



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 59, Number 6

March 2014

Living with Mountain Lions ✦ Zara McDonald



San Francisco-based and globally-working wild cat conservationist and naturalist Zara McDonald will discuss mountain lions and the work currently underway to study and protect them. Felidae Conservation Fund is a non-profit that aims to advance the conservation of wild cats and their habitats planetwide through a combination of groundbreaking research, compelling education and cutting-edge technology. Felidae works in both North and South America on different mountain lion research and conservation projects. The flagship project is the Bay Area Puma Project—www.bapp.org. The Bay Area Puma Project is an innovative merging of scientific research and public education enabling the project to leverage its scientific insights to change public attitudes, and to produce maximum conservation benefits for the local environment.

These keystone predators (also called pumas and cougars) play a critical role in maintaining the health and biodiversity of our ecosystems. However, expansion of human populations is causing increasing encounters and conflicts between humans and pumas, and growing tensions in our local communities. Please join us to learn



about mountain lion ecology and history, the challenges of sharing the habitat with mountain lions, and essential tips for living and recreating without fear in puma habitat.

Zara McDonald is the Founder and President of Felidae Conservation Fund. She is an entrepreneur, conservationist, and vet technician, and has journeyed through-

out four continents working on behalf of wild felid research and conservation since 2002. Zara has worked extensively in all areas of felid research, tracking and monitoring. A certified capture specialist, she has worked on four mountain lion research projects since 2003. During her tenure as an ultra marathoner Zara came into contact with mountain lions on two occasions in Marin County.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, March 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: Zara McDonald

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, April 3:

David Moen, California Condors

BIRDING INFORMATION

David Rice will talk about his enlightening new book, *Why We Bird*, which describes the many reasons why birding has become such a popular recreational activity. David is the co-author, with Bob Richmond and Helen Green, of *Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas*.

Our April program will feature a presentation on California Condors and how they are affected by lead bullets. Our guest, David Moen is a Wildlife Biologist with the Ventana Wildlife Society.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I was at a conference in Utah for almost two weeks in January. It was a time of pretty full days, but we got out a couple of days to see the sites and I had a chance to do some birding there. I saw lots of Black-billed Magpies which I do not see that often. I also saw a yellow-shafted Northern Flicker, which was nice. I did not have a book so not sure of their status here. An adult Bald Eagle flew over on one of the days, which was also nice to see.

A recent local newspaper had an article about the Utah Public Lands Policy Office and its attempt to sue the federal government for trying to list the Greater Sage Grouse as an endangered species. They claim the state can do a better job of protecting the bird than if it is listed. The agency said it would protect public road use, ranching communities and recreation industries. Hmm, sounds like the wrong people to protect. Not sure what the outcome will be, but it is another situation where birds seem

to be in danger's way.

By the time you read this I will have attended the board meeting of Audubon California. As you remember I have the privilege of having been asked to serve on the board. I continue to be so impressed with what Audubon California does, is doing, and plans to do. We are very fortunate. I will give a report in the next Quail newsletter.

I also continue to represent the chapter on the Restoration Advisory Board. Another MDAS member, Kent Fickett, and I serve there. These two boards (one for the inland portion of the Naval Weapons Station and the other for the tidal area) meet ever two months to hear how the cleanup of the former base is progressing. It is also impressive to watch the progress.

I hope many of you have had the chance to get over to Heather Farm park to see the Tropical Kingbird that was discovered there around early January. I think it may be a first for Contra Costa County. You can



DIGITAL ART: ELLIS MYERS

get more info on where it is by going to the Yahoo group our chapter sponsors at East Bay Birders. I would also note that it has been a banner year for winter sightings of this kingbird species. My group on the San Francisco Christmas bird count unexpectedly found one down by the SF airport on December 27. We got excellent photographs of the bird. There have been 4 or 5 other Bay Area sightings this winter season.

As always, I extend an invitation to attend one of the monthly meetings that have such great programs scheduled for this year as in all years. See you there!

Young Birders in the Spotlight

By Tracy Farrington

It's always inspiring to me when a young birder's growing enthusiasm becomes both passion and commitment. Through their endeavors, three such youthful individuals with the Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club, Logan Kahle, Kai Mills and Niki Wixsom, are providing examples to the rest of us of what commitment to serious birding looks like.

