



# Madrone LEAVES

Madrone Audubon Society, Inc., Post Office Box 1911, Santa Rosa, California 95402

VOLUME 47 February/March 2014 Number 4

## West Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

by Gordon Beebe

It was below freezing in Freestone as we started our area tally for the West Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count on a late December morning at 5:30. I stood outside the car, straining to hear the sound of an owl next to an old barn and silo. The stars glittered overhead with a thin crescent moon, and though no hoots were heard, a shooting star seemed a good omen for the upcoming day.



*Ferruginous Hawk*  
Photo courtesy of Tom Reynolds

The next stop proved more productive: first, a female Great-horned Owl hooted to the south, and then faintly in the distance, a male returned her call. Then another female hooted to the northeast, and another male hooted low in reply. All told, we tallied eight Great-horned Owls for the morning. How many species would we have by the end of the day? Would we match our total from last

year? But first, what led us and so many others to choose to be out in the cold on this late December morning, when it would be so easy to stay in bed, warm and cozy instead?  
Imagine living back in the late 1800s, when, instead of going out and counting

birds, people (well, men mostly) were going out with guns and shooting everything they could see, then piling up the spoils: the team with the biggest pile of deceased furred and feathered creatures won.

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### FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

Monday, February 17, 2014, 7:00 PM  
First United Methodist Church  
1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa

John Kelly, Ph.D., Director of Conservation Science at Audubon Canyon Ranch, will present a program on the status, ecology, and conservation of the Bay Area's herons and egrets, based on long-term regional studies of these spectacular birds. The program will include a close look at their natural history, responses to local disturbance, and vulnerability to the changing climate. In addition, John will provide updates on songbird studies in the central Mayacamas Mountains near Healdsburg, and on the responses of wintering shorebirds to wetland restoration in Tomales Bay.

### MARCH GENERAL MEETING

Monday, March 17, 2014, 7:00 PM

Gordon Beebe, Vice President of Madrone Audubon Society, will present "Exploring the Costa Rican Rainforest, from the lowlands to mid-level mountains".

More than a slide show, the presentation includes video clips, Ken Burns-style pans of still photography, with a soundtrack of audio recordings taken on-site at four different rainforest ecolodges in Costa Rica. Experience the visual and auditory splendor of the birds and monkeys of the rainforest, with poisonous snakes, lizards, butterflies, spiders, plants, and more that make each location unique. Views of trails and lodgings depict what you may expect from a visit to this tropical paradise.

### Coming Monday, April 21, 2014

Tom Gardali, Pacific Coast and Central Valley Group Director for Pt. Blue Conservation Science, will present a program highlighting the effects of global warming on various species of our western bird populations, and the methodology for monitoring these effects.



*Great Egrets*  
Photo courtesy of Tom Reynolds

To receive *Leaves* via email in PDF format just email your request to:  
**madroneaudubon@um.att.com**  
You will get your copy faster and help save paper.

All walks and meetings are open to the public. Bird walks are recreational and educational in purpose, and all levels of expertise are welcome. Bring field equipment and wear comfortable shoes and layered clothing for variable weather conditions. Please carpool whenever possible. Forecasted heavy rain cancels. There is no charge for activities unless otherwise specified, but some parks have day-use fees.

## February 2014 Calendar

**CONSERVATION COMMITTEE** exchanges information by phone and email as soon as possible when an issue surfaces. Please contact Diane Hichwa at 785-1922 or dhichwa@earthlink.net.

### *Wednesday February 5, 7 PM*

**BOARD MEETING.** Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.

### *Saturday February 1, 8:30 AM to Noon*

**HUDEMANS SLOUGH.** Meet at the Sonoma County Water Agency property on the northern edge of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes. From the city of Sonoma, drive south on Highway 12/121. Turn south on Ramal Road and drive approximately 2.4 miles until you reach the entrance to Hudeman Slough. There is a large hay barn on the right and a parking lot in front of the barn. Rain cancels. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115.

### *Saturday February 8, 9:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance/Madrone leads a nature walk. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. Contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577.

### *Saturday February 15, 10:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads two children/family nature walks. One to two hours, depending on age of children. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. For the children/family walk in English, contact Mary Edith Moore at 763-3577; for the walk in Spanish, contact Connie Peabody at 338-2237.

