



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

[www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php)

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## Good News for Tricolored Blackbirds and Other Wildlife

Almost all of the 250,000 Tricolored Blackbirds that exist on Earth live in California, and between 25,000 and 50,000 of them were nesting in a farmer's field in Madera County earlier this spring.

But the farmer needed to harvest his field of wheat in order to feed his dairy cattle. He just could not afford to delay cutting his wheat without help from outside sources.

Audubon California, recognizing the risk of losing a significant fraction of the world population of this endangered species, issued an appeal to raise \$40,000 to buy food in order that the farmer would agree to delay harvest until the nestlings had fledged.

Audubon California was successful!

And you, as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society, contributed, with a



Tricolored Blackbirds. Audubon California photo courtesy Jerry Ting.

donation of \$500. The vulnerable colony of Tricolored Blackbirds in Madera County was saved, and the young birds had time to fledge safely. Because of your generosity there is another generation of Tricolored Blackbirds in California, and increased hope for the species in the future. Thank you!

Audubon California continues to work to save the Tricolored Blackbird by creating alternative habitat, advocating for policies that support this species, and partnering with farmers to protect birds on their fields.

In other news, the Mount Diablo Audubon Board of Directors, at its June meeting, assumed a stronger measure of support for the birds cared for by Native Bird Connections. As you know, this organization is dedicated to permanently injured wild birds and to education. Native Bird Connections is an integral factor in our *No Child Left Inside Program*. A donation of \$5500 was made to cover the cost of food for their birds for one year.

During the past year, Mount Diablo Audubon has also made contributions to

Lindsay Wildlife Museum for rehabilitation of wildlife; to Raptors Are the Solution (RATS) for education about secondary rodenticides; and to Save the Frogs for their work with amphibians; to International Bird Rescue for Brown Pelican rehabilitation; to American Bird Conservancy for hummingbird habitat; and to Save the Delta and Save Mount Diablo for wildlife habitat.

Your contributions are hard at work.

### Meeting Schedule

There are no scheduled meetings during July or August. Please join one of the birding field trips: see Page 4.

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

Thursday, Sept. 4: Anne Morkill  
S. F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge



Male Tricolored Blackbird.

The most serious tricolor predators are Black-crowned Night-Herons and raccoons in wetland colonies and coyotes, Cattle Egrets and California king snakes in upland colonies..

Severe weather (high temperatures, intense rainfall or strong winds) can cause massive mortality to adult females, eggs, and nestlings.

# President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I think many of you know that I was asked about a year ago to serve on the Audubon California board of directors. The board meets 4 times a year at different spots around the state. Our last meeting was June 5-6 at a ranch near Sacramento. There are about 25 folks on the board. Three of us have roles in local chapters; the other members of the board may be members of local chapters but their role on the board is a bit different. Brigid McCormack is the executive director and has been so for about two years. She and her staff unveiled to the board a very extensive five year business plan for Audubon California. It was very impressive to say the least. The plan is to include local chapters more and build a strategy for conservation, restoration of lands, protecting seashores and much more, *but* to build all of that around protecting birds. What is so right-on with this plan is that most of our folks if you talk to them build their interest in nature around their interest in birds; it may be as avid bird watchers, back yard feeders, readers of bird publications, etc. As this plan unfolds our chapter will be anxious to be a vital part.

Also at the California board meeting was David Yarnold. David is, of course, president of National Audubon. I had never met him and he is delightful. He is from northern California and was the editor of the San Jose Mercury News at one time. He spoke to us at our last morning and said in 3 months

National Geographic will have a lead article with National Audubon about the over 300 species of birds in North America that will face possible extinction as a result of climate change. He said it is a major article. Keep your eyes open for it.

Our editor of our newsletter, the *Quail*, is stepping down after 10 years. Ellis Myers has done an amazing job with the *Quail*. It has won awards and is certainly one of the best chapter newsletters in the state. We are very actively looking for a replacement for Ellis. It actually good be a dual position with some putting the information together and another person handling the printing. Please let me or one of our board know if you can help with this role. More detail will be in this newsletter. Our moderator of our East Bay Birders email group has also stepped down, but Bill Chilson already had stepped forward to pick up his job.

