



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 60, Number 11

June 2015

California Big Year ✦ Logan Kahle

Inspired by the stunning natural surroundings at his home in the Presidio of San Francisco, Logan started birding at the age of 8. His birding interests grew with age, and the field quickly became his largest hobby and, later, obsession in his life.

His withdrawal from traditional schooling during middle school allowed him to customize his education to help promote his birding along with his ornithological studies at the California Academy of Sciences. With this kind of freedom, Logan started birding nearly every day of the year, exploring areas all around San Francisco and the Bay Area on his bike, and as well areas farther afield, such as the Central Valley, Mount Diablo, and Point Reyes, with help from his friends with larger wheels.

His constant immersion in a wide variety of habitat allowed him a great appreciation for the nuances in the Bay Area's ecosystems, one of his greatest interests to date. He started going on regular pelagic trips with Alvaro's Adventures and the West Marin Environmental Action Committee, and eventually started as a designated spotter on those trips. Pelagic birding remains Logan's favorite type of birding.

When he turned 16, he got his driver's license, expanding his horizon to the state level. So, in 2014 he decided to embark on a monumental quest: a California Big Year. This meant traversing the entire state to find as many bird species as humanly possible in one calendar year, tempted by an artificial goal: 460 species. During this period, Logan drove over 40,000 miles in his mother's car, visited almost every county in the state, scoured the Salton Sea, the Mojave Desert, Humboldt County, and the Modoc Plateau all in search of every extra bird to add to his big year list. He set out on January 1st with the ambitious goal in mind



Logan Kahle.

to find 460 species that year and explore an amazing state. Competition, excitement, frustration, and thrill all went into making this an amazing and unforgettable year.

Annual Potluck Dinner

The potluck dinner meeting on June 4 will be at our regular meeting place at The Gardens at Heather Farm. Doors open at 6:00 PM. Members bring a main dish, salad, or dessert and their own utensils and coffee cup. Please mark your serving plates. Coffee, tea and punch will be provided. Bring your own wine if you wish. Accolades and thanks are owed to our Hospitality Chair, Nina Wong, and her volunteers for setting the ambience.

Meeting Schedule

The annual pot-luck dinner and elections meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, June 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

6:00 PM Doors open

6:30 PM Dinner is served

Please remember to bring your own plate, utensils, and cup.

8:00 PM Announcements

8:15 PM Speaker: **Logan Kahle**
California Big Year

There will be no meeting in July or August. The next meeting will be Thursday, September 3.

Garry George
Renewable Energy in California

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I would like to talk with all of you about some needs the chapter has.

We have three board positions that we need to fill; the Secretary, Hospitality Chair and the Quail Editor. The three people who have filled these positions have asked to step down as of September of 2015, after many years of faithful service to the chapter. We have a person who has indicated he might help with the newsletter, but we really need a committee for that position. It would be ideal to have at least three people who could be available so that it does not always fall on the shoulders of a single individual. The same is true for the Hospitality Chair. We would like to put a committee together

of three or four for this fun task. See the Hospitality Note on this page.

Our chapter is strong because of our behind-the-scene volunteers. Please consider stepping forward and giving me a call or e-mail and we can talk about it. My cell is (510) 290-8006 and e-mail address is ag70@value.net.

Our chapter is very fortunate to have a very active board and it translates to lots of folks at our meetings, great field trips, lots of volunteers at events and an overall healthy chapter. We always can use more help however, so think about how you can help out.

Good News for Oregon Silverspot Butterfly

The Cooperative Recovery Initiative, established to restore and recover species listed as threatened or endangered on National Wildlife Refuges and surrounding lands combines the resources of several programs in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Migratory Birds, Ecological Services, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation, Science Applications) as well as partnerships outside the Service to implement large-scale conservation efforts. CRI has funded 41 projects nationwide through 2015. All of the projects are being monitored to evaluate their success.

"Preventing Extinction of Oregon Silverspot Butterfly" is one of these projects. Its goal is to restore suitable habitat for the Oregon silverspot butterfly at Nestucca Bay and Willapa Refuges and introduce a population of this threatened species at Nestucca Bay Refuge.

Nestucca Bay Refuge, south of Tillamook, Oregon, was established in 1991 with the acquisition of short grass pastures to provide wintering habitat for dusky Canada Goose and Aleutian Cackling Goose. The Nestucca Bay area supports approximately 10 percent of the world population of dusky Canada Geese, and 100 percent of a very unique subpopulation of Aleutian Canada Geese. It is also an important rest stop for migrating shorebirds and other waterfowl and is used by Peregrine Falcons and Bald Eagles. Other wildlife using this area includes migratory songbirds, bobcat, black-tailed deer, and many other species. Shoreline and tideland habitats are used by a variety of estuarine fish including coho and Chinook salmon.

