



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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March 2015

Spiders ✦ Tim Manolis

If you don't know much about jumping spiders, be warned – learning more about them can become an addictive pleasure! Now, while a lot of folks more frequently associate the phrase “creepy crawly” with spiders than the phrase “addictive pleasure,” jumping spiders are not your average spiders. Among other amazing things, they stalk prey—insects and other spiders—like cats, using vision that rivals that of many birds and mammals. Male jumpers can be brilliantly colored with courtship displays rivaling those of birds-of-paradise. Some species are remarkable mimics of ants, wasps, or beetles. Intrigued? Plan to attend our spider program on March 5, featuring Tim Manolis, to learn more about spider biology, California species, and jumping spiders.

Salticidae, the family of jumping spiders, is the largest family of spiders worldwide, with around 5000 described species. Though most numerous in the tropics, they are found just about everywhere, from the highest peaks of the Himalaya to the arid depths of Death Valley.

Some species hop around in trees and bushes like little spider monkeys. Others stalk prey on the ground, walls, and fences, and very small ones crawl through leaf litter. Over 100 described species live in California, and you can probably find five to ten of these in your back yard.

Courtship is an aspect of jumping spider behavior that has evolved in a dramatic way as a result of their excellent vision. Males are often brightly colored and strongly patterned in comparison to cryptic females, much as in many songbirds and dragonflies. The most fantastic expression of jumping spider courtship is probably that of a group of tiny, leaf-litter inhabitants of

Australia called peacock spiders. Male peacock spiders have flaps festooned with brightly-colored scales in striking patterns atop their abdomens, which they raise above their bodies as they dance about and wave their legs in front of females, resembling miniature birds-of-paradise.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, March 5**, 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: **Tim Manolis**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, April 2: Jim Burcio,
Bird Carvings



Jumping spider, *Phanias concoloratus*. Courtesy Ken Schneider.

Tim Manolis will present photos of these extraordinary creatures and answer all your spider questions at our March meeting. Dr. Manolis received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado and is an artist, writer and field biologist who has lived in Sacramento for many years. He is author of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of California*, and the illustrator of *Field Guides to Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento Valley Regions* and the *Field Guide to Spiders of California and the Pacific Coast States*.

BIRDING INFORMATION

MVSD Biologist Kelly Davidson will present a program on the “The Mountain View Sanitary District Wetlands Program: a Community Success Story”. She will also discuss the McNabney Marsh Nesting Raft Project.



Green Heron. MVSD photo

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

On the morning of February 5, I received a phone call from Jimm Edgar. He sounded very upbeat and seemed anxious to return to his duties as MDAS President. His first question to me was, "Is everything ready for the meeting tonight?" He is no longer in the hospital and has begun his recuperation. I still do not have information regarding his hospitalization, and as in many family illnesses, it is best that it remains a private matter. He plans to return

to MDAS in April, and we sincerely look forward to his return.

On behalf of Jimm and myself, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the board members and volunteers who provide ongoing, vital service to MDAS. Without their dedication, MDAS would certainly not be the strong chapter that it is. Kudos to all of you.

Paul Schorr, Vice President

Welcome New Members

Joseph Burk	Lafayette
Teresa Connell	Houston, TX
Marcia Huberman	Walnut Creek
Edward & Camille Lee	Moraga
Jennifer Roe	Clayton
Anthony Venezia	Orinda

Confusing Website Issue:

Very recently, it was brought to the Chapter's attention that there is another website that has apparently attempted to mimic the MDAS East Bay Birds Yahoo Group website, perhaps in an attempt to distribute inappropriate information, including pornographic material, recruit subscribers, etc. The mimic website is EBBsightings; whereas, the correct MDAS East Bay Birds website is: EBB_Sightings (with an underscore).

Yahoo Groups has been contacted and hopefully the situation will be corrected.

California Partridge.

John James Audubon, *Birds of America*

Audubon Prints for Free

John James Audubon's *Birds of America* comes to life in a vibrant digital library on Audubon's new website, www.audubon.org/birds-of-america. You can enjoy and download a free high-resolution version of all 435 prints. Share these beautiful watercolors with your network and spread the legacy of Audubon's namesake and inspiration.