I know it is six months away, but I thought I would get the dates for our Christmas bird counts to you. Maury Stern and I compile these counts and they are really fun to do. Our central Contra Costa count is on Saturday, December 20, and east Contra Costa count is on Wednesday, December 17.

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

## Concord Hills Regional Park

The National Park Service's *Federal Lands to Parks* program has approved the East Bay Regional Park District's application for conveyance of lands from the Concord Naval Weapons Station to form the future Concord Hills Regional Park. The District worked with the City of Concord and numerous stakeholders, including the CNWS Neighborhood Alliance, throughout the Community Reuse Project planning process to identify a substantial portion of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station as a Regional Park. The adopted Reuse Plan and Area Plan both identified a Regional Park of at least 2,536 acres. The District received the support of the National Park Service early in the process and formally submitted an application in September 2013. In May, the District was officially notified that the application was approved and that the National Park Service would grant a public benefit allowance of 100 percent of fair market value of the property. It is hoped the actual land transfer will be made soon.

## Welcome New Members

|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Lin Ashlock       | Walnut Creek |
| Mehdi Benyahia    | Pacheco      |
| Cathy Currea      | Martinez     |
| Charlotte Liniger | Martinez     |
| Linda Post        | Walnut Creek |

## Board Position Open

Applications are now being accepted for the position of Editor of the *Quail*. This is what the task involves: The following is adapted from the *National Audubon Society Chapter Newsletter Committee Guide*.

"The newsletter staff collects, writes, and edits the news, designs the newsletter, and arranges to have it printed, addressed, mailed, and posted to the chapter web site, for ten issues per year. The newsletter editor is the chair of the newsletter staff and is a member of the chapter's Board of Directors."

For the last ten years, the *Quail* has been produced using *Adobe InDesign* page-layout software on a *Mac* computer, working from a template of the previous month's issue. The file is then delivered to the printer, who handles both addressing and printing. The mailing list is prepared by our Membership Chair. The finished job is then delivered to the Bulk Mail Division of the Concord Post Office.

No prior experience is necessary, as only basic computer skills are needed, along with a willingness to learn. Most of the content is supplied by regular, dependable contributors, such as the field trip summaries and trip reports, and the Observations and other regular columns.

Any questions? Call the current editor, Ellis Myers. at 925-284-4103.



Seasonal pond at Concord Naval Weapons Station. Photo by Scott Hein.

**Q**

A sighting of this bird played a significant part in General Dwight Eisenhower's choice for his Vice Presidential running mate in 1952.\*

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 6 to learn more.

AAABEHLOONPRRRRTTWY

\* <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/warbler.html>

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# Observations

By Maury Stern

The quiet season has begun with returning local migrants breeding and very few new migrants passing through to the mountains or farther north.

A **Ross's Goose** flew over Meeker Slough in Richmond 5/15. LK, AM.

ME, AL, and LW saw a **Mute Swan** at Clifton Court Forebay 5/26.

A late **Common Goldeneye** was at Waterbird Park in Martinez 5/18. LK, CD.

AL, ME, and LW saw a late **Ring-necked Duck** at Clifton Court 5/26.

AL saw an extremely rare **Yellow-billed Loon** 5/23 at Clifton Court. This is the second county record.

Five **Cattle Egrets** were flying over Bethel Island 5/18. LK, CD.

There were also **Swainson's Hawks** in the same area.

On 5/16, three **Red Knots** were at Meeker Slough that had been seen four days earlier by another person. AL.

A **Snowy Plover** was at Clifton Court 5/26. AL.

LK and AM heard a **Red-necked Phalarope** at Point Isabel 5/15.

A very rare **Laughing Gull** was at Meeker Slough 5/16. AL.

A **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at Iron House Sanitary District 5/18. LK, AM. Another visited the Lafayette home of KM 6/11.

**Rufous Hummingbird** was at the Lafayette home of BP 6/11, about the same time as one was there last year.

A **Prairie Falcon** was at Mount Diablo State Park 5/13. MP.

MP saw a **Dusky Flycatcher** 5/13 while surveying the plant life in the recent Mount Diablo State Park burn.

A **Western Tanager** was at DH's Walnut Creek yard 5/14.

**Grasshopper Sparrows** were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near the Rancho Laguna gate 6/2. JT.



Red-faced Warbler.  
Sketch by Meg Sandri.

