological formation, drop of water, and nutrient that cycles through life and land. Since European colonization, the ecosystem we reside in has been out of balance. An extractive culture concerned solely with the accumulation of personal wealth has led to the extreme exploitation of the natural world, decimating the forests, rivers, and all their inhabitants. Prey-go-neesh fell victim to this wave of destruction and for the last 130 years these magnificent birds have not cast their fleeting shadows from high above. Their strong, sharp beaks have not torn open the carcasses of sea lions or elk, so others may also eat. The thread that ties them to all other members of this ecosystem was severed, weakening the entire complex web of life.

This spring though, with the guidance of the Yurok council to restore Prey-go-neesh to this land, the diligent and persistent work of the Yurok Wildlife Department and Redwood National and State Parks, support from numerous partners, and the cumulative knowledge from decades of condor restoration in southern California and throughout the southwest, a deeper renewal is unfolding. On May 3, Poy'-we-son (one who leads) and Nes-kwe-chokw' (one who has arrived) took flight over the redwood coast. As they flew from captivity into the wild, they carried more than bone, muscle, and feather. On wings spanning nine feet, they carried the hopes of a people, tied together the fraying strands of an ecosystem, and demonstrated resiliency of a species and the possibility for renewal.

Condors are the other extreme of superlatives - enormous wings that rarely flap, allowing birds to travel hundreds of miles a day while expending very little energy. While hummingbirds help usher in new life, condors send off the dead. Both are necessary. This spring, as the hummingbirds return to the flowering land and prey-go-neesh returns to Yurok ancestral territory, we are reminded of who we are and where we came from, and hope is renewed for balance.



Do you love spending time on the beach?

From the National Audubon Society

Birds like Snowy Plovers and Least Terns can be found on our coast this summer, nesting and resting on our beaches. The Western Snowy Plover is still listed as *Threatened* under the Endangered Species Act because of the many challenges to its small population. Plovers and terns are beach breeders and often nest in a scrape of sand, pebbles or clamshells to hide their chicks - too easy to step on if not careful!

Whether you love the beach for sunbathing, walking your dog, fishing, kayaking or boating, here are some ways to be a bird-friendly beachgoer:

1. Give shorebirds and seabirds at least 100 feet of space - that's the equivalent of 16 beach towels.
2. Respect any fences and signs, and stay outside of areas roped off for breeding birds.
3. Keep dogs on a leash, away from the beach, or visit a dog-friendly beach.
4. If you see small eggs on the beach *outside* a fence, back away to let parent birds return, and call Fish and Wildlife to let them know. Be aware that parent birds are easily scared and may never return to a nest once disturbed.
5. Avoid use of loud or large flying things which birds perceive as predators: drones, fire-works, kites, balloons, etc.
6. Enjoy watching Snowy Plovers scurrying along the beach searching for insects or tending their young. On warm days, you may see tern moms standing over eggs and hatchlings to shade them from the sun. On hot days, they'll soak their belly feathers in the ocean and return to the beach to give their broods a cool sponge bath. Simply adorable! So grab your binoculars or scope, and watch from a safe distance!

KID'S CORNER
Wowza Wildlife!
By Leslie Scopes Anderson

WHERE IN THE WORLD?
Purple Martins live mainly in eastern US, where native tribes once put out gourds for them to nest in. If there are no birdhouses, martins may use old woodpecker holes.

FUN FACTS:
Purple Martins roost together in the thousands in late summer after the chicks learn to fly (fledge.) Some groups are so huge they show up on weather radar!

Aquatic Songster – The American Dipper

By Gary Bloomfield

A varied song full of whistles, repeated buzzes and trills, heard over the sound of rushing water, signals the presence of the rather plain yet charismatic American Dipper. This is one of five species of aquatic songbirds that comprise the family Cinclidae, and the only one found in North America, from Alaska south to Central America.

The moist coastal forests of northwestern California provide ample clean, fast-flowing streams that dippers require for their unusual method of feeding. They can be seen standing on midstream rocks, poking their heads under the water's surface, and constantly bobbing up and down ("dipping") or even diving underwater to swim or cling to submerged cobbles to search for and pursue their prey. This mainly consists of aquatic insects, such as caddisfly larvae, which they bash against rocks to remove their inedible cases which protect them from less persistent predators, supplementing with other invertebrates, small fish, and fish eggs. The presence of these prey items, and thus the dippers themselves, indicate a healthy stream environment, where these organisms thrive and the water is clear enough for the dippers to find them.

