

The Sandpiper

June 2024



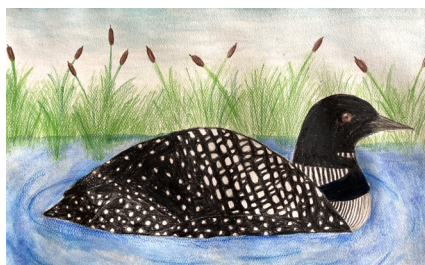
Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

* Annual Children's Issue *



Belted Kingfisher
by Fiona Varzgah



Common Loon by Heidi Tout



Great Gray Owl
by Rosemary Bornman



White-tailed Kite
by Kenna Klajic

2024 Student Bird Art Contest Results

Some 660 school kids pulled out paints, pencils, pastels, or paste to enter the 21st Annual Student Bird Art Contest. Cosponsors were RRAS and Friends of the Arcata Marsh. The contest was held in association with mid-April's Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival in Arcata. All entries were displayed at the Arcata Community Center for public viewing during the festival.

Copies of 2024's cash prize and honorable mention winning artwork are on display at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center May through

June. Winners were spread across 27 different schools! Public viewing is possible Tuesdays through Sundays between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and Mondays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. A downloadable booklet containing the artwork and photos from the April 20 awards ceremony is posted at www.rras.org. Awards totaled \$700, with 44 cash prizes, plus 37 honorable mentions.

Kindergarten & Grade 1

First Place: Fiona Varzgah, Coastal Grove Charter, Belted Kingfisher

Second Place: Eliyana Sarley, Union Street Charter, American Avocet

Third Place: Faith Tucker, Kneeland School, Anna's Hummingbird

Honorable Mentions: Eleanor Taylor, Mistwood Educational Center, Chestnut-backed Chickadee; Lily Castillo, Union Street Charter, Spotted Owl; Mikael Goor-Arie, Mistwood Educational Center, Snowy Plovers

Grades 2&3

First Place: Franky Elfing, Redwood Coast Montessori, California Quail; Sylvia Tout, Garfield Elementary, Mallard; Ike Barrameda, Arcata Christian, Spotted Owl

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RRAS FIELD TRIPS IN JUNE

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 in the parking area at the end of I St. (Klopp Lake). Facilities – one portable. Bring binoculars if you have them. If not, come on out anyway!

Trip leaders for June: June 1, Gary Friedrichsen ~ June 8, Mark Colwell ~ June 15, Chet Ogan ~ June 22, Kathryn Wendel ~ June 29, Dan Greaney
Sunday, June 9, 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. Email Ralph to sign up at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

Sunday, June 16, 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**. This relatively urban trail offers the potential to observe a variety of species on the bay and

along the trail. Email Ralph to sign up at [thebook\[at\]reninet.com](mailto:thebook[at]reninet.com).

Saturday June 22, 9-11am. Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Help create bird-friendly native habitats and restore a section of the bay trail behind Bayshore Mall by removing invasive plants and trash. Bring water and gloves, we provide tools and snacks. Contact Jeremy Cashen at jeremy.cashen@yahoo.com or 214-605-7368, for more information.

Saturday, June 22, time TBD. Join RRAS in **Southern Humboldt** for a free guided bird walk, *trip leader TBD*. Meet at Tooby Park, one mile west of Garberville on Sprowl Creek Road for an easy walk, lasting 2-3 hours. Call Ann Constantino for start time, (707) 296-8720.

Sunday, June 30, see times below. Horse/Grouse Mountain area with Ken Burton. In case you missed the Memorial Day trip or just can't get enough of mountain birding, here we go again! This will be a shorter outing focusing on the denser, cooler forests around Cold Spring and Clear Lake. Meet Ken (shrikethree@gmail.com) at Pepper's Arcata at 7:00 a.m. or at the base of Titlow Hill Road at 7:45 for this half-day trip; please be prepared to carpool.

