

the Quail

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

Volume 62, Number 2

October 2016

October Program: A New Vision for the Salton Sea ♦ Andrea Jones

Andrea Jones, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon California, will speak on Audubon's engagement at the Salton Sea, past and present.

The Salton Sea, an inland saline lake covering 350 square miles in southern California, is a critically endangered "Important Bird Area" that hosts two thirds of California's bird species. Andrea will highlight why the Salton Sea is so important, why over 400 bird species make use of this habitat, and will describe which species are most threatened by a changing Salton Sea.

She will discuss past efforts to "restore" the sea and describe how Audubon is engaging in a new solution for the Salton Sea that will be beneficial to both birds and people.

Andrea has worked at Audubon California for the past ten years. She leads conservation programs and works with staff and the network of Audubon chapters across the state to implement conservation projects at high priority Important Bird Areas (IBAs). She oversees Audubon's efforts



A Double-crested Cormorant skull (above L) at the Salton Sea (above), Andrea Jones photos

in priority bird species and serves as their spokeswoman for bird conservation across California.

Prior to California, Andrea worked at Massachusetts Audubon as Director of the Coastal Waterbird Program. She received her M.S. in Wildlife Conservation/Ornithology and her B.S. in Wildlife Biology and Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is a past

board member of the Morro Coast Audubon Society and currently resides in the East Bay.

Birding Information 7 PM

State Senator Steve Glazer will speak about environmental issues affecting our district and state and take questions from our members. Elected to the California State Senate in 2015, Glazer previously served as a city council member and three-time mayor of Orinda. A lifelong environmental advocate, he led efforts that raised hundreds of millions of dollars to protect open space in California and 25 other states, leadership recognized by the Trust for Public Land and Save The Bay.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, October 6** in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

630 PM Doors open
700 PM Birding Information
725 PM Announcements
740 PM Refreshments and raffle
805 PM Program: Andrea Jones

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM:
Thurs., November 3, 2016—Owls
& Woodpeckers ♦ Paul Bannick

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Our chapter is vibrant, not only due to the talents and interests of our many active members, but also through the generous donations of our members and friends. On page 9 of this newsletter, you will see the 2015-2016 Annual Report by our Treasurer, Steve Buffi, and a list of our donors.

Because of dues and member donations, we are able to continue with known MDAS programs including the Young Birders Club, No Child Left Inside, Phenology, Conservation and Legislative Outreach, CBC, Field Trips, along with interesting and varied program presentations each month.

In addition, we are able to support other non-profits that reflect our MDAS mission statement: 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.

Last fiscal year, we donated a total of \$7550 to nine non-profits. They are: California Audubon's Bobcat Ranch for wildfire damage; Save Mt. Diablo for land acquisition and in memory of Betts Sanderson; The Gardens at Heather Farm for expansion projects; John Muir Land Trust for Carr Ranch land acquisition; to two program speakers, Pandemonium Aviaries for bird conservation and the John Muir Project for Rim Fire Research; Wildcare for rodenticide diagnostics to inform ongoing legislation; and to Mt. View Sanitary District for the construction of McNabney Marsh nesting rafts, some built by MDAS volunteers this past year.

I also want to welcome MDAS Board Members Beth Branthaver, Education Chair, and Chick Chickering, Member-at-Large. Elizabeth Leite will serve as the Citizen Science Coordinator and is the CBC Contact (see pages 3 and 6). Thank you for volunteering your time and talents!

Good News For Tricolored Blackbirds

Through cooperative agreements with farmers in California's Central Valley, a historic 100% of rare Tricolored Blackbird colonies on agricultural fields were protected during the 2016 harvest season. Working with the USDA California Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and their Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Tricolored Blackbird Project, Audubon California helped seven farmers delay the silage harvest, saving roughly 57,000 birds on 378 acres.

"More than 90 percent of the world's Tricolored Blackbirds live in California, so we have a special responsibility to protect them," said Samantha Arthur, Conservation Program Manager at Audubon California (*editor's note: Samantha was the MDAS program speaker in September 2015*). "Reaching this milestone shows what private landowners can do to help a declining species and make a big conservation impact."

Audubon California collaborates with NRCS, Western United Dairymen, Dairy Cares, Sustainable Conservation and the California Farm Bureau Federation to create agreements with dairy farmers to delay harvests to allow the young Tricolored Blackbirds time to fledge—an approximately 40-day process. Agreements with dairy farmers have saved many thousands of blackbirds since 2011, but this is the first year every

colony found in an agricultural field was protected.

Tricolored Blackbirds, which once numbered in the millions, live almost entirely in California, and have long been a concern to conservationists. A comprehensive survey of Tricolored Blackbirds in California in 2014 confirmed that the population of the rare species had declined 44 percent since 2011 due to habitat loss and breeding colony disruption.

Colonies were discovered in Kern, Tulare, Fresno, and Riverside counties. Approximately \$231,227 was spent by NRCS in the silage program to offset farmer losses. In addition, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife worked with a farmer in San Benito County who had a nesting colony of 10,000 birds.