At Willapa NWR on Long Island, Washington, forests are home to mammals such as black bear, Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, beaver, and river otter. The mature forests provide special niches for numerous sensitive wildlife species. The largest trees provide wide, sturdy limbs suitable for the platform nests of Marbled Murrelets, a seabird that has lost much of its historical nesting habitat due to logging of old growth forests. Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons also nest in large trees on the island. Standing dead trees, or snags, contain nesting cavities for species such as Pileated Woodpeckers, flying squirrels, and Spotted Owls. Roosting silver-haired bats and Pacific tree frogs find cover in the loose and creviced bark of old trees.



Willapa NWR, Ilwaco, Washington. Photo by Ellis Myers.

Welcome New Members

Pamela Billings	Pleasant Hill
Nahide Craig	Lafayette
Shelley Cullimore	Pleasant Hill
Burt Kaufman	Lafayette
Kramer Klabau	Orinda
Susan Lavin	Concord
Tom Oakes	Walnut Creek

A Hospitality Note

Just a short note to say that after three years, we feel that it's time to give someone else a turn at this fun job. And we do mean fun!!! We've met and worked with so many wonderful people who were always willing to help whenever we needed it, especially Jerry and Nancy Mix, Julie Starr, Brian Murphy, Rosita Harvey, Diana Granados, Nancy and Paul Schorr; we could go on and on. We especially want to say thank you to all who have provided us with the monthly goodies that have helped make our meetings so successful. It's been a blast!!!

Nina and Leary Wong

P. S. We encourage and challenge anyone to step up to the plate and take Hospitality on. You won't regret it. When available, we'll be there to help



This monotonously gray bird shows a striking black-and-white wing pattern when it flies.

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

EILLTW

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Observations

By Maury Stern

Logan Kahle, Eric Pilotte and Jeff Hoppes (The Contra Costa Calliopes) did a Big Day of 20 hours in Contra Costa County on April 19, and saw 178 species. This broke the previous record of Steve Glover, John Luther and Frances Oliver of 170 from April 21, 2007. For viewing the list, please go to <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S22959942>.

Brant continued off the Miller/Knox Shoreline in Point Richmond. SD 4/14 and LK, EP 4/17.

On 4/17 LK and EP had 34 **Wood Ducks** fly over at Holland Tract in East County.

LK and EP saw a **Common Merganser** at San Pablo Reservoir 4/17.

A **Common Loon** was at Richmond Shoreline 4/17, LK, EP; and 5/1 near Richmond Marina KB.

Four **American Bitterns** were at Iron House Sanitary District 4/17. LK, EP.

DW saw 17 **White-faced Ibis** at Jersey Island 4/22.

An **Osprey** was over the Heather Farm Pond on 5/12. DK.

There were four **Swainson's Hawks** at Jersey Island 4/22 and one over Highway 4 in Antioch. DW.

A **Golden Eagle** flew over Morgan Territory Preserve while being harassed by an **American Crow** 4/23. IA.

HH heard a **Black Rail** at 6 in the morning at Martinez Regional Shoreline. 4/27.

On 4/17, over 300 **Whimbrels** flew over Holland Tract. LK, EP.

A **Common Murre** was Point Isabel Shoreline 4/24. JDB.

Caspian Terns continued at Heather Farm Pond. HH.

A **Northern Pygmy Owl** was at Pinehurst in Canyon 4/19. LK, EP.

A **Long-eared Owl** was heard in Tilden RP near South Park and Grizzly Peak Roads 5/4, ZD; and another in Las Trampas RP 5/6. MR.

DW heard a **Common Poorwill** at Mitchell Canyon 4/22.

A **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at JR's Alamo home from 4/14 to 5/6. An expected one was at Bethel Island 4/22. DW. MP saw one 5/10 at Dave Brubeck Park in Concord.

Costa's Hummingbirds were at the Alamo home of JR 4/15; Danville home of BR 4/29; and on the Lydia Lane Trail 5/1. AL.

Calliope Hummingbirds were in White Canyon off Mitchell Canyon at Mount Diablo SP on 4/15 P&NS; 4/18 LK, EP; and 4/25 MD et al.

