



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com

Volume 61, Number 3

November 2015

## November Program: **Brotherly Love: The History and Breeding Behavior of Wild Turkeys in California** ♦ **Dr. Alan Krakauer**



Dr. Alan Krakauer,  
Emily DuVal photo

Flocks of Wild Turkeys walking across a grassy hill or foraging along the roadside are now common sights throughout the East Bay, but most readers of the *Quail* are old enough to remember when this was not the case. In fact, the increase in turkeys in our backyards represents one facet of the broad success this species has enjoyed over the past several decades. Dr. Alan Krakauer will chart the history of Wild Turkeys in California and elsewhere, tracing their recent rise from rare hunting quarry to controversial suburbanite.

Turkeys in California also provided a key to solving a long-standing puzzle in evolutionary biology—why would one animal help another? Male turkeys sometimes show up as teams to jointly court and defend females during the breeding season. One suggestion was that the males were brothers, and that males could be successful by helping a close relative pass on his genes. By combining field observations and genetic information, Alan was able to confirm that males in teams were kin and that these teams



Male Wild Turkey tail display,  
Dr. Alan Krakauer photo

father many more offspring than males that display alone.

Alan originally hails from the East Coast and received his B.S. from Cornell University. During his studies he was fortunate to work with bird biologists at the famed Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. He also worked as a field biologist in Guam and Venezuela before moving to the Bay Area in 1998 to begin graduate school at UC Berkeley. Although the allure of studying birds in the tropics was strong for him, Alan turned his attention closer to home, spending several years studying turkeys at UC Berkeley's Hastings Natural History Reservation in upper Carmel Valley. His study of cooperation among males is now featured in several ornithology and animal behavior textbooks.

Now a lecturer and project scientist at UC Davis, Alan has been uncovering the behavior of Greater Sage-Grouse since receiving his Ph.D. in 2005. He has published more than twenty scientific articles, presented his work at conferences from Iceland to Brazil, and helped with nature documentaries including *The Sagebrush Sea* on PBS.

### Birding Information

This month, we will view an informative and engaging video, *Inside Birding: Behavior*, from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Recognizing behavioral clues is a key component of bird identification. Improve your identification skills by watching Lab experts as they examine posture, foraging behavior, and flight style.

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, November 5** in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

700 PM Birding Information  
725 PM Announcements  
740 PM Refreshments\* and raffle  
805 PM Speaker: **Dr. Alan Krakauer**

*Go green—please bring your own cup for tea or coffee.*

**NEXT MONTH: Thursday, December 3, Kerry Wilcox ♦ San Francisco Bay Waterbird Program**

I like to watch golf on TV. Golf courses are great habitats for birds. The cameras used for golf tournaments are of the highest quality and it is not unusual for these cameras to focus in on a bird. They get some great photos of birds, usually large birds like heron or geese. I keep a loose list of birds seen on TV. I even contacted the PGA of America and suggested that they should have someone available to identify the birds shown, as the commentators rarely know the names of those seen. I added that there are some 58 million bird watchers in America. They did not respond to my inquiry.

Birding is very popular and is growing. It is enjoyable to get out into nature and enjoy all we see. Looking ahead, our annual MDAS Christmas Bird Counts will be occurring on Wednesday, December 16 in East Contra Costa County and on Saturday, December 19 in Central Contra Costa County.

Sign-up sheets will be circulated at the November and December general meetings, or you can contact me at [ag70@value.net](mailto:ag70@value.net), or call (510) 658-2330.

I subscribe to a number of bird magazines and I enjoy reading literature about birds. The ABA magazine *Birding* is fairly technical, while others have more human interest stories. A recent article written about the saga of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse was touching. One of the areas in Colorado used by the Sage-Grouse had been flooded due to a newly constructed dam. One cold winter day, a researcher observed a number of males doing the mating dance on the ice of the lake directly above the flooded area that had once been their *lek* before the dam had been built—very sad.

With climate change, drought, and urban growth, all birds need our protection. MDAS is doing all we can to help.

## Good News For Least Terns

Tern Town, as it's called by Dave Reinsche and his team of East Bay Regional Park volunteers, is a small set of artificial islands at the Hayward Shoreline. They are in the freshwater marsh near the Interpretive Center and are the temporary home to migrating birds who arrive in the summer to breed. This area is significant because it is the 6th largest breeding site in California for the state and federally endangered Least Tern, smallest member of the tern family.



Least Tern, Daniel Reinsche photo

To protect and monitor the birds, volunteers visit the islands seven days per week; once in the morning and once in the evening to count them and scare away predators such as gulls, raccoons, and foxes. This summer was one of the most successful breeding seasons with an estimated 70+ Least Tern nests and 90-105 fledged chicks.

In addition to the Least Terns, there was one nest for another

federally threatened species: the Western Snowy Plover. This plover pair fledged two chicks. Many Forster's terns also successfully nested as well as one Black Skimmer pair who can still be seen raising their three chicks.

The success of these birds is due to the major contributions from East Bay Regional Park staff and many volunteers who spend hours maintaining the habitat and guarding the nests each year (to date, 4,453 people have contributed 19,762 hours). ~reprinted with permission from *Tidal Tales*, the Hayward Shoreline IC newsletter

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Dave Reinsche added, "Thanks to more than \$95,000 in grant funds, this is the eighth year in a row that California Least Terns and Western Snowy Plovers have nested on the island (arriving on April 13). However, this is the first time that three special status species have nested and fledged offspring at this site!" Interested in volunteering next year? Contact Dave Reinsche at [docquack@ebparks.org](mailto:docquack@ebparks.org).