### *Saturday February 15, 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM*

**PUTAH CREEK/LAKE SOLANO.** Meet at Lake Solano Park, 8685 Pleasants Valley Road, Winters, CA at 9:30 AM. Take Calistoga Road (becomes Petrified Forest Road) to Highway 128. Turn right on Highway 128. Turn left on Deer Park Road. Turn right on Silverado Trail North. Turn left on Sage Canyon Road/128. Follow Highway 128 until you reach County

Road 86/Pleasants Valley Road, and turn right. The park is immediately over the bridge to your left. There is a \$5 day use fee at Lake Solano Park. To carpool, please arrive by 7:30 AM at our Santa Rosa meeting place, the Safeway parking lot at the northeast corner of Highway 12 and Calistoga Road. We will park at the edge of the parking lot bordering on Calistoga Road. Bring lunch. Rain cancels. Leader: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115.

### *Saturday February 15, 12:30-1:30*

**MAYACAMAS ACCESS ORIENTATION** (Required for independent hiking on the Sanctuary) + Optional Hike until 4 PM. Starts at Rob Roy Flat, a big pullout about 25 minutes up Pine Flat Road from Highway 128, just before crossing under the big power lines. This session will qualify you to hike independently on the Sanctuary. Dave Self will introduce you to the preserve and our rules. The session is outdoors, so bring a chair or cushion to sit on if you like. Afterwards, you can hike independently or join an easy three-mile hike (on the road to Little Sulphur Creek and back) for views and a little ghost town history. Dress for the weather and bring drinking water.

### *Saturday February 22, 9:00 AM*

**ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY, PETALUMA.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads a walk at the Ellis Creek ponds. Go to the end of Cypress Drive and through the gates. Parking lot is on the left. Rain cancels. Contact: Bob Dyer at 763-2934.

### *Saturday February 22, 1:00-4:00PM*

**MAYACAMAS PEAK TO PEEK.** Starts at Little Sulphur Creek Bridge, 30 minutes up Pine Flat Road from Highway 128. Look for the White Egret truck. Join Preserve Naturalist Dave Self for a two-mile hike to two of the highest points on the preserve, on Red Hill; part is off-trail onto steep ground. If it's clear, we may see Mt. Tam, Mt. Wittenberg and the Hills at Pt. Reyes (on exceptionally clear days we've seen the Headlands near the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse and the water in the bight between Pt. Reyes and Bodega Bay).

## March 2014 Calendar

### *Wednesday March 5, 7 PM*

**BOARD MEETING.** Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.

### *Saturday March 1, 8:30 AM to Noon*

**ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY and SHOLLENBERGER PONDS.** Meet at Ellis Creek promptly at 8:30; the group may go to Shollenberger. From Highway 101 in Petaluma, go east on Highway 116 (Lakeville Highway), and right on Pine View Way, then left on Cypress Drive. Go to the end of the road and through the gates. We will meet in the parking lot, near the bathroom. Bring a scope if you have one. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115, and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.

### *Saturday March 8, 9:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance/Madrone leads a nature walk. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. Contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577.

### *Saturday March 15, 10:00 AM*

**SHOLLENBERGER PARK.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads two children/family nature walks. One to two hours, depending on age of children. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. For the children/family walk in English, contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577; for the walk in Spanish, contact Connie Peabody at 338-2237.

### *Saturday March 15, 8:30 AM to Noon*

**LAS GALLINAS PONDS.** Meet at the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. From Highway 101, north of San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, and go to the lot at the end of the road. Informal carpools meet at 7:30 AM, at the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Office, 747 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa. The parking lot is behind the office (access from Carillo Street). Please arrive at 7:35 AM to carpool. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115, and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.

### *Saturday March 22, 9:00 AM*

**ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY, PETALUMA.** Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads a walk at the Ellis Creek ponds. Go to the end of Cypress Drive and through the gates. Parking lot is on the left. Rain cancels. Contact: Bob Dyer at 763-2934.

