



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053  
[www.diabloaudubon.org](http://www.diabloaudubon.org)

Volume 62, Number 7

April 2017

## April Program: Second Chances for Seabirds ♦ JD Bergeron

International Bird Rescue (IBR) was founded in 1971 in response to a major oil spill outside of the Golden Gate Bridge, and today is a world renowned response organization for oiled wildlife. Bird Rescue's SF Bay wildlife center is located on the edge of Suisun Marsh in Fairfield and treats more than 4,000 birds each year. This facility covers a geographic area ranging from Mendocino in the north, to Monterey in the south, and Sacramento to the east.

The IBR's core work is the rescue and rehabilitation of oiled, sick, injured, and orphaned sea and water birds, supported by a corps of impassioned volunteers. The staff learns from the patients in their care and then contributes to knowledge of best practices for some of the most threatened species in the world.

The center treats more than 100 different species, primarily in the following groupings: geese and dabbling ducks; diving ducks; loons; grebes; tubenoses/petrels; cormorants;

pelicans; herons and egrets; shorebirds; gulls and terns; and alcids.

As Executive Director of International Bird Rescue SF Bay, JD Bergeron brings a birder's passion, a childlike delight in nature, as well as a deep commitment to solving the world's challenges in unconventional ways. He has more than 20 years of experience in non-profit leadership, international development, and organizational change.

He is also the Co-Founder and Board President of Chooda, which puts on Bike Zambia, a weeklong bicycle ride that raises funds and awareness for HIV / AIDS prevention as well as economic empowerment for girls and women in Zambia. JD is a graduate of Washington University in Saint Louis.

JD will share some rarely seen views of some of your favorite species



L: JD Bergeron, IBR Executive Director: above: grebes and murrelets recuperate at IBR; below: a pelican perches in the holding tank, International Bird Rescue photos

as well as stories of working up close and personal with beautiful animals that usually are only seen through your binoculars.

For more information: [www.bird-rescue.org](http://www.bird-rescue.org) and [chooda.org](http://chooda.org)

### Meeting Schedule

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

*\*please bring your own coffee mug*

**800 PM Program: Second Chances for Seabirds ♦ JD Bergeron**

**NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM:**

**Thursday, May 4, Tides ♦**

**Jonathan White**

### Birding Information 7 PM

Jerry Britten will share photos and observations of the bird species he has spotted and seen nesting on his 5-acre parcel on Morgan Territory Road outside of Clayton. A few pictures of other species passing through will be thrown in for good measure.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MDAS-sponsored "No Child Left Inside Program." During the past nine years, over one thousand students have benefitted from this educational outreach program, which has received accolades from students, parents, teachers and MDAS volunteers. This year's field activities are scheduled for Tuesday, May 23 and Thursday, May 25, and will be held at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch.

Following are a few comments from the students who participated in the 2016 program. Their reactions reinforce how rewarding and beneficial this program is.

"Dear Mr. Schorr and friends, thank you for volunteering your time to spend the day with me." ~Diallo



L: Students view birds in the field at Contra Loma RP; above R: Great Horned Owl and owlet, Paul Schorr photos

"My favorite part of the trip was when I saw the American Kestrel eating the mouse." ~**Franane**

"My favorite part of the trip was when I saw the baby Great Horned Owl." ~**Wisdom**

"My favorite part of the trip was when we saw the Barn Owl, and it looked at me and yawned!" ~**Daniel**

"My favorite bird was the Anna's Hummingbird because it's very colorful and it can fly backwards." ~**Ashlyn**

"My favorite part of the trip was everything. This was one of the most amazing field trips I ever had." ~**Tina**

If you would like to volunteer for this year's program, please contact Paul Schorr at [pkschorr@comcast.net](mailto:pkschorr@comcast.net) or call (925) 757-5107. I look forward to the experiences that this year's students will have to remember. ~**Paul Schorr**



## Good News For Citizen Science

Since its inception in 1998, the popularity of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) has grown exponentially. This year, over 173,000 checklists were submitted worldwide with almost 6000 species identified and over 27,000,000 birds counted. Almost 7000 checklists were submitted from California. Contra Costa County birders submitted 212 checklists and identified 159 species. You can search the GBBC webpage at [gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org) to look at the results of the 2017 Count and even which MDAS members participated.

This year, MDAS collaborated with John Muir National Historic Site for their first Count ever. The rain paused long enough for sixteen participants to locate 23 species on the six-acre site.

Robins were in profusion. Young Birder Kai Mills was our official "expert" accompanied by two birder friends. Six additional MDAS members and several interested JMH volunteers enjoyed the two-hour walk. Denise Amador, the site's Biological Science Technician, had prepared some excellent hands-on materials for new birders which she will use at future events.

We are planning another Citizen Science walk in either April or May on Mt. Wanda, the beautiful oak woodland adjacent to the John Muir House site. Results will be reported to eBird. If held in April, the walk will coincide with a wildflower event. If in May, it will celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. A specific date and time will be posted on the website and on our social media sites when known. ~**Elizabeth Leite, Citizen Science Coordinator**



Citizen Scientists took part in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) at the John Muir House, a National Historic Site, on an overcast day in February tallying 23 species, Maren Smith photo

## Welcome Members

Jannie Dresser	Crockett (rejoin)
Craig Fleming	Pleasant Hill
Nicolas Morgan	Concord
Sheila Malley	Danville
Lori Patel	Orinda (rejoin)
Sarah & Dean Huber	Walnut Creek
Tom Garry	Walnut Creek

## MDAS on the Web

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

Q

What songbird has a subspecies that is threatened by loss of habitat, largely due to the foraging of feral

burros? Unscramble the letters below or look at page 7 for the answer.

