



the Quail

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

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July/August 2016

"A Place of Worship": Our National Park Service Turns 100 ♦ Mike Mecham

Many of us know (or can guess) the answer to the Jeopardy question, "In 1872, Ulysses S. Grant set this natural wonder aside as the first National Park." Answer: What is, Yellowstone National Park.

Probably most of us would name Theodore Roosevelt as the president with the greatest National Park legacy; he called Yosemite "A Place of Worship" when he hiked there with John Muir in 1903.



Above: President Roosevelt and John Muir in Yosemite NP, Google Images photo

But it is a bookworm, President Woodrow Wilson, who gets the official credit for establishing the National Park Service, whose centennial we celebrate this year. No outdoorsman, Wilson did have a passion for governmental organization and his act consolidated a number of agencies within the new Department of Interior putting the idea of National Parks on firm legal footing.

There are now 59 National Parks created by Congress, 121 National Monuments, 10 National Seashores, and some 80,000 National Historic Places, plus countless National Sites, Historic Trails, Recreational Areas, Preserves, and Memorials.

With an official count of 490 species, California's Point Reyes National Seashore is the champion birding spot among all the National Park Service's assets. In fact, it has a higher species count than all but 10 states.



Most visitors are wide-eyed for the National Parks' natural beauty. But, MDAS members can be forgiven for wanting to include a bit of birding on their visits. California has nine National Parks, the most of any state, that offer birding opportunities from shoreline to desert scrub and from meadows to old-growth forests. Here are some (brief) birding highlights for them:

Channel Islands NP—The 250,000 acre park is reachable by charter plane and boat and provides essential nesting and feeding grounds for 99% of the seabirds in southern California. Its checklist covers 387 species spread over the Park's five islands off the coast of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, 82 of which are thought to breed there, according to the 2011 checklist developed by Paul W. Collins of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Large breeding populations of Western Gull, Cassin's Auklet, and Brandt's Cormorant are present. Most of the world's Xantus's Murrelet and more than 50% of the world's Ashy-Storm Petrel nest on the islands. The islands are also the only known nesting site for Brown Pelican on the West Coast.

Eleven of the 60 land birds that have nested in the Park are represented by endemic species or subspecies, including the Island Scrub-Jay and San Clemente House Finch. There are non-migratory Allen's Hummingbird, Channel Island Flycatcher, Island Loggerhead Shrike, Island Horned Lark, Santa Cruz Island Bewick's Wren, Dusky Orange-crowned Warbler, San Clemente Spotted Towhee, Santa Cruz Island Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Channel Island Song Sparrow.

Death Valley NP—With a varied tableau that includes the lowest desert in North America, canyons, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and high boreal peaks, the park is also one of the largest at nearly 3.4 million acres. Scotty's Castle on the Park's northeast side and the Salt Creek Interpretive Center off Hwy. 190 in the center of the Park are top-rated birding areas, as are Wildrose Canyon (like Scotty's Castle, a riparian habitat), Furnace Creek, and Sarasota Springs.

The Park Service reports that Cactus Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Mountain Bluebird, Common Yellowthroat, Sage Sparrow,

>>>continued on page 8

Meeting Schedule

There will be no meeting in July or August. The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 1** in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

Program: Wildlife Photography ♦ Brent Paull

We have completed the 9th year of the MDAS “No Child Left Inside” program with the Antioch School District and, again, it was a wonderful success. Our Vice President Paul Schorr heads up the program. He will have more to say in this edition of the *Quail* (see page 6). Our chapter should be very proud of this effort introducing students in Antioch to nature. I wish we could offer the program to more schools.

Recently, I was reading an article in *BirdWatching* magazine about Whooping Cranes. In the article it used the word “colt” when referring to young Whooping Cranes. I had never heard that word used for a crane chick before. Curious, I searched the internet and looked up names for young birds. Some were very familiar such as eaglet for a young eagle and peep for a young sandpiper, but what about cheeper for a young grouse or eyas for a young falcon?

Most of us have heard a few terms for groups of birds such as a “murder” of crows. Next, I looked up names for groups of birds (birdnature.com) and it became even more foreign--a cover of coots, an unkindness of ravens, a

parliament of owls. It went on and on. Please go look it up and amaze your friends (and yourself).

I hope you had a chance to hear Joan Morris speak at our May meeting. Joan writes her column about nature every weekday for the *East Bay Times*. She wrote on May 31st about a letter she had received from a reader who said that dogs kill as many birds as outdoor cats do and we never talk about this problem. Joan’s response was that, yes, dogs, if left to themselves outside, do kill birds and animals, but that it’s nowhere near what cats, particularly feral cats, kill. She also mentioned in her response to the letter writer that it has been estimated that cats kill as many as 3.7 billion birds each year. Please, let’s all keep our cats inside.

Our summer break from MDAS general meetings begins this month. Our next general meeting will be on September 1, but we will have two weekend field trips in June and July and will resume our regular field trips in August (see page 5). I hope you’ll take advantage of some of these great trips.

Good birding!

