



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 59, Number 5

February 2014

Birds of the Sierra Nevada ✦ Ed Pandolfino



Yellow Warbler.
From *Birds of the Sierra Nevada*.
Illustration by Keith Hansen.

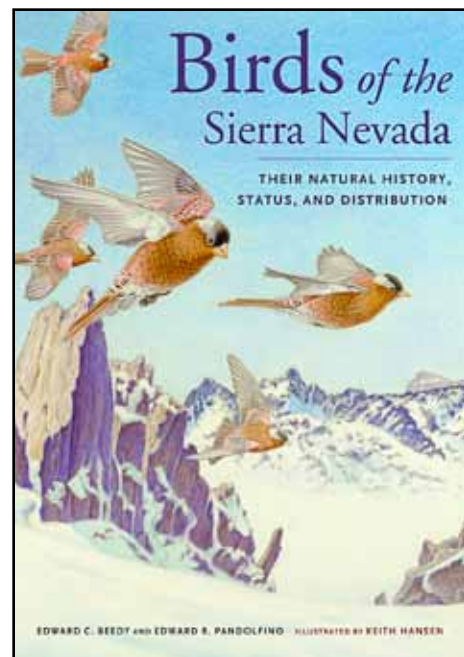
Ed Pandolfino will take you on a virtual transect of the range from the oak savanna in the west, through serene conifer forests of the west side, up into the majestic alpine regions, and down the steep eastern escarpment to the pinyon/juniper woodlands and open steppes of the Great Basin. Along the way we'll see and hear the stunning diversity of birds that make the Sierra their home. We'll learn about which birds are in decline and which are expanding and increasing. We'll address some mysteries surrounding some of those species and discuss how birders can help to solve them.

Ed Pandolfino spent most of his early life on the move, living in many different states and countries and attending 13 different schools between first grade and high school. His first exposure to the Sierra came as a teenager, hunting, fishing, and backpacking, but somehow remaining essentially unaware of the birds. After a checkered and inconsistent college experience that included dropping-out and touring Europe as a drummer for a rock & roll band, Ed finally settled down and earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry at Washington State

University. He spent over twenty years working in various management positions in the medical device industry. After an eyeball-to-eyeball encounter with a Spotted Towhee (then Rufous-sided Towhee), Ed's relationship with birds transformed instantaneously from oblivious to obsessed. Since retiring in 1999 he has devoted his life to birds, working on habitat conservation and avian research.

Ed is president of Western Field Ornithologists and is the Northern California Regional Editor for *North American Birds*. In the past several years, he has rediscovered his "inner scientist," and has published more than two dozen papers on status and distribution of western birds. He co-authored with Ted Beedy *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution*, illustrated by Keith Hansen and recently published by U.C. Press. He lives in Sacramento with his wife and close to both their children.

Our March program will feature a talk on Mountain Lions by Zara McDonald, the Executive Director of the Felidae Conservation Fund



BIRDING INFORMATION

Birding the Inca Trail. MDAS member Jill Hedgecock will talk about the bird life she saw while hiking the Inca Trail. Jill is a young-adult fiction writer and member of the California Writer's Club and the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 6**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* raffle

8:05 PM Speaker: **Ed Pandolfino**

Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, March 6:

Zara McDonald, Mountain Lions

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

2014 is upon us. We are off and running. Our two Christmas bird counts for Contra Costa County are behind. You can read the reports of both counts in this newsletter. Of course the weather was great and we did have some great birds.

Last year while doing the Hayward bird count one of people in our group pulled out her iPhone and using iBird Pro, an app with all the birds of North America on it, she played the call of a Red-breasted Nuthatch and one popped right out of tree next to us. I vowed right there that I would have to get an iPhone and that app. I have used it a number of times with good results. Of great interest was the article in the January 3 issue of the Wall Street Journal on the use of these devices and the possible negative effect on birds. It was a fairly long article and had quotes from Jeff Gordon, president of the American Birding Association and National Audubon staff as well as National Park service staff. David Sibley was quoted also. They all said that these high-tech devices can be abused and can have a negative effect on birds. As of now there is no clear scientific evidence to back up the possible negative effects because all of this is so new. It was a good reminder to all of us to use wisdom in the field. It would be a shame if the overuse of these devices would be one more thing that our poor birds had to deal with.

