



the Quail

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

Volume 62, Number 5

February 2017

Feb. Program: Birds of Scotland & the Ancient Sport of Falconry ♦ Jill Hedgecock

Jill Hedgecock will share photos from her Scotland birding adventures and her experience at the Cotswold Falconry Centre at Moreton-in-Marsh in south-central England. Inspired by the book *H is for Hawk* by Helen MacDonald, Jill will also discuss the hawk and falcon training process as well as how falconry has infiltrated the English language.

Although Scotland is not considered a global birding hotspot, according to the Avibase database, 560 birds occur in Scotland. In a single day, Jill birded a variety of habitats from freshwater lochs to moorlands to marine coastal wetlands in the Angus region of Scotland. This diversity allowed views from waders to songbirds and grouse to gannets.

Highlights of her trip with Stuart Green of Angus Bird Tours (www.angusbirdtours.com), who was kind enough to share his photos, include Grey Heron, Blue Tit,



Bullfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Red Grouse, and a spectacular rust-and-green Kingfisher.

Although the United Kingdom supports a number of colorful birds, the raptors and their connection to falconry are a big birding attraction. As with most human interactions with wildlife, man's meddling provides advantages and disadvantages to conservation efforts targeting birds of prey. Based on its long-standing



L: Barnacle Goose and Above: Jill holds a Snake Eagle, Stuart Green photos; Top R: Sparrowhawk, Jill Hedgecock photo

history and cultural roots, falconry is unlikely to disappear soon.

Human's preoccupation with raptors dates back to 2000 BC when the country of Turkey was called Mesopotamia. On the plus side of this sporting tradition, through captive breeding and reintroduction, the



population of peregrines in the UK has rebounded after severe declines. But the numbers of peregrines are declining again, particularly in regions where pheasant and grouse hunting are popular. These and other conflicts between man and bird will be discussed during the presentation.

Jill leads the Black Diamond Mine CBC Count, served as the MDAS International Conservation Coordinator in the early 1990s, and is a popular MDAS program presenter, who last shared her bird and rhino stories from her South Africa trip at our meeting in June 2016.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 2** 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

800 PM Program: Jill Hedgecock

♦ **Birds of Scotland & Falconry**

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM:

Thursday, March 2: Karine

Tokatlian ♦ Snowy Plovers

Birding Information 7 PM

Two years ago, Staci Hobbet, a Mount Diablo State Park natural history docent, gathered a group of volunteers from several regional organizations to form a Peregrine Patrol Team to support an official, seasonal closure of the Castle Rock/Diablo Foothills Regional Park cliffs on the western edge of Mount Diablo State Park where Peregrines attempt to nest every spring. With nearly 100,000 yearly visitors, she'll tell us about the Peregrine Patrol's efforts to educate visitors.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

It has been a busy couple of months for our chapter. New Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation revisions were approved by the Board and await chapter vote. Two successful Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) were coordinated by Elizabeth Leite in December. And, our new Education Chair, Beth Branthaver, and her committee has created a survey (see page 10 or go to the link: www.diabloaudubon.org/education/Educational-Programs-Member-Survey.pdf) to poll the MDAS membership on their interest in possible classes and community outreach programs.

We continue to be wowed by Ariana Rickard's line-up of fascinating programs and our members' detailed Birding Information presentations (photos page 12), as well as Hugh Harvey's full schedule of field trips (in between rain showers). Enjoy our dedicated leaders' trip recaps and please join MDAS on one of the many 2017 outings including a weekend trip to Panoche Valley in February, all described on pages 4-5.

Regarding the revisions, at the December 8 MDAS Board meeting, the Board approved the revised Bylaws and

voted to amend Article VI of the Articles of Incorporation. The next step is to communicate the proposed revisions to the membership and present them at the February 2 meeting. They are posted on the link: www.diabloaudubon.org/chapter.php.

The proposed revisions will be explained in detail at the February 2 meeting and voted upon at the March 2 meeting. If approved, Board Secretary, Carol Pacht, will file the Articles of Incorporation amendment with the California Secretary of State.

We continue to support Citizen Science activities for our members. In December, 40 East County CBC participants found 140 species while 64 participants found 154 species in the Central County Count. Mark your calendars for the 2017 CBCs, December 16 and 20. See page 9 for Elizabeth Leite's full report as well as information about the February 17-20 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Then, check out two local GBBC survey birding walks on page 7 to see how you can help gather citizen science data.

Audubon California Assembly 2016 Report

Last November 4-6, I attended the 2016 Audubon California Chapter Assembly representing MDAS. Held at the Tenaya Lodge near Yosemite, more than 100 chapter leaders and members from throughout California participated in this meeting, sharing ideas and creating new partnerships.

Two days of workshops and panel discussions included topics such as the use of legislative action by chapters to



Mike Lynes talks about policy advocacy, Audubon California photo

influence local and state policies, the impact of climate change, siting of renewable energy projects and their impact on birds, water for bird habitats, building bird friendly communities, diversity and inclusion within chapters, and the use of social media.

The importance of chapters working together for common goals was stressed, with an example of 14 chapters in Southern California who held an "Energy Summit" in 2015 to align their strategies for addressing climate change. Napa-Solano Audubon wrote an excellent

booklet, "California Birds in a Changing Climate: 170 Species at Risk," that was presented at the meeting, and available at: www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Main/Climate.

Several chapters also described successful projects that are promoting the establishment of native plant gardens at homes, businesses, and school yards, with the goal of creating more habitat for birds and conserving water.

On the first evening, the keynote speaker was author David Sibley, who presented an entertaining talk about the psychology of bird identification titled "How to Mistake an Egret for a Shrike." On the final day of the meeting, field trips were organized to several locations in the Yosemite area.