Good News For Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross

Wisdom, a female Laysan Albatross, is the oldest confirmed banded bird (tagged in 1956) in the wild. But she became even more famous in November 2015 when, at age 64, in her preferred nesting ground in Hawaii’s Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, she laid her 40th known egg. The latest chick, born in February 2016, was named Kukini, Hawaiian for “messenger.” (*Above L, Google Images photo*)

Laysan Albatross pairs hatch one egg every other year, feeding, protecting, and caring for the chick for seven months. Albatross travel thousands of miles each year and face constant threats due to unhealthy oceans, longline fishing gear (see page 7), habitat degradation, and invasive species. Wisdom’s story is one of survival and perseverance.

Midway, a remote Pacific coral atoll, was once a major naval air and submarine facility. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt sent a message from Midway on the newly connected trans-Pacific telegraph cable and, observing the birdlife, declared the island a seabird

conservation area, setting the stage for it to become a National Wildlife Refuge in 1988.

Once home to over 5000 residents, it currently houses 40-60 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) employees and is home to the world’s largest numbers of albatrosses, Bonin Petrels, and Laysan Ducks. Nearly three million birds nest on the 2.4 square mile island.

Sadly, it’s not all good news for the albatross. According to a National Audubon Society article, “Even with Wisdom’s impressive contributions to her colony, the species is in trouble—they’re listed in danger of extinction on the 2014 State of the Birds Watch List. And it’s not just the Laysan; of the 22 albatross species, 15 are threatened.”

Wisdom, however, gives us hope. And, *that’s* good news for Wisdom, Kukini, and the Laysan Albatross.

To view a Laysan Albatross cam in Kauai: http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/41/Laysan_Albatross/



National Wildlife Refuge, she laid her 40th known egg. The latest chick, born

“We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune.” ~Theodore Roosevelt

Welcome New Members

Troy Devitt	Clayton
Rolando Salazar	Walnut Creek
Annie Vargas	Walnut Creek

MDAS on the Web

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

Q In California, this species with a long bill that droops at the tip, is seldom seen except at the Salton Sea from May to November. However, in May of this year many birders reported observations of this bird at the Hayward Regional Shoreline.

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

AGGGHILLNUU

The *Quail* is published monthly except in January and August by the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. **The deadline for September is August 8.**

May and early June were relatively quiet with only an occasional straggler of note and a few unusual visitors. Most unusual of all was a reported **Lawrence's Warbler (hybrid Golden-winged Warbler)** from Martinez by JQ on 6/5. If confirmed this may be the first record in the Bay Area since 1981.

On 6/2 LK and MP saw two **Brant** at Brooks Island. They also saw a **Wood Duck** at McNabney Marsh on that date.

A **Northern Pintail** was a late bird at McNabney Marsh 5/18. HH

A late **Ring-necked Duck** was at Ironhouse Sanitary District 5/20. RB

LK and MP saw a late-leaving **Bufflehead** at Holland Tract 6/2.

A very late **Red-breasted Merganser** was at Ironhouse 5/27 AL, and 5/28. RB

There was a **Red-throated Loon** at Miller-Knox RP 5/17 AL, and another 6/5 at Ferry Point. BD

A **Red-tailed Hawk** was at a nest with young in Hidden Valley Park in Martinez 5/30. IA

Two **Golden Eagles** flew over Castle Rock Park in Walnut Creek 5/10. JoHe

AL saw a **Spotted Sandpiper** 5/14 at Mococo Road Pond just south of the Benicia Bridge. JR and BD also saw one at Ironhouse Sanitary District 5/30.

An unusual **Solitary Sandpiper** was seen 5/12 at Pt. Edith Trail in Martinez and 5/14 at McNabney Marsh. AL

EP saw a **Red Knot** flying over the Carquinez Strait between Port Costa and Benicia 5/10.

Up to three very late **Long-billed Dowitchers** were along the Pt. Edith Trail in Martinez from 5/21-6/3. AL

Between 5/17 and 6/5, there were up to three **Pigeon Guillemots** in the Pt. Richmond-Ferry Point Area. AL, LK, JH, JHe, GC, BD

Bonaparte's Gulls were at Ironhouse SD 6/2 and 6/4. RB, AL

FS saw a **Yellow Warbler** at Heather Farm 5/22 and HH saw one on 5/28 at the Heather Farm Pond.

Over 300 **Caspian Terns** were on Brooks Island 6/2. LK, MP

A **Black Tern** was at the Bethel Island-Piper Slough area 5/28. AL

Eurasian Collared Doves continued their march into Central Contra Costa County. FS saw one on the canal trail near Heather Farm 5/24, and K&WT had one feeding in their Martinez yard.

LK saw a **Lesser Nighthawk** at Clifton Court Forebay 5/28.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** and **Western Wood-Pee-wee** were at the Tilden Botanical Garden 5/12, MC, WH, IW, and H&RH saw a **Western Wood-Pee-wee** at Heather Farm 5/18.

A **Cassin's Vireo** was singing on the Old San Pablo Trail at San Pablo Reservoir 5/13. JC

LK saw a rare **Purple Martin** 5/28 at Bethel Island.

A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Vollmer Peak in Tilden RP 5/12. ER, JCo

A very late **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at Briones RP 5/23. CM

A **Black-throated Grey Warbler** was seen 5/29 in Mt. Diablo SP. ST

A **Townsend's and Hermit Warbler** were together at Sibley Volcanic Preserve 5/12. JS

Several sightings of **Yellow-breasted Chats** occurred: JoHe, 5/10, at Castle Rock RP; JS, 5/12, at Sibley; and LK and MP, 6/2, at Bethel Island where it is known to breed in small numbers.