**IHLREATCNWFOOAEI**

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 May Quail will be April 10.**

Spring migration continues with hummingbirds, warblers, and swallows arriving.

At least 100 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were around Delta Road and Holland Tract Road in east county 2/1. P&NS

On 2/26, IA saw a **Wood Duck** on Rimer Creek at the Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga.

BF saw two **Eurasian Wigeons** at Miller-Knox RP in Pt. Richmond 2/24, and SD saw three on 3/3.

**White-winged Scoters** were in the waters near Jersey Island in the Delta 2/13, DN, JBl; and 2/17, JB, LK.

A **Black Scoter** was at the Richmond Marina and nearby waters from 2/12 to 2/25. JH, LL, HH, ST, DL, MP, DLe

Three **Hooded Mergansers** were at a golf course pond in San Ramon 2/14. E&GL

An unknown type of hummingbird was nesting at Seven Hills School in Walnut Creek. Anon

BF saw a **Selasphorus genus Hummingbird** at Miller-Knox RP 2/24. SD saw an **Allen's Hummingbird** there 3/3 and AK saw one 3/3 at Tilden Nature Center area.

P&NS saw six **Sandhill Cranes** in the area of Delta and Holland Tract Roads 2/1.

A **Red Knot** was at Meeker Slough 2/24, ST; 2/26, CM; and 3/5, BS.

Either an early or very late **Caspian Tern** was at Bethel Island-Piper Slough 2/19. LK, JB

C&TW, AG, and AH, saw a **Least Bittern** near Jersey Island 2/12.

On 2/8, JT saw an **Osprey** with a fish flying into Bollinger Canyon.

A **Bald Eagle** sat on the fence of his El Sobrante home 2/12. Anon



*Bald Eagle seen on the Los Banos/ Panoche Valley weekend field trip (details on page 4), Beth Branthaver photo*

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was in the Holland Tract area 2/1. P&NS

The **Western Screech-Owl** was in its hole on the Lafayette-Moraga bike trail 2/12. RS

HH saw a **Short-eared Owl** north of Waterfront Road in Martinez 2/11.

A **Merlin** was at Meeker Slough 2/24. ST

The **Tropical Kingbird** at Heather Farm pond continued in its 4<sup>th</sup> winter. 18 observers

HH saw two **Violet-green Swallows** and three **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at Heather Farm pond 2/22.

AL saw a **Barn Swallow** 2/24 at Ellis Lake Pond in Concord.

About 300 **Cedar Waxwings** were eating privet berries at her Walnut Creek home 2/17. EL



*Female Phainopepla, Joy Shonfeld photo*

PS saw a **Phainopepla** at Black Diamond Mines 2/22, and SL saw one at Big Break Regional Shoreline 3/3.

ST saw an **Orange-crowned Warbler** 2/24 at Miller-Knox RP in Pt. Richmond, and AK heard and saw

many at the Tilden Nature Center area 3/3.

P&NS have had **White-throated Sparrows** on and off since December.

C&TW saw a **Slate-colored Junco** 2/4 at Contra Loma Regional Park and P&NS saw one in their Antioch yard.

P&NS saw flocks of thousands of blackbirds 2/1 in the Holland Tract area. There were **Red-winged-, Tricolored-, Brewer's-, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.**



IA Isaac Aronow, JB Jonah Benningfield, JBl John Blakelock, SD Sheila Dickie, BF Bob Firehock, AG Alane Gray, JH John Harris, HH Hugh Harvey, AH Anne Hoff, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, E&GL Eugenia and Gary Larson, EL Elizabeth Leite, DL Don Lewis, DLe David Lewis, AL Albert Linkowski, SL Steve Lombardi, LL Laura Look, CM Colin Meusel, DN David Nickerson, MP Michael Park, BS Ben Sandstrom, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, PS Paul Schorr, RS Rachel Silverstein, JT Janet Taylor, ST Steve Tucker, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills



*A Rufous-crowned Sparrow, rarely seen in her yard in the past 28 years, made an exciting January appearance between rainstorms, Lynn Lakso photo*

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? Since 2012, Mike has generously made over \$3300 in donations. To participate, simply let WBU know that you are an MDAS member when making your next purchase. Thank you, Mike!

*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.*

## Trip Reports

**Grizzly Island, February 9:** cancelled due to flooding and rain ~**Maury Stern**

**Los Banos/Panoche Valley, February 18-19:** After learning that the road to Panoche Valley would close for seven nights starting at midnight

the Saturday of our weekend trip, the leaders changed the order of the trip visiting the Panoche Valley on Saturday this year. Following some Friday rains, the road shoulders were soft in some places, but we able to bird from the parking lot of Little Panoche Dam and one other area for extensive birding before lunch at the top of the BLM Road. We had a California Thrasher below the dam parking lot and at the roadside stop we found a Greater Roadrunner and a Prairie Falcon. Along the road, we also found a flock of at least 100 Lark Sparrows which we all enjoyed through our binoculars, scopes, or cameras. White-Crowned Sparrows and House Finches were common on the roadside fences and we had Savannah Sparrows, also. Light rain started just before we turned onto the BLM Road and we saw very few birds as we drove to the top. Because of the storm clouds, we were unable to see the snow-covered Sierra Crest. But the rain did stop and we enjoyed 30-40 beautiful Mountain Bluebirds, a Rock Wren, and a number of Juncos, which seemed out of place. We had a couple of posing Horned Larks on the fences as we descended, and just before re-joining the road, Beth spotted a male Lawrence's Goldfinch. It became two males and we were all able to view these birds as we stood on the road and they sat patiently on the barbed-wire fences.

