

Central Coast Chapters Council Meeting Notes  
Saturday, September 21, 2019

Attending: Audubon CA – Andrea Jones, Gaylon Parsons - Conejo Valley Audubon – Frank DeMarino, Chrystal Klabunde, Don Klabunde - Morro Coast Audubon – Dave Tyra, Doug Tait, Rosalie Valvo – Santa Barbara Audubon – Dolores Pollock, Lee Moldaver, Chris Mersey, Kathleen Boehm, Jessie Alstatt, Jayne Wamsley, Janice Levasheff, Teresa Fanucchi, Hannah Atkinson, Katherine Emery, Peter Thompson, David Levasheff, Conor McMahon(UCSB), Mark Holmgren, Steve Ferry, Adrian O’Loughlen, Janice Powell - Ventura Audubon – Alissa Goldberg (CSUCI Liaison), Cynthia Hartley, Vince Hartley, Alecia Smith

Bird Walk, North Campus Open Space – About 12 people enjoyed an hour of birding the North Campus Open Space, thanks to David Levasheff for leading.

The meeting started with everyone present introducing themselves.

**Legislative and Policy Update** – Juan Altamirano, Associate Director of Public Policy of Audubon CA provided an update of the recently ended legislative session via Skype.

- Legislative session ended September 13, late into the night, with Juan representing Audubon until the end!
- AB454 – Migratory Bird Protections act will protect CA birds from incidental take regardless of federal rollbacks. Passed Assembly and Senate and is awaiting signature by the Governor. (Signed by Governor 9/27).
- SB1 - California Environmental, Public Health, and Workers Defense Act of 2019. Provides a backstop to federal protections that may be diminished by the Trump Administration. The Governor stated he would veto the bill because it was unnecessary. Central Valley water recipients threatened to abandon draft Voluntary Agreements regarding water for fish protection if the bill passed. (The Governor vetoed the bill on 9/27)
- AB552 - Coastal climate resiliency program would have created a coastal resiliency program funded by revenues from oil and gas leases along the coast. It did not make it out of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee. Audubon will work to reintroduce a similar program next year.
- SB200 - Safe and Affordable Drinking Water – Creates a fund to provide safe drinking water to all Californians. Signed by Governor in July.
- AB1788 Prohibition of certain rodenticides in wildlife areas – was intended to expand a current state band to all state wildlife areas and other state areas. Was held in the Senate Appropriations committee. Audubon CA is considering a more active role in creating a strategy to pass rodenticide reform in California in 2020.

**Coastal Conservation Workshop**

Andrea Jones, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon CA  
Gaylon Parsons, Deputy Director, Audubon CA

Andrea Jones presented on Audubon CA’s California Coast Program. Her full PowerPoint presentation can be seen [here](#).

Presentation Summary:

National Audubon Coastal Priority Strategies:

- Coastal resilience through coastal planning and on-the-ground restoration
- Marine conservation of fisheries and places seabirds need to survive

- Coastal stewardship through community science, hands-on conservation, local partnerships, and community outreach

***Pacific Flyway vision: Healthy coastal ecosystems that provide high-quality habitat for birds and foster coastal resilience for communities—for today and tomorrow.***

- Pacific Flyway Coastal Conservation Goals
- Protect or restore 1.2 million acres of critical coastal habitat for birds
- Keep 137 million acres of coastal and marine habitat in Arctic Alaska free of oil and gas leasing and drilling
- Recruit, train and support coastal stewards protecting the places on the Pacific coast that birds need most
- Support the adoption and implementation of a system of strong local, state, and national regulations and policies that support healthy and resilient coastal ecosystems throughout the Flyway

#### **AUDUBON CALIFORNIA COASTAL PROGRAM**

- **Coastal Stewardship**
  - Sharing our Seas and Shores
  - Advocacy/protection Snowy Plovers
- **San Francisco Bay Program**
  - Waterbird Program
  - Policy
- **Estuary Restoration/enhancement/protection**
  - San Francisco Bay
  - Other estuaries with chapters
- **Seabird Program**
  - Black Oystercatchers/Brown Pelicans
  - Forage fish

#### **California Coastal Stewardship**

- We engage 500 volunteers and 14 chapters at 25 sites.
- *Ventura Audubon* helped pass Oxnard resolution protecting nesting birds from dogs and other predators.
- *Sea and Sage Audubon* efforts helped enable first successful Snowy Plover nests at Huntington Beach success in 50 years.