16 year old Logan has begun a California "big year" with the stated goal of achieving a count of at least 460 species. The current record stands at 479 accomplished by Vernon Howe, Riverside. Doing a "big year", regardless of the geographical target, can be quite consuming and California is one enormous chunk of geography. Combined with the demands of high school, his California quest will become a significant challenge but, then again, Logan's tally for the first week of the year was 165...challenge squarely faced, so far. If you did not see the article and profile of this talented young birder in the January 16 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle, here's the url for it at SFGate: <http://www.sfgate.com/default/article/Teen-of-a-different-feather-looking-for-460-birds-5156182.php#page-1>.



Black-and-white Warbler. Niki Wixsom Photo.

And very impressive, as well, have been the birding and birding related efforts of Kai Mills and Niki Wixsom, both high school students and residents of Lafayette. These two young birders have been adding photography to their pursuit of bird identification, and contributing posts to the Yahoo EBB site. But even more so, they've created their own beautifully designed web page with contents that include their photographs, sightings and personal profiles. It can be found here: <http://kaihaydenmills.wix.com/nikiandkaibirders>. I compliment them on its quality. Take a look for yourself and enjoy.

The MDAS sponsored Young Birders Club always looks forward to new and enthusiastic members as well as any suggestions and/or recommendations. I can be contacted at tracy_farrington@yahoo.com or (925) 788-6223.

Join Mount Diablo Audubon Society

Membership form is on Page 7, or visit www.diabloaudubon.org/join.php



These birds are cavity nesters who prefer coniferous forests. They build new nesting holes each year, sometimes in the same tree.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 8 to learn more.

AACEIIKLLMNOPRSSSSUW

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 April issue is March 14.**

Observations

By Maury Stern

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 annual Herring run with attendant gulls has just started at Ferry Point in Point Richmond. Other notable sightings included a probable **Wilson's Plover**, **Common Murre**, and **Tropical Kingbird**.

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** and a **Cackling Goose** were at Heather Farm on 1/22, HH; and in Martinez near Solano Way 1/23, JC.

Eurasian Wigeons continued at Miller-Knox RP through the period. LL. 1/19.

More than 100 **Ring-necked Ducks** were at Heather Farm Pond 1/22, HH.

A **Sora** was at Marsh Creek Trail near Cypress Road in Oakley, 1/30, LA.

A probable **Wilson's Plover** was at Miller-Knox pond for one day, 1/28, CM, T&DB. This is a rare winter visitor usually to Southern California from the Gulf Coast.

Twenty-six **Wilson's Snipes** were seen during the high tide of 1/30 at the mouth of Meeker Slough, JD, MB.

The annual herring run at Ferry Point had two **Slaty-backed Gulls**, **Thayer's Gulls**, an adult **Heermann's Gull**. The predominant Gull was **Glaucous-winged**, 2/4, TB, ST, AJ, BD, CuM, NA, DS, DaW, KF, MR, AB, WR, JF.

DW saw a **Glaucous Gull** at Clifton Court Forebay in east county, 1/22.

A healthy **Common Murre** was near Meeker Slough and 51st Street in Richmond, 1/26, MS. A sick one was there last year.

Merlins were near Heather Farm, 1/22, HH; at her home frequently in Lafayette, KB; and at their Moraga home, 2/10, M&EM.

JA saw two **Peregrine Falcons** at Heather Farm, 2/4.

A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Heather Farm from 1/16 to press time and seen by many observers. HH, FS, BH, BS, JR, AL, LL, BaH, JH, P&NS, JA, EP, TE.

Numerous **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were seen by P&NS at Lafayette Reservoir, 1/15.

A **Phainopepla** was at Shell Ridge, 1/27, PS.

A **Swamp Sparrow** was at Lafayette Reservoir, 1/22 and 1/26, P&NS, KM, NW.



Tropical Kingbird. Paul Schorr Photo.

JA Jeff Acuff, NA Noah Arthur, LA Lee Aurich, T&DB Tom and Diane Bennett, AB Al Bilal, KB Kristen Baker, MB Marj Blackwell, TB Tony Brake, JC Jim Chiropolos, BD Brian Daniels, JD Judith Dunham, JF John Facchini, TF Tracy Farrington, KF Kathy Francone, LF Lee Friedman, HH Hugh Harvey, JH Joel Herr, BH Bob Hislop, BaH Barney Howard, AJ Alvaro Jaramillo, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, CM Cindy Margulis, CuM Curtis Marantz, KM Kai Mills, M&EM Mimi and Ellis Myers, EP Ed Pandolfino, MR Mark Rauzon, JR Jean Richmond, WR William Rockney, FS Fred Safier, BS Bobbie Schmidt, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, DS Dan Singer, MS Maury Stern, PS Patricia Sullivan, ST Steve Tucker, NW Niki Wixsom, DW, Denise Wight, DaW, David Wimpfheimer.

