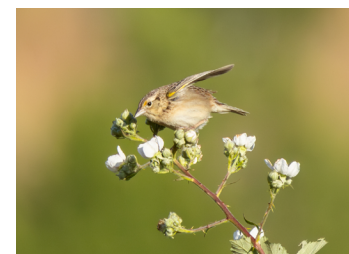




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President's Column

By Kathryn Wendel

Summertime and the breeding season is easily in full swing, with many baby birds fledging from the nest. All of our winter residents are long gone, and now is the height of the season for summer birds of the North Coast: Western Flycatchers, Bullock's Orioles, and Violet-green Swallows, to name a few favorites. But winter is just around the corner, and July is not too early to start thinking about the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), now just a few months away.

The CBC takes place mid-December through early January, and there are several Count Circles around the Redwood Region, including Willow Creek, Arcata, Loleta (Centerville), Orick (Big Trees), and Del Norte County. No matter where you live, there's a Circle near you. It is a major collaborative effort to cover all these areas, and the more people out there, the better! Any level of birder is welcome to participate, for any amount of time. And this year, RRAS hopes to



again be hosting a CBC compilation gathering after the Arcata count, so consider joining us. It is a lot of fun and contributes to one of the longest running community bird science projects in the nation. There are plenty of ways to participate, whether you are out counting birds or volunteering with the compilation gathering.

A warm welcome to two new board members, Jolian Kangas, Secretary, and Sean McAllister, Field Trip Committee Chair! Are you all about birds? Do you have some free time and want to get involved with your local birding community even more? RRAS currently has an open Director-at-Large position on the board. Please check our website rras.org or email president@rras.org for more information on how you can get involved.

BIRD ALERT: In June, Humboldt County added the Eastern Wood Pewee to its county list, and as of press time, it was one of six found in California within a week of each other.

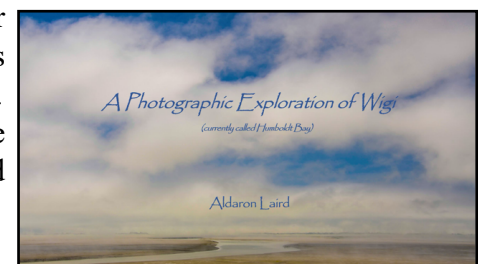
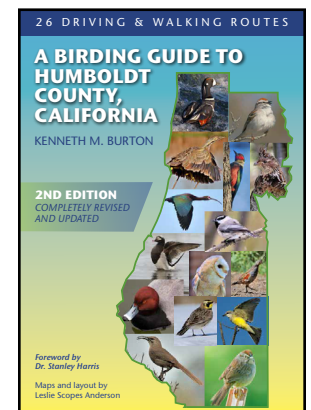
Bird News Round-Up

Compiled by Gina Rogers



Kudos to our Local Authors! Two wonderful books focusing on our region were published this spring. A completely revised and updated edition of Ken Burton's *A Birding Guide to Humboldt County, California* has been released. This comprehensive source for discovering the best birding areas in the county is published by us (the Redwood Region Audubon Society). Copies are available at many local locations, or you can have a copy mailed to you by going to the rras.org website.

In addition, local sea level rise expert and photographer extraordinaire Aldaron Laird's new book *A Photographic Exploration of Wigi* also became available. It includes 119 stunning images from around Humboldt Bay, with Wiyot place names and brief commentary. A dramatic two-page spread near the beginning features a murmuration of shorebirds in flight, and herons, egrets, and a scolding marsh wren are among the other photos of birds. With tag lines like "*Enjoying the magic... Experiencing the surreal...*", the book captures the beauty and spirit of our region.



KID'S CORNER
Wowza Wildlife!
 By Leslie Scopes Anderson



PICK ON SOMEONE
YOUR OWN SIZE!