Good News for Peregrine Falcons

The area known as "Castle Rock" in Mount Diablo State Park will be closed off to visitors from February 1st to July 31st to help protect the Peregrine Falcon during their nesting season. This is an annual closure, as the Peregrine Falcon is listed as a "Fully Protected Species" in California. This raptor is territorial and highly sensitive to disturbance during nesting season.

California State Parks has partnered with East Bay Regional Park District, the operator of the Diablo Foothills Regional Park, which neighbors the closed area, to educate rock climbers and the general public of this closure and the importance of protecting the Falcon. Signs and educational panels will be placed in the area to advise and educate users about the closure.

Violators are subject to penalty by fine. Rock climbers will be encouraged to utilize an alternate climbing area of the park during the closure.

California Department of Parks and Recreation



Peregrine Falcon. Photo by Beth Branthaver.

Social Media Coordinator

Mount Diablo Audubon Society is seeking a Social Media Coordinator to help promote our chapter on Facebook and Meetup. We would like to reach out to new audiences through additional social media platforms. The coordinator would be responsible for setting up a Facebook page and a group on Meetup. Content would need to be added weekly to maintain interest in our pages. No prior experience is necessary, as only basic computer skills are needed. Other outreach ideas are encouraged, such as Twitter and Instagram. Please contact Ariana Rickard (rickard@post.harvard.edu, 347-754-0143) if you are interested.

Q

In Ralph Hoffmann's *Birds of the Pacific States*, printed in 1955, this raptor was said to have not more than 50 pairs remaining in California, with a further decreasing population. The *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County* (2009) reported 23 confirmed nests and another 23 probable or possible sites in the county.

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

ADEEEHIIKLTWW

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 10.**

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

March

- 4 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks
- 11 Wednesday Contra Loma Reservoir
- 17 Tuesday Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh
- 19 Thursday Valle Vista
- 21 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park
- 25 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas

April

- 4 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 8 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 11 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 16 Thursday North Briones
- 18 Saturday Mines Road
- 23 Thursday Black Diamond Mines
- 28 Tuesday Del Puerto Canyon
- 30 Thursday Mitchell Canyon

May

- 2 Saturday East Contra Costa County
- 6 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park
- 14 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 19 Tuesday No Child Left Inside
- 21 Thursday No Child Left Inside

① Wednesday, March 4 Walnut Creek Parks

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

Meet at 8:30 AM at the wooden railing of 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 continue our birding at the Borges Ranch off Castle Rock Road



Tropical Kingbird
Heather Farm Park. Kai Mills photo.

① Wednesday, March 11 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 Tuesday, March 17

McNabney Marsh/Mountain View Sanitary

Leader: Steve Taylor, 828-8810.

Meet at 9 AM at the Mt. 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 Mt. 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 19

Valle Vista

Leader: Don Lewis, 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.

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. 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: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **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.

Come Birding With Us!

② Saturday, March 21 Tomales Bay State Park

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

Carpool leaves 7 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM 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.

③ Wednesday, March 25 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 last year). 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.

Trip Reports

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh, January 20. The morning started out in heavy fog that limited the 15 participants to up-close and personal viewing of the various ducks, grebes and gulls. The Tufted and Ring-necked Ducks that are usually seen were missing this year. We spent a bit of time examining the differences of the two scaups, which are far easier to sort out at a distance of five feet than out on the bay. By scoping the islands, we were able to ID the Belted Kingfisher as a female and the raptor as a Red-tailed Hawk. The fog made it impossible to make those distinctions with just binoculars. We proceeded to the opposite side of the lake to the channel where the Barrow's Goldeneyes are found, and we were successful in our search. Arrowhead Marsh was experiencing a tide of 7.5 feet, and although there were no Virginia Rails sighted, there were four very cooperative Soras in the grass, just in front of the long dock. There were also two Soras along the shoreline that provided very close views. Most of the newly split and named Ridgway's Rails were out quite a distance in the grass, but easily seen with scopes. They were quite plentiful, which was very nice to see. The dock was totally covered with Marbled Godwits, Willets, about a dozen Black Turnstones and two Great Blue Herons standing sentry at the end. A Swamp Sparrow that had been reported was missed, but the Nelson's Sparrow was seen by some of our group.

