



White-tailed Kite

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Butte, Glenn, and Tehama Counties of Northern California

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2014

ALTACAL Programs

Programs for the general community are normally held on the third Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., at the Chico Creek Nature Center, 1968 E. 8th St. Chico.

In December the program is held on the second Monday and in July and August there are no programs.

October

Monday, October 20, 2014 6:30 p.m.
Chico Creek Nature Center

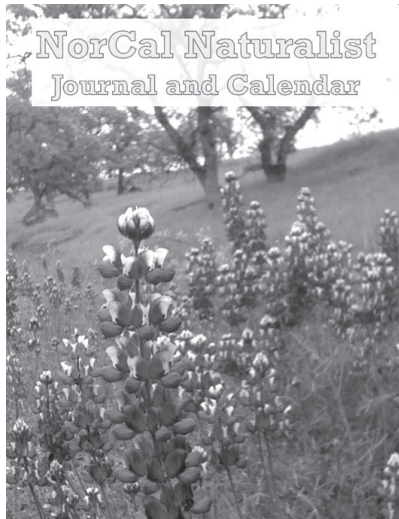
November

Monday, November 17, 2014 6:30 p.m.
Chico Creek Nature Center

REFLECTIONS OF A NATURALIST

NorCal Naturalist Journal and Calendar

Presented by SCOTT HUBER, Altacal Past President



Scott Huber began journaling in 1979 while on a three month trek in New Zealand. Since that time he has kept a field journal of almost every major adventure he has undertaken. With the introduction of computer based blogging Scott began journaling electronically, beginning with a three week bird-watching trip to Nome Alaska in 2008.

While working at the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserves from 2011 through 2014, Scott used Facebook to record his observations. Through the years Scott has found that a paper field journal enables him to take quick notes on what he's seen, allowing him to expand those notes into longer-form recollections and stories upon returning home. (continued on page 2.)

CAVITY NESTING BIRDS of Northern California

Presented by LARRY JORDAN

Larry Jordan, Wintu Audubon Society webmaster, will be sharing his experience with local cavity nesting birds of the north-state. Larry was introduced to birding after moving to northern California where he was overwhelmed by the local wildlife, forcing him to buy his first field guide just to be able to identify all the species visiting his yard. Building birdhouses and putting up feeders brought the ever increasing diversity of avian fauna even closer and he was hooked. Being the Shasta County Coordinator for the California Bluebird Recovery Program he monitors three Bluebird Trails with over 30 nest boxes for cavity nesting birds. Using photography and video imagery we will peek into the nesting behavior of these amazing bird species and learn how to make our backyards bird magnets. (continued on page 2.)



ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Director - at-Large	DEREK DUNN 414 698-3851 derekwdunn@gmail.com

October (continued from page 1.)

Scott's publication: *The NorCal Naturalist Journal and Calendar* was based in part on the holy grail of desk calendars – the Sierra Club Engagement Calendar. Scott's mother asked for and received a Sierra Club Desk Calendar each Christmas for many years and religiously wrote in it each day, and those journals now serve as a documentary of her golden years. With that in mind he decided to customize the desk calendar format specifically to northern California.

The journal is designed to fit in a back pocket, enabling a user to easily take it into the field if desired or keep it on a desk to use as a day-planner. Every right hand page features a seven day calendar page which is dated without days-of-the-week, so that it can be used over multiple years. Scott's personal field notes from many seasons of nature observation were expanded into one-page essays then condensed into forty-eight short stories opposite the calendar pages. Interspersed among the calendars and stories are twenty-four photos taken throughout the region by Scott and his son, Liam. Subject matter of the stories and photos include birds, flowers, reptiles, amphibians, fish and more. The publication will be available in limited quantities in local bookstores in time for the holidays.

Our October presentation will include the reading of essays from *The NorCal Naturalist Journal and Calendar* as well as a photo slide-show accompanied by the stories behind many of the photos. Signed copies of the journal will be available to purchase at the end of the meeting.

November (continued from page 1.)

