



the Quail

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

Volume 61, Number 5

February 2016

February Program: Ospreys in the Bay Area ♦ Tony Brake

The last decade has seen a remarkably rapid expansion of Osprey nesting into San Francisco Bay tidelands. From a single nest reported in 1990 on Mare Island Strait in Vallejo, in 2003, the number of nests began a steady climb and expansion southward in the Bay. What's behind this increase? What conservation challenges do nesting Osprey face here, and how can we help them?

Tony Brake has been monitoring nesting Osprey along San Francisco Bay since 2012. A volunteer with Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO), he is the lead author of a paper on Bay Area Ospreys that was published fall 2014 in the journal *Western Birds*.

Before retirement, Tony was a research scientist in molecular neuroscience at UCSF. He participated in a nesting survey of Cooper's Hawks for GGRO from 2003-2010 and monitors nesting Golden Eagles in East Bay Regional Parks.

Historical records from the early 1900s, as well as surveys updated in the late 1980s, and more recent information from local breeding bird atlases indicate that Ospreys rarely nested on San Francisco Bay prior to 2005. In 2013, Tony Brake and his team surveyed 17 successful nests producing 44 Osprey fledglings, and in 2015, nesting Ospreys observed baywide showed that the number of successful nests had increased to 23, with 56 fledglings. Furthermore, 38 nest sites observed were occupied.

They also looked at findings from previous annual nest surveys of a portion of San Francisco Bay beginning in 1999. These results demonstrate a greater breeding abundance than had previously been recognized, about half at Mare Island with the remainder mainly along the eastern shore of the bay.

Historically, Ospreys nest in trees, but with increasing development, they now readily nest on artificial structures such as cranes, light structures, and power poles, some of



Two baby Ospreys call to their mother, Joy Shonfeld photo

which are dangerous or in derelict condition requiring nests to be removed. Over half of the unsuccessful pairs experienced significant human disturbance. Conservation efforts should focus on reducing disturbance and alternative nest platforms should be erected as part of efforts to deter nesting when it conflicts with human activity.

In fact, several nest platforms have been installed that were quickly and successfully adopted by Osprey pairs, thus accommodating the continuing expansion of this charismatic raptor species.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 4** 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: **Tony Brake**
*Go Green-bring your cup for tea/coffee.

NEXT MONTH: Thursday, March 3, Renewable Energy in California
♦ Garry George

Birding Information

Our local California representative, Assemblywoman Catharine Baker, will speak about environmental issues affecting our district and state and take questions from our members.

Baker was elected to the California State Assembly in November 2014 representing the 16th District. Her legislative agenda is intently focused on four key areas which she describes as her "four pillars": education, infrastructure, financial discipline, and pro-jobs policies.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

It was with great interest that I read an article in the January 1, 2016 issue of the *Contra Costa Times* about the return of AC-4 to the wild, one of the first condors captured that was then bred in captivity in an attempt to save the species from extinction. The article stated that California Condors can live to be over 60 years old in the wild; AC-4 was estimated to be about 35 years old. They returned the bird to Kern County where it had initially been captured.

I remember doing a Christmas Bird Count in Southern California in 1981. Driving home on December 20, as I was at the I-5 Grapevine area, I saw a large bird soaring over the freeway. I stopped my car and got out and sure enough, it was a California Condor. I stood by the highway as cars rushed by and thought, people don't know what they're missing. Even at that time, experts realized that this species was in big trouble, mostly from the ingestion of lead shot as they ate animals that had been shot but not recovered by hunters. The use of lead shot in our state will be banned in

about two years aided by the work of Audubon California to get a bill passed in Sacramento. Anyway, it was fun to read about the return of this magnificent bird. I hope all of us will get a chance to see them now that they are back among us.

I think one of the finest things our chapter has created is a brochure on the negative effects of feral cats and cats that are left outside. My neighbor, who has a cat that they let out quite a bit, "jokingly" showed me the hummingbird that their cat had brought to their doorstep. He thought it was funny; I did not.

Our chapter continues to work on getting the word out on how devastating outdoor and feral cats can be for wild birds. It is a tough uphill battle. (see the "Take Action" link on our website at www.diabloaudubon.com to read the published Letter to the Editor on feral cats along with County Supervisor email information if you would like to communicate your concerns)

Hope to see you at an MDAS event soon.

Welcome New and Rejoining Members

Bennett Berke	Pleasant Hill
Patty Biasca	Walnut Creek
John and Diane Blackman	Pinole
Stephen Bonn	Walnut Creek
Douglas D. Bradley	Diablo
Paul Brenner	Martinez
Brendan Brown	Walnut Creek
Gary Brown	Walnut Creek
Arthur Castillo	Martinez
Doris & Peter Daniels	Oakley
Karin Deas	Walnut Creek
Stephen Dorfman	Concord
Beatrice Ferreira	Walnut Creek
Marilyn Fickett	Walnut Creek
Thomas Finger	Walnut Creek
Tina Fletcher	Orinda
Joanne Fowler	Alamo
Jaya Francis	Clayton
Juan Pablo Galván	
Carol Galvin	Alamo
Tom Gardner	Walnut Creek
Marcia Grassman	Walnut Creek
Sherri Hedman	San Ramon
Donna Herdman	Walnut Creek
Judy Hirabayashi	Walnut Creek
Elizabeth Hoople	Walnut Creek
Daniel R. Jacobs	Pleasant Hill
Gessica Johnston	Walnut Creek
Bradley Mitchell	Danville
Sue Clint Phalen	Walnut Creek
Wendy Raggio	Pleasant Hill