### *Saturday March 29, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM*

**BODEGA BAY.** From the center of the town of Bodega Bay, drive north on Highway 1. Turn left at Eastshore Road (the Bodega Head turnoff), then right at the stop sign, and continue 0.3 mile to the large dirt parking lot on the right. Bring lunch. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 583-3115, and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.

### *Wednesday December 4, 7:00 PM*

**BOARD MEETING.** Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55A Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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In the winter of 1886, ornithologist Frank Chapman, of the American Museum of Natural History, decided to go out and count birds in Manhattan on two afternoon walks. His total was 174 birds, of 40 species. But these were not live birds—they were the feathers, and sometimes entire bodies of birds, that he could identify on the hats of women of fashion, from grebes, a saw-whet owl, flycatchers and jays, to bluebirds, thrashers, and waxwings.

A few years later, in 1896, Mrs. Augustus Hemenway and Miss Minna Hall started a series of afternoon teas in Boston to discuss the destruction of heron colonies that fueled the trade in feathers for women's hats. Out of this informal series, the Massachusetts Audubon Society was formed. Members pledged to boycott bird hats. Like-minded individuals (mostly women) formed other Audubon Societies, inviting men to join. By 1900, through their efforts and the efforts of the American Ornithologist's Union, five states had joined to outlaw the sale of plumes.

In 1900, Frank Chapman proposed the first "Christmas Bird Census." It included 27 dedicated individuals who counted birds in 25 circles, from Boston to Pacific Grove, California. By 2012, the count had grown to 2,369 circles with 71,531 counters in the entire western hemisphere, from Canada to Ecuador, counting over 64 million individual birds!

### Our 47th Year

The December 29th count in 2013 was the 47th year for West Sonoma County. In 2012, our total of 184 species put us in 17th place for total bird species recorded in a circle north of the U.S.-Mexico border. This is a testament both to the diverse habitats found in the county, and the number of dedicated individuals willing to spend a cold day late in the year to do what they love—identify birds.

Throughout the day, volunteers worked hard to tally species; these are only some highlights: Peter Colasanti paddled his kayak down the Estero Americano, counting many species along the way; Bill Doyle's group along Highway One found seven White-winged Scoters; Mike Parmeter's group at Bodega Head counted Fulmar, Burrowing Owl, and Marbled Murrelet; Dea Fried's group in Doran Beach added Northern Waterthrush and Orchard Oriole; and Carolyn Johnson's group on Harrison Grade counted all seven species of woodpeckers, with a total of 66 individual woodpeckers.

The sunburned faces of counters at the post-count dinner attested to the beautiful weather we had on this late December day—clear and bright, almost hot by midday, with nary a breeze. As we are all aware, we have been having this type of weather for much longer than normal for this time of year. The effects were noted at the post-count dinner by one area leader after another: ponds that had been good spots for waterfowl in years past were dried up, rivers and streams that had offered chances to see or hear a dipper were reduced to pools and trickles. Some species, such as goldfinches, were noticeably low, and the final count, though low in total numbers of birds, was an unofficial 186 species.

All of the data collected helps to assess the status of bird populations in our country and beyond. Every little tick mark on each team's tally sheet adds

to our understanding of how birds are doing, and helps to guide future conservation efforts. Congratulations and thanks to our CBC Chairman, Veronica Bowers, to all of the area leaders and counters, and to everyone who helped make the day and the post-count dinner a success!



*Cinnamon Teal at Spring Lake*  
Photo courtesy of Tom Reynolds

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## Out and About

**Wednesday February 26, 7:00-8:30PM**  
**"Thinking like a Naturalist: Reclaiming the Art of Natural History"**

Speaker: John Muir Laws - renowned naturalist & illustrator

Learn how to get more out of every nature ramble. Developments in neuropsychology have opened doors in our understanding of the brain and cognition and how you can train yourself to see more and to be more curious about what you discover. John will demonstrate simple and fun techniques you can incorporate into your own recreational nature study. Take your birding and nature study to the next level with one of the best naturalists in the Bay Area! The Wine Country Nature Lectures Series is in partnership with Sonoma County Regional Parks and is based at the Veteran's Memorial Building, 126 First Street West, Sonoma, CA. 95476. At door: \$8.