ES saw eight **Lazuli Buntings** at Vollmer Peak 5/14.

MP saw three **Lawrence's Goldfinches** at Mount Diablo State Park burn area 5/13.

CD Cedric Duhalde, ME Mark Elness, LK Logan Kahle, AL Albert Linkowski, AM Aaron Maizlich, KM Kai Mills, MP Michael Park, BP Ben Pettersson, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, ES Emilie Strauss, JT Jan Taylor, LW Liz West, DW Denise Wight.

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

## Beaver Festival

By Heidi Perryman

Technology, urban sprawl, and deforestation are just a few of the hazards that present native birds with ever-widening dilemmas. They face encroachment, climate change, wind turbines, toxins and a dwindling food supply. Audubon needs all the helpers it can get in the brewing battle for biodiversity as we protect avian interests.

What if there was a free ally that was readily available in every community without grants or fund-raising? A sustainable, renewable resource, which—whether applied in urban, suburban or pastoral settings—made habitat, food, and nesting real estate for thousands more migratory and songbirds? Suppose that resource also created rookery sites for Great Blue Herons and dead trees for Wood Ducks and other elusive obligate nesters? Imagine it was even shown to consistently increase fish biodiversity (benefitting waterfowl), insect populations (augmenting songbirds) and restoring complex plant communities to help everyone else?

Believe it or not, I'm talking about beavers, *Castor Canadensis*. Without pay,



Beaver and Egret--Friends. Photo by Cheryl Reynolds

these tireless ecosystem engineers maintain wetlands, raise water tables, augment the invertebrate community and promote dense, bushy re-growth so that nesting is easier for everyone from kinglets to kestrels. Birders from every Audubon chapter should show their appreciation for these unique and indispensable corporate sponsors. Why not say thanks to these lifetime members by coming to the seventh annual Beaver Festival in downtown Martinez. There you can learn why and how to coexist with these remarkable benefactors.

Visit wildlife displays from seven bay area counties, enjoy children's activities and live music, peruse the unique gifts at our sizeable silent auction, or tour the remarkable habitat to see for yourself how birdlife has increased since these famous beavers took residence in Alhambra Creek. You won't believe how much they have changed the watershed and enriched the community. Bring your camera, your friends and your grandchildren to this free, one-of-a-kind event that has inspired similar celebrations in five states and Canada. Mount Diablo Audubon Societh will have a table.

Get ready for a 'dam' good time.

- ◆ When: August 2, 2014 11:00-4:00
  - ◆ Where: Beaver Park, Martinez (Corner of Marina Vista Blvd. and Alhambra Ave.)
- For more information go to [www.martinez-beavers.org](http://www.martinez-beavers.org)

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## July

12-13 Sat/Sun . . . . . Mount Lassen  
19 Saturday . . . . . San Mateo Coast

## August

16 Saturday . . . . . Bodega Bay

## Come Birding With Us!

### ② Saturday/Sunday, July 12-13 Mount Lassen Volcanic National Park

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

If you are planning on participating in the MDAS birding trip to Lassen Volcanic National Park the weekend of July 12 and 13, please let the leader know ahead of time that you are coming. Gary and I will be camping in Loop B of the Butte Lake Campground which allows reservations ahead of time. If you prefer not to camp, I can give you names and phone numbers of several small motels and B & B's outside the park, but you should make your reservations soon as they fill up quickly. There are also a few sleep-only cabins at Manzanita Lake, with a nearby communal bathhouse and a private lodge in the south central part of the park, which serves meals and has a pool. Please contact me for details and more information at 925-806-0644 or e-mail me at: eklarson@comcast.net. *Eugenia Larson*

### ② Saturday, July 19 San Mateo Coast

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

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. Meet at 9 AM at overlook at Pescadero Beach on Highway 1 across from Pescadero Road. Go south on I-680, turn west on I-580 to I-238, follow to I-880, then south to SR 92. Cross the San Mateo Bridge (toll) and continue to Half Moon Bay. Turn south on SR 1, go 15 miles to Pescadero Road, turn right into parking lot. Bring lunch and sunscreen—one can get badly burned on a foggy day at the seashore. Early returning shorebirds, gulls and seabirds.



*Pescadero Marsh Natural Reserve*

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders, but not dogs. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://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.

