



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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July/August 2015

Gates to Open for New Birding Location in County

The John Muir Land Trust announced in late May it has agreed to buy the 600-acre Carr Ranch in rural Moraga from a family that has grazed cattle there for a century. The nearly square mile of hilly grazing land with sweeping views of the Bay Area is being bought to preserve it for open space and recreation.

The land trust changed its name recently from Muir Heritage Land Trust to John Muir Land Trust to emphasize the inspiration it gets from John Muir.



John Muir Land Trust Executive Director Linus Eukel opens a gate on the Carr Ranch property in Moraga. Photo: Aric Crabb, Bay Area News Group.



John Muir Land Trust manages eleven other properties in Contra Costa County: Fernandez Ranch, Franklin Canyon, Acalanes Ridge, Sky Ranch, Dutra Ranch, Gustin Ranch, Mount Wanda, Contra Costa Goldfields, Pacheco Marsh, Bodfish Preserve, Stonehurst, and West Hills Farm.

The Carr Ranch is home to Golden Eagle, mountain lion, Alameda whipsnake, American badger, western pond turtle and many other species essential to our ecosystem. Carr Ranch has oak and California bay laurel tree forests, grasslands, three ponds, and several perennial springs that flow to Upper San Leandro Reservoir.

protecting water at its source." Buying the land prevents housing development that could lead to erosion and pesticide-laden runoff flowing into the reservoir.

The land trust bought the land to protect open space, wildlife habitat, and the quality of water runoff. Some grazing on the land will continue. But the public will get access for birdwatching, hiking, horseback riding and other low-key recreation some time after the sale is completed around June, 2016, the land trust said.

On a tour of the site, land trust employees showed off hilly land with views of the reservoir and San Francisco Bay to the

south, and Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette and Suisun Bay to the north.

To the east is EBMUD's Rocky Ridge property famous for big rocks, and also Las Trampas Regional Park, which has a trail along Las Trampas Ridge between Moraga and Alamo and Danville.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 3**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

No general meetings are scheduled for July or August. Please come to one or all of the birding field trips as described on Page 4.

Everyone is invited.

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I read a couple of very good articles recently. One was on June 3 in the CC Times and the SF Chronicle. The article was about a California Condor that was being rehabilitated at the Oakland Zoo. The condor's name is Miracle. It was the first condor chick to be born completely in the wild in the Big Sur area. Then she got lead poisoning from feeding on carcasses that had been shot by hunters using lead shot. She is doing well and they think she may be able to be returned to the wild in a few weeks if they can remove the lead from her system. Lead shot will not be allowed in shells by 2019, the legislation that passed on that exclusion was championed by Audubon California. There was a lot of fighting to not have the bill pass, but it did. The NRA was the primary opponent. What a shame it would be to have saved the California Condor and then lose them to lead poisoning. Again our Audubon California was what made this law happen. Good for us.

The other article I read was in the New York Times on May 30. The title of the article was "Saving Canada's Boreal Forest." Scott Weidensaul, who has written many books on birds, was the author. It was just

fascinating to read. The boreal forest is 1.5 billion acres and the article pointed out that between 1 and 3 billion birds spend their summers breeding in these forests. There are also many wetlands and a lot of tundra. Corporations have their eyes on this land's plentiful resources and without adequate protection much could be lost. There has been a new campaign called *Boreal Birds Need Half: Maintaining North America's Bird Nursery and Why It Matters* that is providing direction on how to provide birds the best fighting chance of surviving the dual threats of habitat loss and climate change. At least half of the boreal forest should be protected from industrial development. It is just one of those many things you don't think about; but it is so critical.

We completed our eighth year of the No Child Left Inside program in late May with again a large number of school children getting a chance to see birds as many of us do. You can read all about it in this issue of the *Quail*. This is one of the best things our Mount Diablo chapter has ever done.

We will take some summer time off and be back in September with our general meetings. We will see you then.



White-crowned Sparrow, Point Reyes
Beth Branthaver photo



Q

All of these mis-named birds in the UK are owned by the Queen, and a Warden makes an annual census of all those

on the Thames.

