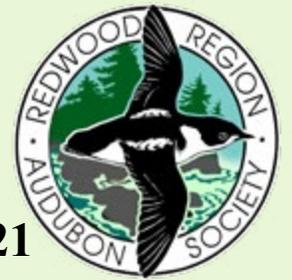


The Sandpiper

September 2021



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

In This Issue: • Offshore Wind Energy Public Comment Deadline • Arcata Catio Tour • Kid's Corner

RRAS Virtual Program

Please join us on Friday, August 13th, at 7 pm, for a presentation on:

Traditional Fire Practices in a Contemporary Context, by Margo Robbins, and Bringing Prescribed Fire Back to the People by Lenya Quinn-Davidson

In this presentation, Margo Robbins, the Executive Director of the Cultural Fire Management Council (CFMC), a 501(c)(3) organization located on the upper Yurok Reservation in far Northern California, and co-founder and co-lead of the Indigenous People's Burn Network (IPBN), will discuss how these two entities are helping tribes revive their traditional burn practices.



Above: Margo Robbins at a burn on the upper Yurok Reservation. Photo by Matt Mais.

The IPBN is a support network led by Native American people who are revitalizing their traditional fire cultures in a contemporary context. The long-term goal of the IPBN is to assist indigenous nations across the U.S. and abroad to reclaim their traditional fire regimes. Cultural practitioners of the Yurok, Hoopa, and Karuk tribes, in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy piloted this project which culminated in the creation of the Yurok, Hoopa, Karuk Healthy Country Plan which outlines a pathway for the three tribes to reclaim their traditional burn practices. The CFMC is in the process of implementing the strategies outlined in the Yurok, Hoopa, Karuk Healthy Country Plan which include: 1) Establish a family-led burn program, 2) Build local capacity, 3) Initiate Collaborative burning and learning opportunities, and 4) Strengthen state and federal support of cultural burning.

The mission of the Cultural Fire Management Council is "to facilitate the practice of cultural burning on the Yurok Reservation and Ancestral lands, which will lead to a healthier ecosystem for all plants and animals, long term fire protection for residents, and provide a platform that will in turn support the traditional hunting and gathering activities of Yurok." Their long-term goal is to fully reclaim sovereign rights to use fire as a tool to restore Yurok ancestral territory to a healthy, viable ecosystem that supports the cultural lifeways of Yurok people.

The CFMC has several strategies for achieving these goals. These include ongoing implementation of a cultural burn fire program, strengthening state and federal support of cultural burning, building local capacity, public outreach about good fire, and intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

Co-founder of the Cultural Fire Management Council, Margo Robbins is also a co-lead and advisor for the Indigenous People's Burn Network. She graduated from Humboldt State University in 1987. Margo comes from the traditional Yurok village of Morek and is an enrolled member of the Yurok Tribe. She gathers and prepares traditional food and medicine and is a basket weaver and regalia maker. She is also the Indian Education Director for the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School district, a mom, and a grandma.

Continued on p. 2 – including Lenya Quinn-Davidson's presentation details.

RRAS Field Trips in September!

Sat. Sept. 4th – 8:30-11am. We are excited to be providing *four Saturday bird walks at the Arcata marsh this month*, all meeting at the I Street parking lot. The first walk will be led by Cindy Moyer. With fall migration kicking in, these walks may offer a chance to say farewell for the year to some migratory species that breed here, such as swallows and swifts, and a chance to greet other species that spend their winters in Humboldt, including many sparrows and songbirds.

Contact Ralph at thebook@reninet.com for information on walks he leads, and all Arcata Marsh walks.

Sun. Sept. 5th – 7:30am. This is the fourth of our monthly **Women & Girls' Birding Walks** series. September is here and the birding action is picking up! This walk at Hiller Park is likely to provide great viewing opportunities of both resident and migratory songbirds and hopefully some of the raptors, shorebirds, and water birds that use this park and the surrounding areas. Led by Samantha Chavez, a Wildlife graduate student at HSU studying barn owls, it will be **wheelchair accessible**. For reservations and meeting location contact out Field Trip Chair, Janelle, at janelle.choj@gmail.com.

