



Shorebirding Field Trip 6 September 2014

On Saturday, 6 September, 9 participants and I birded some of the coastal Humboldt shorebirding hotspots around Humboldt Bay and the Eel River estuary. When I originally scheduled this trip I had no idea that the first-annual "[World Shorebirds Day](#)" was going to be taking place on the same day! What are the chances of that happening!?

We started shorebirding in earnest at the mouth of Jacoby Creek in the northeastern portion of north Humboldt Bay. Unfortunately the tide had already risen high enough to cover most of the mudflats here but there were still many shorebirds present in some of the muddy areas of the salt marsh, including a nice adult PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER that everyone enjoyed nice studies of. [eBird list for Jacoby Creek mouth](#).

After Jacoby Creek we headed back to Klopp Lake at the Arcata Marsh to study the roosting shorebirds there for about an hour before our lunch break there. Highlights for us here were nice studies of juvenile SHORT-BILLED LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS side by side, 4 ELEGANT TERNS (rarely get into north Humboldt Bay), and a nice study of various ages of LEAST and WESTERN SANDPIPERS and GREATER YELLOWLEGS. [eBird list for Klopp Lake](#).

After a lunch break at the Klopp Lake parking lot we decided to head to Marina Way in Eureka to try and add BLACK TURNSTONE to our shorebird list. One fly-by turnstone was the best we could do but we enjoyed the numerous ELEGANT TERNS that roost on the numerous old pilings here. [eBird list for Marina Way \(Wharfinger Building area\)](#).

After Eureka we headed to Fields Landing for a quick stop to look for more turnstones and other shorebirds before heading to the Eel River estuary. We did get better looks at more BLACK TURNSTONES and had lots of MARBLED GODWITS heading south towards mudflats out of view. [eBird list for Fields Landing](#).

The whole trip was building and building for the highlight of the trip: going out on a boat to explore some little-seen shorebirding areas in the Eel River estuary with Bruce Slocum and his Camp Weott Guide Service (707.786.4187 to book a tour with him). Bruce has been leading boat trips in the estuary since the 70's and knows more about the ecology and history of the area more than anybody else in the area. Before we got on the boat we discovered 2 juvenile WANDERING TATTLERS right on the dock, a species that is very rare in the estuary and rarely found away from its preferred rocky shore habitat (see photo of one bird in the species list below). Bruce suggested we head to a mudflat that was at the southwestern portion of the estuary so we did! The mudflat was pretty amazing and provided expansive foraging habitat for the couple of thousand shorebirds that were using it when we pulled up to it! It didn't take long for us to pick out the best shorebird find of the day: a juvenile STILT SANDPIPER (See photo below in the species list). While looking at the Stilt Sandpiper I spotted a BLACK TERN flying over and heading to the west. Everybody in the group got nice but quick views of this bird as it flew to the west and quickly out of sight.

I think everybody really enjoyed shorebirding at this location where few birders have had the chance to visit and the bonus rare birds made it that much sweeter for us! After birding these mudflats for an hour, or so, we moved on to the west end of Cock Robin Island (after we took a brief foray up the Salt River where no shorebirds were present) where we ended the day. Not many shorebirds were present but we did add our only WHIMBREL for the day (a calling flyover) and our last shorebird species of the day was a RED KNOT, a nice surprise. [eBird list for the Eel River estuary](#).

Thanks to all the participants that joined me on this inaugural Fowlerope Birding Tours fall shorebirding trip and special thanks to Bruce Slocum for ferrying our couple of boatloads of birders to the hot shorebirding locations in the Eel River estuary!!

Here is a photo of that magic mudflat (with participant Paul Roush walking back):



Photo of the group at end of the tour:



Bird Species List

We detected 61 species total and found exactly 20 species of shorebirds.

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

I = introduced

Anseriformes – Screamers, Swans, Geese, and Ducks

Anatidae - Ducks, Geese, Swans

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

Gaviiformes - Loons

Gaviidae - Loons

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*

Podicipediformes - Grebes

Podicipedidae - Grebes

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Suliformes – Frigatebirds, Boobies, Cormorants, Darters, and Allies

Phalacrocoracidae - Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Pelecaniformes - Pelicans, Herons, Ibises, and Allies

Pelecanidae - Pelicans

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Ardeidae - Herons and egrets

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Accipitriformes - Hawks, Kites, Eagles, and Allies

Cathartidae - New World Vultures

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Accipitridae-Hawks, Eagles and Kites

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Charadriiformes - Shorebirds, Gulls, Auks, and Allies

Recurvirostridae - Stilts and Avocets

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*

Charadriidae - Lapwings and Plovers

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (1 adult found at the mouth of Jacoby Creek; see Fig. 1.)



Figure 1. adult Pacific Golden-Plover at mouth of Jacoby Creek

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Scolopacidae - Sandpipers, Phalaropes, and Allies

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* (Two juveniles found right at the boat dock at the end of Morgan Slough rd. were a nice surprise and unexpected there; See Fig. 2.)



Figure 2. juvenile Wandering Tattler

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Willet *Tringa semipalmata*

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
 Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*
 Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*
 Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*
 Red Knot *Calidris canutus*
 Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* (1 juvenile found with mostly peeps at the southwest corner of the Eel River estuary; See Fig. 3.)



Figure 3. juvenile Stilt Sandpiper with Least Sandpipers

Sanderling *Calidris alba*
 Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*
 Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*
 Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*
 Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
 Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Alcidae - Auks, Murres, and Puffins

Common Murre *Uria aalge*

Laridae - Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
 Western Gull *Larus occidentalis*
 California Gull *Larus californicus*
 Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*
 Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*
 Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* (One bird found at the southwest corner of the Eel River estuary was an unexpected highlight for the trip.)
 Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*

Columbiformes - Pigeons, and Doves

Columbidae - Pigeons and Doves

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* – I

Coraciiformes - Rollers, Motmots, Kingfishers, and Allies

Alcedinidae - Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

Falconiformes - Caracaras and Falcons

Falconidae - Caracaras and Falcons

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrines*

Passeriformes - Passerine Birds

Tyrannidae - Tyrant Flycatchers

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*

Corvidae - Crows and Jays

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Hirundinidae – Swallows

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Paridae - Chickadees and Titmice

Black-capped Chickadee *Poecile atricapillus*

Troglodytidae – Wrens

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Sturnidae - Starlings

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* – I

Bombycillidae – Waxwings

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Parulidae - Wood-Warblers

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

Emberizidae – Emberizids

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Fringillidae - Fringilline and Cardueline Finches and Allies

House Finch *Haemorrhous mexicanus*

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*

Passeridae - Old World Sparrows

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* - I