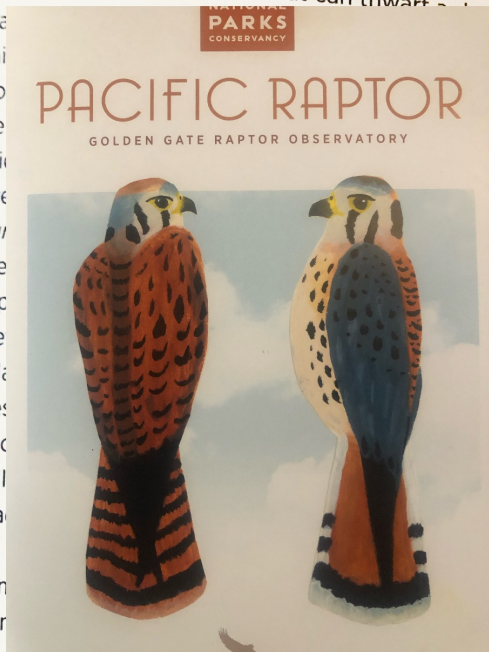


Wednesday, September 9

There are a few conditions that can thwart



Thursday, October 8

The fog was rolling through the Headlands as if on a tide schedule all day, never so much that we packed it in early, but enough to make for a closed-in view and a slow-going count.

If you stare at the Marin Headlands long enough you start to see all kinds of patterns in the grass and trees and rocks. It can be a lot like cloud-watching: Some people see that dragon eating the starfish, while others see an amorphous blob. Enough vegetation patterns here have endured through the seasons long enough to reach official GGRO landmark status, points of reference we use to tell each other where the birds are flying. A typical yell on Hawk Hill might be "Buteo, moving left over Sleeping Elvis" (a swath of hillside that looks a bit like the King lying on his back), or "Juv harrier over the Petri Dish" (a patch of greenery in the west quadrant that looks like a giant cell-culture dish).

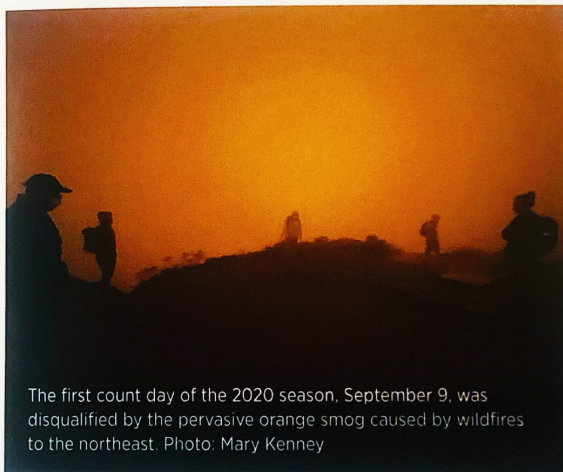
Named for our GGRO Director Allen Fish, Fish Rock is a craggy outcrop of lichen-covered rocks not far beyond the north viewing platform. Ravens, Flickers and a great assortment of passerines, as well as the occasional raptor, will land on Fish Rock.

When it was my turn in the north quadrant, most of the potential view was obscured by low-hanging clouds and wisps of drifting fog. I could just see Fish Rock, weathering the winds and dampness as it has done for millions of years, impassive.

Then I saw it move. I blinked. Now I was awake! I lifted my binocs, and saw the hide of a Mule Deer, grazing just on the other side of the rock. Then

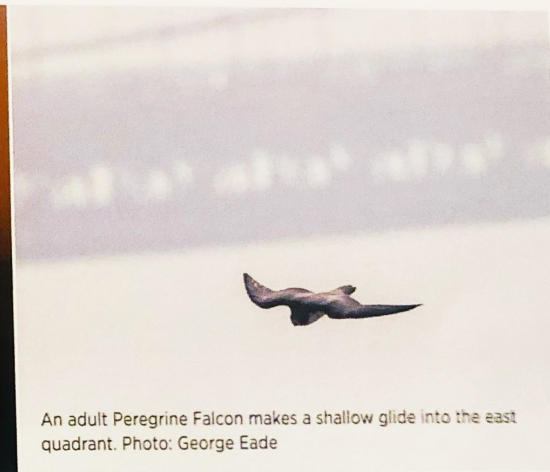
another patch of rock moved and became two ears twitching from the middle of the outcrop. A second deer was grazing down the middle of the rock formation (which I only then realized was two ridges side by side). Both animals were perfectly camouflaged. I called Nancy and Cheryl over from their equally slow quadrants to marvel. One of the deer lifted its head and gazed at us with dark eyes for one, very still moment. Then it resumed its grazing and disappeared back into the rock.

- Deborah Crooks



The first count day of the 2020 season, September 9, was disqualified by the pervasive orange smog caused by wildfires to the northeast. Photo: Mary Kenney

A juvenile Ferruginous Hawk finds lift in the updrafts along Slacker Ridge. Photo: Don Bartling



An adult Peregrine Falcon makes a shallow glide into the east quadrant. Photo: George Eade

An adult female Northern Harrier cruises the coastal grasslands. Photo: John Davis

