A Special Day

January 5th, 2013 turned out to be a unique life event for three Monterey Audubon Members. For newest Monterey Audubon Board member Cooper Scollan, new birder Hana Wood, and Monterey Audubon trip leader Tim Amaral, it was a historical day marked in two uniquely related, but very different ways.

It started that morning with a surprising find in Monterey. An incredibly rare sighting of an Arctic Loon was spotted off Wharf #2. The call went out and soon hundreds of birders across the state were racing to see such a special find. Although they are very rare visitors in the winter as far South as Baja, this was the first record for Monterey County.

For Tim Amaral, it marked an achievement shared by few others. Arriving at the wharf to find many people with scopes and cameras along the pier, the Arctic Loon gave Tim his 400th Monterey County bird. I was there to share his sighting and catch his story (it was my 350th). The “400 Club” was a type of “listing game” developed by Monterey Records Compiler Don Roberson many years ago. To belong to this group, one must have recorded 400 or more species on his or her Monterey County bird list. As of February of this year, there were only 17 members who belonged to this club (Ron Branson was the first in 1988). Tim was obviously excited to be #18. Tim started birding in 1992 and started his Monterey 400 list in 1996. His 400th should have been Evening Grosbeaks in Del Monte Forest, but were missed. Of the 400 though, Tim says his most memorable was a Streaked Shearwater on a Monterey Seabirds trip in 2008.

See more about the “400 club” here…
creagrus.home.montereybay.com/MTY_400
Meanwhile, as great a find as it was, it wouldn’t be the most amazing find for Cooper and Hana. As a lifelong friend of the Scollans, I received an early morning text from Cooper, “Arctic Loon at the wharf! On my way to see it. U going?” A phone call to him a bit later confirmed he had just seen it and was leaving upon my arrival. He said he was on his way to meet Hana, his girlfriend, and do some birding at the Carmel River Lagoon.

A few hours later I received a call from him with a story barely understandable through the laughter. Cooper had apparently been planning a different kind of birding trip for that day. After leaving the Loon, he met Hana near the Carmel lagoon. He had previously acquired on loan a Red-breasted Sapsucker specimen from the CMS Hilton display. After having to touch it up with a red sharpie pen (with permission) or it wouldn’t be recognizable, it was planted on a tree branch. Just before getting to the bird, he asked Hana to take his new camera to try it out and get some pictures. When they walked up to the bird, she didn’t notice it and he had to point it out, “Hey, what’s that? Get a picture quick”. She started snapping away and after a minute said, “Hey, I think that woodpecker is dead! It’s not moving”. After examining it for a bit, she had suspicions (maybe it was a victim of a Zombie Tit?) and further stated, “I think it’s stuffed. And someone wired it to the tree holding some trash!” Upon closer look, in its talons was a sparkling ring. Hana was shocked and surprised. After fetching the bird, Cooper took the ring out of the talons and got down on one knee and proposed with the ring in one hand and the Sapsucker in the other.

What started with an Arctic visitor that day, ended in two events that marked not only a life accomplishment in the new year for Tim, but a new life together for Cooper and Hana.

-Chris Hartzell (and yes, she did accept!)

**Weird…**

Common throughout Europe and Asia, the Great Tit (*Parus major*) is a colorful wee bird that produces a lovely, chirping song. It’s also known to many as the “Zombie Tit”, and for terribly good reason. Like all birds, Zombie Tits belong to a subgroup of Therapods, making them living descendants of some of the dinosaur kingdom’s fiercest predators -- think *T. rex*.

And yeah -- those sweet-looking little Zombie Tits also eat brains. They eat bat brains, the brains of other birds -- brains, brains and more brains! While most of their diet consists of insects, seeds and fruit, Zombie Tits have also been documented cracking and slurping the skulls of 10 birds for a single meal! They’ll even sneak into caves to gulp down the cranial contents of hibernating bats…Yet more evidence ferocious dinosaurs live on.

- Center for Biological Diversity

**& Wild!**

The Greater Roadrunner is often thought of battling one of its favorite meals, the snake. But few realize its diet is so wide-ranging. Both predators and scavengers, they eat scorpions, spiders, lizards, and have been seen working collaboratively to capture and eat Rattlesnakes twice their size. Another source of prey surprisingly, is other birds. In fact, in one instance, a Roadrunner was seen leaping up from hiding in a dry river bed and knock down a White-throated Swift and eat it. This is rarely witnessed, but on the recent Monterey Audubon Panoche Valley field trip led by myself, we came across such an event. As we were driving, a Roadrunner bolted in front of the vehicle. I stopped suddenly and was able to capture this (first of a kind?) image of a Roadrunner eating a Savannah Sparrow. The Roadrunner continued into a field where it finished off its meal.

