



# the Quail

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

Volume 61, Number 1

September 2015

## September Program: Tricolored Blackbirds ♦ Samantha Arthur

The Tricolored Blackbird is a colonial breeder nearly endemic to California. Historically, Tricolored Blackbirds have bred in the Central Valley's dense wetlands in cattails and bulrush. However, 90% of these wetlands have been lost. Today, the Tricolors increasingly nest in agricultural fields during the spring. When nesting schedules and farmers' harvest schedules conflict, high proportions of the Tricolor population are at risk.

Audubon California received a major federal grant this year to help grow the population of the Tricolored Blackbird. The funding from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service will support a partnership with Farm Bureau, Western United Dairymen, DairyCares, and Sustainable Conservation to work with farmers to protect birds that breed in silage fields. Most of this \$1.1 million grant will go to farmers to delay harvesting giving the birds time to fledge their chicks, and to fund off-farm habitat restoration to encourage these birds to set up their colonies safely away from the dairy farms.

Approximately 145,000 individuals were counted in the 2014 statewide survey, down from an estimated 2-3 million in the 1930s. Tricolored Blackbirds were emergency listed as an endangered species under the California Endangered Species Act in December of 2014, but the Fish and

Game Commission allowed these protections to expire.



Conservation Project Manager, Samantha Arthur, will discuss Audubon California's multi-pronged approach to save the Tricolored Blackbird. Samantha has a Masters of Environmental Science and Management from the Bren School at UC Santa Barbara. Prior to Audubon, Samantha worked with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts to support private lands stewardship across the state, and was a Land Protection Specialist for the Big Sur Land Trust.



Tricolored Blackbird, Teddy Llovet photo

### Birding Information

A short video highlighting an all-day celebration of birds with more than 30 sponsored events around Los Angeles, dubbed "Bird LA", will be shown. Hmm... "Bird the Bay" next year anyone?

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 3** 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: **Samantha Arthur**  
*\*Please remember to bring your own cup*

**NEXT MONTH: Thursday, October 5, Breeding Exotic Birds ♦ Michele Raffin**

I hope your summer was a good one and that you are ready for fall. We have diverse programs planned as well as our wonderful field trips which include some new locations for the 2015-2016 season.

We have several new Board members including our new *Quail* Editor, Maren Smith, who will take over the reins from Ellis Myers, Editor for 11 years. Ellis will help make the transition a smooth one while continuing to contribute articles to the *Quail*. We thank him for his years of service to the MDAS. Also, please welcome our new Board Secretary, Carol Pachl, and Hospitality Chair, Kathy Kellogg. Hope you make a point to meet them.

The East Bay Regional Parks is beginning to move ahead with preliminary plans for the Concord Hills Regional Park, a large amount of land within the Concord Naval Weapons Station, slated for new housing, parks, and open space. A number of us attended a land use planning meeting in July to hear about some of the proposed ideas for this valuable ecosystem. The MDAS is in favor of a "protect and enhance" approach to land use management in hopes of making this a

nice attraction for many of us to use. The Weapons Station's inland and tidal area has been a great place for our annual Christmas bird count.

Speaking of the Christmas bird counts, mark your calendars now. The East Contra Costa County count will take place on Wednesday, December 16, while the Central Contra Costa County count will occur on Saturday, December 19. We will have more details as we get closer to those dates.

Maury Stern and I have been the co-compilers of our counts for many years. We met a few weeks ago to get the process started and we both talked about the idea of passing on the compiler role to some new folks. Please let us know if you have an interest in this role.

I look forward to seeing you at a general meeting or on a field trip. Our chapter is certainly ranked amongst the most attended of any Bay Area Audubon chapter. There is a lot that goes into making that happen—diverse, interesting programs, friendly hospitality, a central meeting spot at Heather Farm, and all of you! We are very fortunate.

Good Birding!

## Good News For Conservation

The 2015-2016 Federal "Duck Stamp" features a pair of Ruddy Ducks painted by wildlife artist Jennifer Miller of Olean, N.Y.



Miller is the third woman ever to win the Federal Duck

Stamp Contest.

The stamps are available for purchase at MDAS meetings, online, at many sporting goods stores, and at some post offices and national wildlife refuges. Go to <http://www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp/buy-duck-stamp.php>.

The Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Conservation Stamp is the nation's most unique and successful conservation stamp. Since 1934, sales of the stamp have raised more than \$800 million to protect more than 6.5

million acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife. This effort has largely been fueled by waterfowl hunters, who are required to buy a stamp each year. Birders, outdoors enthusiasts, artists and stamp collectors also contribute to conservation by buying Duck Stamps.