Visit [www.sonomabirding.com](http://www.sonomabirding.com)

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### Are you a National Audubon member?

Please consider joining our local chapter, Madrone Audubon.

(see membership form, back page)



**OUT AND ABOUT**

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**Thursday March 20, 7:00-8:30PM**

**“Birds: The Most Amazing Animals on Earth”**

Speaker: Joe Mueller, Director of the Natural History program, College of Marin

Birds are exceptional in so many ways, their intelligence, migration, color, behavior, and senses. Being able to see a mouse a mile away, migrating 40,000 miles in a year, remembering thousands of hiding places and many other feats, set birds apart from all other living beings. Join Joe for an evening of biological investigation of the most amazing animals on earth. Warning: you might find yourself embarrassed to be a mammal! The Wine Country Nature Lectures Series is in partnership with Sonoma County Regional Parks and is based at the Veteran’s Memorial Building, 126 First Street West, Sonoma, CA. 95476. At door: \$8.

Visit [www.sonomabirding.com](http://www.sonomabirding.com)

**Junior Audubon Outings**

Scott Campbell will join Gordon Beebe on March 1 at Ellis Creek from 8:30 to noon for a walk, and April 5 at Spring Lake from 8 to noon. Rain cancels. An artist friend of Scott, Stephanie, may be able to lead some wildlife drawing after the Spring Lake walk.

**January 7-March 24**

**“Once Upon a Wetland” Art Exhibit**

Heron Hall, Laguna de Santa Rosa Environmental Center, 900 Sanford Road, Santa Rosa, CA 527-9277 Come and enjoy Ane Carla Rovetta’s beautiful soil and pastel paintings. Ane Carla is a local science illustrator, field biologist, storyteller and teacher or cultural uses of plants and nature crafts.

Ane Carla will be conducting a storytelling performance on February 8 from

6:30-8:00 PM; **“Animal Tales from the Marsh”** will be held in Heron Hall. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children (suitable for children 5 years and up).

**Olympic BirdFest 2014**

**April 4-6, 2014, Sequim, WA**

Visit the rain shadow of the Olympic Peninsula to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest—Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Dippers, Black Oystercatchers, Long-tailed Ducks, and more. Guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, silent auction, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker is Noah Strycker: “Bird World: the Fascinating Parallels between Bird and Human Behavior.” The festival with the most spectacular setting!



Immediately following BirdFest, join us for a three-day, two-night birding cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 6-8, 2014.

Website address: [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org)

E-mail address: [opas.birdfest.info@gmail.com](mailto:opas.birdfest.info@gmail.com)

Information on the San Juan Cruise can be found at the following website: Register separately at [www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon](http://www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon).

Contact name: Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, 360-681-4076

**19th Annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Festival**

**April 16-22, 2014, Arcata, California**

Events include: birding the Arcata Marsh, Del Norte redwoods at Mill Creek, Petrolia and the Lost Coast, Bear River Ridge, Stone Lagoon, Owl scouting, Humboldt Bay boat cruise, Kneeland and coastal prairies of Humboldt, Patrick’s Point

State Park, North Spit and Woodley Island, Horse Mountain and high elevation habitats, Headwaters Forest, Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Lanphere Dunes, Fern Canyon, Hoopa, and Humboldt Lagoons.

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**Petaluma’s 5th Annual CBC 4 Kids**

by Al Hesla

“Awesome,” “great educational opportunity,” “had the time of their lives,” and “looking forward to the next event” were some of the comments received from the parents after a fun-filled morning at the 5th Annual CBC 4 Kids in Petaluma on January 2, 2014.

Following a warming cup of hot chocolate during the morning registration and listening to a brief overview of Audubon’s CBC 114-year history by PWA Chairman Gerald Moore, the 26 kids grouped into five teams and embarked into the wetlands of Shollenberger Park and the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility along with 14 parents and nine docents. The kids identified 67 species in a total count of 3,273 birds. Some highlights included two Peregrine Falcons, two American Bitterns, and a pair of Snow Geese.



Photo by Scott Manchester

The following volunteer docents provided their birding skills to guide the kids in the use of binoculars and bird identification techniques: Peter Colasanti, John Richards, Mary Edith Moore, Gerald Moore, Monica Schwalbenberg-Pena,



**CBC 4 KIDS**

Continued from page 4

Bob Dyer, Andy LaCasse, Len Nelson, and Scott Campbell.