We finished the day at Garretson Point, where we were able to see all three teal species and an assortment of shorebirds to challenge us. The final count of the day was a respectable 77 species. Thank you to all who made the day so very enjoyable. *Sandy Ritchie*

Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park/Ellis Creek, January 31. Nineteen participants arrived at Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District for a bright, sunny morning of birding at the water treatment ponds. Las Gallinas did not disappoint, with a wide variety of water birds and raptors. In addition to the numerous wintering ducks, we were able to catch glimpses of a Sora and Virginia Rail. We also had nice views of several Common Mergansers and a Snow Goose. Raptors included a Peregrine Falcon, White-tailed Kites, Northern Harriers and Red-shouldered Hawks. We next stopped at Rush Creek where we saw quite a few Greater Yellowlegs and added to our duck count with a few Gadwall. At Shollenberger Marsh we were able to pick up



Hooded Merganser, male (left), female (right).
Las Gallinas. Beth Branthaver photos

Greater and Lesser Scaup, Mute Swans and we had distant views of a Tundra Swan. Shorebirds including Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Least and Western Sandpipers, Dunlin and Dowitcher species were also observed. Near the picnic area we saw a pair of Hooded Mergansers and a Cooper's Hawk. After lunch we headed over to Ellis Creek where we found a Ross's Goose, more wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. On one of the ponds we saw a Common Gallinule pair. Over the tree line we observed a Sharp-shinned Hawk that was harassing a Red-tailed Hawk. For the whole day we had 84 species. *Beth Branthaver*

Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve, February 7. This trip was cancelled owing to threatening weather. *Chick Chickering*

Grizzly Island, February 12. Thirteen members and guests had a nice day at Grizzly Island Refuge and Rush Ranch. We had high cirrus clouds, blue skies and high 60-degree temperatures. In addition to the birds, there were at least 40 Tule Elk. Highlight birds were: 12 duck species, a Ferruginous Hawk on the way out that was seen by four people, Ridgway's Rail, three Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Barn Owl at Rush Ranch, Several Great Horned Owls in eucalyptus groves with one on a nest, Peregrine Falcon, hundreds of over-wintering Tree Swallows, and American Pipits. *Maury Stern*



Meriwether Lewis

» Continued from Page 8

Although he was able to give details of the sighting, he "endeavoured to get a shoot at it, but could not." Similarly, Clark tells us that at the Big Bend of the Missouri River on September 17, 1804, Lewis had killed "a remarkable Bird of the Corvus Species" (Black-billed Magpie, *Pica hudsonia*), which he later analyzed in detail. In another example, Lewis observes "a beautiful little bird" on June 6, 1806, along the Clearwater River in Idaho, which he unmistakably describes, feature by feature (Western Tanager, *Piranga ludoviciana*).

"we meet with a beautifull little bird in this neighbourhood about the size and somewhat the shape of the large sparrow."
Meriwether Lewis, on the discovery of the Western Tanager, Idaho, June 6, 1806.

It is standard in scientific identification that a "type locality" be determined for a species, a place where the specimen was gathered which is being distinguished from other species. In this era of geo-tags, Google Earth, and easily available GPS data, even photos record the site of their own creation. Not so in Lewis's time, despite his best efforts to be precise in his geographic descriptions. He and Clark were making the maps, so they could only refer to their own sense of where they were. Accordingly, latter-day scholars have found much grist for their research mills in attempting to locate exactly where Lewis found what.

This same historical uncertainty, incidentally, is what has made it possible for there to be equally quasi-revisionist efforts at determining if Lewis really did father a child while passing through the Sioux territory, establishing what happened to his purported "missing" journals other than those known to have been lost, and, most poignantly perhaps, whether he was in the end a murder victim or a suicide.