The next Audubon CA Assembly will be in 2018 and National Audubon's Convention will be held July 14-17, 2017 in Park City, Utah. ~Carol Pacht

Did you know that Mike Eliot of Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) in Pleasant Hill donates 5% of every purchase made by an MDAS member to MDAS and Native Bird Connections. To participate, simply let WBU know that you are an MDAS member when making your next purchase.

Since 2012, Mike has made over \$3300 in donations based on MDAS member purchases to these two groups. Thank you Mike!

Welcome New Members

Susan Medlin	Fairfield
Janie Nelson	Walnut Creek
Christine Dunbar	Martinez
Cinnie Chou	Walnut Creek
Andrew Naegeli	Walnut Creek
Madelon DeYoung	Concord

MDAS on the Web

www.diabloaudubon.org
www.diabloaudubon.org/mobile (mobile only)
www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon
www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society/
smile.amazon.com (choose MT Diablo Audubon Society for .5% donation of eligible purchases)

Q

What is North America's most intensely studied songbird?

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

ATCHNRRRDIWWWEEPOOS

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 March Quail will be February 6.**

Numerous ducks returned to the Bay Area with late arrival land birds, as well. Cackling Geese were found, usually with flocks of Canada Geese.

Wood Ducks were reported at the Upper San Leandro Reservoir 11/6 and 11/7. AH, EL

At Miller-Knox RP in Pt. Richmond **Eurasian Wigeons** returned to the pond and the shoreline near Ferry Point. 12/9 SD, 12/31 LL

Two **Blue-winged Teals** were at MacNabney Marsh 12/8. SL

BP and a group saw two **Tufted Ducks** in the Upper San Leandro Reservoir near the Rancho Laguna Park section on 12/21.

A **White-winged Scoter** was at Clifton Court Forebay 11/16, AL, and near the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge 11/21. DR

A **Black Scoter** associating with scaups returned to the Richmond Marina area on 12/17. ST, GS, LL, SD, AL, SJ, C&TW, FD, DM, JHo

DR saw a **Long-tailed Duck** near the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge 11/21 and one was reported in the Emeryville coastal area, too.

Barrow's Goldeneyes were at Cypress Grove Park in Oakley 12/5 P&NS and 12 were seen 12/11 by HH off the Martinez Shoreline Preserve.

Hooded Mergansers were in several places: Heather Farm 11/6, TF; Upper San Leandro Reservoir 11/6 AH, EL; at Tilden 12/2 AK; and in Refugio Valley Park, Hercules 1/4 LL.

An interesting hybrid **Cinnamon Teal X Northern Shoveler** was at Waterbird Way Pond 12/24. AL

A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at the Richmond Marina 12/9. BD

DW saw over 400 **Sandhill Cranes** at Holland Tract 12/1.

Caspian Terns continued their very late activity (usually gone by October), seen at Clifton Court Forebay by AL, LP, DRu, RC, DW, JA, BH, AM, LK, CM, RB, DT, and RCu.

Also at Clifton Court Forebay, LK saw a **Common Loon** 12/19 and a **Pacific Loon** 12/27.

On 12/10 and 12/15 PS saw an adult **Bald Eagle** at Contra Loma RP.

BM saw one at San Pablo Reservoir 12/19 and JC saw two at the Siesta Valley area of Orinda the same date.

LK saw a **Ferruginous Hawk** at Clifton Court Forebay 12/19.

A **Golden Eagle** was at Tilden Nature Center 12/2, 1/6, AK, and two were at Oak Hill Park 1/2. DC

The long-present **Western Screech Owl** on the Lafayette-Moraga Trail continued: 11/9 HH, RC; 12/20, M&SS; and 12/27 P&NS.

A **Northern Pygmy Owl** was at Pinehurst in Canyon 12/27. LW

AL saw a **Long-eared Owl** at Black Diamond Mines 12/28.

The **Red-naped X Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, first seen three months ago, was seen again in early December at the Martinez Regional Shoreline by LL, SL, and JH.

A **Yellow-shafted Flicker** was at Pt. Isabel 12/18. KM, AJ, PY

Several **Merlins** were about. KB's returned for the fourth year to her Lafayette house. TF saw one at Heather Farm 11/6. P&NS had one at Contra Loma RP 11/12, and AKr had a fly-by at his Richmond home near Wildcat Canyon Park on 1/2.

A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen perched on old pier pilings at Pt. Pinole RP 11/10 SD; 11/12 MC; 11/15 HH, MS; and 12/5 KH.

The returning **Tropical Kingbird** was seen by FS, DK, ML, TF, NM, JS, WR, MR, BB, GM, RS, and JHe.

A flock of **Horned Larks** was on Crestview Drive in the southeastern corner of Mt. Diablo SP 11/14. DF

LK saw a **Barn Swallow** at Clifton Court Forebay 12/19. A few Barn Swallows overwinter in the US.

Two **Brown Creepers** were on Walnut Blvd. near Cherry Lane in Walnut Creek 11/21. FS

A number of overwintering **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were seen by KR 12/8 Inspiration Pt./Tilden Park; RC, DT 12/14 Clifton Court; LF 12/18 Inspiration Pt.; LK 12/19 Holland Tract; and LL 12/31 Miller-Knox RP.

Phainopeplas were at Bethel Island 12/19, LK, and at Oak Hill Park, Danville, 1/1 and 1/2. SH, DC

JE saw two **Red Crossbills** at his home in Pinole 11/9.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was on the Iron Horse Trail in Concord 12/2. AL

Black-throated Gray Warblers were in JR's backyard 12/18 in Alamo and near Vollmer Peak, 11/18. JC

Townsend's Warblers were in a number of backyards. JR, EL, M&SS

A **Hermit Warbler** was at Pt. Isabel 12/18. KM, AJ, PY

A **Wilson's Warbler** was at Valle Vista Staging area 12/3. DW

A **red Fox Sparrow** was seen by JC in Orinda 12/6.