Larry enjoys sharing his passion for birds and conservation through his blog, "The Birder's Report" which he started in September of 2007. He is also the West Coast Beat Writer for the popular 10000 Birds blog. As habitat manager for the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network his recent focus has been on bringing the Western Burrowing Owl back to life in California. Larry is now co-founder of a movement to create a new revenue stream for our National Wildlife Refuges with the Wildlife Conservation Stamp Project.

BOARD MEETINGS

5:15 p.m.

2nd Wednesday of each month

Altacal Audubon Society / Snow Goose Festival Office
635 Flume Street, Chico

Altacal Audubon Members are welcome to attend

NEIGHBORHOOD HABITAT

ALTACAL'S NEW PROGRAM

by MELINDA TEVES, Education Chair



Ruby-crowned Kinglet by Steve King

Altacal is starting a new program in October. It's called the **Neighborhood Habitat Certification Program**. Our goal is to support local community members who are interested in converting unused lawns to wildlife habitat.

Some of our members are already enjoying the benefits of having bird-friendly landscapes. It's a wonderful experience to watch a yard come to life.

By replacing unused lawn with primarily (but not exclusively) 'native' California plants, the benefits are many. The birds and pollinators that have evolved alongside these plants, for thousands of years, will have a reliable food source. This means more wild visitors. And plants that are native to our valley are generally drought-tolerant. This is valuable to our community - now, during the drought, and also for the long term as we face larger water issues. In addition, our native valley plants are beautiful. We don't want to wait for a weekend hike to enjoy them!

Altacal will support participants by providing resource packets and a **Neighborhood Habitat** garden sign. Resource packets will include local demonstration garden locations, local expert contacts, a calendar of workshops, favorite bird-friendly plants, local business coupons, best books & websites, irrigation tips, and other educational resources. There will be some easy-to-attain criteria regarding plantings, water-wise irrigation, and wildlife stewardship, and a small \$15 fee to support the program.

Portland, which has initiated a similar program, has enabled city residents to create urban wildlife corridors on 335 acres of urban land. This makes a real difference to local birds and wildlife. We look forward to working with Northern California residents eager to start our own program.

Further information will be provided on our new & improved website (coming soon). With questions, please feel free to e-mail Melinda at neighborhoodhabitat.mt@gmail.com



by STEVE OVERLOCK, President

At our Annual Program in September the following Executive Board Members were installed: STEVE OVERLOCK, President; JOSEPH O'NEIL, Vice President; KATE BRICE, Secretary; LEANN MCCONNELL, Treasurer, each for a two year term. There is a lot to do and I think I can speak for all the Board Members that we are looking forward to doing a lot. With your support and input Altacal will continue to speak up for the environment and the birds that inhabit it.

And a much deserved thank you to Lucas RossMerz for his in depth and enlightening talk at our September Program on the Bank Swallows of the Sacramento River. Altacal is indebted to Lucas and SNWR for all they are doing to restore California's longest river.

from the President

It is too late to restore the Carrier Pigeon (or maybe not: 100 Years After Her Death, Martha, the Last Passenger Pigeon, Still Resonates (tinyurl.com/lss7bet) and there has been much publicity recently about the death of Martha 100 years ago. But perhaps not enough awareness of the ill-fated Pigeon when you consider right in California 80% of tri-colored blackbird habitat has been lost in the last 100 years and there are nearly 20 species listed on Audubon California's web page that are in trouble, including our Grebes at the Oroville Afterbay and the elegant, ancient Sandhill Crane. Be assured, the Board Members of Altacal will not forget Martha nor the amazing run her lineage had.

Enjoy the Fall, and hope to see you at our next Program in October. Best of birding to all

UPCOMING

Bird Walks and Birding Trips

*All of our field trips are open to beginning birders.
Anyone with a sense of wonder is welcome to participate.*



Monterey Seabird Trip, Aug 24, 2014

October 5, Sunday **MONTEREY SEABIRD TRIP**

Trip Leader: Matt Forster

We will be joining John Sterling and Todd Easterla, once again, out of Monterey to try our luck on a Monterey Seabird Trip. Our last trip on August 24 turned up some amazing birds, including 5 species of Shearwater, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, Red-necked and Red Phalarope, Black-footed Albatross and many other great birds that you will only be able to see miles off the coast. Orcas, whales and dolphins will also be searched for! We had the opportunity to successfully help out a fur seal who had been entangled in a fishing net on the last trip! I'm sure there will be other exciting sites and sounds this time around, as well! (see full report on page 8.)