Daniel Reinsche, Dave's son, is a high school Junior who enjoys nature photography. Through volunteering, he's had the opportunity to get "lens-to-beak" with a number of special status birds and wildlife species.

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And, *that's* good news for Least Terns!

## Welcome New Members

Yongcha Bryant	Pittsburg
Darcee Guttilla	Pittsburg
James Hixson	Pittsburg
Lucy Kihlstrom	Richmond

## MDAS on the Web

[www.diabloaudubon.com](http://www.diabloaudubon.com)  
[www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon)  
[www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society/](https://www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society/)

Q

This bird is resident on all continents except Antarctica. It is also missing from Hawaii and New Zealand.

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

**EOPRSY**

*The Quail* is published monthly except January and August by the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, POB 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **Deadline for the December/January issue is November 10, 2015.**

Wintering land birds have begun to arrive with Fox, Golden-crowned, and White-crowned Sparrows, Hermit Thrushes, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets coming in the second and third weeks of September. Ducks have started arriving in larger numbers and many shorebirds are continuing to stay on in the area.

There was one female **Wood Duck** at Heather Farm Pond 10/11, FS, and five in Las Trampas Creek behind his Lafayette home 10/11. MS

Unusual for the location, a **White-faced Ibis** was at McNabney Marsh 9/14. HH

An adult **Bald Eagle** flew over the Briones Reservoir 9/17 near the Oursan Trail. SG

RH saw a **Golden Eagle** near Wildcat Canyon Park on 10/5, and BP saw one flying toward Mt. Diablo from Heather Farm Park.

**Sandhill Cranes** returned to the Holland Tract area in eastern Contra Costa County 9/30. BC

A **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Heather Farm pond 9/17 and a **Greater Yellowlegs** 9/18. HH

A rarer **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at the Richmond Sewer Ponds 9/18 and 9/22. ES

A **Common Murre** was near the Richmond Yacht Club 9/26, ES; near Miller-Knox Ferry Point 10/3, AA; and at Meeker Slough 10/5, MS.

**Vaux's Swifts** were at the Mt. Diablo summit 9/13, JRy, and at Vollmer Peak in Tilden Park 9/28. JC

A **Yellow-shafted Flicker** was in the yard of P&NS 10/8.

A **Pileated Woodpecker** was at the Tilden Botanic Garden 10/1, ESa, WH, and 10/4. CS

WP saw a **Say's Phoebe** on the grassy hillside at Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga 9/29.

A **Tropical Kingbird** arrived 10/9 at Heather Farm Pond. TF This could be the third year for the same bird to visit.

A **Brown Creeper** was at his Lafayette home 9/22. MS

An out of area **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was on Cherry Lane in Walnut Creek 9/26. A few of these nuthatches of the Oakland-Berkeley hills have a post-breeding dispersal period.

Another out of area bird, a **Pygmy Nuthatch**, came to EM's home in Moraga 9/15.

An early **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Maricich Lagoon in Briones Regional Park 9/13. KH

EL had **Western Bluebirds** actively feeding at her suet feeder in Lafayette 10/10.

A first of season **Hermit Thrush** was at Creekside Park in the El Cerrito-Albany area 9/22. GC

A number of **Cedar Waxwings** were seen at Heather Farm in early October by BP, HH, and FS.

A **Nashville Warbler** and a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** were at Creekside Park near El Cerrito 9/22. GC

Many **Yellow Warblers** were at Heather Farm from 9/7 to early October. HH, FS

An early **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at Maricich Lagoon in Briones 9/13. KH

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was at Heather Farm 9/7, FS, and at her Lafayette home 9/29. KB

A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was in some reeds at Heather Farm natural pond 9/15. FS

Five **Chipping Sparrows** were at Maricich Lagoon in Briones 9/18. KH, and an early **Fox Sparrow** was there as well 9/18. KH

A **White-throated Sparrow** was at Valle Vista Staging area in Moraga 9/21. HB

Many **White-crowned Sparrows** came in from 9/18-9/24. KH, AK, JB

KH also saw a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** at Maricich Lagoon 9/18.

**Western Tanagers** were still at Heather Farm area 9/17 and 9/22. HH

JR had a brief visit from an **Orchard Oriole** 9/18-9/24 at her Alamo home.

There were many **Pine Siskins** at a thistle feeder near Wildcat Park in the El Sobrante/Richmond area. CS

AA Ann Ardillo, KB Kristen Baker, HB Holly Bern, JB Jackie Bobrosky, BC Beth Carver, JC Jim Chiropolos, GC Graham Chisholm, TF Tracy Farrington, SG Susan Greef, HH Hugh Harvey, KH Kevin Hints, RH Ryan Holmes, WH Wen Hsu, AK Alan Kaplan, EL Elizabeth Leitem, EM Ellis Myers, WP Wendy Parfrey, BP Bernt Pettersson, JR Jean Richmond, JRy Jennifer Rycenga, FS Fred Safier, ESa Ellen Sampson, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, CS Colin Smith, CSP Catherine Spaulding, MS Maury Stern, Est Elaine Stamman, ES Emilie Strauss, DW Dan Williams

*Submit Contra Costa County sightings to [mbstern2@yahoo.com](mailto:mbstern2@yahoo.com), 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 them to Maury Stern.*

## Field Trips: End-of-Year Report

The MDAS Chapter features about 45 field trips each year. This past calendar year we numbered more than 425 participants, for an average of almost ten people per field trip.

We also observed 270 species and heard four others. While it's true that nobody sees every bird on our trips, one is more likely to see rare species with the group than by oneself.