You have had a very successful year of field trips which is now almost finished. After the field trips scheduled for July and August, you will have completed 42 trips. One additional trip was rained out, and one canceled due to the federal shutdown.. By the time you read this, over 400 participants will have gone birding with MDAS. On July 23, we will have our annual planning meeting for the coming year. It is scheduled to be at Jean Richmond's house in Alamo, at 7 PM. Light refreshment will be provided.

The meeting is intended not to be just for the leaders; it is a chance for the membership to express input to the planning process. Ideas for new field trips and new leaders are welcomed. For further information, call Hugh Harvey at 935-2979 or Jean at 837-2843. Thank you for being such strong supporters of your field trips.

### ② Saturday, August 16 Bodega Bay

Leader: Fred Safier, (925) 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Meet at the Tides Restaurant on water side of Highway 1 in Bodega at 9:15 AM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 to Lakeville Road, turn right. In Petaluma turn left on E Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road and SR 1 to Bodega Bay. Walk through or around The Tides to find the group viewing the harbor birds from the outdoor seating. Possibilities at Bodega Bay include flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, as well as terns, gulls, cormorants and much more. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen.

## Trip Reports



Lazuli Bunting. Photo by Beth Branthaver

**West Briones, May 15.** Ten members and guests had a day of fair weather (55°–90°) along the Old Briones Trail and the trail toward the Archery Range. We saw 44 species with the major highlight the Lazuli Buntings in the parking lot. A Great Blue Heron flew over. Allen's Hummingbird male was well seen. A Western Kingbird was in the fennel and fence area near the parking lot. Brown Creepers were well seen and photographed. A Western Tanager male was also in the trees at the edge of the parking lot.

*Maury Stern*

**East Contra Costa County, May 17.** On a mild and pleasant spring day, fourteen MDAS members and guests gathered to bird the rural areas of eastern Contra Costa County including a portion of the Marsh Creek Trail, Piper Slough on Bethel Island, areas around the community of Knightsen and the Holland Tract. This year nearly all of the target species were either seen or heard, included Swainson's Hawk, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak and Hooded Oriole on Bethel Island, and Yellow-billed Magpie in Knightsen. Knightsen also afforded a very nice look at a light-phased Swainson's Hawk. The bird was perched on the top of a utility pole, consuming a rabbit. Coloration of this bird was very similar to the light adult depicted in Sibley's guide. The only target species not observed was Burrowing Owl. Other notable species include American White Pelican, Green Heron, Caspian Tern, Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Western Kingbird. Northern Mockingbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds were in abundance along the Marsh Creek Trail, and we had excellent, close views of both male and female Blue Grosbeaks. At Bethel Island, the group had close-up views of Killdeer



Blue Grosbeak. Photo by Beth Branthaver



Swainson's Hawk. Photo by Beth Branthaver

and their nests with eggs still unhatched. The Holland Tract is where the group saw the Caspian Tern. The group tallied 61 bird species for the day. *Gary Fregien*

**Young Birders Club, Tilden Park, May 18.** The Young Birders Club of Mount Diablo Audubon attended a special outing to Inspiration Point on the Orinda side of Tilden Park. Members were lucky enough to have this trip joined by our guest leader, Denise Wight, a longtime member of MDAS and a specialist in birdsong identification. She can identify hundreds of songs (and contact calls), including subtle differences between songs of the same species in different territories.

We had considered using the Nimitz trail that morning but were surprised to see that a cross country race had been scheduled there. Luckily, we were able to proceed down the unoccupied EBMUD trail, where we heard and observed many species without interference from the runners. The trail was a bit windy, but the view and abundant wildlife were not easily missed. At the outset, the path was occupied by several California Quail and Mourning Doves, and even some brush rabbits.