KH saw a **Pileated Woodpecker** on the Toyon Trail in Briones RP 4/14. JBr had one in his yard on Morgan Territory Road 4/19.

Two **Merlin** were in Donner Canyon at MDSP 4/20. MH.

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at Castle Rock 5/9. JM.

Olive-sided Flycatchers were near the Tilden RP Botanical Garden and San Pablo Reservoir 4/18 LK, EP; Mitchell Canyon 4/25 MD et al; and 4/27 FS.

Hammond's Flycatchers were seen 4/14 by KH in Briones RP; and at Mitchell Canyon 4/25 by MD; and 4/27 FS.

JR had a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at her Alamo home 4/16.

Two **Say's Phoebes** were at the Castle Rock Orchard Staging Area 5/9. SO.

Western Kingbirds were near the Macedo Ranch entrance to MDSP 4/12. MHu.

Cassin's Vireo was near Tilden Botanical Garden 4/18, LK, EP; and Mitchell Canyon 4/25, MD, and 4/27, FS.

A **Pygmy Nuthatch** was at a nest hole near Vollmer Peak 5/8. AK.

P&NS saw a **Canyon Wren** at Black Diamond Mines 4/21.

First of the year **Swainson's Thrushes** were at Mitchell Canyon 4/30, MS; and Tilden Nature Area 5/1, AK.

A late **Varied Thrush** was at his Richmond Hills home 4/29. ME.

A breeding plumage **American Pipit** was near China Wall in MDSP 5/9. JM.

Nashville Warblers were at White Canyon 4/18 LK, EP; Donner Canyon 4/21 EL; and White Canyon 4/22. DW.

Late staying **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were at Iron House Sanitary District and Bethel Island 5/9. LK.

A **Hermit Warbler** was at Mitchell Canyon 4/25. MD.

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at a bottle-brush plant at her Moraga home 4/22. KS.

Late **Fox Sparrows** were at Tilden Botanical Garden 4/26, WH; and North Gate Road on Mount Diablo 4/27. AL.

LL saw a **White-throated Sparrow** at her Pinole home 4/20; and JR had one through 4/26.

A few late **Golden-crowned Sparrows** lingered into early May.

Western Tanagers were seen at Mitchell Canyon 4/25, MD; Martinez yard 4/27, JB; and Richmond Hills 4/29. ME.

Lazuli Buntings arrived 4/18 near Macedo Ranch, MHu; Black Diamond Mines 4/21 P&NS; and 4/22 at Sibley Volcanic Preserve. DG.

MLM had a pair of **Hooded Orioles** for the 13th consecutive year at her Hercules home 5/10.

A **Pine Siskin** remained in Alamo until 5/7. JR.

IA Isaac Aronow, JDB JDBergeron, KB Ken Berniker, JB Jackie Bobrowsky, JBr Jerry Britten, ZD Zac Denning, SD Sheila Dickie, MD Mathew Dodder and class, ME Mike Eliot, DG Doug Greenberg, MH Mike Hall, HH Hugh Harvey, KH Kevin Hintsma, WH Wen Hsu, MHu Matt Huber, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, DK Dave Kent, EL Elizabeth Leite, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, JM Jean Matsuno, MLM MaryLou Mull, SO Sue Oehser, MP Michael Pang, EP Eric Pilotte, MR Mike Resch, JR Jean Richmond, BR Barbara Robeson, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, JS Judi Sierra, KS Kathy Spence, MS Maury Stern, DW Dave Weber, MW Marilyn Wojcik.

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.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

June

6 Saturday..... Outer Point Reyes

July

11-12 Saturday/Sunday Lassen Volcanic National Park

18 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

August

22 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

Come Birding With Us!

② Saturday, June 6 Outer Point Reyes

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

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:00 AM. Meet 8:30 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center in Olema. From I-80 in Vallejo, follow SR 37 19.1 miles to Atherton Avenue, exit and turn left, cross US 101 to San Marin Drive and continue for 3 miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd. for 6 miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to another stop sign. Turn right across the bridge, go 3 miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at the Bovine Bakery for coffee and pastries, continue out of town towards Olema, then turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We are hoping for migrants. Bring lunch and liquids. Weather is unpredictable.

② Saturday/Sunday, July 11-12 Lassen Volcanic National Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson, (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*

① Saturday, August 22 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. Possibilities at Bodega Bay include flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen.