Another fascinating article I read in the magazine *Birdwatching* was about the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. It was entitled "Like meteors from heaven," which was part of a quote by an Indian chief named Pokagon. We are all aware of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon, but I had no idea about what went on surrounding the extinction. The article is written by Joel Greenberg who is the founder of Project Passenger Pigeon and author of the book *A feathered river across the sky: the Passenger Pigeon's flight to extinction*. The Passenger Pigeon population in the early 19th century made up 25-40% of the total bird population of North America. Alexander Wilson, the early ornithologist, studied a single flight in Kentucky that he estimated was 2½ billion birds. John James Audubon said flights along the Ohio River eclipsed the sun for three days. The slaughter of these birds is a terrible tragedy. Human beings wiped out a billion or more birds in a matter of decades. Most of this was by guns. They were shot for

food and for fun. A gunner claimed killing 100 birds in one shot. As the country grew and railroads came about, that sparked more killing since the birds could be shipped off in barrels. A single pair of pigeons nested once a year and laid only one egg. By 1890 only a few Passenger Pigeons remained. The last three wild birds were killed in 1900. Two pigeons were at the Cincinnati zoo. George and Martha were their names. George died in 1911 and Martha, the last Passenger Pigeon, died September 1, 1914. What a sad story!

Hope to see you at a general meeting or on a field trip.

Great Backyard Bird Count

The 2014 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17. This 17th annual count is a four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are.

Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website.

New participants must set up a free GBBC account to submit their checklists or use login information from an existing account for any other Cornell Lab citizen-science project. You'll only need to do this once to participate in all future GBBC events.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported.

Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see for the GBBC photo contest. 2012 first-place winner of a Cedar Waxwing is seen here.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use the GBBC information, along

Welcome New Members

Elizabeth Bader	Pleasant Hill
Linda Downing	Lafayette
Dana Gallo	Pleasant Hill
Wendy Parfrey	Oakland
Joy Shonfeld	Danville



with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited.



This species is named for the rusty coloration of its feathers. It has two color morphs. The light morph has whitish feathers on its legs.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 7 to learn more.

AEFGHIKONRRSUUW

The Quail is published monthly except January and August by Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **The deadline for the March issue is February 11.**

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB Sightings@yahoo.com. If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

The last two months have been marked by an influx of Lewis's Woodpeckers, a few unusual birds, and the beginning of the Herring Run at Richardsson Bay in Marin.

Wood Ducks were prevalent at Valle Vista Staging Area bridge with a high of 30 seen 11/30. BP.

Eurasian Wigeon were at McNabney Marsh 11/19, HH, Meeker Slough in Richmond 1/1, LL, and Miller-Knox Regional Park on 1/10. AK, MS.

Blue-winged Teal pair was at McNabney Marsh 11/21. On 1/1 there was one at the Albany Crescent. BPo.

HH found a female **Redhead** at Heather Farm Pond 11/30.

A single **Black Scoter** was with a flock of **Surf Scoters** in the Richmond Marina from 11/22 to 12/24. DW, LK, RB, DH.

One hundred forty **Bufflehead** were on Heather Farm Pond 12/7. HH.

PS found a **Barrow's Goldeneye** in a small lake in Oakley 12/26.

Hooded Mergansers were wide spread 11/11-1/7 at Jewel Lake, San Ramon Creek, McNabney Marsh, DVC pond, and Valle Vista creek. JP, AL, DW, LK, BP, WH, LF, CH, JL.

LLa saw a rare **Black-crowned Night Heron** at Lafayette Reservoir 11/29.

A **Bald Eagle** flew over the EBRPD Botanic Garden in Tilden 12/9. ES.

Ferruginous Hawk was on Holland Tract Road 11/10, P&NS; and 1/1, DW. LK.

A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Clifton Court Forebay 12/1, AL; and Byron Airport area 12/9, CS.

P&NS had a fly-over **Golden Eagle** for a new yard bird in Antioch. 11/14.

Seven **Clapper Rails** were at Meeker Slough near 51st Street in Richmond on 1/1, LL; and B&KB saw some there as well on that date.

A **Sora** was at Lafayette Reservoir 11/29. RC.

NW and KM saw a **Common Gallinule** at Lafayette Reservoir 12/1.

Sandhill Cranes were at Holland Tract 11/10, P&NS; and 12/1. DW, LK.

A **Surfbird** was at Meeker Slough 1/2. KP. BPo found a **Red Knot** at Albany Crescent 1/1.

A most unusual **Iceland (Kumlien's) Gull** was at Clifton Court Forebay 1/9. AL, NA. M&RJ found 7 **Burrowing Owls** in Brentwood at Minnesota and Grant.

EL had a possible **Costa's Hummingbird** at her house in Walnut Creek 1/13.

A **Merlin** was at Ferry Point in Point Richmond 12/14. BM. KB had one at her Lafayette yard 1/8.

Lewis's Woodpeckers were in higher numbers than usual: Los Vaqueros north side 11/15, AL; on the Clayton-Black Diamond Trail 11/30, JB; 4 at Los Vaqueros 12/1, DW and LK; at Contra Loma RP 12/20, PS.

Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker were at Contra Loma RP 12/20, AL, PS; AL saw 1 at Point Edith Trail 1/7, and earlier in December at Markham Community Park.

An **Eastern Phoebe** stayed one day at Newhall Community Park in Concord 11/28. AL.

MaK and SG saw a **Tropical Kingbird** on the Bay Trail in Richmond near 51st Street entrance. 12/3.

A very unusual **Barn Swallow** was at Meeker Slough 1/1, LL.

LL found **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in Briones RP with a mixed flock 11/15. LF found some on the Upper Packrat Trail at Tilden RP 12/15.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were at Inspiration Point in Tilden 11/12. MO, MB, Meeker Slough 12/6, MR; and Clifton Court Forebay 1/9. AL, NA.

A **California Thrasher** was in an unusual place at Mountain View Sanitary District 12/17. DB, PW.

LL found a **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** at Briones RP 11/15.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was with a large sparrow flock at Ferry Point, Point Richmond, from 12/2 to 12/9. KF, GG, MK, ES.

Lincoln Sparrows were in the yards of BH in Concord and P&NS in Antioch 1/5, 1/7.

A **Swamp Sparrow** returned to Lafayette Reservoir 12/23, NW, 12/28, MR. There was one at the Bay Trail along Meeker Slough 1/7 and 1/8. KF, LL, EH, EP.

JR, P&NS had **Slate-colored Juncos** in their yards. One was seen at Miller-Knox RP 12/2. KF.

An unusual form of **Dark-eyed Junco—Cassiar Junco**—was at the John Muir House 12/5. AL. This bird breeds in the Canadian Rocky Mountains and is usually to the east and south of there for the winter.

A flock of about 100 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at the Big Break observation pier 12/1. DW, LK.

The only report of **Pine Siskin** was from EL, 11/20, in her San Ramon yard.

NA Noah Arthur, KB Kristen Baker, DB Don Bauman, B&KB Barbara and Ken Berniker, MB Matt Brady, JB Jerry Britten, RB Richard Broadwell, RC Robert Clark, KF Kathy Francone, LF Lee Friedman, SG Susan Greef, GG George Griffeth, EH Ed Harper, HH Hugh Harvey, CH Claudia Hein, DH Derek Heins, BH Bob Hislop, WH Wen Hsu, M&RJ Mel and Rosemary J., MaK Marilyn K, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, MK Melani King, LLa Lynn Lakso, EL Eugenia Larson, EL Elizabeth Leite, JL Julie Lindemann, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, BM Bruce Mast, KM Kai Mills, HN Harold Newman, MO Meagan Oldfather, EP Ed Pandolfino, KP Kathy Parker, BP Brent Pettersen, JP John Poole, BPo Bob Power, MR Mark Rauzon, JR Jean Richmond, PS Paul Schorr, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, CS Catherine Spaulding, MS Maury Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, PW Pat Whitesides, DW Denise Wight, NW Niki Wixson,

Olympic Birdfest 2014

April 4-6, 2014, Sequim, WA

A bird watching vacation for beginners to experts, from leisurely strolls to active hikes. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, silent auction, gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker, Noah Strycker, "Bird World: the fascinating parallels between bird and human behavior". BirdFest program information and registration can be found at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

Stay on for a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 6-8. Register separately at www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

February

1	Saturday	Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
13	Thursday	Grizzly Island Wildlife Area
15-16	Saturday/Sunday	Los Banos/Panoche Valley
26	Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park

March

5	Wednesday	Walnut Creek Parks
12	Wednesday	Contra Loma Reservoir
18	Tuesday	Mt. View Sanitary/MacNabney Marsh
20	Thursday	Valle Vista
22	Saturday	Tomales Bay State Park
26	Wednesday	Lake Lagunitas

April

5	Saturday	Garin Regional Park
9	Wednesday	Orinda Connector Trail
12	Saturday	Pine Canyon
17	Thursday	North Briones
19	Saturday	Mines Road
24	Thursday	Black Diamond Mines
29	Tuesday	Del Puerto Canyon

① Saturday, February 1

Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve

Leader: Ethan Chickering, (925) 686-9231.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 8 AM. Meet at 8:45 AM in Westgate Landing Park at end of Glascock Road. Take SR 4 to Antioch Bridge (toll), go north on SR 160 along river to Rio Vista bridge. Turn right on SR 12 for 11.5 miles. East of Terminous, turn left onto Glascock Road and continue to the park at the end. Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, hawks and grassland birds. Trip will go in light rain. Bring lunch and a beverage. If questions, call the leader.



Observation Deck
Cosumnes Preserve

② Thursday, February 13

Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

Leader: Maury Stern, (925) 284-5980.