Ninety-eight percent of the proceeds from the Duck Stamp sales go towards supporting wetland acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Federal Duck Stamp is also good for free admission to any refuge that charges an entry fee. More than 560 Refuges offer outdoor recreational opportunities, including bird watching and photography as well as hunting and fishing.

This year's stamp will cost \$25—up from \$15 last year—the first price increase for the stamp in 24 years, the longest single period without an increase in the program's history. The increased price of the duck stamp will allow the Service to devote more funds to conserving wetlands habitat that benefits birds and many other species.

And, that's good news for conservation!

## Welcome New Members

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Andrew Henton | Pleasant Hill |
| Marty Morrow  | San Leandro   |
| Diane Siegel  | Alamo         |



This is an aquatic bird that usually sleeps on the water during the day. On windy days, one may be swept across the lake. Montana has an optional *Audubon/Bird Habitat* license plate featuring this and three other birds.

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

**CDDDKRUUY**

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The end of breeding season is near. Many shorebirds are returning from the Arctic.

Logan Kahle, who has contributed the most observations in the last two years for this column is off to Cornell University shortly to study Ornithology. We wish him well and look forward to his participation in at least one of Mount Diablo Audubon Society's Christmas Counts this December.

Bird of the month was **Bank Swallow** at Bethel Island seen by many in July.

A **Brant** was at Brooks Island 7/27. LK, CD.

A female **Wood Duck** was at Heather Pond 7/11. HH, FS.

LK and CD saw a **Greater Scaup** at Ironhouse Sanitary District pond 7/11.

A male **Common Merganser** was at Clifton Court Forebay 7/27. LK, CD.

A very unusual **Brandt's Cormorant** was off Miller/Knox Park in Point Richmond 7/11. LK, CD.

CB saw a **Green Heron** at Heather Farm Pond 6/10. Three were there 6/20. FS. At Hidden Lakes Park in Martinez IA saw 1 adult and 3 young 7/15.

A **White-faced Ibis** was at Bethel Island Piper Slough 7/23. JRo.

Six **Ospreys** were off Point Molate 7/28. LK, CD.

JR saw an adult **Bald Eagle** while on the Rocky Ridge Trail at Upper San Leandro Reservoir 7/11.

A **Golden Eagle** flew over San Ramon headed for Las Trampas Park 6/21. ST.

Twenty **Long-billed Curlews** were at the Richmond Shoreline near Costco 6/20. JS.

There were 20 **Marbled Godwits** in the same location.

A **Snowy Plover** was reported at Clifton Court Forebay 7/10 by AH.

**Heermann's Gulls** were seen 7/5 by JA and LK and CD at Miller/Knox 7/27.

An early **Glaucous-winged Gull** was at Meeker Slough in Richmond 7/27. LK, CD.

**Caspian Tern** individuals were at Heather Farm Pond 6/23, KH, HF; and Lafayette Reservoir during most of July. SS. 300 were at Brooks Island 7/11. LK, CD.

A breeding plumage **Black Tern** was seen from Bethel Island on Frank's Tract 7/28. ES.

There were 250 Elegant Terns on Brooks Island 7/27. LK, CD

A European Collared Dove was at Jewel Lake in Tilden Park 7/4. MK, SG

A Western Screech Owl was at DH's Walnut Creek house at 8:30 am being mobbed by many birds 7/18.

LK and CD saw a **Burrowing Owl** on Jeffrey Way in Brentwood 7/11.

A **Merlin** was in Richmond 7/24. PC.

GC saw a **Prairie Falcon** at Clifton Court Forebay 7/26.

A **Say's Phoebe** was in Brentwood 7/11. LK, CD.

The previously mentioned **Bank Swallows** were mostly seen at Bethel Island from 7/11 to 7/28. LK, CD, DQ, BD, PB, CS, ES. LK and CD saw 1 at Ironhouse Sanitary District 7/11.

A **Brown Creeper** was on redwood trees along Cherry Lane in Walnut Creek 6/20. FS.

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was on a nest at the Valle Vista Staging Area 7/10. AK.

A small flock of **Phainopeplas** were in El Sobrante 6/11 off San Pablo Dam Road and May on 6/11. AC.

GC saw 2 **Yellow-breasted Chats** in the willows at the end of Bethel Island Road 7/26.

LK and CD saw 2 **MacGillivray's Warblers** at the ¼ mile point on Inspiration Point Trail 7/11. This is the third or fourth year for them at this site.