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

Trip Reports

North Briones, April 16. Thirteen members and guests spent a fair weather day at North Briones viewing wildflowers and birds. 37 species were seen even though there were wind gusts of 25 to 30 mph. A juvenile Golden Eagle was the highlight bird, seen many times going back and forth to a hillside oak above the Briones Crest Trail. A Ring-necked Duck and Caspian Tern were at the lower Maricich Lagoon, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were at the top of the first uphill part of the Old Briones Road Trail and many Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers were along the trail. A Townsend's Warbler was seen as well as a Bullock's Oriole. At the staging area many House Wrens were well seen and heard. *Maury Stern*

Mitchell Canyon, April 30. Twenty-three members and guests came to Mitchell Canyon on a beautiful day with temperatures ranging from 60s to low 90s. 48 species were seen including a Selasphorus hummingbird, Hairy Woodpecker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Cassin's Vireo, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, First of Season Swainson's Thrush, California Thrasher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager, and Lazuli Bunting. *Maury Stern*

Mines Road April 18. "'Twas the 18th of April in 2015, nobody else saw the sights we'd seen" While that statement is not strictly true, it was a beautiful day, and we did see or hear the target birds we hoped to see south of Livermore. We had a beautiful male Bullock's Oriole on top of a sycamore tree, Yellow-billed Magpies were in the valley, an Ash-throated Flycatcher called from high on a hillside, and a pair of Bald Eagles tended their young in a nest inside Del Valle Regional Park. A Golden Eagle soared high at MP 5.75, and we also heard a California Thrasher far below us. As we walked along the road, we had wonderful looks at a male Phainopepla and a hillside of sticky monkey flower and white larkspur. These two flowers were just some of the many flowers we saw throughout the

Trip Reports

wonderful spring day. At The Junction, 30 miles from town, we finally found some Lawrence's Goldfinches and a Western Kingbird. South of the intersection with Del Puerto Canyon Road, we found Lewis's Woodpecker and Tricolored Blackbirds where we have seen them in the past. We also had a lot of purple larkspurs in the grass. Altogether, we identified 64 bird species. *Hugh Harvey*

Black Diamond Mines Regional Park, April 23. Nineteen MDAS members and guests enjoyed a beautiful spring day of birding, with 46 species seen and/or heard. The likely highlight for most of the group was a nice view of a singing Canyon Wren along the Chaparral Loop Trail. An additional first-of-season sighting for many was a singing male Lazuli Bunting in breeding plumage. Other highlights included White-throated Swift; Pacific-slope Flycatcher; numerous Ash-throated Flycatchers; Western Kingbird; House Wren; Bewick's Wren; Wilson's Warbler; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Chipping Sparrow; Lark Sparrow; Lincoln's Sparrow and Bullock's Oriole. A number of wildflower species were showing, including *Calochortus albus*, the white globe tulip, which is a close relative of the Mount Diablo Globe tulip. *Paul Schorr*



Lazuli Bunting
Beth Branthaver photo.

Del Puerto Canyon, April 28. The day for the annual MDAS field trip to Del Puerto Canyon dawned with a blue sky, a slight chill in the air but with the promise of reaching into the 80s as the day wore on. Thirteen members turned out for a good day's birding in spite of the fact California is in the fourth year of a drought. The lower reaches of Del Puerto Canyon proved significantly drier than in past years and were reflected in the lower than usual number of birds observed. Most notable were Western Kingbird, Savannah Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Horned Lark and Say's Phoebe. Birds became more plentiful as we made our way through the mid-level elevations where water was flowing in the creek. Here we found Phainopepla, Rock Wren, Bullock's Oriole, Anna's Hummingbird (but no Costa's), a Red-tailed Hawk sitting on its nest, and Yellow-billed Magpie. At the upper levels of the canyon we came across Lawrence's Goldfinch, House Wren, Black-headed Grosbeak and Tricolored Blackbird. Finally we were able to locate a solitary Lewis's Woodpecker among trees on San Antonio Rd, about 1 mile south of the junction with Mines Rd. After refreshing ourselves at the Junction Café and compiling our list, we found we had sighted or heard 60 species. *David Hutton*