So, don't be shy—feel free to join us on one of our upcoming trips. The monthly calendar is printed in the *Quail*, is found on the MDAS website, and is featured on our Facebook page. Hope to see you out on the birding trail soon. ~Hugh Harvey

A recent Mt. Diablo Audubon Society field trip to Pt. Reyes, Cassie Tzur photo



# Trip Reports

## Antioch Dunes, September 12:

After a hot week, the overcast skies and cool Delta breeze were a welcome surprise for three members who took the monthly, 2nd Saturday, docent-led tour of the sand dune

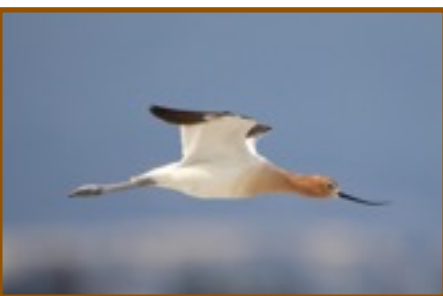
habitat, the only National Wildlife Refuge created to protect an insect. Home to the endangered Antioch Dunes evening primrose, the Contra Costa wallflower, and the elusive Lange's Metalmark butterfly, we saw few birds and zero butterflies, but plenty of naked-stemmed buckwheat on which butterfly eggs are laid. The docents explained the fascinating history of the refuge created in 1980 where dunes once stood 120 feet tall. This year, just 38 Lange's Metalmark have been counted at Antioch Dunes, the only known habitat on Earth for this endangered butterfly. ~Maren Smith

## Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg, September 19:

Though it is a long drive (1-1/2 hours each way), five members and a guest made the trek to Rio Lindo Academy to see Vaux's Swifts fly into an unused chimney after sunset. They were not disappointed, joining more than 100 other observers in seeing 4500 Swifts enter the chimney. They circled above for minutes, making chipping noises; sometimes flying clockwise, sometimes counter-clockwise. No one knows what initiates it, but suddenly the birds start flying into the chimney, diving down before coming to a flutter just as they reach the opening. Slow-motion photography has shown a maximum chimney entry rate of about 360 birds per minute. It is certainly a spectacle which will be remembered by all who saw it. ~Hugh Harvey

## Hayward Shoreline/Winton Avenue, September 24:

The specter of a warm day did not deter 11 members and guests from walking around two sides of Mt. Trashmore, then walking to and around Frank's Dump at the shoreline. We were led by Bob Richmond, Jean's son, who is the expert for that locale.



American Avocet, Jean Halford photo

We had a slight breeze along the bay and were rewarded with thousands of shorebirds for a total of 66 species.

With the bay surface like glass, we saw a distant raft of Ruddy Ducks and three species of Grebe. Many White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows were joined by Yellow Warblers, Savannah Sparrows, a Lincoln's Sparrow, and a Common Yellowthroat. But the best was the shorebird numbers at the giant mudflat which is Frank's Dump. There, we had wonderful views of 16 shorebird species, highlighted by Dunlins, Sanderlings, Marbled Godwits, Willets, Long-billed Dowitchers, Black-bellied Plovers, Stilts, Avocets, a Ruddy

Turnstone, and a Pectoral Sandpiper which managed to fly away before everyone was able to scope it. We also had both Brown and White Pelicans, Say's Phoebes, Red-tailed Hawks, a Peregrine Falcon, and an American Kestrel. ~Hugh Harvey

## Outer Point Reyes, September 26:

The morning started foggy, but soon cleared up for the eight MDAS birders who traveled to Outer Point Reyes. We first headed for Chimney Rock and were not disappointed.



Tropical Kingbird, Beth Branthaver photo

Near the fish docks we saw numerous Common Murres and a pair of Red-throated Loons. As our group came back toward the residence we also found a Tropical Kingbird.

From the overlook we found Heermann's Gulls, Elegant Terns, Pelagic Cormorants, and Eared Grebes. Flying over the hills were several raptors including a Peregrine Falcon, Northern Harrier, and Cooper's Hawk.

After lunch we traveled over to Nunes Ranch where we met a group from the Sacramento Audubon. They had found a Cape May Warbler, which we briefly glimpsed through the trees, and a Western Wood-Pewee.

From there we traveled to the Mendoza Ranch. We found a pair of Great-Horned Owls and a Barn Owl. At the Spaletta Plateau we found a Pacific Golden Plover. Then, at the Nicasio Reservoir we looked for the Red-throated Pipit that had been spotted the previous week. Alas, no RTPI, but we were able to add a number of shorebirds to our list. Our group saw 67 species. ~Beth Branthaver

## Hawk Hill, October 3:

Thirteen birders set out for the Marin Headlands. We arrived at Rodeo Lagoon in partial sun and fog, so we observed much activity: Wigeon and Pintail on the lagoon among several egrets, Purple Finch on the wire, Fox Sparrow as well as the expected sparrows, a cooperative Wrentit, and an Orange-crowned Warbler. This sums up the trip highlights.

Unfortunately, the fog was stronger as we climbed Hawk Hill, so we left on the early side, though not before seeing several Sharp-shinned Hawks, as well as Cooper's Hawk, and Northern Harrier.