A **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** was at her Lafayette home 6/19. KB.

**Blue Grosbeaks** were numerous in East County, seen at Byron, Bethel

Island, Ironhouse Sanitary District, and Jersey Island. LK, CD, GC.

KH and HF saw a male **Tricolored Blackbird** at Heather Farm in a small **Red-winged Blackbird** flock 6/23.

JA Jeff Acuff, IA Isaac Aronow, PB Pat Bacchetti, KB Kristen Baker, CB Claude Bardin, AC Ann Callaway, GC Graham Chisholm, PC Pam Coville, SD Sheila Dickie, CD Cedric Duhalde, BD Bob Dunn, HF Hank Fabian, SG Susan Greef, AH Aaron Haiman, HH Hugh Harvey, KH Kevin Hintsa, DH David Hutton, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, MK Marilyn Kinch, DQ Dave Quady, JR Jim Roethe, JRo Jim Roworth, FS Fred Safier, JS Judi Sierra, CS Catherine Spaulding, SS Susan Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, ST Steve Taylor.

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

## MDAS Volunteers

Thanks to Carol Pacht, Nancy Balles, Diane Malucelli, Kathy Kellogg, and Jean Halford for volunteering at the 8th Annual Martinez Beaver Festival August 1.

The festival celebrates the beaver family "saved" by the citizens of Martinez. The family of four reside in a two-block long habitat near the Amtrak Station in "Beaver Park". What began as a small party, the festival now attracts some 2000 visitors and includes live music, wildlife and environmental exhibits, tours, and activities for children.

Heidi Perryman took an interest in saving the beavers when she learned of a city plan to trap and kill them to prevent potential flood damage. She formed the Worth a Dam action group that provided research to advise the City Council on wildlife benefits and alternatives, thus saving the beaver family. The Beaver Festival continues that tradition.

**For more information:**  
[www.MartinezBeavers.org](http://www.MartinezBeavers.org)



## September

|    |          |                               |
|----|----------|-------------------------------|
| 3  | Thursday | Jewel Lake                    |
| 12 | Saturday | Antioch Dunes                 |
| 19 | Saturday | Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg |
| 24 | Thursday | Hayward Shoreline/Winton Ave. |
| 26 | Saturday | Outer Point Reyes             |

## October

|    |           |                                |
|----|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 3  | Saturday  | Hawk Hill                      |
| 21 | Wednesday | Berkeley-Emerlyville Shoreline |
| 24 | Saturday  | Abbott's Lagoon                |

### 2 Thursday, September 3

#### Jewel Lake, Tilden Park

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Meet at 730 AM in Nature Center parking lot at north end of park. From Hwy 24 in Orinda, go north on Camino Pablo. Turn left on Wildcat Canyon Road. Stay right at the Brazil Building. At the next main intersection, turn right and pass Lake Anza and the Carousel. Or, take Fish Ranch Road from the Caldecott Tunnel. Turn right at the top onto Grizzly Peak Road. Turn right and downhill onto South Park Drive and turn left at the bottom onto Wildcat Canyon Road. Short morning walk to look for migrants.

### 2 Saturday, September 12

#### Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge (10-11 AM)

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley Mall parking lot at 915 AM. Leader will not be attending—will organize only. Your chance to visit the only unit of the National Wildlife Refuge system in Contra Costa County. A 1-hour docent-led tour will introduce you to the history of the only place on Earth to see Lang's Metalmark Butterfly. Though the butterfly requires Naked-stem Buckwheat, Star Thistle is the predominant plant. Don't be disappointed if you don't see this butterfly, or see flowing sand dunes, though sand has been brought in from river dredging the last two years. After hearing the history, you will understand. No shade, so may be hot and dusty walking along graded fire trails. Bring sun protection and water. From Hwy 4 in Antioch, exit north on A Street. After about 1 mile, bend right onto Wilbur Avenue. Turn left onto Fulton Shipyard Road and cross railroad tracks. Entry gate on the right. Will be guided by a Refuge volunteer.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. For weather updates or ?s contact trip leader.

Our MDAS Chapter is a conservation organization. As such, we encourage carpooling. Carpool locations are listed by field trip. Those who share a ride should offer to help with gas, bridge tolls or park entry fees.