"This Tricolored Blackbird effort continues to be a shining example of farmers, the environmental community, and government achieving success together through partnership," said Alan Forkey of NRCS.

The California Fish and Game Commission voted to designate the species as a candidate for state endangered species listing in January 2015 and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is now reviewing current scientific information on the species. The United States Fish and Wildlife Department is also reviewing a federal endangered species listing.

And, *that's* good news for Tricolored Blackbirds! ~California Audubon

Welcome Rejoining* and New Members

Orin Dahl	Oakland
Jim & Sharon Gallagher	Walnut Creek
Tamara Hennigan	Pleasanton
Melanie Hunt*	Pleasant Hill
Laura Osegueda	Concord
Sam Pence	Pleasant Hill
Will & Kate Taylor*	Martinez
Rose Towery	Danville
Stephanie Villasenor	San Ramon
Karen Driscoll	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/



What bird has the most densely packed nesting colonies?

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

RROONMMMECU

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 the November *Quail* is October 10.**

The past month has been a time of migratory activity and the return of shorebirds, songbirds, and winter residents of the Bay Area.

LK saw 28 **Wood Ducks** at Holland Tract 8/18.

An **American Wigeon** was at West County Waste Sewage Ponds (WCWSP) 9/6. AL

DW saw a **Canvasback** at Clifton Court Forebay 9/6.

A late clutch of two **California Quail** adults and six babies was at the Lafayette home of BE.

A **Horned Grebe** in breeding plumage was at Pt. Isabel 8/9, MP, and 8/10. LK

Lesser Nighthawks were at Clifton Court 8/16, AL, and Pinole 9/7. JE

AL saw a **Snowy Plover** at Pt. Pinole 8/15.

Six **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at the south end of McNabney Marsh 8/8. LK

A **Red Knot** was at Pt. Isabel 9/5. AL

Baird's Sandpipers were common around the county. LK saw one at Pt. San Pablo. From 8/15-19 there was one at the WCWSP seen by AL, GC, JHa, ES, PB, JH, LK, and JR. LK found one at Holland Tract 8/18. On 8/29, AL found nine at the south end of McNabney Marsh. (accessible on the road into the Mt. View SD) They were present until 9/2 and seen by BD, BG, MK, SL, RN, JD, and CM.

A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at the WCWSP 8/18. JR

AL saw a **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** at Pt. Pinole 8/15.

A **Wilson's Phalarope** was at Shell Pond 8/19. JH

SD saw a **Red-necked Phalarope** 8/26 at the Miller-Knox Pond.

A **Parasitic Jaeger** was harassing terns at the Potrero Reach Channel by the Richmond Yacht Club 9/10. MS

A **Common Murre** and two **Pigeon Guillemots** were flying off-shore of the Richmond shoreline on 8/10. LK

LK saw a **Least Tern** near Pt. Isabel 8/7.

Two **Black Terns** were at the Frank's Tract overlook on Bethel Island 8/11. LK

A **Common Tern** was at Pt. Pinole 8/9. MP and ES

There were 61 **Elegant Terns** at the Pt. Pinole fishing pier on 9/6. SD

MP saw a **Red-throated Loon** 8/8 at Pt. Isabel.

LK saw two **Pelagic Cormorants** off Pt. San Pablo 8/18 and 8/19.

A single **White-faced Ibis** was at Holland Tract 8/11. LK

JCS saw a **Swainson's Hawk** in the field across from Pioneer Elementary School in Brentwood 8/19. Eighty were at Holland Tract 8/18, LK, and 24 in Byron 9/3. AM

A **Western Screech-Owl** continued in an oak about 100 yards from the beginning of the Lafayette-Moraga Trail 8/28, HH, EC, K&SW, DK, and 8/30. GPD

Burrowing Owls were across the street from Pioneer Elementary School in Brentwood 8/19. JCS

A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was seen 9/5 by TK near Bear Creek Road above the Briones Reservoir.

LK saw a **Willow Flycatcher** 8/18 on Bethel Island.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Mitchell Canyon in Mt. Diablo State Park 9/6. EF and RF

EF and RF also saw a **Gray Flycatcher** near Meridian Ridge Trail 9/6.

The same duo, EF and RF, also saw a **Cassin's Vireo** on 9/6.

AL saw a **Purple Martin** at the Dow Wetlands Preserve 8/11.

ES saw a **Bank Swallow** at the Iron House Sanitary District 8/2. LK saw 20 from Bethel Island 8/2 and JS and RB also saw some from Bethel Island 8/9 and 8/12.

FS had two **Brown Creepers** miles apart in Walnut Creek 8/19.

A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Briones Park 8/27. NT

JA saw 24 **Yellow Warblers** in his backyard in Lafayette 8/17. Two were in the Antioch yard of P&NS and 14 were at Bethel Island 8/14. LK

A **Townsend's Warbler** was at Pt. San Pablo 8/19. LK

LK saw a **Hermit Warbler** 8/18 on Bethel Island.

Three **Yellow-breasted Chats** were at Piper Slough 8/18. LK

EF and RF saw two **Bell's Sparrows** 9/6 near the Meridian Ridge Trail.