All together, our group was able to observe a total of 35 species. ~Fred Safier



Fox Sparrow, Isaac Aronow photo

## November 2015

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

## 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

## January 2016

09	Saturday	Putah Creek
13	Wednesday	East Contra Costa County
23	Saturday	Bodega Bay
30	Saturday	Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/ Shollenberger Park/Ellis Creek

### 2 Saturday, November 14

#### Charleston Slough/South Bay

Leader: Eugenia Larson (925) 806-0644

Carpool leaves from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 730 AM. OR, meet at Terminal Road in Mountain View at 830 AM. Take I-680, exit Mission Boulevard west. Continue through two traffic lights and take I-880 ramp south. Exit to SR 237, connect to US 101 north at Moffett Field. Exit at San Antonio Road, turn right (north) to Terminal Road, turn right, and park. Entrance is on the left. Other areas of interest in the South Bay are Palo Alto Baylands, Alviso, and Redwood Shores. Shorebirds and waterfowl should be plentiful. Bring lunch and a beverage



Black Skimmer,  
Beth Branthaver photo

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. Contact trip leader for questions 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.

**Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride carpool location:** Exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road East in Danville. Park and Ride lot is on the left, one block east of the freeway.

### 2 Tuesday, November 17

#### McNabney Marsh/Mt. View Sanitary District

Leader: Steve Taylor (925) 828-8810

Meet at 9 AM at the Mt. View Sanitary District Visitor Center. Exit from I-680 southbound at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. Exit I-680 northbound at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road, and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will turn left. At 0.4 miles make a sharp left turn onto Mt. View Sanitary District's private road. Follow the road through the entry gate, alongside the freeway, and through the tunnel under I-680. Park and sign-in at the Visitor Center. Trails may be muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and herons. After walking around the ponds we will drive back through the tunnel to the viewing platform on the left to observe more birds and complete a check list of the birds seen. If you wish, bring a lunch and explore the Martinez shoreline in the afternoon on your own.



Black-crowned Night-heron, Maren Smith photo

**Join the Christmas Count: 12/16 in East Contra Costa County and/or 12/19 in Central Contra Costa County. To sign up, contact Jimm Edgar at [ag70@value.net](mailto:ag70@value.net), or call (510) 658-2330.**

### 2 Saturday, November 21

#### Limantour

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Carpool leaves from El Nido Ranch Road at 7 AM. OR, meet at 830 AM at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore. Take SR 24 to Oakland, then I-580 west to Richmond and the San Rafael Bridge (toll). From US 101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1 in Olema, turn right for 0.25 miles, then turn left on Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley Road. This trip includes forest birds on the ridge and ducks, shorebirds and, often, loons and grebes on the bay. Bring lunch and a beverage.



American Coot mother feeding her baby, Joy Shonfeld photo

## Young Birders Club Field Trip

By Kai Mills



Young Birders Club and friends at the Putah Creek Preserve, Joy Dardin photo

Davis area, we had a couple of Swainson's Hawks that were viewed from the car, the first of many birds to come.

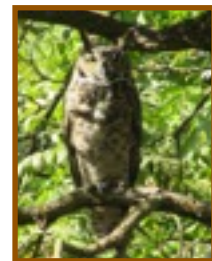
Arriving at 8 AM, we met up with more birders from the group. We quickly got Nuttall's and Downy Woodpecker, and White-breasted Nuthatches on a bare tree, along with a couple of active Yellow Warblers searching for food along a patch of willows. It was strange to see a large flock of about 15 Western Kingbirds fly over.

Six of us gathered at Tracy's house at 615 AM to carpool to the Putah Creek Preserve west of Davis. I had intended to do some homework on the 90 minute drive, but got in some sleep instead. In the

An abundance of Hooded Orioles were seen in the parking lot area, but also down by the creek, all females and juveniles. Right before the trek down to the creek, more than a dozen White-faced Ibis were seen flying overhead.

Along the trail, there were many Yellow and Orange-crowned Warblers, a couple of bathing Wilson's Warblers, and at least one Nashville Warbler. We had read reports of Black-throated Gray Warblers during the past week, but we couldn't get eyes on any.

A Great-horned Owl on a tree leaning over the creek provided great photo opportunities. Other than that, there were six Wood Ducks that flew down the creek, a Belted Kingfisher, a Green Heron, a calling Red-shouldered Hawk that was never seen, and a single Yellow-billed Magpie flyover. Overall, 48 species of birds were observed making it a fun day.



Great-horned Owl, Maren Smith photo

## Young Birder Bio: Meet Kai Mills

My birding career got started in Seattle when I was visiting

my grandparents for the summer. I was 13 years old when my avid birding grandfather led me on a one-on-one bird walk along the Montlake Fill next to the University of Washington. Ever since then, I have been hooked by the beautiful diversity in all the birds I have seen around the world.

I went back home to Tokyo where we were living at the time, and as a fresh, new birder, I returned to Japan not thinking there would be any birds in a city the size of Tokyo, which is a common misconception. Looking back on it now, I wish I had taken advantage of the birding opportunities I could have had in Japan.

Halfway through the school year, our family decided it was time to move back to Lafayette after five and a half years abroad, and instead of simply flying over the Pacific Ocean, we flew home via Africa and Europe. Africa re-sparked my interest in birds and I quickly learned the dozens of common birds that I saw on safaris—I would spot most of the animals and birds, shouting out the bird species, only to have the other families on the safari jeep roll their eyes at me. The beauty in all the African birds, especially the bee-eaters and African penguins near Cape Town, also sparked my interest in photography and I tried to capture the beauty of them all.

When I got back to Lafayette, I was very quick to start adding to my North American life list and would bike over to the Lafayette Reservoir when I had free time. Being less than five minutes away from the reservoir helped me get to the top of the eBird rankings with the most species of birds seen there by an individual.