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

### 1 Saturday, September 19

#### Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

We hope to see thousands of Vaux's Swifts enter a chimney on the grounds of the Rio Lindo Academy. This has been an annual occurrence since 1989, when use of the chimney ceased. Be advised we will be returning home after dark. Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley Mall parking lot at 430 PM. 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 take US 101 north to Healdsburg, exit at Old Redwood Highway/Healdsburg Avenue (Exit 502). Go north to Bailhache Avenue, turn right. Bailhache becomes Rio Lindo Avenue. Follow it about 3 miles into the Academy's main entrance. Turn left at first stop sign and another left just before the dormitory. In half a block turn right toward rear of the campus. Park on right past the chimney. Bring folding chairs, a picnic supper, and join the evening show. Please call the leader if you want to carpool.

### 2 September 24, Thursday

#### Hayward Regional Shoreline, Winton Ave Entrance

Leader: Bob Richmond 510-427-9843

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville at 745 AM. Meet at 830 AM at Winton Avenue entrance. From I-880, exit Winton Avenue, drive west 4.5 miles. Park near the trailhead just before the parking lot gate. Because traffic is so unpredictable, if no one is there, wait a while. Shorebirds and possible early ducks. Time permitting, we will finish at the San Leandro Marina. Bring a lunch and something to drink.

### 2 Saturday, September 26

#### Outer Point Reyes

Leader: Beth Branthaver (925) 944-1856

Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley Mall parking lot at 7 AM. Meet 830 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. Continue 3 miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd. Go 6 miles to stop sign, turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to stop sign. Turn right across bridge. Go 3 miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at Bovine Bakery for coffee/pastries, continue towards Olema. Turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We are hoping for migrants and vagrants. Weather is unpredictable—dress accordingly. Bring water, a lunch and something to drink.

## Trip Reports

### Mount Lassen, July 11-12:

Eight intrepid birders braved the rain forecast and enjoyed the weekend at Lassen Volcanic NP. Saturday began with a Gray Jay seen in D Loop of the Manzanita Lake campground.

The hike around the lake provided great looks at the Western Tanager, Willow Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Cassin's Finch, American Dipper, pairs of Spotted Sandpiper (some with young), and the ubiquitous Black Phoebe.

Seen flying over the lake were a pair of Osprey, two Vaux's Swifts, and many Tree Swallows. On the lake with young were American Coots, Canada Geese, Mallards and Bufflehead. Warblers observed were Wilson's, Hermit, Yellow, Orange-crowned, Nashville, and the ever-present Yellow-rumped. In the evenings Common Nighthawks hawked for insects over the campgrounds.

We also birded Bathtub and Summit Lakes, Lost Creek Group Campground, and the trail to Bumpass Hell. Across from Summit Lake we viewed a pair of Williamson's Sapsuckers.

Earlier in the week a male Black-backed Woodpecker was found. Other woodpeckers seen included Hairy, Downy, Northern Flickers, White-headed, and Red-breasted Sapsuckers. Western Wood-Pewees, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Red and White-breasted Nuthatches were seen daily, but only one Dusky Flycatcher was noted.

Lincoln's Sparrows were singing at the south end of Summit Lake and a Gray Jay perched near the trail. We spotted two Townsend's Solitaires: an adult at Manzanita Lake and a spotted juvenile behind the Lost Creek Group

Campground. The trail to Bumpass Hell produced nice looks at noisy Clark's Nutcrackers, several bright Cassin's Finches, and a Calliope Hummingbird. David and Linda Shinn were fortunate to see a female Sooty Grouse on their way through the park early Saturday morning.



Gray Jay,  
Eugenia Larson photo

All together, 58 species were seen. A big thanks goes out to Tracy Farrington for helping to scout and lead this trip; a great time was had by all in spite of the rain!

~Eugenia Larson

### San Mateo Coast, July 18:

For the 17 participants the trip started a little foggy, but soon we were treated to a beautiful, clear, sunny day. At Pescadero Marsh we were able to find two of our target species, Black Oystercatchers and Heermann's Gulls, in the rocks along the coast. In addition, we also had distant views of Surf Scoters, Common Murres and Marbled Murrelets. We saw all three cormorants: Double-crested, Pelagic and Brandt's. Out hunting and diving for fish were Caspian and a few Elegant Terns. Flying around the marsh were three swallow species: Northern Rough-winged, Cliff and Barn. Along the shore was a group of Whimbrels. From the marsh we traveled inland where we had nice views of a White-tailed Kite and a brief sighting of a tiny Allen's Hummingbird. At Pigeon Point we found another of our target species, the Pigeon Guillemot. Altogether, our group spotted 47 species.