A **Fox Sparrow** was at Vollmer Peak 9/7. ER and JC

~ ~ ~

JA Jeff Acuff, PB Pat Bacchetti, RB Russ Bright, EC Ethan Chickering, GC Graham Chisholm, JC John Colbert, GPD Gary P. Davis, SD Sheila Dickie, JD Judith Dunham, BD Bob Dunn, JE Jack Edick, BE Bill Espey, EF Erin Fitzgerald, RF Robert Furrow, BG Bingham Gibbs, JHa John Harris, HH Hugh Harvey, JH Jeff Hoppes, LK Logan Kahle, DK Dave Kent, TK Trevor Kienzle, MK Mary Krentz, AL Albert Linkowski, SL Steve Lombardi, AM Amy McDonald, CM Colin Meusel, RN Rich Nicholson, MP Michael Park, JR Jim Roethe, ER Erica Rutherford, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, MS Marc Simmel, JCS Juan-Carlos Solis, JS John Sterling, ES Emilie Strauss, NT Nancy Tognan, DW Denise Wight, K&SW Ken and Stephanie Woods

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

MDAS Christmas Bird Counts

Mark your calendar now for our Christmas Bird Counts, the East County on Wed., December 14, and the Central County on Sat., December 17. Previous years' participants, please let your leaders know if you plan to help out again this year. If you are new to MDAS or have questions about the CBC, please feel free to contact me at: e.leite@sbcglobal.net. A good source for more information is the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count website. -**Elizabeth Leite, CBC Coordinator**

Trip Reports

Bodega Bay, August 20: Twenty birders enjoyed a typical mild gray day filled with birds at Bodega Bay. Highlights included Ruddy and Black Turnstones near the Tides, and Whimbrels, both Pelicans, and a

surprising Townsend's Warbler at the Cypress Grove. At Campbell Cove, a few hardy souls found the Northern Waterthrush in the underbrush, but everybody had good views of Warbling Vireos on the foliage, two Common Loons on the water, Elegant, Caspian, and Forster's Terns



Warbling Vireo,
Beth Branthaver photo

in the air, and dozens more pelicans on the breakwater. At Bodega Head, there were Black Oystercatchers and all three cormorants, with a preponderance of Brandt's, as well as Pigeon Guillemots and Common Murres on the ocean. Back to the bay, we enjoyed a close encounter with an Osprey,



Four Western Sandpipers, one leucistic, Beth Branthaver photo

and, after much effort, found a Virginia Rail who responded vocally and enthusiastically to the recording of a Sora! The most exciting spectacle came at the end at Smith Brother Lane, where we watched several hundred Western Sandpipers (including one almost pure white, leucistic bird) performing wonderful aerial maneuvers, and we waited long enough so that the Peregrine Falcon that had been troubling them swooped down. The final total was 58 species. ~Fred Safier

Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, September 1: Twelve members spent an overcast morning climbing the Packrat Trail at the Tilden Nature Center and finishing at Jewel Lake. It was a quiet morning with few birds heard or seen. The bird of the day was a Townsend's Warbler along the Wildcat Canyon Trail between Jewel Lake and the Nature Center. We saw just 25 species, ten more than another trip the following day. ~Maury Stern



American Kestrel,
Megan Sandri sketch

Pelagic Trip Yields Eleven Lifers for MDAS Young Birder, Michael Pang

I was excited to go on my first pelagic trip with Alvaro's Adventures out of Half Moon Bay very early on the morning of August 20. My father, sister, and I met him at the pier and I was glad to find that Tracy Farrington from my Young Birder's Club was there, too. We boarded the boat and headed out to sea. The sea was very calm and there was very



little wind. Before too long I got to see my first lifer of the trip, the Pink-footed Shearwater. There were also some whales and Red-necked Phalaropes. And then, I got two more lifers: Sabine's Gull (photo R) and Red Phalaropes. I also got to see several Blue Whales, Blue Sharks, and a Mola Mola. Later,

we got great views of a Common Tern perched on a floating plant and we saw many Black-footed Albatross, (photo below

middle) another lifer for me. We also saw some Ashy Storm Petrels, two Scripps's Murrelets (photo below), a Buller's Shearwater, and I was very happy to see three rare Craveri's Murrelets. Back near the harbor we were able to see the Northern Gannet perched on the cliffs. After 11 hours on the boat, I



got 11 lifers for this trip, nine of which I also photographed. Everybody on board was nice and Alvaro Jaramillo is a knowledgeable guide. I will definitely come on another pelagic trip with him. ~Michael Pang, article and photos



Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

October 2016 (Call Leader for ?s or rain cancellations)

01	Saturday	Hawk Hill
15	Saturday	Abbott's Lagoon
19	Wednesday	Berkeley-Emeryville Shoreline
29	Saturday	Outer Point Reyes