-Chris Hartzell
History Of Wildlife Rehabilitation
(cont’d from Winter Sanderling edition story ‘Long Lived the King’)

In 1936, Rachel Louise Carson, became the second woman to fill a full-time position with the Bureau of Fisheries (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). She became chief editor of publications in 1949, but left the agency in 1952 to focus on writing. In 1962, Silent Sprint was published. This book was a milestone for the environmental movement.

By the late 60s and early 70s, the “Save the Whales” campaign was gaining momentum and the concept of rehabilitating wildlife began taking shape. Jay Holcomb, a pioneer in the field, recalled the shift in consciousness. "People started asking, 'Okay, we want whales to be free, well then why not these other species?', so we started rethinking our methods, but, there were two major incidents that really brought us all together". Two major oil spills off California's coast were significant in the history of wildlife rehabilitation.

On January 28, 1969, a Union Oil drilling platform located six miles off the coast of Santa Barbara suffered a blow-out. An estimated 4 million gallons of crude oil surfaced, marring 35 miles of coastline. With thousands of birds in peril, the community came together in force. President Nixon noted at the time, the incident, "touched the conscience of the American people" and fueled the environmental movement. It certainly did.

Months after the spill, at a United Nations conference in San Francisco, John McConnell introduced the idea of Earth Day, suggesting the vernal equinox for its global spiritual significance. March 21, 1970, marked the first official Earth Day. Over 20 million Americans participated in the first Earth Day rallies across the United States. People were engaged, impassioned, and willing to go out of their way for a cause.

As urban sprawl encroached deeper into wild habitats, more wild animals were being found in distress - injured or orphaned. With the heightened state of awareness and concern about the environment, citizens sought help for these casualties, delivering them to shelters, zoos, and natural history museums.

One, very small natural history center, Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek, was known for taking in injured wildlife. Due to the increase in patients, the museum started one of the first formal rehabilitation centers in 1970.

Just months later, on January 18, 1971, two Standard Oil tankers collided under San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, releasing 840,000 gallons of oil. Once again, citizens joined together to help save their wildlife. Lindsay Wildlife Museum was one of the dozen or so emergency bird centers set up throughout the Bay Area.

These oil spills brought like-minded people together; people who were concerned about wildlife and interested in learning how to help them return to the wild. In 1972, a small group of kindred spirits who had worked together during the spill, joined forces to establish an association for those interested in caring for wildlife - a resource for rehabilitators to share their knowledge and receive information on current techniques.

In 1972, the Bay Area Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (BAWRC) was formed. This was a milestone in the history of wildlife rehabilitation, because up until then, there were no standards for the rehabilitation of wildlife - most practiced in isolation, with techniques based mostly on trial and error.

At about the same time as the council was forming, the Louise A. Boyd Natural Science Museum in San Rafael (what is now WildCare) was experiencing growing pangs. Much like the Alexander Lindsey Museum, they were admitting more and more wild patients each year, including seals and sea lions. Animal curator for the museum, Lloyd Smalley, soon realized their wild patients, especially the marine mammals, needed more than what the museum could provide.

...continued on page 4

International Bird Rescue: Since 1971, IBR has provided oiled wildlife collection, rehabilitation and documentation services on an assured basis for companies that transport or hold petroleum products. bird-rescue.org

International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council: Providing science-based education and resources to wildlife rehabilitators and the public to promote wildlife conservation and welfare. theiwrc.org

Blue Banded Pelicans
In 2009, International Bird Rescue began putting large plastic blue bands with white letters and numbers on our rehabilitated Brown Pelicans to track their progress. These bands are in addition to the metal federal band. If you see a Blue Banded Pelican, please contact IBR with the number and bird's location.

INTERNATIONAL BIRD RESCUE
P.O. Box 2171
Long Beach, CA 90801
(707) 207-0380
or report online at:
bird-rescue.org/pelican-project
After leaving the museum in 1973, Smalley joined up with Paul Maxwell, and Patricia Ariagoni, who had been on the museum's Board of Trustees for seven years. Together, these three paved the way for the establishment of The Marine Mammal Center in 1975. Today, TMMC is considered one of the largest marine mammal rehabilitation programs in the world. Also in 1975, Jay Holcomb accepted a part-time position at the Boyd Natural Science Museum, which later became a full-time position. He had become acquainted with the museum while working at the Marin Humane Society in 1969, after graduating high school. The shelter received its share of injured wildlife. Some he would care for at home, others were transferred to the Museum.

