



The Sandpiper

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2017



REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY www.rras.org

FIELD TRIPS

Every Saturday: Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. These are our famous rain-or-shine, docent-led field trips at the Marsh. Bring your binocular(s) and have a great morning birding! Meet in the parking lot at the end of South I Street (Klopp Lake) in Arcata at **8:30 a.m.** Trips end around 11 a.m. February 4: Alexa DeJoannis; February 11: Gary Friedrichsen; February 18: Ken Burton; February 25: Christine Keil.

For some of our more far-reaching trips we would like to suggest donating gas money to drivers on field trips. A good rule of thumb is \$5 per ½ hour drive time to field trip destination.

Saturday, February 11: Wildlife Tracking. Join Redwood Region Audubon Society and professional wildlife tracker Phil Johnston for a wildlife tracking field trip at **9 a.m.** This will be a unique chance to get hands-on experience identifying and interpreting wildlife tracks and sign. This introductory wildlife tracking class is perfect for naturalists of all ages and skill levels, and will focus on the basics of understanding the morphology, behavior and ecology of our local wildlife. The class will go rain-or-shine, so be prepared to spend 4-6 hours in the field in a variety of conditions. The class is limited to 20 participants, and interested parties must reserve a spot by emailing pj147@humboldt.edu.

Sunday, February 12: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This is a wonderful 2- to 3-hour trip for people wanting to learn the birds of the Humboldt Bay area. It takes a leisurely pace with emphasis on enjoying the birds! Beginners are more than welcome. Meet at the Refuge Visitor Center at **9 a.m.** Call Jude Power (707-822-3613) for more information.

Saturday, February 18: Willow Creek Birdwalk. Meet at Studio 299 (75 The Terrace, Willow Creek) starting at **9 a.m.** We will depart promptly at 9:30 for our destination; carpooling available. Walks generally run 2-3 hours. All ages, abilities and interest levels welcome! For more information, please contact Melissa Dougherty at 530-859-1874 or email willowcreekbirdwalks@gmail.com.

Sunday, February 19: Eureka Waterfront. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the foot of W. Del Norte St., where we will scope for birds off the public dock until everyone assembles. We will then drive to the base of the Hikshari' Trail at Truesdale Street and bird along the trail to the Elk River Wildlife Sanctuary. Leader: Ralph Bucher (707-499-1247; thebook@reninet.com).

Sunday, March 5: North Jetty. This short trip will focus on rocky shorebirds and seabirds to be found off the jetty. We will hope to see Rock Sandpiper, Wandering Tattler

and the other common rocky shorebirds, and will scope for seabirds off the tip of the jetty. Marbled Murrelets are often seen right off of the jetty and some years, Black-legged Kittiwakes and various tubenoses can be seen off of the tip. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the jetty parking lot at the south end of the North Spit. Alexa DeJoannis (202-288-5174) and Rob Fowler (707-839-3493) will lead. Trip will go until sometime around noon.

Sunday, March 12: Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. See February 12.

Saturday, March 18: Willow Creek Birdwalk. See February 18.

Sunday, March 19: Eureka Waterfront. See February 19.

Loleta/Ferndale Winter Raptor Survey Route. This will be the 10th consecutive winter of raptor surveys in the Loleta/Ferndale area. Tentative survey date is February 4, weather permitting. If you have not participated before and would like more information, please contact Ken Burton at shrikethree@gmail.com.

FEBRUARY PROGRAM, FRIDAY, FEB 10

WILDLIFE TRACKING: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF AN ANCIENT ART

Professional wildlife-tracker **Phil Johnston** will cover the basics of tracking, from its roots in early human evolution on the African savanna to its modern applications for science and education. The talk will separate fact from fiction, dispelling common myths and highlighting a practical approach to wildlife tracking and nature connection. Phil will also share personal anecdotes from his experience tracking in northern California and elsewhere in the world. The talk will be followed up on Saturday, Feb. 11, by a local field trip for hands-on experience identifying and interpreting wildlife tracks and sign in the field (see Field Trips).



