



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com

Volume 61, Number 2

October 2015

October Program: Breeding Exotic Birds ♦ Michele Raffin

In her backyard, half an hour south of San Francisco, Michele Raffin houses, nurtures, and breeds more than 350 birds belonging to more than 40 species in 34 “and still counting” large aviaries.

Ms. Raffin is President of Pandemonium Aviaries, a conservation organization dedicated to saving birds. A former high-tech executive, Raffin began taking in abandoned and discarded birds 15 years ago. Today, Pandemonium is one of the premier facilities breeding and caring for avian species facing extinction due to the destruction of their natural habitats.

The focus of the aviary is six specific species. These include the largest population of rare Green-naped Pheasant-pigeon under conservation in the world. Five members of Ms. Raffin’s green-naped flock of 18 were born in her aviary. She, and her then-husband, hand-raised the first two, but the others were reared by their parents, a rare feat for endangered birds in captivity who are particularly fussy about breeding.

She also has the second largest population of the endangered Victoria Crowned-pigeon of New Guinea—modern-day dodos. Scientists don’t know how many exist in the wild, so they could become extinct if we don’t do something to conserve this species.

Living with turacos, lorikeets, East African cranes, finches, and doves (as well as parrots, donkeys, goats, two dogs, and one cat!), Raffin is a dedicated avian advocate and a passionate observer of birdlife. In her book *The Birds of Pandemonium: Life Among the Exotic and the Endangered*, her enthusiasm for and special relationship with these winged creatures comes through radiantly. A certified aviculturist and regular consultant to zoos and breeders, Raffin has spoken at the TEDx conference, is the conservation columnist for the Avicultural Society of America’s *Avicultural Bulletin*, has served as co-chair of a large humane society, and is on the Board of a companion bird rescue organization.

Ms. Raffin respects and loves the birds in her aviary and hopes to inspire others to care about the conservation of threatened species. She has said, “I think of birds and other creatures as fellow travelers on this Earth, not here to serve us, but (as) fellow nations, to be respected, admired, cared for—and definitely to be preserved.”



Michele Raffin feeds a Victoria Crowned-pigeon

***The Birds of Pandemonium: Life Among the Exotic and the Endangered* by Michele Raffin** will be available for sale courtesy of **Rakestraw Books in Danville**. Her book “does for rare birds what Susan Orlean’s *The Orchid Thief* did for rare orchids, Joy Adamson’s *Born Free* did for lions, and Jane Goodall did for chimpanzees and apes.”
~Heller McAlpin, NPR.org

Birding Information

Prior to the evening program, we’ll screen a short video about the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuges. Discover seven natural treasures that lie just beyond the city limits. Explore the National Wildlife Refuges that protect endangered species like evening primrose, Lange’s metalmark butterfly, and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, October 1** 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* and raffle
 - 8:05 PM Speaker: **Michele Raffin**
- *Please remember to bring your own cup*

NEXT MONTH: Thursday, November 5, Wild Turkeys ♦ Alan Krakauer

We start the 2015 Fall season with many MDAS activities including field trips to our usual spots and a few new locations. Migration is upon us and that means our bird friends that winter here or pass through are soon to be seen.

The Sunday, August 23 issue of *The Contra Costa Times* had an Op-ed piece entitled "Climate Change Alters Wildlife." It was signed with my name as President of MDAS and I received many compliments, but I did not write it. Ariana Rickard, our Program Chair, and staff at California Audubon wrote the article with my approval, and they should get all the credit. It was a very articulate report on a subject we will be dealing with for a long time.

Another informative talk (Tricolored Blackbirds) kicked off our first general meeting in September to a full room. Our MDAS chapter is very healthy. A number of Board positions have recently changed leadership. It has been encouraging that people have stepped forward to fill the vacancies.

Speaking of which—Maury Stern and I are co-compilers for our Christmas bird counts. Both of us are looking at stepping down. We may have a volunteer for Maury. If you are interested in helping, please let me know. Incidentally, our Christmas count dates are Wednesday, December 16 for East County and Saturday, December 19 for Central County.

Another MDAS position needs support. If you have Webmaster skills or experience, please contact me.

Throughout this newsletter, you will meet our newest Board members. Carol Pachl, MDAS Board Secretary, has been a member for 10 years. She has enjoyed participating in field trips, the Christmas bird counts, and the Phenology Project. After 31 years in the biotechnology industry, she has recently retired and is looking forward to serving as Secretary. (see Pages 4 and 7 for other new Board members)

I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming meeting or out birding this year!

Good News For Wood Ducks

Our "Just For Ducks" program, started in 2009 as an urban creek, Wood Duck housing project, had a second generation hen nest in Walnut Creek's downtown Civic Park, producing 11 ducklings this year.

Additional Wood Duck nest boxes in Civic Park are from a previous Community Service Day Project. Two years ago Rossmoor Wood Shop volunteers repaired five Wood duck boxes for a Boy Scout troop to install.

