



# the Quail

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

Volume 62, Number 8

May 2017

## May Program : Tides: The Science and Spirit of the Ocean ♦ Jonathan White

After nearly losing his 65-foot wooden schooner in a large Alaskan tide, writer, sailor, and surfer Jonathan White vowed to understand the tide. He knew that the moon had something to do with it, but what exactly? He thought he'd learn enough about tides from a book or two, but the subject turned out to be far more complex, fascinating, and poetic than he ever imagined. Two books turned into ten, and ten into three hundred — and ten years of research crisscrossing the Seven Seas. Jonathan's newest book, *Tides: The Science and Spirit of the Ocean*, is the result of his search for the largest, fastest, scariest, and most amazing tides in the world.

In China, he confronted the Silver Dragon, a twenty-five foot tidal bore that races eighty miles up the Qiantang River; at London's Royal Society, he dug into the earliest Western tide science, which preoccupied thinkers from da Vinci to Galileo to Newton; and in the Arctic, he followed an Inuit elder down a small hole through thick winter ice to gather fresh blue mussels in the cavities left by low tide.



Avid surfer, sailor, and author, Jonathan White

With photographs, stories, and short readings, Jonathan takes his audience on an enthralling journey into the surprising and poetic workings of the tide.

Jonathan White has written for the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Sierra*, *The Sun*, *Surfer's Journal*, *Orion*, and other publications. His first book, *Talking on the Water* (Sierra Club Books), was a collection of interviews exploring our relationship with nature.

White is an active marine conservationist, holds an MFA in creative nonfiction, and lives with his wife and son on a small island in Washington State.

Books may be available for sale.

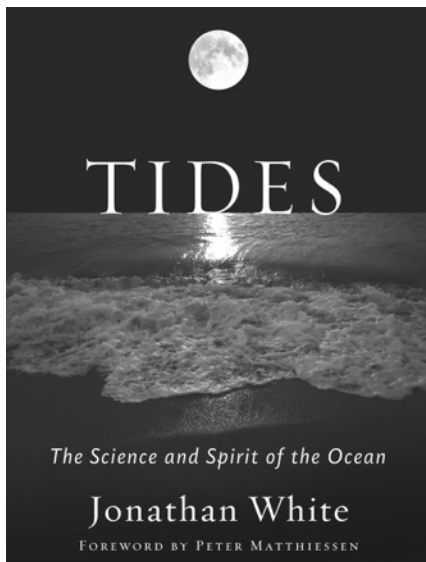
For more information:  
[jonathanwhitewriter.com](http://jonathanwhitewriter.com)

### Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, May 4** 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: Tides: The Science and Spirit of the Ocean ♦ Jonathan White

NEXT MONTH: Thursday, June 1  
630 PM Potluck Dinner  
815 PM Program: "Animal Homes"  
DVD



### Birding Information 7 PM

Dal Leite, MDAS Webmaster, will present a brief introduction to some special features of the MDAS mobile website, show some surprising resources available on the desktop site, and will share some of his favorite birding apps.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

I was asked to share some reflections on my nearly 50 years of MDAS involvement. There have been so many positive experiences. I will say that the Young Birders Club is one of my favorite projects, and Tracy Farrington's involvement with this group has been wonderful. Paul Schorr's efforts with the "No Child Left Inside" program have also resulted in a tremendous educational program for young people in our community. Sharing an appreciation for birds in their natural environment with them is rewarding.

In the early 1970s the chapter was small and almost bankrupt. Our *Quail* editor published a book on birding in Northern California that sold well and our chapter received the proceeds, so we got well.

I also served as the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Co-Chair along with Maury Stern. Those stories could also fill a

lot of pages. I remember driving north on the 680 freeway on my way to Shell Marsh and spotting a Cattle Egret on the back of a pet buffalo visible from the freeway! It made the CBC Count that year, but another has not been recorded since.

In the early days, we had trouble finding a place for meetings, but when we were finally able to get into The Gardens at Heather Farm it changed a lot for MDAS. With a great room and ample parking, all very central to all of the county, it really helped the chapter grow. Of the eight Bay Area Audubon chapters, I think we are the most successful.