#### **PROGRAM: Nature's Nurseries**

Audubon will protect California's estuarine habitats in order to reduce threats to millions of migratory birds and bolster local communities that rely on estuaries for natural defenses, recreational purposes and local economies. This work is critical to the long-term sustainability of marine and shorebirds, and will help to mitigate ocean acidification and buffer communities from the impacts of sea level rise.

#### **Eelgrass – the Foundation of the Estuary**

- Improves water quality
- Sequesters carbon
- Reduces wave action and coastal erosion
- Provides essential fish habitat including nurseries for many fish and invertebrate species that are primary food resources for birds
- Provides economic value (herring, aquaculture, Dungeness crab, salmonids, etc.)

### **Estuary program priority species:**

Western Snowy Plover - beaches, mudflats

**California Least Tern – open water, beaches, islands**

Western Sandpiper- mudflats, shoreline

Ridgway's Rail - tidal marsh

Brown Pelican - open water

Scaup– open water (eelgrass)

**Surf Scoter – open water (eelgrass)**

Elegant Tern (SF Bay) – open water

**Marbled Godwit - mudflat**

**Brant – eelgrass**

**Long-billed Curlew– mudflats, shoreline**

**Western/Clark's Grebe**

### **Estuary 5-year Goals**

- a. 100,000 acres of estuary habitats (tidal marsh, eelgrass, living shorelines, open water) restored or enhanced
- b. 250,000 acres of estuary habitats with improved protection status
- c. 100% (14,000) acres of California's eelgrass beds permanently protected through legislation
- d. 10,000 acres of eelgrass restored
- e. Statewide eelgrass protection and mitigation policies passed
- f. Local Coastal Plans updated
- g. New funding secured to implement coastal resilience projects in targeted estuaries

### **Discussion:**

What are chapter priorities?

Where are there shared priorities?

From Lee Moldaver – Hannah Beth Jackson bill now requires cities and counties to include a climate change vulnerability assessment. Chapters should check to see that this has been done.

Following are Gaylon Parson's Coastal Workshop notes, and some added comments from Dave Tyra Ventura

- Snowy plover, least terns, 2 beaches to care for soup to nuts.
- Beaches with patchwork landowners. No management plans, no staff
- Chapter monitors the birds. 5 y developed shorebird monitoring plan. Fences, advocacy, etc
- Hollywood is urban beach, residential. Channel Islands harbor, hotel on other end. Sand grooming. Dog restrictions unenforced
- Ormond is remote because industrial and ag uses. Superfund site adjacent. Power plant in middle of beach. 2 mi stretch.
- Good nesting, now new homeless encampment – nests vandalized, disturbed, bikes through nesting area. Birmingham gets NFWF \$ to fund enforcement. May do same?
- Gaylon noted that homeless is a broader issue, example is Marcos approach at Debs Park
- Landowners: SCC, TNC. Interested in working on grant writing work together
- Increasing volunteers on the beach (section 6 money)
- Potentially hiring staff; rules have changed in CA re: how to classify independent contractors v staff