On San Ramon Creek we also observed a second nesting of a banded hen this year, producing an additional



San Ramon Creek nest, Brian Murphy photo

12 ducklings. She has been nesting in that box since 2011. Nearby, at Tice Creek, we had a second nesting hatch



Tice Creek ducklings hatch, Brian Murphy photo

out 11 ducklings an initial nesting of 12 ducklings.

"Just For Ducks" began as a just-for-fun experiment to see if native ducks of our wooded city creeks would return if we provided cavities for them to nest in, since nearly all of the natural cavity-producing old growth trees had been cut down by Flood Control.

Collaboration makes this kind of project easier. Building, installing, and monitoring nesting boxes with the help of community members and Boy Scouts has been invaluable. Along with the support of a partnership with the California Wood Duck Program, we have witnessed considerable success in reintroducing Wood Ducks back into our urban creeks.

And, *that's* good news for Wood Ducks. ~Brian Murphy

Welcome Members

Dr. John Bodle, DVM	Pittsburg
Judy Lauper	Danville
Susan Rosenthal	Oakland

MDAS on the Web

www.diabloaudubon.com
www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon
www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society/

Q

This bird is known to use tools to forage for its food. When alarmed, this bird will raise its crest and flick its short tail.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 5 to learn more.

EEEGHNNORR

The Quail is published monthly except January and August by the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **Deadline for the November 2015 issue is October 13, 2015.**

E is for Eagle—and for Energy

How to find the balance—this is our dilemma as environmentalists. If you saw the recent Op-ed on climate change in the *Contra Costa Times* (8/23/15), you might also have noticed the photo of a Golden Eagle the paper chose to accompany the piece. The female eagle shown is taking flight after being released in Las Trampas Regional Wilderness.

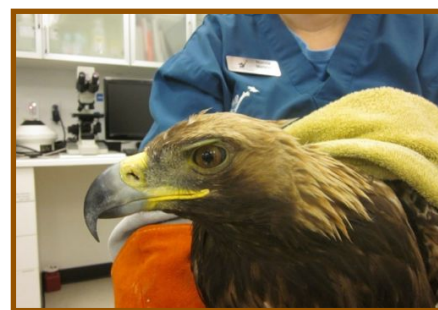
Golden Eagle 7833, as she came to be known, was originally captured at Morgan Territory in January 2013, and outfitted with a GPS satellite transmitter. She became part of a study being conducted by the East Bay Regional Park District to monitor the movement patterns of a total of 18 Golden Eagles and their interactions with wind turbines in an effort to reduce impacts on eagles in the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area (APWRA). GOEA 7833 was tracked until her transmitter failed almost two years later in November 2014.

During that time, she ranged extensively through open space lands of the East Bay, moving between the APWRA, Mount Diablo/Morgan Territory, north Livermore Hills, and the Las Trampas region.

On March 26, 2015, she was recovered by firefighters who found the eagle on a road outside their fire station in San Ramon. She was suffering from an apparent minor head injury and was transported to the Lindsay Wildlife Hospital in Walnut Creek. Following treatment and rehabilitation, the now celebrity eagle was harnessed with a new transmitter and released back into the wild in Las Trampas on May 1, 2015, surrounded by Lindsay Wildlife donors who had helped her, firefighters who had rescued her, doctors who had rehabilitated her, and biologists who had studied her.

Sadly, just three months later on July 25, 2015, Golden Eagle 7833 was found severely injured on a wind farm operated by Altamont Winds, Inc. (AWI). Telemetry from her GPS transmitter indicated that she had been found almost three days after being injured, and gave the specific site where the collision had occurred. She was again transported to Lindsay Wildlife Hospital where staff determined that the bird

had a partially amputated left wing, with missing wrist bones and primaries. Her injuries were entirely consistent with a wind turbine blade strike. Due to the severity of her injuries, sadly, the bird had to be euthanized.



Golden Eagle 7833,
Lindsay Wildlife Hospital photo

Data showed that Golden Eagle 7833 had collided with a wind turbine in a string of old-generation, very hazardous, lattice-type turbines. Studies have repeatedly shown that this type of turbine design consistently kills more birds than non-lattice-type turbines. Despite extensive testimony by Audubon and many other conservationists, AWI recently received a three-year extension to continue operating more than 800 of these dangerous, old-generation wind turbines through 2018.

Since 2005, according to US Fish and Wildlife Service records, AWI's wind turbines have been associated with the fatality and/or injury of an estimated 67 Golden Eagles, including at least seven during 2014. However, during hearings before the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, AWI repeatedly blamed rodenticides and other factors for avian mortality on its wind farms.

Golden Eagle 7833 represents a clear case of a wind turbine-related death which is directly attributable to AWI. Due to the extension of AWI's permit, the ongoing "take" of a significant number of Golden Eagles can be expected to continue in the APWRA for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it is imperative that independent scientists have unfettered access to the entire APWRA area for the purpose of conducting research aimed at reducing the unsustainable kill rate of the region's Golden Eagle population. Their efforts will benefit birds and wind farm operations in the long term.