Volunteers Make Flyway Festival a Success

The 18th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival was held on February 7-9 at Mare Island with the special addition this year of lots of rain. Puddles, the Blue Goose mascot of the National Wildlife Refuges, came by to pose with Donna Kramer at the Mount Diablo Audubon table, along with a USF&W representative.

MDAS members who volunteered at the event were Kristen Baker, Beth Branthaver, Ruth and Ethan Chickering, Ella and Moses de los Reyes and Michelle de los Reyes, Tracy Farrington, Donna Kramer, Jim Leach, Lita and David Little, Diane Malucelli, Phil Neff, Carol Pacht, Cassie Tzur, Nina and Leary Wong. Thanks to you all.



Loggerhead Shrike.
Meg Sandri Sketch..



Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

March

- 5 WednesdayWalnut Creek Parks
- 12 WednesdayContra Loma Reservoir
- 15 SaturdayTomales Bay State Park
- 18 Tuesday Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh
- 20 Thursday Valle Vista
- 26 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas

April

- 5 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 12 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 16 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 17 ThursdayNorth Briones
- 19 Saturday Mines Road
- 24 ThursdayBlack Diamond Mines
- 29 Tuesday Del Puerto Canyon

May

- 1 Thursday Mitchell Canyon
- 8 Thursday Mount Diablo State Park
- 15 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 17 Saturday East Contra Costa County
- 20 Tuesday No Child Left Inside
- 22 Thursday No Child Left Inside

① Wednesday, March 5 Walnut Creek City Parks

Leader: Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979.

Meet 8:30 AM at the wooden railing at the natural pond, just past the community center in Heather Farm Park. This is down the hill from where our monthly meetings are held. We will tour the park, view wintering birds, then drive to Howe-Homestead Park south of Ygnacio Valley Road. Time permitting, we will visit two other park areas off Rudgear Road.

① Wednesday, March 12 Contra Loma Reservoir

Leader: Paul Schorr, (925) 757-5107.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:45 AM. Or meet the leader at 8:30 AM at the Channel Point Parking Lot in Contra Loma Regional Park. Go east on Highway 4 and exit at Lone Tree Way in Antioch. Continue south to Golf Course Road and turn right. Continue on Golf Course Road to Frederickson Lane, turn right and continue into the park and the entrance kiosk. Fee required at kiosk. Turn left and continue to first parking lot on right, which is Channel Point Parking Lot. Expected species include waterfowl and woodland, riparian/marsh, shore and grassland birds. Bring lunch and beverage.



② Saturday, March 15 Tomales Bay State Park

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

Carpool leaves 7 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 in the parking lot at Heart's Desire Beach in Tomales Bay State Park. After crossing the Richmond Bridge (toll), follow US 101 north and take the first San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left onto 3rd Street. In San Anselmo turn right onto Sir Francis Drake. Follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd. through Inverness. Just over the ridge, turn right onto Pierce Point Road. The park entrance is on the right. Entry fee required.

② Tuesday, March 18 Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

Leader: Steve Taylor, (925) 828-8810.

Meet at 9 AM at the Mountain View Sanitary Visitor Center. Exit from I-680 southbound at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. Exit I-680 northbound at Pacheco Blvd., turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will turn left. At 0.4 miles turn sharp left onto Mountain View Sanitary's private road. Follow the road through the entry gate, alongside the freeway and through the tunnel under I-680. Park and sign-in at the Visitor Center. Trails may be muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and herons. After walking around the ponds we will drive back through the tunnel to the viewing platform on the left to observe more birds and also complete a check list of the birds we saw at the ponds. If you wish, bring a lunch and explore Martinez shoreline in the afternoon on your own.

② Thursday, March 20 Valle Vista

Leader: Don Lewis, (925) 284-5480.

Meet at 8 AM at Valle Vista staging area off Canyon Road in Moraga. From SR 24 in Orinda, take Moraga Way to Moraga. From Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, take Moraga Road south to Moraga. At the Chevron station, go south 1 mile on Canyon Road to Valle Vista. Expect 55-60 species; we should be finished by noon.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society, as a conservation organization, encourages members to carpool on field trips. It is important that given the cost of gasoline, those who ride with others offer to pay some of the cost. Don't forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees. Carpool locations: **El Nido Ranch Road**—Exit SR 24 at St. Stephens Drive east of Orinda. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with St. Stephens Drive. **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.