Continuing on into the Panoche Valley, we finally saw the amount of equipment which will eventually cover 5000 acres with solar panels, along with the associated electrical connections to the outside world. We searched in vain for Mountain Plovers, but did have a number of Red-tailed Hawks, at least two Ferruginous Hawks, American Kestrels, Tricolored Blackbirds and one Cassin's Kingbird. We stopped at the newly sold and bought Panoche Inn for drinks and bathrooms, arriving just in time to hear Johnny Cash singing the Folsom Prison Blues. Suitably refreshed, we drove to Los Banos, our hotels, and a group dinner at España's Mexican restaurant. It was a long and tiring day, but very productive for our birding.



Cassin's Kingbird, Beth Branthaver photo

On Sunday we headed off to Merced NWR hoping to see nesting Great Horned Owls, wintering geese, cranes, and numerous other waterfowl. Across the field from the entrance, we found a Bald Eagle eating something (not sure what) and two Mountain Plovers. At the viewing platform we saw quite a few Wilson's Snipes, Coots, and ducks, especially Northern Shovelers. Water levels were high although not excessively so. On the auto tour we saw Greater White-fronted, Snow and Ross's Geese (including one blue morph), and ducks and Tundra Swans.

We found several nesting Great Horned Owls and three Burrowing Owls. As we turned north there were spectacular collections of geese and cranes feeding. From Merced, we headed north stopping at the San Luis NWR Complex headquarters and ate lunch in our cars in a light rain, then went to Santa Fe Grade Road, mostly birding from the cars due to light rain. We got great looks at most of the expected waterfowl, including some Lesser Scaup which we hadn't seen there before. We also saw more Great Horned Owls and three falcon species including Peregrine, Merlin, and American Kestrel. We got two fairly close views of American Bitterns as they hopped up and flew away. At the end of the weekend, we had 97 species total. ~**Hugh Harvey and Beth Branthaver**

**Sunol Regional Park, February 22:** cancelled due to rockslides and rain ~**Eugenia K. Larson**

**Bodega Bay, February 25:** It pays to wait and see what the weather will do; the predicted storm did not appear, so 19 participants had a beautiful, but cold, day at Bodega Bay. Starting out with Ruddy Turnstones, Dunlins, and Brants seen from The Tides Restaurant, we then proceeded to Bodega Head. The view of the surf breaking on the offshore rocks is always stunning. Wonderful views allowed us to compare Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants. We also had



Above: Ruddy Turnstone, Beth Branthaver photo; below L: Marbled Godwit flock, Eugenia Larson photo

more than 20 Surfbirds on a rock below us, along with Black Oystercatchers. Other harbor birds seen included three loon species, Marbled Godwits, Willets, smaller peeps, Western and Least Sandpipers, and some Sanderlings. Fifty-seven species were seen or heard. ~**Hugh Harvey**



**Walnut Creek Parks, March 1:** A cold morning greeted 17 participants as they started a walk around the large pond at Heather Farm Park. We did find numbers of the winter sparrow population and some wintering ducks, including Buffleheads, Ring-necked Ducks, and one male Lesser Scaup. We also saw a Great and a Snowy Egret, two Green Herons, and two Black-crowned Night-Herons. On the southwest slope, we saw a Say's Phoebe. We could not find the long-present Tropical Kingbird. Continuing to Borges Ranch, we had numerous Western Bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks, a Northern Harrier, California Quails in the late Bob Wisecarver's restored Quail habitat, Western Meadowlarks, and two White-throated Swifts. Altogether we tallied 55 species for the day. ~**Hugh Harvey**

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## April 2017 (Call Leader for ?s or rain cancellations)

01	Saturday	Garin Regional Park
04	Tuesday	Orinda Connector Trail
13	Thursday	North Briones
20	Thursday	Black Diamond Mines
22	Saturday	Mines Road
25	Tuesday	Del Puerto Canyon
27	Thursday	Mitchell Canyon
29	Saturday	Pine Canyon

## May 2017

03	Wednesday	Mt. Diablo State Park JE
06	Saturday	East Contra Costa County
18	Thursday	West Briones Regional Park
23, 25	Tu/Th	No Child Left Inside

### 3 Saturday, April 1

#### Garin Regional Park

Leader: Fred Safier (925) 937-2906

Carpool leaves 715 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. **OR**, meet in parking lot at the end of Garin Road at 8 AM. Take I-680 south and I-580 west. Take Castro Valley exit and continue west. Turn left onto Crow Canyon Road and go under the freeway. Crow Canyon Road becomes Grove Way and then A Street. At A Street and Mission Blvd turn left; stay left to continue south on Mission Blvd, which becomes SR 238. Go south about three miles to Garin Road, turn left, and follow up the hill to its end. Spring migrants will be our goal. Bring liquids and enjoy lunch in the park afterwards.