"Fall Into Nature" Event

Wild Birds Unlimited welcomes Fall on **Saturday, October 3** from 10 AM-4 PM. Visitors can expect kid-friendly games and information tables highlighting local conservation and animal rescue groups including MDAS and The Young Birders Club. Learn about volunteer activities, meet *Contra Costa Times* wildlife columnist, Joan Morris, and observe live animals (birds, snakes, spiders) up close. For more details call: 925-798-0303 (to volunteer, see Page 5)

The Gardens at Heather Farm "Wine & Roses" Annual Fundraiser

Mediterraneo is the theme for the **Sunday, October 4** event from 4-7 PM featuring tapas from choice caterers, local wine, craft beer, live music, a silent auction, and open air visual artists, all in the lush gardens. For ticket information: www.gardenshf.org

Lindsay Celebrates 60

The Lindsay Wildlife Experience is planning a community open house and festival on **Sunday, October 11** to celebrate 60 years of serving wildlife. Lindsay's exhibit hall will be free and open to the public from 10 AM-5 PM. The festival in Larkey Park will include animal presentations, food trucks, crafts, and environmental organizations from 11 AM-4 PM. (to volunteer, see Page 5)

19th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium in Stockton

Enjoy renowned speakers, authors, workshops, and field trips **November 19-22** at the Stockton Hilton. For detailed information about the schedule of events: www.cvbsreg.org

The Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the “Duck Stamp” (September 2015 *Quail* “Good News for Conservation”) will be for sale at the October general meeting for \$25.

Sales of the stamp supports wetland acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System and are good for free admission to any refuge.

Your purchase contributes funds to conserve wetlands habitat that benefits birds including the Tricolored Blackbird, while providing recreational land for bird watching and photography. ~Don Lewis

Hospitality News

New Hospitality Chair, Kathy Kellogg, admits she first went birding by herself along Dry Creek in Modesto in order to have another interest to list in her High School Honors report. It wasn't until she was married with three children that her family gradually took on birding as a regular pastime.

On camping trips, studying the bird identification guides entertained the kids for hours as they chose their favorite bird in the books. Now in her twenties, her youngest daughter does birding for her employment at USGS.

Kathy has enjoyed MDAS programs and trips for over 20 years. Now retired from nursing, birding is high on her list of hobbies, which includes church-related activities, music, such as Diablo Choral Artists (this area's own serious community choir), reading, and being with her grandchildren.

She says, “I have always enjoyed the hospitality time during our evenings and hope to continue the fun by chairing our Hospitality Committee. Hopefully a few others will want to join me!”

Kathy welcomes anyone interested in helping out—the more the merrier. **Please contact Kathy at: ggonlekyhtak@hotmail.com or (925) 228-2690.**

August was a quiet month with many birds finished breeding and ready to migrate, and some mountain and northern breeders passing through. The Arctic breeding shorebirds have been here for a month and are continuing to pass through or stay for the winter.

WP saw three **Wood Ducks** at the Upper San Leandro area which had received an infusion of water, raising the levels from the creek, swamping some of the dry areas.

An unusual **Black-necked Stilt** was at Heather Farm natural pond 8/24. HH

BD saw a **Snowy Plover** near Meeker Slough 8/22.

Two **Wandering Tattler** were in the Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline Ferry Point area of Point Richmond 8/19 to 8/23. TH, JH, GC, PB and JD

A single **Wilson's Phalarope** was seen on AK's Point Isabel walk on 8/14. DQ

Up to three **Red-necked Phalarope** were in the area of Meeker Slough, Miller/Knox Regional Park and at Point Isabel from 8/22 to 9/4. GC, KF, MK, and IA

Common Murre were at Point Isabel 8/14, AK, at Meeker Slough 8/22, GC, and five sick-looking murre were seen on 8/29. GC

Willow Flycatchers were at Heather Farm 8/26. JR, TF, HH, DK, and one more was seen at Meeker Slough on 8/29. GC

BD saw a **Bank Swallow** 8/1 at Bethel Island and Piper Slough.

A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was in Tilden Park 8/23, and on the Seaview Trail near Big Springs trail. LF

PS saw a **Nashville Warbler** at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch 9/4.

A juvenile **Chipping Sparrow** was seen near Vollmer Peak in Tilden Park 8/14. ES

A **Slate-colored Dark-eyed Junco** was seen at the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline 9/3. LGL

ES also saw two **Western Tanagers** near Vollmer Peak 8/14, and LGL had one in her Martinez backyard 8/17.

A pair of **Tricolored Blackbirds** was at the Tilden Botanical Garden 8/18. JM

Hooded Orioles were seen in San Ramon 8/11, ST, and in Martinez 8/17. LGL

KB had a first for her Lafayette yard, a **Brown Creeper** bathing 8/28.