Sat. Sept. 11th – 8:30-11a.m. Arcata Marsh with Carol Wilson.

Sun. Sept. 12th – 9-11a.m. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk at the **Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge**, a beautiful and natural setting with a diverse array of habitats that support waterbirds, shorebirds, raptors, and songbirds.

Sat. Sept. 18th – 8:30-11a.m. Arcata Marsh with Elizabeth Meisman.

Sun. Sept. 19th – 9-11a.m. Ralph Bucher will lead a walk at the **Eureka Waterfront**, which is located in the urban center of Humboldt County, and offers an incredible diversity of waterbirds and shorebirds, including loons, grebes, pelicans, terns, gulls, and many species of sandpipers. It's always a good time to perfect your gull ID and the Eureka waterfront can be a great place to do so!

Sat. Sept. 25th – 8:30-11a.m. Arcata Marsh with Michael Morris.

Sat. Sept. 25th – 9 a.m. to noon. Join RRAS and **Kayak Trinidad** (kayaktrinidad.com) to view local seabirds from a kayak. We will ply the waters of Trinidad Bay with professional guides seeking out Marbled Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, Common Murres, Black Oystercatchers and more. All kayaks and gear are provided. Reservations are required. Cost for this trip is \$99/person to cover equipment and professional kayak guides. Contact Andrew Orahoske at andrew.rras@gmail.com to reserve a spot on this sea birding adventure.

Sat. Sept. 25th – 9-11a.m. Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Help create bird-friendly habitat. Contact Jeremy Cashen at (214) 605-7368 for details. View rras.org for more details. Local, state, and federal COVID protocols will be followed on all trips.

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P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502.**

Thinking of Joining the Audubon Society?

By sending in your membership, either directly or on the form below, to National Audubon, (rather than replying to solicitations from National Audubon), **the fee is sent directly to our chapter – if you use the Code RRAS C24.** However, when you renew with National, the share of membership dues that RRAS receives is only a couple of dollars.

If you join the local Chapter, RRAS, directly, we receive the total dues both initially and on renewal.

To do so, write a check out to RRAS for \$15 and be sure to include “local membership” on your check, then mail to:

**Redwood Region Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502.**

You are welcome to join both nationally and locally.

To join National Audubon:

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter (**RRAS C24**), and send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below. My check for \$25 is enclosed.

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President's Column

By Gail Kenny

“Always be birding” is a term that accurately describes what it’s like to be a birder. I found that once I became bird aware, it is hard to turn that off. “Always be birding” even applies when watching TV and movies where there are birds on the soundtrack or video. With video, they often get it wrong. Unintentional critic, I can’t help but note that it makes no sense to hear summer birds singing in winter in Canada with snow on the ground. I’m even guilty of birding while attending weddings, or at least the receptions. Several years ago, we attended a beach wedding on the Texas Gulf where I enjoyed watching frigate birds fly by while my husband requested that I refrain from using my binoculars during the ceremony.

In downtown Trinidad where I live, the birds have turned the seasonal corner in early August where they have gone quiet. Although I’m still hearing Collared Doves cooing, and House Sparrows chirping with the occasional, White-crowned Sparrow’s, “pink” call, the birds are mostly quiet now. The Brewer’s Blackbirds that arrived early in spring to nest are long gone. The recently fledged Barn Swallows are no longer chattering on the wire in the backyard. Fortunately, the female Anna’s Hummingbird is still visiting my garden flowers. In the nearby woods, Swainson’s Thrushes have gone silent. I’m also missing the Wilson’s Warblers that were thick in numbers and singing vigorously just weeks ago. At the beach a few migrating shorebirds have begun

showing up, and I look forward to the fall surge of neotropical migrants and shorebirds.