November 2016

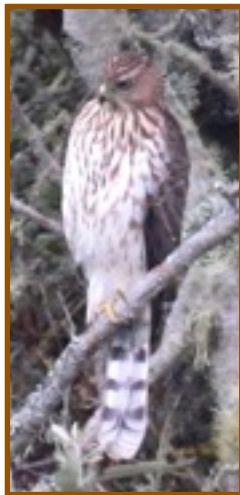
05	Saturday	Charleston Slough/South Bay
15	Tuesday	McNabney Marsh/Mt. View SD
19	Saturday	Limantour
29	Saturday	Solano County Raptors

2 Saturday, October 1

Hawk Hill

Leader: Fred Safier (925) 937-2906

Carpool leaves El Nido Ranch Road at 8 AM. **OR**, meet in parking lot, upper Rodeo Lagoon at 915 AM. From southbound US 101 take last Sausalito exit, Alexander Avenue, just before the Golden Gate Bridge. If driver knows the city, Fremont St./Columbus Ave./Marina/Golden Gate Bridge is a very reasonable alternate route on a Saturday--pass the Vista Point and take the Alexander Avenue exit. On west side of freeway, turn left toward Marin Headlands and go up the hill (Conzelman Road). At the traffic circle go right and down hill (McCullough Road). Turn left at the stop sign onto Bunker Road and continue to the parking lot on the right just before the bridge. We will bird the lagoons before going up to the hawk watch site. At noon the staff gives a talk on their work and usually demonstrates the actual banding. Carry snacks, lunch, and liquids. The walk up the hill is only a few hundred yards, but it is steep.



Cooper's Hawk, Beth Branthaver photo

Celebrate the first annual Bay Day by birding in Marin on October 1! (for information on Bay Day, see page 8)

3 Saturday, October 15

Abbott's Lagoon

Leader: David Hutton (925) 938-4485

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 7 AM. **OR**, meet at 830 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore. From I-80 in Vallejo, follow SR 37 19.1 miles to Atherton Avenue, exit and turn left, cross US 101 to San Marin Drive and continue for three miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd for six miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for seven miles to another stop sign. Turn right across the bridge, go three miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at the Bovine Bakery for coffee and pastries, continue out of town towards Olema, then turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley Road. Be prepared to carry snacks, lunch, and liquids. Lots of walking in sand.

1 Wednesday, October 19

Berkeley-Emeryville Shoreline

Leader: Eugenia Larson (925) 806-0644

Carpool leaves at 8 AM from El Nido Ranch Road.

OR, meet at 830 AM in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina.

Take SR 24 to I-580 west, turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. exit, turn left on Powell, go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy--dress in layers.



Black-bellied Plovers, Maren Smith photo

Loons, grebes, bay ducks, and shorebirds. Bring a snack and liquids.

2 Saturday, October 29

Outer Point Reyes

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

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall parking lot at 7 AM.

OR, meet 830 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center in Olema. From I-80 in Vallejo, follow SR 37 19.1 miles to Atherton Avenue, exit and turn left, cross US 101 to San Marin Drive and continue about three miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd. for six miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for seven miles to another stop sign. Turn right across the bridge, go three miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at the Bovine Bakery for coffee and pastries, continue out of town towards Olema, then turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We are hoping for migrants and vagrants. Weather is unpredictable, so dress in layers. Bring snack, lunch, and liquids.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. **Contact Leader for ?s or rain cancellations.** MDAS is a conservation organization; as such, we encourage carpooling (riders should help with gas, tolls, or entry fees).

Category **1**: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category **2**: Moderate, one mile+, possibly rough terrain

Category **3**: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain

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

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

MDAS Welcomes New Board Members

Ethan “Chick” Chickering joins the Board as a Member-at-Large. He will continue his role as the MDAS Scheduling Coordinator for the calendar on the MDAS website www.diabloaudubon.org that includes field trips for our chapter as well as other Audubon groups in the Bay Area.

Chick is a retired Computer Programmer of 40 years who moved to California from Lexington, Massachusetts with his wife Ruth in 1968. He attended college at UMass Lowell, known then as Lowell Tech, after serving in the USAF and graduated in 1965 with a BS in Physics and Math. He has worked for Edgerton, Germeshausen and Grier, Bechtel, Bank of America, and Price-Waterhouse-Coopers.

He was an avid skier prior to knee replacements, and both he and Ruth love to travel, having been to 34 countries and all over the United States. In his spare time, Chick volunteers with the San Francisco City Guides (his walks are: Golden Gate Bridge, Ft. Mason, and Silent Film SF), is a docent with the Market Street Railway Museum in San Francisco, and is also a volunteer ranger at Muir Woods.

Beth Branthaver joins the MDAS Board as the Education Chair. She has spent most of her life living in California. Her first job as a dietitian/nutritionist was from 1975-1991. After completing a Masters in Health Care Administration in 1991, Beth worked in various analytical and management positions at Kaiser Permanente until her retirement in 2010.

As a result of both of these work experiences, Beth developed a strong appreciation for science and evidence-based practices and began birding around 1994. At the time, she was living near Lake Merritt and became fascinated by the birdlife in and around the lake. Beth took birding classes and joined bird walks, initially with Golden Gate Audubon, and later with Mount Diablo Audubon.