Though my role as a chapter officer will come to an end, my heart will always be with MDAS. It has been a memorable experience and a real privilege to serve as your MDAS President. Good birding, everyone!

~Jimm Edgar



Jimm Edgar, R, presented a certificate to Young Birder, Kai Mills, L, at a recent meeting, Maren Smith photo

## Good News For Peregrine Falcons



Peregrine Falcon in Orinda, Isaac Aronow photo

A volunteer Peregrine Patrol is in full swing to help protect the Peregrine Falcon nesting site in the Castle Rock area of Mt. Diablo State Park adjacent to Diablo Foothills Regional Park. The area is closed yearly from February 1-July 31. Volunteers patrol the area while educating the public about this protected species who are territorial and sensitive to human disturbances including rock climbers, especially during nesting season.

According to the [ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org) website, the Peregrine Falcons have nested here since the late 1800s. After declines due to DDT, captive-bred falcons were reintroduced in 1990 in a joint effort by Save Mount Diablo and EBRPD. And *that's* good news for Peregrine Falcons!

If you are interested in the Peregrine Patrol, please join me to learn the ropes. [marensmithbkk@yahoo.com](mailto:marensmithbkk@yahoo.com)

~Maren Smith

the Quail

## Election of Officers

The election of officers for 2017-18 will be held at the May 4 meeting. All members are eligible to stand for election and may submit nominations from the floor.

In accordance with the MDAS Bylaws, Brian Murphy, Nominating Committee Chair, presented the names of the nominees at the April 6 meeting. They are:

- President: Paul Schorr
- Vice President: Kent Fickett
- Treasurer: Steve Buffi
- Secretary: Carol Pachl

## Urgent Request

The position of Sales Manager will be open in June. After serving in this position for many years, organizing the monthly meeting raffle and coordinating sales, Diane Malucelli is stepping down to take care of family responsibilities. Please consider volunteering your time and talents. Grab a friend or two to share this position. **To learn the ins and outs of this job, please contact Diane at: [dmalucelli@att.net](mailto:dmalucelli@att.net) or call (925) 674-0920.**

## Amazon Smile

If you shop online at Amazon, please register **MT Diablo Audubon Society** as your favorite non-profit charity at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). For every eligible purchase, MDAS receives 0.5% of your purchase. You shop. Amazon gives.

## Welcome Members

Pam Murray	Pleasant Hill
Kathy Gilman	Walnut Creek
Avery Davis	Danville
Denise Amador	Berkeley
JD Bergeron	Oakland
Constance Kuranko	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/)



What bird has the second longest legs in proportion to their body? Unscramble the letters below or look at

page 7 for the answer.

**IKCLTCTKELNASBED**

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 June Quail will be May 8.**



# Observations

by Maury Stern

Migrating birds are coming faster and in larger numbers. Many first of season (FOS) birds were seen.

A **Rufous Hummingbird** was at White Canyon off Mitchell Canyon at Mt. Diablo State Park 4/5. P&NS

JB had an **Allen's Hummingbird** at her Martinez home 3/5.

A **Virginia Rail** was in the reeds around Heather Farm Pond 4/8. FS

SM saw a **Pigeon Guillemot** off Ferry Point in Pt. Richmond 3/28.

A **Great Blue Heron** ate all the fish in her pond in Martinez 3/5. JB

An adult **Bald Eagle** was over the Valle Vista Staging Area 4/1. EL

Two **Western Screech Owls** were near Jewel Lake in Tilden Park 3/23. PY

A **Northern Pygmy Owl** was on the Prince or Steam Trail at Redwood Regional Park from 3/12 to 4/2. SJ, SR, AL, CM, LK, BP, MiK, PM, DW; one was also at Pinehurst Road in Canyon 4/2. JT

MM saw a **Lewis' Woodpecker** at the northern entrance to Los Vaqueros Reservoir 4/1.

**Pileated Woodpeckers** were in Moraga 3/15, An, and at Skyline Gate of Redwood Park 3/15. AL

**Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were seen 3/14 to 3/16 at Tilden Nature Area. TP, SM, JD, PG; and JW saw one on the Steam Trail at Redwood Park.