Western Tanager were in several places: LK and MP in East County 5/28; AL at Ellis Lake Park in Concord 5/28; JA at his Lafayette home 5/29; BD on 6/5 at Inspiration Point in Tilden.

LK and MP saw **Blue Grosbeak** at Holland Tract in East County.

Lazuli Bunting returned to Briones RP in May. MS They were also seen at Sibley Park 5/12 by JS and near Miller-Knox RP 5/20. MCA

Tricolored Blackbird were at Holland Tract 5/28, LK and Ironhouse SD 5/27 and 5/28. AL, RB

Hooded Orioles were at Bethel Island 6/2. LK, MP

JA Jeff Acuff, IA Isaac Aronow, RB Russ Bright, MCA Mike Carnall, MC Minder Cheng, JC Jim Chiropolos, GC Graham Chisholm, JCo John Colbert, BD Bob Dunn, HH Hugh Harvey, H&RH Hugh and Rosita Harvey, JHe Jeff Hendricks, JoHe Joel Herr, JH Jeff Hoppes, WH Wen Hsu, LK Logan Kahle, AL Albert Linkowski, CM Chris Marker, MP Michael Park, EP Eric Pilotte, JQ Judy Quinlan, JR Jim Rowth, ER Erica Rutherford, FS Fred Safier, JS Judi Sierra, MS Maury Stern, K&WT Kate and Will Taylor, ST Steve Tucker, and IW Idell Wiedemeyer

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.

Adorableness Alert

Gray foxes, native to the Bay Area, just happened to use a storm drain outfall as a den below my deck. Gray foxes are omnivorous creatures and are generally out at night, but the four playful kits came out of the den a



couple of times during the day to provide these wonderful photo opportunities. ~Brian Murphy story and photos



Trip Reports

West Briones Regional Park, May 12:

Eighteen members enjoyed a lovely spring day birding with temperatures ranging from 55 degrees at the start to a pleasant 70 degrees by the end of the 3 ½ hour trip. Thirty-five species were seen with the following highlights: six soaring American White Pelicans; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Blue-grey Gnatcatcher; and Lazuli Bunting. It was a very pleasant morning. ~Maury Stern



Lazuli Bunting,
Joy Shonfeld photo

McNabney Marsh/Martinez Regional Shoreline, May 21: Fourteen birders joined Nathan Stalnaker, Measure AA Contra Costa County Regional Coordinator, for a tour of some of the local wetlands that could receive funding for restoration if Measure AA passes on June 7 (photo page 12). We spotted a Green Heron, Snowy and Great Egrets, a Black-crowned Night-Heron roosting in a tree, singing Song Sparrows and Common Yellowthroats, a Mute Swan, Western Grebe, many White Pelicans, Black-necked Stilts, and a Kestrel. One highlight was seeing an Osprey soaring overhead with a fish in its talons. Rain ended our trip abruptly at 11 AM, but we

managed to see many species and learn about Measure AA on this field trip. ~Ariana Rickard

Outer Point Reyes, May 28: Twenty determined birders assembled on a bright, sunny day, too bright and too sunny to see any vagrant migrants. However, under the leadership of Juan-Carlos Solis, the group found a total of 60 species. At the lighthouse, we were impressed by perhaps 1500 or more Common Murres on the rocks far below, along with Pigeon Guillemots and three cormorants. Two Peregrine Falcons posed by the famous steps. After lunch at the Fish Docks, Beth Branthaver's eagle eyes spotted the Great Horned Owl high in a tree, which we all got to see, while Loons, Surf Scoters, and Caspian Terns fished below. At Drake's Beach, we heard the spiraling songs of Swanson's Thrushes and had good views of Allen's Hummingbirds and Wilson's Warblers, not to mention posing Bewick's Wren and a male Western Bluebird. ~Fred Safier



Above L: Osprey with a fish in its talons; R: MDAS members birding at Outer Point Reyes, Isaac Aronow photos

June Potluck and Silent Auction



Save the Date!

A field trip planning meeting will be held **Wednesday, July 20 at 7 PM**. Anyone interested in helping to shape our 2016-2017 calendar is invited to attend—former leaders as well as MDAS members. The meeting will be held at Jean Richmond's home. Jean's address is 125 Via Serena, Alamo. Enter through the driveway gate. Light refreshments will be served. **Call Hugh Harvey for details at: (925) 935-2979.**

Birding Course

Interested in honing your raptor skills? Merritt College course, Biol 80A, "Raptors of Central California and the Bay Area," will be offered 9/10-11/5/16 taught by Daniel Edelstein. **For information: dedelstein@peralta.edu or enroll at: merritt.edu**



The silent auction coordinated by MDAS Sales Manager Diane Malucelli (above L) raised \$305 with proceeds benefitting MDAS programs. Attendees bid on stunning prints by Harry Adamson, hefty illustrated bird books, and a pair of binoculars. Delicious food and decadent desserts were also enjoyed by over 100 members and guests at the annual potluck dinner. Maren Smith photos



July 2016 (Call Leader for questions or rain cancellations)

09-10 Saturday-Sunday Lassen Volcanic NP

August 2016

06 Saturday San Mateo Coast
20 Saturday Bodega Bay

2 Saturday/Sunday, July 9-10

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson (925) 806-0644

If you plan to join this July trip, please contact the leader.

To avoid disappointment, make motel or camping reservations now.