Male Northern Cardinal drawing by Megan Sandri

Dorothea Ray	Walnut Creek
Mike Robertson	Concord
Willie M. Rose	Walnut Creek
Heather Rosmarin	Pleasant Hill
Mark Schmieder	Concord
Alice E. Schofield	Walnut Creek
Barbara Shuman	Concord
Vicky Spranger	Danville
Linda Stanley	Brentwood
R.C. Stephens	Walnut Creek
Barbara Stevens	Danville
Gary Stevens	Lafayette
Sandra Tickner	Concord
Karin Wagner	Walnut Creek
Darrell & Joan Wise	Danville

"Go Green" and receive the *Quail* by email. Print pages you need and enjoy the newsletter in color.
Contact: patinococo@gmail.com

MDAS on the Web
www.diabloaudubon.com
www.diabloaudubon.org/mobile (mobile only)
www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon
www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society/

Q This bird, listed as endangered, also known as a flinthead, was formerly a fairly common post-breeding visitor to southern California. In recent years, only a few are seen each year, at the southern end of the Salton Sea, or in San Diego County.

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

DKOORSTW

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Many highlights occurred these past two months: First county record and second Northern California record (Farallones in the 80s) of **Brown-crested Flycatcher** in Holland Tract on the East Contra Costa County Christmas Count LK, RF, JL; first county record of **White-winged Doves** (same as preceding); a **Northern Goshawk** at Concord Naval Weapons Station during the Central Contra Costa County Christmas Count TR, the first in over 30 years. Fortunately, for the editor of Bird Sightings, Logan Kahle returned from Cornell on his winter break and Albert Linkowski returned from a long vacation, immediately enhancing the number of sightings.

LK and DW saw 33 **Brant** from the Canal Boulevard viewing platform in Richmond 1/4.

Cackling Geese were at Heather Farm 11/20, HH, and 12/15 at West County Wastewater Treatment Plant (WCWTP).

Wood Ducks have been at the Seven Hills School Pond and the creek at the Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga. HH, BM, H&MB

Eurasian Wigeon has been at Point Isabel 12/15, LK, and Miller-Knox RP 12/26, LL.

LK saw two **Blue-winged Teal** at McNabney Marsh on 12/15.

A **Eurasian sub-species of Green-Winged Teal** was found by AL at McNabney Marsh 12/2. This bird has a horizontal white stripe high on the body, while ours has a vertical white stripe at the front. TE, JS, EK, SL, DK, and JH saw the bird in the next few days before it left.

The first **Redheads** in two years appeared locally with one 12/24 and 12/25 seen by FS and TE, then by EL and DK. The next one arrived at Lafayette Reservoir 1/2. PS, JA Previously, one had been at Clifton Court Forebay (CCF) in East Contra Costa County. AL, RB, LK

Both **White-winged** and **Black Scoters** have been at the Richmond

Marina Vincent Park Area for months, now seen by dozens of birders.

Barrow's Goldeneyes were in the Ibis Drive Pond of Cypress Grove Park in Brentwood as reported by PS, RB, JH, and CL.

Hooded Mergansers were at Heather Farm Pond 11/24, HH, and at the Valle Vista Staging Area bridge 12/7. BM, H&MB

A possible **Yellow-billed Loon** was reported by ES and her husband 12/14 between Ferry Point and the Richmond Marina.

AKr had a flyover of 12 **American White Pelicans** at his Richmond house 12/27.

LK saw about 20 **White-faced Ibis** near Bethel Island 12/13.

A **Bald Eagle** flew over JC's Orinda home 12/29. DW saw one on the north side of Los Vaqueros 1/10.

GC saw a **Sora** in the reeds between two docks near the Visitor's Center at Lafayette Reservoir 1/9.

Thirty **Sandhill Cranes** flew west over CM's Alamo home 12/31.

A **Ruff**, first found in October by AL at the WCWTP, was re-found by LK 12/15 at the same site. It was seen by many over the next two days. JHo, BD, GC, AM, TH, JB, GZ, MR, MP, EK, CS

Mew Gulls returned in large numbers per usual.

Elegant Terns stayed later than usual with last reports 11/21.

GG found a **Burrowing Owl** along Bethel Island Road near Gateway Boulevard 12/1, and B&KB found one on a fence near the trail from the 51st Street entrance to the Bay Trail in Richmond.

SS heard a **Long-eared Owl** in early morning on 12/20 in the Contra Costa portion of Redwood RP.

Lewis's Woodpeckers were at the northern entrance to Los Vaqueros Reservoir 11/22. GC

Many **Yellow-shafted Northern Flickers** were seen 11/24, AL Newhall Park, 12/4 AL Lydia Lane Trail, 12/4 JE Pinole (well-described), and 12/31 RO Holland Tract.

Multiple observers have seen **Mountain Bluebirds** at the north entrance to Los Vaqueros Reservoir and the Contra Loma RP in Antioch.

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at Lydia Lane Trail 12/4, AL, and 12/15, LK.

The **Brown-crested Flycatcher** was seen by many before it moved on.

The **Tropical Kingbird** of Heather Farm continues to attract a large number of interested birders.

Yellow-billed Magpies have been in Knightsen near Gateway Road 11/22, GC, and 12/2, RB.