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was at Black Diamond Mines 4/6. MK

The continuing **Tropical Kingbird** was seen by 12 observers at Heather Farm pond. It should be leaving soon.

**Western Kingbirds** were at Los Vaqueros 4/1, MM; five were observed at Contra Loma RP 4/8, P&NS; and at Castle Rock Park 4/9. DK

On 3/12, a **Warbling Vireo** was at Valle Vista. An

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

FS and HH saw **Tree-, Violet-green-, Northern Rough-winged-, and Barn Swallows** at the Heather Farm pond 3/16.

TF saw many **House Wrens** on the trail in Castle Rock Park 4/2.



*An energetic House Wren in a very vocal and showy display in Pine Canyon within Castle Rock Park, Maren Smith photo*

A **Pacific Wren** was along the Stream Trail at Redwood Regional Park 3/28. JD

A pair of **Phainopepla** was at Black Diamond Mines 3/12, JD, LH, WHO; and 3/22. DWe

On 4/5, **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were near the bridge near the parking lot at Round Valley RP. SG, MKin

FS and HH saw a **Common Yellowthroat** at Heather Farm 3/18, and IA saw one 4/9 at the Martinez Shoreline.

WH saw a **Yellow Warbler** at Valle Vista 3/14, and AL saw one at Hilltop Lake Park in Richmond 4/5.

**Black-throated Gray Warblers** were at Los Vaqueros 4/1, MM, and at White Canyon in Mt. Diablo SP on 4/5. P&NS

Two **Chipping Sparrows** were at Morgan Territory Preserve 3/10. SM, JM; KT saw one at Northgate High School 3/12; and AL saw one at Black Diamond Mines 3/18.

A **White-throated Sparrow** made one of many appearances at

P&NS Antioch home 3/26. T&PL saw one at their Rossmoor home 3/27.

SS saw a FOS **Black-headed Grosbeak** in her Lafayette yard 4/7.

JB saw a **Hooded Oriole** at her Martinez home 3/17, and JR had one at her Alamo home for her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 3/29. (**Happy 90th Birthday Jean Richmond!**)

**Bullock's Orioles** were at Los Vaqueros 4/1, MM; Castle Rock Park 4/2, TF; Pt. Pinole Shoreline Park 4/2, SD; and Contra Loma RP 4/8. P&NS

An Anonymous, IA Isaac Aronow, JB Jackie Bobrowsky, SD Sheila Dickie, JD Judith Dunham, TF Tracy Farrington, PG Pete Goldman, SG Susan Greef, HH Hugh Harvey, WHO Wendy Hoben, WH Wen Hsu, LH Lydia Huang, SJ Sharon J., MiK Michael Karpinko, DK Dave Kent, MKin Marilyn Kinch, MK Mary Krentz, LK Lis Kuo, T&PL Tom and Pam Lee, EL Elizabeth Leite, AL Albert Linkowski, MM Mike Marchiano, JM Jean Matsuno, PM Pam McKown, CM Colin Meusel, SM Sue Morgan, TP Trent Pearce, BP Bob Power, SR Scott Restivo, JR Jean Richmond, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, SS Susan Stern, KT Kevin Thomas, JT John Toldi, JW Joanne Wallen, DWe Dave Weber, DW Denise Wight, PY Pam Young



*Backyard bath time for American Robins and Cedar Waxwings, Paul Schorr 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!

## Trip Reports

### Contra Loma RP and Reservoir, March

**8:** On a beautiful spring-like day, fourteen birding enthusiasts joined to see and/or hear as many birds as possible, and they were pleasantly surprised to tally 52 species at the conclusion of the outing. The 533 acres that had been burned by a wildfire on June 24, 2015 has shown signs of excellent recovery, and very little evidence of the fire is still apparent. The group was welcomed by the drumming and appearance of Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers, and later



Above: Osprey; Below R: Lark Sparrow, Paul Schorr photos

added a Red-shafted Northern Flicker. There was a nice showing of raptors with the following species seen: Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks. There was a Red-shouldered Hawk on the nest that had been successfully used last year, and the Osprey offered excellent views as

it continually traversed the sky above the reservoir, seeking the recently-planted trout. Near a small cove with reeds and cattails, the group had good views of several Common Gallinules, a Sora, and a persistently-singing, but very s e c r e t i v e ,