### 2 Tuesday, April 4

#### Orinda Connector Trail

Leader: Chick Chickering (925) 686-9231

Meet at 8 AM at the NE corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Road, Orinda. Exit at Orinda from SR 24, turn north on Camino Pablo and drive about two miles to the intersection. We will walk towards the base of Briones Dam looking for spring birds. We will be finished by noon. Bring a snack and liquids.

### 3 Thursday, April 13

#### North Briones

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Meet at 8 AM in the parking area at the north entrance of Briones Regional Park. Take Briones Road off Alhambra Valley Road and drive up this narrow winding road, park at the end. Wildflowers, spring birds, and poison oak are along shaded trails. A continuation through grasslands to Sindicich Lagoons makes this walk about three miles round trip. Bring a snack and liquids.

### DATE CHANGE!! 3 Saturday, April 29

#### Pine Canyon

Leader: Nancy Wenninger (925) 938-7987

Meet in parking lot at end of Castle Rock Road at 8 AM. Turn south on Walnut Avenue from the intersection with Ygnacio Valley Road in Walnut Creek. At the traffic circle, turn right and continue on Castle Rock Road past Northgate HS to the end, the parking lot for Castle Rock Recreation Area and Diablo Foothills RP. We will hike into Pine Canyon at least as far as the Castle Rocks. The trail crosses Pine Creek several times. We will look for spring migrants and Peregrine Falcons. Bring a lunch and liquids.

### 3 Thursday, April 20

#### Black Diamond Mines

Leader: Paul Schorr (925) 998-0070

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 730 AM. **OR**, meet at 8 AM in the parking lot at the end of Somersville Road. Go east on Ygnacio Valley/Kirker Pass Roads, in Pittsburg turn right on Buchanan Road. Go east on Buchanan to Somersville Road (Antioch) and turn right. Alternate route, exit Highway 4 at Somersville Road (south). Follow Somersville to the entry gate, entry fee required, proceed to the last parking lot. We will look for woodland, chaparral, and grassland birds. Bring a lunch and liquids.

### 1 Saturday, April 22

#### Mines Road

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

Because of limited parking along Mines Road, carpooling is essential. This is an all-day trip and often hot! Bring lunch and liquids. Phainopepla, Lewis' Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and many spring migrants are possible, plus spring wildflowers. Entry fee required for Del Valle RP. Call the leader for meeting time and location.



Male Lawrence's Goldfinch,  
Beth Branthaver photo

## More Field Trip Listings on page 6

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 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  
**Sycamore Valley Park and Ride carpool location:** Exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Rd., Park & Ride lot is east of the freeway  
**Sun Valley Mall parking lot carpool location:** SW corner of mall lot at Willow Pass Rd. and Contra Costa Blvd. in Concord

**1 Tuesday, April 25**

**Del Puerto Canyon**

Leader: Beth Branthaver (925) 944-1856

Carpool leaves at 730 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. **OR**, meet on Del Puerto Canyon Road west of I-5 at 9 AM at Patterson Exit (Diablo Grande Parkway and Sperry



*Bullock's Oriole, Beth Branthaver photo*

Road) off I-5 (56 miles from Sycamore Valley Road). Take I-580 east to I-5 south. We will stop at the Larry Combs Rest Area near Westley, as there are no facilities on this trip until our lunch stop.

Looking for Canyon Wren, Costa's

Hummingbird, Greater Roadrunner, and other goodies. Usually very warm! Bring lunch and liquids.

**3 Thursday, April 27**

**Mitchell Canyon**

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Meet at 8 AM in the Mitchell Canyon parking lot in Clayton. From I-680 in Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to Clayton Road. Turn right on Clayton Road and right on Mitchell Canyon Road to the end. There is a \$6.00 parking fee, payable before entering the parking lot We hope to see gnatcatchers, spring migrants, residents, and lots of wildflowers. This trip is usually hot, so bring a hat, lunch and plenty of liquids.



*Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Isaac Aronow photo*

**👁️👁️ Looking Ahead**

**Saturday/Sunday, June 24-25, Yuba Pass**

Leaders: Rosita and Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

Save the date for what is always a productive and fun weekend trip to the northern Sierras which requires driving and walking, some of it over rough terrain. Saturday, we will meet at the parking lot at the top of the pass at 7 AM and will be in the Sierra Valley that day looking for basin birds. On Sunday, we will bird in the Yuba Pass area for mountain birds.

**Make motel reservations now!** Closest motels are in Sierra City, 11 miles down Highway 49 to the west. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530) 862-1151 or (800) 682-9848) is one of the most popular; or try Yuba River Inn (530) 862-1122 with cabins and kitchenettes (cash or check only. Bassett's Station (530) 862-1297 at Highway 49 and Gold Lake Road has some accommodations and meals, and High Country Inn (530) 862-1530 or (800) 862-1530 is across Hwy. 49 from Bassett's. Also, in Calpine is the Sierra Valley Lodge (530) 994-3367 or (800) 858-0322. More listings are at [www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html](http://www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html). Campgrounds are located at Yuba Pass and Chapman Creek downhill to the west. Sites are available first come/first serve for only three days at a time. Longer term reservations can be made at (877) 444-6777, but there is an additional \$10 charge for this service. After June 19, call Wild Birds Unlimited (925) 798-0303 for information.