It is unknown whether Meriwether Lewis continued to collect or study birds after his return to the capital and Philadelphia. He was preoccupied with the publication of his notes and journals, and with the exception of those Jefferson had unfortunately entrusted to Benjamin Barton, Lewis carried them with him almost until his death. Barton had effectively scattered the plant specimens, notes and observations, despite having been one of Lewis's tutors before the



Syringa Philadelphus lewisii. Idaho state flower.

Expedition, and having promised Jefferson to publish the findings. The ornithological collections were deposited with Charles Willson Peale, and Lewis personally asked Alexander Wilson, later to produce a 9-volume *Ornithology of America*, to systematize and illustrate the birds. Having risked his life repeatedly for his discoveries, Lewis did not willingly part any further with the evidence.

Some of Wilson's names are still in use, and his painting of a Western tanager was done directly from the skin Lewis provided, now lost. Peale's taxidermy work preserved the only Expedition ornithological specimen still known to exist, a Lewis's Wood-



Lewis's Moon Snail, *Euspira lewisii*. Named for Meriwether Lewis, this largest marine snail (up to five inches across) is found along the Pacific Coast, including at Elkhorn Slough.

pecker personally collected by Lewis and now housed at Harvard. Peale also made a wax figure of Lewis wearing a Mandan chief's outfit to accompany the displays. Over the years, the Museum contents were eventually purchased by P. T. Barnum and much of it was likely shown with the traveling circus, while other portions were destroyed in a fire in 1851. Another part had been transferred to the American Museum in New York, but it, too, fell victim to a fire.

Lewis had twice attempted to send indexed portions of his collections back to Jefferson during the Expedition. The first shipment, which had included stuffed birds, became separated from its labels in transit. The second, gleaned from the remains of a cache partly ruined by a Missouri flood, was distributed by Jefferson to Philadelphia. On leaving the White House in 1809, 25 crates of Jefferson's remaining Lewis and Clark artifacts were lost when he attempted to have them shipped home to Virginia.

"I met with a singular plant today in blume of which I preserved a specemine; It grows on the steep sides of the fertile hills near this place."

Meriwether Lewis, on the discovery of Ragged Robin, *Clarkia pulchella*, June 1, 1806.

When Lewis was appointed Governor of Louisiana after his return, he took his journals with him to St. Louis, intending to work on them. For political reasons, the new Secretary of War named by incoming President James Madison refused to pay many of Lewis's expenses for the Expedition, funded through his own estate. It was on a desperate dash to the nation's capital in 1809 crossing over 400 miles of wild land from the lower Mississippi through Tennessee, likely suffering from malaria and hoping for repayment and publication, that Lewis died still carrying his precious papers.

No other American naturalist has ever faced such challenges as did Lewis, nor ever will again. His achievements, made possible by his ability to discern in nature what others could not, mark Meriwether Lewis as a truly great birding pioneer.



Four live magpies were sent to President Jefferson in a shipment of specimens from Fort Mandan in April 1805. One survived the four-month trip, along with a prairie dog.

John James Audubon, *Birds of America*

Observations

By Maury Stern

This past month has had multiple sightings of the **Tropical Kingbird** and **Black-and-White Warbler** at Heather Farm. Other birds with multiple reports are **Varied Thrushes**, **Band-tailed Pigeons** and **Pine Siskins**.

From 1 to 25 **Brant** have been seen at Ferry Point in Pt. Richmond. GC, LK, MS.

Up to 13 **Cackling Geese** have been near the Bayside Trail in Richmond. GC, DW, DH, KM, NW, EK.

Two **Eurasian Wigeon** have been at Miller-Knox Park in Point Richmond through at least 2/10. GC, MP, MC, MS.

Up to three **Blue-winged Teal** were near the shoreline near Costco in Richmond. CL, JA, DW. LF saw them at the Richmond Landfill Loop 1/29.

A single **Black Scoter** continued near the Richmond Marina. DW, DH.

A **Black-crowned Night Heron** was unusual for Lafayette Reservoir 1/25. NL.

Ferruginous Hawks were at or near Fernandez Ranch along Franklin Canyon 1/28 and 1/31. JB, C&TW.

A **Sora** was at Heather Farm Pond 2/4. GT, HH, TF.