They have far-and-away the best boat captain in the region, Richard Ternullo; an amazing naturalist with a degree in biology and several decades of experience in Monterey Bay. His knack for getting the boat aligned in the water to allow the best looks at birds and marine mammals is legendary. All trips feature excellent, knowledgeable, highly-experienced and friendly leaders. Read about their trip leaders at montereyseabirds.com/SeabirdTripLeaders.htm

We will be driving down on Saturday and will be camping so make sure to bring appropriate attire and gear. We will be returning Sunday, after the trip is completed. The price is \$130 per person and goes from 7:30am -3pm. This trip is limited occupancy, so if interested, please contact immediately. Matt Forster, findforster@yahoo.com, 619-347-2269

October 26, Sunday **CHICO OXIDATION PONDS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**

Trip Leader: Matt Forster

We will get a personal and upclose view of the winter water-fowl migration at the Oxidation Ponds Wildlife Sanctuary at the Waste Water Treatment Plant, west of Chico. We'll have a first had look at the returning birds from Alaska and Canada, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal and possibly some unexpected migrants. The walk is under 2 miles and about 3 hours. For shorter, you can walk out to the viewing blind. The walk is flat and pretty easy going.

Meet at the Oxidation Pond parking area at 3 pm. Afternoon keeps the sun at our back. We should be back to the lot by 6 pm. To get to the Oxidation Ponds, go west on W 5th St from Hwy 32 in Chico. Follow W 5th St, which becomes Chico River Rd, for 3.9 miles. The wildlife viewing parking area is 300 yards past the main entrance to the water treatment plant, on the left. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, water, walking shoes and proper clothing for the expected weather conditions. There is a chemical toilet on the way out to the viewing area. Rain cancels. Matthew Forster, findforster@yahoo.com

November 15, Saturday **GRAY LODGE WILDLIFE AREA**

Trip Leaders: Gaylord Grams & Kathy Trevino

Join Altacal for a walking tour at Gray Lodge. We will walk the two-mile trail that includes the bird blinds after scoping the pond by parking lot #14. Fall migration should be well underway. We will meet at the Chico Park & Ride (lot closest to freeway) at 8 am sharp, carpool from there, and return by 3 pm. If you would prefer, meet us at Gray Lodge (parking lot #14) at 9 am. Bring a lunch, water, \$4 per person entry fee, binoculars, and a scope if you have one. For more information contact Kathy Trevino at kathytre@sbcglobal.net or 530-520-2872, or Gaylord Grams at 530-533-1624.

CENTRAL VALLEY BIRD SYMPOSIUM

November 16, Sunday

RAPTOR RUN

Trip Leaders: Matt Forster and Mary Muchowski

Join us in our search for Raptors in Butte County! We will be traveling by car to Cottonwood Rd and Nelson Ave to view the returning hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls. Cottonwood Road boasts one of the best landscapes in Northern California for raptors. Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks are regular visitors and Peregrine and Prairie Falcons can be seen perched on the surrounding power poles. While viewing a soaring Golden Eagle last year, I was pleasantly surprised by a beautiful Mountain Bluebird that flew within 20 feet of my car! Breathtaking! We will then travel to Richvale and check out the fields for Swans, Geese, and Ducks! Maybe we'll get lucky and be able to find Trumpeter Swans, that infrequently visit us!

Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, water, walking shoes and proper clothing for the expected weather conditions. Light rain will not cancel. We will meet at the first parking area at the Chico Park & Ride at 8 am. The trip will be 5-6 hours, so plan accordingly! Matthew Forster, findforster@yahoo.com, 619-347-2269

November 30, Sunday

LLANO SECO VIEWING PLATFORM BIG SIT

Trip Leader: Jennifer Patten

Give your legs a rest and your eyes a treat on this leisurely afternoon at Llano Seco Viewing Platform.