Participants should arrive by the night of Friday, July 8. Gary and I will be arriving earlier in the week and are camping in Section D of the Manzanita Lake Campground, which is tents-only and non-reservable; Sections A and C at Manzanita Lake are reservable, but B and D are not. We will start birding at 730 AM from Manzanita Lake each day.

I can also suggest small motels and B&Bs outside the Park. Make your reservations soon as most are small motels



Evening Grosbeak,
Beth Branthaver photo

with just 5-10 rooms each that fill up quickly. There are also a few sleep-only cabins at Manzanita Lake with a nearby communal bathhouse, and a private lodge in the southcentral part of the Park that serves meals and has a pool.

Birds we hope to see include Gray Jay, American Dipper, Evening Grosbeak,

Townsend's Solitaire, Osprey, Red Crossbill, Clark's Nutcracker, and Common Nighthawk.

2 Saturday, August 6

San Mateo Coast

Leader: Beth Branthaver (925) 944-1856

Carpool leaves at 730 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. **OR**, meet at MacDonald's parking lot in Half Moon Bay at 830 AM. Go south on I-680, turn west on I-580 to I-238, follow to I-880, then south to SR 92. Cross the San Mateo Bridge and continue to Half Moon Bay. Turn right at first stoplight (N. Main St.), drive one block to the next light, and cross Hwy. 1 into the parking lot. Bring lunch and sunscreen (you can get burned even on a foggy day). Expect early returning shorebirds, gulls, and seabirds. Itinerary to be announced the day of the trip.



Black Oystercatcher,
Beth Branthaver photo

1 Saturday, August 20

Bodega Bay

Leader: Fred Safer (925) 937-2906

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 730 AM. **OR**, meet at The Tides restaurant on the water side of Highway 1 in Bodega at 915 AM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Drive west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 to Lakeville Road, and turn right. In Petaluma turn left on E. Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road, and SR 1 to Bodega Bay. Walk through or around The Tides restaurant to find the group viewing the harbor birds from the outdoor seating.



Caspian Tern, Jean Halford photo

Possibilities at Bodega Bay are flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, as well as terns, gulls, cormorants, near-shore pelagics, and much more. Bring lunch, liquids, and don't forget your sunscreen.

**Come birding with us
this summer!**

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. **Contact FT Leader for questions/rain cancellations.** 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

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.

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

Youth Outreach: "No Child Left Inside"

Begun in 2008, the MDAS program "No Child Left Inside" (NCLI) concluded this year's activities on May 17 and 19 by taking 94 fifth grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch to nearby Contra Loma Regional Park and Reservoir. Their teachers and parent volunteers were joined by sixteen MDAS volunteers to enjoy two mornings of introductory birding. MDAS volunteers were Jimm Edgar, Herb and Randi Long, Nina and Leary Wong, Barbara Minneman, Jackie Bobrosky, Bruce Kronmiller, Dave and Linda Shinn, Maury Stern, Hugh and Rosita Harvey, Carol Pachl, and Nancy and Paul Schorr.

The groups enjoyed pleasant spring weather on both days. On each day the students were divided into six groups and they rotated amongst six birding stations on or near



Above: Students and MDAS volunteers (L. to R.) Nina Wong, Nancy Schorr, Leary Wong, and Carol Pachl observe Ash-throated Flycatchers; Below: Great Horned Owl and fledgling, Paul Schorr photos

Loma Island with each station monitored by MDAS volunteers with spotting scopes. Each of the students used a pair of loaner binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this activity and other education outreach programs.

Following this activity, the groups walked from the reservoir to an open area with views of the oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savanna. Because this area had been severely burned in 2015, the students also learned how natural habitats can respond and rejuvenate after wildfires.

After lunch, as on MDAS field trips, the groups tallied the number of species seen and/or heard, and the total number of species for both days was 43. Highlights included the following: an adult Great Horned Owl with a fledgling; a Barn Owl; a Red-shouldered Hawk feeding chicks at the nest; female American Kestrel with a mouse; Mallard and Canada Goose families; Common Gallinule and chicks; Ash-throated Flycatchers; Bullock's Orioles building a nest; Common Yellowthroat; Western Kingbird; and Green Heron.

MDAS volunteer, Barbara Minneman, enhanced her station with a life-sized replica that represented the

the Quail

wingspans of many of the birds to be seen with the wingspan of the Golden Eagle as the maximum length. Then she had the students measure their arm lengths according to the model. Most of their arm lengths approximated the wingspan of a Turkey Vulture, which they saw.

The field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities. On March 18, Jenny Papka, from Native Bird Connections, initiated the 2016 program by doing an introductory lesson on bird anatomy and behavior. During her presentation she introduced a Swainson's Hawk, an American Kestrel, and a Eurasian Eagle-Owl which drew much enthusiasm and excitement from the students, a great way to promote this year's program. Jenny's presentation was sponsored and funded by MDAS.

On March 22, Nancy and Paul Schorr collaborated to do classroom presentations to introduce and instruct the students on the proper use of binoculars. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for Contra Loma Regional Park. Concluding this lesson, the students were introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so that they could learn and appreciate bird vocalizations, as well as study the illustrations and information about the target birds to be seen or heard during the field trips. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms before the field trips.