~ Beth Branthaver

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## Young Birder Club

By Tracy Farrington



Lauren Amy presents a Red-shouldered Hawk during the Young Birder's tour, Tracy Farrington photo

On Monday, July 13, several members of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club, along with parents and adult supporters, were treated to a very engrossing, entertaining, and exclusive program at the Lindsay Wildlife Experience (formerly The Lindsay Museum). They offer special behind-the-scenes tours for select groups by appointment only.

The morning began in one of the classrooms with an up-close presentation of three beautiful raptor species. Our group was treated to an American Kestrel, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a Great Gray Owl, North America's largest owl. Each bird was brought to us on falconer's glove by Lauren Amy, one of Lindsay's knowledgeable animal handlers. Many excellent questions accompanied the presentations. In addition to its live collection and main exhibit hall, our group got a chance to inspect the Lindsay collections including preserved specimens and taxidermy mounts. At the conclusion of our 90-minute program, we observed actual veterinary procedures through a large, one-way glass wall at the Lindsay Hospital.

From Laz Lune, age 12: "I had an incredible chance to get a behind the scenes look at the Lindsay Wildlife Experience. Once we had all shown up, Tracy began with introductions and a quick discussion about the museum and what we were going to see. We had access to many things behind the scenes, such as a room of taxidermied birds and bones. We even got a look at

the veterinary clinic. We also were able to meet some of the fabulous birds they take care of and we saw a special raptor presentation featuring a Great Gray Owl and a male Kestrel, as well as a beautiful California Mountain Kingsnake. Overall, I really enjoyed the trip and I hope we can do something like this again. Thank you Tracy and MDAS for setting up this trip -- it was awesome."

In August, a make-up session was arranged for another Young Birder, unable to attend the July event, and her friend. A full report by Dagny Bradford-Urban will be featured in the October *Quail*.

# Condor Experience

This program is a series of:

- ◆ Free lectures at REI locations—in Dublin ON September 26, 2015, or in Concord on September 30, 2015.
- ◆ An 8-hour experience in Pinnacles National Park—classroom, hike (15 people per group) and meal —learning with guides and experts about Pinnacles NP and California Condors.

This is a fundraiser for Pinnacles Partnership and Pinnacles Condor. Join condor trackers and protectors, Park staff, and other experts in condors, birding, botany, wildlife, and geology for an unforgettable experience.

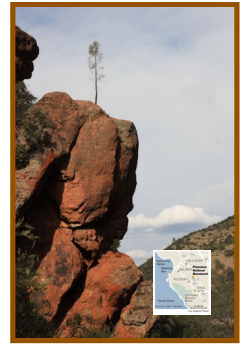
Begin this day-long adventure at 8:30 am in a Pinnacles classroom learning about the California Condor and Pinnacles' birds, geology, flora, fauna, and history. Throughout the day learn about the collaboration between public and private agencies including Pinnacles NP—and volunteers at the Condor Restoration Program. The science, technology, dedication, and human goodwill behind this work to protect and preserve the endangered California Condor are inspiring.

Mid-day, choose between a 900 foot climb to a California Condor overlook site, or a flat, relaxed walk through riparian habitats, guided by two or more experts. The family-friendly hikes are paced for ease and enjoyment. Afterwards, enjoy a simple meal and recap the day's adventures.

To register: [www.PinnaclesPartnership.org](http://www.PinnaclesPartnership.org)



California Condor, Joel Summerhill photo.  
Pinnacles NP, Maren Smith photo



Saturdays, 830 AM-430 PM  
October 10, November 7, or  
December 5, 2015

Choice of hike:  
Overlook (climb) or riparian (flat)  
Limited to 15 people per hike  
\$150 per person

Information and Registration at:  
[www.PinnaclesPartnership.org](http://www.PinnaclesPartnership.org)



Ruddy Ducks spend most of their time on the water. Their legs and feet are structured towards the

tail so that while walking is cumbersome, ability to dive and to swim is enhanced.

To escape predators, they surface dive rather than fly. Except when swimming, Ruddy Ducks hold their tails upright as they bob along in the water. To take flight these ducks must beat their wings rapidly and run along the surface of the water. Ruddy ducks fly with rapid wing beats, just above the water even during migration when they travel in medium to large sized flocks to their summer breeding grounds. They migrate at night in large flocks of up to 100 birds.

In an unusual courtship procedure, the males (with distinct white cheeks), will run across the water making popping noises with their feet. Also, they will stick their tails straight up and strike their bills—sky blue during breeding—

## Ruddy Duck ◆ *Oxyura jamaicensis*



Ruddy Duck, Beth Branthaver photo

against their inflated necks creating bubbles in the water and a low rattling sound.