In 2009 she completed the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Home Study Course in Bird Biology with Golden Gate Audubon, led by Bob Lewis. This outstanding course cemented her interest in avian species. Beth started photographing birds in 2004 and this hobby quickly became an enduring passion.

Beth would like to announce the following course for those interested in expanding their knowledge of birds:

Cornell Birding Course

Join Cornell Lab's "Comprehensive Bird Biology" on-line course starting September 1 for \$199 plus a book. Participants will work independently for course certification by viewing short videos by Cornell instructors and reading each chapter followed by a quiz. If interested, Tracy Farrington will facilitate a discussion group for those taking the course. They will meet regularly to review the lessons, quizzes, and to discuss the material. Interested? Contact Tracy at: tracy_farrington@yahoo.com

For course information: http://store.birds.cornell.edu/Home_Study_Course_in_Bird_Biology_s/44.htm

Board Position Opening

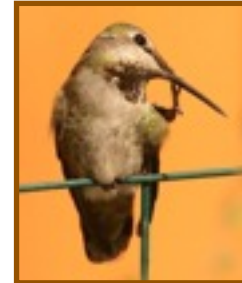
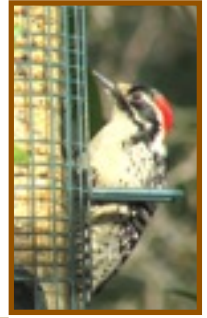
Pat Schneider, current Membership Chair, is retiring from this Board position and needs to find a replacement. The position requires computer literacy, a PC, and it would also be useful to have a familiarity with database concepts or to have used an Access database. Pat will provide training, so if you are interested, or if you have questions, please contact Pat at: patincococo@gmail.com.

Stork News

From Ariana Rickard, Programs Chair: "We are thrilled to announce the arrival of Nico Kian Bull born Thursday, August 18 at 1054 AM, weighing 7 lbs. 14 oz. Mother, baby, father Pierre, and big brother Dimitry are doing well." Welcome!

Citizen Science Update

Project FeederWatch, a Cornell University project, records the movement of migratory birds across the continent and runs seasonally from November to April. Following a specific protocol, on a weekly basis participants record birds species and



numbers seen at the feeder over a two-day period along with weather conditions. Having been a dedicated

FeederWatch volunteer for about ten years, I can promise you'll improve your observation skills and holistic understanding of species and view interesting avian interactions. In addition, you may become involved with a larger community of birders nationwide who provide photos and comments about their experience. Sign up at: www.feederwatch.org. ~Elizabeth Leite, Citizen Science Coordinator (photos Maren Smith top R and Joy Shonfeld above L)

Quail and e-Quail News

Did you know that if you move and have filled out a Change of Address form with the US Post Office, they will only forward your first-class mail? Thus, your *Quail* is returned to MDAS with additional postage due charges. Please notify me of address changes **BEFORE** you move so that I can update our database and avoid these extra costs. Or, better yet, switch to *Quail* by email. You will receive your *e-Quail* with color photos and you will generally find it in your inbox a week earlier than the print version. It's also environmentally friendly and will save MDAS the paper, printing and postage costs. Please notify the Membership Chair of your address change or send her your email address to receive the *e-Quail* at: patincococo@gmail.com.



Common Murre ♦ *Uria aalge*

Common Murres can be seen in our San Francisco Bay year round, but are more likely to be seen from October to May. The photo pictured was taken on the Berkeley-Emeryville Shoreline field trip last year (see Field Trips, page 5).

These birds are an oceanic species, only going onto land to nest. They are expert swimmers and divers. Breeding adults are a dark brown on the upper body with white underparts. The non-breeding plumage changes to include a white neck, chin, and lower face, with a black line extending from the eye.

Common Murres nest in densely packed colonies known as “loomeries”. No nest is built; instead the female lays a single egg on a ledge or rock. Because of this, the egg that she lays is cone-shaped with one end pointed, which keeps the egg from rolling off the cliff. Each egg is a distinct color and pattern helping the parents recognize it. The egg is incubated for 28-34 days with both parents helping with incubation. After the egg hatches, both parents help with foraging for food and brooding of the chick.

The chick leaves the nest before it has fledged, at around 20 days, hurling off the edge and gliding down to the sea, flapping to help slow its fall. It can fall as far as 1500 feet to



Common Murre, Jean Halford, photo

the water below! The male is there to feed and care for the chick for up to two months.

Murres dive as deep as 300 feet, which can put them in danger of getting caught in gill nets and drowning. They are also threatened by oil spills in waters where they breed.

Up to a half a million Common Murre eggs were harvested from the Farallon Islands in the mid-19th century to feed San Francisco’s growing population during the Gold Rush. Today, they number more than 4 million strong living in both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. ~**Jean Halford**

MDAS Special Planning Meeting

Nearly the entire Board of Directors met July 23 for a special 4-hour meeting during the summer break, to develop priorities and goals for the next year, and to address "big picture" issues beyond the time and scope of regular Board meetings.

The Board first identified the strengths and challenges of the organization. Strengths include: great volunteers, fantastic field trips, remarkable programs, an attractive newsletter, an effective Conservation Committee, longstanding in-house educational programs, stable and solvent finances, supportive members, and a lovely place to meet.