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 ❶: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

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

Category ❸: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

❸ Wednesday, March 26 Lake Lagunitas

Leader: Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979.

This very popular birding trip to Marin passes through varied terrain in the beautiful area of the northern slopes of Mount Tamalpais. Carpool leaves from Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Cross the San Rafael Bridge to US 101 north. Take the first San Rafael exit, go left on 3rd Street. In San Anselmo turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd., continue to Fairfax. Go left on Fairfax Road, follow to left turn on Sky Oaks Road and continue to kiosk. Entry fee required (\$8 per vehicle, exact change or credit card). Drive to parking lot near foot of Lagunitas Dam. Approximate meeting time is 9:00 AM. After birding the nearby area, we will hike around Lake Lagunitas. We have often found Pileated Woodpeckers here.

Good News for Puffins

For the first time, breeding Tufted Puffins have been documented on Hawadax Island in Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The news comes just five years after the removal of invasive Norway rats from the place formerly known as Rat Island. Leach's Storm-



petrels, thought to have been extirpated because of the rats, have also been heard. Song Sparrows and Snow Buntings are rebounding as well. Norway rats were spilled onto the island's rocky shores in

a 1780s shipwreck. Since then, the rats had decimated native bird species by eating eggs, chicks and adult birds, and by ravaging habitat. In 2008, after years of planning, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Island Conservation and The Nature Conservancy successfully removed the rats using rodenticide bait. The early increases in native bird populations are expected to lead to more ecosystem recovery. Seabirds drive vegetation communities on islands free of invasive predators by delivering marine-based nutrients to the soil. As seabirds increase on Hawadax, scientists expect plant communities to return to this natural state. *USF&WS*

Trip Reports

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh, February 3. After nearly two months of dry weather, our annual field trip to Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh seemed to be threatened by rain. Shortly after leaving the carpool spot, the rain stopped, and we had a very nice outing. Eleven of us saw 70 species for the day, and some highly sought after birds were found. At Lake Merritt, a very cooperative Tufted Duck was seen at close range, and we were treated to a sighting of the resident Peregrine Falcon that is known to roost on one of the apartment buildings near the Nature Center. Although the total number of ducks was



Tufted Duck. Beth Branthaver Photo.

down, we saw most of the usual species. A special treat was a good sighting of Red-breasted Mergansers.

At Arrowhead Marsh, we were able

to find California Clapper Rails and Soras, but we missed seeing any Virginia Rails. We stopped on the way out to check mounds 1-3 for Burrowing Owls, and as we were lucky to see an owl standing in plain view on mound #2...thank you, Maury, for the tip.

After lunch at Garretson Point, we checked the area for some missed species, and we finally saw a Black Phoebe, which made the day official. Thank you to all that joined me. *Sandy Ritchie*



Woodbridge Ecological Reserve/Cosumnes River Preserve, February 1. Eight MDAS birders took a field trip to the Isenberg Sandhill Crane Refuge and the Cosumnes River Preserve. We met at Westgate Landing County Park for some birding and then proceeded along Hwy. 12 to Guard Road. There were numerous cranes in the fields including some Lesser Sandhill Cranes with brown on their wing feathers. I had only seen these back East in Michigan. Along Woodbridge Road in the Isenberg Refuge there were huge groups of Greater White-fronted Geese mixed in with the cranes. We also saw hawks, both Red-tailed and Red-shouldered. Numerous Northern Pintails, Black-necked Stilts, Mallards, and American Coots among others floated on the various ponds just off the road. Other birds seen were Loggerhead Shrikes, Savannah, Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows, Black Phoebes and many other birds of the field.

At the Cosumnes Preserve we spotted great rafts of Northern Pintails and Northern Shovelers in the ponds to the north. At the preserve itself we were able to spot both Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal along with two Wilson's Snipes and, sitting in a nearby tree, a Rough-legged Hawk. Behind the Visitor Center we also heard an American Bittern.

All in all, we saw 55 species, a successful day. The weather was bright and clear with unlimited visibility and comfortable temperatures.

