

The Sandpiper

August 2021



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

In This Issue: • Marbled Murrelets Get Protection • The Little Red Shack – An Old Birding Hotspot • Wigi Wetlands Carousal! • Birding With Women

The 7 Bigfoot Steps in Creating Your Own Native Plant and Wildlife Sanctuary

By Monterey Caid, Owner of Lost Foods Native Plant Nursery, a local, non-profit dedicated to restoring native plant diversity and abundance.



Big Foot Step #1

Provide food for your local wildlife by planting diverse native plant species. Native plants start the local food web and provide the most food for the most wildlife. Native plants also provide the correct foods at the correct time of year that our local wildlife depend on to feed themselves and their young, as well as nesting material and nesting sites. Native plants can sustain 35 times more birds and butterflies than non-natives!

Diverse Native Plants Support Diverse Native Insects
Insects are the most important food in the food web that sustain most other wildlife, by passing the energy from the sun captured by plants to the other species of the food web in the form of insect protein and fat. Wildlife that do not depend on native plants or insects for food eat the wildlife that do. About 90% of insects depend on specific native plants to reproduce. The interactions between the plants and insects determine the diversity of the wildlife community.

Big Foot Step #2



Provide a Water Source that contains water all year. A water source can be as small as a bird bath or bucket,

or as complex as a large pond landscaped with native pond and wetland plants. Always provide easy entry and exits to the water source to eliminate the possibility of wildlife drowning. No need to worry about mosquitoes in a healthy habitat because other wildlife will use them as food, like dragonflies, frogs, bats and birds.



(Continued on P.3)

RRAS Field Trips in August!

Sun. August 1st – 3p.m. This is the third of our monthly Women & Girls' Birding Walks series.

Our August **Women and Gulls Birding Walk** will focus on shorebirds at one of the most productive birding spots in Humboldt – the Arcata marsh! Take a tern about the tidal flats with **Jude Power**, who will lead this walk that will have you looking all plover the marsh for the diverse range of shorebirds Humboldt Bay supports. Shorebirds can be tricky to identify with their quick movements and mottled plumages, but this walk should provide a fun and collaborative space to practice and improve your shorebird ID skills!

Will you join us for this exciting, afternoon walk at **3pm Sunday, August 1st**?

For reservations and meeting location contact Janelle, at janelle.choj@gmail.com.

Sat. August 7th – 8:30-11a.m. Arcata Marsh with Rob Fowler.

Sun. August 8th – 9-11 a.m. Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge with Ralph Bucher.

Sun. August 15th – 9-11a.m. Eureka Waterfront Trail with Ralph Bucher.

Sun. August 28th – 8:30-11 a.m. Arcata Marsh with Larry Karsteadt.

Sun. August 29th – 9a.m. to noon. Join RRAS in partnership with Kayak Trinidad (kayaktrinidad.com) for an exciting morning viewing 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. Space is limited and reservations are required. Costs for this trip are \$99/person to cover equipment and professional kayak guides. Contact Andrew Orahoske (andrew.rras@gmail.com) to reserve a spot on this sea birding adventure.

View rras.org for more details and how to register for all walks, or contact our Field Trips Chair, Janelle Chojnacki at janelle.choj@gmail.com.

If you aren't vaccinated please wear a mask. It is recommended that all participants maintain a 6' distance.



RRAS Virtual Program Presentation

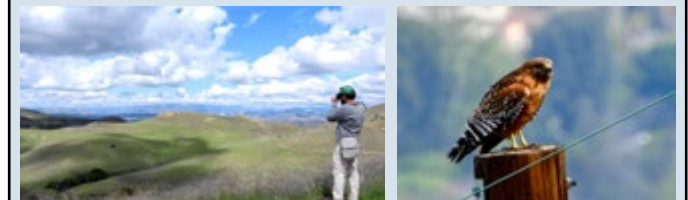
Please join us on Friday, August 13th, at 7 pm, for Changes in Nesting Bird Populations in the Los Angeles Area, 1995-Present.