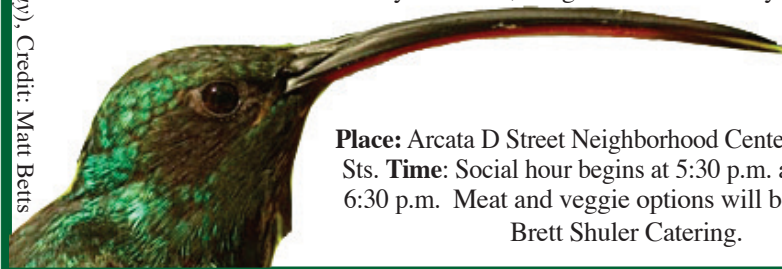
Green Hermit (*Phaethornis guy*), Credit: Matt Betts

ANNUAL BANQUET: SAT, MARCH 4

Hummingbird Highways: Why Landscape Connections Matter To Pollination In The Tropics

As tropical forests become increasingly broken up by roads, farm fields, pastures, and other developments, corridors of trees provide vital pathways for pollinators and contribute to a rich diversity of plant species.

Speaker **Matthew Betts**, Associate Professor of Landscape Ecology, IWFL Professor of Forest Biodiversity Research, Oregon State University..



Place: Arcata D Street Neighborhood Center, 13th and D Sts. **Time:** Social hour begins at 5:30 p.m. and dinner at 6:30 p.m. Meat and veggie options will be offered by Brett Shuler Catering.

The program starts at **7:30 p.m.**
at the **Six Rivers Masonic Lodge**, 251 Bayside Rd., Arcata.
Bring a mug to enjoy shade-grown coffee,
and please come fragrance-free.

Cost: Ticket price is a sliding scale between \$35 and \$75.
Send check made out to RRAS to P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502,
email redwoodpost@suddenlink.net with Banquet in the subject line,
or phone (707) 442-8862. The last day to make reservations is February 28.

CHAPTER LEADERS

OFFICERS

President— Hal Genger 707-499-0887
Vice President— Jim Clark 707-445-8311
Secretary Pro Tem — Ken Burton..... 707-499-1146
Treasurer—Syn-dee Noel..... 707-442-8862

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Ralph Bucher 707-443-6944
Jill Demers 707-667-6163
Harriet Hill..... 707-267-4055
Chet Ogan 707-442-9353
Susan Penn..... 707-443-9660
C.J. Ralph 707-822-2015
Denise Seeger 707-444-2399

OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS

Conservation — Jim Clark 707-445-8311
Eductn/Schlrshps — Denise Seeger ..707-444-2399
eBird Liaison — Rob Fowler 707-839-3493
Facebook — Cindy Moyer..... 707-822-1886
— Rob Fowler 707-839-3493
Field Notes **HELP NEEDED**
Field Trips— Rob Fowler 707-839-3493
Finance— Syn-dee Noel707-442-8862
Historian — John Hewston 707-822-5288
Membership — Susan Penn.....707-443-9660
NEC Representative — C.J. Ralph..... 707-822-2015
Nominating - Jim Clark 707-445-8311
Programs — Ken Burton707-499-1146
Publications — C.J. Ralph..... 707-822-2015
Publicity — Harriet Hill..... 707-267-4055
Sandpiper (Ed.)—Alexa DeJoannis..... 202-288-5174
Sandpiper (Layout)- Gary Bloomfield ..707-362-1226
Volunteer Coordinator- Susan Penn.....707-443-9660
Website — Susan Penn.....707-443-9660
Lake Earl Branch — Sue Calla..... 707-465-6191
RRAS Web Page..... www.rras.org
Arcata Bird Alert707-822-5666

The Sandpiper is published six times each year by
Redwood Region Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1054, Eureka, CA 95502.

Thinking of Joining the National Audubon Society?

If so, please use the coupon below. By sending in your membership on this form, rather than replying to solicitations from National Audubon, \$20 is sent directly to RRAS. This is how NAS rewards local chapters for recruiting national members. (Otherwise, the RRAS dues share per new member is only a couple of dollars.) Thank you.

Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed. (Introductory offer)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

email _____

Local Chapter Code: C24

Please make checks to the National Audubon Society.

Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society

P.O. Box 422250

Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

-----LOCAL CHAPTER-----
REDWOOD REGION AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1054, EUREKA, CA 95502

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Hal Genger

Welcome to a new year! Listed below are the major goals for this year.

1. We will continue with our regular monthly field trips interspersed with trips to different areas and habitats. Let us know if there is an area you would like to visit.

2. We will continue to seek out significant bird habitat and do on-ground restoration. Projects include:

- Baylands Project — We will be working with Arcata Rotary to improve public access to this parcel as soon as the permits are in place.
- Parcel 4 behind the Bayshore Mall — We are actively working with the City of Eureka and other groups. This area has been cleaned up, had concrete structures removed, and now has a paved bike and pedestrian trail traveling through it. Jim Clark has researched and written a proposal for funding to replace alien species with native ones to make it a nicer place for birds and people.
- Mad River cottonwoods — We are also looking to maintain and preserve in some fashion the cottonwoods along Mad River. Cottonwoods are important migration and breeding habitats for birds and other wildlife.
- Bird-friendly yards — Urban areas, schools, yards, etc. can be viable bird habitats. RRAS is

gathering information to share with the public on how to make their yards more amenable to bird life.

3. RRAS is building its education program. We are helping to maintain the bird collection at Eureka High School. Using grant monies we have done some cabinet repair, replaced lighting, and put UV filters over the skylights. We are digitizing our curriculum, working on digitizing the collection data, and updating the bird names.

4. Our local chapter is continually striving to increase its membership. We would like to get more young people interested in birds. The education committee works with K-12 students. We give an award at the Humboldt County Science Fair and cosponsor student bird art and nature writing contests. We would like to have younger people attend our activities. Please contact the board if you have any other ideas.

5. We are busy planning another Birdathon this year as a fundraiser for both NEC and RRAS (see article below). Start forming your groups, thinking about where to bird, and asking people to donate for each bird you find!

6. We will be involved with Godwit Days (April 19-25, 2017), again running the Godwit Café. Come in and see us!

GET READY FOR THE THIRD ANNUAL TIM MCKAY BIRDATHON!

By Gary Friedrichsen

Though our winter winds are still blowing and rain is pelting down, we can take heart because Spring is just around the corner, and with it comes another opportunity to get out for a great day of bird-watching while you help support two wonderful local organizations. In May, individuals and teams will once again sally forth to amass a list of birds seen during a 24-hour period. With every different species tallied, the cash register "ka-chings," and pledged donations go to the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC) and the Redwood Region Audubon Society (RRAS). Birdathons have been taking place throughout America for over 30 years now and they have proven to be a fun-filled activity that can make a huge difference to the volunteer organizations they support.

This year the Birdathon will begin May 6 and last until May 14, giving participants nine days to pick a period of time in which they can maximize their efforts. It's not too early to begin putting your team together and planning your route for your "Big Day." As we have done for the last two years, we will award prizes to those teams (or individuals) that garner the most sponsors and donations. We know that some people have difficulty asking anyone for money, but remember that you are appealing on behalf of two organizations that operate on shoestring budgets, and yet provide our community amazing benefits with regard to our environment. We are likely sailing into troubled waters these next four years, and groups

like the RRAS and the NEC will be at the forefront of the fight, helping to guard our resources and vulnerable ecosystems.

Tim McKay worked his entire adult life as Executive Director of the NEC and waged battle after battle on our behalf against those who would overuse our resources for short-sighted and immediate profit. He began the local Birdathons back in the 80s, and we trust that his motto, "Endless pressure, endlessly applied" will direct the continuing work we must all help accomplish.

Register your team at www.yournec.org/birdathon and watch that site for pledge sheets, prizes, and other information.

NEW MEMBERS

RRAS welcomes the following new members and subscribers:

Albany, OR - Cathy Vicory

Arcata - Tony Gonsalves, Jim Roberts,
Christine R Rousselot, Debby Harrison,
Jennie Domareki, Jennifer Mason

Bayside - Karen Orsolics, Susan Cashman,
Jim McIntosh

Burnt Ranch - Tom Weisend

Crescent City - Mari Sample, Beverly Hopkins

Cutten - Linda Anne Cummings

We look forward to seeing you on field trips and at our monthly programs.