### **Morro Coast**

- Oceano dunes SVRA (1500 acres) is the chapter's priority, likely to be so for a few years
- Dunes alliance: Sierra Club, Surfrider, AWC, OBCA, ECOSLO, MCAS, Concerned Citizens for Clean Air
- Coastal Commission gave SP until next July to submit a draft Public Works Plan meeting Commission staff recommendations. Plovers, terns dying
- Final PWP will be ready in 3 years → EIR → public comment → could take 3 years
- Habitat destruction from development, dunes are being monitored. State parks also saying that it's out of control.
- State parks is currently breaking the law by allowing take of snowy plovers. SP have never had conservation plan
- Small aquaculture farm – Morro Bay Oyster Co wants an expansion
- Diablo Canyon will be closed by 2025. 12k acres of marine habitat. Will be for sale by PG&E.
- SP is proposing a southern entrance to the SVRA with access road, campground, RV area through Oso Flaco Lake, which MCAS and Dunes also opposes.

### **Santa Barbara**

- Beach adjacent lands, drone use
- City of Goleta – increase protection for open spaces.
- Existing laws, regs enforced. Improve – local zoning ordinance, protect creek setbacks. Looming: sea level rise especially on Devareaux slough (upper- north campus open space) as part of Coal Oil Point Natural Reserve. 3 watersheds feed into this.
- Goleta Slough – was open water lagoon system centuries ago. Land use, droughts, floods, slough filled in, then airport was built on slough
- Could have values from slough – tide gate installed by Lima Bean magnate (I think this is real, but strange) would need to be removed, current upland could be converted for habitat.
- Patchwork of agencies – and no will to remove gate despite fact that study suggests increase bird strikes by airplanes is small danger
- Used to be bonfires on the beach – now plovers are doing very well
- Managed retreat at Goleta beach. Urban infrastructure, parking lots, etc. “Save Goleta beach” but beach is gone. It's a sand fed beach. Hwy 217 is main UCSB entrance. Emergency management drowns out ecological and conservation planning.
- How change agency mindset re: flood control, emergency response – armoring the coast, destruction of eelgrass
- Could this be statewide policy issue?

### **Conejo Valley**

- Rivers, creeks, flowing through- excellent bird habitat. Target: water districts to maintain creeks, rivers that are mainly flood control but also provide habitat.
- Mostly inland other than naval base
- Looking to resurrect bird festival, but was cancelled because was day of fire
- Habitat is coming back mixed: oaks coming back, natives return from roots. Mustard is everywhere

## **Strauss Wind Energy Project**

### **Steve Ferry, Santa Barbara Audubon**

- The Strauss Wind Energy project site is about 4 miles south of Lompoc, 3000 acres
- Plan is for 29 WTGs, close to 500 feet tall, producing 100MW of power, the Cuyama Solar Project produces 50MW on less than 100 acres
- Plan includes access roads, new transmission line, and switchyard
- Over 130 species of birds seen on site, many special status species, in 16-month period 130 RTHA and 329 GOEA seen, 60% within rotor swept zone of turbines
- Company is German, BayWa
- County issued DSEIR in April of 2019, members of SBAS and LPAS testified at DSEIR hearing
- SBAS has hired lawyer to help with process. SBAS and lawyer both submitted DSEIR comment letters.
- BAYWA has sited turbines for maximum power output, with maximum negative impact on birds
- BAYWA now says their turbine siting takes bird mortality into account, but hasn't shown any data to prove this
- Also, proposal will destroy mature oak trees, and there are alternatives to minimize tree destruction
- Expect final EIR in a couple of months, and after that a public hearing before the planning commission possibly before the end of the year.
- Local Sierra Club supports the project without modification, siting need for alternative energy and state mandate.

The full text of Steve's presentation can be found [here](#).

## **Santa Barbara Breeding Bird Database**

### **Mark Holmgren**

- SBAS has created a breeding bird database for SB county
- It contains 8,000 records collected over the past 4 years, with 181 breeding species
- Breeding activity goes from pair bonding and ends at fledging
- eBird not used because no way to display data, and expensive to create a portal
- Currently uses Google Fusion Tables to display and filter breeding data on map
- Mark demonstrated how data could be displayed to show species impacted by SLR, or species impacted by flood control activities in riparian corridors
- Unfortunately, Google has decided to shut down Google Fusion Tables, ending December 2019. They have not provided an alternative at this time.