With Daniel S. Cooper, Ph.D.

Bird populations, particularly in urban areas, are in constant flux, with some species adapting and thriving, and others declining. With colleagues, I recently investigated the role of ecological and behavioral traits for more than 50 species of nesting birds in the Los Angeles area using two datasets separated by over 20 years, the Los Angeles Breeding Bird Atlas (1995-1999) and newer data from eBird, an online platform archiving bird sightings that has been active since c. 2010. I will discuss trends in species, explore traits that appear to confer success in urban areas, and offer predictions as to which species – or types of species – will continue to thrive in urban and urbanizing southern California. I will also discuss species that declined during this time period, and offer suggestions for their conservation.

Daniel S. Cooper is a lifelong resident of southern California, and is regarded as an expert on the birds of the region. Through research and independent consulting, he has spent more than 20 years conducting surveys and analyzing bird populations from the deserts to the coast, including rare and protected species such as the California Gnatcatcher and the coastal Cactus Wren. Dan has served on many environmental advisory boards and committees, including most recently on the Oak Park – Park and Recreation Planning Committee. Since 2012, he and his family have made their home in Oak Park, where he enjoys the natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities, even if his two kids don't.

Please visit our website, rras.org for the Zoom link.



Above top: Juvenile Cooper's Hawks, and above right: Red-Shouldered Hawk by Nurit Katz. Above: Dan Cooper in the field, courtesy of Dan.

Photos: Left top: Red Flowering Currant by WordPress. Left middle: Bathing songbirds, by Shutterstock. Left bottom: Rufous Hummingbird on a fountain by Catherine Werther. Left: Wilson's Warbler by Gisèle Albertine.

CHAPTER LEADERS

OFFICERS:

President – Gail Kennygailkenny@gmail.com
Vice President – CJ Ralph707-822-2015
Secretary – Andrew Orahoske ...andrew.rras@gmail.com
Treasurer – Gary Friedrichsen707-822-6543
Past President – Hal Genger707-499-0887

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE:

Ralph Bucher707-443-6944
Pia Gabriel707-382-2101
Harriet Hill707-267-4055
Chet Ogan707-442-9353
Denise Seeger707-444-2399

OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS:

Conservation – Jim Clark707-445-8311
Educatn/Schlrshps – Denise Seeger ...707-444-2399
Membership – Ralph Bucher707-443-6944
Volunteer Coordinator

– Andrew Orahoske.....andrew.rras@gmail.com
eBird Liaison – Rob Fowler707-839-3493
Facebook – Cindy Moyer707-822-1886
– Andrew Orahoskeandrew.rras@gmail.com
Field Trips

– Janelle Chojnackijanelle.choj@gmail.com
NEC Representative – CJ Ralph707-822-2015
Nominations

– Hal Genger707-499-0887
Programs – Harriet Hill707-267-4055
Publications – CJ Ralph707-822-2015
Publicity – Denise Seeger707-444-2399
Website – Susan Penn707-672-3346

THE SANDPIPER:

Editor, Layout, & Design

– Gisèle Albertinegiseleandco@gmail.com
– Proofreader/CopyeditorPia Gabriel
Historian – Gary Friedrichsen707-822-6543
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Board of Directorsboard@rras.org

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Above: Green Heron. Right top: Eared Grebe.
Right bottom: Northern Harrier.
All photos by Jeff Todoroff (including the Common Raven in last month's Sandpiper – apologies for dropping the credits!).

President's Column

By Gail Kenny



We are hosting a “catio” tour on Saturday, September 18th from 12-4. The tour will feature up to six cool catios in Arcata and Mckinleyville. A catio is an enclosed outdoor patio where cats can safely experience the enrichment of the outdoors. This keeps the cats separate from birds and other prey they might harm and protects cats from diseases and injuries.