Carpool leaves at 7 AM from Sun Valley. Meet at 8:30 AM at Refuge headquarters. Take I-680 north, then I-80 east to SR12. Follow SR12 through Fairfield, watch for sign to Grizzly Island Refuge on right and follow road to headquarters. Entry fee for refuge. Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along road. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Grizzly Island Wildlife Area is in the heart of the 84,000-acre Suisun Marsh, the largest contiguous estuarine marsh in the United States. Grizzly Island provides habitat for more than 200 species of birds and is home to a variety of threatened or endangered wildlife and plants. We may see the herd of Tule Elk. We may also bird at the Rush Ranch if time permits after finishing at Grizzly Island. Bring lunch and a beverage.

① Saturday/Sunday, February 15-16

Los Banos/Panoche Valley

Leader: David Hutton, (925) 938-4485.

On Saturday we will leave from Sycamore Valley Road Park & Ride at 6:30 AM to bird Santa Fe Grade Road, together with the San Luis and Merced Wildlife Refuges; we should see a full range of waterfowl and raptors. On Sunday we will bird Mercey Hot Springs and Panoche Valley. Target birds include Mountain Bluebird, Mountain Plover and Long-eared Owl. Motel options in Los Banos include Best Western Executive Inn (209) 827-0954, Los Banos Days Inn (209) 826,9690, Vagabond Inn Executive Los Banos (209) 827-4677; and in Santa Nella, Holiday Inn Express (209) 826-8282. Participants need to bring lunch for both days. A communal (optional) dinner is being planned for Saturday evening. A fee is charged at Mercey Hot Springs. If you plan to go on the trip, please call the leader as soon as possible for likely last minute detail changes!



Los Banos Wildlife Area

③ Wednesday, February 26

Sunol Regional Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson, (925) 806-0644.

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville. Meet at 8:00 AM in the first parking lot on the left, Sunol Regional Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Road. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 miles south on Calaveras; turn left on Geary Road and go 2 miles to park. Possible entry fee. Watch and listen for Wild Turkey along Geary Road. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, American Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens are possible. Bring lunch and a beverage.

Trip Reports

McNabney Marsh/Mountain View Sanitary, November 12.

No rain happened on the fall field trip to Mountain View Sanitary District and McNabney Marsh and 18 birders enjoyed a pleasant trip with a slight overcast sky which kept the heat away also. While the fall trip does not produce as many birds as the spring outing, forty-four different species were found. One of the main highlights was that everyone got to watch a cormorant which had just captured a fairly large fish try to swallow it. After several attempts and being chased by another cormorant, it was successful in eating its meal. Other highlights included Green Herons, White-tailed Kites, Black-crowned Night Herons, a Sora, Greater Yellowlegs, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher and Great-tailed Grackle, to name a few. Not many ducks were in residence this year; and perhaps the dry weather has something to do with that. But all in all it was a good outing and everyone seemed to enjoy it.

Steve Taylor

Charleston Slough/South Bay, November 16. Seventeen Mount Diablo birders and guests enjoyed a cool, clear day birding three marsh areas down the Peninsula on Saturday, November 16th. Fifteen species of ducks were seen during the trip including four pairs of Hooded Mergansers and one pair of Blue-winged Teal at Radio Pond and nearby slough. Two Peregrine Falcons were sighted on tall utility towers, one at Charleston Slough and one off of Radio Pond. Among the twelve species of shorebirds and waders were one Whimbrel, a few Dunlin and both Western and Least Sandpipers among the Long-billed Dowitchers. The hot-lined Swamp Sparrow put in a quick appearance for most of the group at Palo Alto Baylands and we enjoyed eleven Black Skimmers resting on one of the small islands at Radio Pond. Close up views of the wintering ducks and shorebirds was a special treat to the new birders among our group. The total was 75 species for the day. *Eugenia K. Larson*

Come birding with us!

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders, but please do leave your dogs at home. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php. Phone area codes are 925 unless specified otherwise. Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, bring a lunch and drink and join us during our midday break.

Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ②: Moderate, one mile +, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Our Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is a conservation organization. As such, we encourage members to consider meeting at the carpool point to pick up or ride with others. It is important that given the cost of gasoline, those who ride with others offer to pay some of this cost. Don't forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees on some of our longer trips. Carpool locations: **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left. **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.

Limantour, November 30. 12 members and guests had a beautiful clear day at Point Reyes, with temperatures between 55–65 degrees. The birding was slow at the headquarters as well as the beach and the Inverness Ridge area. A few highlights included Brant, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon and Hairy Woodpecker.

Maurly Stern

Niles Canyon, December 12.

It was a fairly cool morning as the Niles Canyon field trip began, but warmed up to be a very nice day. We had a total of 55 species which is very good for the area we covered. Highlights included a Merlin, a hoped for Spotted Sandpiper, 4 species of Grebes, a Golden Eagle and 12 species of ducks including Hooded Merganser which is tough to see here. This is the area I cover for the Hayward Christmas count so we have a good idea where some of the birds might be. *Jimm Edgar*



BETH BRANTHAVER PHOTO

Southeast Solano County Raptors, December 14.