After the bird count, the group met back at Shollenberger Park under warm, sunny skies for a pizza tailgate lunch with drinks and homemade cookies. One by one, the kids enthusiastically described their favorite sightings of the morning. Concluding the event, each family was presented with a Pocket Guide of Northern California Birds compliments of the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance the Madrone Audubon Society.



*Snipe at Ellis Creek*  
Photo courtesy of Tom Reynolds

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**Western Sonoma County Christmas Bird Count a Success!**

On Sunday, December 29th, 2013, Madrone Audubon conducted its annual Christmas Bird Count in Western Sonoma County. Under clear skies and unseasonably warm weather, approximately 120 volunteers divided into 20 teams and searched the hills, valleys, rivers and ocean of Western Sonoma County for birds. As usual, we enjoyed a high diversity of species on our count; including Ferruginous Hawk, Orchard Oriole, Northern Waterthrush, Black-legged Kittiwake, Ancient Murrelet, Barn Swallow, Long-tailed Duck, Mountain Bluebird and Bald Eagle to name a few.

Our preliminary species count is 186. The number of individuals for many species

was low this year. This is consistent with several counts throughout California and may be attributed to the unusually dry conditions in our state. The confirmed and final compilation for our count will be posted on the Madrone Audubon website by March, and the National Audubon website by October.

The success of this count can be attributed to the hard work of many people. Gordon Beebe updated area maps and the CBC webpage on Madrone’s website. Susan Kirks and Nancy Hair set up the post-count dinner and provided a warm and welcoming atmosphere after a long day in the cold. Out to Lunch Catering made a delicious dinner that was enjoyed by all. Our amazing area leaders and their teams contributed their birding skills and time in the field by foot, car, boat, and kayak collecting data for this very important citizen science effort. Many, many thanks to all!

-Veronica Bowers

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**The Nature of Change**

**The 2013 Great Egret nesting season at Martin Griffin Preserve**

Looking out the window of my office cabin at ACR’s Cypress Grove Research Center, a group of dunlin moves across Tomales Bay, flashing white with each turn of the flock. “Dunlin are arriving already?” I think to myself, lamenting the end of summer. I am already counting the days until spring begins, when I can return to charting the progress of heron and egret nests at colonies scattered throughout the North Bay area.

One of the things I love most about living and working close to the natural world is feeling connected to the cadenced cycles of nature. After four seasons of monitoring the heronry at Martin Griffin Preserve (MGP), I cannot help but feel in tune with the rhythms of the nesting cycle there. Every year I am mesmerized by the courtship displays and behaviors of Great Egrets (*Ardea alba*). I revel in the quiet ambiance of Picher Canyon while adults

faithfully incubate their eggs, tethered to their nests by some unseen force. And I delight in watching each chick grow from tiny fuzz ball to gawky “teenager.”

But things were different in the canyon this year.



*Great Egret with Chicks*  
Photo courtesy of Tom Reynolds

**A Change of Rhythm**

In the 2013 nesting season, there was an unmistakable change in the rhythm of the nesting cycle in Picher Canyon. There was no cacophony of begging calls from hungry chicks, no clumsy fledglings taking their first awkward flights. Surprisingly, not one egret chick fledged from the colony this season.

A complete failure of the nesting colony has not occurred since regular monitoring of the colony began in 1967. This year, we also saw considerably fewer egret nests initiated than we have seen before. The combination of total reproductive failure and a low number of nests has caused concern regarding future nesting seasons at this heronry.

**A Silent Spring**

The egret nesting season started normally, with birds slowly coming in around late March, followed by a steady increase in the number of nests. Around mid-May, however, it was apparent that the seasonal nesting activity would be dramatically low, as fewer nests were established at this point than in past years.

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## NATURE OF CHANGE

Continued from page 5

In June, as I made my way up Kent Trail to the Henderson Overlook, I should have been greeted by the relentless begging calls of egret chicks, but I heard only the familiar melody of songbirds. By this time, most egret nests had failed and were unoccupied, although a few still cradled adults, incubating eggs apparently long past their due date.