**Save the Date:**

**Saturday/Sunday, July 15-16, Lassen NP**

Leader: Eugenia K. Larson [eklarson@comcast.net](mailto:eklarson@comcast.net)

If you plan to attend, please contact Eugenia for motel and camping information at her email address (she will be traveling quite a bit from May-July). **To avoid disappointment, book soon.** Detailed area motel and Manzanita Lake camping information will be listed in the *May Quail*. It may also be found on page 6 of the May 2016 *Quail* on the MDAS website at [diabloaudubon.org](http://diabloaudubon.org).

**Nominating Committee News**

Elections for the four MDAS Officers (President, VP, Secretary and Treasurer) will take place in June, with a slate of candidates to be presented to the membership by the Nominating Committee at the May meeting. If you are interested in running for an office, please contact Hugh Harvey, Chair, at (925) 935-2979.

**Volunteers Needed**

The MDAS Board Sales Manager position, currently held by Diane Malucelli, is seeking a volunteer to take over the duties. While the position includes Board responsibilities, ideally, this position could be supported by a committee to share the responsibilities. Grab a friend or two and consider stepping up. **For information: [dmalucelli@att.net](mailto:dmalucelli@att.net)**

In addition, if you enjoy working with youth, Tracy Farrington is looking for volunteers to help with the Young Birders Club weekend field trips. (see page 9 for the latest **YBC field trip report**) And, if you have children or grandchildren who might enjoy this experience and are interested in sharing your expertise and support, please contact Tracy Farrington at: [tracy\\_farrington@yahoo.com](mailto:tracy_farrington@yahoo.com).

Lastly, a big thank you to everyone who offered to volunteer their time and talents at the upcoming John Muir House Birthday-Earth Day event on April 22, staffing the MDAS table. **To volunteer: [pkschorr@comcast.net](mailto:pkschorr@comcast.net)**

**Bylaws and AOC Vote**

At the March meeting, the members unanimously voted to approve the revisions to the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws after being presented by Carol Pachl in February.



## California Towhee ♦ *Melospiza crissalis*

California Towhee is a plump-bodied, long-tailed, perky bird, brownish overall, and about 8-10 inches in length. The crown is slightly warmer brown than the other upper parts; the buff throat is bordered by dark streaks, and the under tail coverts are a cinnamon color. Juveniles show faint wing bars. Most of us have a pair of California Towhees in our yards, where they can be quite bold at times.

California Towhees may mate for life and they remain together in their breeding territory throughout the year.

The male can be very aggressive in defending his territory, attacking intruding males and even his own reflection. A friend of mine has a feisty male towhee who, each spring, sits on her car attacking the side view mirror. The courting male approaches the female with wings drooped and quivering. The male and female give a “squeal duet” and posture when meeting after being apart within their territory.

This bird is a permanent resident, rarely moving even short distances away from nesting areas. The nest site is usually in a dense shrub or tree 4-12 feet above the ground, but may be found on the ground or 30 feet high in a tree. The nest is a bulky open cup, rather loosely made of twigs, grass, weeds, rootlets, and animal hair. Three to four bluish-white eggs marked with brown and black are laid as early as March. The female incubates the eggs for about 11 days.

Both parents feed the nestlings. Young may leave the nest after as little as 8 days, before they are able to fly well, and

remain with the parents for 4-6 weeks. A pair may raise 2-3 broods each year.

They forage mostly on the ground often scratching in leaf litter. They do the classic towhee foraging maneuver, the double-scratch. These birds will lunge forward while feeding on the ground and then quickly hop backward, scratching on the ground with both feet as they go. Their diet consists of seeds, insects, berries, and other small fruit. The young are fed mostly insects.



First named as a separate species in 1839, they were combined with Canyon Towhee as a species called Brown Towhee in 1886. Recent studies of their DNA has resulted in them being considered a full species again. Six subspecies of California Towhee occur in the United States. Generally the color of the subspecies gets darker in color the farther north that they occur, with the three inland subspecies averaging larger size than the three coastal subspecies. The Inyo California Towhee, a subspecies of the California Towhee, is restricted to riparian habitat in the isolated Argus Mountains of Inyo County. It is threatened by the destruction of habitat, due in part by the excessive foraging by feral burros, cattle, and horses.

The population of California Towhees is estimated at 9 million birds, according to *Partners in Flight*, with 61% living in the U.S. and 39% living in Mexico. A group of towhees are collectively known as a “tangle” or a “teapot” of towhees.

~Jean Halford article and California Towhee photo

### Community Events

#### ► Los Medanos College Earth Day Festival, Pittsburg, Wed., April 19, 10 AM-1 PM

This Earth Day festival, held in the Campus Quad off 2700 E. Leland Road, is an annual event for staff, faculty, students, and visitors to celebrate the Earth, explore sustainable actions, and support local organizations involved in environmental protection.