## **Chapter Reports**

### **Santa Barbara Audubon**

- SBAS has update their bylaws, and is now in legal review
- Current board has 20 members, with new Field Trip Communications Chair
- Articles of Incorporation are being updated, original articles do not allow for legislative advocacy
- In process of updating Strategic Plan
- Reviving classroom outreach to Title 1 schools, program is "Meet your Wild Neighbor", 4 schools to start with
- They had a question about how to decide about requests for support and letter sign on; comment made to use Audubon CA as a resource when not sure.

- Fire Management Taskforce has white paper coming out
- Working with county fire to keep dialog regarding protecting bird habitat
- Working on Plants for Birds collaborating with Ventura Surfriders
- Created new donor/membership DB using Access
- Looking to sponsor Student Chapter at UCSB, working with new student Connor McMahon and getting info from Ventura Audubon on student chapter requirements

### **Conejo Valley Audubon**

- Lawns to Habitat project 2 years old with \$10,000 grant
- Have done 25 yards, with donation of \$500 worth of native plants, homeowners do the work
- There is an application process, those not chosen are kept on the list for the next year
- Heritage Park Project, converted to native plants as a demonstration park
- Does Annual Garden Tour, gave talk to Master Gardeners Group, then took them on bird walk to see converted yards in various stages of development
- Department of Water and Power can provide money for lawn conversion grants
- Birdfest last year was not held due to fire.
- Planning to restart Birdfest next year, with San Fernando and Santa Monica at King Gillette Ranch. One day event, includes tables, birds, speakers, bird walks, kid friendly, get about 2,000 attendees!
- Doing Audio Field data collection looking for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, using custom software to identify

### **Ventura Audubon**

- Cynthia Hartley is now President, replacing Bruce Shoppe after 10 years
- The chapter has instituted term limits into by-laws
- Has created volunteer recruitment process using Survey Monkey, getting about 1 response a week
- Have a Least Bell's Vireo Study monitor
- Issue with compost yard next to Ormond Beach
- Continuing Least Tern and Snowy Plover protection and monitoring at Ormond Beach

### **Channel Islands Audubon**

- Policy issue – Anti-Rodenticide legislation
- AB 1788 (Bloom) did not move out of the Senate Appropriations Committee
- We need anti-rodenticide support and education

### **Morro Coast Audubon**

- Participating again this year in Bloody Mary Contest at Sweet Spring Saloon, last year brought in \$3300 from donations and auction
- Donated to with other to fund 2 Raptors are the Solution anti-rodenticide bill boards in SLO county.
- Wrote letter to Army Corp of Engineers opposing oyster farm expansion in Morro Bay, concern over loss of winter bird habitat
- Replacing Audubon lookout viewing platform at 3<sup>rd</sup> street in Los Oso
- Obtained \$50,000 SCC grant for trail improvement and habitat restoration at East Sweet Springs
- Offering yearly scholarship to ABA Camp Colorado starting in 2020.

- Purchased 30 pair of quality youth binoculars for use by North County students. Setting up classroom visits and on site bird walks in county elementary schools
- Member of Dunes Alliance, to get State Parks to meet CC requirements at Oceano Dunes, and opposes a SP plan for southern access for ORV at Oso Flaco Lake.

### **Discussion of new chapter network support system**

Gaylon Parson gave a brief overview of the history of the chapter network. Going forward, chapter engagement with Audubon CA will be conservation focused. Gaylon Parsons and Andrea Jones will be the contacts at Audubon CA for chapter engagement. A draft partnership charter has been written, and will be reviewed in January 2020. This charter can be found [here](#).

Next Central Coast Chapters Council Meeting will be Saturday, March 21, 2020 hosted by Morro Coast Audubon.