East Contra Costa County, May 2. On a very pleasant spring day, nineteen MDAS members and guests gathered to bird the rural areas of eastern Contra Costa County including a portion of the Marsh Creek Trail in Oakley, Piper Slough on Bethel Island, areas around the community of Knightsen and the Holland Tract. Again this year nearly all of the target species were either seen or heard,

including Swainson's Hawk, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Hooded Oriole on Bethel Island, and Yellow-billed Magpie at both Bethel Island and Knightsen. Again this year too, the only target species not observed was Burrowing Owl. Other notable species include Osprey, Green Heron and Cattle Egret, Caspian Tern, Belted Kingfisher, Loggerhead Shrike, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Common Yellowthroat, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, Western Kingbird, Black and Say's Phoebe and nesting House Wren. Northern Mockingbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds were in abundance along the Marsh Creek Trail, and we had views of both male and female Blue Grosbeaks. At Bethel Island, perhaps the most significant observations, other than target species, were a calling Yellow-headed Blackbird (it's hard to call that noise a "song") and a high soaring raptor that we concluded was a very late Ferruginous Hawk. The bird appeared to still be in juvenal plumage, which



may account for its presence this late in the season. The Holland Tract is where the group saw the Caspian Tern. The group tallied 65 bird species for the day. *Gary Fregien*

Black-chinned Hummingbird.
Beth Branthaver photo.

Mount Diablo State Park May 6. The field trip had 15 members and guests; a fairly large number. It turned out to be a beautiful day with sunshine and very little wind. We had a total of 35 species. We missed a few birds we normally see such as Black headed Grosbeak and no warblers whatsoever. This trip is scheduled to primarily see migrating warblers but none were present. Maybe the trip was late. The best sighting may have been the 14 American White Pelicans flying north seen from the Junction Campground. The mountain was alive with Blue gray Gnatcatchers. We saw them every stop and unfortunately found a young one dead. We think a Western Scrub-Jay may have killed it. Lots of Red-tailed hawks but no other hawks and no Eagle. Woodpeckers of the Acorn type were also abundant. Member Jean Richmond had called me the day before the trip to invite any who wanted to come after we finished on the mountain to see a Black throated Hummingbird that had been at her feeder. We did go over and see the hummer as well as LOTS of birds including a beautiful Hooded Oriole. All in all a great day. *Jimm Edgar*



American White Pelicans over Mount Diablo.
Isaac Aronow photo.

Birds and California's Drought

The State Water Resources Control Board's enforcement of a 25 percent water use reduction will likely impact everyone from restaurants serving water and homeowners with backyard pools to virtually everyone with a standard lawn.

Many crop farms and other agricultural operations will not be affected, state officials said, because many have been hard hit already. Last year, more than 400,000 acres were not planted as a result of drought. Last year bird-friendly rice lands dropped from about 525,000 acres planted to 420,000 acres, and the same level is expected to be maintained this year, absent some serious rain.

In the Central Valley, the network of National Wildlife Refuges and state wildlife areas has been particularly hard hit by the drought.

Fish are also threatened. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife said the agency counted the lowest-ever number of smelt last year and estimated a 95 percent mortality rate in salmon eggs and young fry, suggesting that the winter spawning stock had collapsed. Indeed, associated fish-eating birds may also go hungry.

Early this year, Band-tailed Pigeons were dying from avian trichomonosis, a disease caused by a protozoan parasite. Reports from counties from San Diego to Mendocino indicated that as many as 10,000 Band-tails had perished. Stricken birds starve, suffocate, or grow too weak to escape predators. The massive die-off had been abetted by California's debilitating drought. As water sources go dry, birds congregate around remaining oases, like fountains and irrigation ditches. In such close quarters, disease spreads quickly. Some scientists suspect that it helped finish off the Band-tail's close relative, the Passenger Pigeon.

What's more, trichomonosis is not the only avian disease exacerbated by drought.

Waterbirds—especially grebes and waterfowl—in migration and in wintering areas may concentrate in places where water remains. This increases the danger of overcrowding, which can lead to outbreaks of diseases such as avian botulism and cholera. At the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge, just south of the Oregon border, last fall's outbreak of avian botulism was unusu-

ally severe—likely because the wetlands of nearby Lower Klamath NWR had dried up for the second year in a row, their precious water diverted to farmers with senior rights. Migrating ducks and geese flocked to Tule Lake instead, where hot temperatures had created favorable conditions for botulism spores. Ultimately, some 20,000 birds may have succumbed at the refuge.

"Avian cholera is spread by secretions from birds," said Holly Heyser, editor of California Waterfowl magazine. "In wetlands, the bacteria tend to concentrate on the surface, so takeoff, landing, and other disturbances can aerosolize it. When you have intense crowding, then, you have a lot more activity that aerosolizes the bacteria."