FUN FACTS:

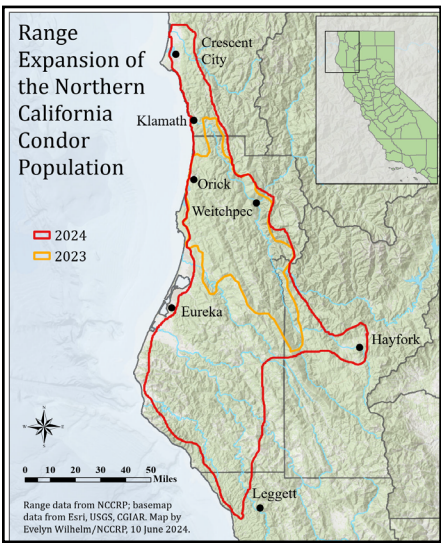
Red-winged Blackbirds aggressively defend their nest sites, even from large birds like this Great Egret! They have been known to attack horses and people! In winter blackbirds gather in flocks of a million or more.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Red-winged Blackbirds and Great Egrets are common in our area and can be seen at the Arcata Marsh and other wetlands especially in spring and summer. They both nest in the reeds.

Continued on next page

Condor Range Update: The range of the eleven California Condors (Prey-go-neesh) released in Humboldt County has been expanding dramatically. Birders have been sharing reports of condors east to Hayfork and west to Petrolia. He-we-chek’ (A7) flew 95 miles south to the Leggett area, and



there’s been great excitement from sightings over tribal ancestral lands in many locations, at the Sequoia Park Zoo and Greenwood Heights (Eureka), and over the Potawat Health Village and the Cal Poly Humboldt campus (Arcata). The new range map from the Northern California Condor Restoration Program confirms just how extensive their travels have become. The eleven condors did have to be contained for most of May and into June, as they received their annual health checks and a two-shot Avian flu vaccine series, but now

the chances of seeing condors is back, so keep your eyes open and look closely at those vultures! If anyone submits an eBird report with a photo that includes identifiable tags, it will be added to the database. Note that there is more good news on the horizon. Recent reports indicate that as many as seven more birds may arrive in Humboldt from the Oregon and Los Angeles Zoos. (Map courtesy of the Yurok Tribe/NCCRP)

Renaming Birds—New Focus on Just Six: There has been an update to the American Ornithological Society (AOS) strategy for renaming birds

with eponymous names and those deemed offensive and exclusionary. They now intend to begin with a pilot project focusing on an initial set of six species. The list includes four with particularly objectionable eponymous connections (Bachman’s Sparrow, Townsend’s Solitaire, Townsend’s Warbler, and Scott’s Oriole), along with Inca Dove for its link to derogatory/culturally unsuitable references, and Maui Parrotbill with a local Hawaiian name (Kiwikiu) that can acknowledge the importance of considering Indigenous names.



The AOS will create an ad hoc committee to further develop and test a new process for determining the replacement names for these six species and plans a public forum at the October AOS 2024 annual meeting.

Support Continued Seabird Research on the Farallon Islands: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently announced that, due to budget cuts starting in 2025, it will cease funding critical research at the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. The cuts threaten the continuity of vital ecological data collected in partnership with Point Blue Conservation Science, hindering sustainable management of the refuge and potentially impacting wider marine ecosystem management. The islands, located 27 miles off San Francisco, are home to the largest seabird colony in the contiguous US and a significant pinniped population. Twelve species of sea- and shorebirds nest on the island, including Tufted Puffin, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Black Oystercatcher. Point Blue has sent out an urgent request for help preventing these cuts. To sign on to a group support letter or see alternative options, go to PointBlue.org/FarallonEmergency.

Are Birds *Real*? by Jolian Kangas

“Birds aren’t real!” the poster exclaimed. *Did I read that statement correctly?* Upon second glance, the phrase was still there, clear as day: “Birds aren’t real!” A website of the same name was referenced beneath the perplexing postulate. My curiosity was piqued. Was there some new breakthrough in the field of ornithology of which I was unaware? Did a recent development in quantum physics negate the existence of all avians? Or was this just another iteration of pop psychology?

What I found on opening the website was more perplexing than any of my preconceptions. According to its creator, all birds were eradicated at the onset of the Cold War by a consortium of intelligence agencies. The goal was to roll out a lineup of feathered mechanical drones that would be deployed as part of a massive surveillance operation. The fake-bird robots would assume the niche of actual birds, blending more seamlessly into the natural world as the technology advanced. The public would remain

in the dark as this devious plot played out over the ensuing decades.

At a time awash in conspiracy theories, this one struck me as particularly outlandish. Yet the organization behind the website has a robust following. Hats and T-shirts sold by the group emblazoned with the phrase “Bird Watching Goes Both Ways!” have become fixtures on many college campuses.