KM saw a **Swamp Sparrow** at Lafayette Reservoir 12/17 and 12/29, possibly the same returning bird of the past few years. One was also at San Pablo Reservoir 12/19. HB, MB, BM

White-throated Sparrows were at the homes of JR, PS and AKr.

A **Slate-colored Junco** was at his Pinole yard 12/12. JE



JA Jeff Acuff, KB Kristen Baker, HB Holly Bern, MB Martin Bern, BB Beko Binder, RB Russ Bright, RC Roy Carlson, MC Mike Carnall, JC Jim Chiropoulos, DC David Couch, RCu Rob Cullison, SD Sheila Dickie, BD Bob Dunn, FD Fances Dupont, JE Jack Edick, TF Tracy Farrington, DF Daniel Fitzgerald, LF Lee Freidman, KH Kate H., BH Bradley Hacker, JH John Harris, HH Hugh Harvey, JHe Joel Herr, AH Anne Hoff, JHo Jeff Hoppes, SH Steve Hutchcraft, SJ Sharon J., AJ Alice Jordan, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, DK Dave Kent, AKr Alan Krakauer, EL Elizabeth Leite, AL Albert Linkowski, SL Stephen Long, LL Laura Look, ML Miya Lucas, GM Garrett MacDonald, BM Bruce Mast, AM Amy McDonald, KM Kevin McKereghan, CM Colin Meusel, NM Nathaniel Moys, DM Dan Murphy, BP Brent Pettersson, LP Linda Pittman, MR Mark Rauzon, JR Jean Richmond, KR Kreke Ritter, WR William Rockey, DR Dan Roth, DRu Dale Rubach, FS Fred Safer, PS Paul Schorr, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, MS Maren Smith, JS Julia Starr, M&SS Maury and Susan Stern, GS George Suennen, RS Rose Swift, DT David Tomb, ST Steve Tucker, LW Liam Waters, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills, and PY Pam Young

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com, call (925) 284-5980, or send to EBB_sightings@yahoo.com.

Trip Reports

Charleston Slough/South Bay, November 5: Twenty-one members and guests enjoyed a pleasant day birding the South Bay. We began the day at Charleston Slough in Mountain View where we saw two

Semipalmated Sandpipers among the usual herons, ducks, and shorebirds. We finally spotted the American Bittern that hangs out in the wet spot just off the trail between Shoreline Lake and Terminal Road. The lake had Horned and Eared Grebes, as well as Surf Scoters, some fishing Brown Pelicans, a group of Ruddy Ducks for close-up looks, and a flock of Cedar Waxwings in the trees by the main trail. At Byxbee Park, adjacent to Palo Alto Baylands, we saw several Western Bluebirds. The large pond at Radio Road in Redwood Shores is still dry, but the smaller one yielded many gulls, including Mew and Glaucous-winged. Ducks seen included Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, and American Wigeon. The group finished the day overlooking the Bay along Beach Park Blvd. in Foster City with 12 Black Skimmers and a Surf Bird among many Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitchers, Marbled Godwits, Willets, Black-bellied Plovers, and peeps. We totaled 80 species for the day. ~**Eugenia Larson**

McNabney Marsh/Mt. View Sanitary District, November 15: Ten Birders joined the trip on a nice day that was cloudy but not too cold. While it was not what I would call a real “birdie day” for birds at this location, we did find 55 different species. We walked the Moorhen Marsh grounds first and later went to the viewing platform on McNabney Marsh. Some of the birds seen included several good sightings of Green Heron, two male Cinnamon Teals, Marsh Wren, Merlin, Greater Yellowlegs, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, lots of Night Herons, a Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, and Glaucous-winged Gull. At almost the end of the field trip, a Golden Eagle flew over with close looks for all. ~**Steve Taylor**

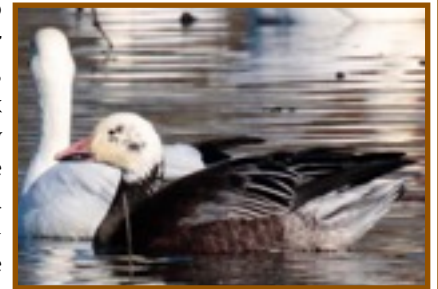
Limantour, November 19: rain cancelled ~**Maury Stern**
Solano County Raptors, November 26: Eleven birders left Suisun City under the threat of rain, which persisted throughout the day, but never deterred us, although the rain came in earnest as we finished the checklist. Our first notable sighting was a flock of about 100 Long-billed Curlews on Creed Road. This leg of the journey also produced a high number of Loggerhead Shrikes, notable considering that they seem to be a species in decline throughout much of the Central Valley. Also along Creed Road, we came to an abrupt and lengthy halt—it took more than 30 minutes for a male Merlin, of the columbarius (taiga) race, to finish



A Merlin feasting, Beth Branthaver photo

dining on a Savannah Sparrow, atop a nearby fence post. Creed Road also had a good number of Black and Say's Phoebes, American Kestrels, and some sizable flocks of American Goldfinch. The Icteridae family (blackbirds, meadowlark, grackle, etc.) proved to be the best represented group throughout the day, numbering in the hundreds, or perhaps, thousands. We saw three Great Horned Owls near Cook Lane and the Jepson Prairie Preserve. This trip is billed as a “raptor run” and the number of Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and a smattering of Northern Harriers supported that label, but it was early afternoon before we saw our first Ferruginous Hawk along Robinson Road, a dark-phased individual, followed by three other light-phase birds. As the day warmed a bit, Turkey Vultures appeared in soaring groups. Common Raven were indeed common, along with a few American Crows and California Scrub-Jays. Robinson Road was also good for American Pipit, Horned Lark, and Killdeer, but no Mountain Plovers or Burrowing Owls this year. We also managed to see a Prairie Falcon along McCormack Road, almost rounding out the four Falcons expected in the valley, the exception being the Peregrine. The trip tally was 57 species. ~**Gary Fregien**