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

AEMNSTUW

Good News for Flamingos

In the early 1800s, people who visited coastal areas in southern Florida in winter were met with an astounding sight: hundreds of thousands of American Flamingos. The majestic pink bird, endemic to Central and South America and the Caribbean, wintered in Florida's tropical climes. By the end of the century, however, European settlers seemed to have eradicated the leggy waders through feather and egg harvesting, and ever since the birds have been scarce in the Sunshine State—until recently.

A few years ago, ornithologists and biologists spotted a number of these long-necked birds in a portion of the Everglades ecosystem in Central Florida. The flamingos were hanging out in a water treatment facility—Stormwater Treatment Area 2 (STA2), a 9,000-acre constructed wetland built to remove excess nutrients from the water supply.

The big question is, are these escapees or are they wild birds? It's possible that they broke free from the captive population that's spent the past 73 years at Hialeah Race-

track in northern Miami-Dade County. Or it's possible they migrated up here from the Bahamas or Mexico.

To find out, scientists and biologists from the National Park Service and Miami Zoo, with support from the

Tropical Audubon Society and others, are attaching satellite transmitters on flamingos to track their journeys. When word got out that flamingos were in STA2, a number of birders began sneaking into the restricted area to see them. Realizing that the draw of flamingos was likely irresistible, the water district reached out to Audubon Society of the Everglades about leading weekly car tours to the area, which began in March of this



American Flamingos. Photo: Curt Dalton, National Audubon

year. It's a win-win solution: People get to see flamingos, and the birds can go about their business undisturbed.

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Young Birders

By Tracy Farrington

Mid-May is an important time of year for birders as Spring migration for many species in our area is just about at its peak, or somewhat beyond. Bearing this in mind, several members of the Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club, including several parents and adult supporters, made their way to Mitchell Canyon on the morning of Saturday, May 16, for a field trip to this significant location in northern California. The weather conditions were most favorable and bird song was rich and abundant. The trip produced 45 species, and Erica Kawata generously volunteered to record our tally on eBird as we traveled.

In addition to myself, our trip was attended by Dagny Bradford-Urban, Jennifer Xu, Grace Pang, Michael Pang, Max Pang, Kai Mills, Erica Kawata, Diana Cavanaugh, and my guest, Ryan Janke, a post-doctoral fellow at Cal and a fine birder, as well.

The Young Birders Club will visit Lindsay Wildlife Museum (now known as the Lindsay Wildlife Experience), for a special and exclusive program on July 13 featuring some close encounters with several fascinating creatures, and some behind the scenes activities.

Here are some remarks in the words of three of our very enthusiastic members:

"I was excited to attend another Mount Diablo Audubon Society field trip to Mitchell Canyon. We talked about birds and spotting them. We stopped at one tree and saw many warblers. We also got good looks at numerous Black-headed Grosbeaks and a pair of Western Tanagers. A few Lazuli Buntings, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and Yellow Warblers were also seen. I enjoyed every Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club trip so far and wish to attend many more in the future." *Michael Pang, age 12*

"I met up with Tracy Farrington at the parking lot. We waited for the other birders to arrive, and then set off on our hike. We saw many European Starlings, Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Scrub-Jays, Wild Turkeys, and California Quail. As we walked, we saw some male Anna's Hummingbirds displaying to a female. We came to a hill and saw a lot of migrants such as White-throated Swifts, a Yellow Warbler, a Black-headed Grosbeak, a Pacific-slope Flycatcher, and a resident Red-shouldered

Observations

By Maury Stern

The past month has been one of breeding, with many newborns about and suet and seeds being consumed rapidly. Unusual birds, as usual, were to be seen in the mountains and Great Basin area.

There were still two **Brant** off Albany Bulb 5/27. KM.

KH saw breeding **Gadwalls** at Maricich Lagoon at Briones RP 5/26, with three adults and ten ducklings.

A **Green Heron** pair had two young in a nest at Heather Farm reported 5/20 by HH, TE, RH, FS, and ACS.

An **Osprey** was over the large pond at the Martinez Regional Shoreline on 5/21. IA.

A **Bald Eagle** flew over the Contra Loma RP 5/15. P&NS.

Golden Eagles were at Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve 5/18, PY, 5/28, PD, 5/31, WP. One was also seen near the junction of Old Briones Road and Briones Crest Road in Briones RP. 5/27, LF. Both are near known nesting areas.

Two **Black Oystercatchers** at Iron House Sanitary District 5/14. BYW.