Overwintering **Tree Swallows** in the Delta are not unusual, but LK saw 10 in the Meeker Slough area 12/15.

RB has been finding remarkable late **Swallows** at the Big Break Trail area including **Northern Rough-winged** 11/11, **Bank** 11/11, **Cliff** 11/11, and **Barn** 12/5 and 1/8. ER found **Violet-greens** at the Lafayette Reservoir 12/27 and BD found some at Holland Tract 1/11. CS saw a **Barn Swallow** in Orinda 12/18.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were unusual at the Lafayette home of BP 12/3 and even further east at the Clayton Community Park 12/9 by AL.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were at Clifton Court Forebay 12/17, AL, RB, 12/23, LK, at Inspiration Point 12/20 FC, TE, and at Wendell Park in Richmond 12/23, JHo.

DS saw two **Townsend's Solitaires** along Mitchell Canyon Trail 11/22.

Phainopepla have been feeding on mistletoe berries at Clayton Community Park 12/4, AL, and 12/15, JR. J-CS saw them at the entrance to Donner Canyon near Regency Drive on 1/4.

RB saw a **Chipping Sparrow** at Creekside Park in Brentwood 11/19.

Both **Slate-colored** and **Red** races of **Fox Sparrows** have been reported. The expected race in our area is **Sooty**. AL, LK, JC, RB, AKr, JA

The **Pine Siskin** irruption was noted by many.

A **Swamp Sparrow** returned to Lafayette Reservoir 1/2, JA, KM, PS. DW saw one 12/30 at the Big Break Trail. >>>continued on Page 7

Trip Reports

Charleston Slough/South Bay,

November 14: Twenty-one members and guests enjoyed a pleasant day birding the South Bay region. At Charleston Slough in Mountain View, we saw two Semipalmated

Sandpipers among the usual herons, ducks, and shorebirds. We finally spotted the American Bittern that hangs out in the



American Bittern,
Isaac Aronow photo

wet spot just off the trail between Shoreline Lake and Terminal Road. The lake had both Horned and Eared Grebes, Surf Scoters, some fishing Brown Pelicans, and a group of Ruddy Ducks. A flock of Cedar Waxwings in the treetops was enjoyed by all. At Byxbee Park we saw several Western Bluebirds off the parking lot. The smaller pond at Radio Road in Redwood Shores yielded Mew and Glaucous-winged

Gulls. Ducks included Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, and American Wigeon. We finished the day overlooking the San Francisco Bay in Foster City with 12 Black Skimmers and a Surf Bird among the many Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher, Marbled Godwit, Willet, Black-bellied Plover, and peeps. We totaled 80 species for the day. ~**Eugenia Larson**

McNabney Marsh/Mt. View Sanitary District, November 17: On a cold morning, 15 birders began the slow hunt for birds, but as the day warmed up we managed to see 45 different bird species when the check list was tallied. Some of the birds seen included Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, Great Egret, Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Song Sparrow, White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, White Pelican, a Mute Swan pair, and, of course, a Black Phoebe. The Great-tailed Grackle, a target bird, was not present on this day. Hopefully, we will catch him on the field trip in March. ~**Steve Taylor**

Limantour Area/Point Reyes, November 21:

Ten members and guests spent a beautiful, 65 degree, fair weather day at Point Reyes. The outstanding bird of the day was a Pileated Woodpecker seen near the bathrooms in the gravel parking lot at the Bear Valley Headquarters. Large flocks of Surf Scoters lined the breaking wave areas of the beach, but other ducks and shorebirds were sparse. Other birds were limited in numbers although 47 species were seen. The Muddy Hollow tidal pond is almost filled in with reeds. The dry year has had a significant impact. ~**Maury Stern**

Niles Canyon Area, December 10: Five members and guests braved what was forecast as a rainy day. We avoided most of the rain and had a wonderful day of birding with 40 species seen. Highlights included ten species of waterfowl including looks at two male Hooded Mergansers, Spotted Sandpiper and lots of Yellow-rumped Warblers. The morning ended with a Raven sitting beside the drinking fountain totally unafraid of our group 20 feet away~**Jimm Edgar**

Sacramento/Colusa NWR, December 12: Thirteen participants headed north early to spend the day at the Sacramento Valley Refuges. On the way there, we saw our first of many groups of Tundra Swans. South of Colusa on Abel Road, we saw most of the expected duck species, a few white geese, a Wilson's Snipe and a Bald Eagle flyover. At Colusa, we added Eurasian Widgeons, a Cackling Goose, Bufflehead, and Scaup to our list. We drove the auto tour where we got views of White-faced Ibis, a



Northern Pintails,
Dana Slauson photo

huge Black-crowned Night-heron rookery, American Pipet, and a large group of Ross's and Snow Geese where we could compare the two. From Colusa, we drove northwest through agricultural fields and found large groups of shorebirds including dowitchers, stilts, Western and Least Sandpipers, and a few Long-billed Curlews, but no Sandhill Cranes. Heading west, we toured the Sacramento NWR and saw another Bald Eagle, a large group of Ring-necked Ducks, and were able to find several blue-morph Snow Geese. For the day, we counted 72 species. ~**Beth Branthaver**