Sacramento and Colusa National Wildlife Refuges, December 3: Sixteen participants headed out early for a glorious, sunny day at the refuges. On Abel Road we scanned the lower ponds of Colusa NWR and saw stilts and several duck species. At the viewing platform, we found both Snow and Ross's Geese, close enough to easily observe the differences. Also present were Greater White-Fronted Geese, most all of the duck species, and a few Buffleheads. On the auto tour, we had good looks at Pied-billed Grebes, a female Common Goldeneye, White-face Ibis, egrets, Great Blue Herons, American Pipits, and Common Gallinules. Hooded Mergansers were spotted along with a Ross's blue morph curled up on one of the berms, and we had a flyover by Sandhill Cranes. The usual Black-crowned Night-Heron rookery was larger than last year with 100 adults and juveniles. From Colusa, we headed north through Princeton where a Bald Eagle was spotted. On our way to Sacramento NWR, we scanned the fields spotting 1000 or so Dunlins. On the 6-mile auto tour at the Sac Refuge, we added Ring-necked Duck to our list and had good views of a Peregrine Falcon, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawks, blue morph Snow Geese, heard a Virginia's Rail, and saw Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, and a Red-shouldered Hawk, ending near sunset with 82 species. ~**Beth Branthaver**



Blue morph Snow Goose, Beth Branthaver photo

Niles Area, December 8: rain cancelled ~**Jimm Edgar**
Putah Creek, January 7: rain cancelled ~**Fred Safier**

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

February 2017 (Call Leader for ?s or rain cancellations)

04	Saturday	Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
09	Thursday	Grizzly Island
18-19	Sat./Sunday	Los Banos/Panoche Valley
22	Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park
25	Saturday	Bodega Bay

March 2017

01	Wednesday	Walnut Creek Parks
08	Wednesday	Contra Loma Reservoir
14	Tuesday	McNabney Marsh/Mt. View SD
23	Thursday	Valle Vista
25	Saturday	Tomaes Bay State Park
29	Wednesday	Lake Lagunitas

1 Saturday, February 4

Thornton Area and Cosumnes Preserve

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

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

1 Thursday, February 9

Grizzly Island

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 7 AM. **OR**, meet at 830 AM at headquarters. Take I-680 north, then I-80 E to SR 12. Follow SR 12 through Fairfield. Sign to Grizzly Island Refuge (entry fee) on right. Follow road to headquarters. Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along the road. The CA Department of Fish and Game's Grizzly Island Wildlife Area is in the heart of the 84,000-acre



Short-eared Owl, Megan Sandri sketch

Suisun Marsh, the largest contiguous estuarine marsh in the US, habitat for more than 200 species of birds and a variety of threatened wildlife and plants. We may see the Tule Elk herd and bird at Rush Ranch if time permits. Bring lunch and a beverage.

1 Saturday/Sunday, February 18-19

Los Banos and Panoche Valley

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

On Saturday leave from Sycamore Valley Road Park & Ride at 630 AM. **OR**, meet at MacDonald's in Gustine at 8 AM. We will bird Santa Fe Grade Road, together with the San Luis and Merced Wildlife Refuges and should see a full range of waterfowl and raptors. On Sunday we will bird Mercey Hot Springs (fee) and Panoche Valley. Target birds include Mountain Bluebird, Mountain Plover, and Long-eared Owl. (see page 6 for motel options in Los Banos) Participants need to bring lunch for both days. A communal (optional) dinner is being planned for Saturday evening. If you plan to attend, please RSVP the leader/s for possible last minute detail changes.

3 Wednesday, February 22

Sunol Regional Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson (925) 806-0644

Carpool leaves at 730 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville. **OR**, meet at 8 AM in the first parking lot on the left at Sunol RP (possible entry fee). Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Road. Go left under I-680, drive four miles south on Calaveras; turn left on Geary Rd. and go two miles to park. Watch for Wild Turkey along Geary Road. Golden Eagles, raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens are possible. Bring lunch and a beverage.

1 Saturday, February 25

Bodega Bay

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 730 AM. **OR**, meet at The Tides Wharf restaurant on water side of Highway 1 in Bodega at 915 AM. Take I-680N across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 to Lakeville Road, 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 restaurant to find the group viewing the harbor birds from the outdoor seating. Possible wintering shorebirds may include Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, and terns, gulls, and waterfowl. Bring 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 help with gas, tolls, or entry fees). **Drivers who carpool for our field trips are reminded that they should have proof of liability insurance in their cars.**

1: Easy, little walking, smooth paths **2**: Moderate, one mile+, possibly rough terrain **3**: Difficult, many miles, rough terrain

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

Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride carpool location: For I-680 S, exit at Sycamore Valley Road East in Danville and for I-680 N, exit at Sycamore Valley Road. The Park and Ride lot is on the left, at the stoplight, one block east of the freeway.

Speaking of Conservation: McNabney Marsh Update

McNabney Marsh, named to honor long-time Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS) conservation advocate Al McNabney, is a 130-acre wetland complex located east of I-680 between Highway 4 and the Benicia Bridge. Originally a tidal wetland, the marsh was converted to a seasonal marsh when development in the 20th century cut off its connection with the Carquinez Strait.

Since the early 1990's, treated effluent from Mt. View Sanitary District (MVSD) was the primary water source. In June 2009, tide gates on Peyton Slough to the north were opened, allowing water from the strait to flow into the marsh for the first time in more than a century. Marsh managers were hopeful that reintroduced tidal action would resolve water quality and habitat issues; however, MVSD has discovered that keeping the tide gates open year-round does not work. The marsh fills up during high tides but does not drain during low tides. This effect aggravates water quality issues through stagnation and creates difficult challenges for ground-nesting birds which have depended upon McNabney Marsh for decades.

