

# The Sandpiper

June/July 2025



Redwood Region Audubon Society

www.rras.org

## Annual Children's Issue

### 22nd Annual Student Bird Art Contest Results, by Sue Leskiw, Contest Coordinator

Some 818 school kids pulled out paints, pencils, pastels, or paste to enter the 22nd Annual Student Bird Art Contest. Co-sponsors 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.



Turkey Vulture  
by Asher Stein



Purple Finch  
by Ember Freedlund

Winning artwork is on display at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center through June. Winners were spread across 30 different schools! You may view the art Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Mondays from 1 to 5 p.m. A

downloadable booklet containing the artwork and photos from the April 19 awards ceremony will be posted sometime in May at [rras.org](http://rras.org). Awards totaled \$750 (\$300 from RRAS), with 47 cash prizes plus 39 honorable mentions.

### Winners of the Student Bird Art Contest

#### Kindergarten & Grade 1

**1st Place:** Lily Varzgah, Homeschooled, Red-breasted Nuthatch; Nova Connelly, Union Street Charter, Northern Harrier  
**2nd Place:** Thomas Willson III, Orleans Elementary, Scrub Jay; Asher Stein, Northern United Charters, Turkey Vulture  
**3rd Place:** Olea Vance, Alder Grove Charter, Anna's Hummingbird; Onyx Austrus, Northern United Charters, Common Yellowthroat

**Honorable Mentions:** Ember Freedlund, Mattole Elementary; Nicholas Flemming, Mattole Elementary; Seraphina Fosnaugh, Northern United Charters; Rose King, Union Street Charter; Oliver Caldwell-Russo, Union Street Charter



Spotted Owl  
by Fiona Varzgah

#### Grade 2

**1st Place:** Fiona Varzgah, Homeschooled, Spotted Owl; Wren Rushby, Coastal Grove Charter, Cedar Waxwing  
**2nd Place:** Sawyer Mathieson, Ridgewood Elementary, Northern Flicker; Harper Rybeck, Northern United Charters, Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
**3rd Place:** Emilia Wright, Ridgewood Elementary, Anna's Hummingbird; Brynlee Steele, Fieldbrook Elementary, Mallard  
**Honorable Mentions:** Della Zdrazil, Garfield Elementary; Sylvie Davis, Garfield Elementary; Owen Lowe, Seaforth Montessori; Niamh Horcasitas, Fuente Nueva Charter



Snowy Plover by  
Sequoia Manchester



Cinnamon Teal  
by Sylvia Tout



American Kestrel  
by Iona Ennis

#### Grade 3

**1st Place:** Sylvia Tout, Garfield Elementary, Cinnamon Teal; Iona Ennis, Mattole Elementary, American Kestrel  
**2nd Place:** Cody Herman, Morris Elementary, Steller's Jay;

continued on next page

## 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 the parking area at the end of I St. (Klopp Lake). Bring binoculars and scopes if you have them. If not, come on out anyway!

**Trip leaders for June:** June 7, Dan Greaney ~ June 14, Kathryn Wendel ~ June 21, Gary Friedrichsen ~ June 28, Ken Burton

**Sunday, June 8, 9-11am.** Join us at *Azalea State Reserve*, a thirty-acre holding that is one of the north county's most vegetative diverse public parks. We'll explore both loop trails, enjoy the spring flora, and hopefully encounter the rich bird life found there. This will be a relaxed morning of birding, with an optional drive afterwards to visit Gary Lester's nearby yard for additional plant and bird

study. In case you're unfamiliar with the location, the site requires a short but somewhat steep walk to complete the two separate loop trails. Meet Gary in the Reserve parking lot on the east side of Azalea Avenue in McKinleyville just north of the intersection of North Bank Road (SR 200) and Azalea Avenue.

**Sunday, June 8, 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 15, 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**. Email Ralph to sign up (see above).

continued on next page

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## President's Column

By Kathryn Wendel



Welcome to the Children's Issue of the *Sandpiper*. As the days lengthen and the Redwood Region warms up and dries out after a wet winter, we also welcome all the recently arrived summer birds that migrate here for the season to nest and delight us with their rich songs and vibrant colors. Eye-catching birds such as Yellow-breasted Chats, Bullock's Orioles, and Black-headed Grosbeaks, as well as little brown jobs like Western Flycatchers, can be found all over the region, and RRAS will be leading guided bird walks all summer long. Be sure to check the trip schedule in this issue and on the website, and plan to join us!

Besides summer breeders, certain birds only seasonally pass through during the summer, including many pelagic birds such as storm-petrels and shearwaters, where the opportunity to see certain



species comes only during a brief window of time during the year. Did you know that petrels are among the farthest flying birds in the world? During the year, Murphy's Petrels circumnavigate the entire Pacific Rim, passing through Humboldt waters only in late spring. Dan Barton photographed one (shown left) seen on our May pelagic trip. To reserve your spot on the *Steller Sunrise* and a chance to see birds seldom seen on land, email Sean McAllister ([whiteouters\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:whiteouters[at]gmail.com)).