~

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, JD Jay Dodge, CD Cedric Duhalde, BD Bob Dunn, HF Hank Fabian, KF Kathy Farrington, TF Tracy Farrington, LF Lee Friedman, LGL Lita Gloor-Little, SG Susan Greef, AH Aaron Haiman, HH Hugh Harvey, KH Kevin Hints, JH Jeff Hoppes, TH Tom Hurley, DH David Hutton, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, DK Dave Kent, MK Marilyn Kinch, JM Jean Matsuno, WP Wendy Parfrey, DQ Dave Quady, JR Jim Roethe, JRo Jim Roworth, FS Fred Safier, PS Paul Schorr, JS Judi Sierra, CS Catherine Spaulding, SS Susan Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, ST Steve Taylor.

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



Pied-billed Grebe, sketch by Megan Sandri

Trip Reports

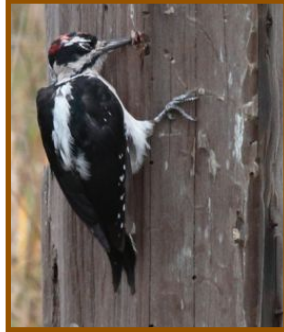
Bodega Bay, August 22:

The trip started out promising with breeding plumage Ruddy Turnstone and a Whimbrel among several species at the mud flat north of the Tides. At Porto Bodega we spotted another Whimbrel, a Common

Loon, a Black Oystercatcher, and a Spotted Sandpiper. At the Rail Ponds we had Band-tail Pigeon and Virginia Rail which responded to a recording on Paul Schorr's iPod.

At the Cypress Grove (Marine Lab entrance) we had a very cooperative Hairy Woodpecker, Brant, Marbled Godwit galore, White Pelican, Least and Western Sandpiper, and a Semipalmated Plover.

In addition, at Owl Canyon we had two beautiful Warbling Vireos, a Western/Pacific-slope Flycatcher, a MacGillivray's Warbler, and one Quail (but see later on).



Hairy Woodpecker,
Beth Branthaver photo

From the Head we saw a Black Oystercatcher, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Murre, and, finally, a Black Turnstone. A few lucky birders saw Wandering Tattler and, far out, Sooty Shearwater. It was so calm and mild that for only the second time in my memory we lunched comfortably at the Head.

At Campbell Cove we had Bewick's Wren, Black-crowned Night-heron, Western Wood-Pewee, and a family of Quail with Papa keeping watch on a tiny mound while Mama and six half-grown young foraged below. Hundreds of Elegant Terns were with the Brown Pelicans and cormorants on the jetty at the harbor entrance as viewed from Campbell Cove.

At Smith Brother Road we had a Northern Harrier harrying the Godwits and peeps. Other interesting birds included several Belted Kingfishers, Willet, Great Blue Heron, both Egrets, and the requisite Black Phoebe.

We had pleasant weather—mostly overcast with little wind. The 21 participants observed 65 species. ~Fred Safier

Jewel Lake at Tilden Park, September 3:

Seven birders and guests spent a congenial morning birding the unusually quiet Tilden Nature Area in Berkeley. Only 23 species were seen and Jewel Lake has become a big puddle rather than a lake. The highlight bird for us was the loud Hairy Woodpecker in the parking area. ~Maury Stern

Two Volunteer Opportunities

◆ Six people are needed for the MDAS table Saturday, October 3 from 10 AM-4 PM for the "Fall Into Nature" event at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill from 10 AM-4 PM. Volunteer for a two-hour shift, enjoy this educational event, and do some birding on the nearby creek where Hooded Mergansers have been seen.

◆ Volunteers are also needed for the Lindsay 60th Birthday Celebration Festival at Larkey Park Sunday, October 11 from 11 AM-4 PM. The MDAS will display bat, barn owl, and wood duck boxes as well as information about MDAS.

If you would like to volunteer, enjoy the festivities, and get to know fellow MDAS members, please contact Brian Murphy at: b-murphy21@hotmail.com or (925) 937-8835.



Green Heron ◆ *Butorides virescens*



Juvenile Green Heron at Jewel Lake, Isaac Aronow photo

The Green Heron often belies its name. From a distance, the stocky bird appears dark with its grey wings and deep chestnut breast and neck. With the exception of its yellow legs, this small heron is often difficult to discern as it stands motionless in filtered light at the water's edge or on a branch just above the water, patiently waiting for its victim to approach within range. In better light the back is deep green, hence its name, while juveniles are browner with pale streaking on the neck and wing spots. Green Herons have a dark shaggy crest that can be raised at will by the bird.

This bird is one of very few tool-using species. These remarkable birds use a variety of baits and lures, such as insects, earthworms, bread, twigs, or feathers to entice fish to where it can grab them. Although it feeds primarily on fish, this intelligent heron has a rather large bill for its size and can consume a variety of other large prey, including frogs, reptiles, crustaceans, even small mammals. The bird will quickly extend its neck and stab its prey with its needle-sharp bill. This amazing behavior can be seen on a variety of video clips on YouTube.