Bring your lawn chair, binoculars, and snacks, sit back and relax as the birds come to you. You'll learn to identify the waterfowl species that frequent this idyllic setting. Then at dusk the waterfowl will fly-out from the ponds to nearby fields to feed at night. As the sky fills with birds, their wing beats and calls are incredible. Meet at Llano Seco Viewing Platform at 4pm. Limited parking, limited to 20 people. To reserve your spot contact trip leader Jennifer Patten, jpchico@sbcglobal.net, 530-345-9356 by November 24.

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the **18th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium Nov 20 - 23, 2014** at the Stockton Hilton Hotel in Stockton. Please come and help us kick off this year's CVBS! Come meet the CVBS board & staff members! Reconnect with old friends! Meet new ones! Take advantage of the scrumptious Hors D'oeuvres buffet & No Host Bar on Thursday night. Thursday Night's Keynote speaker is Ed Harper presenting a program on "Appreciating the Birds of the Central Valley". The CVBS gets off to a supercharged start with this lively and informative presentation. Ed is a widely known, popular and highly sought after speaker.

Friday Night's keynote program is presented by Nat Seavey on "From Flood to Drought: A Bird's-Eye View of Water Management in the Central Valley." Nat Seavey, is the Research Director of the Pacific Coast and Central Valley Group at Point Blue Conservation Science (formerly PRBO). His research is focused on the ecology and conservation of riparian ecosystems, bird migration, the ecological effects of climate change, and applying science to conservation decision making and public policy.

Saturday Night's keynote program is presented by Joel Greenberg on "The Echoes of their Wings: The Life and Legacy of the Passenger Pigeon." For the past four years he has been a leader in Project Passenger Pigeon which aims to mark the anniversary of the species' extinction. He is co-producing with director David Mrazek the documentary, From Billions to None: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction.

WORKSHOPS include: "Subspecies for Birders" by Joe Morlan, "What Birders should know about Taxonomy in Flux" by Jon Dunn & Kimball Garrett, and a photo workshop by Bob Steele, plus, informative talks by Monica Iglesia, Sara Kross, and Bob Meese. Andy Engilis and his UCD Museum crew will present the very popular Specimen Workshop.

FIELD TRIPS always turn up exciting birds. Add in the always entertaining and educational Bird ID Panel, the wonderful display of art and gifts for yourself or others at the Birder's Market and the camaraderie of hundreds of like-minded folks, and you know you'll have a good time! There's something for everyone interested in birds. Come and join us to bird, learn, and just have fun!

To look over the line-up of speakers, workshops, and field trips or register, check out our website at 2013cvbs.org



Get to know YOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES!

PART 11 - OCTOBER / NOVEMBER

by LORA HALLER, Visitor Services Manager

Everyone by now has heard about the drought in California. With the doom and gloom images of low levels of water in Lake Shasta, Lake Oroville, and many other lakes and knowing there are lots of water users including homes, businesses, agriculture, fish, and wildlife, what does this mean for the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex this winter and the millions of birds that migrate to the Sacramento Valley?

As of this writing in early September, Lake Shasta is at 29% of its capacity which is only 46% of historical average for this date (California Department of Water Resources) and it feeds the Sacramento River which supplies water to the Complex. It is ordered and delivered to the refuges through drainage ditches and canals by the local water districts including the Glenn Colusa Irrigation District for Sacramento, Delevan, and Colusa.

State and federal land managers are working strategically together on a landscape-wide level in their water management. The National Wildlife Refuges in California help compensate for the loss of ~95% of the Central Valley's historic wetland habitat. Recent midwinter counts have shown that 5-6 million ducks and geese winter in the Central Valley. This accounts for ~60% of winter waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway. The mosaic of managed wetlands and winter-flooded rice fields (mostly on private lands) in the northern Sacramento Valley, support 4-5 million waterfowl or 50% of the winter waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway.