Good news on our conservation project—the Lucas Street Parcel, which is a greenstrip of riparian habitat along the Third Slough in Eureka. RRAS is moving forward with our intention to help conserve this important slice of land by working with the City of Eureka to rezone it. We are interested in what birds are using this land, and are looking for birders to help with bird surveys there. It is as simple as creating an eBird list, with the goal of at least one eBird list a month at the Lucas Street Parcel hotspot. If you are interested, please let us know ([president\[at\]rras.org](mailto:president[at]rras.org)).

## RRAS Field Trips in June, continued

**Saturday, June 21, sunrise-early afternoon.** Join us for our monthly *pelagic trip* aboard the *Steller Sunrise*. Three experienced birders will be on board and on the lookout for albatross, storm-petrels, jaegers, and other birds seldom seen from shore. Cost is \$150 each. For more information, contact Sean McAllister at [whiteouters@gmail.com](mailto:whiteouters@gmail.com) or 707-496-8790, and see more about pelagic trips on our website.

**Saturday, June 28, 9-11am.** Wigi Wetlands Volunteer Workday. Join a fun group of volunteers

to create bird-friendly habitat in a section of the bay trail behind Bayshore Mall. Bring water and gloves. We provide tools and snacks. Contact Susan Penn at [susanpenn60@gmail.com](mailto:susanpenn60@gmail.com) for more information.

**Saturday, June 28, 8-11am\*.** Join RRAS in Southern Humboldt for a free guided bird walk led by Tess McGuire: [tmcquire9130@gmail.com](mailto:tmcquire9130@gmail.com) for more information. \*We'll meet early to beat the heat.

**NOTE:** Our regularly scheduled field trips will continue in July. For dates and times and other July trips, see [rras.org](http://rras.org).

## Winners of Student Bird Art Contest, continued

Emory Thoreson-Veeh, Garfield Elementary, American Kestrel

**3rd Place:** Autumn McTague, Northern United Charters, Snowy Plover; Henry Schmidt, Cutten Elementary, Bald Eagle

*Honorable Mentions:* Camille Kerhoulas, Garfield Elementary; Lucia Herndon,

Cutten Elementary; Vasili Tokarev, Homeschooled; Antonio Fuentes Rodriguez, Northern United Charters; Iko Shipley, Agnes J. Johnson Charter



Pileated Woodpecker  
by Stella Brents

## Grade 4

**1st Place:** Ona Kypta, Garfield Elementary, Spotted Sandpiper; Esa McGowan, Alder Grove Charter, Snowy Plovers; Cameron Riley, Union Street Charter, Osprey  
**2nd Place:** Wilder Brosemer-Brown, Northern United Charters, Common Raven; Avery Skehen, Mattole Elementary, Great-horned Owl; Skylar Kaskinen, Northern United Charters, Wood Duck

**3rd Place:** Stella Brents, Union Street Charter, Pileated Woodpecker; Iver Vu, Fuente Nueva Charter, Purple Finch; Aubree Harrison, Redwood Preparatory Academy, Bald Eagle



Bald Eagle  
by Aubree Harrison

*Honorable Mentions:* Brynn Thrash, Garfield Elementary; Asher Troyer, Northern United Charters; Banyan Villagomez, Union Street Charter; Aurora Martin, Morris Elementary; Kenzie Christianson, Cutten Elementary; Nadia Dervin, Whitethorn Elementary

## Grade 5

**1st Place:** Emma Varzagh, Homeschooled, Pileated Woodpecker; Margot Nims, Garfield Elementary, Chestnut-backed Chickadee  
**2nd Place:** Bella Kanaga, Jacoby Creek School, Snowy Plover;

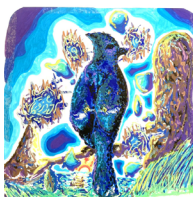


Snowy Plover  
by Bella Kanaga

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## Winners of Student Bird Art Contest, continued



Steller's Jay  
by David  
Grienauer

Ivan Tokarev, Homeschooled,  
Peregrine Falcon  
3rd Place: Elena Cudahy, Jacoby  
Creek School, Chestnut-backed  
Chickadee; Madden McCall,

Northern United Charters,  
Mallards

*Honorable Mentions:* Emma  
Studebaker, Northern United

Charters; Heidi Tout, Garfield Elementary; Harper  
Elliott, Blue Lake Elementary; Veda Vance, Alder  
Grove Charter; Saebra Ester, Garfield Elementary;  
Isolde Thayer-Randall, Trinidad Elementary