This year Mount Diablo Audubon partnered with MVSD to provide new breeding habitat by constructing and installing eight nesting rafts. A \$2,500 grant from Audubon California along with \$500 from MDAS provided funding for the project, and MDAS volunteers Donna Kramer, Mike Mecham, Mike Robertson, Richard Saillard, Dave Shinn, and Christine Steck helped with the rafts' construction.

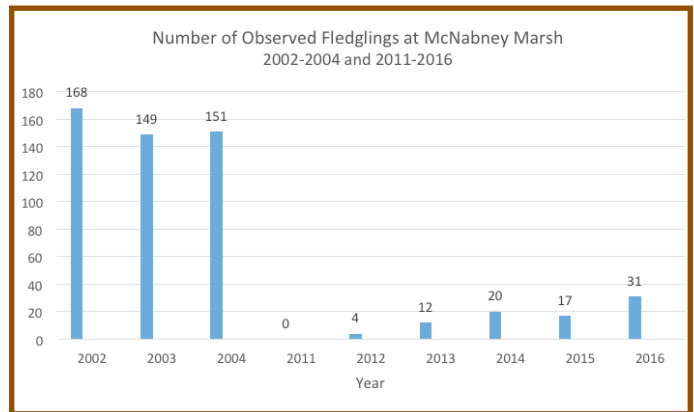


Above: Two American Avocets, a young cormorant, and a Black-necked Stilt on a nesting raft in McNabney Marsh; Below: Newly hatched American Avocets feed in the marsh under their mother's watchful eye; Top R: Killdeer; Far R: an American Kestrel perched on a nesting box at McNabney Marsh, Maren Smith photos

MVSD has commissioned multi-year nesting bird surveys to try to determine the most beneficial range for marsh water levels between March and July. According to The Wildlife Project's 2016 report, the various ground-nesting species observed nesting at McNabney Marsh



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included Canada Goose, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Killdeer, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, and Suisun Song Sparrow. Six additional species which regularly nest in the marsh were also observed: Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Marsh Wren, Black Phoebe, San Francisco Common Yellow-throat, and Red-Winged Blackbird.

At least 31 fledglings were observed in 2016—an increase



from 2015—but no more than 20% of the numbers detected in the early 2000s. The fledglings observed this year represented five species: Canada Goose, Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, American Avocet, and Black-necked Stilt. Biologists detected

fourteen separate nests constructed by Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets on several of the new rafts. Potential nesting sites for these two shorebird species would otherwise likely number at or near zero in McNabney Marsh.

In the conclusion of their report, wildlife biologists recommended that MVSD continue to add numerous floating or stilted nesting platforms of various sizes and styles, as well as nest boxes for Tree Swallows and other species. ~Nancy Wenninger



Happy 100th Birthday Golden Gate Audubon!

Help "Celebrate Our Centennial" by viewing a traveling exhibit or going on one of the family bird walks scheduled from 10-1130 AM the first, third and fourth Saturdays from January-March. For details: goldengateaudubon.org

Weekend trip to Los Banos and Panoche Valley February 18-19, 2017

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

Motel options in Los Banos: Best Western Executive Inn (209) 827-0954; Los Banos Days Inn (209) 826-969; Vagabond Inn Executive Los Banos (209) 827-4677; and in Santa Nella, Holiday Inn Express (209) 826-8282.



White-crowned Sparrow ♦ *Zonotrichia leugophrys*

Every fall and winter I look forward to seeing an influx of sparrows in my yard, among them the White-crowned Sparrow, easily identified by their “white crowns”. They have a black and white-striped head, a grayish breast, and yellowish to reddish-pink bill. Immatures have a brown and buff-streaked head with lightly streaked underparts.

We only see them in the fall and winter because they breed far to the north. In fact, they breed the farthest north of any North American sparrow, although subspecies will breed on the California coast and in northern and mountain regions of the U.S. and Canada. The male will arrive first on the breeding grounds, singing to protect his territory, awaiting a female to join him. The female builds a cup-shaped nest on the ground or just a few feet above the ground. Then, 2-5 pale blue eggs with fine mottled markings are laid. The female incubates the eggs for 11-15 days. Both parents feed the nestlings for up to 6 weeks; the young fledge in 9-11 days.

White-crowned Sparrows are the most studied of any North American sparrow. For instance, they are able to stay awake for days during migration. This natural alertness mechanism is being studied to see if it can be applied to human applications, such as in truck driving or for shift work drowsiness.

Another research project finding was the different dialects of male White-crowned Sparrows’ songs. The young males learn the basics of the song from the generalized song

environment of their neighborhood. And because male White-crowned Sparrows stay close to where they were raised, song dialects frequently form. Males on the edge of two dialects may be bilingual, having learned both dialects while maturing.



White-crowned Sparrow, Jean Halford photo

Scientists studying energetics and movement have discovered that White-crowned Sparrows can run on a treadmill at a pace of 1/3 mile per hour without tiring out. (I would love to know how they got a sparrow on a treadmill and kept it there!)

Golden-crowned Sparrows are very closely related to the White-crowned Sparrow. Studies of the mitochondrial DNA show that the two evolved into separate species very recently in geologic time.