In summary, MDAS, through the "No Child Left Inside" program, has made a strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of dedication to environmental education, and during the past nine years has brought this program to hundreds of children. MDAS can be very proud of this highly successful program, which has served as a model for other education outreach programs.

The success of the NCLI program would not be possible without the continued support and involvement of the MDAS volunteers. Their participation is greatly appreciated. On behalf of the students, thanks to each of them. It should also be noted that MDAS is grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District and the staff at Contra Loma Regional Park for their continuing support of the "No Child Left Inside" program.

All of the volunteers had many teachable moments and they were rewarded with the subsequent excitement and enthusiasm of the students. At the conclusion of the days' activities, each student received a copy of the book *Backyard Birds of California* purchased for them by MDAS.

Throughout the activities the students appeared to retain much of what they had learned and I am confident that they will recall their experiences for a long, long time. Hopefully, some of them will even become birders some day and when asked where it all began, they just might say, "Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS." ~Paul Schorr



Students and MDAS volunteer Randi Long looking at the Great Horned Owls, Paul Schorr photo





Laughing Gull ♦ *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Adult Laughing Gulls have black heads and red bills during the breeding season; during the non-breeding season they have white heads streaked or mottled with black and black bills.

Laughing Gulls are so common along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts that they have earned the appellation "Parking Lot Gull"; but they do occasionally appear at inland locations.



Second winter Laughing Gull at Cape May Point, NJ (1992), Ellis Myers photo

Their range also includes the Gulf of California.

The gulls are drawn to parking lots for two reasons—the first is food. Gulls are opportunistic feeders and, rather than specializing in one kind of prey or food, will eat almost anything available to them. They'll feed on fish, insects, fruits, even small rodents, and a lot of things

discarded by humans. Parking lots offer plenty of trash and scraps, especially if there's a supermarket or restaurant nearby with dumpsters, garbage cans, and people who can't be bothered to use them. Parking lots often have landscaped patches around the pavement that can be good places to look for insects.

Secondly, parking lots are spacious, open, and flat. This allows the gulls to congregate en masse near a valuable food

source and gives them clear views in all directions so they can keep an eye out for danger. They nest in colonies sometimes numbering tens of thousands of birds.

Closest in appearance to the adult Laughing Gull, with its black head, is the Franklin's Gull, a bird of the mid-continent. Neither species is apt to be encountered in Contra Costa County. (The only Franklin's Gull observed in the Bay Area, and reported on *eBird* was one at Lake Merritt in Spring of 2005.)



Franklin's Gull at Lake Merritt (2005), Ellis Myers photo

Franklin's Gulls are smaller and paler above than Laughing Gulls; they have smaller, thinner bright red bills, and their black wing tips are dotted with bright white spots. Their thick white eye crescents are striking.

Formerly assumed to be of the genus *Larus*, in 2008 Laughing Gull and its close relative, Franklin's Gull, were reclassified as *Leucophaeus atricilla* and *Leucophaeus pipixcan*, respectively. Other common gulls of the genus *Larus*, such as Ring-billed Gull and Herring Gull, are larger than Laughing Gull and have white heads (often slightly streaked in winter) and yellowish bills.

Nearly extirpated in the late 1800s by eggers and the millinery trade, today the Laughing Gull is increasing in much of its range. ~Ellis Myers

Conservation and Legislative Committee News

► **Save Tesla Park letter writing campaign**—If you attended our May meeting you will recall the disturbing presentation by Celeste Garamendi of Save Tesla Park (www.teslapark.org). Tesla is a biologically diverse ecosystem near Livermore that is home to seven threatened and endangered species and more than 50 rare species. Tesla is part of an Audubon Important Bird Area and includes a Critical Linkage Wildlife/Habitat Corridor. Three known pairs of Golden Eagles nest and forage within its boundaries. An historic mining town and sacred Native American sites also lie within its borders. The expansion would triple the acreage of Carnegie SVRA. Currently, areas of Carnegie that are designated "trail-only" (no vehicles) show extensive damage and devastation of the scarred hillsides. **Letters are urgently needed to combat the expansion of the Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area (for off-road ATVs/motorcycles) into Tesla Park lands.** Please use the sample letters and email addresses in the **Take Action section of the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.org** to write to state officials including: Resources Agency Secretary John Laird, State Parks Director Lisa Mangat, State Senator Steve Glazer, and Assemblywoman Catharine Baker (or call their local offices if you prefer). ~Rosalie Howarth

► **Trim a Tree, Lose a Nest**—Our MDAS committee is seeking feedback from members about when and where they might have observed public utility and/or city, county, or parks maintenance personnel cutting trees or shrubs during nesting season. Our goal is to talk to administrators of these companies or agencies to discuss how damaging tree trimming can be during nesting season and to urge them to time their maintenance activities with birds in mind. **But first, we need to collect some examples of badly timed tree trimming.** The more specific we can be with examples (park location, street name, type of bird nests and young affected), and/or photos, the stronger our case will be. **If you have any information on this issue please contact Christine Steck at christinesteck@icloud.com or (510) 480-5609.** ~Mike Mecham

► **Mount Diablo Audubon signed on to two letters from the National Audubon Society supporting bills currently being considered by Congress.** The first bill, the **Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act (H.R. 4480)**, seeks to conserve some of the most endangered birds on the planet. An estimated 100,000 albatross die each year after becoming hooked on longline fishing gear and subsequently drowning. The second bill, the **Federal Bird-Safe Buildings Act (H.R. 2280)**, is bipartisan legislation that aims to reduce one of the top sources of mortality for birds. As many as 1 billion birds may be killed each year due to building collisions. Luckily, there are readily available solutions that can reduce these needless deaths. H.R. 2280 would set vital standards for federal buildings to require bird-friendly design and materials on new or renovated buildings. ~Ariana Rickard

>>>continued from page 1

Common Poorwill, Costa's Hummingbird, Fox Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and (of course) Ovenbird and Greater Roadrunners are among those found. You may be surprised, given that Death Valley is so commonly associated with desert desolation, that Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon, and Mallard are also found there.