Green Heron is seen throughout Contra Costa County year-round—at Moorhen Marsh in Mt. View Sanitary District, Heather Farm, Dow Wetlands Preserve, and Jewel Lake in Tilden Park. The genus, *Butorides*, comes from *Butor*, an old genus for bitterns, and *-oides*, Greek for resembling. The specific name, *virescens*, refers to the color. Calls of the Green Heron include an explosive 'skyow' when disturbed, and a series of low 'kuk-kuk' calls. Displaying males make various squawks, screams and deep 'whoom-whoom-whoom' calls. ~Ellis Myers

One of the club's first members, Dagny, was unable to attend the July group tour, so I was able to arrange a Lindsay specialty, the Keeper's Tour, for Dagny and her friend, Mia, hosted by one of Lindsay's senior animal handlers, Brittany Buenvenida.

From Dagny Bradford-Urban, age 11: "In August I took a behind-the-scenes tour at the Lindsay Wildlife Experience. I had missed the group tour, so I got to redo it with my friend, Mia. First, we walked to the outdoor animal gymnasium and watched as a Red-tailed Hawk and a Barred Owl enjoyed themselves in the sun.

Docents talked about how the birds happened to come to the Lindsay. The Red-tailed Hawk had suffered from a wing injury that made him unable to fly very well, so he could not be released back into the wild. The Barred Owl had a wing injury, too, and though he could fly better than the hawk, he too could not be set free. The docents also reminded us that the Lindsay is *not* a zoo; the animals that we viewed there will be unable to be returned to the wild because of different injuries.

Then we went behind the scenes. We watched as the docent talked about what the raptors were fed. She proceeded to cut up bits of mouse, quail, and chicken—raw—putting them into small bowls. We walked into the animal recreation area and saw all the birds of prey: a Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Owls, a Great Gray Owl, a Great Horned Owl, a Swainson's Hawk, a Peregrine Falcon, and an American Kestrel. The Barn Owl had a particular aggression towards Tracy that made us laugh.

Our docent talked about all of the raptors. When she asked if we had questions, we realized that we didn't have any because she had explained everything so well. She showed us the gloves they use to hold the birds. Finally, she got the American Kestrel, Falco, to hop up on her glove. She talked about Falco and why he had come to the museum as she fed him mouse tidbits. When there were two pieces left, she let each of us feed him and he gulped down the mouse-tail like raptor spaghetti!

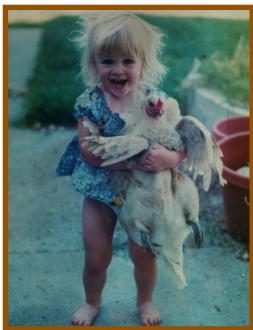
After the amazing experience in the raptor room, we went to the Education Room to look at the animals used to teach people including Mexican Free-tailed Bats, Acorn Woodpeckers, tarantulas, and a Pocket Gopher. We also looked at all of the animals, displays, and spotted the queen in the beehive. Afterwards, my mom picked us up and we talked about the tour all the way home."



Dagny and Mia prepare to feed an American Kestrel held by Lindsay trainer, Brittany Buenvenida. Tracy Farrington, photo

Young Birder Bio: Meet Dagny

My interest in birds began when I was very young because we always kept a flock of backyard chickens. Even though my parents had horses, I was much more in love with my



Dagny, at age two, with her chicken, Peekay, Meredith Bradford photo

chickens and the baby chicks. My mom remembers me reaching into the cage and they would peck my hands until I cried, but then I would just do it again.

I expanded into wild birds with backyard feeders, and then one fateful day I saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk take a mother House Sparrow off a nest. The next day, I found one of the babies hiding and we took it to the Lindsay Wildlife Hospital. I felt so good about helping that baby sparrow I wanted to help more and more. That was around the time I first decided I wanted to become an ornithologist—except because I was only six, for at least a year I kept telling people I wanted to be a "bird geologist."

Every year my life has become more and more filled with birds. I read field guides cover to cover (my favorite is Sibley's because I feel it has the best organization and explanations), and I have spent many long hours memorizing and practicing the calls recorded in the *Bird Songs Bible*, so that I can imitate them. I draw birds, my bedroom is full of birds, and all the teachers and kids at school call me "The Bird Nerd." They come to me with all of their bird questions.

My most memorable trip was in 2013 when my mom took me on a special adventure, just the two of us, to the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There were many other cool things we could have done there, but every morning I said, "I just want to go back to the Aviary." Pretty quickly, the staff realized I was not just some annoying kid there to bother the birds, so I was invited behind the scenes. I got to hold an Eastern Screech Owl on my arm with a glove. I absolutely loved everything about The National Aviary; it's so amazing that you are not just looking at the birds, but actually walking amongst them.

Now that I am 11, I'm not sure whether I still want to become an ornithologist, because I am beginning to think I could do more to help birds by being an avian veterinarian. I just started middle school and was excited to discover that there is a Bird Club! Hopefully some of those kids will want to join the Audubon Young Birders Club with me. For the first time I might meet someone else my age whose favorite movie is also "The Big Year!"