Rice farms are sometimes criticized for using a lot of water. But much of that water is released back into rivers and streams after the growing season. And it is also the temporary layer of a rich wet "soup" that makes these fields such a seasonal bonanza for waterbirds of all types. Indeed, when rice-field burning was replaced with flooding in the early 1990s, the change had a major positive effect on birds, as well as an improvement in air quality.

The great saline lakes in California's interior (Mono Lake, Owens Lake, Salton Sea, for instance) host millions of shorebirds every spring during migration. Here, less water can result in a spike in salinity that eliminates the brine flies that all these birds rely on for food. So many songbirds rely on flies and other bugs for food. Less water in the environment means lower hatching levels for these insects. This drop in insects can result from either less standing water or a reduction in flowering trees.

If you haven't noticed, most of our hills are still brown. Ranchers are reporting that grass isn't growing, and there's a real concern that we won't see the wildflowers anywhere near normal. This could impact all those nectar-loving birds, such as hummingbirds. And less grass will be trouble for birds that commonly nest in the grass.

As Audubon California's Coastal Stewardship Director Andrea Jones pointed out: "It can take a few years to really see the impact of drought. In most cases, birds don't just visibly die. Instead, they just don't reproduce, and you'll see the population levels decline for several years."

Cormorant Update



As indicated in the April Quail, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Wildlife Services intend to kill more than 10,000 Double-crested Cormorants using shotguns as the birds forage for food. Snipers with night vision goggles and high-powered rifles will also shoot birds from elevated platforms as the birds care for their eggs and young on their nesting grounds at East Sand Island in the Columbia River. The agencies also plan to destroy more than 26,000 Double-crested Cormorant nests through oiling of eggs and starvation of nestlings whose parents have been shot.

Audubon Society of Portland, Center for Biological Diversity, Wildlife Center of the North Coast, Animal Legal Defense Fund, and Friends of Animals initiated a lawsuit April 20 against the agencies to stop the slaughter of tens of thousands of Double-crested Cormorants in the Columbia River basin. According to the lawsuit, the agencies are scapegoating the native birds for salmon declines while ignoring the real threat to salmon: mismanagement of the federal hydropower system.

Cormorants eat a very small portion of migrating salmon and also eat their predators, so the killing will have little benefit for salmon.

"This is not about birds versus fish," said Bob Sallinger, Audubon Society of Portland conservation director. "The Corps and other federal agencies have proposed rolling back dam operations that benefit salmon while at the same time targeting thousands of cormorants. Blaming salmon and steelhead declines on wild birds that have coexisted with salmon since time immemorial is nothing more than a diversion."

But on May 8, a Federal District Judge denied an injunction to stop the killing, and it is expected that the slaughter will begin within days.



Plan of the City of Los Angeles, 1849. Drawing by William R. Hutton..



Montezuma Quail (*Cyrtonyx montezumae*) (formerly Mexican quail). Drawing by William Rich Hutton..

by the fact that Hutton had joined his uncle William Rich (his namesake) in 1847 on an Army assignment as paymaster to military volunteers in the newly "liberated", heavily Spanish-speaking, California Republic. Being in the Golden State before, during, and after the gold discovery itself was an exciting, tumultuous time, and Hutton initially traveled from San Francisco to Los Angeles, with stops and sojourns in between, repeatedly. He carried his drawing materials, arms for protection and collection, and at times was accompanying his uncle with vast, well-guarded, quantities of money for the occupying American troops.

Throughout his travels, he recorded both the sights in sketches and watercolors as well as the natural history in detailed diaries. Although it was not until 1851 that Spencer Baird in his position at the Smithsonian would request that Army personnel gather specimens for the Institution from west of the Mississippi, Hutton was the prototype for such an endeavour. He knew the names of all the known plants, mammals, and birds, and recognized when he was seeing something likely to be new. By the end of 1847 he had already traveled as far south as La Paz and Mazatlan, where American soldiers were holding territory for possible future annexation. The Vireo in question was apparently sent from San Diego, as that's where Cassin placed Hutton in his published description of the bird.

After the public announcement of the Sutter's Mill "discovery", Hutton took an official two month journey through the gold region as one of his final Army tasks. Hutton then began a second career as surveyor and draftsman for the enormous new ranches and mining projects which becoming part of the United States had made possible. His last California drawings are dated from 1852, and in 1853 he sailed from San Francisco to begin his journey home to D.C., stopping in Acapulco before traveling overland across Mexico. As though to complete his presence at the significant events of the time, he attended Santa Ana's inaugural in Mexico City that April. As he left the West, he commented in a letter, "It astonishes me to think what a change has taken place within the last three years in this country. There are now ten or twelve steamers to Panama, two on the California coast, and an infinite number on the bay & rivers ... they are talking about railroads."