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RRAS Sponsors 18th Annual Science Fair Award

By Sue Leskiw

In March 2024, the annual Humboldt County Science Fair moved to the Sequoia Conference Center in Eureka. The judges awarded a \$50 prize for the best project related to birds or their habitat to Nora Souza, a sixth-grade student at Hydesville Elementary School.

The idea for Nora's project, "Troutin' About," came to her when the California Department of Fish and Wildlife suggested putting a fish ladder in Barber Creek, where her grandparents live, paid for by the road association. Nora thought "it would be a good idea to test the suitability of the creek by testing the turbidity, pH, depth, and height of the bank."

She measured speed of water flow, temperature, pH, water depth in fast-and slow-moving sections of the stream, and bank height at three locations. Her testing found that the creek had a highly alkaline pH, which is tolerable but not healthy for rainbow trout.

Nora was selected to compete in the California Science and Engineering Fair, held virtually on April 16, where she won first place in the Earth & Environment: Air/Water category. She plans to compete in the Regeneron International Science Fair, May 11-17, in Los Angeles, the world's largest pre-college STEM competition!

Photo courtesy of Humboldt County Office of Education



President's Column

By Kathryn Wendel

It's June already, and the incredible spring we had is turning to summer. As busy as the birds have been, so have all of us nature lovers, birders, and bird-watchers. Several very rare birds made an appearance on the North Coast this spring, causing many birders to travel here to see them, notably the Bell's Vireo spotted right



off Highway 101 in Arcata in a small grove of willows and cottonwoods. This is the first time this species has been confirmed in Humboldt County, and its arrival coincided with one of the biggest local birding events of the year: Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival. Happily, many on the Godwit Days birding tours were treated to fantastic views of this little songbird.

Redwood Region Audubon has always played a big role in producing Godwit Days, and this year we were proud to sponsor its newest event: the Big Sit. As Michael Morris, one of three field guides directing the "Sit," notes, it was a good time for the leaders and



continue sponsoring the Big Sit, so be sure to look for it at next year's Godwit Days.

RRAS is also co-sponsoring an educational panel soon to appear at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary concerning the impact of feral cats and off-leash dogs on birds and other wildlife, so be on the lookout for it sometime this year.

Supporting education and outreach to the greater community is a wonderful way to get people interested in birds, wildlife, and environmental conservation, and we are always interested in hearing what you think and what local conservation concerns you may have. Please email me any ideas or comments you would like your local Audubon chapter to hear about at president@rras.org.

Bell's Vireo photo by Aiden Brubaker; Kathryn provided the photo with Kate Rowe, proudly displaying the Big Sit sign.

Godwit Days' Big Sit Is a Big Hit

By Michael H. Morris

A Big Sit was added to the Godwit Days Festival this year. It sounds like one of the first things I do in the morning after getting up, but in this case it's an all-day event. The inaugural Big Sit took place on the back deck of the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center, a perfect venue for anyone with a disability or mobility issues. It's also great for those of us birders who are just plain lazy (lookin' at you, Jim Clark), and a nice break from all the driving and chasing around of Godwit Days' other "guided" trips.

Observers hang out for the allotted time in one spot and tally up the species that are seen. It's a lot like what I do in my backyard in the morning with a cup of coffee or in the afternoon with a cool refreshing beverage. In fact, RRAS provided a cooler with sodas as well as snacks. People come and go as they please, no preregistration required.

The day was broken up into three shifts, with Max Brodie, Nora Papian, and myself sharing leadership duties. The leaders tracked the birds seen and kept the easy conversation going. Numbers of individual birds are not so important in a Big Sit, but anything within identifiable sight gets recorded. I believe we tallied 80+ species, my favorite being the American Bittern fly-by. Later visitors were treated to a Great Egret enjoying an all-you-can-eat fish buffet in the creek right in front of the deck.

This was an enjoyable way to spend time during Godwit Days, very inclusive and informative for birders of any level and a good place to gather and share sightings and stories of adventure. I do hope this becomes a regular Sunday event for the festival.