A late **Dunlin** was at the SF Bay Trail near 51st Street in Richmond 5/21. MB.

Four **Barn Owls** were in and around the Barn Owl box near the Heather Farm Garden Center 6/7. HH, RH.

JCS saw **Burrowing Owls** in Brentwood near Pioneer Elementary School 5/26.

Hawk. I found an abandoned California Quail nest. As we walked, we decided to take a detour. We were rewarded with a Black-chinned Hummingbird, a Lazuli Bunting, another Anna's, a Red-tailed Hawk, five Turkey Vultures, and a pair of Mourning Doves. We also saw a California Striped Racer snake! As we came down, I found a scorpion, too. After that I had to leave early, but still, it was an amazing experience!"

Dagny Bradford-Urban, age 11

"I really enjoyed the birding trip to Mitchell Canyon. It was fun to be birding in a group and there's more people to help spot the birds. I really liked how we saw so many different colors in the birds even though none of them were particularly rare.

Grace Pang, age 10

At Mount Diablo Blue Oak campground KH and HF saw a **Lesser Night-hawk** 5/29.

P&NS saw **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** at the end of Bethel Island Road 5/12. DH had a visit 5/29 at his Walnut Creek home and JR had one continuing through the period.

A **Rufous Hummingbird** visited the Lafayette home of BP 5/21.

A **Pileated Woodpecker** was at Lake Anza in Tilden Park 5/17. CW.

P&NS saw a **Willow Flycatcher** at Contra Loma Park 5/21 and had a **Pacific-Slope Flycatcher** in their yard in Antioch 5/14.

A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Point Pinole RP 5/17. KW.

Swainson's Thrushes visited the Antioch yard of P&NS 5/12, and the Martinez yard of JB 5/23.

A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was at the 0.25 mile marker on the Inspiration Point Trail in Tilden RP 5/17. DW. Probably the same bird has been at that spot for several years now.

A late **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Lake Anza 5/17. GC.

Hooded Orioles were at two homes in Lafayette. NL 5/26 and ER 5/31.

IA Isaac Aronow, JB Jackie Bobrosky, MB Mary Burmester, GC Graham Chisholm, PD Pete Davis, HF Hank Fabian, TF Tracy Farrington, LF Lee Friedman, HH Hugh Harvey, RH Rosita Harvey, KH Kevin Hintsma, DH David Hutton, NL Norm Lustig, KM Kai Mills, WP Wendy Parfrey, BP Bernt Pettersson, ER Ellen Reintjes, JR Jean Richmond, FS Fred Safer, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, JCS Juan-Carlos Solis, ACS Ann-Charlott Stenberg, KW Kurt Wahl, BYW Betty Young Weber, DW Dave Weber, CW Christine Woo, PY Pam Young,

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

July

11-12 Saturday/Sunday Lassen Volcanic National Park
18 Saturday San Mateo Coast

August

22 Saturday Bodega Bay

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

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

We are suggesting that participants camp at Manzanita Lake this year. Since the reservable campsites are already taken, participants will have to camp in the two loops (B and D) that are non-reservable. The earlier you arrive, the better chance you will have of getting a camp site. (Gary and I plan on getting there on Monday ahead of time so I don't think we'll have a problem, but if people wait until Friday afternoon, they may not get a site.) For those who wish to get a motel, type in "Motels in the Lassen Park area" and you will get a selection of places to stay, both north and south of the park. Since most of these establishments are fairly small, you should make your reservations ASAP. The group will meet at the entrance to Manzanita Campground on Saturday, July 11th at 7:30 a.m. Please have your lunch and beverages in your vehicle with you.

Eugenia Larson, eklarson@comcast.net

② Saturday, July 18 San Mateo Coast

Leader: Beth Branthaver, (925) 944-1856.

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.