The White-crowned Sparrow was first recognized as a species in 1772 by Johann Forster in his examination of a collection of skins provided by the Hudson Bay Company. The oldest recorded White-crowned Sparrow was at least 13 years, 4 months old and lived in California. ~**Jean Halford**

Community Events

►10th Annual Winter Bird Festival, Saturday, January 21, Galt

The city of Galt, the Cosumnes River Preserve, and the Galt School District have collaborated on this exciting festival. Enjoy presentations from 930-330 PM on landscape art, bats, or hummingbirds, tours including Beer & Birds in the Cosumnes River Preserve Barn, and guest speaker David Allen Sibley. **For information: www.ci.galt.ca.us (festivals) or call (209) 366-7115.**

►18th Annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway, January 25-29, Chico

This action-packed, 5-day event celebrates the remarkable winter journey of millions of waterfowl and raptors along the Pacific Flyway. Choose from over 60 trips and workshops, a guided tour of a nature preserve, a visit to a local vineyard, or hike the scenic Sutter Buttes in search of lofty views and resident wildlife. Learn nature photography, bird carving, or how to record nature sounds, and enjoy keynote speaker, Alvaro Jaramillo. **For information: www.snowgoosefestival.org, or contact Jennifer Patten, Event Coordinator, at: info@snowgoosefestival.org or call (530) 345-1865.**

►Mount Diablo State Park’s Mountain Talk, 7-830 PM, Wednesday, February 15

John Sutter of Contra Costa Search and Rescue (SAR) will share his experiences as a member of this all-volunteer team, the largest in the state. He is the corporal for the annual SAR Academy and holds key positions in other emergency responder categories. The 7-830 PM talk will be held at the Ygnacio Valley Library, 2661 Oak Grove Road, Walnut Creek. No reservation required. **For information: contact Jenn Roe at roejenn@aol.com.**

►Citizen Science at the John Muir House, 10 AM Saturday, February 18, Martinez

Join MDAS at the John Muir Nat’l. Historic Site, 4202 Alhambra Avenue, Martinez, for a bird walk and survey on Mt. Wanda. Inspired by the Great Backyard Bird Count, this collaboration is a joint citizen science effort led by MDAS Young Birder, Kai Mills, and supported by Muir staff and MDAS member, Christina Lopez. **For information: (925) 228-8860 ext. 6443.**

►Citizen Science Bird walk at Big Break, 1030-1130 AM, Sunday, February 19

Nichole Gange, an East Bay Regional Park naturalist at Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley, will lead a bird walk and survey in conjunction with the Great Backyard Bird Count. **For information: NGange@ebparks.org or call (510) 544-3053.**

A Public Lands Legacy

Using the Antiquities Act, the 1906 law that gives presidents the authority to protect by proclamation significant natural, cultural and scientific features, President Obama has designated or expanded 29 National monuments, including two in Utah and Nevada in the waning days of his presidency.

His legacy included an aggressive push to confront climate that his successor, Donald J. Trump, promises to reverse. Obama found that 29 species had recovered sufficiently to delist them from the Endangered Species Act (ESA), far more than any of the four presidents who preceded him, according to an analysis by Elizabeth Shogren of High Country News. He also gave 340 species ESA protection while changing the ground rules for listing species, most notably by requiring that states be consulted first.

While Obama's support for a global effort to confront climate change is his most controversial environmental legacy, his willingness to exercise the Antiquities Act has also drawn fire from those opposed to federal restrictions on energy development and timber harvesting. In all, the new monuments cover 5.25 million acres. His most recent additions have renewed calls from some Republicans to overturn his decisions as an abuse of executive power, but presidents acting under the Antiquities Act have been withstanding such challenges since Theodore Roosevelt first employed it.

The newest is the 1.35 million-acre Bears Ears National Monument in the Four Corners region of southwest Utah, much favored by conservationists and Native American tribes. Bears Ears includes an estimated 100,000 archaeological sites, but the region is also seen as ripe for energy development.

In late December, Obama also preserved Gold Butte outside Las Vegas, a 300,000-acre preserve of dinosaur tracks and rare fossils, rock art, and artifacts. The region gained unwelcome fame in 2014 because it's near where rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff with government agents. He is now facing trial over those actions.

During his presidency, Obama created seven National Monuments in California. Another seven are on the short list to become sites. Nationally, 11 of his designations are of historic or cultural importance, including an Ohio museum Ohio commemorating a Buffalo Soldiers leader, a Texas monument to military dogs, and a tribute in California to Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers.

Not all wilderness sites are on land. The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument is 100 miles off the coast of Massachusetts protecting four underwater seamounts and three deep canyons of the continental shelf that are home to several endangered species.

The California list includes the 330,780-acre Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. The most northern site selected in the state, it stretches along 100 miles of the Coast Range and includes parts of Napa, Yolo, Solano, Lake, Colusa, Glenn, and Mendocino Counties. That marks it as one of the state's most biodiverse regions, with abundant song birds, Ospreys, and a large wintering Bald Eagle population. As with other National Monuments, Berryessa Snow Mountain incorporates previously designated wilderness areas, including Cache Creek.



Hikers hit the trail at Cache Creek in the new Berryessa Snow Mountain NM, Google Images photo

Three new and environmentally related desert regions were added as Monuments this year—Castle Mountains, Mojave Trails, and Sand to Snow.

Castle Mountains covers nearly 21,000 acres between the Nevada state line and Mojave National Preserve, an area abundant in Joshua tree forests and rare desert grasslands. Strictly four-wheel drive territory, the Castle Mountains includes the Lanfair Valley and New York Mountains and is home to big horn sheep, Golden Eagles, and mountain lions.

Mojave Trails was created to preserve the Cadiz Dunes and covers 1.6 million acres sandwiched between Interstates 15 and 40.

Sand to Snow National Monument encompasses 154,000 acres, including 100,000 acres previously designated as wilderness by Congress. One of Southern California's most biodiverse regions, it extends from elevations of 1,000 feet in the Coachella Valley up to 11,000 feet in the San Bernardino Mountains. The monument encompasses sections of Mojave and Sonoran deserts, chaparral, and oak woodlands, and is home to 1,600 native plant species and 240 bird species.

Speaking of chaparral, another of Obama's designations is the 346,177-acre San Gabriel Mountains NM in northern Los Angeles and western San Bernardino counties. The monument consolidates a number of previously designated wilderness areas and is especially prized because it is only about a 90 minute drive for 15 million Californians.