#### ► March for Science SF, Saturday, April 22, 12-4 PM

Grab your binoculars and birding attire and join MDAS members (see details on page 10) at the afternoon nonpartisan march celebrating public discovery, understanding, and distribution of scientific knowledge as crucial to the freedom, success, health, and safety of life on this planet. **For information:** [www.marchforsciencesf.com](http://www.marchforsciencesf.com)

#### ► John Muir Birthday-Earth Day Celebration, Saturday, April 22, 10 AM-4 PM

Celebrate John Muir’s 179th birthday on Earth Day’s 46th anniversary at his former home, a National Historic Site located at 4202 Alhambra Avenue at Highway 4 in Martinez. Collect booth stamps for a chance to win a National Park Pass, learn steps to care for our planet, enjoy music by Piedmont Highlanders Pipers, view a “recycled” fashion show, and hear “John Muir” tell stories of his life. Be sure to visit the MDAS table in the orchard. **For information:** [johnmuirassociation.org](http://johnmuirassociation.org)

#### ► People’s Climate March, Saturday, April 29

At press time, specific details are still unfolding. **For information:** [peoplesclimate.org](http://peoplesclimate.org)

#### ► Celebrate Earth Day at the PH Instructional Garden, Sunday, April 30, 1-4 PM

Join an afternoon of fun in the Garden, with activities for kids and adults, tours of the garden by Master Gardener, Monika Olsen, and local sustainable organizations’ tables at 1 Santa Barbara Road. **For information:** [phigarden@gmail.com](mailto:phigarden@gmail.com)

## Colorado Grouse Birding Tour

In April, 2016, Nancy and I joined eleven other birders to participate in a ten-day “Colorado Grouse Birding Tour,” which was conducted by High Lonesome Birdtours. Our guides, Kipp Miller and Wezil Walraven, worked extremely hard to assure our success in seeing all of the target grouse species as well as many, many other birds. This tour covered over 1,000 miles throughout Colorado, and it was very comforting that we were in such good hands.



L to R: Kipp Miller, Paul and Nancy Schorr, and Wezil Walraven in Colorado, Paul Schorr photo

After we were met at the Denver Airport, the group was divided into two groups, occupying two vans. On the way to our first night's lodging in Manitou Springs, we stopped at Garden of the Gods State Park where we kicked off the tour with scope views of a Prairie Falcon and a spectacular show of White-throated Swifts against the scenic red rock formations.

Following breakfast on Day Two, we headed towards Lamar and the Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek. Along the way we made several stops and added Scaled Quail; Curve-billed, Brown and Sage Thrashers; Mountain Plovers; and Swainson's Hawk.

Day Three began very early with a departure from the hotel at 3:30 AM in order to meet Fred, our rancher-guide, who took us in a “former” school bus to the Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek. We arrived at the lek before sunrise and remained on the bus, waiting patiently in the pre-dawn cold for the chickens to arrive. However, a Ferruginous Hawk had taken up a position on a nearby fence post and both Kipp and Wezil were dismayed by the potential impact of this raptor on the chickens' appearance, but we continued to wait in hopeful anticipation. Then, just as Kipp dejectedly announced the apparent disappointing “miss” and Fred was ready to start the bus, Wezil exclaimed that he had spotted a lone displaying male (photo R). Much to the group's delight, we all got to see the bird, a lifer for everyone! We followed the happy occasion with a full homemade breakfast at the ranch home of Fred and Norma. Continuing on towards Wray, we added a feeding Merlin, and later that evening at dinner Wezil was roundly celebrated.



On Day Four, we slept-in until 4:30 AM before heading to the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek on the Bledsoe Ranch, just outside Wray. There we enjoyed a fantastic show at dawn as

the Quail

both vans were surrounded with Greater Prairie-Chickens, the males showcasing their elaborate displays and booming sounds, and the females scrutinizing their talents. After this spectacular show, we traveled from northeastern Colorado to Silverthorne, the longest travel day of the trip. Along the way we birded in the Pawnee Grasslands and added both McCown's and Chestnut-colored Longspurs to our lists.

Our tour took us from Silverthorne to Gunnison on Day Five. Following another early breakfast, we birded at Loveland Pass where we had outstanding views of White-tailed Ptarmigan (photo R), one approaching to within a few yards away. Upon returning to Silverthorne, we visited a neighborhood where we saw all three species of Rosy-Finches and Cassin Finches at feeders. On our way to Gunnison, we added Pinyon Jay, both Lewis's and Three-toed Woodpeckers, and American Dipper.



On Day Six, at 4:30 AM we met the volunteer guides at Waunita Watchable Wildlife Site and received instructions regarding the viewing of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse from the viewing trailer. Inside the trailer, we received additional assistance in spotting the grouse, which were about a half mile away, using the scopes that were provided. The Gunnison Sage-Grouse is a seriously imperiled species and highly vulnerable to human disturbance, hence the very strict protocol regarding their viewing. It was quite cold, but the volunteer guides provided us with blankets to sit on the cold aluminum benches. Although a Golden Eagle had taken up a position near the lek, we were still able to see several displaying male grouse. To avoid disturbing the birds, we were not allowed to depart the trailer until the birds had ended their courtships and had left the lek. After breakfast in Gunnison, we continued our travel to Grand Junction, stopping at Black Canyon in the Gunnison National Park where we located a female Dusky Grouse. In addition, we toured the visitor center and had spectacular views of the canyon from a nearby viewpoint.

After breakfast on Day Seven, we departed from Grand Junction and headed off to the scenic Colorado National Monument (photo R) where the birding highlights included Pinyon Jay; Juniper Titmouse; Canyon, Rock and Bewick's Wrens; and Gambel's Quail. The Colorado National Monument is an area of desert land high on the Colorado Plateau where >>>cont. on page 10





## Young Birders Visit Sacramento NWR

A break in this season's much welcome rain provided an opportunity for the Mt. Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club to travel north on Saturday, February 25 to enjoy a full day of birding at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge near Willows. It had been our intention to include the Colusa NWR but it was closed due to flooded conditions.