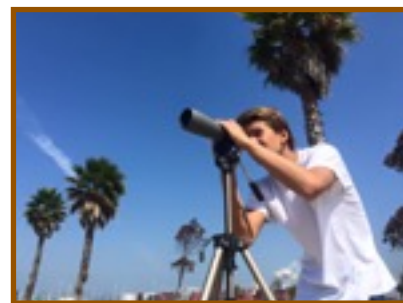
I soon started expanding my birding borders to all around the East Bay, adding different species in different habitats. Erica (one of my mom's friends whom I had introduced to bird watching), Niki (a year younger than me and someone I had also introduced to the world of birding), and I started a group. We tried to find one day every week that fit everyone's schedule to go out and bird. Over the last couple of years we have had many memorable birding experiences together such as seeing a Great Gray Owl in Yosemite that flew right over us, the Christmas Bird Counts, and viewing curious rare warblers in San Francisco.

Recently, in Santa Barbara, I took a photo of a pair of Black Skimmers doing a courtship dance that has earned prizes in local Lamorinda photography contests. I am currently in an advanced art class at school and draw a lot of birds.

My Junior year has started at Acalanes High School in Lafayette and the amount of birding I have done this school year has plummeted. I am also on the Varsity water polo team and swim during the spring, so it is hard to get out in the field. School is time-consuming and tough, but I always try to squeeze in some time for birds.

Just recently, I got my drivers license, so I can now cover more territory and don't have to depend on others. I am signed up for a habitat restoration volunteer project with the Global Student Embassy next summer. I will fly to Ecuador during the first several weeks of summer. Hopefully, it will be a fun experience filled with birds. ~Kai Mills

Check out my blog: <http://kaihaydenmills.wix.com/nikiandkaibirders>



Kai birding at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, Kai Mills photo

## Eagle Scout Project

Brian Murphy recently lent his advice and expertise to sponsor Ethan Woodbury's recently completed Eagle Scout project, owl boxes.

According to Ethan, "Building the boxes was an amazing experience. It was incredible to see the project I'd spent months planning come together before my eyes. In total, we spent around 120 man-hours on the project, so it was definitely a lot of work. I learned a ton about carpentry from doing the project. It was also a tremendous leadership opportunity for me. I've gained plenty of insight into what it takes to be successful as a leader. And of course, it felt great knowing that my project would make a big difference in aiding our local ecosystem."



Ethan and his crew with the completed owl boxes., Ethan Woodbury photo

## MDAS Volunteers

A big thanks to our October volunteers Brian Murphy, Tracy Farrington, and Joe Shellenberg who manned the MDAS table at the Wild Birds Unlimited "Fall Into Nature" Event. A week later, Brian Murphy, Donna Kramer, and Tracy Farrington represented MDAS at the Lindsay Wildlife Experience 60th Celebration.

## AOU Checklist Changes

Each year, with the publication of *The Auk*, the American Ornithologists Union does its lumps and splits routine. This year, most of the changes are a reassignment to different families or in scientific names. For example, the scientific name for American Tree Sparrow is changed from *Spizella arborea* to *Spizelloides arborea*.

Of the several new species added to the *Checklist of North and Middle American Birds*, likely the only one to



Egyptian Goose at the Oakland Zoo, Maren Smith photo

appear in Northern California is Egyptian Goose. At least one has been reported at Lake Merritt during the last ten years with a number of them regularly seen in Southern California. Other new listings are Waved Albatross, Zino's Petrel, Whistling Heron, Dusky Pigeon, Bicolored Wren, and Common Redstart.

Among seabirds, splits include Herald Petrel (to Herald Petrel and Trindade Petrel), Townsend's Shearwater (to Townsend's Shearwater and Newell's Shearwater), and Great Skua (to Great Skua and Brown Skua). There is also a split of the Bahama Woodstar (to Bahama Woodstar and Inagua Woodstar), and changes among Hawaiian Honeycreepers. ~Ellis Myers

## "Walk and Talk"

Saturday morning October 3 was a beautiful day for a "Walk and Talk" at Bishop Ranch Open Space Preserve with Assemblywoman Catharine Baker, 16th District. MDAS Board members Maren Smith and Ariana Rickard (with baby Dmitry) joined Baker and East Bay Regional Park staff who provided natural history information and pointed out an Acorn Woodpecker granary.



Ariana and Dmitry Rickard, youngest MDAS member, at the "Walk and Talk", Ariana Rickard photo

Joined by calling Red-tailed Hawks and nearly 100 hikers, some representing local conservation groups, Baker spoke about the importance of natural spaces and her commitment to supporting these resources for all. ~Ariana Rickard

## Go Green

Consider signing up to receive your *Quail* newsletter via email. You will get your *Quail* faster, view the newsletter in color, help save natural resources, reduce waste, and help our chapter save money. You may read it online or print out individual pages you need to refer to more frequently. Sent to you in pdf format, it will look exactly like the printed newsletter.



Green Heron sketch by Meg Sandri

To start your paper-free *Quail* by email see Pat Schneider, Membership Chair, at a monthly meeting, or email Pat at [patincococo@gmail.com](mailto:patincococo@gmail.com).

## Quail News

Wondering why you received not one, but TWO printed copies of the October *Quail*? Due to a printer error, four pages from the July/August newsletter were accidentally substituted into the October issue. FastPrint kindly reprinted and mailed the corrected copy at no extra cost.

We thank Daliel Leite for stepping up to support MDAS by updating the website that now includes all *Quail* issues as well as current MDAS news and events.

## Project Feederwatch

Embrace winter and count backyard feeder birds for fun and for citizen-science. This Cornell Lab project begins November 12. To join the flock go to [feederwatch.org](http://feederwatch.org).