After the race cleared, we proceeded onto another nearby trail and moved about under a canopy of tall trees which housed many different bird species. As a new mem-

ber of the Young Birders Club and Mount Diablo Audubon, I learned a lot on this trip and I was lucky enough to see many species I had not encountered before. I only started birding a few months back as the focus of my high school senior project, but since then I have learned a lot and gotten attached to the activity. Having joined the Young Birders Club about a month ago, I was very eager for my first trip with the group. I was not at all disappointed with the outing. We encountered about fifty different species, as recorded by member Logan Kahle. For his eBird posting: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S18448551>

Highlights included spotting the Olive-sided Flycatcher that we heard several times along the EBMUD trail, and then discovering a Pacific-slope Flycatcher on the other trail. We heard an abundance of Song Sparrows, Spotted Towhees and Dark-eyed Juncos and several warblers, the MacGillivray's, especially so, as it perched in the open long enough for all of us to get a great look. I personally familiarized myself with many bird calls through hearing them on this trip, with the aid of Denise Wight, of course. And I was quite pleased when Tracy Farrington asked me to write the report for this enlightening morning. I eagerly look forward to our next outing and all the amazing amount of information I still have to learn about birds and birding.

*Mehdi Benyahia*

**Outer Point Reyes, June 7.** Nine participants turned out for the annual Spring field trip to Outer Point Reyes. Weather was overcast with fog barely clearing the hills, though this lifted gradually until sunny conditions returned in the afternoon. Temperatures were in the upper 60s and low 70s. Fortified with coffee and baked goods, first stop was Drake's Beach where we had good looks at several Wilson's Warblers and listened to a vocalizing Swainson's Thrush. Mendoza Ranch was very quiet—the resident Great Horned Owl could not be found, nor any notables on the pond below the road. Nunes Ranch yielded the first excitement of the day—local birding-by-ear expert, Mary Anne Flett, who was already there, believed she had seen a young American Redstart. After some extended searching, indeed, a young American Redstart was found. Moving on to the Lighthouse a pair of adult Peregrine Falcons posed for us on top of the rocks by the visitor center—an additional juvenile was

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# No Child Left Inside

By Paul Schorr



MDAS volunteer, Austin Prindle, with Jack London students and parents, looking at a Red-shouldered Hawk nest with 3-4 immature birds and an adult bird bringing food. Paul Schorr photo.

The MDAS *No Child Left Inside* Program concluded this year's activities on May 20 and 22 by taking 70 fifth grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch to Contra Loma Regional Park. Their teachers and parent volunteers were joined by fourteen MDAS volunteers to enjoy two mornings of outstanding birding. The MDAS volunteers were Jimm Edgar, Tracy Farrington, Jody Sherrard, Barbara Minneman, Austin Prindle, Jackie Bobrosky, Bruce Kronmiller, Maury Stern, Gloria Cannon, Joel Summerhill, Claudia Hein, Nancy Salsig, Nancy Schorr and Paul Schorr. The groups enjoyed beautiful spring weather on both days. On each day the students were divided into

six groups and they rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, each station being monitored by a volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each of the students adeptly used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this activity and other education outreach programs. (Note: twenty of the binoculars were brand new and had been purchased using funds from a Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Grant that had

been written by Nancy Wenninger.) Following this activity the groups walked from the reservoir to an open area with views of the very dry oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savannah. From this location the students also learned the importance of habitats created for California Quail and other animals; the Western Bluebird/Tree Swallow nest boxes; and nearby bat houses. After lunch,



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk. Kathy Barnhart photo.

as on MDAS field trips, the groups tallied the number of species seen and/or heard, and the total number of species for both days was 43. Highlights included the following: a Red-shouldered Hawk nest with 3-4 chicks and parent birds bringing them food; a roosting adult Great Horned Owl guarding two fledglings; a Golden Eagle being harassed by a Red-tailed Hawk; Swainson's Thrushes; Western Bluebirds tending to nestlings in a tree cavity; American White Pelican; Mallard and Canada Goose families; Common Gallinule; Nuttall's Woodpeckers; Bullock's Oriole; Green Heron; 4 warbler species—Orange-crowned, Yellow, Wilson's and Common Yellowthroat; Warbling Vireo; and a Bushtit nest attended by adult birds. In addition,

Maury Stern found a very docile gopher snake and delighted young and old with his herpetology lesson and hands-on experience, and some of the students and volunteers were surprised by a striped skunk that was working its way down the lake shore very near their station. Barbara Minneman enhanced her station with a life-sized replica that represented the wingspans of many of the birds to be seen, with the wingspan of the Golden Eagle as the maximum length. Then she had the students measure their arm lengths according to the model. Most of their arm lengths approximated the wingspan of a Turkey Vulture.