Interested in networking with other rehabilitators, Holcomb began attending meetings held by the newly-formed Wildlife Council. Years later he would be its President. Today, we know it as International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. Through IWRC, the first set of standards for wildlife rehabilitation emerged. Today, these science-based fundamental principles are relied on by state and federal agencies in overseeing rehabilitation programs throughout the country.

- Rebecca Dmytryk
  President and CEO, Wildlife Emergency Services

**About the Author:** Rebecca Dmytryk has been involved in the field of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation for over thirty years. She's become a leading authority on first response to wildlife emergencies. She authored *Wildlife Search and Rescue: A Guide for First Responders*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. and currently heads the nonprofit: *Wildlife Emergency Services* (formerly *WildRescue* est. 2000).

You can read more of Rebecca’s stories, including much more about this subject, online at: [http://wildrescue.blogspot.com/](http://wildrescue.blogspot.com/)

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**Tricolored Blackbird Research**

**In Monterey County**

The Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) is a highly social and gregarious bird that forms the largest breeding colonies of any landbird in North America. Unlike the very similar looking, and widely distributed Red-winged Blackbird, the Tricolor lives almost entirely within California where it evolved to nesting in freshwater marshes and foraging in open grasslands. In order to better understand the ecology of this unique species, the Santa Lucia Conservancy is leading a research project using radio-telemetry technology in Monterey County, an area where the bird has received very little research attention in the past. With assistance from California Audubon and UC Davis, Tricolors were captured from a breeding colony on the Santa Lucia Preserve (formally Rancho San Carlos) in Carmel Valley and fitted with radio transmitters, which allowed biologists to follow the bird’s movements throughout the breeding season of 2012. Additionally, four breeding colonies were regularly monitored at sites located on the Santa Lucia Preserve, Fort Ord, and the Laguna Seca Recreation Area.

The first surprise was that birds were frequently tracked to the tops of oak trees and observed feeding on oak moth caterpillars, a behavior never before reported and quite surprising given the birds are normally associated with grassland foraging. The remaining bulk of foraging observations were within nearby, actively grazed equestrian pastures, as well as a grassland area regularly managed with prescribed burns, suggesting the birds prefer

...continued on page 5
Each year, Tricolored Blackbirds nest in just a few colonies, often in grain fields due to habitat loss. Without incentive to do otherwise, farmers sometimes harvest the fields before the young can fly. A machine harvester can easily wipe out 25% of the entire species’ young in just a few minutes. This year, Audubon California is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to make agreements with Central Valley farmers to protect several large colonies, and we are also creating new habitat in the hope that the birds will set up their colonies out of danger.

This is where you come in.

Whether we compensate a farmer to delay harvesting or create new habitat, it costs money. We’ve done the math on these projects – it works out to about a dollar a bird.

Audubon California is working with others to come up with a long-term solution for Tricolored Blackbirds. In the meantime, these strategies are the best way to protect this year’s fledgling birds.

When you give to the Tricolored Blackbird Conservation Fund, your donation will go directly to save these birds.

$5 saves 5 birds
$24 saves four and twenty blackbirds

Donations can be sent to:
California Audubon c/o Tricolored Blackbird Fund
4225 Hollis Street, Emeryville, CA 94608
or can be made online directly at:
California Audubon/Birds & Wildlife/Key Species/Tricolored Blackbird/$5 5 Birds

Historical Happening: For the first time in more than 85 years, a Gray Wolf was found in California. A 2-1/2 year old male, known as OR-7, traveled over 700 miles from his birth pack (Imnaha pack) in Oregon and crossed the California border. Since entering in December 2011, he has spent over a year traveling 3,000 miles across seven counties in Northern California.
Field Trips

Field trips are free unless otherwise stated. Times are estimates. Please RSVP leaders at the contact info provided.