We are highlighting catios to educate and encourage the community about how to keep their cats safe, which also keeps birds safe from cats. Cats killing birds is number one on the list of human-caused bird mortality in the United States, even more than collisions with buildings and wind turbines. Over 2 billion birds a year are estimated to be killed by cats in the United States alone. Our pet cats have been domesticated from a blend of several small cat species over thousands of years. As a domesticated animal, they can no longer live on their own without human help. Since we domesticated them, it is our responsibility to take care of them and to also protect wildlife and the natural environment.

One of the ways to do this is to spotlight how people are living with cats while containing them. Indoor cats live longer and more healthy lives. Cats can get outdoor stimulation by hanging out in patios and by being walked on leashes outside. This also helps pet owners have more interactions with their cats, providing enrichment for cats and their owners.

What is fun about a catio tour is you get to see all the shapes and sizes of catio designs and get ideas on

how to create your own catio. When we had the bird friendly yard tour a couple of years ago, one of the gardens featured catios that were made with repurposed and often free materials. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money to create a catio. Of course, there are ready-made catios you can purchase, or you can design your own.

We will share all the details about the in-person catio tour in the September issue of *The Sandpiper*. Watch rras.org and local media, for more information. Admission is \$10, and tickets will be available soon. Also, volunteers are needed for set-up, ticket-selling, take-down, greeters, photography, etc. Please contact Harriet Hill at harrieth6@gmail.com to sign up for volunteering.



Above: Catio options, courtesy of catiospaces.com.

Wigi Wetlands Clean-up Carousel!

By Hal Genger

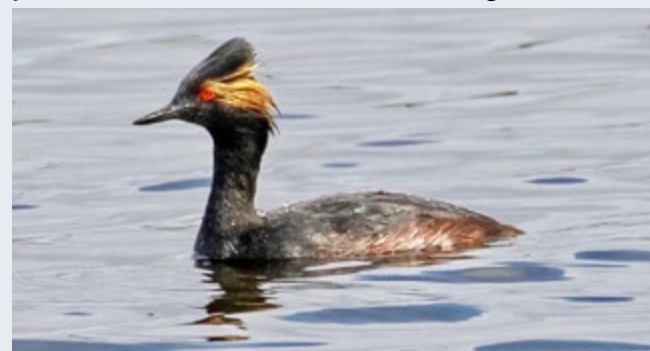
Need a reason to get out of the house for a while and be in nature? Wigi Wetlands is an easy place to explore and help birds at the same time! Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS) assumed responsibility for organizing a monthly cleanup for this region of the Humboldt Bay Trail several years ago. Grant money was procured to purchase tools and hire a part time coordinator for this purpose and now volunteers meet every month to improve the area for birds and other wildlife. Wigi Wetlands is the portion of the Humboldt Bay Trail behind the Bayshore Mall.

The paved trail passes a variety of habitats for viewing plants, and animals, especially birds. Willows and alders grow along the trail and provide good views of Yellow-rumped and Townsends Warblers, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees. The trail travels near several small freshwater ponds which are a good site for aquatic birds such as Green Herons, Great Blue Herons, and Mallards. Portions of the trail offer viewing access of salt marsh vegetation and Humboldt Bay – an area that provides good views of gulls, Brown Pelicans, and Double-crested Cormorants on the wharf pilings. Shorebirds (e.g., Marbled Godwits, Black Turnstones), are visible on the low tide regions, and scaups, Widgeon, Eared Grebes, and Surf Scoters can be seen floating on the water. Between the trail and the bay lies a region suitable for dune vegetation. This is a good open area to look for White-tailed Kites, and Northern Harriers. Western Meadowlarks and House Finches are common birds found in the lower vegetation. Much of this area has been taken over by invasive species which have shaded out the native vegetation that birds rely on. This is the region where RRAS is doing most of its restoration and invasive species removal.