19th Annual Student Nature Writing Contest Results

Twenty-five Humboldt students in grades 4 through 9 entered a poem or essay in a contest associated with the 2024 Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival. RRAS awarded \$75 in prizes to the

following schoolchildren who explored the topic “What Nature Means to Me”:
Junior Division (Grade 4) Winners
First Place: Penn Kerhoulas, Garfield Elementary
Honorable Mentions: Avery Dolan, Hendrix Malicdem-Hayes, and Renley Nero, all from Coastal Grove Charter
Senior Division (Grades 6-9) Winners

First Place: Thea McKnight, Grade 7, Coastal Grove Charter
Second Place: Trillium Pitts, Grade 8, Alder Grove Charter
Third Place: Isabella Green, Grade 9, Academy of the Redwoods
A downloadable booklet containing submissions from all the winners is posted at www.rras.org.



“What Nature Means to Me”
By Penn Kerhoulas

I close my eyes and feel the wind flowing over my face, it blows my hair into my eyes, I brush the silky brown hair away, and feel soft crumbs of redwood bark on my face. I look down, the forest floor is spread out far below me like an ocean of thin spindly needles, the needles fill the grooves and cracks of the forest floor as they float down upon the drafty air. The forest is like a swirling lake spread out below me.
As I look closer I can see two young deer lounging in the shade of a lofty redwood, their eyes are soft and dark. I shift my head carefully and see their mother, poking her head out from behind a curving trunk, her eyes are soft as well. I take a deep breath and then exhale.



“These Lonely Roads”
By Thea McKnight

“Remember last time when we saw the baby jellyfish?” my sister asks, an excited, carefree gleam in her ocean blue eyes. I wonder what people see when they look into my eyes. Do they see sadness, or joy? The maturity of age, or a little girl’s naïve dreams? I admit to a deep aching sort of envy over that carefree, happy glint in her eyes. When you’re young, it’s easy to be happy over the little things, a trip to the beach or forest, getting a new top, hearing your old favorite song again. That ability to find the purest joy in the smallest things is a superpower. The older you get, the more you look at the bigger picture, become cynical, and waste those precious, tiny, happy moments on worrying about something that happened weeks, months, years ago.
“Of course I remember,” I say. And I do. Once, when we went to the beach, there were tiny baby jellyfish rolling around at the edge of the water, washing up and then washing back out to sea. My family took to calling them “Eyeballs” because that’s what they looked like. See-through spheres with miniscule and unidentifiable organs at the center. Eyeballs.
Our old black car speeds along the road, and my family continues their conversation. Heedless to what’s being said, I stare out the window.
Birds sit on telephone wires; other cars drive past. A man in a silver Avalanche glares at the road, as if daring it to make him late. *Good luck*, I think, silently laughing. Cows graze in green fields and horses race the wind in their perfectly manicured enclosures. *Those fields used to be forests*, I think. *Those enclosures used to be marshes*. Before we slashed and burned the forests, filled in the marshes, and plowed the flattened earth into perfection.
More drivers flash past in the opposite lane. It’s almost as if everyone is in their own world. Someone frantically talks on the phone. Someone else sings along with the radio. And in so many ways, we all are in our own worlds. The days’ worth of our own troubles and our own worries weigh down our shoulders. No one has time for anyone else’s worries or troubles. *Did you forget your phone? Bring the keys! Pack an extra pair of shoes!* The thoughts of what we could’ve

I stare into a hill of reddish clay and see wild ginger climbing up onto the trees surrounding it, the plants are green and the delicate white pink blossoms seem to spill from the leafy heart of the plant. Tall redwoods stretch up tall around me as I pull in my breath yet again. I feel the warmth of the wind on my bare legs, I feel it in my hair and drifting all about me.
I bend my knees inward and push off against dry crumbling bark of the redwood; as I soar out into the blazing blue and white sky I see everything, I see the ocean in the distance, and the birds’ nests perched high in the upper branches, I feel the sun beating onto my back, I feel the red harness around my waist, the harness is the only thing keeping my body suspended above the ground far below me, and yet I feel no fear. I am in my happy place. I feel my body rapidly regaining weight as the harness and I swiftly fall back against the familiar tree. I know I am safe, nothing can hurt me. Times like these, when I am tall in the redwood canopy help me appreciate what nature means to me.