Sat. Mar. 2 – 7:30am-mid-afternoon: East Pinnacles National Park hike
This 2.8 mile hiking loop (moderately strenuous) covers some of the most diverse terrain in the park, climbs over 500 ft. and goes through oak woods, riparian, chaparral, and rocky slopes. We will be looking for early migrants, winter holdovers, and of course, the many raptors the monument is famous for, including California Condors. Meet: First meetup at Nob Hill on the corner of Hwy 68 and Blanco in Salinas at 7am. Second meetup at the Windmill Market in San Juan Bautista at 7:30. Fee: $5.00 per car entrance fee to the monument and carpooling is strongly encouraged. RSVP: R.J. Adams 831-771-9303 rjadams55@yahoo.com.

Sat. Mar. 16 – 8am-noon: Frog Pond & Laguna Grande Park
One of the peninsula’s “hidden treasures”, this small Monterey Peninsula Regional Park wetland is a delight to bird with a variety of waterfowl, sparrows, warblers, finches and the occasional vagrants. The trail is an easy saunter along the pond with a surprising variety of habitats for such a small area. If time permits, we will head over to Laguna Grande Park and bird along the path surrounding the lake. Meet: 8am Wild Bird Haven. RSVP: Robert Horn 831-372-4608.

Sat. Apr.20 – 8am-noon: South Bank trail to Palo Corona Regional Park
Recently the Monterey Regional Park District and the Big Sur Land Trust formed a new access trail to the east side of Palo Corona Regional Park that runs adjacent to the Carmel River from its trailhead off of Rancho San Carlos Rd. in Carmel Valley. We will explore this access trail as it winds its way from the Quail Lodge Golf Course area to the east entrance of the park, birding in a variety of habitats from riparian to oak woodland, grassland, and golf park environments. Group limited to 12, carpooling a must as parking is limited. Meet: 8am Wild Bird Haven. RSVP: Bill Hill 831-624-3300.

Sat. May 4 – 6:30am-4pm: Arroyo Seco Birds & Butterflies
Spring is a great time to explore the breathtaking Arroyo Seco River and gorge, before hot summer temperatures set in. In the early morning, we’ll look for spring migrant warblers and flycatchers, as well as breeding birds like Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Canyon Wren. As the morning warms up, we’ll shift attention to butterflies, possibly up to 20 species, including four Checkerspot species (Variable, Gabb’s, Leanira, and Edith’s). Bring lunch and water, and plan on 2-3 miles of leisurely walking on Indians Rd. Meet: 6:30am Wild Bird Haven for carpooling RSVP: Chris Tenney 831-656-9830

Sat. May 18 – Andrew Molera State Park
Known as one of our finest areas for birding in the county, this state park offers the birder a chance to not only find outstanding native birds, but on a fairly regular basis, some of the rarer vagrant birds too. Located about 20 miles south of Carmel along scenic Hwy #1, the drive alone is worth the trip. Last year we had six California Condors, Peregrine Falcon, and the bird of the day, a Yellow-breasted Chat. Bring lunch and water. RSVP: Blake Matheson for meeting time and location 831-596-9990.

Pelagic Trips
Monterey Bay hosts excellent Pelagic trips for both birds and whales (& turtles!). Although Monterey Audubon does not directly conduct Pelagic trips, we do recommend either of our two local Pelagic trip tour operators:

Monterey Seabirds: 831-375-4658 www.montereyseabirds.com
Shearwater Journeys: 831-637-8527 www.shearwaterjourneys.com

(look out for the next edition, where we’ll hear all about Pelagic trips!)

Volunteer!
Monterey Audubon is always in search of volunteers. We use volunteers to lead field trips, be on the Board of Directors, staff events, and submit articles for The Sanderling newsletter. If you would be interested in helping out, please contact us at: montereyaudubon@yahoo.com
Events

Friday April 26th through Saturday April 27th: Monterey County Annual Birdathon
Every year, teams and individuals cover all corners of Monterey County in a joint effort to compile the largest species total possible within 24 hours. In essence, it is a huge, cooperative county “Big Day”! The event begins at 4pm on Friday and ends at 4pm on Saturday and is followed by a wonderful countdown dinner at the Wild Bird Haven in Del Monte Shopping Center. There is a $30/person $50/couple fee for attending the dinner and all proceeds go directly to Monterey Audubon’s Youth Scholarship Program. Contact: Blake Matheson 831-324-4914 LammergeierEyes@aol.com

Meetings & Programs

Board meetings & Programs are open to the public and held at the Pacific Grove Museum the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Board meetings start at 6:00pm followed by educational & informational programs at 7:30pm, preceded by refreshments. (Times subject to change. Check online or contact us to see about any changes or agendas)

March 12: The Livingstone Birding Trail; an armchair African Safari of Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia - Brent Reed
Brent was born in the Magaliesberg mountains of South Africa where he developed a deep and abiding love for the bush and all things wild. Brent has been guiding birding safaris since 1997 in many countries of Africa. Tonight, join us as he takes us for an armchair birding safari through Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia. Beginning and ending in the Okavango Delta, this birding journey covers a wide variety of Southern African habitats from permanent wetlands through semi-arid Kalahari, riparian woodland, Miombo woodland and the vast salt plains of the Makgadikgadi Pans.