On a clear and mild late autumn morning, fourteen birders observed a total of 7 raptor species. We saw many Red-tailed Hawks, by far the most common raptor. We also saw at least 4 Ferruginous Hawks, including one dark phased bird that took some time to decipher. At one stop along Robinson Road, we were treated to both a Prairie Falcon and an immature Golden Eagle. The Prairie Falcon represented a “lifer” for at least one member of the group; and it also marked the 286th bird species of the year for Hugh Harvey. We had a very accommodating Burrowing Owl at the junction of Hwy. 113 and Robinson/Creed Roads. Throughout the trip, it seemed we were in constant view of American Kestrels, Loggerhead Shrikes and Savannah Sparrows, with dozens of each species. On Cook Lane we had a nice view of a Sora and an immature Black-crowned Night-Heron. Other notable species include Long-billed Curlews, Tricolored Blackbirds, several Black and Say's Phoebes, and a pair of Common Yellowthroat. The elusive Mountain Plover remained that way; we did not observe them despite reports of them being in our vicinity. The group tallied 63 species on the day. *Gary Fregien*



BETH BRANTHAVER PHOTO

The 13th annual **East Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count** was held on Tuesday, December 17. We had 39 people this year do the count and we broke our all-time high species count by 2 species. We had 151 species on the count. More than the Central Bird Count had. Highlights were two Glaucous Gulls never before seen. They were at Clifton Court Forebay and were well photographed. A Hooded Oriole was seen there also in the same location as last year. Wrentit, Brown Creeper, Red-throated Loon, Swamp

Continued on Page 6 »

Trip Reports

» Continued from Page 5

Sparrow, American Redstart, Redhead and Pacific Wren were great birds. Ted Robertson's group had 112 species themselves. Good weather certainly helped the cause.

Jimm Edgar



Yellow-rumped Warbler.
Meg Sandri.

The 114th National Audubon Society **Christmas Count in Contra Costa County** was **December 21, 2013**. We are approaching our 60th year. This was the mildest and easiest year in a long time for comfort, with no rain, wind or cold weather. However, that didn't improve the birds. We saw 147 species which is our typical number. Highlights included more Lewis's Woodpeckers than ever seen; Ferruginous Hawk at Concord Weapons Station; Peregrine and Prairie Falcons; Brown Creeper, Pacific Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. With the help of our Young Birder's Club and a Lindsay Museum contingent, we had close to 80 counters.

Maury Stern

Putah Creek, January 11. First the bad news: target birds Green Heron, Osprey, and Dipper were missed and Magpies were very scarce. Everything else is good news. Weather: a momentary sprinkle or two, not too cold. The trip started well under gray skies with a Phainopepla at the meeting place. At the first stop, Gates Canyon Road, we had good views of a Merlin perched close by. At Lake Solano Park the ducks were abundant and diverse. How often do you have Hooded Mergansers, several Wood Ducks, and a Eurasian

Wigeon in the same binocular view? Not to mention the several Barrow's Goldeneyes, plus so many more of the common species: American Wigeon, Mallard, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, and Common Merganser.



BETH BRANTHAVER PHOTO

We lingered all morning at the park, enjoying five woodpecker species including Lewis's, plus Phainopepla and Cedar Waxwings galore. After an early lunch, we drove up to Monticello Dam, where the resident Rock Wren put on a good show. But it was soon outclassed by a pair of Peregrine Falcons who, between them, managed to capture a duck, then drop it—to see it immediately snatched by a Bobcat who came out of a lair right by the dam. After that it was anticlimax to stand on the bridge, not see a Dipper, but plenty of Hermit Thrushes and a brilliant Varied Thrush. And three American Pelicans far overhead! Numbers: 15 birders, 70 species.

Fred Safer

Mount Diablo Audubon Urges Protection of Public Lands and Wildlife

Mount Diablo Audubon has joined with the Wildlife Society and The Society for Conservation Biology, along with many other conservation organizations, by endorsing a letter to Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, requesting that the Department develop a "clear, comprehensive management plan that will protect public land and wildlife from feral cats." Despite overwhelming scientific evidence that feral domestic cats, a non-native invasive species, negatively impact native wildlife in the United States, the Department has no official management policy. New research by scientists from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have estimated that domestic cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals every year in the United States. Un-owned (e.g., feral) cats were estimated to be responsible for nearly 70 percent of the estimated bird mortality and nearly 90 percent of the estimated mammal mortality.