Joshua Tree NP—Created in 1994 at the same time as Death Valley NP, Joshua Tree covers nearly 790,000 acres at the convergence of the low-desert Colorado and high-desert Mojave Deserts and is home to more than 250 species, mostly



Gambel's Quail,
Jean Halford photo

as migrants or vagrants because a lack of water and year-round food are limiting factors. Of these, 78 species are known to nest and raise young in the Park, including Golden Eagle and Gambel's Quail, the NPS says.

Winter is a good birding period at Joshua Tree because many of its migrants have merely moved in to escape snows in nearby mountains. The aquatic areas of Baker Dam and the Desert Queen Ranch are top viewing areas for waterfowl not usually seen in the desert as they make their way to the Salton Sea during the fall and spring migration.

Kings Canyon and Sequoia NPs—Residing side-by-side in the central Sierras, the two Parks cover 866,000 acres and are known for sequoias, granite canyons, and caves. But, they also are home to more than 200 species of birds. The Parks offer viewings of Hairy Woodpecker, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak as well as Central Sierra regulars such as American Kestrel, Stellar's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, and Mountain Chickadee. However, understanding bird distribution and abundance in backcountry meadows has been a challenge for the NPS.

Yosemite NP—The most popular of the classic wilderness areas in California, this 761,000 acre park has 262 documented species, including 165 resident and migratory species and 46 recorded at least four times. Recent single sightings include an Eastern Kingbird, a White-face Ibis, and Scott's Oriole. American Dipper, Blue Grouse, Great Grey Owl (photo page 12), Black-and White-throated Swift, Dusky Flycatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pileated Woodpecker, Red Crossbills, and Lincoln's Sparrow are among the specialty and key birds.



Western Tanager,
Joy Shonfeld photo

Habitat and climate change studies are revealing that Willow Flycatcher no longer breed in the Park, but that Peregrine Falcon have increased in numbers along the Park's famous cliffs and that Spotted Owl are benefitting from fires.

Pinnacles NP—The state's newest National Park (2013), the 27,000 acre Pinnacles provides the possibility of seeing endangered California Condor, Golden Eagle, Prairie and

the Quail

Peregrine Falcon, and Northern Pygmy Owl among its 181 recorded species. That list offers a pretty wide variety from the common gregarious Acorn Woodpecker to such exotics as Ring-Necked Pheasant, Chukar, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. The Park check-list compiled by Gavin Emmons reports that Condor and Peregrine sightings have declined from "regular" in past years to "seldom seen" today.

Lassen Volcanic NP—The 106,000 acre Park is celebrating its 100th birthday this year and is home to 216 bird species, including 96 recorded breeders. Data from a bird banding monitoring station in operation since 1997 estimates that MacGillivray's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Song Sparrow have higher counts in Lassen than in the Northwest.



Wilson's Warbler, Isaac
Aronow photo

Annual breeding monitoring includes the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, California Spotted Owl, and Bufflehead populations. The Park is one of the rare Northern California breeding areas for Buffleheads and is also known for its Clark's Nutcracker.

Specialty birds include the Williamson's Sapsucker, White-headed and Black-backed Woodpecker as residents, and Red-breasted Sapsucker, Western Wood-Pee-wee, Hammond's Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Hermit Warbler, Western Tanager, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, and Cassin's Finch in the summer, according to John Kemper's *Birding Northern California*.

Redwood NP—A 112,500 acre mixture of the world's tallest and oldest trees, tide pools, oakwood prairies, and riparian habitats, Redwood NP and the surrounding State Parks are home to 280 species, including such specialties as the Marbled Murrelet, Ruffed Grouse, Varied Thrush, and Pacific Wren.

In its southeastern region, where Oregon oak woodlands and grasslands predominate, White-tailed Kite, Western Scrub-Jay, Red-Tailed Hawk, and Western Bluebird are common. The Park's three rivers provide habitat for American Dipper, Yellow Warbler, Spotted Sandpiper, Vaux's Swift, and Common Merganser, while its ponds and estuaries provide habitat for Belted Kingfisher, Osprey, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon. On the Park's shores Whimbrel, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, and (possibly) Western Snowy Plover, Caspian Tern, California Brown Pelican, and (nesting) Pigeon Guillemot may be seen.



American Dipper,
Meg Sandri sketch

That's a quick rundown of California's National Parks that might motivate a word of thanks to three presidents and our local environmental prophet, John Muir. Celebrate the National Park Service Centennial with a visit to one of our many scenic Parks for a bit of birding.