Volunteers meet at 9a.m. in the parking lot behind Walmart at the Bayshore Mall in Eureka, for monthly cleanups. We have been concentrating on the removal of broom, but also work on removing Pampas Grass, Fennel, Himalaya Berry, Ice Plant, Sweet Willow, and ivy. We

go after large plants during the non-nesting season and smaller plants during nesting season so we don't disturb nesting parents and their chicks. In some areas, native vegetation (e.g., Coyote Bush, Angelica, Yarrow, Owl's Clover) are returning. These are much better plants for native animals to thrive in their habitat.

So, if you need something to do on the fourth Saturday of the month from 9-11 a.m., how about showing up at Wigi Wetlands to help remove invasive vegetation, pick up trash, and meet other wildlife-lovers? We provide gloves, tools, snacks, and good company! Please contact the coordinator Jeremy Cashen at (214) 605-7368 or jeremycashen@yahoo.com for information on volunteering.



(Continued from P. 1)

Big Foot Step #3

Provide cover for wildlife to escape extreme weather or to hide and escape from predators. Planting native evergreen shrubs and trees can provide cover all year. Cover can also be made with yard waste by building a brush pile, wood pile or rock pile that remains undisturbed. The larger the spaces in the pile the larger the species that can use it. Even small piles can provide valuable cover for many beneficial species, using natural rock, recycled concrete and pottery. No black asphalt!

Brush/Wood Pile:

Use recycled chemical-free wood, logs, and trimmings from trees and shrubs.

Rock piles and brush piles are used by many birds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and beneficial insects including butterflies, to nest, hibernate, hide, find food and shelter.

Big Foot Step #4

Provide places for wildlife to nest and raise young.

Create brush piles and rock piles that remain undisturbed and locate them in sun and/or shade. Create a snag, or leave a dead tree standing or laying on the ground which will benefit many different species over time. Nest boxes can be made and placed in the correct location depending on the species needs. Plant a patch of thorny native plants that provide protection to the nest from predators.

Dead Trees and Downed Wood

Hundreds of species of wildlife use downed wood (logs, snags, stumps, and rounds) for nests, dens, food, cover to rest, and to get sun. All rotting wood can host insects that provide valuable food for wildlife. Use downed wood on your property as borders for paths and gardens or place them in the landscape.

Big Foot Step #5

Eliminate the use of pesticides and other chemicals that can harm wildlife. Even organic pesticides can kill beneficial insects like butterflies, bees and ladybugs. Instead use native plants that attract beneficial insects which feed on the pest insects that might be damaging your plants. By planting diverse native plants and making diverse habitats you can recreate a healthy ecosystem that will keep pests and disease in check naturally.

Big Foot Step #6

Remove and control invasive species which replace and damage diverse natural wildlife habitats that wildlife need to survive. Invasive species can be used to make a brush pile, burned or taken to the dump. Even if an invasive species provides some of the needs of local wildlife, they do not provide the many benefits that diverse native plants provide.

Green Waste Compost Heap

Use yard clippings, weeds – and invasive species if your compost gets hot enough. Composting your own green waste can add nutrients, beneficial insects and microbes to your soil.

Big Foot Step #7

Reduce or eliminate mowing and weed-whacking in all or some parts of your property. Reduce lawn areas to plant diverse native plants that do not require mowing. Use wood chips, cardboard, or other forms of natural mulch to control weeds. If you have to mow and weed-whack provide sensitive wildlife with a place to hide or escape that is undisturbed.

For more information contact Monty Caid at (707) 268-8447, montycaid@yahoo.com, or lostfoods.org/.



Above: Bee on Checkerbloom by Monty Caid. Brush pile, by OSU Ext. Services.



Above: MAMU chick on nest by Aaron Allred.

MAMU's receive Federal Protection in Oregon!

Submitted by Andrew Orahoske

On July 9, 2021, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission approved a petition to give Marbled Murrelets more protection by reclassifying them from threatened to endangered under the state's Endangered Species Act (ESA). The plight of the Marbled Murrelet is synonymous with decades of industrial logging that have devastated the forests of California and the Pacific Northwest.