Adults sometimes joke with me about my "eagle eyes" because it seems that almost every day, everywhere we go, I find some kind of a bird in trouble. I always tell them that it is not because my eyes are so much better; it is because I look. ~Dagny Bradford-Urban

Phenology News

Phenology is the study of periodic events in the life cycle of a plant or animal, not to be confused with...

phenology, a pseudoscience primarily focused on measurements of the human skull.

If you overhear conversations at our meetings or field trips about a "phenology" study you can be sure it is the former, and that no one is asking for our hat sizes!

Last winter Nancy Wenninger, MDAS Conservation Chair, called for volunteers to undertake an 18-month pilot study to help determine what impact a warming climate may have on our Bay Area environment. More than 20 members responded. Along with Audubon California and Sandy DeSimone, Director of Research and Education at the Audubon Starr Ranch Sanctuary in Orange County, and with logistical support from the National Phenology Network, this past March we began a long-term effort to quantify changes in the environment.

In her project proposal, Nancy said, "We will monitor a defined subset of bird species within a local Important Bird Area, the "Concord Marshes." More specifically, we will be observing the birds at McNabney Marsh (part of East Bay Regional Park District's Waterbird Regional Preserve) and Moorhen Marsh (wetlands constructed by the Mt. View Sanitary District)."

The birds being monitored include a mix of both migratory and resident species; Red-winged Blackbird, Killdeer, Canada Goose,

Northern Mockingbird, American Kestrel, Black Phoebe, Cliff Swallow, Tree Swallow, and the Common Yellowthroat. In addition to the presence or absence of a species, certain behaviors are also recorded such as nesting, feeding, or mating.



Common Yellowthroat singing at Moorhen Marsh, Joy Shonfeld photo

There are seven clearly defined observation stations established, with four in McNabney Marsh and three in Moorhen Marsh.

Species and behaviors are observed for 15 minutes at each station, and the results are put in the National Phenology Network database.

This necessarily involves a large volunteer effort. Further, as it is a longitudinal study over time, it has no clearly defined end. This is the right way to study long-term changes in the environment—in fact it is the only way, but it is a way that has created enormous difficulties for scientists.

The biggest issue—cost—is largely resolved by "citizen science." Volunteers from MDAS commit hundreds of hours to the study.

Every week, one of four teams is responsible for observations. Each round takes between two and four hours (depending on how much time we spend chatting with each other). As there are 4-5 members on each team, and observations only need two to three birders, we have quite a bit of flexibility.

What have we found so far? Given that this is a study of seasonal changes driven by a warming climate, we will need more than a full year's set of data to draw any conclusions. In terms of the study, however, we have refined our observations and our methodologies, and are becoming more efficient. We have a lot of fun. Seeing a Common Yellowthroat pop out of the reeds at Moorhen Marsh singing is a genuine thrill!

~Dave Kent

Get Social

For 21 years, Rosalie Howarth has lived across the street from The Gardens at Heather Farm, where she birds casually around the lake and casting pond, often running into Hugh and Rosita Harvey. She is a DJ at San Francisco radio station KFOG where she has hosted the popular program Acoustic Sunrise & Sunset for the past 22 years. In 2011, she was inducted into the Bay Area Radio Hall of Fame.

She and her husband Barry have two grown daughters, both Cal Poly grads. Rosalie is the MDAS Chair for Social Media and Community Outreach. She hopes to contribute to the chapter by helping to develop our social media presence on Facebook.



Rosalie Howarth, KFOG Radio photo

If you are already on Facebook, please "Like" our page. In the search field at the top of the page type in "Mount Diablo Audubon Society" or visit www.facebook/mtdiabloaudubon.

In addition, please "Share" our MDAS posts with your Facebook Friends, and post your own photos, links, and comments.

Like it or not, social networking is a valuable asset for non-profits like MDAS to communicate, advertise, share information, and build our community. With more than one billion users, Facebook is the largest social media format in the world.

Even if you don't Facebook we'd love your ideas for content on the MDAS Facebook page. Send us email links to interesting articles, ideas for discussion, or original photos. **Please email those ideas to Rosalie and Ariana at: barhowarth@msn.com and rickard@post.harvard.edu.**



Phenology Team l. l to R: Paul Schorr, Hugh Harvey, Jean Halford, Maren Smith, and Joy Dardin. Joy Dardin photo

Reverend John Bachman

Naturalist ♦ Educator ♦ Clergyman

There are three bird species that honor the Reverend John Bachman—Bachman's Sparrow, Bachman's Warbler, and Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*). In all likelihood, the warbler is extinct; the last sighting of the warbler was in 1988 in Louisiana. All three birds were given their names by his friend and collaborator, John James Audubon.



*Bachman's Warbler, Plate 185,
Audubon's Birds of America*

Audubon also honored Bachman through the species name of the Brush Rabbit, *Sylvilagus bachmani*, and a southern subspecies of the Eastern Fox Squirrel, *Sciurus niger bachmani*, which has a black mask and white ears, nose, and paws.