## Osprey ♦ *Panidon haliaetus*

Ospreys are found only near water, as their diet is almost exclusively of fish. Unlike pelicans and other fish-eaters, Ospreys do not dive into the water, but rather, drop feet first. They can plunge completely below the surface, close their nostrils and nictitating membrane, and grab their prey, then fly away to a nearby perch, orienting the fish head first to reduce air friction for the laborious flight. Their feet are particularly adapted to carrying fish, as there are barbs—specules—that make the feet rough to hold onto a slippery fish. An opposable toe can switch the foot from a zygodactyl (two toes facing forward, two backward) to an anisodactyl formation (three toes facing forward, one backward), further strengthening their grasp.



*Osprey with a fish in its talons,  
Beth Branthaver photo*

Reported at many locations in Contra Costa County, ospreys are found along the bayshore from Point Isabel around to Carquinez Regional Shoreline to Marsh Creek, and inland to Los Vaqueros Reservoir, Lafayette Reservoir, and Heather Farm.

Only one record of breeding was mentioned in the *Breeding Bird Atlas*, however, and that was near Point Pinole Regional Shoreline. As beavers build their dams, they create ponds that attract Ospreys. Beavers also create dead trees that Ospreys claim for nesting sites. The nests are reused and added to each year, and over time, can grow to be enormous. Osprey nests are used by many species of birds other than their builders. Swallows, House Sparrows and other small birds may build nests within Osprey nests. In the spring, before the Ospreys return from migration, Great Blue Herons, Canada Geese, Bald Eagles and other raptors have been known to move in as squatters.

Fortunately, populations of Ospreys have rebounded following their decline in the second half of the twentieth century owing to the ingestion of pesticide-laden fish. The cessation of DDT use in the United States in 1972 has been the major factor in this recovery, but erection of artificial nest towers and new habitat created by construction of reservoirs have also been of benefit. Ongoing use of DDT in malaria-plagued Africa and Asia remains controversial. ~Ellis Myers

### Swan Festival, Marysville, CA, November 13-15, 2015

Timed to honor the return of tens of thousands of tundra swans, this is a spectacular show for bird watchers and photographers in the Yuba-Sutter region. Participate in workshops, the Junior Naturalist Program, vendors, the keynote address, and field trips at levels for all birders. **For information: [www.caswanfestival.com](http://www.caswanfestival.com)**

### Celebrate the 20th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 15-18, 2016

On California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay, is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. At last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified! Sharpen birding skills on field trips, in workshops, and through guest speakers. Registration begins November 7. **For information: [www.morrobaybirdfestival.org](http://www.morrobaybirdfestival.org)**

### San Diego Bird Festival, March 3-6, 2016

Celebrate the 20th year of sea, sage and sand at Marina Village Park in San Diego, CA. Enjoy field trips, workshops, pelagic birding, and family events. The Festival's keynote speaker will feature Jeffrey Gordon, ABA, and the special guest speaker will be Paul Balcich, writer and conservationist. Registration begins October 1. **For information: [www.sandiegoaudubon.org](http://www.sandiegoaudubon.org)**

## MDAS Annual Treasurer's Report 2014-2015

Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS) remains in an excellent position to serve our community. We had another successful year. The annual year-end fundraising drive continued to be strong and our total chapter membership is strong, too.

Due to the generosity of our members, MDAS is allowed to actively pursue our mission. This year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and continued our community education outreach efforts for young people such as the "No Child Left Inside Program" and the Young Birders Club. Your generosity supports our monthly program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, our web site, and more. Each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community.

The General Fund balance covers operations and reserves, the Conservation and Education balance is used towards these efforts, and the *Breeding Bird Atlas* reflects the books held for sale and the results of book sales. ~Steve Buffi, Treasurer

### July 2014 – June 2015

Funds:	Revenue:	Expenses:	Net:	Balance on 7/1/15:
<b>General</b>	\$30,381.03	\$22,593.93	\$7787.10	\$116,990.66
<b>Conservation and Education</b>	\$20.55	\$0	\$20.55	\$16,611.87
<b>Breeding Bird Atlas</b>	-\$529.21	\$96.58	-\$625.79	\$19,056.28
<b>Total All Funds:</b>	<b>\$29,872.37</b>	<b>\$22,690.51</b>	<b>\$7181.86</b>	<b>\$152,658.81</b>



# Have A Berry Happy Thanksgiving!

By Georgette Howington, California Bluebird Recovery Program

As autumn brings us cooler weather, insects begin to overwinter and insectivores, such as the Western Bluebird, eat berries in the wild. Oak Mistletoe (*Phoradendron Villosum*), Toyon (*Heteromeles Arbutifolia*), and Coffeeberry (*Frangula Californica*), are all California natives and members of the Oak Woodland plant community. They are delicious, nutritious food for many birds and animals including Western Bluebirds.

California Toyon is drought tolerant, it grows well in full sun or in dappled shade as an Oak tree understory companion, and it can grow up to 18 feet tall and six feet wide. Toyons can stand alone as a specimen or as an addition to a hedgerow.

In summer, the slow-growing, tall shrub produces small white flowers attracting beneficial insects and butterflies. In the winter, the glossy leafed evergreen has red, holly-like berries perfect for the holiday season. These brilliant red berries, generally eaten when very ripe, persist for several months if not eaten.

*Did you know that the toyon plant was called the Holly Berry in Southern California, and thus, the name "Hollywood"?*

The California Coffeeberry grows fast with little supplemental water and can be pruned as a hedge. Planted in front of a redwood fence, the deep green foliage with black and green highlights is strikingly beautiful in the garden. The ebony-purple berries attract birds and animals, while also providing nesting sites and cover.