Ethan Chickering

John Graham Bell

Traveling with Audubon were John G. Bell, his friend Edward Harris [Harris's Sparrow], an ornithologist; Isaac Sprague, an artist; and Louis M. Squires, who served as Audubon's secretary. They left New York City on March 11, 1843, by rail for Baltimore, then by coach to Wheeling, and down the Ohio by steamer to St. Louis.

The party left St. Louis for Fort Union, near what is now the Montana–North Dakota border on April 25, 1843, aboard the American Fur Company's small steamer *Omega*. They were joined by more than a hundred hunters and trappers, also bound for the Fort Union trading post. Audubon and Harris both kept regular journals and wrote fact-filled letters, collectively providing a detailed record of their observations and activities. (Audubon's journal, lost for more than fifty years, was discovered in 1896 by two of his granddaughters, one of whom published it the following year.) As the boat made its way upriver, stopping to visit settlements and cut wood to fuel the steamboat, Audubon and Sprague drew pictures of the landscape and sketched

» *Continued from Page 8*

the rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks, and other small animals and birds Bell and Harris collected on their hunting trips.

Audubon's Journal entry for May 6, 1843, records "Harris shot another of the new finches [Harris's Sparrow], a male also, and I saw what I believe is the female, but it flew upwards of 200 yards without stopping. Bell also shot a small Vireo, which is in all probability a new species (to me at least)."

On June 13, after fifty days and 1,400 miles, the *Omega* finally reached Fort Union. Audubon and the others explored the area around the fort, and remained throughout the summer. Among the birds shot on this venture, near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers was a small, brown bird that Audubon named Sprague's Missouri Lark, now known as Sprague's Pipit. Thus Audubon named a new species for each of his three river companions.

John Graham Bell traveled to California in 1849 via the Central American isthmian route. He visited Sutter's Mill and localities from Sonoma to San Diego, considering

the short duration of Bell's visit he made a notable collection, and returned the specimens to John Cassin in Philadelphia. Four of the birds were described as new by Cassin: Lawrence's Goldfinch, White-headed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker and Sage Sparrow. The Sage Sparrow, which Bell shot at a location near Sonoma, was given the name *Amphispiza belli*, to honor John Graham Bell. It is now known officially as Bell's Sparrow. It is interesting to contemplate what might have been the history of California ornithology had Bell decided to stay in the State rather than return to New York! He died at Sparkill, New York, in October, 1889.



Bell's Sparrow. Photo courtesy of Glen Tepke.

Williamson's Sapsucker ♦ *Sphyrapicus thyroideus*

a

The story of the discovery of Williamson's Sapsucker is both intriguing and complex.

When John Graham Bell returned east from his collecting trip to California in 1850 he brought to John Cassin two previously unknown woodpeckers. One, which he had found near Sutter's Mill, Cassin named White-headed Woodpecker. Cassin called the other Brown-headed Woodpecker. He gave it the scientific name *Sphyrapicus thyroideus* from the Greek *sphyrā* (hammer) and *Picus* (Roman god whom Circe turned into a woodpecker), then from the Greek *thyreos* (shield) and *eidos* (like), for the shield-like black patch on the bird's chest. The bird was also commonly known as Black-fronted Sapsucker.

Robert Stockton Williamson (1824–1882) was an army lieutenant in charge of the Pacific Railroad Survey in California and Oregon. The surgeon on the survey, John Newberry collected an unusual woodpecker on August 23, 1855, on the shores of Klamath Lake in Oregon and named it for his com-



Williamson's Sapsucker; male at left, female at right. Drawing by Louis Agassiz Fuertes, 1902.

manding officer. Williamson's Sapsucker was utterly unlike the Brown-headed in

appearance, but its habitat and behavior were similar. In Jacob Studer's reference *Birds of North America*, it was stated of the Brown-headed Woodpecker "A remarkable feature connected with this bird is the entire absence of the familiar red on the upper part of the head, so common on all other North American Woodpeckers, which is a peculiarity shared only by the Williamson's Woodpecker".

So it was that for eighteen years this sapsucker was known as two separate species. The confusion between sexes and species ended in 1873 when Henry Henshaw observed a mated pair at a nest in Colorado showing that the two were a single species. *Sphyrapicus thyroideus*, the scientific name given by Cassin, was retained, since it had priority; in 1886 the AOU assigned the common name Williamson's Sapsucker.

Robert Stockton Williamson is also honored with the name Mount Williamson, at 14,379 feet, the second highest mountain in California. This peak lies at the crest of the Sierra Nevada, in Inyo County, east of Sequoia National Park.