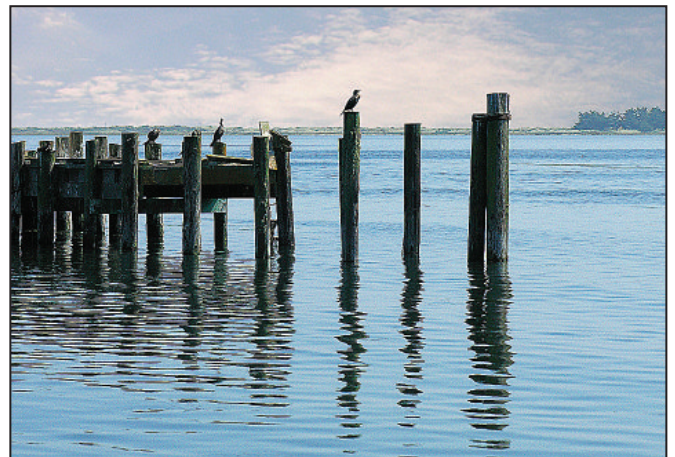
You have had a very successful year of field trips which is now almost finished. After the field trips scheduled for July and August, you will have completed 42 trips. Four additional trips were rained out. By the time you read this, over 400 participants will have gone birding with MDAS. On July 22, 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.

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. 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.



Bodega Bay. Ellis Myers photo.

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 location: **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.

Trip Reports

West Briones Regional Park, May 17.

Seven of us gathered with clouds threatening rain for the West Briones field trip. A Lazuli Bunting greeted us with song from his usual spot in the top of the tree in the parking lot. We had good views of Orange-crowned Warblers and a Pacific-slope Flycatcher singing. In addition, lots of singing Warbling Vireos, Wilson's Warblers, Hutton's Vireos and Chestnut-backed Chickadees. Good views of an Allen's Hummingbird in the creek bed west of Homestead Valley. By the end of the morning we had 38 species and zero drops of rain.

Beth Branthaver

YubaPass/Sierra Valley, May 30-31. The timing of the trip to Yuba Pass is always difficult to predict. For many years the Chapter has gone the weekend closest to the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. But because we had little snow last year, we went a week early and had trouble finding birds. This year we also had a lack of snow, so the leaders decided to go even two weeks earlier. It was a gamble, but one which paid well for the 23 participants. We mostly stayed together as a group, but some of the participants visited other areas over the weekend, and our cumulative total of species seen and heard was 105 by Sunday after lunch.

While we intended to visit the Sierra Valley Saturday, it was impossible to ignore the birds near the parking lot at the Pass. Cassin's Finches, Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins flocked along the road to the west. A Hairy Woodpecker nest hole was just 50 yards from the corner, and a Red-breasted Nuthatch nest was behind the stop sign across the highway. Also, Red-breasted Sapsuckers had drilled many sap wells in a large pine just off the parking lot corner.

But we did go to the valley and our first stop was Mountain Quail Road, where we had a singing Green-tailed Towhee atop a small pine, and a Gray Flycatcher building a nest a little farther along the dirt road. The sparrow corner east of Calpine had singing Brewer's Sparrows.

The sage and marsh habitats at the north end of the valley offered wonderful birds, including Sage Thrashers, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, White-faced Ibis, an American Bittern, Sandhill Cranes and a Swainson's Hawk on a nest near the high-



Black-backed Woodpecker.

Beth Branthaver photo.

way. A lucky few saw Wilson's Phalaropes, and we were treated to a spectacular display of hundreds of American White Pelicans flying in Vs overhead.

After lunch in Loyalton, we checked the Rotary Club picnic area south of town and had Lazuli Buntings, a nesting Lewis's Woodpecker, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Driving back to Sierraville, we saw Black-billed Magpies.

After a rest followed by dinner at a Mexican restaurant in Sierraville, we tried several places unsuccessfully for Common Nighthawks, including the old truck scale just out of town and the scenic view on the way uphill to Yuba Pass. We then drove about a mile above the campground and tried again, also unsuccessfully. We did, however, hear a Common Poorwill, and after about half of the remaining group left, it came in close enough to be seen as a lifer by several. Then, before leaving, we did hear the boom of a Common Nighthawk. While we were preparing to sleep in the campground, a Great Horned Owl hooted just one time.

Sunday morning had the same birds close to the parking lot at Yuba Pass, but we took a walk and added Wilson's and Hermit Warblers, Warbling Vireo, Lincoln's Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Dusky Flycatcher, Western Tanager and Western Wood-Pewee.