Meanwhile, the Murrelet had been listed as Endangered under the California ESA since 1992, and listed under the federal ESA as threatened since 1992. Despite these listings, actual on the ground protection for Murrelet nesting habitat has continued to be inadequate throughout the species range. Currently, the State of California is logging recovering older redwood forests in Jackson State Forest in Mendocino County, with some trees over 200 years old being targeted for destruction. In a climate crisis, it's time to pay attention to the Murrelet's habitat needs.

Rolling Meadow Cannabis Ranch Lawsuit

Redwood Region Audubon Society has joined the Rolling Meadow Cannabis Ranch, LLC commercial cannabis project lawsuit along with the Northcoast Environmental Center and Citizens for a Sustainable Humboldt. The initial study and draft mitigated negative declaration by Natural Resource Management Inc. (NRM), relies on conclusions based on unsubstantiated assumptions to arrive at a statement of no significant impact with regard to birds. We are concerned about the impact of this project on species such as Golden Eagles, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Savannah Sparrows in the oak woodland habitat. The cumulative impacts of the project, in combination with other projects, including impacts to groundwater resources, biological resources, and wildfire risk, were not adequately analyzed. The lawsuit is asking for a full Environmental Impact Report for the project.

www.youmec.org/rolling-meadows-lawsuit/ for more information.

Observando Aves Con Mujeres

Por Daisy Ambriz-Perez

Me la pase de maravilla caminando a través del bosque del Área de Conservación de las Dunas y Humedales de Samoa. Estábamos rodeadas por grandes helechos, zarzamoras, y grandes pino de playa. Oíamos el famoso canto en espiral del zorzal de anteojos en el fondo, pero desafortunadamente nunca llegamos a ver uno de cerca. Veníamos el camea, un pajarito chiquito y carismático, con mucha frecuencia. Un curioso camea estaba a sólo un pie de distancia de una de nosotras. Vimos vareas golondrinas que parecían estar disfrutando de la fiesta de los mosquitos gordos que pululaban a nuestro alrededor. Fue una experiencia muy hermosa. Me encantó sentirme cómoda y apoyada por el grupo de mujeres.

Right: Samoa Dunes and Wetlands, by Mike Cipra Friends of the Dunes.



Birding With Women

By Marliese Tollner

On Sunday July 11th, the second of RRAS's Women and Girls' Birding Trips, our group explored the Friends of the Dunes (FOTD) stewarded, Samoa Dunes and Wetlands, with leader, Daisy Ambriz-Perez. Being fluent in English and Spanish, Daisy was able to provide information in both languages as we explored the area off Coper Lane. As is fairly typical we heard more birds than we saw so we were fortunate to have not only Daisy, but Annette Leshner, with the group, since they were able to identify most of the birds by songs and calls. Daisy and others also provided information about the plants along the trail which was just as interesting to me as learning the birds! Due to the nature of sand dunes, we also enjoyed identifying a variety of freshly-made animal tracks. Overall, the experience was really nice – one of comradery and a shared love of nature among all participants.

For more information, visit Friends of the Dunes website at www.friendsofthedunes.org/.

The Little Red Shack – A trip back in time...

By Gary Friedrichsen

“If these walls could talk, half of Eureka would have to move out of town tomorrow.” So spoke one of the previous owners after I had taken up residence in the little shack, built at the mouth of Jacoby Creek toward the end of the Korean War, by local duck hunters. By the time I was involved with the club, the active owners included Roy Gutheridge and his brother Rollo from Arcata, and Paul Cook of Eureka.

When I returned to Humboldt in 1970, after a tour in the Army, my good friends, Tim Osborne and Laurel Beisner, were living in the cabin while completing their degrees at HSU. I had been invited to dinner and asked if I would like to take over the cabin when they left. The original owners had stopped using the shack and begun letting students live in the club’s cabin in turn for protecting the cabin and keeping other duck hunters out of their duck blinds.