To the great relief of Audubon members everywhere, this has been revealed as a work of satire, created in 2017 by one man, Peter McIndoe, as a commentary on social protest and conspiracy-mongering. After years of presenting his arguments at face value, he admitted on *60 Minutes* that his “movement” is a ruse.

So if you encounter any slogans affiliated with this parody, don’t fear the worst. It may present an opportunity for those of us who are passionate about conservation to have a meaningful dialogue about protecting and enjoying the presence of our REAL feathered friends. Rest assured, those birds on the power lines are only recharging their batteries metaphorically.

Recent Sightings

Word quickly spread that a Great-tailed Grackle was spotted at the marsh in early June, and within a couple weeks there were reports (rumors?) of four!



Photo by Jeff Todoroff

In case you missed it, the *Birds Aren’t Real* campaign began as a joke. Its creator Peter McIndoe called it an “experiment in misinformation,” initiated after Trump’s election to highlight just how easy it is to spread false news. The slogan appeared on billboards, bumper stickers, drone field guides, and even a halftime ad during the NCAA men’s basketball national championships. More than a million people became followers. Official word that it was satire came on a *60 Minutes* broadcast in May 2022, but it has been in the news recently with the June 4 publication of a book detailing the conspiracy.

Birding Horse Mountain with Wildflowers on the Side, *by Gail Kenny*

Ken Burton has been leading unique field trips for RRAS about once a month, and sixteen of us joined him for an all-day trip to Horse/Grouse Mountain on Memorial Day in May. We carpoled to the parking area at the intersection of Titlow Hill Road and the road that goes to the top of Horse Mountain.

When we arrived on the cool sunny morning we heard birds singing, including Dusky Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Mountain Quail. We soon heard the song of the first of many Nashville Warblers. Throughout the day, ear-birding



turned up more species, including Lazuli Buntings and Sooty Grouse.

To the delight of the flower lovers in the group we found a large patch of California Fawn Lilies with good numbers of Western Fairy-slipper Orchids (also called Calypso Orchids). There were still some little drifts of snow in shadier places, and



another fun flower we saw was Glacier Lilies (pictured here), which emerge just after snowmelt.

As we continued south on Titlow Hill Road, we stopped to bird the roadside, sometimes walking down a dirt road or into a meadow. Ken's challenge for the day was to find a Cassin's Finch, rare in this location. We reviewed the similar sounding Purple and House Finch songs as well

as the Cassin's Finch. But to our disappointment we did not see or hear a Cassin's on the trip.

I soon learned to keep an eye on Daniil Suchkov, the guy with the big camera lens. If he was clicking away, I would scurry over and look for what he was seeing. He contributed some of his photos, including the MacGillivray's Warbler pictured here, to the group eBird checklist you can see here: ebird.org/checklist/S177710152.

The weather warmed up to a comfortable 65 degrees after midday, and there were good looks at Nashville, Hermit, and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Fox Sparrow.

We had a fleeting glimpse of a White-headed Woodpecker—a target bird—and saw Mountain Quail, Sooty Grouse, Olive-sided and Dusky Flycatcher, Mountain Chickadee, and Chipping Sparrow. Our species



count after six and a half hours of active birding was 41. The most numerous species was Hermit Warbler, with a total of 27 recorded.

Ken will be leading more field trips in the next few months. He is a very knowledgeable leader, and I am sure you will learn something from him on his trips. If you join an all-day

field trip with Ken, he probably won't stop for lunch, so be ready to eat as you bird!

Photos: (top) Glacier Lilies, and (left) enjoying wildflowers and birds, by Gail Kenny; (above) McGillivray's Warbler, by Daniil Suchkov



DID YOU KNOW?

From the CatBird Committee

A worldwide scientific review found that free-ranging cats (both domestic and feral) will eat 2,084 different species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Even cows are on the food list, though they were probably scavenged rather than hunted.

From Nature Communications (2023)14:7809

Eastern Wood Peewee, found by Frank Fogerty in June, for the first Humboldt County Record.

Photo by Greg Gray



Your membership in Redwood Region Audubon supports our field trips, programs, education, and conservation efforts. You may also join us online at www.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

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