A **Glaucous Gull** was at Ferry Point 2/8 and 2/9. LK, JH, SM, PC, RC.

A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was in Canyon near Pinehurst 1/16. AL.

MP saw a **Short-eared Owl** off Waterfront Road in Martinez 2/23.

A **Common Poorwill** was at Sibley Regional Preserve 1/31. JB.

Two first-of-the-season **Allen's Hummingbirds** were seen by KM, NW, and EK at Miller-Knox Park 1/24.

JC and DH saw a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** 2/2 at Heather Farm.

DB saw a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at the Lime Ridge Open Space in Walnut Creek 1/8.

A **Palm Warbler** was along the path from the 51st Street entrance to the Bay Trail in Richmond 1/19 and 1/24. GC, DH.

JA Jeff Acuff, PB Pat Bacchetti, JB Jackie Bobrowsky, JDB Jesse David Burrows, DB Dan Bylin, MC Minder Cheng, JC Jim Chiropoulos, GC Graham Chisholm, RC Rich Cimino, TF Tracy Farrington, LF Len Friedman, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, JH Jeff Hoppes, LK Logan Kahle, EK Erica Kawata, BK B Kristal, AL Albert Linkowski, CL Calvin Lou, NL Norm Lustig, SM Soham Mehta, KM Kai Mills, MP Michael Pang, MS Maury Stern, GT Gary Thompson, DW Dave Weber, C&TW Chris and Terry Wills, NW Niki Wixon.

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

Christmas Counts

East Contra Costa County. December 17. Thirty-three participants spent the day counting birds at Clifton Court Forebay, Byron, Holland Tract, Vasco Caves, Los Vaqueros Reservoir, Round Valley Preserve, Iron House Sanitary District and Trail, Discovery Bay, and Marsh Creek Reservoir and other locations.

152 species were seen and highlights were: 2700 Greater White-fronted Geese, 370 Cackling Geese, 240 Tundra Swans, 2000 Canvasbacks, 142 Red-tailed Hawks, 8 Golden Eagles, 55 Lewis's Woodpeckers, 44 Loggerhead Shrikes, 5 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and 19 Orange-crowned Warblers.

Central Contra Costa County. December 20. We had 68 people out surveying birds at Mt. Diablo State Park, Mallard Reservoir, Concord Weapons Station, Heather Farm, Hidden Lakes, Pittsburg Marshes and other parks and waterways.

153 species were seen including 10 Barrow's Goldeneyes, 2 Ferruginous Hawks, 112 Red-tailed Hawks, 6 Golden Eagles, 187 Virginia Rails, 166 Soras, 395 Band-tailed Pigeons, 22 Great-horned Owls, 164 Varied Thrush, 1 Black-and-white Warbler, 3320 Tricolored Blackbirds, and 98 Pine Siskins.

Thanks to everyone who participated and especially to the leaders of the sections that were surveyed. Many of the leaders have done their roles for more than 20 years. Full results can be found by going to the National Audubon web-site, Christmas Bird Count. *Maury Stern*

a White-tailed Kite ♦ *Elanus leucurus*

The original name for this raptor was the White-tailed Kite, and it was given the systematic name *Elanus leucurus*. Some, however, thought it to be a subspecies of a European and African species, *Elanus caeruleus*, at the time known as the Black-shouldered Kite, and the recognized name was changed.

Just over twenty years ago it was shown that the hawk differed from the Old World species in size, shape, plumage and behavior, and that these differences were enough to support species status. The American Ornithologists' Union agreed, so the White-tailed Kite has its original name back. Meanwhile *E. caeruleus* has been

renamed as the Black-winged Kite, and the name Black-shouldered Kite is now applied to an Australian species, *Elanus axillaris*.

The White-tailed Kite soars and glides like a gull, holding its wings with the tips downward like a gull. It has about an 80% hunting success rate, feeding mostly on voles and mice, but also on insects and lizards. It hovers while it searches for prey, rapidly flapping its wings, then plunges after its prey. It usually feeds at dusk.