In 2014, the Sacramento, Delevan, and Colusa NWRs will be receiving only 75% of their allocated water. Over the spring and summer, refuge managers and biologists continue to strategize for the optimal use of water to continue to meet the refuges' conservation goals. The refuge staff is being flexible with water

usage so water conserved early in the season can be used later in the season to support migratory bird populations and meet management objectives to the extent possible. During the spring and summer, less water was used to provide irrigation to the desirable plants and treat invasive plants. The lack of water will result in a lower food production and less control of invasive species. Less summer wetland habitat was flooded to increase the amount of water available for fall. This conservation will result in only holding 10-15% of the managed wetlands dry during the 2014-15 winter. Some of these units may be flooded as monthly water use is assessed.

For Sutter NWR, parts of the refuge will not be flooded due to water curtailments of post 1914 water rights by the state of California. For the Llano Seco Unit of the North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area, it will receive water near the platform but will be unable to begin flooding until November 1.

With drought conditions, there is an increased possibility of disease outbreak in waterfowl. Avian botulism is common in wetlands and toxins from the bacterium affect central nervous systems of waterfowl, ultimately resulting in paralysis and death. Previous outbreaks on the refuge can result in thousands of birds lost. Birders and landowners are asked to keep an eye open for sick and dead birds. On the Complex, please report any birds to headquarters. On private and state land, please report possible outbreaks to the CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab 916-358-2790 or using the Mortality Reporting Form at wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Laboratories/WildlifeInvestigations/Monitoring/MortalityReport.aspx

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

16th Annual SNOW GOOSE FESTIVAL of the Pacific Flyway January 21 - 25, 2015

Altacal Audubon Society plays a huge role in organizing and hosting this wonderful community event. The Altacal board and several members are involved at all levels. Making a difference in our community is what we all strive to do. We are hoping for an even more successful event this year! If you are interested in volunteering please call Jennifer Patten at 345-9356 or jpchico@sbcglobal.net.

Thank you,
JENNIFER PATTEN, Snow Goose Festival Coordinator & Altacal Audubon Program Chair



Bird Walk and Birding Trip REPORTS

July 11 - 13, 2014

FLAMMULATED OWLS OF PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST

Trip Leaders: David Arsenault and Jennifer Patten

The trip to Lake Davis to see the Flammulated Owl undoubtedly was one of the best field trips of the year. Our journey began Friday afternoon when several of us who were camping at the Lighting Tree Campground birded the north side of the lake. We saw



Western Tanagers, Brown Creeper, Spotted Sandpiper, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, Mountain Bluebirds, Northern Flicker, and lots of **American Robins**. On the lake were **White Pelicans, Western Grebes, Canada Geese, Ring-billed** and **California Gulls** and an **Osprey** searching for food. A pair of **Williamson's Sapsuckers** were in the campground and we could hear **Sandhill Cranes** across the lake.

Saturday morning we were up and out of camp by 8 am for a drive to Eureka Plumas State Park to bird the Madora Lake Nature Walk. A beautiful easy 1.5 mile forested trail thick with Incense Cedar, Ponderosa Pines, and Red Fir where soon the trees part for glimpses at the water's edge lined with willows and reeds. In the thick forest we all got great views of a **Pileated Woodpecker**, also sighted were **Mountain Chickadees, Western Tanager, Western Wood-Pewee,** and **Hammond's Flycatcher**. In the willows, **Yellow, Orange-crowned** and **Wilson's Warblers**, with lots of **Tree Swallows** flying over the lake.

By 5 pm Saturday we were meeting David Arsenault, Plumas Audubon, for dinner at Lena's Cantina in Portola. If ever in Portola, stop and eat at Lena's, excellent! He filled us in on what our night owl adventure would entail. Driving rough dirt roads, walking quietly in the forest at night, and encountering many mosquitoes. But it was all worth it! Our night began with a sighting of a **Northern Pygmy Owl** along the dirt road, perched on a snag in the forest. Then as we reached the ridge after a half hour drive, the supermoon was up, we took a short walk in the woods, and there she was, the female owl peering out of her nesting box. What a beauty! She had three owlets too. Then David took us to the owl banding site, another half hour drive along a forested ridge dirt/dusty road, where owl project interns set up mist nets to capture Flammulated Owls. Our lucky night, the interns caught the first **Flammulated Owl** of the season. But what was also amazing that night near the banding site, we heard the whistled *poor-will* calls of the **Common Poorwill**, the **Common Nighthawk's** nasal *peent* and *hollow booming* sounds made by his wings and *hollow hoots* of a Flammulated Owl all calling at the same time. A pretty magical moment in the wood.