Solano County Raptors and More, December 26: The day was clear and cold, with a swift, steady wind blowing from the north during the entire trip, much to the chagrin of the ten birders braving it. As such, many birds were penned down, braced against the wind and chill, mostly hidden from view. Still, we had dozens of buteos, including Red-tailed Hawk, Red-Shouldered Hawk, and a probable over-wintering Swainson's Hawk. American Kestrel was fairly common, and we saw both Great Horned and Burrowing Owls. There were large flocks of Long-billed Curlew and American Goldfinch, and upwards of 20 Loggerhead Shrikes. We saw 10-12 Say's Phoebe, over 100 Common Raven, and numerous Western Meadowlark and Horned Lark. The waterfowl treat of the day was a pair of Hooded Mergansers. At a dairy on the road to Birds Landing, we saw a large mixed gathering of European Starling, Brewer's, Red-winged and Tricolored Blackbirds. At the Montezuma Slough fishing access, we saw at least two dozen Mute Swans. We didn't locate three of the target species this year: Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk and Mountain Plover, but the "official" tally was 60 species. After the group departed, the trip leader saw an adult Golden Eagle perched on a utility pole at close range and a couple of White-throated Swifts. Despite the wind, it was a good day of birding. ~**Gary Fregien**

Putah Creek/Lake Solano, January 9: Though plagued most of the day by a light drizzle, 17 enthusiastic birders (including guests from as far away as Connecticut and Chile) enjoyed abundant birds and 65 species. Most of the target birds were seen, including Eurasian Wigeon, Wood Duck (Rosita Harvey counted 22!), Common and Hooded Merganser, Green Heron, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, and Phainopepla. Also, perhaps noteworthy, was an impressive number of Buffleheads (probably 500 all told) and a White-throated Sparrow.~**Fred Safier**

February 2016

06	Saturday	Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
08	Monday	Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh
11	Thursday	Grizzly Island Wildlife Area
20-21	Sat./Sun.	Los Banos/Panoche Valley
24	Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park

March 2016

02	Wednesday	Walnut Creek City Parks
09	Wednesday	Contra Loma Reservoir
15	Tuesday	McNabney Marsh/Mt. View SD
19	Saturday	Tomales Bay State Park
24	Thursday	Valle Vista
30	Wednesday	Lake Lagunitas

1 Saturday, February 6

Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve

Leader: Ethan "Chick" Chickering (925) 686-9231

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 8 AM. **OR**, meet at 845 AM in Westgate Landing Park at end of Glascock Road. Take SR 4 to Antioch Bridge (toll), and go north on SR 160 along river to Rio Vista bridge. Turn right on SR 12 for 11.5 miles. East of Terminous, turn right onto the exit to Glascock Road. Go under the bridge, turn left onto Glascock Road, and continue to the park at the end. Expected birds include Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, hawks, and grassland birds. Trip will go in light rain. Bring lunch and a beverage.

1 Monday, February 8

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh (High Tide)

Leader: Sandy Ritchie (925) 685-8048

Carpool leaves at 8 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. **OR**, meet at 830 AM in parking lot by Lake Merritt. Take SR 24 to Oakland and I-980, take Grand Avenue exit, and turn left on Grand. Enter park at Children's Fairyland (entry fee), and follow road around to parking lot entrance on right between boathouse and aviary. Birding through the many ducks and gulls, we may find a Tufted Duck, a bird seen almost annually. We will then drive to Arrowhead Marsh for the high tide around 1115 AM; the rising tide should flush out rails. The area is also good for shorebirds and loons on the estuary. A visit to Garretson Point will finish our trip. Bring lunch and a beverage.

1 Thursday, February 11

Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Carpool leaves at 7 AM from Sun Valley Mall. **OR**, meet at 830 AM at Refuge headquarters. Take I-680 north, then I-80 east to SR12. Follow SR12 through Fairfield, watch for sign to Grizzly Island Refuge on right, and follow road to headquarters. Entry fee for refuge. Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along road. The California Department of Fish and Game's Grizzly Island Wildlife Area is in the heart of the 84,000-acre Suisun Marsh, the largest contiguous estuarine marsh in the United States providing habitat for more than 200 species of birds and home to a variety of threatened or endangered wildlife and plants. We may see the herd of Tule Elk. We may also bird at the Rush Ranch if time permits. Bring lunch and a beverage.

1 Saturday-Sunday, February 20-21

Los Banos/Panoche Valley

Leaders: Beth Branthaver (925) 944-1856
and Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

On Saturday we'll leave from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 630 AM to bird Santa Fe Grade Road, together with the San Luis and Merced Wildlife Refuges; we should see a full range of waterfowl and raptors. On Sunday, we will bird Mercey Hot Springs and Panoche Valley. Target birds include Mountain Bluebird, Mountain Plover, and Long-eared Owl. Motel options in Los Banos include Best Western Executive Inn (209) 827-0954, Los Banos Days Inn (209) 826,9690, Vagabond Inn Executive Los Banos (209) 827-4677; and in Santa Nella, Holiday Inn Express (209) 826-8282. Participants need to bring lunch for both days. A communal (optional) dinner is being planned for Saturday evening. A fee is charged at Mercey Hot Springs. If you plan to go on the trip, please call the leaders as soon as possible for likely last minute detail changes.

3 Wednesday, February 24

Sunol Regional Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson (925) 806-0644

Carpool leaves at 730 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride, Danville. **OR**, meet at 800 AM in the first parking lot on the left at Sunol Regional Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Road. Go left under I-680 and drive four miles south on Calaveras; turn left on Geary Road and go two miles to park. Possible entry fee. Look for Wild Turkey along Geary Road. Golden Eagles, raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens are possible. Bring lunch and a beverage.