The abundance of water at Sacramento was breathtaking. The amount of submerged acreage was greater than I've ever seen, perhaps two to three times the area covered in years past. As a result, there was no significant concentration of waterfowl but, rather, small rafts and groups of individuals, mostly duck species and a few Greater White-fronted Geese scattered about. However, towards the end of the auto tour we did come across a significant flock of Snow Geese, perhaps three to four thousand, settled over a vast, shallow pond. A couple of blue morphs were picked out and we scanned, as well, for Ross's Geese but none were found.

While bird numbers overall, with the exception of Snow Geese, were generally lower than expected, our trip tallied 62 species. (Erica Kawata always graciously keeps track for us on eBird) Sightings of particular interest included three Bald Eagles, three Virginia Rails, clearly heard, a Sora, one Blue-winged Teal, three Common Goldeneye and a Great Horned Owl.



MDAS Young Birders Club participants L to R: Kai Mills, Matt Mlynek, Tracy Farrington, Eric Arnon, Michael Pang, and Erica Kawata kneeling, Tracy Farrington photo

Kai reminded us to be on the lookout for a Peregrine Falcon should we witness, at any time, large numbers of birds suddenly taking to the air. About fifteen minutes thereafter, as if scripted for us, 300+ Long-billed Dowitchers erupted en masse, quickly bringing to life that liquid-like and marvelously synchronized shape-shifting aerial swarm, the murmuration—and right on cue, diving into frame from directly above, the astutely predicted Peregrine Falcon.

The falcon plunged, then ascended, and plunged again, each time scattering the dowitchers for but a second before they re-knit the swarm and promptly continued their

dizzying evasion. In all, six strikes were attempted, not one of which was to produce a reward for all the predator's efforts.

This dramatic display kept the seven of us fully engaged until it came to an end when the falcon relinquished his pursuit, about 60 seconds after it began.

On this outing, the Young Birders welcomed two new participants, Matt Mlynek and Eric Arnon, both fairly new to birding. Both were eager, engaged, curious, and enthusiastic. I'm confident we'll see them again. (see page 6 for more YBC information) I look forward to Spring! ~Tracy Farrington

## Peregrine Patrol

In early February, 30+ rangers and volunteers, including several MDAS members, met to learn about Peregrine Falcons and to discuss the ins and outs of a volunteer patrol of the Castle Rocks area in Pine Canyon, part of the Diablo Foothills Regional Park adjacent to Mt. Diablo State Park to support the limited number of staff who patrol this large area.

Jenny Papka, of Native Bird Connections, brought an injured and unreleasable falcon to the presentation providing an opportunity for close-up views and the opportunity to ask questions about these magnificent birds.

Peregrine Falcons breeding in the area have faced encroachment on their nesting sites from rock-climbing humans. In years past, this has caused the birds to abandon their nest. In response, the East Bay Regional Park District and Mt. Diablo SP have partnered to close the area seasonally from February through July. However, despite clear and obvious signage, in February of 2015 alone, 300 people were caught on camera violating the closure.

In its third year, the goal is that, with the support of the Peregrine Patrol, a dedicated corps of volunteers who patrol the area and educate the public, the falcons will nest and raise a family. The patrol supports the staff of both the Regional and State Parks who manage the trails and rocks where the birds nest.

Using a private Facebook page, or email, volunteers share a brief summary of their patrol and include reports of interactions with the public, any trespassers, and, hopefully, sightings of the Peregrine Falcons. Trespassers are reported by phone to the Park rangers.

If you would like to be trained to join the Peregrine Patrol team and can commit to six hours a month, please contact Staci Hobbet, MDIA docent and Peregrine Patrol lead, at: [anastasiahobbet@gmail.com](mailto:anastasiahobbet@gmail.com).



Jenny Papka brought a Peregrine Falcon to the training session, Maren Smith photo

>>>Colorado Grouse Birding Tour continued from page 8  
 one can witness magnificent views of canyons cut deep into the sandstone. Grand Mesa, the largest flat-topped mountain in the world, lies nearby. Leaving the National Monument, we stopped at Coal Canyon before continuing on to Craig where we would spend the night. In Coal Canyon, we had excellent views of Chukar. We continued to bird along the way to Craig, stopping at likely habitats.

Day Eight began with another pre-dawn start to view displaying Dusky Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse on their lek. After breakfast, we continued on to Walden, adding additional new trip species along the way.

On Day Nine, we left the hotel in pre-dawn and went to the Greater Sage-Grouse lek where we parked the vans in the darkness and awaited the arrival of the birds. As the sun rose on the new-fallen snow and visibility improved, the vans became surrounded with over one hundred male and female

Greater Sage-Grouse (*photo below*)—quite a spectacle, and certainly a highlight of the trip. Even a small band of cow elk traveling through the lek did not deter the displaying birds.



After returning to Walden for breakfast, we continued on our way toward Denver, traveling through heavy snowfall over Cameron Pass, an elevation of 10,276 feet. Our guides, Kipp and Wezil, did a marvelous job navigating the vans through the falling, accumulating snow.

Instead of continuing to Denver with the rest of the group, Nancy and I got dropped off in Fort Collins where we spent time visiting our son and his family there. In addition to the family visit, it was very enjoyable to conclude our trip,

relaxing and reflecting on a wonderful birding adventure... and, to sleep in! The tour was an outstanding success, as we saw 140 species, all of the target species, and added nine life birds to our list. ~Paul Schorr, article and photos

For more information: [www.highlonesometours.com](http://www.highlonesometours.com)

### Legislative Action Update

Ten members of the Legislative Action arm of the Conservation Committee met on February 16 to discuss strategies for supporting birds and their habitats under the current administration, reinforcing our 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.**

We reviewed proposed Federal and State legislation and set priorities, such as defending the Endangered Species Act. We also received an update on the Tesla Park/Carnegie OHMVR approval process.