Sunday morning added more birds to our list with sightings down at lake's edge, in the sage brush, meadows and forest, **Sage Thrasher, Lark, Chipping and Brewers Sparrows, Green-tailed Towhee, Pine Siskins, Cedar Waxwings, Black-headed Grosbeak, Cassin Vireo, Band-tailed Pigeon, Black Phoebe, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and Pygmy Nuthatches**. A great trip, great group of birders and a big thank you to David!



Bird Walk and Birding Trip

REPORTS

August 17, Sunday

CHICO OXIDATION PONDS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Trip Leader: Matt Forster Report by Joseph O'Neil

On a warm August afternoon, it is easy to think that this might not be that great of a birding adventure, but then again it is the Oxi Ponds and it rarely lets us down. Seven of us braved the heat and ventured onto the path along the canal. **Barn, Cliff and Tree Swallows** were zipping and a pair of **Belted Kingfishers** were rattling around the canal. **Lesser Goldfinch** and a lone **American** reminded us that star thistle does have a purpose. Approaching the first pond, a pair **Green Heron** flew off. The beautiful call of a **Marsh Wren** was heard as **Red-winged Blackbirds** also occupied the reeds. In the next pond we saw **Pied-billed Grebe** and turtles with their version of up periscope. A pair of **Wood Ducks** were also seen. Towards the end of the canal we started to see **Lazuli Buntings** and ended up with a total of 13. A nice summer treat! Along the south end we were pleasantly surprised to see a **Phainopepla** sitting next to a **Lark Sparrow** atop an elderberry. The ponds are getting engulfed by the plants, water primrose and Johnson grass, so there is not much mud for shorebirds. But we soon were reminded that migrating birds will find water and make the most of it. The large eastern pond was full of species. Thanks in part to the waste water plants manager Mark. He is listening to our concerns and letting the water level of the ponds evaporate becoming more conducive to shorebirds. We started seeing large groups of **White Faced Ibis, Snowy Egrets** and of course **Greets** and **Blues**. Many ducks have started to find there way here



including: 14 **Northern Shoveler**, 2 **Green-winged Teal**, a couple **Cinnamon Teal** and a lone **Double-Crested Cormorant**. So much to our delight we started to notice shorebirds! A dozen **Greater Yellowlegs**, 7 **Western Sandpiper**, 4 **Short-billed Dowitcher**, 25 **Long-billed Dowitcher**, and a **Wilson's Phalarope**. Betwixt all these was a lone sandpiper with an eye ring and a showy tail that got us all worked up. After some research, we were

certain that it was a **Solitary Sandpiper**. A rare bird for the Chico area! Our initial misgiving that a warm afternoon would not produce much was thwarted by the reminder that the Oxi Ponds rarely disappoints. Thanks to Matt Forster for leading a great bird walk!

Solitary Sandpiper by Matt Forster



Marbled Godwits at Drakes Bay
by Mary Muchowski

August 24, Sunday

MONTEREY SEABIRD TRIP

Trip Leader: Matt Forster Report by Joseph O'Neil

On August 24, 11 members of Altacal Audubon joined a Monterey Pelagic out of Monterey Harbor. The trip was exceptional! Birding experts John Sterling and Todd Easterla led the excursion and we racked up a great list of pelagic birds and many lifers! A very sad situation turned resolved in to a happy ending as we were able to release a Fur Seal that had been tangled in fishing net! Contact Matt Forster at findforster@yahoo.com, if you'd like to join us on our next trip, **October 5**. (see page 3.)