Common Yellowthroat. A Virginia Rail was also heard. Six sparrow species were tallied: California Towhee, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln Sparrow, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Both Black and Say's Phoebes, and three swallow species (Tree, Violet-green, and Barn) were also seen. Many of the birds were displaying their breeding plumages, and close inspection revealed a Double-crested Cormorant that was developing its whitish nuptial crests. The warm weather also produced an active, good-sized gopher snake that the leader tried to retrieve as it disappeared into a gopher hole, to no avail—maybe a good thing! ~Paul Schorr

### McNabney Marsh/Mt. View Sanitary District, March

**14:** Despite some major vegetation changes at Mt. View Sanitary's Moorhen Marsh, ten birders had some stunning experiences. As we walked along the south fence line adjacent to the Shell refinery, a Common Yellowthroat could clearly be heard singing, but was devilishly hard to find. Eventually though, he was well seen by everyone as he sang from the top of the fence. In another part of the marsh, a second Common Yellowthroat was seen singing from the cattails. Many Tree Swallows were flying around and entering the nest boxes near

the center of the marsh. We even saw a muskrat swimming in Peyton Slough and a mink off a small dirt side-trail. We viewed McNabney Marsh from two sides, the wooden platform and from Waterbird Park. A number of ducks were seen, including at least two male Northern Pintails. A female American Kestrel perched on the Osprey platform, Stilts and Avocets were busy along the edges, but only one Pied-billed Grebe and one Ring-billed Gull were seen. Because it was still early, we made one more stop before compiling our daily checklist. We crossed the railroad tracks and parked underneath the freeway, not knowing that Cliff Swallows and White-throated Swifts were using the overpass as a nesting site. They flew out continually, chattering as they took to the air. Several Northern Rough-winged Swallows perched on some adjacent wires, and an Osprey flew over us. When we counted, we had seen or heard 54 species. ~Hugh Harvey

**Valle Vista in Moraga, March 23:** The only non-rainy day of the week was enjoyed by 16 congenial birders during this pleasant four-hour walk. The lake (Upper San Leandro Reservoir) was very high and muddy and there were no non-resident ducks, keeping our total species count down to 53. After a slow, somewhat foggy start, things picked up at the bridge where some saw a male Wood Duck. Later we saw 15 more Wood Ducks at scope distance down the lake and, on the way back, three more from the bridge. Other highlights were a singing California Thrasher, seen best through scopes, a cooperative Brown Creeper, several technicolor Western Bluebirds, a killer close-up view of a pair of Wrentits, and as we neared the end of the roundtrip, a gorgeous male Bullock's Oriole. ~Don Lewis



Wrentit, Pam Lorenz photo



Douglas Iris, Maren Smith photo

**Tomales Bay State Park, March 25:** Thirteen members had a beautiful day along Tomales Bay with blue skies and moderate temperatures. We were along beaches and in Live Oak forest and saw many fresh wildflowers, especially Douglas Iris. Forty-five birds were seen, with four Ospreys at one time one of the highlights. Other good sightings were Allen's Hummingbird, Common Loon, Peregrine Falcon, and Pacific Wren. Of particular note, there was no Varied Thrush on this trip as they have been very rare this winter. ~Maury Stern

**Lake Lagunitas, March 29:** Better weather could not have been expected for the 12 participants who walked the nearby meadows, then circled the lake on the side of Mt. Tamalpais. Acorn Woodpeckers were busy everywhere, and the bird we wanted to see, the Pileated Woodpecker, made a brief appearance flying from a low stump to the side of a tree,

>>>Field Trip Reports continued on page 6



# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

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

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

## June 2017

03 Saturday Outer Point Reyes  
 24-25 Sat./Sun. Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

## July 2017

15-16 Sat./Sun. Mt. Lassen NP  
 27 Thursday Frank's Dump—High Tide

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

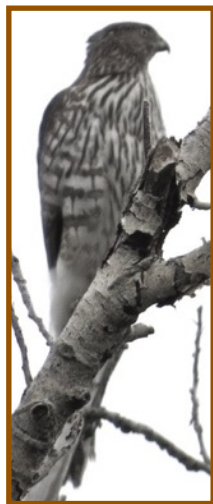
Leader: Nancy Wenninger (925) 938-7987

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.