done, what we’re a second away from doing, and what’s in the future crowd for space. *Me! I matter more!* Each one screams, until it’s just too much.
So many writers have dreamed up dystopian worlds where everyone lives in front of a screen and never sees anyone face-to-face. Everyone lives in their own chosen world, built on memories and comforting words and idealistic futures. But maybe that future’s already here, so subtle that we barely notice it. It’s here in the way that texting is a completely different language than the one we speak, made up of abbreviations and symbols and misspelled, mixed-up words that have taken on new meanings. It’s here in the way that so many people who consider themselves best friends have never met in real life. It’s here in the way that it’s so easy to forget all about the little moments, the tiny details that hold up reality. Forgetting that being happy is very, very different from being ecstatic.

I tune back into the conversation inside the car, and talk, laugh, and crack jokes like normal. But slowly, a realization settles over me, like rain falling to the ground. Such a long fall, what a sudden end. The realization that, although the road is teeming with cars, it might as well be deserted, and we might as well be alone.
* * * * *
We go to the beach, have our fun. Before we leave, I swear to the sand between my toes and the sun drying my hair and the cool brush of the wind and the salt air that I won’t be swept off my feet into my own little world and forget all about this other world of wonder right at my fingertips. I’ll never abandon it, because the whispering redwoods, the sound of the birds, the gravity of the moon, the cold of the storms, the scent of rain on pavement, the distant stars, and the warmth before a cruel spring rain mean everything to me. I’ve always loved nature, and I always will: even though I couldn’t imagine a world without technology, I couldn’t imagine a world without nature, either. I just wouldn’t exist.

After hours of fun, I pile into the car with my family, saltwater crisping my sister’s blond hair, sand and wind having done their fair share of damage to me.
We make our way along the twisting and turning journey home, and as I glance out the window at the other drivers and passengers, each in their own multiverse, I don’t forget my promise. I’ll never lose myself to these lonely roads.

Student Bird Art, continued

Artwork (left to right): American Kestrel by Evie Dowd; Wood Ducks by Makaila Finch; Bald Eagle by Mariia Vasileva; Pileated Woodpecker by Sam Castillo; (below left) Barn Owl by Eva Tovar; (right) Black-crowned Night Heron by Sophia Piazza.



Second Place: Sarah Murphy, Homeschooled, American Robin; Anastasia Darning, Redwood Prep Charter, Bald Eagle; Aubree Harrison, Redwood Prep Charter, Northern Harrier
Third Place: Cully Stack, Northern United Charters-Willow Creek, White-breasted Nuthatch; Jon Larson, Morris Elementary, Great Horned Owl; Brynn Thrash, Garfield Elementary, Bufflehead

Honorable Mentions: Emily Redner, Fieldbrook Elementary, Anna’s Hummingbird; Evelyn Kauffman, Garfield Elementary, Chestnut-backed Chickadee; Hazel Fisher, Seaforth Montessori, Tree Swallow; Jordan O’Connor, Fieldbrook Elementary, Common Loon; Gianna Enriquez, Arcata Christian, Anna’s Hummingbird; Emilio Zaragoza, Redwood Christian, Great Blue Heron; Kira Osborne, Redwood Coast Montessori, Marbled Murrelet;



Joah Nicely Alfaro, Fuente Nueva Charter, Peregrine Falcon

Grade 4

First Place: Margot Nims, Garfield Elementary, Barn Swallow; Heidi Tout, Garfield Elementary, Common Loon; Penn Kerhoulas, Garfield Elementary, Mallard
Second Place: Harper Landry, Union Street Charter, Northern Harrier; Zemira Haas, Union Street Charter, Anna’s Hummingbird; Rosemary Bornman, Northern United Charters, Great Gray Owl