Based on the behavior of some adults, it appeared that a small number of nests did hatch chicks, although no egret chicks were directly observed. The chicks that did hatch apparently died shortly after hatching, for unknown reasons. The majority of the nests either incubated unviable eggs for a period much longer than is required, or they failed and re-nested, and the second attempt also failed.



Great Egret with nest stick  
Photo courtesy of Tom Reynolds

### Unexpected Visitors

There were several unusual sightings by staff and volunteers in Picher Canyon this season that give us some clue as to what may have caused the poor nesting performance this year. In early June a large group of adult egret feathers was found in the MGP courtyard. A couple weeks later, an adult Bald Eagle flew over the colony, causing all the egrets to flush off their nests. An hour or two after the egrets were flushed, most nests were still unoccupied.

The depredated remains of a Great Blue Heron chick was found below a telephone pole at the end of the Osher Volunteer Center. Guano at the base of the pole near

the remains appeared to be owl guano, based on its thick, slightly gritty, and even consistency. We were not alarmed by these events, however, because such disturbance from predators, scavengers, or even humans, is normal and expected every year in heronries. Disturbances do not necessarily lead to colony abandonment or cause overall nest failure, as long as the frequency and intensity of disturbance remains low. However, when it exceeds some invisible threshold, the egrets can take drastic action, which may include abandoning their nests. It is unclear if this is what happened at Picher Canyon this year, but observations point to some disturbance at the colony coinciding with widespread nest failure.

### One Pearl on a String

Standing in Picher Canyon, spending hours with my eyes fixed only to the colony, it is easy to forget the world beyond the canyon walls. But the nesting colony in Picher Canyon is just one breeding site used by a large egret population, which includes numerous other nesting colonies throughout the San Francisco Bay area, and possibly beyond.

Therefore, the current nesting decline at Picher Canyon probably does not reflect the status of the overall egret population. Since the inception of ACR's Heron and Egret Project in 1991, Great Egret nest abundance has fluctuated but remained stable throughout the San Francisco North Bay region. We have no current concerns regarding the overall health of egrets in the Bay Area.

*“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”*

- John Muir

The unseen forces that drive natural processes are wonderfully complex and, as such, can be challenging to understand. Rarely can a single factor contributing to a natural process be isolated from all others. We do not know precisely what caused the

colony to fail this year, and we may never determine this with certainty. What will happen in future years is also unknown, and we are hoping the egrets recover and continue with their long tradition of nesting in the canyon.

One thing we do understand about the natural world is its dynamic nature. Like a symphony without a conductor, nature is beautiful, unpredictable, and always moving to her own beat.

by Sarah Millus

Helen Pratt Field Biologist for Audubon Canyon Ranch

Gratefully reprinted with permission from Audubon Canyon Ranch

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## Openings for Madrone Board of Directors

Would you like to serve our Audubon Chapter? Consider volunteering for two years of service by becoming our:

**Treasurer** - Bookkeeping and/or Accounting skills are required and QuickBooks or a similar program is preferred. The Treasurer maintains Madrone's financial records and provides reporting to the Board.

**Membership Chair** - Excel spreadsheet or similar database skills are integral to managing our membership records. The Membership Chair also provides mailing information to the printer for the Leaves newsletter and integrates National Audubon members into the Madrone membership database for complete records. While time consuming, this position allows the Board member to work individually and provide information to the Board as needed.

We appreciate Clara Else stepping up to volunteer to help with data entry and updating records while we seek dedicated Auduboners to fulfill roles on our Board. We also appreciate members' patience with response to questions about membership or other issues.



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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We welcome your consideration and would love your participation. If interested, contact Susan Kirks (susankirks@sbcglobal.net), Diane Hichwa (dhichwa@earthlink.net), or Gordon Beebe (gdbeebe@earthlink.net).

**Volunteer Opportunities with the Modini Mayacamas Preserves.** If interested, contact david.self@egret.org and submit a Volunteer Intake Form.

**Hiking Patrol:** We're seeking folks that will hike here a day each week or two, or monthly (especially Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays), in order to maintain a regular presence and thus discourage inappropriate uses. Please indicate a schedule or dates you or your team would like to patrol.