At the SF State Sierra Nevada Field Campus, we found an American Dipper upstream from the bridge. Many Evening Grosbeaks visited their seed feeders. But we continued downhill to visit a burned area near Bassetts Station, parking below and walking up into a very small portion of the burned trees. We found many birds here, including American Robin, MacGillivray's Warbler, White-headed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Hairy Woodpecker, and one the whole group had not seen for a number of years, the Black-backed Woodpecker. A male flew in almost right over our heads and tapped on a part of the bark, which had lifted away from a burned tree. Now we knew how it made that loud, hollow sound.

We finished sometime after noon by driving the rest of the way to Bassetts Station for lunch and doing our checklist. We all enjoyed the Calliope Hummingbirds which came to the feeders there. But some, sadly, had to depart for home, while others of us could stay one more night in the mountains, sitting around a campfire before sleeping under the enormous trees.

Hugh Harvey

Outer Point Reyes, June 6. Our annual trip to outer Point Reyes turned out to be foggy with the overcast either at ground level or slightly above; later in the day it lifted somewhat, and a little sun came through. Eight participants turned out for the day's activities. Since over the previous four or five days several migrants had been observed, we were hopeful that some might still be around. Best bird of the day, a Magnolia Warbler, was found among the cypresses on the trail out from the parking lot to Chimney Rock. At Drake's Beach we heard Yellow and Wilson Warblers as well as a Swainson's Thrush among the willows, and Common Yellowthroat and Marsh Wren in the reeds around the pond. Mendoza Ranch yielded a solitary female Bufflehead and the resident Great Horned Owl, while at Nunes Ranch and the Lighthouse cypresses, little of note was encountered except for omni-present White-crowned and a few Song Sparrows. Chimney Rock proved be the more "birdy" spot of the day—here, of note, we found the Magnolia Warbler, Pigeon Guillemots, Common, Pacific and Red-throated Loons, and a Red-breasted Merganser. After compiling our list for the day, we found we had seen or heard 47 species. *David Hutton*

No Child Left Inside

By Paul Schorr



The MDAS “No Child Left Inside” Program concluded this year’s activities on May 19 and 21 by taking 87 fifth grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch to nearby Contra Loma Regional Park and Reservoir. Their teachers and parent volunteers were joined by fourteen MDAS volunteers to enjoy two mornings of good, introductory birding. The MDAS volunteers were Jimm Edgar, Tracy Farrington, Barbara Minneman, Jackie Bobrosky, Bruce Kronmiller, Mike Tischler, Maury Stern, David Hutton, Hugh Harvey, Claudia Hein, Nancy Salsig, Carol Pachl, Nancy Schorr and Paul Schorr. The groups enjoyed pleasant 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 MDAS volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each of the students skillfully used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this activity and other Education Outreach programs. 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, 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 39. Highlights included the following: a Red-shouldered Hawk nest; Swainson’s Thrush; Osprey; Western Bluebirds and Tree Swallows bringing food to nestlings in nest boxes; American White Pelican; Mallard and Canada Goose families; Common Gallinule; Nuttall’s Woodpecker; American Robin and Bullock’s Oriole nests with adults bringing food to nestlings; and a Green Heron. 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, which they saw.

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* which had been purchased by MDAS. 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 13, Jenny Papka from Native Bird Connections initiated the 2015 program by doing an introductory lesson on bird anatomy and behavior. During her presentation she used a Red-tailed Hawk, an American Kestrel and a Eurasian Eagle-Owl which drew much enthusiasm and excitement from the students, a great way to promote this year’s program. On April 14 and 16, Nancy and Paul Schorr collaborated to do classroom presentations to introduce and instruct the students on the proper use of binoculars which had been purchased by MDAS. 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.

"One day's exposure to mountains is better than a cartload of books."

John Muir

In summary, MDAS, through the No Child Left Inside Program, has made a strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of dedication to environmental education, and during the past eight 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 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.

Can You Spare a Little Water?

By Mike Eliot

With both a hot summer and a drought, our backyard birds need to stay hydrated and cool. Bird baths can be the most important thing we can provide in hot weather. A bath will attract more birds to your yard



and you can expect to see different birds that do not come to feeders.

Most local birds bathe and drink water every day. Clean feathers help then regu-

late their temperature better. Most food provides little water, so birds must find other sources.

Bird baths should be very shallow, usually 2 inches in depth at most. Some birds will completely immerse in water while others just preen from the edges. Clean sand or small stones help birds footing in slippery baths.