White-tailed Kites like to rest in high lookouts or vantage points such as treetops and telephone poles. Outside of breeding season these hawks are sociable and may convene in large groups of up to a hundred near marshy areas.



White-tailed Kite. Isaac Aronow photo.

Bird Illnesses

By Mike Eliot

With droughts, often come spates of illnesses among birds that flock together. This year is especially hard on Band-tailed Pigeons, which are contracting and spreading trichomonosis among their own species and possibly among raptors that eat them. Recent outbreaks have been found in the South Bay Area and possibly in the Lafayette/Moraga area. This disease is unlikely to spread to other bird species or humans.

Avian Flu, which can spread to humans, has been detected in shore and aquatic birds, but has not been found locally in other birds. A commercial turkey flock in Central California has had a recent outbreak.

Although West Nile virus had been found in dead birds in Contra Costa County last summer, the transmission of this disease to humans and other animals appears to be from mosquito bites and not from contact with sick birds. Mosquito activity has subsided owing to extensive spraying and cool weather.



While you watch them, be aware of sick birds. Continuous warm and dry weather

throughout this winter has resulted in increased bird numbers in our yards, especially finches. Many berries are ripe, so birders are beginning to see flocks of Cedar Waxwings and American Robins. Consumption at feeders has grown substantially as well.

When birds flock together to feed or bathe, they are more likely to pass on illnesses like trichomonosis. Birds that seem to be puffed up, breathing heavily or quickly, sitting still more than usual, holding beaks open, vomiting, or appearing weak may be showing signs of illness. If you are seeing this regularly or among several birds, you could take down feeders and empty baths for a few days.

Some types of feeders have built-in protection using "Agion" which helps keep diseases from being spread from bird to bird. Cleaning feeders and baths more often may also help, especially if you have noticed a bird that appears ill on the feeder or bath. If you use bleach to clean feeders or baths, use only a 10% solution and rinse thoroughly. If you can smell any bleach on the feeder or bath, it still needs further rinsing.

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.

MDAS Board of Directors

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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. [Note: Second Thursday, January 8, 2015.]

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

Wild Birds Unlimited
Steven Joseph Photography
Galaxy Press
Native Bird Connections

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 dues are separate from Mount Diablo Audubon dues.

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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

Please make your check payable to:
MOUNT DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:
 Membership Chair, 282 Firestone Court, Walnut Creek, CA 94598

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Western Tanager: Beth Branthaver Photo.

Meriwether Lewis Soldier ♦ Explorer ♦ Collector

PART 2 *Member Contributed*

Continued from the February Quail

Lewis's hasty tutoring sessions complete, his assembly of tools and supplies mirroring Clark's preparation of their keelboat and crew, by late spring of 1804 the Corps of Discovery was ready.

The Expedition famously lasted nearly three years. The first scientific results were sent back to Jefferson in 1805, and he sent the specimens of birds to the Philosophical Society. Although it appears that some collections were lost or damaged in transit, on their return in 1806 the explorers brought back a vast amount of data about every aspect of the country through which they had travelled. And they carried the skins of dozens of rare birds. Professional naturalists were the first Americans other than President Jefferson to study these materials, and much of it went to Peale's museum in Philadelphia. A Black-billed Magpie lived there for several months. Along with

Peale, leading ornithological scholars of the period studied, drew, and described the treasures that had been provided.

In truth, there is some difficulty of separating Lewis's overall contributions from Clark's. They copied each other's journal entries, including some of the drawings, partly for the redundancy that Jefferson had mandated to avoid losses. Lewis was apparently better at drawing specimens, Clark at doing the maps. On many days Lewis was occupied with preserving, meticulously describing, and labeling what had been obtained, while Clark recorded other aspects of the journey. The almost daily account often does identify who actually collected what, however, and it is from these entries that we can usually credit discoveries.

Accordingly, we know that it was on July 20, 1805, that Lewis first saw a new "black woodpecker" (Lewis's Woodpecker) near the present-day site of Helena, Montana.

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Meriwether Lewis, Frontiersman. Watercolor by Charles-Balthazar-Julien Fevret de Saint-Memin, New York Historical Society.