April 9: Saving the Western Snowy Plover; Species Update - Kris Neuman
The Western Snowy Plover is a threatened small shorebird, about the size of a sparrow. During the breeding season, March-Sept, Plovers can be seen nesting along the shores, peninsulas, offshore islands, bays, estuaries, and rivers of the U.S. Pacific Coast from Oregon to California. Around the Monterey Bay, Plovers breed from Del Monte Beach north to Pajaro River Mouth. Join us for a special presentation on the most current population status. Kris Neuman studied seabird reproductive biology in Alaska and Maine, shorebird migration in the Midwest, has been a Biologist with Point Reyes Bird Observatory since 1996, and responsible for monitoring Snowy Plovers in central and southern Monterey Bay.

Tuesday May 14: The Mysterious and Imperiled Marbled Murrelet - Portia Halbert
Discover the elusive, endangered Marbled Murrelet, which lives most of its life at sea, but nests only in the tallest trees in the world. The story begins with how this mysterious bird was re-discovered (at Big Basin Redwoods State Park in the 1970s), and then takes to the high seas and back in time with Captain Cook, fast forwards to the Smithsonian Institute, and returns to the foggy coastal forests of Northern California. Learn about Marbled Murrelet habitat, life cycle and the scientific efforts underway to prevent its extinction.

In Memory

On January 30th, May Gong-Tenney, wife of Chris Tenney, passed away at the age of 63. May was a Sierra Club National trip leader throughout the ’90s, leading groups into Southwest desert canyons and the High Sierras. Her favorite birding spot was her back yard and her favorite birding method was by bicycle. One of her favorite trips was a spring migration cycling trip in Southern France with Chris. She was very active with Monterey Audubon. At one time, the President retired and other Board members resigned, reducing the active Board to only three. During that time, May helped steer MAS through this leadership vacuum over a two year period, assuming the roles of President (not the title), Treasurer, event organizer (Christmas count and Birdathon), along with filling other needs of the organization such as a regular key player in meal preparation associated with MAS events. She bridged the gap until the presidency was filled and also helped by recruiting new Board members.

May was responsible for the formation of the MAS Scholarship Committee, which has been responsible for helping many youth in pursuing their education. It is with great honor that we announce in dedication, Monterey Audubon Society’s May Gong-Tenney Youth Scholarship Award. This scholarship will be funded directly through contributions at Monterey Audubon’s Monterey County Annual Birdathon held each spring (see Events top of this page).
**Sightings**

Recent reports of the more rare and unusual sightings from the Rare Bird Alert


**Christmas Count Summary**

This year 15 counters participated in the Big Sur Christmas Count on December 17. We recorded +/ - 124 species, or slightly (but only just) below the fifteen year average. Highlights were Red Crossbill, above average numbers of Varied Thrush and Pine Sisken, many Northern Fulmar, a Black-vented Shearwater and a Long-tailed Duck. The day was most notable for the many California Condor experiences.

On Dec 27, MAS hosted its 113th annual Monterey Peninsula Christmas Bird Count, tallying some 181 species—a fairly good figure and a little above average. Highlights were multiple flocks of Red Crossbill, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Fulmar, 8-10 White-throated Sparrow, 3-4 Nashville Warbler, 2 Swamp Sparrow, 2 Palm Warbler as well as Sage Sparrow, Golden Eagle, Mountain Quail, Greater Roadrunner, and Burrowing Owl. The rarities of the day were Snow Goose (3, Monterey and Corral de Tierra); Short-eared Owl (Pebble Beach); Tennessee Warbler (Laguna Grande); Clay-colored Sparrow (Pacific Grove); Eastern Phoebe (2, Carmel River Lagoon & Pt. Pinos); Vermilion Flycatcher (Pt. Pinos); and “bird of the count” Brown Booby (Wharf No. 2).

Once again, Dr. Ron Branson made history by participating in his 53rd consecutive Monterey Peninsula Count!

-Blake Matheson