While the breeding areas for Ruddy Ducks are mostly the north-central states from Colorado and Nebraska, Montana to North Dakota and to South-Central Canada, they have nested in Contra Costa County at two or more locations, according to the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County*: Heather Farm in Walnut Creek,

and Wildcat Creek in Richmond.

Other nearby probable locations were at McNabney Marsh, in Martinez, the Upper San Leandro Reservoir, and Marsh Creek. In winter (non-breeding) Ruddy Ducks are generally found throughout the coastal states and Mexico.

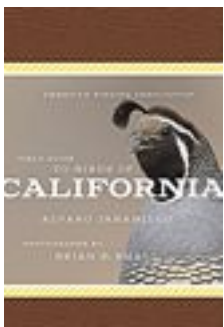


# New ABA Field Guide

Just what you need—another field guide! The American Birding Association has released a new series of ABA State Field Guides. From entry level to intermediate and beyond, these colorful and useful new books will offer an ideal state field guide companion for pack, pocket, or car.

Abundantly illustrated with high quality photographs by Brian Small and a cadre of other recognized photographers, each state guide provides concise information pertaining to identification, preferred habitat within each state, and a description of the primary song or vocalizations for each of more than 250 species for every state. Information on where and when to expect each species in each state, as well as the species' relative abundance make these attractive guides both useful and convenient.

The American Birding Association *Field Guide to Birds of California* became available on July 3. Written by Alvaro Jaramillo, it includes more than 300 species birders are most likely to see in the state. At 352 pages, illustrated with nearly 450 crisp, color photographs, it includes clearly written descriptions along with tips of when and where to see birds.



Three new titles were released late in 2014: *The ABA Field Guide to Birds of New Jersey*, *Field Guide to Birds of Colorado*, and *Field Guide to Birds of Florida*. A guide

for Pennsylvania was recently released, with New York, Texas, and Massachusetts available in October, 2015.

According to Editor Ted Floyd's blog, "The State Guides are not bird-finding books, but are authoritative field guides, written by experts with unsurpassed knowledge of their state's bird communities. The books are intended for beginning to intermediate birders, but expert birders will appreciate and learn from the authors' ID tips, in-depth knowledge about avian ecology, and conservation."

## What Do Backyard Birds Eat?

By Mike Eliot

We're very lucky to have a wide variety of backyard birds in this area. Many come to bird feeders, but some do not.

People often ask what birds they can attract to their yards and how to do this.

First of all, arrange your yard appropriately. A well-placed bird bath, away from bushes or hiding places for predators like cats, is highly attractive to many bird species. Plants that attract birds, especially hummingbirds, can also be very effective. Dense plants that offer hiding places for small birds are preferred because they help protect and hide them when predator birds approach.

If you decide to feed birds, be aware that there are several types of quality foods available and each attracts different species. Seeds, nuts, suet, worms, and insects can be used individually or in blends to attract different species. Note that

some grains and seeds aren't nutritious and don't appeal to birds. Cheap seed blends may contain over 70% of these fillers, which go to waste. In addition, seed comes in or out of the shell. Since most shells become waste, seed in shells is usually lower priced, and is more likely to grow when it falls on the ground below the feeder.

Placement of food is also important. Some birds prefer to eat on perches, some on the ground, and others peck at food while hanging onto the sides of tree trunks or cage feeders.

Freshness is critical. Bird food has a shelf life. Be sure the food you buy is fresh when purchased. Store food for no more than four to six months, and keep it in a cool, dry environment. Food in feeders will go bad in as little as a few days or weeks depending on sun and moisture exposure. If seed is clumped or smells musty it should be discarded and feeders should be cleaned regularly.

Perch feeding birds are the most prevalent in this area. Sunflower seed is by far the most popular seed for these birds. Finches, sparrows, titmice, and other small seed eaters will feed on sunflower seeds both in and out of the shell. Some perch eaters, like chickadees and nuthatches, prefer

peanuts or tree nuts, finely chopped. Some birds like goldfinches and pine siskins love nyjer (thistle) seed in specially designed feeders.

Ground feeding birds prefer millet and safflower, but will pick up nuts and sunflower pieces as well. They prefer to pick up their seed from trays, bowls, or off the ground.

Woodpeckers and nuthatches tend to eat vertically from a trunk, pole, or cage feeder. In addition to natural foods like insects, they prefer suet and seed cylinders in feeders upon which they can hang.