SUNRISE AT THE REFUGE

By Denise Seeger

You are invited to Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge for "Sunrise at the Refuge, a.k.a Aleutian Cackling Goose Fly-Off & Family Fun Weekend," on Saturday and Sunday, March 4 and 5, rain or shine. Meet at the Richard J. Guadagno Headquarters and Visitor Center, 1020 Ranch Road in Loleta. The gate will open at 6 a.m.

View the habitats of southern Humboldt Bay at sunrise. Watch thousands of Aleutian cackling geese fly off their night time roosts. The fly-off usually occurs within 15 minutes before or after sunrise. Sunrise will occur around 6:45 a.m.

Family fun activities inside the Visitor Center will include bird silhouette painting and other arts and crafts from 7 a.m to 11 a.m. Bring a mug for coffee, tea, or cocoa.

This is a popular event. We encourage everyone to please carpool to ease parking congestion on the refuge. For more information or special accommodation please call (707) 733-5406 or visit www.fws.gov/refuge/humboldtby/.



CHILDREN'S NATURE WRITING CONTEST DEADLINE MARCH 24

By Sue Leskiw

Redwood Region Audubon Society is sponsoring its 12th annual children's nature writing contest. Up to six cash prizes will be awarded for the best essay(s) or poem(s) on "What Nature Means to Me" by Humboldt or Del Norte County students in grades 4 through 12. Winners will be published on the RRAS website, www.rras.org, with awards presented at the 22nd Annual Godwit Days Festival in Arcata on Saturday, April 22.

Entries should be no more than 450 words in length; one entry per person. Topics suitable for exploration include, but are not limited to, bird feeding, duck hunting, animal rescue, and observations of the natural world. Entries must include the student's name, home address, phone number, and e-mail, plus teacher name, grade, school, phone, and e-mail. Deadline for receipt is Friday, March 24, 2017.

Send submissions as text within the body of an e-mail (no Google docs or attachments) to tomleskiw@gmail.com or mail a printout to Tom Leskiw, 155 Kara Lane, McKinleyville CA 95519.



Tufted Duck, Arcata Marsh, HUM Co., © Elias Elias

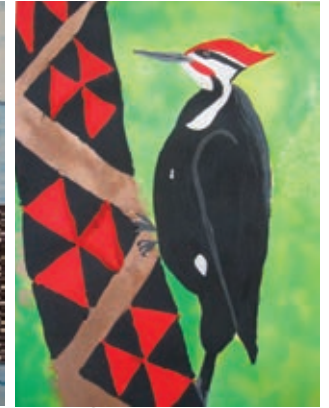
GET UP-TO-THE-MINUTE BIRD NEWS!

By Elias Elias

Ever wonder how to get up-to-the-minute bird news? Or how to share some interesting sighting? Call it in!! The RRAS-sponsored **Northwestern California Birders' Voicemail** is again using the original number, **(707) 822-LOON (822-5666)**. When reporting a rare or unusual bird, please list all the species first, then follow with your name and details on the bird's location, giving time and date of the sighting. Last year the computer operating the "bird box" failed. To replace the service we opted for a "cloud"-based solution. Following instructions on the service you can have the message streamed to your smart phone inbox. To find out what all your bird news options are, navigate to this webpage: www.rras.org/ebird_and_other_reporting_systems.aspx.



Pileated Woodpecker
by Deja Coleman



Common Loon
by Calvin Gans

MARCH 24 DEADLINE FOR STUDENT BIRD ART CONTEST

By Sue Leskiw

For the 14th year, RRAS and Friends of the Arcata Marsh are co-sponsoring a Student Bird Art Contest in conjunction with Godwit Days. At least \$550 in prizes will be awarded to Humboldt County students from kindergarten through high school who submit a drawing of one of 40 suggested species or another common local bird. Prize(s) also will be awarded for the best rendition of a bird in its natural habitat.