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 (riders should help with gas, 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

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

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

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 intersection with St. Stephens Drive.

Saturday, February 27, 9-11 AM
Shell Ridge Open Space "Walk & Talk" with
Assemblywoman Catharine Baker—Details Page 6



Wood Stork ♦ *Mycteria americana*

Wood Storks are a signature bird of the Everglades and other refuges of Florida, such as the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge and Corkscrew Swamp. They also can be found in coastal Georgia at Harris Neck NWR and in swampy places like the Lake Martin Bird Sanctuary in Louisiana.

Unlike any other wading bird in its appearance, the Wood Stork is about three and a half feet tall with a wing span of five feet. The bird is covered with white feathers with the exception of the tail and the primary flight feathers which are black. The long unfeathered legs and light colored feet blend with its naked gray upper neck and head area. A heavy long dark bill (yellow as a juvenile) is very wide close to the head and curves downward.

The only stork that breeds in the United States, the Wood Stork is a colonial breeder, nesting in the tops of cypress and other tall trees.

Wood Storks use their massive beak to feed in shallow water, catching a variety of food in their bill—fish, crayfish, salamanders, tadpoles, shrimp, frogs, insects, or an occasional baby alligator—tossing their head back to swallow.

This is known as “grope feeding” because the stork does everything by touch, a reflex thought to be the fastest of any reflex in the vertebrate world. They also use their feet to stir the bottom when collecting food, a technique that startles prey from the vegetation into the beak.



Wood Stork, Beth Branthaver photo

In the 1950s, summer Wood Storks counts at the Salton Sea exceeded 1500 according to Arnold Small’s *California Birds*. By the 1990s, however, fewer than 100 birds were seen there. This year, *eBird* shows only a few records of immature, post-breeding visitors flying up from south of the border, all in the vicinity of the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge.

~Ellis Myers

“Walk and Talk” with Assemblywoman Baker, Saturday, February 27, 9-11 AM

Join Assemblywoman Catharine Baker for a casual nature hike in the Shell Ridge Open Space co-sponsored by Mount Diablo Audubon Society and the local chapter of the Sierra Club. The hike will emphasize birding and enjoying nature while allowing participants an opportunity to meet Assemblywoman Baker, hear her remarks, and ask her questions.

Catharine is a mother of school-age twins and an active parent leader in local schools and youth programs. As Vice-Chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee, Catharine works to protect California students’ access to a quality, affordable education. In addition, Baker serves on the Assembly Transportation, Business and Professions, Privacy and Consumer Protection, and Joint Legislative Audit Committees.

Meet at the Shell Ridge Open Space entrance by Indian Valley Elementary, 555 Marshall Drive, Walnut Creek 94598. Parking is limited, so carpools are encouraged. Wear comfortable shoes, dress in layers, and bring water, a snack, and binoculars. Heavy rain cancels.

Waterbird Festival, Tiburon, February 6

Celebrate scaups, scoters, cormorants and more! Visit Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary for naturalist-led bird walks, field trips, and bird-themed activities. Bring binoculars or use spotting scopes to see waterbirds that call Richardson Bay home. Activities include a Gull Identification Workshop, Birding Basics, a bird walk in Blackie’s Pasture, guest speaker Judy Irving (Director of *Pelican Dreams* and *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*), John Muir ‘Jack’ Laws sketching class, exhibit of *Audubon Magazine* photography winners, and food trucks. **To register:** richardsonbay.audubon.org/waterbird-festival-2016

Winter Wings Festival-Klamath Basin Audubon Society, February 11-14

Enjoy winter birding at its best at Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech) in Klamath Falls, Oregon including fifty+ field trips, workshops, receptions, and talks related to birding, nature photography, and the Klamath Basin, also featuring James Currie, life-long wildlife enthusiast and host of the birding TV show *Nikon’s Birding Adventures* and Stephen Johnson, landscape photographer, author, designer and educator. **For more information:** dsamuels@charter.net

San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, Vallejo, February 19-21

Join us at Mare Island for our 20th annual celebration of the millions of birds that fly through the San Francisco Bay area at the peak of migration. Join hikes, tours, and The Wildlife Exploration and Birding Expo. **For more information:** www.sfbayflywayfestival.com

California Duck Days Festival, Davis, February 20

Taking place in the heart of the Pacific Flyway, in Davis, CA, the 20th annual festival, fit for all ages, celebrates wetlands and wildlife. See displays of California Junior Duck Stamp winners, build wood duck boxes, attend waterfowl identification workshops, fish for trout, or listen to kids do duck calls. Tickets required. **For more information:** yolobasin.org

Young Birder Bio: Meet Michael Pang

I began birding when I was in the fourth grade. I started because it's fun to learn about birds and observe them. I also enjoy photographing birds because it becomes a record of birds I see. Here's a link to my flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/91887826@N04/>



Michael Pang, age 12, birding with the Young Birders Club, Tracy Farrington photo

In Orinda, where I live, I see many birds in my yard such as Great-horned Owls and Pacific-slope Flycatchers. There are many places I like to bird such as Fort Mason where I saw two American Redstarts, in Golden Gate Park where I saw a Blackburnian Warbler and a Red-eyed Vireo, and at Point Reyes where I saw Ferruginous Hawks, Barn Owls, and Tricolored Blackbirds. There are also many, many places in the East Bay where there are great opportunities to bird.