These unique birds have several adaptations to their aquatic lifestyle. The very shape of their eyes can be adjusted by muscles to enable them to see clearly both in air and underwater, and in addition to their nictitating membranes which serve as underwater goggles, their nostrils can be sealed by scaly covers while under water. They also have robust oil glands, used to waterproof their outer feathers, keeping their dense layer of down underneath dry to protect them from even the most frigid streams. Their short, pointed wings are more suited to swimming than flying, so most of their flight is done just over the water's surface, with wing-blurring dashes up or downstream along their territories.

Throughout most of their range they are primarily mountain birds, but along much of the Pacific Coast they also frequent cool forested streams in the lowlands, occasionally right to the coast. Year-round residents, American Dippers present different viewing opportunities throughout the year. Dippers nest along the streams that support them, building their domed, mossy nests on protected, often rocky sites, behind or near waterfalls, and frequently under bridges that cross their favored creeks. These bridge sites can offer especially enjoyable viewing opportunities, as the height above the stream can provide views of their underwater activity.

Springtime, especially after the young hatch, through early summer is when they are most active, as both parents work their territories, singing, bobbing, and flashing their white-feathered eyelids, and energetically foraging for their young as well as themselves. Late summer is when they molt, rendering them flightless for a period of time. Fall and winter is when both the young disperse and adults from higher country move downstream, even along the larger rivers that might not provide proper nesting sites but do offer productive foraging wherever the water is not too deep and there are sufficient rocky areas that suit their prey.



Above: American Dipper nest (with chick inside), East Fork, Willow Creek. Photo by Michael H. Morris.

Top left: American Dipper (AMD), closes white-feathered eyelids. Top right: Fledgling begging loudly upon seeing a parent approaching with food. Above: Adult dipper.

Photo and illustrations by Gary Bloomfield: bloomfieldstudio@me.com, "Portfauxlio" on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bloomfieldstudio/sets/72157642703538265/>.

U.S. House Passes Recovering America's Wildlife Act

From the National Audubon Society

The House just passed the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) in a bipartisan vote of 231-190 – a historic victory for wildlife. The legislation would dedicate desperately needed conservation funding annually directly to states and Tribal Nations for proactive, on-the-ground projects. Thank you for contacting your legislators to support this vital conservation bill. At a time when science tells us that we've lost 3 billion birds in less than a human lifetime and that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk of extinction due to climate change, RAWA will help conservation efforts for more than 800 species of birds, including the vulnerable Golden-winged Warbler and Black Tern. This bill will not only help wildlife, it will also create more than 30,000 jobs and generate \$93 billion in total economic activity in communities across the country. [It's now up to the Senate to pass this important legislation. You can take action by asking your Senators to support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act to help thousands of wildlife species.](#)



Peafowl, by Gary Bloomfield, seen during the 2022 Birdathon.

Peacock Feather

By Effie Lee Newsome

Heav'n's deepest blue,
Earth's richest green,
Minted dust of stars,
Molten sunset sheen,
Are blent together
On this lithe brown
feather,
In a disc of light—
Lithe, light!

Effie Lee Newsome (1885-1978), was born in Philadelphia.

One of the first African American poets who primarily published poems for children, she was the author of one volume of poetry, *Gladiola Garden* (The Associated Publishers, 1940).

Courtesy of Academy of American Poets.



DID YOU KNOW? Facts shared by the RRAS Cat & Bird Safety Committee

A 2017 study of data from wildlife rehabilitation centers throughout the US found that cats were responsible for 52% of bird intakes, and 78% of those cat-related admissions died. In California in 1999, 95% of birds brought home by cats were native species (i.e., not house sparrows, starlings, etc.), and native birds were twice as likely to be seen in areas without cats! If you enjoy seeing ground-dwelling California Quail or Spotted Towhee in your yard or nearby wild area, then you can protect them by keeping cats indoors, on a leash or in a cat carrier.

Source: US Dept. of Agriculture, Oct. 2021, *Wildlife Damage Mgmt. Tech. Series "Free-ranging and Feral Cats."*