Around 1974, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began their search for properties around Humboldt Bay and they found willing sellers among the hunt club members. I believe theirs was the first parcel that was purchased for the fledgling Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

The cabin had no running water, no electricity, and no proper sewage but it did have natural gas. There was also a telephone line but that’s where the amenities ended. When I moved in there was a small Franklin wood stove and a 2’ x 4’ gas heater, a three burner cook top and a broken water well pump that had provided water until the salt water broke into the system. We had to haul our water in three five-gallon jugs and use that water for drinking, cooking, and rinsing dishes.

Tim had left me some furniture, including the dinner table we have to this day, and an antique Servel refrigerator that had a freezing compartment large enough for two ice cube trays. The cabin had been piped with three gas lamps. To this I added three Aladdin kerosene lamps and eventually a large double mantled street lamp that came from Magic Mountain Amusement Park, a gift from my father who had



been an electrician wiring the park. This light provided loads of light as well as warmth. Fortunately, the cabin walls were board and batten on the outside and tongue and groove redwood on the inside with no insulation so the air movement kept us from asphyxiation.

As time went on the refuge went through a number of managers and somewhat languished until the McBride family finally agreed to sell their large ranch headquarters in south bay. It was after the acquisition of this property that we began to hear the distant drums of eviction. By the 1980’s I had finished my biology degree at HSU and married my wife, Jan. We both volunteered for the refuge and worked on a number of restoration projects mostly on revegetation on Salmon Creek but we were warned repeatedly that our tenure in the shack was likely coming to an end.

I will say that the shack was really quite cozy. Most people stopping by for a visit were surprised at how quiet it was considering the close proximity to Highway 101. But it was more like a soft grey noise that was easily tuned out until the rumble of a passing train. The day-to-day routine was pretty normal save for the lack of yard work and keeping abreast of the diurnal tides that would inundate our parking area and force us to reposition the vehicles out by the high point next to the former billboard.

The “shack” gained national recognition after Kenn Kaufman of bird guide fame wrote his memoir “Kingbird Highway.” The book describes Kenn’s early days hitchhiking across America at seventeen, birdwatching and setting up his route for attempting a “big year.” He had run into our friend, Rich Stallcup while birding south of Monterey, California, and Rich had directed him to the “little red shack” on the highway south of Arcata. Unfortunately for Kenn he arrived in Arcata at 2:00 AM one very foggy morning.

He had been let out by his ride just above Gannon Slough and in the fog mistook another hunting cabin that had fallen into the bay for our shack. Tired and thinking we must have moved out; he bedded down by the tracks and got a bit of sleep only to awaken and look south to where our shack stood in the early light. He walked up to our front door and stammered “I guess I slept in the wrong place!” Laurel took him in and later that day brought him to join Tim, Dr. Stanley Harris, and myself as we were completing a “big day” birding event.

The Cabin became quite the mecca for birdwatchers in the 70s and 80s. Several friends from the bay area would come up for northern birding and pelagic trips and spend the night, usually after a meal at Mona’s Mexican restaurant on south G St. Many times, there were 10-15 hippie birders sprawled on the floor awaiting the next day’s activity. Thanks to Tim’s early efforts to record birds seen around the property and then my continued tenure of the “list” we boasted a total of 212 species. Some of the rarities included Hudsonian Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, and Black Vulture. Since our departure other birders continue to find treasures at the mouth of Jacoby Creek. A small sample includes Crested Caracara, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Gull, Red-necked Stint, and Nelson’s Sparrow.

Jan and I finally received our “eviction notice” from U.S. Fish and Wildlife in 1998 but it took us another year to complete the purchase and sub-division of our new property in Sunny Brae before we gave into their demands. I had lived in the cabin for thirty years and Jan had been with me for half of the that time. It was home and very difficult to give up. But, on December 23rd, 1999 we closed the door for the last time and handed over the keys to the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Manager.

Many great parties, holidays, and crab feeds were held in the cabin and I hope the previous owners approved of our holding up their traditions to the end.



All photos of the Little Red Shack courtesy of Gary Friedrichsen.