Celery Fields in Sarasota, Florida—a Special Place to See Birds

In March, I journeyed to Florida for three weeks to see old friends and go birding. Before I left, I read about the Sarasota Audubon Society as well as the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast's new Nature Center that had recently opened in January 2016. The Center is located at 999 Center Road, in Sarasota, Florida, and is open daily from 10 AM-2 PM (staffed by volunteers).

It is a 360 acre oasis of wetlands and wildlife in Sarasota County where celery used to grow. Bird naturalists are on duty most days from 830-1030 AM along the two easy-to-get-to boardwalks (photo below) that provide sheltered viewing spots. Each naturalist had a scope and they eagerly



pointed out and recorded nearby and distant species seen.

If you go, you might see

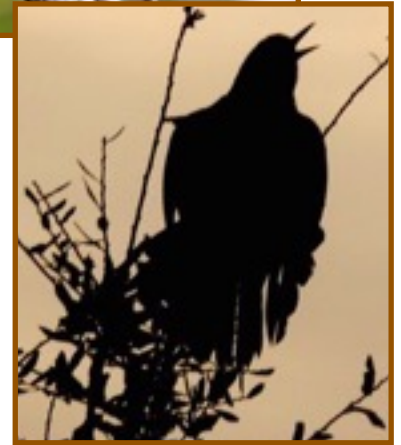
such birds as the beautiful, large brown Limpkin (a first for me), Boat-tailed Grackle, Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Roseate Spoonbill, White and Glossy Ibis, Bald Eagle, and Palm Warbler.

There are several walking trails and one morning I went on a short bird walk led by Jeanne Dubi, Sarasota Audubon Society's President. A Red-shouldered Hawk flew right over me almost touching my head! They are paler and slightly smaller than the ones we see in California. There were also three Purple Martin houses on poles near the Nature Center which afforded close looks at these lively, active birds.

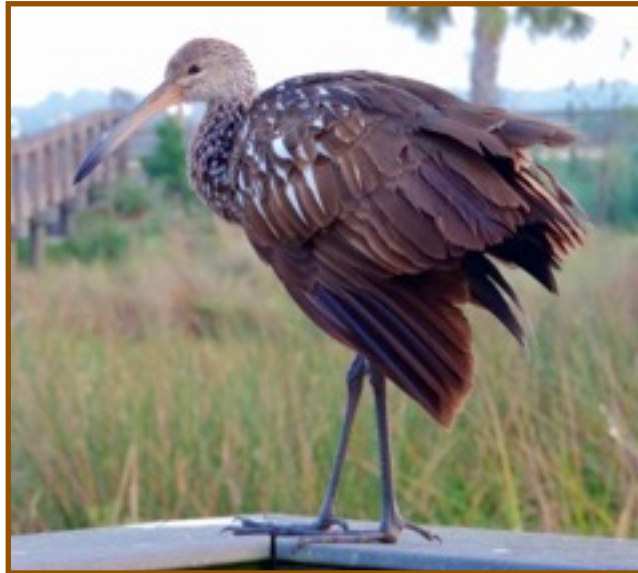
Although I went to a variety of birding areas in central and southwest Florida, I found this spot in Sarasota the most productive. The staff were friendly and I met many birders from all over the USA and Canada. ~Cassie Tzur



For more information: conservationfoundation.com



From top to bottom: Purple Martin house with Purple Martins; Palm Warbler; Boat-tailed Grackle; and two photos of a Limpkin, Cassie Tzur photos



Planting for Wildlife

It's a lot of fun feeding birds. You can attract them to bird feeders easily and feed them all year long. But, there are other ways to supplement their diet to keep them coming and nesting in your yard. Planting trees, bushes and flowers attracts those that may not be seed eaters. The insects that eat the plants provide protein for the insectivores maintaining the "good bug/bad bug" balance in the garden.

Orioles and Western Tanager love their bugs, but also their fruit and flowers. The first Western Tanager I ever saw was feeding on a bottle brush plant, not a native plant, but it is drought tolerant, nice looking, and faced my kitchen window. The hummers also frequented that bush and a California Towhee nested in it once. What's not to love?

Berries are incredible bird magnets. Natives like toyon, currants, gooseberry, huckleberry, coffeeberry, and blackberry generally take less



A hummingbird enjoying Columbine nectar, Joy Shonfeld photo

water than natives. Berry bushes not only serve as food, but also shelter birds from predators. Birds help propagate the plants by spreading seeds from the berries through their droppings. California wild grapes attract mockingbirds, Cedar Waxwing, robins, bluebirds, thrushes, orioles, towhees, kinglets, thrashers, and humans. Their fall foliage is stunning as well.

California oaks provide more food and habitat for wildlife than any other native plant. The list of birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles that benefit from the Valley Oak is a mile long. California buckwheat is a great pollinator plant and hummingbirds love the red tubular flowers of the California fuchsia. Parry manzanita seems to be the favorite

among manzanita species. The hummers love the flowers and birds love the apple-like fruit. Apparently, you can make a tasty manzanita cider...who knew?

Lavender and rosemary are attractive, useful, and deer-resistant. Goldfinch, in particular, love rosemary. And, don't forget the bees. You need them for pollination. My salvias attract not only hummers, but honey bees, bumblebees, mason bees, and species I couldn't even begin to identify. There are also winter flowering salvias that attract wildlife.