To help you to “always be birding,” RRAS continues to offer weekly birding field trips. Check our scheduled field trips in *The Sandpiper* and on our website, rras.org. Another way to always be birding is to attend our second-Friday-of-the-month, Program Presentations, still on Zoom for the next few months at least, to learn more about birds and nature from a variety of knowledgeable speakers.



Above: Cartoon by Gary Bloomfield. Contact Gary for more artwork at bloomfieldstudio@me.com.

(Continued from p. 1)

Bringing Prescribed Fire Back to the People

By Lenya Quinn-Davidson

During her presentation, Lenya Quinn-Davidson, Area Fire Advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension, will discuss recent efforts to bring prescribed fire back into the hands of landowners, community members, and cultural practitioners throughout California. Prescribed fire is used to increase biodiversity, reduce fire risk, and increase landscape and community resiliency. Recent catastrophic wildfire seasons have piqued national interest in increasing its use. Lenya will share her community-based work in Humboldt County, as well as statewide policy and community organizing that are changing the face of prescribed fire throughout the West.

Lenya Quinn-Davidson is a Fire Advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension on the North Coast of California. Lenya’s primary focus is on the human connection with fire, and increasing the use of prescribed fire for habitat restoration, invasive species control, and ecosystem and community resiliency. Lenya works on prescribed fire issues at various scales, including locally in Humboldt County, where she works with private landowners to bring fire back as a land management tool; at the state level, where she collaborates on policy and research related to prescribed fire; and nationally, through her work and leadership on prescribed fire training exchanges (TRES). Lenya received a Bachelor of Science from UC Berkeley and a Master of Arts in Social Science from Humboldt State University. She is passionate about using prescribed fire to inspire and empower people, from rural ranchers to agency leaders to young women pursuing careers in fire management, and everyone in between.



Above: Lenya Quinn-Davidson at September burn in Bear River. Photo by Thomas Stratton.

King of the Night

By Susan Penn

Scientists have named the Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*. This translates roughly as ‘night raven night raven.’ But while the strident call of this bird at night might remind you of a raven, this debonair bird is not even closely related to ravens. In the Humboldt Bay area, their relatives include the Great Blue Heron, all our egrets, and also the reclusive bittern. They share the fact that the night-heron never learned to sing, and the love of fresh fish and frogs. They also share a coiled neck which is kept discreetly hidden.

A fine artist crafted these creatures. The top of the adult’s head and back are a glossy black, while the neck and forehead are a brilliant white, setting off a long, heavy black bill, and deep scarlet eyes. At the nape of the neck are two or three long, thin white plumes. On a breezy day, these plumes float up over a black back, then settle back down in a graceful arc. The wings are medium blue-gray, with a lighter gray belly like the color of fog seen through branches.

Night-herons roost in trees near the water during the day. Walking by, you will often hear an off-key, hollow clucking, which aids in locating them. It seems odd that a two-foot-tall bird would be hard to discern, but their coloring mimics the dark and light of tree and sky, and looking up into a tree, part of the bird is usually obscured. Peer up through cypress branches to find a night-heron, and you may spy just toes and part of a belly, maybe a gray shoulder topped with a black and white cap, or a sharp red eye gazing down at you.

I find myself referring to individual night-herons as “he.” I mean no slight to females of the species, but the male and female of this species look alike (I am told that the female is slightly smaller, but I have never seen two of them close enough together to make that distinction). More significantly, their markings make me think of tuxedos, and their carriage has some of the propriety that I associate with a man wearing a tux.

Night-herons walk rapidly along on short yellow legs with long, serious-looking unwebbed toes. Unlike their cousins, they disdain muddy feet. The herons are all considered “wading birds,” and everybody else wades through marshes, tidal sloughs, and cow pastures. The night-heron however, prefers to balance on rocks, perch on docks, or swing on dock lines – anything that gets them within stabbing distance of the water without sullyng their yellow legs!

They spare themselves a lot of grief by feeding at night while their larger cousins are sleeping, as competition for food can be intense. I have seen them get pushed aside by Great Egrets before sunset, but once darkness falls, the Black-Crowned Night-Herons reign.