### Grades 6&7

1st Place: Clover Zinsmann, Winship Middle

School, Snowy Plovers; Daisy Eldridge, Agnes J  
Johnson Charter, Varied Thrush

2nd Place: David Grienauer, Pacific View Charter,  
Steller's Jay; Isaac Sisouphanh, Winship Middle  
School, White-tailed Kite

3rd Place: Leonardo

Freitas, Northern  
United Charters, Belted  
Kingfisher; Mackenzie  
Powell, Cutten  
Elementary, Peregrine  
Falcon

*Honorable Mentions:* Kenzie Payne, Northern  
United Charters; Zoey Moore, Sunny Brae Middle  
School; Natalia Dimmick, Zane Middle School;  
Mikalah Jackson, Cutten Elementary; Sasha



Cinnamon Teal Family  
by Evie Dowd

Woods, Sunny Brae Middle School; Ayla Dunn,  
Northcoast Preparatory Academy

### Grades 8-12

1st Place: Sequoia Manchester,  
Eureka High, Snowy Plover

2nd Place: Evie Dowd,

(Garberville) Leggett High,

Cinnamon Teal Family

3rd Place: Timuulin Page, Zane  
Middle School, Great Blue Heron

*Honorable Mentions:* Ricardo

Freitas, Northern United  
Charters; Amanda Malle,  
Winship Middle School; Bailey

Vue, Zane Middle School; Lily Baldwin, Zane  
Middle School; Fleda Burton, Far West Christian



Great Blue Heron  
by Cicada Pierce

## RRAS Sponsors 19th Annual Science Fair Award

By Sue Leskiw

The Humboldt County Science Fair was held in Eureka in mid-March. Tom Leskiw and I served as judges on behalf of RRAS and awarded a \$50 prize for the best project related to birds or their habitat to Ruby Williams, an eighth-grade student at Trinity Valley Elementary School in Willow Creek.

The purpose of Ruby's project, "**Fuel Reduction**," was to show that a forest treated with fuel reduction techniques (such as controlled burning, brush reduction, cultural burning, thinning through logging) reduces extreme fire behavior, saving homes, lives, money, and habitats.

Ruby set up three large aluminum baking trays half filled with sand to test different scenarios. These ranged from 1) untreated forest, to 2) untreated forest with fuel reduction near a house, to 3) a forest with fuel reduction. Each had toothpick trees with various spacing and a cardboard house, with differing amounts of crumbled dry leaves and pine needles representing dry dead fuel and understory brush. She lit each tray and recorded what happened.

Independent variables were the spacing between trees and amount of leaves and pine needles, representing whether the forest had been treated or not. The dependent variable was that a fire with less fuel to consume will not burn as fast or as hot. The controlled variable is that all items were the same dryness. Here are Ruby's results:

- Tray 1 (heavy fuel loading): entire forest burned at high intensity, house burned
- Tray 2 (heavy fuel loading with fuel reduction around house): entire forest burned at high intensity up to where the fuel reduction occurred, house did not burn
- Tray 3 (treated forest): very few trees burned, most of ground litter (understory fuel) burned at low intensity, house did not burn

Ruby concluded that fuel reduction in forests slows the rate of fire spread, reduces the heat intensity, and is less devastating to the environment and human infrastructure. "There will always be wildfires in the forest and fuel reduction cannot be done on every part of every forest, but if done in strategic places, it can greatly reduce the impact of wildfire to communities and lives and will save millions of dollars yearly."

Academy; October Mintey, Redwood Coast Montessori; Ram  
Virnave, Academy of the Redwoods

### Best Bird in Habitat Awards

Niamh Gaffney, Grade 2, Seaforth Montessori; Daphne Stork,  
Grade 3, Pacific View Charter; Kaylee Bramlett, Grade 4,  
Redwood Preparatory Academy; Cicada Pierce, Grade 5,  
Orleans Elementary; Kai Ault, Grade 6, Cutten Elementary

## Kid's Corner WOWZA WILDLIFE!

By Leslie Scopes Anderson

HEY MOM?  
ABOUT YOUR  
TAIL?



### FUN FACTS

#### Zebra

mothers use their tail  
to keep track of their  
foal while grazing.

Each animal has its  
own pattern of unique  
stripes, like a human  
fingerprint.

### WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Plains Zebras are found in  
savannah habitats in Africa.  
These are in Kenya.

Their grazing leads to more  
biodiversity. They travel in  
large herds to avoid predators  
like lions & hyenas.

## Results of 20th Annual Student Nature Writing Contest

Entry numbers rebounded from just 25 last year, as 75 Humboldt students in grades 4 through 9 entered a poem or essay in a contest associated with the 2025 Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival. RRAS presented six cash awards totaling \$100 plus five Honorable Mentions to the following schoolchildren who explored the topic *What Nature Means to Me*.