Squirrels like fruit, too. I saw a squirrel the other day with an orange on his head. Okay, technically, I threw it at him, but I think he enjoyed it anyway. ~Joanie Smith, East Bay Nature

Birding Pals

The idea for BirdingPal was conceived by Knudsen Rasmussen in 2000. As any birdwatcher knows, when visiting areas away from home, it can be frustrating and time consuming to search out the best birdwatching locations and then actually find them. Knudsen found himself in that exact situation, so he came up with the idea of locals becoming BirdingPals to share their areas with visiting birders.

The website **BirdingPal.com** is very easy to negotiate. A world map is displayed, and by following the directions given, one quickly arrives at the area of their choice. The BirdingPals listed for an area usually supply a little information about their birding experience, days of availability, whether they can provide transportation, and the language(s) they speak. Following the non-paid BirdingPals for an area, there may be a list of paid guides from which to choose, and paid guided trips are sometimes listed.

There are currently 3200 BirdingPal contacts in 156 countries, so there are many potential local guides waiting for your e-mail. The BirdingPal website also has many links for interesting birding information.

I have been a BirdingPal for about six years, and I have taken out birders

from New Zealand, Australia, and from several East Coast states. Sometimes, the only request is for good places to go birding. Other times, the request is for a day in the field. Regardless of the need, the contacts have always been very appreciative. In addition to being someone's guide, I have also used the service on my own trips to Argentina, Thailand, and South Africa.

Recently, I was contacted by three Canadian birders, and I suggested that they join the MDAS scheduled field trip to Mt. Diablo State Park. I was traveling at the time of their visit, so I turned them over to Beth Branthaver and Hugh Harvey who became impromptu BirdingPals. From all reports, the Canadians' day birding with MDAS was a big success.

Being a BirdingPal has been an enjoyable experience for me and is helpful when planning trips. At the end of a day out birding with a visiting guest, it is fun to see how many new birds were found, and to have made a new friend. ~Sandy Ritchie

Beaver Festival Volunteers Needed

Mark your calendars for the ninth annual Beaver Festival on Saturday, August 6 from 10 AM-4 PM. It will feature live music, kids crafts, over 40 booths, including MDAS, and beaver tours highlighting this keystone species. Located at the corner of Marina Vista and Alhambra Avenue in Martinez, it should be a dam good time! **If you would like to volunteer for a MDAS shift, please contact Brian Murphy at:**

b-murphy21@hotmail.com

FYI

▶View the top 100 spectacular winning images from the 2016 Audubon Photography Awards at: **www.audubon.org/magazine/may-june-2016/the-2016-audubon-photography-awards-top-100**.

▶View bird cams (osprey, puffins, owls, and more) at: **explore.org** and Peregrines Falcons at: **www.pge.com/falcons**

Diana Retires

We, at WBU, are sad to accept the retirement of one of the great bird lovers of our time. Diana Granados (photo below) with her knowledge, experience, care, and love for all living things was one of our finest employees and remains a dear friend. We will miss her expertise and exuberance for her work, but most of all, we will miss her excitement for, and commitment to the lives of birds. We wish Diana a future full of wonderful adventures with wildlife and her growing family.

Diana's over 50 years of experience saving and caring for wild birds and other animals has given her a unique and ethereal perspective

that we hope to emulate. Diana said, "Birds are our link to emotions; the great egret flying toward me, landing on the railing outside the window as I mourned my father's death, the children I take outside and the joyful shout "I see the bird" as they hold binoculars for the first time, the gritted teeth at a mockingbird's midnight song, the tear slipping down the cheek for a pile of feathers, the awe of migratory journeys. The list is long, complicated biologically, and metaphorically linked to our being"

Diana has also been active in the Lindsay Museum partnering with Gary Bogue to keep this gem of a wildlife museum and hospital going. She has educated thousands of children; in 1980, she began her own educational programs in the public schools through Native Bird Connections with MDAS support. Diana's programs, including "No Child Left Inside," (see page 6) assure us that her legacy will live on through youth outreach. Now, her protégé, Jenny Papka, continues to rescue and care for several large birds such as owls, hawks, and a bald eagle that can no longer survive in the wild.

Join me in offering tribute to Diana Granados for her many years of dedication. ~Mike Eliot, WBU



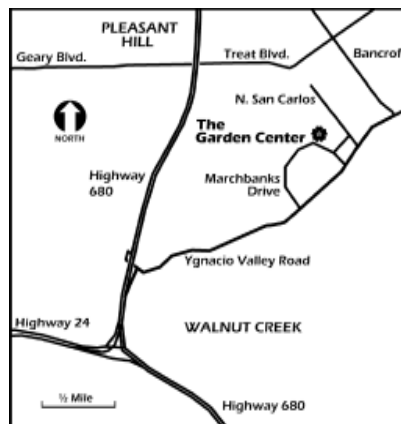
Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS)

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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The Board meets at 645 PM the second Thursday of each month except July and August at Wild Birds Unlimited, PH.



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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.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll me/my family in the 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

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Address: _____

Phone: () _____ email: _____

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Great Grey Owl, Jean Halford photo



Clockwise from L: Measure AA Special Field Trip May 21 at McNabney Marsh (see page 4); Pat Schneider, Membership Chair, welcomes new and old members; Program Chair Ariana Rickard introduced the June Program; MDAS member and June Program Speaker, Jill Hedgecock, presented information about rhino poaching and efforts to prevent this horrific trend, and shared photos from a recent safari trip to Africa; Maren Smith photos



the Quail