I encourage you to plant berry-producing shrubs or a hedgerow of California native plants. Now that bluebirds are showing up more often



Western Bluebird feeding on a toyon bush., Michael Lopez photo

because the population is growing, you can attract them to your garden with berry producing shrubs.

If you want to know more about California native plant communities, the plants that grow in your area, and how to cultivate them, a valuable resource to refer to with fantastic photographs is [www.laspilitas.com](http://www.laspilitas.com).

If you do plant berry shrubs this fall, they will start producing in a few years. A "locally native" plant source for Toyon and Coffeeberry plants is Native Here Nursery in Berkeley. [www.nativeherenursery.org](http://www.nativeherenursery.org)

Please send your Western Bluebird photographs enjoying your berry shrubs to me at [georgette@birdscape.net](mailto:georgette@birdscape.net). Bluebird Blessings, Georgette.

## Not So Common Murres

By Mike Eliot, Wild Birds Unlimited

The plight of Common Murres along California's coastline is unprecedented. Hundreds have been rescued while many more have died as a result of malnourishment. Chicks are most affected as they are unable to maintain weight and body temperature.

Scientists believe that El Niño may be responsible for this terrible phenomenon by raising water temperatures 5-10 degrees near the surface, resulting in food fish going deeper to reach cooler water. Birds have to dive deeper to feed. Much of the food supply has gone too deep for the Common Murres to reach.

Starving and dead Murres are being seen all along the California coast. They are known to be a key indicator species for ocean

conservation and their numbers have been decreasing dramatically.

The public has reported seeing little penguins stranded on Bay Area beaches. Murres look similar to penguins, but, unlike penguins, they can normally fly.

Murres usually spend their lives out at sea and nesting on rocky cliffs. They can dive up to 200 feet using their wings to propel themselves. But, starving Murres are unable to fly and dive making their plight critical.

On Rodeo beach in Marin County, over 80 dead seabirds, mainly Common Murres, were found in early September.

International Bird Rescue (IBR) has taken on the responsibility for rescue and rehabilitation of the starving Murres. They are working long hours and are short on funds to provide enough food and shelter for the hundreds of birds being brought in. On one day they took in 37 new patients—in most years, they seldom see more than ten Murres in a month.

So far, IBR has released over 150 rehabilitated Murres, but they continue to take in more than they release. They are in dire need of money to buy food and medical supplies. You can help by donating to International Bird Rescue online at [birdrescue.org/adopt-murre](http://birdrescue.org/adopt-murre).



Common Murre, International Bird Rescue photo

International Bird Rescue has been helping aquatic birds in the Bay Area, around California, and at a temporary facility in Alaska since 1971. They are a 501(C)3 non-profit that relies on your support to care for more than 5000 birds a year.

At WBU, we have set up a fund for the murres. If you donate to IBR through us, we will match your donation to a total of \$500.

## Roger Tory Peterson

### Ornithologist ♦ Illustrator ♦ Writer

By Ellis Myers

Shortly after the end of World War I, in his home town of Jamestown, Ohio, seventh-grader Roger Tory Peterson and his classmates formed a Junior Audubon Club, going on birding walks in the local parks and surrounding forest with their teacher. Thus began a life-long fascination with birds and all forms of nature. The Junior Audubon leaflets issued by the National Audubon Society sparked Roger's interest in bird illustrations, and he began sketching and photographing the local birds.

In 1925 *The Auk* printed a notice that there would be a bird art show at the next American Ornithologists' Union meeting to be held in New York City. Peterson submitted two paintings, both of which were accepted. At the meeting Peterson met Arthur A. Allen, founder of Cornell

Laboratory of Ornithology; Dr. Frank Chapman, Curator of the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History; and the renowned bird artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes.

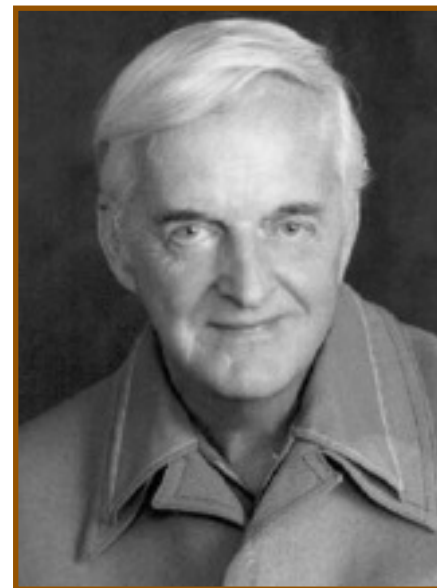
After graduating from high school in 1925 at age 16, Roger worked in a local furniture factory before heading to New York City to attend the Art Students League in 1927. His interest in birds and nature continued. In 1931, Peterson took a job as instructor of art and science at the Rivers Country Day School in Brookline, Massachusetts. While there, having noticed distinctive characteristics of birds that separated them from similar species, Peterson began to formalize his notes and collect his illustrations to prepare a manual for the students.

Based on the idea of Ernest Thompson Seton that used pattern diagrams to teach bird identification, Peterson simplified his drawings of species and used leaders pointing to key characteristics of the bird that distinguished it from similar birds.

His first book, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, was published in 1934, demonstrating the prominent field marks that enabled quick identification. *A Field Guide to Western Birds* was published seven years later.

In 1934, Roger joined the staff of the National Association of Audubon Societies as educational director and art director for *Bird Lore*, the journal that later became *Audubon Magazine*. He redesigned Audubon Junior Leaflets and revised the requirements for the Boy Scouts' Bird Study Merit Badge.