Birds Need the "Right" Nesting Box

By Mike Eliot

Nesting season will begin soon for many backyard birds. When providing places to nest, consider what's best for both you and the birds. There are lots of crafty boxes out there that are mainly designed for decoration and are not appropriate for cavity nesters.



For particular birds to accept a box, obviously size is important. Depending on the size of the chicks before fledging and number of chicks in a brood, the size of the box can vary substantially.

The front opening needs to be high enough to protect young birds, but low enough to allow them to leave when ready to fledge. Some boxes need ladders inside for the chicks to climb. The size of the front openings must be suited to the breed as well. Birds will choose nesting boxes with the smallest opening appropriate for their size. The opening should be protected either by thick strong walls or added metal rings to prevent predators from chewing and enlarging the opening. There should not be a perch near the opening on which predators can land or cling.

Also, insulation and ventilation are important. Good nesting boxes are thick enough—at least 3/4"—to keep heat and cold from penetrating. They provide openings for cross ventilation under the roof, without allowing for a lot of water seepage. There should be roof overhangs and roofs should be slanted to help keep out the elements. Drainage holes also help keep nests dry. They should be in the bottom corners and smaller than 1/4".

Nesting boxes should be removed and cleaned thoroughly after every nesting season to remove bird waste, insects, and mites, and then dried before re-hanging.

Boxes should be firmly mounted or hung to prevent eggs from rolling around and should be durable enough to last through years of sun and rain. They should not be painted, stained, or pressure treated with anything that may be toxic to birds. Dark paint or stain can also cause a box to retain heat, which could kill eggs or nestlings.

If you need help with deciding on a nesting box, see me or one of our staff for expert free advice and a Housing Guide. We can show you the features of boxes that have been scientifically designed to meet the needs of particular breeds.

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.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society thanks our Business Partners for their generous support:

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MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- 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. NAS membership dues are separate from those of Mount Diablo Audubon.
- Please send *The Quail* by: US mail E-mail _____

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Bell's Vireo. Glen Tepke photo.

John Graham Bell Taxidermist • Companion of Audubon

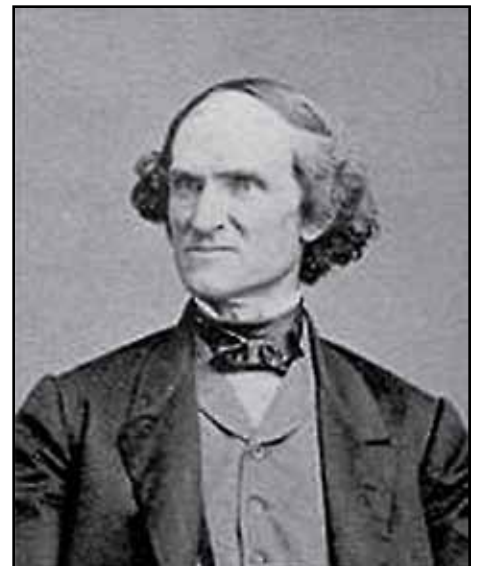
By the time he was fourteen, Theodore Roosevelt was adept in taxidermy, having studied the craft under the renowned New York taxidermist John Graham Bell (born July 12, 1812 in Sparkill, a few miles north of New York City). Then, in 1872, Roosevelt used these skills as he traveled up the Nile with his family. The young naturalist collected a number of birds and prepared each specimen, later donating them to the Smithsonian.

"The lessons in stuffing and mounting birds were given me by Mr. John G. Bell, a professional taxidermist and collector who had accompanied Audubon on his trip to the then "Far West." Mr. Bell was a very interesting man, an American of the before-the-war type. He was tall, straight as an Indian, with white hair and smooth-shaven clear-cut face; a dignified figure, always in a black frock coat. He had no scientific knowledge of birds or mammals; his interest lay merely in collecting and preparing

them. He taught me as much as my limitations would allow of the art of preparing specimens for scientific use and of mounting them. Some examples of my wooden methods of mounting birds are now in the American Museum: three different species of Egyptian Plover, a Snowy Owl, and a couple of Spruce Grouse mounted on a shield with a Passenger Pigeon —



the three latter killed in Maine during my college vacations." ... Theodore Roosevelt



John Graham Bell

Earlier, Bell had been asked by John James Audubon to accompany him on his "Great Western Journey," in search, not of birds, but specifically of the quadrupeds of the Great Plains as source material for what was to be a definitive work *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America* which he was preparing with John Bachman.

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