Areas for improvement include: attracting new members in different age and cultural groups, revising outdated governing documents, refining the budget process, streamlining membership processing, developing new initiatives and finding volunteers to undertake them, and recruiting successors for various Board roles.

The group then took a deep dive into governing documents and came up with a slate of revisions that resolve contradictions and outdated language, to be approved by Membership at a future meeting. Budget and financial procedures were also reviewed. Some committees and Board positions were refined and reorganized. A new advisory position, Citizen Science Coordinator, will be led by Elizabeth Leite, who will also be the Christmas Bird Count contact, and Education, a previously unfilled Board position, will be chaired by Beth Branthaver. Any members interested in getting involved, should not hesitate to get in touch with them.

Members who would consider serving on the Board in the future should contact a member of the Recruitment Committee: Jimm Edgar, Paul Schorr, Nancy Wenninger, or Maury Stern. Proposals for new birding, educational, or conservation projects are welcome, too. Email addresses and/or phones of all Board members and committees are listed on page 11 of the *Quail*.

The Board looks forward to implementing many of the procedures developed at the meeting in the months to come. More importantly it gave us all a fresh appreciation of our colleagues, our chapter members, and our mission. ~**Rosalie Howarth**

“Walk and Talk” with Assemblywoman Baker, MDAS, and JMLT



Assemblywoman Catharine Baker and John Muir Land Trust Executive Director, Linus Eukel, (*photo L*) spoke to the crowd on the Gary Bogue Trail atop Acalanes Ridge during the recent MDAS co-sponsored “Walk and Talk” on September 10. Around 35 people enjoyed the short hike and the stunning vistas from the top. Participants had the unique opportunity to learn about environmental legislation and to ask Baker questions about areas of concern while enjoying the beautiful scenery. Acquisition of the peak, with its spectacular 360 degree views, was accomplished with the help of MDAS Conservation Chair, Nancy Wenninger, when she worked for East Bay Regional Parks. ~**Rosalie Howarth article and photo**

Birds...Up Close

It's great to find birds out on a bird walk and possibly add one to your life list. And, it's wonderful to watch birds out your window while they're eating at your bird feeder or bathing in the bird bath. But, how close can you actually get? Can you touch a feather? Feed the bird a mealworm? Watch it grow from a hatchling to a fully feathered juvenile? Only then can you say that you *really* know a bird.

Bushtit siblings become "aware" of each other at about a week and a half old. One will suddenly stop and look with annoyance at another sibling if it grabs a mealworm first, maybe even giving it a quick peck. When they are older, there can be fierce sibling rivalry ending in a wrestling match on the ground. It's amusing to watch such tiny birds rolling around kicking and pecking, but it is a very important part of their development as young Bushtits finding their place in the hierarchy. These are things I've observed raising orphaned Bushtits as a volunteer for Lindsay Wildlife Experience that I never would have had the opportunity to see in the wild.

White-throated Swifts are usually seen flying at amazingly fast speeds and appear as just a blur through binoculars. Looking down at one clinging to your t-shirt waiting to be fed a mealworm is a whole different experience. Swifts cannot perch like most birds because their short legs are built specifically for clinging. Their strong claws form a



White-throated Swift, Google Images photo

star-shaped pattern for hanging on to rough surfaces. They cannot walk or hop like most birds, but rather shuffle—so awkward on the ground, yet so incredibly graceful in the air. And, unlike other birds, they don't self-feed in captivity. Ever.

Not only does each species behave very differently from one another, they each have their own personalities. After 30 years of rehabbing birds I learn something new and intriguing about each species *every* year, things that I could never have observed in my backyard or through a pair of binoculars. How wonderful is that? ~Joanie Smith, East Bay Nature

Community Events

► Wild Birds Unlimited 25th Anniversary and Nature Event, Saturday, October 1

Learn about birds, bees, and spiders as well as local animal rescue, parks, and environmental protection groups, and meet local nature celebrities, authors, and artists on Saturday, October 1 from 10 AM-4 PM at the Pleasant Hill store. (see article on page 11). **Volunteers needed for the MDAS table. Contact Brian at: b-murphy21@hotmail.com, or call (925) 937-8835.**

► First Ever Bay Day, Saturday, October 1

An off-shoot of Save The Bay efforts, Bay Day will be your day to celebrate the Bay—one official day every year for all Bay Area residents to come together and celebrate our region and our Bay. Join the MDAS field trip to Hawk Hill in Marin, visit Wild Birds Unlimited for their nature event, hit the Bay Trail by bike or by foot, grab a kite or your binoculars and head for the shoreline, or enjoy one of the many Bay Day events. Get outdoors and enjoy our Bay! **For information: bayday.org**

► Los Vaqueros Reservoir Outdoor Adventures

Did you know that besides the obvious hiking, boating, and fishing at Los Vaqueros Reservoir, naturalists also offer stargazing, night hikes, and bird walks? Coming up: Stargazing—Friday, September 23 from 8-10 PM, and Birds of Fall—Saturday, September 24 from 10 AM-Noon. **For information: ccwater.com**