All of the volunteers had many teachable moments and they were rewarded with the subsequent excitement and enthusiasm of the students. At the conclusion of the days' programs, each student received a copy of the book entitled *Backyard Birds of California*, provided by the Chapter. Throughout the activities the students appeared to retain much of what they had learned, and I am confident that they will recall their experiences for a long, long time. Hopefully, some of them someday will even become birders and when asked where it all began, they just might say, "Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS."

The field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities. On March 28, Diana Granados from Native Bird Connections initiated the 2014 program by doing an introductory lesson on bird anatomy and behavior. During her presentation she used a Swainson's Hawk which drew much enthusiasm and excitement from the students, a great way to promote this year's program. On April 23, Nancy and Paul Schorr collaborated to do classroom presentations to introduce and instruct the students on the proper use of binoculars. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for Contra Loma Regional Park. Concluding this lesson, the students were introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so they could learn and appreciate bird vocalizations, as well as study the illustrations and information about the target birds to be seen or heard during the field trips. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms until the days of the field trips.

In summary, MDAS, through the *No Child Left Inside* Program, has made a

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# Trip Reports



Peregrine Falcon. Photo by Cassie Tzur

also seen on a rock overlooking the ocean. Hundreds of Common Murres were found in their usual spot below the lookout. After lunch at the Fish Docks, we walked past the park residence and found several Pigeon Guillemots, a Common and a Red-throated Loon on the water below. A Great Horned Owl was found in its usual place, high in the mature Monterey cypresses. Our second exciting find of the day proved to be a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak close by the water towers—this bird had been reported earlier in the week on the internet. On tallying our list for the day, we found we had observed 50 species. *David Hutton*

## No Child Left Inside

» *Continued from Page 6*

strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of dedication to environmental education, and during the past seven years has brought this program to hundreds of children. MDAS can be very proud of this highly successful program, which has served as a model for other education outreach programs. The success of the NCLI Program would not be possible without the continuing support and involvement of all of the MDAS volunteers. Their participation is greatly appreciated, and on behalf of all of the children, thanks to each of them.

It should also be noted that MDAS is deeply grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District and the staff at Contra Loma Regional Park for their continuing support of the *No Child Left Inside* Program.



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## Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, June 14–15.

Our Chapter does a handful of overnight trips during the year. The June trip to Yuba Pass is always popular, this year there were 17 participants. Some camp, others stay in nearby hotels in Sierra City or Downieville. Every year is different, and with the lack of snow and rain in California this year, the mountain habitats were much drier.

On Saturday, we visited some dry areas around Sierra Valley and across the marshes at the north end. This year was the first time we did not hear a Green-tailed Towhee near the community of Calpine. It is likely that the breeding season peaked 2–3 weeks before our trip. We did see both Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows east of Calpine, the Sage Thrasher along Marble Hot Springs road, and the marvelous Yellow-headed Blackbirds farther out in the marsh. We were quite lucky to find some very cooperative Wilson's Phalaropes. At the east end of the marsh we had an adult American Bittern with two fledglings. Still, there did not seem to be as much water as we have seen in the past. Far out over the marsh, we had American White Pelicans and an adult Bald Eagle being harassed by five Common Ravens. After lunch at a park in Loyalton, we finished our daytime birding southeast of town at the Rotary picnic area. Lewis's Woodpeckers have nested in a power pole nearby for a number of years and we saw them coming in and out of this year's hole.

The day was not over yet, though, as we did some hunting for the Common Poorwill and the Common Nighthawk after 10 of us dined at Los Dos Hermanos restaurant in Sierraville. We stopped at the former truck scale west of town. None had been spotted at other places during the week and this was our last good chance, but we were unsuccessful in finding the nighthawks. After a drive to about a mile up the logging road above Yuba Pass, we were very happy to find the Common Poorwill.

Sunday morning we birded across the highway from the parking lot, walking along two different roads. Birds were scarce, but we did see the active nest of a Mountain Chickadee, Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, Pine Siskins, a few Fox Sparrows, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, a Brown Creeper, several Dusky Flycatchers and a Hermit Thrush. We also heard a singing MacGillivray's Warbler and finally saw a single Western Tanager.