### Junior Division (Grades 4-7) Winners

First Place: Anika Terry, Grade 5, Garfield Elementary

Second Place: Penn Kerhoulas, Grade 5, Garfield Elementary

Third Place: Orion Assam, Grade 6, Alder Grove Charter

Honorable Mentions: Daisy Eldridge, Grade 7, Agnes J. Johnson Charter;  
Cedar Farrell, Grade 6, Garfield Elementary

### Senior Division (Grades 8&9) Winners

First Place: Asriel (Maeve) Martin, Grade 9, McKinleyville High

Second Place: Thea McKnight, Grade 8, Sunny Brae Middle School

Third Place: Easton Pifferini, Grade 9, McKinleyville High

Honorable Mentions

Bowdy Hicks, Grade 9, McKinleyville High; Molly Everett, Grade 8, Agnes J. Johnson Charter; Vida Walsh, Grade 9, Academy of the Redwoods



### “Listen”

By Anika Terry

The Earth. The sustainer of all life sources. Nature, the thing our species is destroying. Maybe one day we will have to fly to another planet, flee the home that we have destroyed.

Mother Nature is trying to tell us something, so I try to listen. The forest feels gentle when I am angry. As if trying to soothe me, to say “Child, there is no need. Be calm.” The ocean flows with my emotions. Washing away the tears I cry. A thousand winds whisper in my ear when I feel I am losing. They say, “One tiny breeze in a million gusts, if it just speaks up it can make a hurricane.”

A fire. Warming me and my friends and family. Bringing us together. We repay the fire by listening to what it has to say. It tells us that there is nothing holding us back, that we can forge a path forward to whatever destination ignites our hearts.

A meadow. The flowers dance in the breeze. Their whispery voices sing songs that carry on the wind. Washing through you like a wave of sounds saying, “Don’t wait to grow, no matter what they say.”

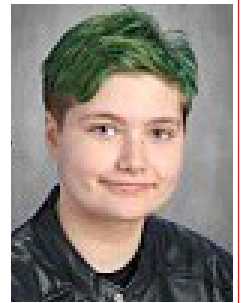
A river. It flows like happiness. It ebbs like fear. It eddies like confusion. It is a home to many. It tells us to be open to change, to take the road less traveled, to be made up of many different things.

A tree. The feeling of the bark under your fingers, rough but soft. The roots thread through the ground, connecting to the other trees. They create a forest. The trunk, worn and weathered, but still hard and sturdy. Big and strong the trunk tells us that it may take time, but you will be brave.

A booklet containing submissions from the winners will be available in late May for downloading at [rras.org](http://rras.org).

### “A Crow’s Memory”

By Asriel (Maeve) Martin



Did you know that crows can remember people? Well, they can, crows have extremely impressive memories. They can even hold grudges and pass along information to other members of their murder. They are very intelligent, interesting creatures. My story is about how I learned that.

I was nervous the first day of high school, especially knowing it’d be my last school before college. I noticed the crows as soon as I got there, in the field near the entrance, a few of them turning their heads up before going back to what they’d been doing. It was almost a week later that one of the crows approached me, outside of the library on a bench as I ate my breakfast. I had gotten there early and hadn’t seen many kids in the halls when I had come in, so the feeling of something hitting the side of my arm was enough to startle me.

However, when I turned around to look I found a small blue-eyed crow perched on the bench beside me, staring up at me expectantly and waiting. I wasn’t sure what to do at first. I silently stared back at her for a moment before realizing that the thing she seemed to want was most likely my own breakfast. Curious to see what would happen, I broke off a piece and tossed it onto the ground. Her attention quickly turned from me to the food, hopping down from the bench and pecking at it before picking it up in her beak, tilting her head up and flying away.

After that I figured if just one of them was hungry enough to hit me the others must be too. I started picking up extra bags of grapes from the cafeteria at lunch and heading outside to feed the crows. A couple weeks went by and they started showing up before I did, following me around the school, and bringing small trinkets for me—one of them even managed to follow me into a hallway outside the school gym. After a while it became a sort of routine, me bringing them food and them leaving gifts. One day, I realized that I’d lost one of my rings, a small silver one in the shape of two leaves that a friend gave me the year before.

I spent all day looking for it but no matter where I looked I couldn’t find it anywhere. Two days later, I’d just finished setting out fruit for my crows when I noticed they’d left more of their “gifts,” but as I knelt down I noticed something else along with the other gifts they had brought me: my ring! Since then I have continued to visit and feed the crows every single day.

So, to answer in short, what nature means to me, is that if you care for something it will care for you in return.

### Summer Hiatus

Just as bird activity slows down here in the summer, *The Sandpiper* too will be taking a break, with our June and July issues combined into one issue that will come out in the June *EcoNews*. Note that the

RRAS monthly programs are also on break over the summer, but a wonderful set of field trips continues every week. You can always keep up-to-date with those offerings on [rras.org](http://rras.org).