My favorite birding trip was when I traveled to various places in Alaska and saw 32 "life birds" such as Gyrfalcon, Tufted and Horned Puffins, Parakeet Auklet, Kittlitz's and Marbled Murrelet, Willow Ptarmigans, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Arctic Warbler. Currently, my life list of North America consists of 316 birds. I recently added two birds to my list, the Lawrence's Goldfinch and Phainopepla.

I like the Young Birders Club because I've met people who share the same passion who also go on birding field trips together. ~Michael Pang

the Quail

YBC Field Trip—A Three Rail Day

Ten of us met at the Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary boardwalk in Alameda at 7 AM for the Young Birders Club (YBC) field trip where we were greeted by hundreds of Dunlins and Western Sandpiper. When I looked more carefully I also spotted some Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, and Forster's Terns.

As the group talked about birds, an Osprey flew over and made a dive. We also spotted a Black Oystercatcher and saw some Sanderlings at the beach.

Next, we drove to Arrowhead Marsh where the tide was getting high. We immediately spotted two Ridgeway's Rails with ease. After a bit more searching we also found two Sora. I was pleased because this was only my second time seeing one and my first really good look at them.

We also saw Surf Scoters, scaups, Common Goldeneyes, and Clark's Grebes, and we spotted two pair of Blue-winged Teals at close range. I also found a Virginia Rail in the brushes and shrubs, making it a three rail day.

It was another great day with the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's Young Birders Club.

~Michael Pang



Top to bottom: Ridgeway's Rail, Virginia Rail, and Sora, Michael Pang photos

Observations

>>>continued from Page 3

White-throated Sparrows returned to JR's Alamo yard as well as a number of sites around the county.

A few **Red Crossbills** remained. On 11/20 there were 12 at the Tilden Botanical Garden, SM. 11/21 ES and WH saw some more at the garden and MR saw some at the Sequoia Bowl near Joaquin Miller Park. On 11/27, CD saw several at the Skyline gate of Redwood Regional Park. FS saw four at Heather Farm Pond 1/1.

Lawrence's Goldfinches appeared in a surprising flock of up to 25 at the Clayton Community Park 11/26, JB, and other Clayton sightings were by AL, CS, GC, MR, DK, JR, and TH. The same day, on Red Road off Mitchell Canyon at Mount Diablo SP, four were seen by GC.

A pair of **Evening Grosbeaks** visited the Orinda home of JC 12/29.

JA Jeff Acuff, H&MB Holly and Martin Bern, B&KB Barbara and Ken Berniker, JB John Blakelock, RB Russ Bright, JC Jim Chiropolos, GC Graham Chisholm, FC Farley Connelly, BD Bob Dunn, TH Travis Harrell, JH John Harris, HH Hugh Harvey, JHo Jeff Hoppes, LK Logan Kahle, DK Dave Kent, AKr Alan Krakauer, EK Elizabeth Kroll, CL Cathy Leach, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, AM Aaron Maizlich, BM Bruce Mast, MP Michael Park, BP Bernt Petterssen, ER Ellen Reintjes, JR Jean Richmond, FS Fred Safier, DS Dan Sandri, J-CS Juan-Carlos Solis, CS Catherine Spaulding, ES Elaine Stamman, CSt Cuyler Stapelmann, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills, GZ Gena Zolotow

Right: Putah Creek/Lake Solano Field Trip participants, Cassie Tzur photo

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 them to Maury Stern.



Donor Thank You

The Board of Directors of Mount Diablo Audubon Society thanks all those who contributed during the 2014-2015 fiscal year. These donations continue to support the on-going programs dedicated to the preservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife, and promote an awareness of our natural wonders among young people. Thank you!

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Hugh B. and Rosita O. Harvey

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Volunteer News



Rossmoor Wood Shop volunteers, L-R: Bruce Thom, Rob Babb, and Brian Murphy, Mike DiCarlo photo

In a letter to MDAS, Carolyn Brady, Waterfowl Programs Coordinator, wrote, "Thank you! The California Wood Duck Program fully appreciates the time and work you've put forth in assisting with our nest boxes and pre-cutting the entrance holes--top notch work!"

Brian Murphy coordinated the project in collaboration with the Rossmoor Wood Shop. Their efforts will provide the California Wood Duck Program with a two-year supply of wood duck box fronts, allowing families and kids to assemble duck boxes at the California Duck Days Festival. (see Page 6 for details)

Volunteers routed out 180 oval entry holes and cut ladders on the backside so that ducklings can climb out to join mom in the creek. Lots of saw dust and many hours of wood work were tallied to finish the project.

MDAS will be at the following Lafayette Partners in Education (LPiE) Middle School Science Fairs from 6-8 PM: Lafayette 2/25, Springhill 3/3, Happy Valley 3/22, Burton Valley 3/24, and Stanley 3/30. If you can help at the MDAS exhibit table, contact Brian Murphy at: b-murphy21@hotmail.com.

Backyard Birder

A good way for birders to expand their observational skills is by participating in Project FeederWatch (feederwatch.org). What began as an annual count by the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, Canada, in 1976 FeederWatch expanded to include all of North America through a partnership with Cornell Lab of Ornithology by 1987. I signed on as a citizen scientist in 2006. Since then, between November and April I've completed eight seasons, submitted 153 counts, and observed forty-six species at the feeders, birdbath, or in the bushes and trees in my yard.