Entries will be judged by local wildlife artists and educators. Awards will be presented at the 22nd Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival on Saturday, April 22. All entries will be displayed at the Arcata Community Center during the Festival and copies of winning artwork will be shown at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center during May and June. A downloadable booklet of winning artwork and photos from the awards ceremony will be posted at www.rras.org.

A flyer with complete rules and a list of suggested birds is posted on the RRAS website (link in right column) or can be picked up at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center, 569 South G Street, Arcata. Flyers have been mailed to all schools in Humboldt County.

Artwork may be dropped off at the Arcata Marsh Interpretive Center or mailed to Sue Leskiw, 155 Kara Lane, McKinleyville CA 95519. Entries must be received by Friday, March 24, to be considered. Questions should be e-mailed to sueleskiw1@gmail.com.



Bald Eagle by Aleta Stubblefield

The editor realizes that many readers appreciate the Field Notes regular feature that often appears here. However, the article is time-consuming to prepare and edit, and the information is available elsewhere: RRAS Bird Box (707-822-LOON), the online northwestern

California birding and information exchange (nwcalbird@yahoo.com), and eBird (ebird.org). We will be offering somewhat different kinds of articles here that we hope will be of equal or greater interest to our readers. Feedback is always appreciated.

NOTABLE HUMBOLDT BIRD SIGHTINGS JANUARY 2016-JANUARY 2017: WHAT A YEAR!

By Chet Ogan; additional research by Elias Elias, and Sean McAllister.

This year we have seen a remarkable number of rare (also called "accidental") birds show up in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. "Accidental" in California is defined as having fewer than 5-10 records.

Among the rarest of local bird finds last year was a **Common Pochard** found by Jeff Allen on Freshwater Lagoon on December 20, among a large flock of Redheads and Canvasbacks. It was still being seen in mid-January, but may have disappeared (last sighted 1/13/17 on [eBird.org](http://ebird.org)). For about a week the duck was easy to distinguish in a group of Ring-necked Ducks in the Redwood Creek oxbow east of Redwood National Park's Kuchel Visitors Center. Common Pochard is considered accidental in North America. According to *Rare Birds of California* (Hamilton *et al.*, eds. 2007), this duck breeds in Eurasia, from Iceland eastward to central Russia and southern Siberia. The species winters in western Europe, northern and central Africa, the Middle East, and across southern Asia to Japan. This is the fourth record for California, and the first Common Pochard to hang around long enough to be easily seen in a publicly accessible place. The sighting has brought many birders from throughout North America to our county, where many spend a night and almost all have at least two meals. This year our Tall Trees Christmas Bird Count (CBC) became the first in the lower 48 states to tally a Common Pochard. From now on, birders will be looking more closely through Redhead and Canvasback flocks.



Common Pochard, Freshwater Lagoon, Humboldt Co.
01/05/17 © Lizzie Feucht

An equally rare find was an immature male **Eurasian Kestrel** found by Tony Kurz and Casey Ryan on January 6, 2017, at Fields Landing. The first and only accepted record in California was at Marin Headlands, where a juvenile female was banded in the fall of 2007 at the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. This bird was seen and photographed by many observers on only one day. A purported Eurasian Kestrel captured aboard a ship inbound from Japan and kept in captivity at Humboldt State University in 1978 has not been accepted by the California Bird Record Committee due to inconsistent

documentation (see *Western Birds* 39, pages 184-187). According to *Rare Birds of California*, the easternmost *Falco tinnunculus interstictus* subspecies breeds as close to North America as northern Japan and winters as far north as southern Japan. This species occurs casually (not seen annually but reasonably expected to occur) in Alaska and accidentally in British Columbia and western Washington.



Eurasian Kestrel, Fields Landing, Humboldt Co.
01/06/2017, © Gary Bloomfield

A **Great Gray Owl** was seen by many people from January to February at Prairie Creek State Park. Another (or maybe the same) Great Gray Owl was photographed months later by a resident along Aldergrove Road just before Christmas in the northeast Arcata area; it is still being reported as of this writing. Great Gray Owls have been known to breed as near as the mountains around Medford, Oregon, and have been reported in Siskiyou and Modoc Counties in California. A year-round population also occurs near Yosemite National Park.