Roger was born on August 28, 1908, in Jamestown, New York, the son of immigrant parents from Sweden and Germany. As a young man he had admired the illustrations of Louis Agassiz Fuertes. His great ambition, he later stated, was to excel Fuertes, who he felt was the finest bird painter who had ever lived.



Roger Tory Peterson, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center photo

In 1943, Roger was drafted into the Army Corps of Engineers, where he worked to produce technical manuals. *Life* magazine used his field guide principles for a plane-spotting manual; later the Air Corps adopted them in their training manual for plane identification as well.

During World War II, in the Pacific theater, more U.S. troops were dying from malaria than from casualties inflicted by the Japanese. Fortunately, DDT was just becoming available and proved to be of astonishing value in preventing both malaria and typhus.

Peterson was assigned to take part in studies of DDT, but the applications on test plots were so light that the pesticide's impacts on birds were not seen. A decade later, in the mid-1950s, after he and his wife, Barbara, moved to Old Lyme, Connecticut, near the mouth of the Connecticut River, they noticed Ospreys nesting near their home were failing to breed successfully.

Analysis of eggs that failed to hatch revealed high concentrations of DDT. Roger spoke out on the issue. Rachel Carson began active research for her book *Silent Spring* at about the

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Illustration from *A Field Guide to Western Birds* by Roger Tory Peterson (1941), noting field marks "wherein live birds may be run down by impressions, patterns, and distinctive marks rather than by the differences of measurements and anatomy that the collector finds useful."

the Quail

## Transitioning From Fall to Winter

By Joanie Smith, East Bay Nature

This time of the year seems to be a favorite for many people. The deer have gone into crazy mode and squirrels are chasing each other into the street and burying everything they can find. We wait for the appearance of the first white-crowned sparrows checking last year's calendar to see if they are "on time" or whether it's time to start worrying. Then comes a golden-crowned sparrow, a hermit thrush, or a ruby-crowned kinglet. But, where's the American goldfinch? Better check that calendar again.

It's also time to get your nest boxes cleaned out and put back up. Birds do use nest boxes as refuges in the winter (and I'm hoping for a VERY wet winter). Bird feeders should be cleaned, repaired, or replaced. Squirrel baffles work great to help keep the torrents of rain we will be having off the feeders. Birds will eat wet seed, but not moldy seed. They also eat more heavily in cold or rainy weather. They need to keep their body fat up to help them get through the stormy nights.

What would they like to eat? Mostly they will be looking for sunflower seeds and high fat foods. Sunflower seeds with no shells seem to be the favorite, crushed peanuts are on the list, millet for some of the ground feeding birds, and nyjer thistle is a good addition. Also, safflower is great in a feeder all by itself. Squirrels don't like safflower (never say never), but they'll usually avoid it if it's not mixed with anything else. Suet is interesting to serve. If you haven't had luck with it before, winter is a good time to start. There are countless flavors, including hot pepper to discourage the squirrels. You may even get some insectivores, like bushtits and warblers.

Our Anna's hummingbirds don't migrate from this area and will be expecting to get their usual energy drinks from their feeders. Don't forget a bird bath! Birds will bathe even during cold weather or in a downpour (which we will be having lots of). Don't forget your umbrella—you'll need it.

## 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, Walnut Creek, CA 94598.

### Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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### MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll me/my family in Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. (MDAS dues are tax-deductible)
- For an additional \$20 please enroll me as a first-time member in the National Audubon Society (NAS). (includes 6 bi-monthly issues of Audubon Magazine)
- Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. (or 2 annual \$250 payments)
- I am enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please send the Quail by  US Mail, or  "Go Green" email

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Send check payable to Mt. Diablo Audubon Society with this application to:  
Membership Chair, 282 Firestone Court, Walnut Creek, CA 94598

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*Osprey with chick, Beth Branthaver photo*

## Roger Tory Peterson

>>continued from Page 10

same time the Petersons implicated DDT in the decline of the local Osprey populations. It is not known, however, if there was any direct connection between these events, although the two naturalists had known each other since 1950.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter awarded both Peterson and Carson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award. President Carter said, "Roger Tory Peterson has achieved distinction as a consummate painter, writer, teacher and scientist. As an unabashed lover of birds and a distinguished ornithologist, he has furthered the study, appreciation and protection of birds the world over. And he has done more. He has impassioned thousands of Americans, and has awakened in millions across this land, a fondness for nature's other two-legged creatures." Peterson was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1983 and 1986.

On March 14, 1961, Roger Tory Peterson spoke to Mount Diablo Audubon Society and others in the Diablo Valley College gym. The April *Quail* of that year reported "The Peterson lecture must have been as gratifying to him as it was to the room filled with intent listeners and viewers. More and more chairs were brought in from other buildings until capacity was nearly reached. Score one for Mount Diablo! He was much interested in the Society mast head, *The Quail*, and pleased to chat with the artist Harry C. Adamson."

Roger died in 1996 at the age of 87. He was respected worldwide as an ornithologist, artist, writer, and wildlife photographer.

In summary, Roger Tory Peterson's legacy can be stated in two quotations from his pen: "... the serious study of natural history is an activity which has far-reaching effects in every aspect of a person's life"—he said in an address to the New York State legislature—"It ultimately makes people protective of the environment in a very committed way;" and "our world is 'one world,' where everything is interdependent—soil, robins, and hickory trees—brook trout, damselflies, and mink—and men."—in his book *Wildlife in Color*.



*Illustration from Two Little Savages by Ernest Thompson Seton (1903), which inspired Roger Tory Peterson's concept for bird identification.*