Some birds that do not eat seed, such as bluebirds and robins, enjoy mealworms, placed in open cup or bowl feeders. Others will not eat anything you can provide, but may show up for the insects, fruit, berries, or plants in your yard.

Hummingbirds eat mostly insects, but come to nectar feeders for extra energy as often as every 10 minutes. When you make nectar, use no more than one part sugar to four parts water by volume, which is comparable to natural plant nectar. Food coloring can harm birds, so nectar should be left clear.

Watching backyard birds can be a calming, educational, satisfying hobby for your family. Enjoy!





Audubon Portrait by John Syne, 1826



Ruddy Duck Plate 343, Birds of America

In 1826, having amassed an impressive portfolio but failing to find a publisher, he sailed with his paintings to England. His life-size, highly dramatic bird portraits, along with his embellished descriptions of wilderness life, were well received as he traveled throughout England and Scotland exhibiting them and soliciting subscriptions for *Birds of America*. King George IV was among those who supported his work.

Audubon found an engraver, William Lizars, in Edinburgh who agreed to publish his work. The first ten engravings were printed, then Lizars' workers went on strike, and Audubon was forced to find another engraver. The task was turned over to Robert Havell in London.

To produce the book, Audubon's images were etched on copper plates, and the resulting printed sheets were colored by artists to match Audubon's original paintings. Because Audubon insisted that his drawings be life-sized, the resulting book, known as the "double elephant folio" edition, was one of the largest books ever published. Each page measured 39.5 inches tall by 29.5 inches wide.

Meanwhile, Audubon had become friends with the Scottish ornithologist William MacGillivray. Recognizing that his own competence

*"At St. Augustine, in Florida, I shot a young bird of this species immediately under the walls of the fort. Although wounded severely and with one of its legs broken close to the body, it dived at once. My Newfoundland dog leaped into the water, and on reaching the spot where the bird had disappeared, dived also, and in a few moments came up with the poor thing in his mouth. When the dog approached I observed that the Duck had seized his nose with its bill, and Ashen I laid bold of it, it tried to bite me also. I have found the species hard to kill, and when wounded very tenacious of life, swimming and diving at times to the last gasp." ~ John James Audubon*

as a writer of English was weak, Audubon collaborated with MacGillivray on the *Ornithological Biographies*, the life histories of each of the species in *Birds of America*.

The last print was finished in 1838; by then Audubon had achieved fame. He traveled the country several more times in search of birds.

Turning his focus away from the birds, he began his final work of mammals, the *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, which was a joint effort with his long-time friend, the Lutheran pastor John Bachman (Audubon's two sons had both married Bachman's daughters).

In 1841 John James and Lucy Audubon built an estate on the banks of the Hudson River in Manhattan which they named Minniesland. Audubon spent his last years in ill health and died in January 1851 at the age of 65.

John James Audubon's only connection to the National Audubon Society is that George Bird Grinnell had been tutored by Lucy Audubon, and so, he was inspired by his knowledge of Audubon's work when, as one of the founders, he chose the name of the first Audubon Society. (See *The Quail*, October 2013.)

Today, the name Audubon means birds and bird conservation to everyone around the world.

*"Patiently and with industry did I apply myself to study, for although I felt the impossibility of giving life to my productions, I did not abandon the idea of representing nature." ~John James Audubon*



# Winging It

By Maren Smith

In thinking it over, I guess I've been a birder all my life. My mother carefully taught me the names of the birds at our feeder as I studied a well-worn Roger Tory Peterson book. Most of my childhood we had a Great Horned Owl who lived in the tall pine tree overlooking our home.

However, I'm new to serious birding; I joined the MDAS less than a year ago, am a novice birder, and I admit, I have a lot to learn as the new *Quail* Editor.

What I lack in formal training, I hope to make up for in enthusiasm—I joined the Phenology Team and monitor a bluebird trail. In addition, I'm hopeful my background as a teacher and my passion for writing and editing will suffice. I'll endeavor to maintain the high standards Ellis Myers has established for the *Quail*. Bear with me as I grow into this position.

Join me in thanking Ellis for his many years of service to the MDAS as Editor of the *Quail*. He single-handedly created the visual, informative newsletter, along with his trusted copy editor, and wife, Mimi. As I understand it, their system operated on a simple formula—he put the commas in and most of the time, she took them out.

Fortunately, Ellis has graciously agreed to mentor me and continue to contribute articles to the *Quail*.