Through this participation I've learned to identify species that routinely visit each fall and I've noticed what works to attract newcomers in the mini-habitat which is my yard. Anyone who feeds birds can learn these things through observation and study. However, by committing the time to paying attention, following a specific protocol, and recording

observational data, a feeding station becomes a laboratory. It is through the data we submit that ornithologists can see the patterns of increase or decline in local populations and can chart the effects of global warming on the species that frequent our backyards.



Nuttall's Woodpecker on a backyard suet feeder, Maren Smith photo

Just this past season, for example, they unlocked the mystery of Pine Siskin irruption by analyzing two million observations over twenty-four years. It turns out that present Pine Siskin irruptions are tied to weather patterns that occur several years earlier and can involve four different paths—north to south, west to east, and

reversed. Predictably, the birds should be here two to three years after a wet U.S. winter and a dry one further north. (see Winter Bird Highlights, Project FeederWatch 2014-15)

It must have been a very dry Canadian winter a few years ago, dryer than in our area, because these noisy, messy eaters are arriving in huge flocks. During the first week in December on a particularly rainy day, I was drawn, as I habitually am, to my kitchen windows. FeederWatch does that to you.

What I saw was a small miracle. At each of three feeding stations in my front yard, fluttering about, above, adjacent, and pecking on the ground below, were over thirty Pine Siskin. In total, nearly one hundred birds were observed, a record for my yard. Joining the siskin were small groups of juncos, chickadees, a Nuttall's Woodpecker, a couple of nuthatches, and my exquisite winter visitor, the Townsend's Warbler.

I might have missed this if I wasn't hooked on counting.

~Elizabeth Leite

Snapshots

Wanting to improve my wildlife photography skills, last November, I participated in the "Bird Photography for Amateurs" class presented by Beth Branthaver and Cassie Tzur at Wild Birds Unlimited. In addition to two nights of in-depth instruction, we went on field trip to Lake Merritt. Nothing beats getting to spend time in the field with experts to lend advice and answer questions in-the-moment.

The format of the class was perfect for beginners. We started with camera basics—types of cameras and lenses, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. After we were clear on the different types of cameras and how they worked, we discussed camera settings, picture formats, mechanics, and post-processing procedures. And, that was the first night! The second night we were treated to photo montages from Beth and Cassie's portfolios. We discussed composition, strategies for best pictures, understanding birds, where to go for more information, and lastly, and most importantly—our field trip.

What I loved about this class—aside from the instructors who were affable and well-organized—were the resources. Beth gave each participant a thumb drive loaded with useful articles on understanding aperture, shutter speed, ISO, and resolution. In addition, a matrix of the best places for birding photography were included. The instructors went the extra mile to ensure we had the resources we needed to learn more.

Another awesome aspect of this class was the range of participants. There were participants with compact zoom cameras, bridge cameras, and high-end DSLR cameras.



Group photo L-R: Joy Dardin, Dana Scauson, Steve Lorenz, Beth Branthaver, Pam Lorenz, Cassie Tzur, Rosita Harvey, and Joy Shonfeld (Matt Tarlach not pictured), Joy Dardin photo

Whatever camera you had, whatever level of expertise, Cassie or Beth could help.

It was a beautiful bright sunshiny day at Lake Merritt—perfect for photography. Over the course of the day the group was given ample opportunity to hone their skills.

Prior to the class I was an automatic girl—auto-setting, auto-focus—auto-everything! Participating in this class gave me a greater understanding of how a camera works, what the settings do, and how to take a better picture. Since the field trip, I've used other settings besides auto. The class gave me the confidence to venture beyond my comfort zone. That's all I needed. Understanding the camera functions and how to use them to the best effect has opened doors. Working side-by-side with experts, I got some great shots. ~Joy Dardin

Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling

Editorial Cartoonist ♦ Conservationist

By Ellis Myers



Jay N. "Ding" Darling, Google Images photo
a photo of a local attorney. The man refused, however, to have his picture taken. Incensed, Darling submitted an uncomplimentary sketch of the lawyer instead. His career as a political cartoonist was born.

His drawings in support of President Theodore Roosevelt's establishment of a Forestry Service led to a close friendship. In 1906, Darling joined the *Des Moines Register*, working there until his retirement in 1949.

His cartoons were popular and were published in as many as 150 newspapers. Two Pulitzer prizes were awarded, in 1923 and in 1942. In July 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed "Ding" Darling to head the U.S. Biological Survey, forerunner of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During his 18-month tenure as director, the National Wildlife Refuge System was increased by over three million acres. Darling also introduced the Federal Duck Stamp Program, and



designed the first Duck Stamp; Darling also designed the Blue Goose logo, the national symbol of the refuge system. At Darling's urging, President Harry S. Truman signed an Executive Order

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February 2016

What do John James Audubon, Roger Tory Peterson, George Bird Grinnell, Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir and Jay N. "Ding" Darling all have in common?

They are all members of the Conservation Hall of Fame.

Audubon's paintings were highly regarded and his work sparked a widespread interest in birds and nature. Peterson became entitled to the moniker "Father of Birdwatching" when his *Field Guide to the Birds* was published in 1934.

Grinnell founded the first Audubon Society and laid the foundation for national parks and forest reserves. Roosevelt established the first National Wildlife Refuges and the Forest Service, protecting millions of acres. And, Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, led an exemplary life championing a concern for mountains and wilderness.