► 20th annual 2016 Central Valley Birding Symposium, November 17-20, Stockton Hilton

Keynote speakers will include professional bird photographer Bob Steele, "Birding in the Central Valley Over the Past 20 Years," Kimball Garrett "The Central Valley's Prominent Place in the Past and Present of California Field Ornithology," and Ed Harper and friends "Celebrating 20 Years of the CVBC and the CVBS." In addition, there will be workshops, field trips, panels, and arts and gifts for sale in the Birder's Market. **For information: cvbsreg.org**

► Greenbelt Alliance Fall Outings

For the stories behind historical, architectural, and iconic landmarks, and great views, consider checking out the Fall outings offered on their website, including Exploring Hamilton Wetlands on Sunday, November 6. **For information: greenbelt.org**

► Save the Date—San Diego Bird Festival, February 23-26, 2017

Enjoy field trips, workshops, pelagic birding, and special guests Kenn and Kimberly Kaufman, at the Mission Village Conference Center in San Diego. CA. Registration begins October 1. **For information: sandiegoaudubon.org**

Thank You Donors

The Board of Directors of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society would like to thank everyone who contributed during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Your donations continue to support ongoing programs dedicated to the preservation of habitat for birds and wildlife and promote an awareness of nature among young people. We extend our heartfelt thanks for your generosity and continued support.

California Condor (\$1000+)

Hugh B. and Rosita O. Harvey

California Gnatcatcher (\$250-\$999)

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MDAS Annual Treasurer's Report, 2015-2016 Fiscal Year

Mount Diablo Audubon Society remains in an excellent position to serve our community. We had another successful year. The annual year-end fundraising drive continues to be strong and our total chapter membership is strong, too. The financial health of MDAS, due to the generosity of our members, allows us to actively pursue our mission. During the year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and continued our community education outreach efforts for young people such as the "No Child Left Inside Program" and the Young Birders Club. Your generosity supports our monthly presentation program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, our web site, and much more. You have read about these important community efforts in this and prior issues of the *Quail*. Each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community. The General Fund balance covers operations and reserves, the Conservation and Education balance is used towards these conservation and educational efforts, and the *Breeding Bird Atlas* reflects the books held for sale and the results of book sales. ~Steve Buffi

July 2015 – June 2016				
Funds:	Revenue:	Expenses:	Net;	Fund Balance as of 7/1/2016;
General:	35,377.15	32,455.72	2,921.43	119,912.09
Conservation & Education:	11.16	0	11.16	16,623.03
Breeding Bird Atlas:	-777.51	45.63	-823.14	18,233.14
Total All Funds:	34,610.80	32,501.35	2,109.45	154,768.26

Thomas Lincoln ♦ Friend of Audubon

By Ellis Myers

In August of 1832, John James Audubon, his wife Lucy, and their two sons, Victor Gifford, 21, and John Woodhouse, 19, traveled to Maine, where Audubon wished to paint northern birds—specifically "Spruce Partridges"—for *Birds of America*, his portfolio-in-progress of all the native birds of the continent shown at life size. (see the September 2015 *Quail*)

At the village of Dennysville the Audubons stayed at the home of Judge Theodore Lincoln. Theodore's father was the renowned Revolutionary War General Benjamin Lincoln, who, as Washington's second in command, received the surrender of the British and French forces at Yorktown.

Audubon wrote: "In August 1832, I reached the delightful little village of Dennysville, (*sic*) about eighteen miles distant from Eastport. There I had the good fortune of becoming an inmate of the kind and most hospitable family of Judge Lincoln, who has resided there for nearly half a century, and who is blessed with a family of sons (*editor's note: five sons and three daughters*) equal to any with whom I am acquainted, for talents, perseverance and industry. Each of these had his own peculiar avocation, and I naturally attached myself more particularly to one who ever since his childhood has manifested a decided preference for ornithological pursuits. This young gentleman, Thomas Lincoln, offered to lead me to those retired woods where the Spruce Partridges were to be found.



Thomas Lincoln, from *In Audubon's Labrador* by Charles W. Townsend

We accordingly set out on the 27th of August, my two sons accompanying us. Thomas, being a perfect woodsman, advanced at our head, and I can assure you, reader, that to follow him through the dense and tangled woods of his native country, or over the deep mosses of Labrador, where he accompanied me afterwards, would be an undertaking not easily accomplished. The weather was warm, and the mosquitoes (*sic*) and moose flies did their best to render us uncomfortable. We however managed to follow our guide the whole day, over fallen trees, among tangled brushwood, and through miry ponds; yet not a single Grouse did we find, even in places where he had before seen them, and great was my mortification, when, on our return towards sunset, as we were crossing a meadow belonging to his father, not more than a quarter of a mile from the village, the people employed in making hay informed us that about half an hour after our departure they had seen a fine covey. We were too much fatigued to go in search of them, and therefore made for home."

the Quail



Spruce Grouse (Spotted Grouse), plate 119, from Audubon's *Birds of America*

With the shores of eastern Canada known to shelter many Gannets, other seabirds and other species uncommon further south, Audubon had long planned an expedition to Labrador. He engaged his son, John Woodhouse, and Tom Lincoln, as well as William Ingalls and George Shattuck, both of Boston, and Joseph Coolidge, of Maine—all between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one—and on June 6, 1833, sailed aboard the schooner *Ripley* from Eastport, Maine, on a journey that would last for three months. Tom Lincoln was, according to William Ingalls, "quiet, reserved, sensible, practical, reliable", and according to Audubon, "a great favourite among us."