Third Place: Henry Landis, Union Street Charter, Peregrine Falcon; Sam Castillo, Union Street Charter, Pileated Woodpecker; Bernardo Freitas, Northern United Charters, Peregrine Falcon

Honorable Mentions: Madden McCall, Northern United Charters-Briceland, Bufflehead; Raven Lovejoy, Union Street Charter, Anna’s Hummingbird; Rain McBeth-Solares, Redwood Christian, American Avocet; Emma Varzgah, Coastal Grove Charter, Red-tailed Hawk; Nova Hyden, Cutten Elementary, Tufted Puffin; Harper Andersen, Cutten Elementary, American Goldfinch; Liam Kilgore, Cutten Elementary, American Avocet; Parker Budes, Coastal Grove Charter, Marbled Godwit; Ellery Craydon, Union Street Charter, Western Grebes

Grades 5&6

First Place: Eva Tovar, Northern United Charters, Barn Owl; Rosemary Amaral, Scotia School, Anna’s Hummingbird; Emma Ayres, Garfield Elementary, Black-crowned Night-Heron
Second Place: Ruby O’Hara, Morris Elementary, Spotted Owl; Milly Bornman, Northern United Charters, Peregrine Falcon; Makaila Finch, Hydesville

Elementary, Wood Ducks

Third Place: Hadley Johnson, Pacific View Charter, Spotted Owl; Mia Hong-Novotney, Fuente Nueva Charter, Varied Thrush; Zahara Calkins, Scotia School, Anna’s Hummingbird

Honorable Mentions: Leonardo Freitas, Northern United Charters, Bald Eagle; Rooney O’Neill, Mistwood Educational Center, Funny Emo Pigeon; Alayia Vainuku, Blue Lake Elementary, Varied Thrush; Carissa Gonzales, Orick Elementary, Western Bluebird; Raven Mitchell, Scotia Elementary, Common Raven; Ava Johnson, Sunny Brae Middle School, Barn Owl; Angel Belz, Sunny Brae Middle School, Great Horned Owl; Matthew Jackson, Sunny Brae Middle School, Bufflehead; Felicity Smith, Redwood Prep Charter, Great Blue Heron

Grades 7&8

First Place: Peyton Wolff, Zane Middle School, Western Meadowlark
Second Place: Khloe Baird, Northern United Charters, Marsh Wren
Third Place: Vuunsip E-kot, Orleans Elementary, American Robin
Honorable Mentions: Hunter Olson, Winship Middle School, Osprey; Emma Webb, Zane Middle School, Varied Thrush; Rilynn Flanagan, Zane Middle School, Wood Duck; Adler Gordon, Hydesville Elementary, Marbled Godwit

Grades 9-12

First Place: Evie Dowd, Northern United Charters, American Kestrel; Mariia Vasileva, Arcata High, Bald Eagle
Second Place: Sequoia Manchester, Eureka High, Steller’s Jay; Ram Virnave, Academy of the Redwoods, Northern Harrier
Third Place: Emma Wiegandt, Eureka High, Anna’s Hummingbird; October Mintey, Redwood Coast Montessori, Red-tailed Hawks
Honorable Mentions: Julia Brands, Arcata High, Snowy Plovers; Alysian Fouquette, Academy of the Redwoods, White-tailed Kite; Sophia Piazza, Eureka High, Black-crowned Night-Heron; Ash Beltran, Eureka High, Great Blue Heron; Domonique Bennett, Eureka High, Red-breasted Nuthatch



Best Bird in Habitat Awards

Miles Johnson, Grade 1, Union Street Charter, Bald Eagle; Aleksis Varnell, Grade 2, Pacific View Charter, Snowy Plover; Saebr Ester, Grade 4, Garfield Elementary, Cinnamon Teal (female); Kenna Klajic, Grade 9, Eureka High, White-tailed Kite; Sophia Grimmer, Grade 10, Eureka High, Snowy Plover