After Audubon returned from England in 1831, having completed arrangements for the engraving of his paintings for *Birds of America*, he realized that there were yet many other birds that he had not illustrated, particularly oceanic birds and birds of the southern states.

He set out from New York on a journey to Florida, Key West and the Dry Tortugas. While passing through Charleston, South Carolina, he met the distinguished Lutheran minister

and naturalist John Bachman. He stayed with his family for a month and the two became lifelong friends.

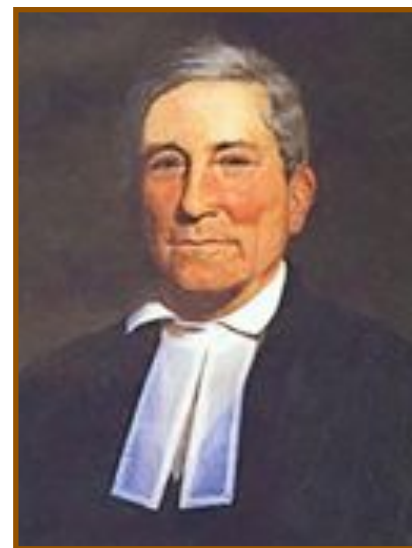
John Bachman was born on February 4, 1790, in New York near the Hudson River not far from Hyde Park. His family was of Swiss descent, but there is no certainty of how to pronounce his name. Most authorities pronounce his name "Bock-man" while others claim it is "Back-man," a question that remains a mystery.

As a young man, Bachman thoroughly enjoyed the outdoors. He spent considerable time exploring the countryside, camping out with a family slave who taught him about the species they encountered. Later, his parents introduced him to the works of Martin Luther, leading the boy to study the Holy Bible and explore Luther's life and religious philosophies.

During a stay in Philadelphia, Bachman visited John Bartram's famous garden, where he met the naturalist Alexander Wilson, the first known scientific expert on the birds of North America.

Bachman eventually taught school in Pennsylvania, where he also became licensed to preach in a Lutheran church for the year preceding his ordination in 1814. From there he was invited to become the pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Charleston, South Carolina, a call he accepted in part because he thought his respiratory problems would benefit from the climate of this southern seaport town. He arrived in January 1815 and stayed on at St. John's Church for 56 years.

Although he was from a slave-owning family, Bachman defied the proprieties of the antebellum South, by helping to educate African American Charlestonians, a practice that was both illegal and socially unacceptable at the time. Baptizing as many as 90 African Americans in one



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year, he grew the Black membership of his church as much as 40%.

Bachman relished the scientific study of birds, small mammals, and wildflowers. Although his duties as a Lutheran clergyman in Charleston were rigorous, the Reverend John Bachman rose early and spent countless hours studying nature and conducting experiments. He published his work in scientific journals and frequently was asked to give lectures to professional societies.

Among his favorite subjects were wild rabbits and the many colorful birds he encountered in South Carolina's "Low Country." The Bachman's Warbler was identified by Bachman who sent study skins and descriptions to Audubon who never saw the bird alive himself, but who named it for his friend, nonetheless.

As Audubon's now famous bird folios became popular, he and Bachman collaborated to create another set of volumes that would include paintings of North American mammals. Audubon realized that Bachman knew far more about the habits of these animals, so Audubon began the paintings while Bachman wrote nearly all of the scientific text for the signal work *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*.

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Molting and Caching

By Mike Eliot

Fall is on its way, but September brings a drop in backyard bird feeding. Grosbeaks and orioles are migrating away and young birds are finding new territories away from their parents.

We have a lot to look forward to as White and Golden-crowned Sparrows will return, along with juncos and Northern Flickers. Chickadees and titmice will be looking to replace dried up natural food supplies. Goldfinches will be returning, though with less color than during the spring.



Chickadee molting, WBU photo

As we move into cooler weather, the natural phenomenon of molting, the twig-yearly replacement of feather, happens with most birds. You may notice birds looking a little ragged with fewer colored feathers and more down.

This takes place over a period of several days or weeks. Birds will need extra protein and energy to stay warm and develop new feathers. Foods high in these nutrients include nyjer, nuts, suet, bark butter, and mealworms.

We should also begin to see migratory Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds stopping by their favorite nectar feeders on the 2500 mile journey south. Clean hummingbird feeders and replace fresh nectar every three days.

Early fall brings about another trait known as caching. Chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, and jays stash food away for the winter. They can be seen grabbing nuts and seeds and flying off to hide them.

Chickadees scatter-hoard by hiding individual seeds in many locations. The birds' amazing memories allow them to return to locate seeds stashed months before in tree bark, under leaves, in knot holes, and even under house shingles or siding. Birds cache both unshelled and shelled seeds and nuts. It is important to provide fresh supplies of seed.