Above: Black-crowned Night-Heron on a snag in the Mad River, by Nancy Spruance.



Birding with Women

By Sue Hilton

For the third in the Redwood Region Audubon Society’s (RRAS) series of Women and Girls’ Birding Walks, folks gathered on the first Sunday in August at the Arcata Marsh by the bay. Under clouds of primitive-looking Brown Pelicans, we introduced ourselves and our well-informed leader, Jude Power, told us the shorebirds we’d be seeing were early southerly migrants. Later birds, she explained, will stay on, but these are just traveling through. We met at 3:30 in the afternoon because the tide was coming in which would encourage the birds to come close to the shore and be easier to observe.

We immediately started seeing tiny Least Sandpipers with their soft brown bibs along the edge of the rocks, close to where we stood by the picnic tables. Further out in the bay, we watched a flock of Marbled Godwits, with smaller Short-billed Dowitchers mixed in. We also saw hard-to-spot (until they fly and show off their dramatic black-and-white wing patterns), grayish-colored Willets among the crowd.

Much further out, we could see packs of gulls and thousands of (to me at least) unidentified shorebirds poking in the still-exposed mud and swooping back and forth in huge flocks over the water. When the godwit flock moved north, we moved with them, but instead of settling conveniently near the shore they all gathered on a low-tide bar further out. Still, it was easy to spot the dowitchers because they were the ones almost disappearing underwater as they probed for invertebrates in the mud, but not so easy to see any other details. Great Egrets waded in deeper water, and mid-sized shorebirds against the far bank were identified as curlews. When we headed back south again and around the corner, we were able to get a much closer look at a mixed godwit/willet/dowitcher flock at the edge of the rocks, and were able to better see pink and black, godwit bill colors, the rusty undersides (remnants of mating colors) on some of the dowitchers, and the clean, white belly and throat (no brown bib) of a Western Sandpiper.

We talked about Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers - not easy to separate visually, but they’re here at different times of the year, and their calls are very different. Jude informed us that the Long-billed are quite noisy when they feed but the Short-billed are silent. Heading back towards the parking lot, a line of seaweed-covered pilings provided perches for one or two birds each, giving us a great opportunity to see the differences in shape and size between a round, stubby-beaked Black-bellied Plover and the by-now-familiar godwits, Willets, and dowitchers. Besides the many, many, Brown Pelicans in various plumages, there were also Double-crested Cormorants and a Mallard on the Marsh islands, a Pied-billed Grebe in the lake, and several swallows swooping overhead. It was a fun, relaxed, and educational trip.

Thanks, Jude, for leading it, and RRAS for organizing these birding walks for women!

Photos: *Top left:* Diving Brown Pelican, by Sue Hilton. *Top right:* Western Sandpiper; *middle:* walk participants; *bottom:* Marbled Godwit (R), and Short-Billed Dowitchers, by G. Albertine.





REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY CAT PATIO (CATIO) TOUR



SEPTEMBER 18, 12-4 PM
The in-person self-guided tour showcases 7 catios in Arcata and McKinleyville. Get inspired to provide an outdoor playhouse for your kitties to keep both them and our native wildlife safe!

-  Check out various designs and materials folks have used to create their catios
-  See enclosures that range from frugal to fabulous to get ideas for one that fits your yard and budget
-  Learn how to create a pleasant outdoor space for both you and your pets
-  Speak with owners about why they built their catio, what worked and what didn't, and how their cats like to use it




Funds raised will support ongoing education and habitat conservation efforts of Redwood Region Audubon Society.