Jay N. "Ding" Darling encouraged President Theodore Roosevelt to create the National Wildlife Refuges. He is known as the originator of the "Duck Stamp" and as the founder of the National Wildlife Federation. He was—it was widely acclaimed—"the best friend a duck ever had."



A Ding Darling cartoon, above, and his first Federal Duck Stamp design, far right, Google Images photos

the Quail

Born in Norwood, Michigan, in 1876, Jay Norwood Darling, son of a Congregational minister, grew up in Elkhart, Indiana, and, from age 10, in Sioux City, Iowa, where life was easy along the Missouri River until he enrolled at Yankton College in South Dakota about 65 miles away. "Everyone hunted and everyone fished and everyone helped himself liberally to the riches which Nature provided," he recalled.

Having spent many of his teenage summers on his Uncle John's farm in Michigan, Jay later wrote of his dismay when he returned for his uncle's funeral. He said, "It seemed as if the farm had died with Uncle John. The topsoil of the grain field had been stripped away. The timber had been cut. The river was reduced to a muddy trickle unfit for game fish. The pasture, bare of grass, was scarred and slashed by erosion and no longer of any use. A solitary crow rose from the barnyard and slowly flapped out of sight—the only sign of wildlife left on the place. This was my first conscious realization of what could happen to land, what could happen to clear running streams, what could happen to bird life and human life when the common laws of Mother Nature were disregarded."

At Yankton College, his comeuppance came when he and some pals "borrowed" the college president's horse and buggy for a joy ride. He was dismissed. Later, having enrolled at Beloit College in Wisconsin, he was suspended for publishing some not universally appreciated caricatures of professors in the yearbook, of which he was art director. During his suspension he traveled on the Chautauqua circuit with a male quartet, but returned to Beloit and graduated in 1900.

Aiming to become a doctor, Darling began work as a cub reporter with the *Sioux City Journal* in order to save money to enter medical school. On one of his assignments, he wanted

Hummingbird Needs

By Mike Eliot, Wild Birds Unlimited

Hummingbird season never ends in this area, so we should always be diligent and ready to help them. They are more attuned to humans than most birds and are enjoyable to watch.

January to February is the hatching time for the early brood of Anna's Hummingbirds, so be ready to see young hummers at your feeders. You will always see Anna's, but Costa's, Black-chinned, and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds have been known to frequent Northern California in winter.

Due to last year's drought and recent cold weather, hummingbirds have few natural sources of nectar needed to maintain their high energy levels. They visit feeders as often as every ten minutes during the day. Keep nectar in good supply and wash feeders weekly to prevent mold. On cold nights bring feeders inside to prevent freezing. At night, to conserve energy, these birds go into a state called torpor, like suspended animation, so they are only at feeders after sunrise.

Use pre-mix nectar packages or make your own nectar using four parts water to one part regular sugar, without food coloring. Boil the water first and add sugar after it cools. Put out enough supply for 3-4 days. Nectar can be refrigerated for up to two weeks.

Anna's Hummingbirds can be very territorial, so multiple feeders spread 15 feet apart allow more birds to eat. Feeders attached to windows allow you to watch these unique birds up close.

You can also put out nesting materials the birds may use to line their nests. Avoid dryer lint containing man-made fibers that can tangle around young birds' feet, or injure them if swallowed. Human or animal hair must be cut in lengths of less than one inch, also to prevent tangles. Down and other small feathers work well.

Hummingbirds need clean water sources to keep their feathers clean promoting heat retention that aids in their intricate flight patterns. Clean your birdbaths regularly and watch for frozen water.

Enjoy the winter acrobatic show of these enjoyable little birds.

the Quail

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.

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- 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 \$_____.

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Dark Morph Reddish Egret at the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, Jim Bennight/USFWS photo

Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling

>>continued from Page 10

creating the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge in 1945. The refuge was renamed in 1967 in honor of the pioneer conservationist.

One of Ding Darling's legacies, perhaps not widely known, stems from his memories of growing up along the Missouri River.

In 1961, in falling health, he told an old friend, Sherry Fisher, that he had dreamed of incorporating "the Missouri River into a national outdoor recreation and natural resources ribbon along the historic trail of Lewis and Clark." Although there had been a number of efforts to commemorate the expedition's route across the nation, none had ever come to fruition.

After Darling's death in February 1962, Fisher brought together family and friends to discuss the best way to honor him by celebrating his dedication to conservation and implementing his proposal for a Lewis and Clark trail. They formed the

the Quail

Darling Foundation, whose charter trustees included former Presidents Truman and Eisenhower as well as other prominent businessmen and conservationists. With the avid support of the Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, Congress passed a joint resolution approving a Lewis and Clark trail.



Plans called for a continuous highway trail retracing the route of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean as well as a water route of the Missouri and the Columbia systems for the use of boaters following the historic trail, and hiking and horseback trails to follow the expedition's route as closely as possible. The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is part of the National Park Service.

Jay N. "Ding" Darling was a true visionary. A classic example of Ding's foresight in conservation matters is revealed in one of his cartoons, perhaps about 1920, depicting a traffic jam, and he's saying, "What on earth are we going to do with all these autos when the fossil fuels run out?"



FYI

✓ The 19th annual **Great Backyard Bird Count** is February 12-15, 2016. For more information on how to join this easy, free, citizen science event contact: BirdCount.org.

✓ All of the John James Audubon *Birds of America* prints are in the public domain and available in high-res for free on the Audubon website at: audubon.org/birds-of-america.