TWS and SCB recognized the clear imperative for effectively managing feral cats and that trap, neuter, release (TNR) fails to eliminate feral cat populations. For these reasons, the several organizations have asked Secretary Jewell to oppose TNR programs on DOI lands and to create a department-wide policy to eliminate the negative impacts of this non-native invasive predator.

To read the letter, see http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/pdf/TWS_and_SCB_letter_to_DOI.pdf

Mount Diablo Audubon has recently published a brochure outlining our position on control of feral cats. Pick one up at the next general meeting.



Young Birders Club

The Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders are looking to get back into the field as soon as possible. We'll be making an attempt to settle on a mid-February date for Grizzly Island.

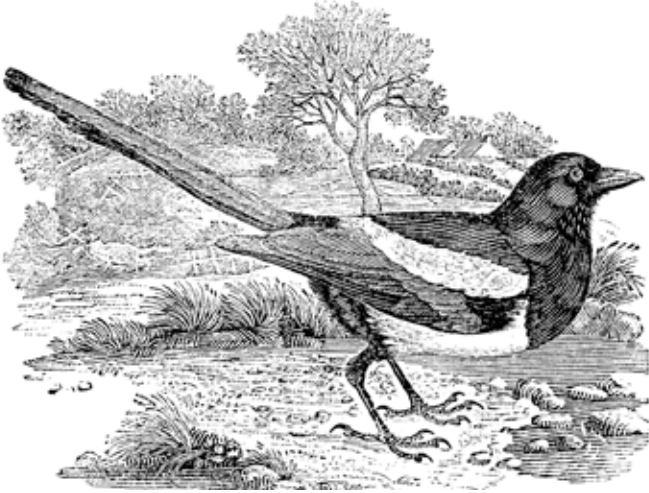
I've purchased a new digital projector and sound system for the club so that we can have the finest quality presentations of videos and photographs at our meetings. I'm working on compiling a file of some excellent birding programs. Paul Schorr, our MDAS vice-president, provided links to some excellent shows. In addition, many of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology videos are very high quality. My intention is to feature programs about birds, birding, and profiles of young birders. If anyone has ideas to add to my efforts, they will be most welcome, as always.

The Young Birders meeting prior to our next field trip will be announced as the trip date is set. Guests are always invited to meetings, trips and other events as they happen.

Tracy Farrington, Young Birder Advisor

Thomas Bewick

» Continued from Page 10



Magpie, History of British Birds

His next project, which proved to be the crowning achievement of his career, was the *History of British Birds*. Bewick was very knowledgeable about his subjects, making the illustrations directly from life or from recently shot specimens. He had a determination to stay as closely to nature as he could. The first volume, "Land Birds", was published in 1797, with Bewick's 117 engravings accompanied by Beilby's text. Bewick wrote the descriptions for the second volume, "Water Birds", which followed in 1804 with 101 illustrations and one hundred thirty-nine "tailpieces". These tailpieces—small illustrations that end book chapters or fill white space on a page—were a popular feature of both *Quadrupeds* and *Birds*. Bewick thought of

them as tale-pieces, each telling a story and often displaying his sense of humor.

In 1826, John James Audubon made his first trip to England. He wrote: "The purpose of this voyage is to visit not only England, but the continent of Europe, with the intention of publishing my work on the *"Birds of America."*

Audubon journeyed from London, Liverpool, and Manchester to Glasgow. Then in April, 1827, he made a stop at Newcastle, in order to meet Thomas Bewick, whose wood engravings he much admired. Bewick was then seventy-four years of age—Audubon was 42. The two became warm friends, though Bewick died just nineteen months later.

When he named the wren in 1821, Audubon said, "I honoured this species with the name of Bewick, a person too well known for his admirable talents as an engraver on wood, and for his beautiful work on the *Birds of Great Britain*, to need any eulogy of mine. I enjoyed the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him, and found him at all times a most agreeable, kind, and benevolent friend.



Bewick's Wren. Audubon's Birds of America.

Another bird named for Bewick is the Bewick's Swan, *Cygnus colubianus bewickii*, a subspecies of the Tundra Swan. It is a swan that breeds in the north of Russia, with one population migrating to Europe and the British Isles, another to Korea and Japan.



Ferruginous Hawk ♦ *Buteo regalis*

a The Ferruginous Hawk is the largest of the buteos, with a wing-span of over four-and-a-half feet. When the hawk first rises from the ground, it appears heavy and lumbering; but as it gains altitude, it soars easily.

There are two Buteos of the American West that have feathered legs—Ferruginous Hawk and Rough-legged Hawk. The feathering may protect these raptors from the bites of rodent prey

In California, Ferruginous Hawks are more abundant in the winter. They prefer grassland and arid areas with an abundance of prey species, such as gophers, jackrabbits, and cottontails. In such areas, the hawks will sometimes roost in groups of up to



Ferruginous Hawk, dark morph, Panoche Valley. Photos by Beth Branthaver.