Walking through the campground and out into the meadow, we found Chipping Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, a Lazuli Bunting and two active woodpecker nests. The Hairy and White-headed Woodpeckers had built their nests about 25 feet apart and facing each other. As it was close to lunch, we decided to drive downhill to below Bassett's Station and look for the American Dipper, which often nests behind a small waterfall next to the road. It was there this year, bringing food to its young, despite the number of vacationers willing to soak their heads in the same cold waters.

At Bassett's Station, we watched Calliope and Anna's Hummingbirds come to their feeders. When the checklists were distributed, we found we had identified 91 species. Because we had heard reports of a Black-backed Woodpecker just a short way up Highway 49, eight of us chose to try and find this bird, but all we could add to our list was the White-breasted Nuthatch. We walked down the hill, and five of our group stayed back, coming down the hill more slowly. Just as the leader left with his passenger, a pair of the woodpeckers flew to within about 10 feet of the last viewers. We were told that they were there for about 15 minutes. That brought our group total to 93 species seen or heard. *Hugh Harvey*



## Jay Holcomb 1951–2014

International Bird Rescue executive director Jay Holcomb, an icon in the world of wildlife rehabilitation and a relentless pioneer in oiled wildlife care since the 1970s, has died. He was 63.

Under his direction, International Bird Rescue grew into one of the world's preeminent wildlife organizations, caring for animals affected by large-scale oil spills such as Exxon Valdez in 1989 and the Gulf Spill in 2010, where Holcomb and his team cared for pelicans, gannets and other birds harmed by the environmental disaster. In November, 2010, Holcomb spoke to MDAS on his work in Louisiana during that spill.

Mount Diablo Audubon has donated \$500 to International Bird Rescue in memory of Jay Holcomb.

Susan Kaveggia, board chair of International Bird Rescue said "We can never replace him. But we can follow in his footsteps and continue to inspire others to care for wildlife in his memory."

# Thomas M. Brewer

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Theodore Roosevelt, on the side of Coues. Over the decades, the fervor has abated, but there are still many who find little value in the presence of the House Sparrow in our environment.

John James Audubon died in 1851, and a new group of ornithologists dominated the mid-19th Century study of birds in this country. Four men were the acknowledged leaders. Brewer was one of these, with Spencer Baird of the Smithsonian, and John Cassin and George Lawrence of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. Brewer, Baird and John Ridgway published the monumental three-volume *History of North American Birds* (1874-84). Brewer's specialty in bird study was nesting and eggs. His collection of bird eggs was considered one of the best of his time and was left to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard.



Brewers Blackbird.. Photo by Beth Branthaver



Brewers Sparrow.. Photo by Glen Tepke.

Cassin gave names to as many as 200 species, many from the specimens sent to the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences by the naturalists of the military expeditions to explore the Western United States. One of these was a sparrow from the collection of Clay-colored Sparrows that didn't quite belong. He named it for his friend, Brewer. According to William Dawson, this bird "may be said to have no mark of distinction whatever—just bird." The bird does, however, have an exuberance of song.

Two other species are named for Thomas Brewer. Spencer Baird named the beach vole *Microtus breweri*, and John Bachman named the hairy-tailed mole *Parascalops breweri* for him. The mole is resident in the northeastern United States and in eastern Canada; the endangered vole is found only on tiny Muskeget Island off Nantucket in Massachusetts.

## Prothonotary Warbler ♦ *Protonotaria citrea*

**a** This bird was named after officials in the Roman Catholic Church known as the protonotarii, who wore golden robes. Because of its etymology, the name may be correctly pronounced either "Pro-THON-a-tary" or "Pro-tho-NO-tary". But if you use the latter, be ready for some funny looks!

The Prothonotary Warbler became known in the 1940s as the bird that, in hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, established a connection between Whittaker Chambers and Alger Hiss. Hiss claimed that he didn't know anyone named Chambers. Chambers had testified that Hiss enjoyed bird-watching, and once bragged about seeing a Prothonotary Warbler. Hiss later was tricked into admitting to the incident, causing many committee members to become convinced of the pair's acquaintance. Hiss may not have been lying, as he had known Chambers



This beautiful Prothonotary Warbler was photographed in May at Magee Marsh in Ohio by Paul Schorr.

by a different name. Eisenhower and his advisors were impressed with how Nixon had prosecuted the Hiss affair, and selected him as a strong anti-communist candidate for Vice President.