On January 18, 2017, Tony Kurz found a pair of **Trumpeter Swans** along north Coffee Creek Road among over 60 Tundra Swans. The same pair may have seen on the first of the year during the Centerville CBC, but were too distant to be confirmed. Trumpeter Swans are considered accidental in coastal northwestern California. They have been reported to eBird four times in the past four years, generally in the Centerville area of Humboldt County and the Lake Earl area of Del Norte County. They are casual in the Central Valley and northeastern California.

Casey Ryan found a **Little Stint** at Tolowa Dunes on August 1; another Little Stint was reported on Centerville Beach on August 31 by Todd Easterla. In mid-August, Rob Fowler found a **Red-necked Stint** at Jacoby Creek Mouth. On September 1 (the day after he found the Little Stint!), Todd Easterla photographed a juvenile Red-necked Stint at Cock Robin Island. Both species are considered accidental in northwestern California. As of this writing, a bright red, adult male **Vermilion Flycatcher** is still being found near the wastewater treatment plant in Crescent City. A **Black-throated**

Sparrow was spotted by Gary Fredrichson and others on a field trip of the Western Field Ornithologists' (WFO) meeting at the BLM campground at the mouth of Mattole River between September 29 and October 9. This sparrow is considered accidental in our region. A **Rusty Blackbird** is being seen in a blackbird flock at a pig farm west of Mosely Road in Del Norte, probably the same bird found by Lucas Brug north of the Smith River in November. According to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, no reason is known why Rusty Blackbirds have declined by nearly 90% throughout North America.

Trained hawk-eyes found a **Broad-winged Hawk** soaring near Capetown along the Lost Coast during a during a field trip of the WFO meeting on October 1, led by Jon Dunn. Casey Ryan photographed and carefully described a Broad-winged Hawk at Benbow Lake on September 23. He wrote:

"First impressions were of a compact Buteo with ... trailing edge perpendicular to body, pointed wing tips, short broad tail. I could easily make out a broad, dark edge to the tail contrasting with a broad, white tail-band. The trailing edge of the wings were also distinct and dark, contrasting strongly with the primaries and secondaries. The underside of the bird was overall very light, with a dark outline. The plumage was overall brown with a little more of a rusty tone to the breast."

Casey noted that it reminded him of an Accipiter as it stooped and had the appearance of a Red-shouldered Hawk while it perched briefly. This hawk breeds in western Canada and is regularly sighted during migration by observers at the Golden Gate Observatory. It is likely present more often than observed during migrations along our region. Casey also spotted a **Zone-Tailed Hawk** at Benbow in May with similar documentation, which is a pretty good bird for northern California.

Keith Slauson spotted a light-morph **Swainson's Hawk** on October 30 in the vicinity of Hammond's Bridge in McKinleyville. While Swainson's Hawk is regularly seen in California, it is mostly reported in the Central Valley where it uses arid habitats.

In early December, "Doc" and Mike Harris saw an unusual dark female scaup-like duck that was later identified by Keith Slauson as a female **Tufted Duck** at the Arcata Marsh. Bob Brown recorded the duck for the Arcata CBC. Officially, this species is listed in our area as casual. This bird is being seen in East Pond but was often seen in Gearheart Marsh with other scaup.

This winter, a big influx of **Bohemian Waxwings** pushed into Washington and Oregon from western Canada. None has been confirmed yet west of the Coast Range in California, but recently Lucas Brug reported a possible Bohemian in a flock of Cedar Waxwings. Keep checking those Cedar Waxwing flocks closely for a rather larger waxwing with cinnamon-brown undertail coverts.

Other sightings of casual birds in 2016 included a **Snowy Owl** (South Spit), a **Hudsonian Godwit** (Clam Beach), a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** (Big Lagoon County Park), an **American Tree Sparrow** (Arcata Marsh), a female **Costa's Hummingbird** (Cock Robin Island), a **Gray Catbird** (Blue Lake), two **Summer Tanagers** (McKinleyville and Terwer Creek near Klamath), a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** along Eureka's waterfront, and a **Lawrence's Goldfinch** near Blue Lake.