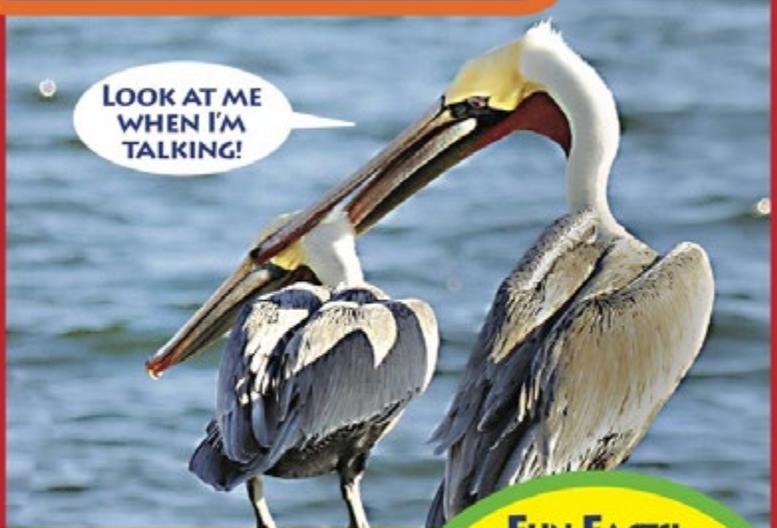
Tickets are \$10.00 – Buy an advance ticket to start your self-guided tour anywhere:

- Go to www.rras.org to buy in advance by 9/13/21
- Mail checks by 9/13/21 to RRAS P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502 (include your mailing address so we can mail your tickets)
- Or buy them (cash / check only) on the day of the tour, September 18, from noon - 2pm at the Bella Vista Plaza parking lot, 1225 Central Ave. McKinleyville

Contact Harriet Hill at harrieth6@gmail.com for any questions or to volunteer for the event (and get a free ticket!)

KID'S CORNER Wowza Wildlife!

By Leslie Scopes Anderson



WHERE IN THE WORLD?
Brown Pelicans live mainly near salt water and can be found along our coasts and sometimes in Klopp Lake at the Arcata Marsh. They spend summer & fall in No. California.

FUN FACTS:
Brown Pelicans are water birds that are brown only as juveniles. They feed in deep water by plunge-diving, which stuns small fish that they quickly scoop up – before a marauding gull steals them!

Update on a Downy Woodpecker Nest

from *The Sandpiper*, April 2021 issue
By Pete and Judy Haggard

We first noticed a pair of Downy Woodpeckers (*Dryobates pubescens*) examining the dead, Red Alder tree in our front yard, on March 30, 2021. By May 5, when we think they established a nest, they had pecked three perfectly round holes, near each other, before choosing one of the holes for the nest. For the first two weeks it seemed that there was not much activity at the nest, but thereafter the parents brought food to the young at an increasing rate. The last week the fledglings were in the cavity, they peeked out of the entrance to the nest hole noisily begging for food. At this point they looked like the adults, and there appeared to be at least one male and one female. The nest was abandoned June 4, but we still commonly see Downy Woodpeckers (DOWO) in our garden. Woodpeckers of all kinds need older dying trees for food and shelter. If they are to survive in urban environments we need to provide them with these essentials.



Right: DOWO parent spits out wood chips in March, while preparing a nesting cavity for chicks.
Below: Both parents feed male chick.
Below Right: Mother feeds female chick. All photos by Pete Haggard.




Offshore Wind Energy Public Comment Deadline September 13

RRAS encourages members and supporters to submit comment letters regarding the potential development of offshore wind energy facilities around Humboldt Bay and in the open ocean in our region. The developments include large floating wind turbines, undersea transmission cables, new shipping and port facilities on Humboldt Bay, and new or expanded electrical transmission lines to the east and south of our region to deliver electrical power to the grid. In addition to obvious potential impacts to seabirds and marine wildlife, there are myriad impacts from port and electrical transmission lines. Some things to consider:

- Adaptive management to mitigate bird impacts should be ongoing and coordinated among all projects within the Humboldt Call Area (HCA).
- Projects within the call area shall not cause negative impact on any species' ability to thrive nor on species that are not thriving.

Please check RRAS.org for additional information and suggested points developed by our conservation committee. We encourage everyone to read the announcement and project documents from the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM): www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/humboldt-wind-energy-area.