Change water at least every other day, even daily on hot days. Some birds will splash around for 20–30 minutes, so you need to watch the level. Most baths use less than a gallon a day, so it shouldn't have a big effect on your water usage.

Regular cleaning prevents most algae. Watch for build-up of algae or leaves and cleanse with a strong brush. Use only bird bath algacides, not bleach, to get rid of algae.

Baths should be placed in open areas, at least 5 feet away from shrubs and trees

where cats can hide and pounce. They should also be high enough to help deter rats and squirrels.

Birds are not easily attracted to still standing water. Drippers that bubble water up or outward make baths easier to spot and keep the water fresher. Water wigglers cause wave motion in the water helping birds find baths, while keeping algae and mosquitos down.



Water misters use very little water and are a favorite of hummingbirds, who love to wet their wings in mid-air.

So spare some water for the birds and enjoy the show.

a Mute Swan ♦ *Cygnus olor*

Mute Swans have been domesticated since the 12th century. Native to northern and central Eurasia, they are large, undeniably beautiful and impressive in flight, but despised by many serious birders and conservationists because they are aggressive and can be destructive of native species. Many are being killed in cull programs, especially on the East Coast and Great Lakes area, where the largest North American populations are established. Adult birds are easily identified by their large size, bright orange bill, conspicuous black knob above the bill, long neck usually held in an S-curve, and all-white plumage. They sometimes swim with wings raised and arched—the pose that is often transformed into designs for fanciful carriages, carousel seats, and pedal boats.

But the beautiful yet aggressive Mute Swan could become a serious problem if allowed to proliferate uncontrolled. This Eurasian native was introduced to New York state in the 1800s as a popular decorative bird for zoos and private gardens—but the birds got away. They have since established themselves across the Eastern Seaboard as wild, successfully breeding birds and in some cases edging native waterfowl from local environments.

Although infrequent visitors to Contra Costa County, Mute Swans have been reported to eBird this year at such places as McNabney Marsh, Mallard Reservoir, Dow Wetlands, and Clifton Court Forebay. They are fairly common at Shollenberger Park in Petaluma.

Mute swans are on California's restricted species list and cannot be imported, transported, or possessed without a permit.

Mute swans are voracious feeders of SAV, submerged aquatic vegetation, with each adult swan consuming up to eight pounds per day, and destroying much more in the process. SAV is an important part of aquatic ecosystems as it provides food and shelter for native waterfowl, fish, and invertebrates. By consuming massive amounts of SAV, Mute Swans negatively impact the aquatic habitats native species depend upon. Additionally, Mute Swans are aggressive towards other birds, as well as disrupting nesting activity of native waterfowl by chasing birds from their nests. They have been reported to physically injure or kill other birds. Mute Swans have been reported to attack people and, in some cases, have critically injured children and pets.

If you observe this species in California, you are asked to report your sighting to the CDFW Invasive Species Program by e-mail



Mute Swan. Ellis Myers photo.

to Invasives@wildlife.ca.gov, or by calling (866) 440-9530.

Despite the common name, Mute Swans make a variety of hissing and honking sounds, and their wings make a noisy hum in flight.

The swan is prominent in mythology and legend—from the story of Jupiter turning himself into a swan in order to seduce Leda, to the Irish legend of The Children of Lir, about a wicked stepmother who turned her four stepchildren into swans and sentenced them to remain so for 900 years. Mute Swans were said to be silent until just before their death, when they sing a beautiful, mournful song. This misconception evolved into the idiom "Swan song", a final performance before one's retirement. .

William MacGillivray

» Continued from Page 12

qualified a person as a scientist of botany or zoology. His outspoken views offended those whose primary studies were examination of preserved collections. He admitted to being "somewhat rude or at least blunt," but he felt that being right meant he need not apologize when pointing out others' errors. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, "To those really desirous of information respecting our native species, I would say, let us betake ourselves to the fields and woods; let us traverse the hills and valleys together; let us there study our favourites, pursue them from brake to bush."

He became curator of the museum for the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh—with Saturdays officially free for trips to the countryside—and then was named professor of natural history at Marischal College, Aberdeen. There, he also founded its Natural History Museum. An accomplished watercolorist, he produced precise, detailed images of plants and animals in their natural surroundings. He illustrated his own published works and those of others, and from 1830 to 1842 authored seven major books covering an amazing range of topics. Titles included *Lives of Eminent Zoologists from Aristotle to Linnaeus*, *Descriptions of Rapacious Birds*, *A Systematic Arrangement of British Plants*, *A History of British Quadrupeds*, plus manuals of botany and ornithology.