Helping the birds with fresh, high protein foods will help ensure they remain plentiful and healthy as they prepare for winter.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS)

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,

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- Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Membership dues are tax-deductible.
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Black Oystercatcher (Haematopus bachmani), Joy Dardin photo

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Included in this work large species such as the American Bison, Wolverine, and Musk Ox are detailed, but smaller mammals are documented including the Eastern Gray Squirrel and the House Mouse. Bachman was so intent on doing an accurate job with the text that he devoted ten years to writing it—and declined the presidency of the University of South Carolina, as it would interfere with his work.

Meanwhile, Audubon's health declined and he was unable to proceed. His son, John Woodhouse Audubon, painted a number of the plates, and he and his brother Victor saw to it that the work was published after Audubon's death in 1851. Incidentally, both Audubon boys, John Woodhouse and Victor, married John Bachman's daughters, Maria Rebecca and Mary Eliza, two of the 14 children of John Bachman and his wife Harriet. Two years after Harriet died in 1846, John married her sister Maria. Interestingly, Maria is credited by Audubon for painting the flowers that accompany his illustrations of Bachman's Warbler and Bachman's Sparrow.

Bachman also helped establish the Lutheran Synod of South Carolina and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He was a professor of natural history at the College of Charleston from 1848 to 1853. In 1856, he founded Newberry College, a Lutheran school in South Carolina, serving as the college's first Board President. Bachman took time to write on many topics, including three books and decades worth of Sunday sermons.

Although he held Unionist views, when South Carolina met to enact the Ordinance of Secession in December 1860, Bachman opened the meeting with a prayer and thereafter minimized his political activities and spent the Civil War years ministering to the sick and dying. His scientific collections and library—slated for delivery to Newberry College—were destroyed by Sherman's Army. Bachman was severely beaten by a soldier and had one arm permanently paralyzed. Bachman died an early death from his Civil War injuries in Charleston, South Carolina in February 1874 at the age of 84.



Bachman's Sparrow, Croatan National Forest, N.C., Glen Tepke photo

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

October 2015

03 Saturday Hawk Hill
21 Wednesday Berkeley-Emeryville Shoreline
24 Saturday Abbott's Lagoon

November 2015

14 Saturday Charleston Slough/South Bay
17 Tuesday McNabney Marsh/Mt. View SD

December 2015

10 Thursday Niles Area
12 Saturday Sacramento/Colusa NWR
16 Wednesday Christmas Count East County
19 Saturday Christmas Count Central County
26 Saturday Solano County Raptors

2 Saturday, October 3

Hawk Hill

Leader: Fred Safier (925) 937-2906

Carpool leaves from El Nido Ranch Road at 8 AM. OR, meet at 915 AM in parking lot at Upper Rodeo Lagoon. From southbound US 101 take last Sausalito exit, Alexander Avenue, just before the Golden Gate Bridge. From San Francisco, pass the Vista Point and take the Alexander Avenue exit. On the west side of the freeway, turn left toward the Marin Headlands and go up the hill (Conzelman Road). At the intersection, turn right and go down the hill (McCullough Road). Turn left at the stop sign on to Bunker Road and continue to the parking lot on the right, just before the bridge. We will bird the lagoons before going up to the hawk watch site. At noon the staff gives a talk on their work and usually demonstrates the actual banding. Bring a lunch and something to drink. The walk up the hill is only a few hundred yards, but it is steep.



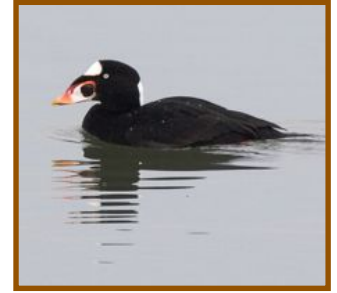
Red-tailed Hawk with snake, Joy Shonfeld photo

1 Wednesday, October 21

Berkeley-Emeryville Shoreline

Leader: Eugenia Larson (925) 806-0644

Carpool leaves from El Nido Ranch Road at 8 AM. OR, meet at 830 AM in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to I-580 west, turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. exit, turn left on Powell, go to Emeryville Marina. Park in last lot near pier. It may be cold and windy, so dress in layers. Bring a snack and something to drink. We hope to see loons, grebes, bay ducks and shorebirds.



Surf Scoter, Beth Branthaver photo

3 Saturday, October 24

Abbott's Lagoon

Leader: Juan-Carlos Solis (925) 222-8573

Carpool leaves from southwest corner of Sun Valley Mall parking lot at 7 AM. OR, meet at 830 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore. 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 three miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd for six miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road. Drive seven miles to the next stop sign. Turn right, drive across the bridge, and go three 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 on to Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley Road on the left. Carry a lunch and something to drink. There will be lots of walking on sand.



California Quail, Maren Smith photo

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

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

El Nido Ranch Road carpool location: Exit SR 24 at St. Stephens Drive east of Orinda. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with St. Stephens Drive.

Sun Valley Mall parking lot carpool location: Southwest corner Sun Valley Mall at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.

Come birding with us!