An upper class childhood and private elementary education in the nation's capital would scarcely seem a likely preparation for such risky adventures. Born in 1826, Hutton was sent to top preparatory schools including the Western Academy and Hallowell's in Alexandria, where Robert E. Lee had studied prior to entering West Point. Young Hutton's curriculum included mathematics, drawing, and surveying. Perhaps the turning point came when Hutton's father died,

and his maternal uncle William Rich came to live with the family. Rich was both an academic and exploratory botanist, having participated in an overland journey from the Columbia River to what was then Upper California in 1841. And though Hutton joined him in the Army posting ostensibly as his clerk, he clearly became also an apprentice in the world of western adventure.

Despite spending the rest of his life no further west than Ohio, Hutton continued to tell stories of his exciting youthful exploits in California among the Spanish-Americans and the Indians until his death in 1901. His enormously successful career as Chief Engineer for giant public works including the Washington Aqueduct, the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, the Washington Bridge, and finally the Hudson River Tunnel, was undisturbed by his Southern sympathies during the Civil War. There was a brief threat of arrest in 1862, but his friendship with a General Halleck, which had begun in wild California, seems to have put an end to it.

Baird's 1860 *Birds of North America* has more than thirty mentions of specimens provided by Hutton. After Hutton's death, his voluminous professional papers were donated to the National Museum of American History, and his Maryland estate, including the mill which cut the red sandstone for the Smithsonian Castle, has become part of Seneca Creek State Park.

More Funds for Waterfowl

There's good news for waterfowl and other birds in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved \$58 million in funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners to purchase, lease or otherwise conserve more than 200,000 acres of wetland and associated upland habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds and other birds across North America.

"Wetlands provide vital habitat for wildlife, purify groundwater and protect communities from storms," said a spokesman for the Department of the Interior. "With so many millions of acres of wetlands lost over the years, it is impossible to overstate the importance of North American Wetlands Conservation Act and Duck Stamp funding in setting aside and conserving them. We all benefit from healthier ecosystems and more abundant fish and wildlife."

Of the total funds approved by the commission, \$25 million will be provided through North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants to conserve more than 85,000 acres of wetlands and adjoining areas in 16 states. To date, funds have advanced conservation of nearly 8 million acres of wetland habitats and their wildlife in all 50 states, engaging more than 3,300 partners in nearly 1,000 projects.

Many bird species spend parts of their life cycles outside the United States, meaning effective conservation must address the needs of these species beyond national boundaries. This is why projects funded through NAWCA occur throughout North America, to ensure a comprehensive approach to the protection of migratory birds and their habitats. This year, the commission approved a total of \$21.6 million for 12 projects in Canada and \$2.7 million for 12 projects in Mexico.

The commission also approved expenditures of \$8.8 million from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to conserve 16,044 acres for nine national wildlife refuges through fee-title land acquisitions and lease renewals. These funds were raised largely through the sale of Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as "Duck Stamps." For every dollar spent on Federal Duck Stamps, 98



First Duck stamp, 1934-1935

cents go directly to acquire or lease habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Duck Stamp program has been in place since 1934 and has raised more than \$800 million to acquire more than 6 million acres for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The 2015-2016 Duck Stamp will go on sale June 26 at many US post offices, sporting goods stores, and at National Wildlife Refuges. They are also available online at USPS.com (search for "Duck Stamps"); and Mount Diablo Audubon will have them for sale at the September meeting.



Black-headed Grosbeak,
Varied Thrush
Sketches by Meg Sandri.



a Willet ♦ *Tringa semipalmata*

The name, Willet is said to come from an imitation of its call. But Hoffmann, in *Birds of the Pacific States*, says " ... it utters a single loud *whee-ee*. In the mating season the Willet flies about in the air calling *pippo-pée-wa-wée-wit*, holding its wings at a downward angle and fluttering the tips as it shoots downward."

Formerly known as *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, this long-legged, plump sandpiper occurs as two subspecies: The Western Willet (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) breeds in marshes in the Dakotas and southern Canadian prairie provinces to the interior of California and winters along both coasts. Eastern Willet (*Tringa semipalmata semipalmata*) breeds along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and winters in South America.