His crowning work, a five volume *History of British Birds*, took 15 years to complete, in part because he devoted a great deal of effort to another multi-volume work not his own. And here's where the answer to the question posed in our second paragraph can be found. The other author involved was John James Audubon, and the books which MacGillivray edited, rewrote, and for which he provided the anatomical diagrams and scientific analyses, were the *Ornithological Biographies* which accompanied Audubon's more famous illustrated *Birds of North America*. Audubon was not a native English speaker or writer, and he turned to the gifted and well-known Scottish academic for paid assistance. MacGillivray's contributions were so extensive that he is included as co-author by some sources

John Townsend and Thomas Nuttall had returned from their West Coast ex-

pedition with bird skins of their own collecting, and also at least two discovered by others, Tolmie's new warbler and the first recorded specimen of Black Oystercatcher. In Townsend's 1839 report of his trip, he named the warbler for his friend, but he and Nuttall eventually sold over 90 of the



Raven, by William MacGillivray, London Natural History Museum.

skins to Audubon. Nearly a seventh of all the birds pictured in *Birds of North America* came from that collection, including the new warbler. Audubon had originally thought it the same as the Mourning Warbler of the east and produced an illustration of the latter using the skin Nuttall had provided as his source. When Nuttall demonstrated that the two were distinct, Audubon made a new plate for the eastern bird. He included the two illustrations in his final volume, giving the western bird the name *Sylvia macgillivrayi*, after his editor and scientific advisor. Townsend was much annoyed, as his publication date of April 16, 1839 had clear priority over Audubon's in June 22 of the same year, and he had assumed Audubon would use the name he had given the bird, as is customary. When the AOU belatedly followed precedent and corrected the scientific name, the common one had become well-enough established that "Tolmie's Warbler" has remained in usage for many English-speaking birders.

The publication in 1852 of the final volume of the *History of British Birds* might have been expected to cement MacGillivray's pre-eminence in this field. The five volumes were filled with black-and-white woodcuts detailing his notion of the classification of every species he had been able to examine and identify. The research wore him out, and he died shortly after. The work, however, was a popular failure.

With not enough funds to include color plates of his illustrations, the books were not useful to birders for field identification. Additionally, he had earned the dislike of many of his academic contemporaries, who unjustly accused him of copying Audubon's writing in a tragic reversal of reality. To top it off, a book with the same name published at the same time by William Yarnell became the standard popular reference largely because it was well-received by those who so strongly criticized MacGillivray's effort.

A collection of 214 drawings and paintings deposited with the Natural History Museum in London by his family demonstrates the reason Audubon himself commented that MacGillivray's were "decidedly the best representations of birds I have seen." His years in the field had enabled him to produce evocative, naturalistic representations of animals within their authentic environments. His expert knowledge of botany yielded compositions which placed birds with the plant communities where they would normally be found.

William MacGillivray left more than a perhaps undeserved name on a North American warbler as his legacy. His distinction between the Hooded and Carrion Crows was vindicated in 2002 with the Hooded Crow given species status on the basis of DNA evidence. A posthumous book, *Natural History of Deeside and Braemar* was published under the auspices of Queen Victoria. MacGillivray's son John became the most well-known naturalist of the Australian continent, and son Paul published a *Flora of Aberdeen*. Of himself, MacGillivray wrote in the preface to his *History of British Birds*, "I can look upon my work without much regard to the opinions which contemporary writers may form of it, assured that what is useful in it will not be forgotten, and knowing that it has already had a beneficial effect on many of present and will more powerfully influence the next generation."

Birders of the 21st Century, who expect not only accurate graphic representation but also a sense of the profound interrelationships between fauna and flora and the behaviors of each in both images and text, have reason to be grateful to Dr. William MacGillivray

Hey, why aren't the birds eating my suet...?