At sea: 23 Species; **Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater** (ABA Code 2), **Sooty Shearwater, Manx Shearwater** (ABA Code 2), **Black-vented Shearwater** (ABA Code 2), **Double-crested Cormorant, Brandt's Cormorant, Pelagic Cormorant, Brown Pelican, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Phalarope, Parasitic Jaeger, Pomarine Jaeger, Common Murre, Rhinoceros Auklet, Pigeon Guillemot, Heermann's Gull, Western Gull, California Gull, Common Tern, Elegant Tern.**

Only in the harbor: 8 additional species; **Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-heron, Black Turnstone, Surf-bird, Rock Pigeon** (feral), **Barn Swallow, Brewer's Blackbird.**

The trip also boasted an excellent list of mammals! **Harbor Seal** (in the harbor), **Northern Fur Seal** (at least two, including the tangled individual), **California Sea Lion** (lots), **Steller's Sea Lion** (one male on the buoy), **Sea Otter** (several), **Dall's Porpoise** (at least one), **Risso's Dolphin** (large group, at least thirty?), **Humpback Whale** (at least one), **Harbor Porpoise** (at least two). Other critters: **Mola mola, Velella velella**, and **Egg-yolk Jellyfish**

September 5 - 7, 2014

POINT REYES TRIP

Trip Leader: Jennifer Patten

With a combination of great people, fantastic weather, beautiful varied habitats to bird in, and some of the finest potluck you'll ever eat, the annual Altacal Audubon camping/birding field trip to Pt. Reyes National Seashore was spectacular! Every year Altacal plans a trip here coinciding with the peak of fall migration. Our goal each year is to see a lifer when a vagrant bird that made errors in navigation and is unexpected in this area stops and rests at the many birding hot spots along the coast. This year seven very lucky birders went along and spent two days doing just that, birding these hot-spots. The hottest of the spots this year for us was the Fish Docks area along the south end of Drakes Bay. Noteworthy seabirds we saw around the docks and rocks were **Common**



and **Pacific Loons, Wandering Tattlers, Black-Turnstones, Common Murre, Eared Grebe, Surf Scoter, and Double-crested Cormorants.** In the cypresses around the buildings and in the pines, landbirds sighted

and lifers for many included **Prairie Warbler, American Redstart, Blackpoll Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Western Wood Pewee, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Black-throated Gray, Yellow, Townsend and Hermit Warblers.** As usual, a **Great Horned Owl** or two are seen in the Eucalyptus trees. Out at the Lighthouse, we saw great views of two **Peregrines, Double-crested, Brandts, and Pelagic Cormorants, Brown Pelicans,** gulls, and in the cypress trees, again lifers for most of us and amazing they're here, we saw a **Pine Warbler,** along with **McGillivray, Townsend, Yellow Warblers,** and a **Rock Wren** on the way back to the cars. Then a stop at Nunes Historic Ranch a top lifer for all of us, a **Cape May Warbler!**

Point Reyes Trip, Sept 5-7, 2014

top - Red-sided Garter Snake at Abbott's Lagoon

top R - Peregrine Falcon at the Lighthouse

R- Group under big California Bay Laurel on Earthquake Trail
by Mary Muchowski



Drakes Beach had an amazing flock of 50+ **Elegant Terns** mixed in with some **Western, Ring-billed, Hermann's,** and **California Gulls** along with **Marbled Godwits, Whimbrels** and in the bay **Red-throated and Common Loons and Surf Scoters.** Adding to our stops this year, the Pierce Point Historic Ranch we saw **Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows, California Quail, Osprey, American Kestrel, Great and Snowy Egret,** and 20+ **Barn Swallows.**

Sunday morning birding at Earthquake Trail, **Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Brown Creeper, Western Bluebirds, Stellar and Scrub Jays, Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawk, Acorn, Nuttals, and Downy Woodpeckers, Anna's and Rufous Hummers.** Final stop at Abbotts Lagoon we saw **White and Brown Pelicans,** immature **Black-crowned Night Heron, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Canada Geese, Great Blue Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, Gulls and Cormorants.**

Other exciting sightings were a mother **dolphin** and young in Drakes Bay, **Gray Foxes, Coyotes, Bobcat,** large herds of **Elk, Red-sided Grater Snake** and spotting several **Sunfish** at the surface of the ocean at the Point Reyes Lighthouse.



Love the Dove

by Rex Burress

Early in the morning I walked over to Blue Oak Meadow above the Feather River, and sitting on Longbar Road were two Mourning Doves. ‘Good mourning in the morning!’ The wary bird was extra wary, as if knowing the hunting season had started the first of September. Perhaps they recognized my walking stick as not being a gun and held their ground!