From the start, the expedition met with unfavorable weather, and all the party were seasick as they crossed the "worst of all dreadful bays", the Bay of Fundy. Off the coast of Cape Breton they viewed what they thought were snow covered rocks; as they came closer, they proved to be sea stacks covered with Gannets. By June 17, they were near the mouth of the Natashquan River. For the most part, Audubon remained aboard the schooner at his drawing table, while the young men explored the mainland, bringing back specimens of birds and plants. It was on June 27 that they found—and Tom shot—a bird previously unknown. Audubon named it Lincoln's Pinewood Finch.



Lincoln's Sparrow (Lincoln Finch), plate 425 from Audubon's *Birds of America*

Mosquitoes were a major misery. Audubon wrote: "Tom Lincoln, who is especially attacked by them, was actually covered with blood, and looked as if he had had a gouging fight with some rough Kentuckians." >>>cont. on page 12

Nature Event October 1

Do you enjoy our parks and wildlife? Do you appreciate the work of people and non-profits that help protect them? Do you want to learn more? Wild Birds Unlimited has invited many local animal rescue, parks, and environmental protection groups to our Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) 25th Anniversary and Nature Event on Saturday, October 1 from 10 AM-4 PM.

This is a fun and educational event for families. Learn how to have your own bee hive, where to go on hikes or bird walks, who rescues injured birds and animals, or what the best plants are for our climate. You may even wish to join or donate to one of the fine organizations participating. Kids can see live birds, animals, snakes, spiders, bees, and insects, and they can have their picture taken with Dee Dee the Giant Chickadee.

While you are here, visit with Gary Bogue, one of our most treasured naturalists, and Joan Morris, who writes



the bird and animal column for the *Times* newspapers. Meet Chuck Todd, wildlife newspaper and book illustrator, Sandra Perry, childrens' book author, as well as fine nature artists.

Mt. Diablo Audubon and our Young Birder's Club will be represented, along with such groups as International Bird Rescue, John Muir Land Trust, Contra Costa Avian Society, Mt. Diablo Bee Keepers, and naturalist Mike Marchiano.

Twice a year, WBU sponsors events to support the wildlife and wild lands protected by local groups. Our goal is to educate the public about our natural resources, how to enjoy them, and how to preserve them for future generations. ~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 MDAS Board meets at 645 PM on the second Thursday of the month except for July and August at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.



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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 Mt. 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 "Go Green" email US Mail

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ email: _____

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

Mount Diablo Audubon Society
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Lincoln's Sparrow, Beth Branthaver photo

>>>*continued from page 10*

Cold was also a hardship, so cold at times "my fingers could no longer hold my pencil." But over all, on arriving back in New York on September 7, Audubon had completed (or nearly completed) 23 drawings, and the adventure returned with 73 bird skins and a large collection of plants and other natural history objects.

Tom kept a journal on the Labrador trip, revealing him to have considerable ability as a naturalist; his watercolor sketches of shells and birds show artistic talents with a high respect for accuracy and detail. However, this journal also contains this diatribe: "Aug. 11. We bid adieu to Labrador without much regret probably never to see that wretched country again. We had been disappointed in everything concerning it. Indeed we had never the truth told us concerning any one thing and it was only the outrageously exaggerated accounts and in many cases stories wholly without foundation that induced us to come hither."

Audubon's journal includes a similar sentiment: "Seldom in my life have I left a country with as little regret as I do this; ..." Yet he also praised Labrador: "All—all is wonderfully grand, wild—aye, and terrific. And yet how beautiful it is now, when one sees the wild bee, moving from one flower to another in search of food, which doubtless is as sweet to it, as the essence of the magnolia is to those of favored Louisiana."

After the Labrador expedition, Lincoln returned to Maine where he became a successful farmer and staunch abolitionist. He corresponded with Audubon for a time and recalled the artist as "a nice man but Frenchy (i.e., emotional) as thunder."

In a letter from Audubon to Tom Lincoln in November 1833, written from Charleston, South Carolina, where he was staying with his friend, Dr. John Bachman, Audubon asks that Lincoln send him certain bird skins, such as "Pine Gros beak, white-winged, and common Cross beaks." In return, Audubon sent a box of Southern bird skins, and shells from the Floridas. According to his son, Dr. Arthur Lincoln, Thomas Lincoln almost never used a gun in his later years, but kept up an interest in birds and everything else in nature until the day of his death, although this interest was secondary to his work in the antislavery cause.

*"Unless we practice conservation, those who come after us will have to pay the price of misery, degradation, and failure for the progress and prosperity of our day."
Gifford Pinchot*