Finally, Obama created the Fort Ord National Monument, which turns the former Army post above Monterey Bay into a 14,651-acre preserve. Home to the 7th Infantry Division, the Fort was primed for development after its closing in 1994, but local interests pushed for its preservation.

National monuments are usually created at the urging of local members of Congress and preservation groups. Seven on the pending list in California include one in the Cascade-Siskiyou region of the Oregon-California border, Trinidad Head and the Lost Coast Headlands in Northern California, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies and Piedras Blancas in Central California and one called Orange Country Offshore in Southern California. ~Mike Meacham

Citizen Science Helps Birds

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a joint project of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, has been held every February since 1998. It provides a snapshot of where birds are located on our continent just before the beginning of spring migration. This February 17-20, GBBC participants will choose a location, observe for a minimum of 15 minutes on one or more days, and report the number of each species seen. If you are a regular eBird reporter, simply report as usual during the four days and your data will be included since eBird and the GBBC are completely integrated. Or, register online and input the data at gbbc.birdcount.org.

The Count went global in 2013 and now has numerous checklists from more than 130 countries. The GBBC was the first online citizen science project to collect data on wild birds and to display the results in real time. It is an event that



First winter White-throated Sparrow, Paul Schorr photo

also lends itself well to group outings—only one participant needs to report the group results. MDAS encourages its members to participate in this project as citizen scientists contributing to an important ornithological data base. (see [page 7 for two GBBC bird walk surveys](#)) ~Elizabeth Leite
Board Position Needs in 2017

MDAS has a large, diverse, talented membership. We would love to see more people get involved in running the chapter programs from Board positions to one of our many committees. Our Young Birder Liaison, Tracy Farrington, could use some help staffing field trips for our Young Birders. Our Hospitality Committee is in need of volunteers to bring snacks. We need a new Sales Manager by June, a fun job that supports our monthly meeting raffle. The nominating committee would be delighted to hear from you as they begin the search for new Board positions.

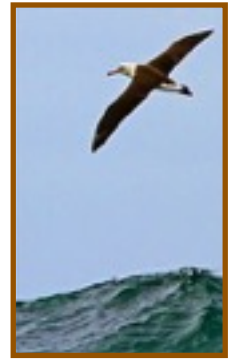
Please consider getting involved—it's a great way to give back to MDAS, to meet other members, and to contribute fresh ideas and knowledge to our chapter. **Questions? Email Paul Schorr at pkschorr@comcast.net or see page 11 for contact information.**

eQuail News

Dear Members, if you prefer to receive the *eQuail* in PDF format while saving MDAS printing and postage costs, please email your request to: vhamrick8@gmail.com.

OOPS!

A correction is in order, with apologies to Juan-Carlos Solis, for the incorrect photo credit on page 7 of the December 2016-January 2017 *Quail* "Q and A" feature. The photo (R) and photo credit should have read: *Laysan Albatross 50 miles off the Pacific coast of Baja California, Mexico near Isla de Cedros, Juan-Carlos Solis photo*. A corrected version of the *Quail* is on the MDAS website The photo of a Laysan Albatross, below, is the one taken by Ellis Myers at Kilauea Point, Kauai.



Christmas Bird Count a Success

The East Contra Costa County Count was cold and foggy but nevertheless, forty birders located 140 species during eight surveys. For the first time in over fifteen years, the wind was too high at Los Vaqueros Reservoir for the boat survey, so the data usually accessible by boat, including shorebirds and waterfowl, were lost. Songbirds seemed to be sheltering due to the weather with numbers slightly lower than last year, and there were less species spotted overall, probably due to limited visibility. Of note, Sandhill Crane numbers were up from 2015 as well as Western Bluebird, Western Meadowlark, and California Quail. American Kestrels sightings quadrupled from 19 to 83 and significantly more Tricolored Blackbirds, a bird of concern, were spotted compared to last year.



Vasco Caves CBC Count, Maren Smith photo

In Central Contra Costa County 154 species were seen, plus two Count week rarities: the Tropical Kingbird at Heather Farm and a Black-throated Gray Warbler found and documented in Jean Richmond's yard. Sixty-four birders participated despite the unusually frigid early morning. Many were out before dawn in their winter layers either owling or getting to their sites. Of note, numbers of Acorn Woodpecker were down probably due to the scarcity of acorns this year, but White-throated Sparrows hit a new high. Most species of waterfowl were less numerous with the exception of Green-winged Teal. - Elizabeth Leite

MDAS Educational Program Member Survey

MDAS members:

The purpose of this survey is to assess interest and resources (i.e. available volunteers) for additional chapter educational activities. Your input is greatly appreciated and will be used to develop and shape future programs. For follow-up, please include:

Your name: _____
Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

How important is it for MDAS to provide educational programs on birds for:

MDAS Members _____ (Rate from 1-5, 1=not important, 5=very important)
School-aged children and/or teachers _____ (Rate from 1-5, 1=not important, 5=very important)
Community Groups _____ (Rate from 1-5, 1=not important, 5=very important)

If we were to develop/acquire program materials, would you be interested in helping to deliver educational programs (after training and possibly with a partner)? Yes/No. If yes, which group(s):

Member Education:

Please indicate below whether you would be interested in signing up for any of the following classes:

- ___ Beginning Birding
- ___ Intermediate Birding (next level after Beginning Birding)
- ___ Identifying Birds by Song
- ___ Raptors (local raptors - their characteristics and how to identify them)
- ___ Shorebirds & Waterbirds (similar to raptors, but for shorebirds & waterbirds)
- ___ Identification Challenges (e.g. flycatchers, vireos, kinglets, warblers, etc.)
- ___ Sketching Birds
- ___ Photographing Birds

Any classes not mentioned above that you'd like to see included: _____

Would you be interested in teaching and/or team teaching any of the classes listed above? Yes/No
If yes, which class(es): _____

**Please return this survey (by mail or at an MDAS meeting) by March 15 to:
Beth Branthaver, 1873 Golden Rain Road #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595**

In addition, if you do not want to tear out this survey from your Quail, you can make a copy of this page, or go to the website link www.diabloaudubon.org/education/Educational-Programs-Member-Survey.pdf to print a copy of the survey.