Doves, with their soft pleading eyes and streamlined structure, do not seem to be a likely game bird that can be shot in season.

They have represented peace and gentleness ever since one returned to Noah’s Ark with a twig verifying that the great flood had receded. That’s not too scientific, but does represent a basic belief about the bird. They are an official symbol of peace in Wisconsin and Michigan. Ironically, they are bully birds around a bird feeder!



Although all song birds are edible—and eat them they did in the former times of Europe—the doves have an added attraction for sportsmen—they have a twisting rapid, 55-mph flight and make a challenging target for a .12 gauge. The wings make a whistling sound on takeoff and landing, and their mournful “ooAA coo coo coo” call is sometimes mistaken for an owl. About 70 million are shot in season each year, but they are not expected to succumb as did the passenger pigeon, as they are more elusive and prolific, nesting up to six times a year.

It is no secret that our society’s namesake and pioneer bird artist, John James Audubon, shot the birds he illustrated in order to correctly render the feathers—and after the art and preserving the bird skin—he ate the bodies!

Guns aside, the mourning dove is one of those all-American birds found all over the U.S.A.—and beyond—being found as far east as Pakistan! Only the introduced Rock Pigeons from Europe have blanketed the continent with such completeness. All doves have a grayish image, except the feral pigeons have considerable plumage variation. There are eight other Columbidae family dove species in America, located in the Southwest. American Crows, European Starlings, English (House) Sparrows, Linnets (House Finches) American Robins, and Downy Woodpeckers, are some other all-Americans.

The introduced Eurasian Colored-Doves, *Streptopella decaocta*, have spread into California, and Stu Shaner of Oroville has watched a flock around his home for several years. They are larger than *Zenaida macroura* Mourning Doves, with no bag limits during the hunting season since their invasive residency is not encouraged by CA Fish and Game.

Mourning doves feed on seeds, and build a flimsy stick nest to hold the two white eggs. Like Wood Duck boxes, doves have been helped out by making a cone-wire nest holder that keeps the eggs more protected. Uniquely, the squab babies are fed regurgitated milk by the parents. While most birds drink by lifting a bill full at a time, Columbids suck water like a horse.

The memory of the mourning of the dove is haunting, when, as a boy, I would sit on the shores of No Creek waiting for my fishing float to flitch. We called them “turtle doves,” a term actually applied to the European *Streptopelia turtur*. The name came from the call of “turr turr,” and had no connection to reptiles. That is also the species mentioned in the song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas [my true love gave to me...],” that ends up with 22 turtle doves!

(reprinted from *White-tailed Kite* Oct - Nov 2010)

Oh that I had the wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest.

– Old Testament: Psalms 4:6

Local Chapter Membership Application

Please join us!

YOUR MEMBERSHIP WILL HELP
ALTACAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
CONTINUE ITS IMPORTANT WORK.

Altacal Audubon Society (AAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. AAS is a separately incorporated non-profit organization with a local chapter membership. 100% of membership dues goes to support local projects and activities. AAS is an all-volunteer organization that conducts all of its programs with unpaid staff.

We offer regularly scheduled **field trips** that focus on birds and bird habitats; membership **programs** with media presentations on birds and related topics; a bi-monthly **newsletter**, the White-tailed Kite; **website** www.altacal.org/; and **advocacy** to protect and conserve local habitats as well as special projects and programs.

Submission of Articles to the *White-tailed Kite*

Articles for publication should be sent to Denise Devine by email to dsrdevine@hotmail.com on the first of the month, prior to the next issue.

THANKS to all of you who contribute regularly by sending in reports, articles and photos for the White-tailed Kite – Denise, Editor.



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White-tailed Kite

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2014

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Oct	20	Program - <i>Reflections of a Naturalist</i>
Oct	26	Chico Oxidation Ponds
Nov	15	Gray Lodge Wildlife Area
Nov	16	Raptor Run
Nov	17	Program - <i>Cavity Nesting Birds</i>
Nov	30	Llano Seco <i>Big Sit</i>

For updated information check the Altacal website
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**REFLECTIONS
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