Getting to know Ellis, has been a perk of this job. He is a humble gentleman with an interesting work history, fascinating WW II stories, and he plays a mean game of badminton. He is a very accomplished individual. Following him as Editor is a bit daunting; he has left big shoes to fill.

As the Editor, I hope to enlist your help. If you have an article you'd like to read about, let me know. If you like to write—maybe your interest is conservation or a birding trip you have taken—please contact me.

The *Quail* is YOUR newsletter. It is already a great newsletter, but it will be even better with your input and suggestions. I look forward to hearing from you and talking to you at future MDAS meetings.

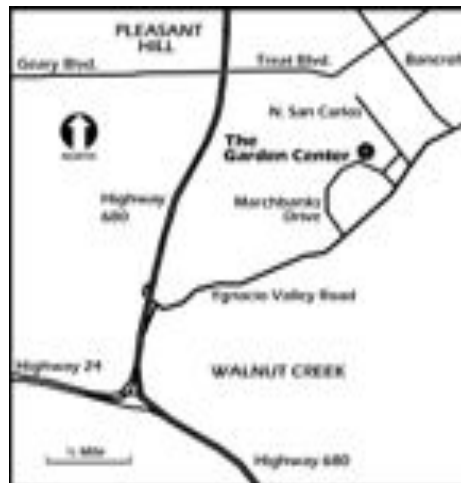
# Mount Diablo Audubon Society

*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 PM 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.**

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Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

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 Society dues.

Please send the *Quail* by  US mail  E-mail\_\_\_\_\_

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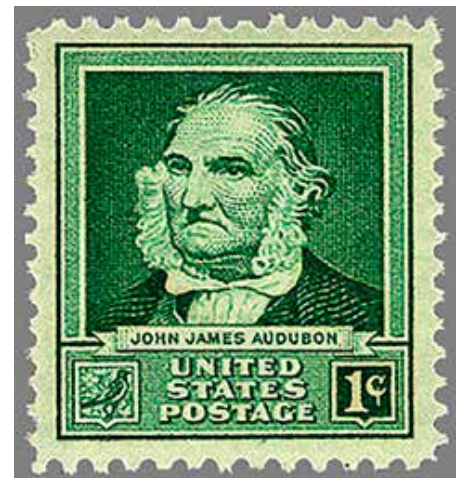
*Yellow-rumped Warbler. (Audubon's Warbler) Ellis Myers photo..*

## **John James Audubon** **Painter ♦ Naturalist ♦ Woodsman**

Jean Audubon was born in the French colony of Saint Domingue (now Haiti), on April 26, 1785, the son of a French sea captain and sugar plantation owner and his French-African mistress. In 1789, the boy was sent to Nantes, France, where he was formally adopted by his father and stepmother. He was renamed John-Jacque Fougère Audubon. He formed a lively interest in birds and nature. He learned to play the flute and the violin, learned to dance, and became proficient in drawing. He studied at the naval academy at Rochefort, France, with the intent of following his father's career. He became a cabin boy, but found he was subject to sea-sickness. In 1803, at the age of 18, he was sent to America, in part to escape conscription into Emperor Napoleon's army. When he emigrated, he changed his name to the Americanized John James. His father had sold his plantation in 1789 and purchased a large estate at Mill Grove, near Philadel-

phia. At Mill Grove, he hunted, studied, and drew birds, and while there, he conducted the first known bird-banding experiment in North America; tying strings around the legs of Eastern Phoebes, he learned that the birds returned to the very same nesting sites each year.

Audubon formed a partnership with Ferdinand Rozier, son of his father's good friend, to mine lead on the Mill Grove estate, but the enterprise failed, and the partners decided to open a dry-goods store in Louisville, Kentucky. After setting up the business, Audubon returned to Philadelphia and in 1808 married Lucy Bakewell, a neighbor from Mill Grove. Audubon was quite successful in business for a while, but hard times hit, and in 1819 he was briefly jailed for bankruptcy. He continued to draw birds as a hobby. While in Kentucky, Audubon's two sons, Victor Gifford and John Woodhouse, were born. In 1820, he moved his family to Cincinnati, where he



*John James Audubon*

became employed at the Western Museum as a taxidermist and painter.

Audubon decided to fulfill his dream of painting every bird in America. Leaving his family, he set off with his gun, artist's materials, and a young assistant, Joseph Mason, in search of new birds. Floating down the Ohio and Mississippi, he lived a hard-scrabble life in the South while Lucy moved back to Kentucky and earned money as a tutor to wealthy plantation families.

*Continued on Page 8 »*