24 individuals. In addition to communally roosting in the winter, the Ferruginous Hawk is known to hunt communally. Ferruginous hawks hunt throughout the day; in some areas they are crepuscular (active at dusk

and dawn) because the prey species are crepuscular. One hunting method used is ground ambush, hunting from the ground near a fresh gopher mound or ground squirrel burrow, striking the prey as it emerges.

Discovering a Sense of Place

A Series of Evening Talks on Environmental Issues sponsored by

The City of Walnut Creek's Clean Water Program and The Gardens at Heather Farm

Presentations are free to attend, but reservations are required. www.gardenshf.org or call 947-1678

Thinking like a Naturalist: Reclaiming the Art of Natural History

John Muir Laws

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

(Doors open at 6:30)

Learn how to get more out of every nature ramble. Developments in neuropsychology have opened doors in our understanding of the brain and cognition and how you can train yourself to actually see more and to inspire more curiosity about what you discover. John Muir Laws will demonstrate simple and fun techniques you can incorporate into your own recreational nature study. "Thinking Like a Naturalist" will be a transformational experience for anyone interested in taking their birding and nature study to the next level.

John Muir Laws is a naturalist, educator and artist. He is in love with the natural world and shares this passion with others. Trained as a wildlife biologist, Laws has taught nature education since 1984. His unique approach connects people with nature through observation, art and journaling. John Muir Laws has written and illustrated several acclaimed books including: *The Laws Guide to Drawing Birds* (2012); *Sierra Birds: A Hikers Guide* (2004); and *The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada* (2007).

The Cultural and Natural History of Contra Costa County

James (Doc) Hale

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Renowned wildlife biologist, naturalist, and ethnobiologist James 'Doc' Hale is known for his profound understanding and appreciation of Contra Costa County and the Mt. Diablo region- its natural beauty, the wildlife inhabitants, and the history of the Native Americans who once built villages along its creek and tributaries. He will discuss Native American prehistory, geology, and the edible and medicinal plants growing in this region.

James (Doc) M. Hale is an expert on the natural and cultural history of the San Francisco Bay Area and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. He leads interpretive natural and cultural history walks, and lectures throughout the East Bay. Doc is an expert on wild, edible plants and their medicinal and cultural uses.

Field Trip to Morgan Territory with Doc Hale, Saturday March 1, 2014, 9 :00 AM-3:00 PM Directions will be e-mailed upon reservation.



Birders of All Skill Levels Needed

Scientists at Vanderbilt University are looking for birders of all levels of experience to participate in a project examining how perception and memory for birds differs between beginners and experts.

Yes, *all* levels of experience, from the true beginner to the expert with decades of study, and everything in-between.

These experiments are online on the web. They measure your ability to remember and identify birds and sometimes other animals or objects. Many experiments are fairly short. They can be done on any computer, wherever and whenever you decide to do them. One current experiment is a bird identification test. Go online and test your birding skills. The web site for

the experiments is <http://expertise.psy.vanderbilt.edu>.

Once you register your own login ID and password on the site, and complete a short survey of your birding expertise, you will be able to participate in any experiments that are available. New experiments may be added over time. Some future experiments may include modest compensation.

This project is funded by the National Science Foundation and the James S. McDonnell Foundation. If you have questions, please contact Professor Thomas Palmeri at Vanderbilt University, thomas.j.palmeri@vanderbilt.edu.



Good News for Brant, Eider

On December 23, migratory birds received a fantastic holiday gift—Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell signed the final decision to keep Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska intact, denying a damaging proposed road. The misguided and harmful proposed road would have cut through Izembek's protected wilderness, pristine habitat that Audubon and other conservation groups have been working to save for nearly 20 years. Izembek is one of the world's most critically important wetlands for many hundreds of thousands of migrating birds. In some years, virtually all of the world's Pacific Black Brant use Izembek, including birds from Alaska, Russia, and Canada. In addition, up to 70 percent of the world's population of Steller's Eiders, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, use Izembek Lagoon. Long-distance shorebird migrants such as Pacific Golden-Plovers and Bar-tailed Godwits also depend on Izembek to fuel up for migration.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded in early 2013 that the road would harm the refuge lands and wildlife. Facing Congressional pressure, Secretary Jewell spent the past several months reexamining that decision, including a visit to the refuge. Secretary Jewell's announcement reaffirms the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's earlier decision to protect this globally significant bird habitat.