By Joanie Smith

I get asked that question frequently from people just starting out with a suet feeder. If you have a seed feeder that your birds are accustomed to visiting and then add a suet feeder, the birds tend to ignore it and make a bee line for the seed feeder. I found that if you are persistent (making sure that the suet stays fresh) a curious bird will give it a try eventually and then other birds will follow. That "curious" bird is usually a chickadee, but you may also get a titmouse, jay, woodpecker, or nuthatch. If you're really lucky you'll get an insectivore, like a kinglet, warbler or Bushtit. I've heard more and more reports of Bushtits coming to suet feeders.

There are loads of home made suet recipes out there if you would like to try making your own, but it's a lot easier and much less messy to buy suet cakes. For best results, make sure the suet you choose contains nuts, such as peanuts, almonds or pecans. If your squirrel won't leave it alone, switch to hot pepper suet. Nearly all squirrels will avoid hot pepper suet yet the birds don't seem to mind it. Notice I said "nearly" all squirrels. There is the occasional squirrel that will ask for chips and a margarita to go with that hot pepper suet.

Or, you can put a small squirrel baffle over your suet feeder. Since most suet feeders are small, you can get by with a small baffle as long as you don't place it too close to a fence or tree. There are even window feeders with suction cups for the window or a suction cup hanger that allows you to use a hanging suet feeder. It never hurts to change the location of your suet feeder.

Still not getting birds to your suet feeder? Suet feeders can be used for a lot of other purposes, too. You can fill it with fruit, stuff it with nesting material, or use a seed block. Seed blocks come in a variety of seed types. They're the same size as a suet cake and fit nicely in your suet feeder.



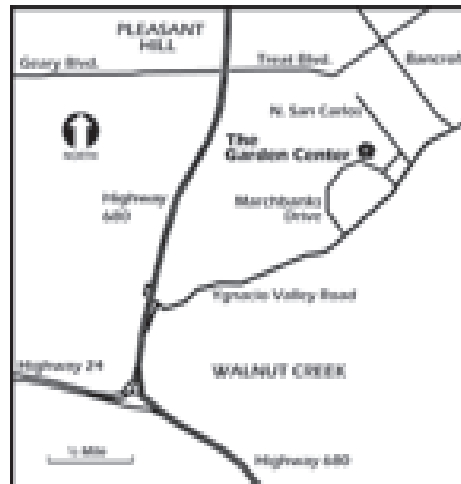
Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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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MacGillivray's Warbler. Kai Mills photo..

William MacGillivray Ornithologist ♦ Illustrator ♦ Botanist

Contributed by Member

It is not uncommon for the American Ornithological Union to update the scientific name of a bird species to reflect the most recent research or the earliest discovery and naming. This is the case with the MacGillivray's Warbler, which, along with a number of other New World warblers, has been placed in the genus *Geothlypis*, while it had been formerly an *Oporornis*. Its species epithet remains "*tolmiei*", however, as its original describer, John Townsend, named it for his friend and fellow Fort Vancouver doctor John Tolmie, who had discovered it on Mount Rainier. Townsend accordingly called it "Tolmie's Warbler".

The AOU's revision did not equally recognize this priority, however, and left the common name as MacGillivray's, after a Scottish naturalist who had never been to the Pacific Northwest, and had never seen the bird in its native habitat. How could this have happened?

The wild Hebrides were the early home

of William MacGillivray, born in 1796. By the age of 12 he had already enrolled in King's College in Aberdeen. He received his M.A. at 16, and was expected to follow his father's career as a military surgeon. Although he had not planned to take after the exploring, pioneering footsteps of fellow Scots like Alexander Wilson and David Douglas, a chance encounter with a botany course in his medical training confirmed his lifelong interest in natural history.

He abandoned his first post as an anatomist at Marischal College and set out on foot from Aberdeen to London, observing the flora and fauna along the way. Upon arriving at London after an 837-mile meandering journey, he became convinced that the classification methods of ornithologists were inadequate, and resolved to become the author of a new system. To his disappointment, such an endeavor would not support him and his new wife, and he began work as an assistant to the Natural History chair in Edinburgh.

MacGillivray's early zeal for outdoor stud-



William MacGillivray

ies never left him. He inspired students to avoid becoming, in the contemptuous phrase, "cabinet naturalists." Academic appointments followed, and publications flowed from his pen like pure Highland brook water. Having gained much of his own expertise through direct experience, he became convinced that only field studies and specimen dissection

Continued on Page 8 »