Little is known about how Willets raise their young, probably because the chicks are able to move about soon af-



Willet at Hayward Regional Shoreline. Isaac Aronow photo.

ter hatching and make themselves very inconspicuous in the salt marsh grasses. When a potential predator is near, adults protect their young by pretending to have a broken wing to draw the attention of the predator to themselves, much like the Killdeer (famous for this behavior). Willets may also carry their young one-by-one to safer areas. Adults can swim across creeks and fly while carrying a chick.

The Band-tailed Invasion

By Mike Eliot

Is it the drought? Is it an irruption? Is it a sign from above? Whatever it is, it has been a very strange spring. Many local folks, me included, are seeing large flocks of Band-tailed Pigeons in our yards this year.

They have been invading backyards and feeders throughout the East and South Bay areas for several months now. Because they arrive in large groups and forage together, they often clean up a tray of birdseed in just a few minutes, leaving nothing for the locals. They may also hang around all day and can



leave rather large messes. Some consider them pests, while others just love their sleek appearance and exceptionally quick flight.

These birds prefer temperate climates and the coniferous forests along the Pacific Coast, generally living at from sea level to 1000 feet. They migrate south in winter, usually to northern Baja California. They flock in groups of up to 300 birds, but are being seen this year in groups of 25 to 50 in backyards. Reports in this area range from San Jose to Lafayette to the Richmond Hills.

Band-tails are large pigeons, bigger than rock doves and unique in coloration. They have sleek blue/gray feathering with distinct bands of white and dark-ended tail feathers. Beaks are mostly yellow with black tips; legs and feet are also yellow. They have a narrow white crescent around the nape of the neck. Earlier this year there was a scare in the Bay Area when several Band-tails were killed by *trichomoniasis*, a disease that can be pandemic to the species. However, this seems to have dissipated. Their population, however, has been declining for at least a half-century, with only 30% of the 1966 numbers surviving in 2010.



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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Hutton's Vireo. Beth Branthaver photo..

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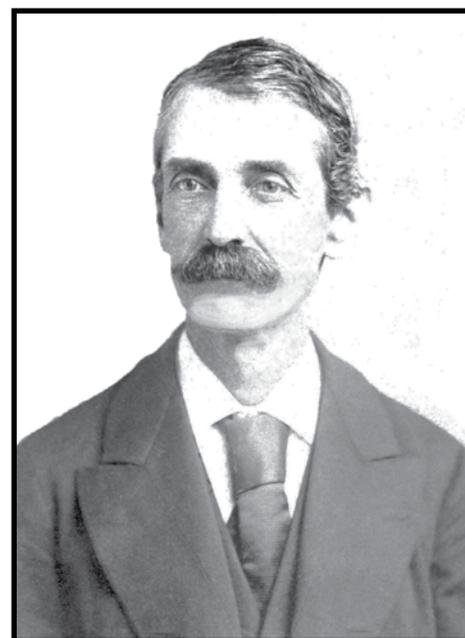
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What do a Hutton's Vireo, the first known map of Los Angeles, and the Washington Bridge in New York City all have in common? They were each, in turn, discovered by, drawn by, and, finally, engineered by William Rich Hutton during his varied and prolific careers.

The naming of Hutton's Vireo, *Vireo huttoni* (Cassin, 1851), is a story all by itself. Hutton had found the bird east of Monterey in 1847 and sent two specimens to Spencer Baird at the Smithsonian. Originally considering them a flycatcher species, Baird had passed the specimens on to John Cassin for a technical analysis, and suggested the bird should be named after its discoverer. Cassin refused, unwilling to honor a "person utterly unknown." He would be willing, he wrote, to "call something after him," but only when "he gets better known."

Baird generally had a different view of the matter, and, indeed, ornithologist James G. Cooper was later to name a new warbler he had found at Fort Mojave, Arizona, after Baird's presumably "un-famous" teenaged daughter, Lucy (*Oreothlypis luciae* Cooper, J.G. 1861). Cassin was in the end persuaded, however, and in his published description he honored Hutton as a "zealous and talented young naturalist." Hutton himself took Cassin's original stand on the topic, writing in a letter to his uncle, "I am much obliged to Don Spencer for the name, tho (but you needn't tell him this) it goes against my principles to name after individuals unless for important scientific services."

We learn from Hutton's letters of the time, preserved by the Huntington Museum in California along with his contemporary drawings, that Spencer Baird was an "old friend," though Hutton was only



William Rich Hutton..

25 when his Vireo got its name and Baird was a venerable 28. The seemingly odd use of the Spanish term "Don", meaning "The Honorable", coming from one of a pair of Eastern seaboard Anglos, is best explained

Continued on Page 7 »