From L to R: Mike Eliot, Georgette Howington, Rosalie Howarth, Carol Pacht, and Ariana Rickard at the DVC DeSaulnier Town Hall in February, Maren Smith photo

Plans were made to request meetings with local legislators including Congressman Mark DeSaulnier. Forging partnerships with other environmental organizations was identified as a goal. Tips on “how to talk to people of differing ideologies” were offered. An email will go out to the MDAS membership soon, listing key environmental bills, and which representatives to contact about them. Several committee members also attended standing-room-only Town Halls hosted by Congressman DeSaulnier, which were informative and encouraging.

And, Mt. Diablo Audubon will participate in the San Francisco edition of the National March for Science. (**see details on page 7**) Join us as we carry our banner, binoculars around necks, on Saturday, April 22, Earth Day weekend. **Contact Carol Pacht, Ariana Rickard, or Rosalie Howarth if you can join; email contacts are listed on page 11.**

✓ Here is handy link to find out EXACTLY who your California State Assemblyperson and Senator are, wherever you live, for yourself or others at: [www.findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/](http://www.findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/), then enter your California address and click the “locate” button to find your State representatives.

✓ For information on how to communicate with your U.S. Senators and Congressperson, the specific contact information, listed below, can also be found on the MDAS website home page (right side) at: [diabloaudubon.org](http://diabloaudubon.org).

- Senator Dianne Feinstein: Washington D.C. (202) 224-3841, San Francisco (415) 393-0707, [feinstein.senate.gov](http://feinstein.senate.gov)
- Senator Kamala Harris: Washington D.C. (202) 224-3553, San Francisco (415) 355-9041, [harris.senate.gov](http://harris.senate.gov)
- Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, 11th Congressional District (WC area): Washington D.C. (202) 225-2095, Walnut Creek (925) 933-2660, [desaulnier.house.gov](http://desaulnier.house.gov)

## Secret Love Life of Birds

Don't tell anybody, but your backyard birds are doing it, a lot!! Birds form many different types of sexual relationships, which may or may not match their social behaviors. Habitat, food sources, predation, activity levels, and other unknowns may play a part.

A few species, such as Carolina Chickadees, jays, Northern Flickers, and Scarlet Tanagers are truly monogamous and mate for life. But they only make up about 14% of species. And, even these monogamous pairs only bond socially, while they still fool around sexually. Advances in DNA testing and bird research show that most monogamous birds often engage in extra-pair mating.

Most monogamous relationships last only one nesting while others may last an entire breeding season, like Wisdom, the 65 year-old Laysan Albatross pictured left. Some stay together to raise young and protect territory. More than 90% of bird species have socially monogamous relationships, but cheat and mate regularly with others.

About 2% of birds are polygamous, openly mating with multiple partners, including Red-winged Blackbirds, House Wrens, and Yellow Warblers. In these pairs, males do not participate in raising young. Females nest close to food sources so that young can walk and find food almost from birth. Some of these females, such as Spotted Sandpipers, however, are polyandrous, and form pair bonds with several males. They lay eggs in multiple nests tended by the males, leaving the female free to find another mate. Such females take on a reversed role, being the bigger and more colorful sex, and put on courting displays to attract males. The more food that is available in a territory, the more the female mates and starts new nests.

Then, there are the promiscuous species-both sexes take multiple mates indiscriminately. Anything goes! All North American hummingbirds and about 6% of other birds use this strategy. These females raise the young alone and the males mate multiple times during a nesting season. ~Mike Eliot, WBU



last an entire breeding season, like Wisdom, the 65 year-old Laysan Albatross pictured left. Some

## 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

President:	Jimm Edgar	.....ag70@value.net..(510) 290-8006
Vice President:	Paul Schorr	.....pkschorr@comcast.net..(925) 757-5107
Secretary:	Carol Pacht	.....carolpacht@comcast.net..(925) 253-0675
Treasurer:	Steve Buffi	.....(925) 938-0929
Programs:	Ariana Rickard	.....rickard@post.harvard.edu..(347) 754-0143
Field Trips:	Hugh Harvey	.....(925) 935-2979
Conservation:	Nancy Wenninger	.....nwenninger@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
Member-at-Large:	Kent Fickett	.....k.fickett@comcast.net..(415) 269-4277
Quail Editor:	Maren Smith	.....marensmithbkk@yahoo.com..(925) 322-9477

### ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Webmaster:	Dal Leite	.....updates@diabloaudubon.org
Observations Editor:	Maury 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**  
**Galaxy Press, Concord**  
**Native Bird Connections**  
**Rakestraw Books, Danville**  
**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" email  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

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

Address Service Requested



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 66  
Concord, CA



An "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler, Isaac Aronow photo



The March Program featured Karine Tokatlian (above), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory's Plover Program manager, who spoke about efforts to help protect the threatened Western Snowy Plover in the South Bay; R: sign created by children to protect plovers, Rosalie Howarth photos

**Happy 176th Birthday John Muir, born April 21, 1838!**  
"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life." ~John Muir