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge lies between the highly productive waters of the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. Within the heart of the Refuge is Izembek Lagoon, a 30-mile long and 5-mile wide coastal ecosystem that contains one of the world's largest eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) beds. More than 200 species of wildlife and nine species of fish can be found on the Refuge. Millions of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds find food and shelter in the coastal lagoons and freshwater wetlands on their way to and from their subarctic and arctic breeding grounds. This extraordinary abundance and diversity of waterfowl has attracted international attention. In 1986, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge was the first wetland area in the United States to be recognized as a Wetland of International Importance by the RAMSAR Convention.

Hummingbirds Need You Now!

By Mike Eliot

Hummingbird season never ends in this area, so we should always be diligent and ready to help them. They are more attuned to humans than most birds and can be some of the most enjoyable to interact with and watch.

January is the hatching time for the first brood of Anna's Hummingbirds. Also, the polar vortex cold wave gripping much of the nation is driving migrants into our area. Be ready to see new and young hummers at your feeders. There have been some reports of Costa's, Black-chinned, and Broad-tailed hummers in Northern California this winter.



Due to the dry and cold weather, hummers have few natural sources of nectar, which they use to maintain their high energy levels. They are

known to visit feeders as often as every 10 minutes during the day. Keep nectar in good supply and wash feeders at least weekly to prevent mold. On very cold nights bring feeders inside to prevent freezing.

Use premix nectar packages or make your own nectar using 4 parts water to one part regular sugar, without food coloring. Boil the water first, and then add sugar after it cools. Put out only enough that the birds can drink in 3-4 days. Extra can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Use more than one feeder. Anna's Hummingbirds can be very territorial, so using multiple feeders spread apart 15 feet or so, will allow more birds to eat.

You can also put out nesting material that hummers will use to line their nests. Be sure to use only appropriate materials. Dryer lint can contain man-made fibers that can tangle on young birds' feet or injure them if swallowed. Human or animal hair must be cut down to smaller than 1 inch lengths also to prevent tangles. Down and other small feathers work well. Hummingbirds also need water sources, like other birds, to keep their feathers clean. Clean feathers promote heat retention and help hummers with their intricate flight patterns. Misters can be used and fountains can be run during the day when the birds are out.

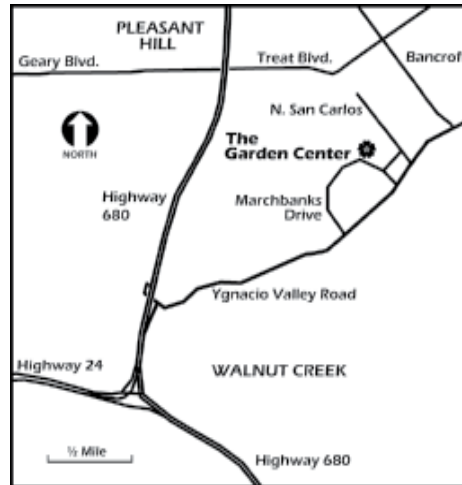
Mount Diablo Audubon Society

Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.

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Quail Editor



Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.

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Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Membership dues are tax deductible.

I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society.

Please send *The Quail* by: US mail E-mail _____

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Bewick's Wren. Beth Branthaver photo.

Thomas Bewick **Wood Engraver • Bird Lover • Naturalist**

On August 12, 1753, Thomas Bewick was born in the Village of Mickley, not far from Newcastle Upon Tyne, in the north of England. His father had a small colliery, and sent his son to school in the nearby village. Although young Thomas was a poor student, his love of birds and talent for drawing were evident at a very early age. When he was 14 years old, he was apprenticed to Ralph Beilby, an engraver in Newcastle. Among other tasks in Beilby's workshop, Bewick was responsible for etching sword blades and engraving bank notes and family heraldry; he also created numerous illustrations for children's books. Having served his seven-year apprenticeship, Bewick rambled throughout Scotland with his dog, to see the country, then ventured to London in 1774 for a brief period but found the city unfriendly. He returned to Newcastle and established a business partnership with Beilby.

His interest in illustrating animals and birds blossomed, and his mastery of wood-block engraving surpassed all others. The art of wood engraving differs from woodcuts, which are carved along the grain. Bewick found that carving end grain in harder wood allowed using the tools of the engraver in copper or silver, and created much finer detail and subtlety than the woodcut. The work is tedious and difficult. The artist must cut away the white areas of a mirror image of the intended final print. The block is cut at final size. Bewick's resulting prints were scientifically accurate and elaborately detailed, even though frequently very small. His mastery of the technique has rarely been equalled and never surpassed.

In 1785 Bewick began work on *A General History of Quadrupeds*, one of his most famous works. The book was published in 1790. In general, domestic animals with



Thomas Bewick

which Bewick was most familiar—the hedgehog and the badger, for example—were accurately shown, but such creatures which he had never observed in the wild were sometimes quixotic. For instance his giraffe is awkward and in the text he even questions its very existence.

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