**Native Nursery & Garden:** 226A Center Street, Healdsburg. Assist with planning, planting, weeding, etc. Please indicate a preferred schedule or on your Volunteer Intake Form, and Susan Maxwell will contact you.

**Preserve Stewardship:** Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons, working with David. These activities will be posted on the Meetup at least a week ahead of time, and drop-ins are welcome. We usually start at 12:30 at Ferguson Spring, though we might work anywhere on the preserve, and finish by 3PM or so. Activities include invasive plant removal, seed collecting, planting natives, trail work, sign maintenance, mapping of plants and habitats, vegetation data collection, etc.

**Public Realitions, Research, Database, etc:** 226A Center St, Healdsburg. Tuesday through Saturday mornings, by arrangement with David. Help with information tables, open house, research (history, horticulture, ethnobotany, etc), developing field

guides, iphone apps and databases, or other projects that you'd like to propose; submit a Volunteer Intake Form, and contact david.self@egret.org or call 707-431-8184.

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**Updates on Legal Challenges**

As we go to press, the Appeals Court date for the Dutra asphalt plant 200 feet from the Petaluma Wetlands (appealed by the coalition of plaintiffs, including Madrone Audubon) is January 14th. News about this will be in the next *Leaves*.

The Cliff Swallows litigation continues, with the intent to report to members and supporters about the upcoming 2014 nesting season at the Petaluma Bridges and the litigation in the next issue of *Leaves*.

Thank you to all Madrone and National Audubon members who are supporting our focused efforts on these issues.

-Susan Kirks

**Madrone Audubon's New Website is in the Works**

The website team has been working hard to create a brand-new website for Madrone Audubon. Still in the final stages, it will include most of the information on the existing site, with new features, better navigation, lots more pictures, and updated information. Modeled after Marin Audubon's website (<http://www.marinaudubon.org/>), this will help to unify the look of Northern California Audubon on the internet. Projected completion is late February or March – look on our current website for updates.



**Memorial Gifts**

**August 2013**

- \$100 in memory of Rich Stallcup**, by Dennis Beall and Pamela Conley
- \$100 in honor of Mary Francone**, who was my master muse in learning to bird, by Nancy Russell Stone
- \$100 in memory of Ellyn Farnsworth**, by Chandra Farnsworth
- \$100 in memory of Sharon Audiss**, by Donald McCarthy
- \$50 in memory of Helen Lathrop Petty**, by Cornelia and James Young
- \$50 in memory of Bill Medin**, by Joyce Kelly

**October 2013**

- \$35 in memory of Jean Tonascia**, from Terry and Gary Haag
- \$25 in memory of her son**, Louis Coker, from Erna Coker
- \$20 in memory of Jean Tonascia**, from Richard Hurley
- \$45 for Happy Birthday to Lisa Peters**, from Carolyn Metz
- \$20 in honor of all the birds**, from Richard Sharke

**November 2013**

- In memory of Jean Tonascia** from George Batchelder
- In memory of Kimberly Sharke**, from Lucille & Richard Sharke
- In memory of Claire Shurvington**, from Janet Bosshard, Betty Burridge, Diane and Bryant Hichwa
- In memory of Jean Tonascia**, from James R. Batchelder, Janet Bosshard, Betty Burridge, Marilyn Edmondson, Donald K Howard, Jr., and Frank & Marilyn Rathman
- In memory of Joseph W. Ulmer**, from Arline S. Ulmer

**Thank You!**

**A REALLY REALLY BIG** thank you to Pat Macias, who has been Madrone's publicist since Fall 2004. That's a long time, THANK YOU PAT!



**Madrone Audubon Society**

Post Office Box 1911  
Santa Rosa, California 95402

February/March 2014

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MADRONE LEAVES



Madrone Audubon Society meets on the third Monday of each month, except in June, July, August, and December. Meetings start at 7:00 PM at First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. All meetings and walks are open to the public. Information: telephone answering service - 546-7492, e-mail - madroneaudubon@um.att.com.

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Please complete this form if you wish to join Madrone Audubon, renew your Madrone membership or make a contribution to Madrone.

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