Prothonotary Warbler differs from most warblers in its nesting habits. It and the Lucy's Warbler are the only ones in North America that use a tree cavity—often an old woodpecker hole. It prefers low-lying wet areas—thus the old name Golden Swamp Warbler. In this habitat there are often many decaying trees with cavities and many are over water. Fledglings may fall into the water and have

been observed swimming safely to dry land.

It's unfortunate for us that the Prothonotary Warbler seldom ventures west of the Mississippi, although Steve Glover reported on *eBird* seeing one in San Mateo in 2004. This is the epitome of a Yellow Bird.



# Squirrel Deferral

By Mike Eliot

Squirrels can be the smartest and peskiest animals in our yards. Locally, tree squirrels are found nearly everywhere, while ground squirrels are seen in the more remote areas. Both species are very acrobatic and will spend hours finding ways to get at your bird feeders. This can be fun to watch, but it also can be rather frustrating.

To deal with squirrels at feeders, you first need to know that there is no 100% effective method. The best you can do is keep them from eating most of your bird food. Squirrels have found ways to get around every preventative method, short of executing them.



Squirrels are attracted to all kinds of nuts and sunflower seeds. They do not particularly like nyjer (thistle), millet, or safflower. Feeding only these seeds may limit the types of birds that visit, but should help prevent most squirrels on your feeders. They also do not like hot food. You can feed hot pepper suet or sprinkle cayenne pepper on any bird food before putting it in the feeder.

Many accessories are available to help keep squirrels off your feeders. Use a dome or hood to prevent squirrels from climbing down from above. Baffles can be mounted on poles or posts that keep squirrels from climbing up. Trays that attach to feeders can keep most excess seed from falling to the ground. There are cages that work around several types of feeders to allow small birds in, but keep squirrels and larger birds out.

Or, you can use a squirrel-proof feeder that closes the feeding ports off from squirrels when they climb onto the feeder. Since squirrels weigh about 10 times as much as an average feeder bird, their weight will pull down the port covers.

I like to watch the squirrels and their antics. I have found that putting out a bowl of nuts keeps them pretty happy. They tend to go to the easiest food source, so they leave the bird feeders to the birds. However, use nuts out of the shell or they will be burying them all over your and your neighbors' yards.

# 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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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.

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*Brewer's Duck, Lindo Lake, San Diego County. Gary Nunn photo..*

## Thomas Mayo Brewer Companion of Audubon ♦ Oölogist

In describing a bird John James Audubon shot in Louisiana in 1822, he wrote "In form and proportions this bird is very nearly allied to the Mallard, from which it differs in having the bill considerably narrower, in wanting the recurved feathers of the tail, in having the feet dull yellow in place of orange-red, the speculum more green and duller, without the white bands of that bird, and in the large patch of light red on the side of the head. It may possibly be an accidental variety, or a hybrid between that bird and some other species, perhaps the Gadwall, to which also it bears a great resemblance.

"I have named this Duck after my friend Thomas M. Brewer of Boston, as a mark of the estimation in which I hold him as an accomplished ornithologist."

Audubon also named Brewer's Black-bird for his friend, while the Brewer's Sparrow was named by John Cassin.

Thomas Mayo Brewer was born in Boston in 1814. He graduated from Harvard College in 1835 and from Harvard Medical School in 1838 at the age of 24.

After a few years as a practicing doctor, he turned to writing and politics, while he kept his life-long strong interest in ornithology, particularly oölogy. Even as a teenager, he shared his field observations with Audubon and others, contributing much new information on bird biology.

In the early 1850s, in an effort to rid elm trees of caterpillars, House Sparrows were imported and relocated to Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn. Soon, because the birds did not favor the caterpillars, and because they displaced native song birds, a "Sparrow War" developed. The rise of the House Sparrow created one of the more interesting environmental battles of the late 19th and early 20th Century. Dr. Brewer thought the House Sparrow was a



*Thomas Mayo Brewer*

wonderful and determined little bird and that, in time, it would prove to be one of America's favorites. Opposing Dr. Brewer's love of the House Sparrow was Dr. Elliott Coues. Dr. Coues advocated an open war on House Sparrows, saying they were a peril to native birds. Among the troops in this battle of minds were Harriet Beecher Stowe, on the side of Brewer, and the very young

*Continued on Page 8 »*