Thanks for your support! If you have any questions, please contact me at: bbranthaver@sbcglobal.net, or call (925) 944-1856.

Rainy Season Feeders

Backyard birds are remarkable for their ability to weather wind, rain, and cold. Taking down regularly filled feeders during heavy weather does not deter our feathered friends from returning for their regular meals. Our feeders only supplement them, providing extra nourishment they can use to build fat reserves, stay warm, strengthen feathers, and raise young.

You must be vigilant to keep feeder food fresh and viable. In bad weather, extra effort is required to prevent spoilage and mold. Feeders can be brought inside until the rain stops.

There are several types of rain guards that can be used with many different types of feeders. These usually hang just above the feeder, high enough to allow the birds in, but close enough to prevent most rain from getting to the food. No guard, however, will prevent blowing rain in heavy wind from reaching the feeder. These rain guards also double as rodent and squirrel baffles.

Any time your hanging or tray feeders get wet, examine them for wet seeds or nuts. This may require emptying the seed onto a flat tray and removing any clumps. If the seed has gotten damp, spreading it out and keeping it in a warm, dry area overnight should dry it enough to return to the feeder. If the seed has been wet for two or more days, discard it and clean the feeder of caked seed or mold. Clean any time your feeder smells musty or you see black, green, or red mold.

Suet and Bark Butter are also excellent foods that hold up well in rainy weather. Surface mold can be scraped off most suet cakes or Bark Butter feeders leaving the remaining product edible.

Two types of nyjer feeders, tube and screen, work differently in rain. Tubes have small openings that are less apt to get wet in mild rain while screen feeders allow air to flow through more easily, drying damp seed without feeder removal. After heavy rain, however, either type may need cleaning.

If you remove your feeders during rain, don't despair. Birds will find them immediately upon return! ~Mike Eliot

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.

MDAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice President:	Paul Schorrpkschorr@comcast.net..(925) 757-5107
Secretary:	Carol Pachlcarolpachl@comcast.net..(925) 253-0675
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Field Trips:	Hugh Harvey(925) 935-2979
Conservation:	Nancy Wenningernwenninger@aol.com..(925) 938-7987
Education:	Beth Branthaver	.....bbranthaver@sbcglobal.net..(925) 944-1856
Sales Manager:	Diane Malucelli	.....dmalucelli@att.net..(925) 674-0920
Membership:	Virginia Hamrick	.....vhamrick8@gmail.com..(925)-945-7761
Young Birders Liaison:	Tracy Farrington	.....tracy_farrington@yahoo.com..(925) 788-6223
Volunteer Coordinator:	Brian Murphy	.....b-murphy21@hotmail.com..(925) 937-8835
Publicity & Social Media:	Rosalie Howarth	.....barhowarth@msn.com
Member-at-Large:	Mike Eliot	.....mikeyeliot@gmail.com..(925) 798-0303
Member-at-Large:	Chick Chickering	.....elchick447@comcast.net..(925) 686-9231
Quail Editor:	Maren Smith	.....marensmithbkk@yahoo.com..(925) 322-9477

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Webmaster:	Dal Leite	.....updates@diabloaudubon.org
Observations Editor:	Maurly Stern	.....mbstern2@yahoo.com..(925) 284-5980
Hospitality:	Kathy Kellogg	.....ggollekyhtak@hotmail.com..(925) 228-2690
EBB Sightings Monitor:	Bill Chilson	.....billchil@comcast.net..(510) 619-6692
Scheduling Coordinator:	Chick Chickering	.....elchick447@comcast.net..(925) 686-9231
Citizen Science & CBC:	Elizabeth Leite	.....e.leite@sbcglobal.net

Legislative Action:	Ariana Rickard	.....rickard@post.harvard.edu..(347) 754-0143
Email Meeting Reminder:	Barbara Vaughan	.....(925) 376-8732
Honorary Advisor:	Jean Richmond	.....(925) 837-2843

The MDAS Board meets at 645 PM at WBU on the second Thursday except for July and August.



Mount Diablo Audubon Society thanks our Business Partners:
AlphaGraphics, Walnut Creek
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Wild Birds Unlimited, Pleasant Hill

The Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7 PM the first Thursday of each month except in 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" eQuail US Mail

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ email: _____

Send check payable to Mt. Diablo Audubon Society with this application to:
 Membership Chair, P.O.B. 2094, Walnut Creek, CA 94595

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The beautiful Yellow-bellied X Red-naped Sapsucker hybrid spotted in a grove of pepper trees at the Martinez Regional Shoreline, Walt Duncan photo



In December:

Top L: For Birding Information, Maury Stern discussed AOU lumps and splits. Two websites he mentioned are:

- www.2.aba.org/birdersguide (Birders Guide to Listing and Taxonomy, October 2016, page 22 onwards)
- www.darwiniana.org (History of bird names in AOU checklists 1886-2000)

Bottom L: Wendy Schackwitz presented highlights of her 2015 Big Year with her husband. The mesmerizing migration video she shared can be seen on the website:

- www.allaboutbirds.org/mesmerizing-migration-watch-118-bird-species-migrate-across-a-map-of-the-western-hemisphere/

In January:

Top R: Mary Ellen Hannibal, author of *Citizen Scientist, Searching for Heroes and Hope in an Age of Extinction*, addressed the important role of eBird and other citizen science efforts to provide data on threatened species.

Bottom R: Elizabeth Leite shared highlights of the 2016 CBC. For a full report, see page 9. (Maren Smith photos)



“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.”

~Edward Everett Hale