### 2 Wednesday, May 3 Mt. Diablo State Park

Leader: Jimm Edgar (510) 290-8006

MDSP is a treasure trove for birders. Although every season in the park has its special qualities, early May on the mountain has its own beauty—a variety of wildflowers add color to the vistas. **NOTE:** Carpool leaves at 8 AM from La Gonda. **OR,** meet at 8:45 AM at the South Gate entrance after birding South Gate Road. (\$10 entry fee or SP pass required) Many migrant and nesting species are possible including Sage Sparrows, California Thrashers, woodpeckers, raptors, and warblers. This field trip can be hot, so plan accordingly. Bring lunch and liquids.



Cooper's Hawk, Isaac Aronow photo

### 2 Saturday, May 6

#### East Contra Costa County

Leader: Gary Fregien (926) 708-0636

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 6:15 AM. **OR,** meet the leader at 7 AM on Cypress Road at the Marsh Creek Trailhead parking lot just east of O'Reilly's Auto Parts in Oakley. Go north on I-680, exit Highway 4 toward Stockton/Pittsburg, take right Exit 30 toward CA-160/Sacramento/Rio Vista (just past Hillcrest Avenue Exit; do NOT continue straight on Highway 4). Take exit 1-A East 18th/Main Street, turn right at the bottom of the exit onto Main Street and drive through Oakley for about 4 miles, turn left onto Cypress Road. Make a U-turn at Picasso Drive, the stoplight after the railroad tracks. Target birds include: Blue Grosbeak, Hooded Oriole, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Swainson's Hawk, Yellow-billed Magpie and Yellow-breasted Chat. It may be hot! Bring lunch and liquids.

### 2 Thursday, May 18

#### West Briones Regional Park

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Meet at 8 AM in the parking lot on the right side of the west entrance road off Bear Creek Road. From SR 24 in Orinda, drive north on Camino Pablo about 2.25 miles, turn right on Bear Creek Road, continue for 4.5 miles to park entrance. Wildflowers, spring birds, and Lazuli Buntings are usually abundant, while poison oak may be found along shaded trails. Bring lunch and liquids.



Bewick's Wren with nesting material, Isaac Aronow photo

### Tuesday and Thursday, May 23 and 25 "No Child Left Inside"

To volunteer: please call Paul Schorr (925) 998-0070

## More summer Field Trip information 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  
**La Gonda carpool location:** From I-680 southbound, exit at El Pintado, turn right and right again; park along open space on left. From I-680 northbound, exit El Cerro, turn left, then right at second light onto La Gonda; carpool point is about one-half mile north.

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

## 2 Saturday/Sunday, June 24-25, Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

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.

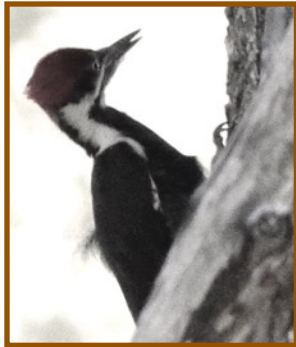
## 2 Saturday/Sunday, July 15-16, Mt. Lassen NP

Leader: Eugenia K. Larson (925) 806-0644

If you are planning to participate in this MDAS birding trip to Lassen Volcanic National Park, let the leader know ahead of time that you are coming. The Larsons will be camping in Section D of the Manzanita Lake Campground, which is tents-only and non-reservable. If you prefer not to camp, there are several small motels and B & Bs outside the Park, but you should make your reservations soon as they fill up quickly. There are also a few sleep-only cabins at Manzanita Lake with a nearby communal bathhouse, and a private lodge in the south-central part of the Park, which serves meals and has a pool. Please contact me for details at: [eklarson@comcast.net](mailto:eklarson@comcast.net).

### >>>Field Trip Reports continued from page 4

then leaving, though we had two more glimpses of it later. Some of the birds we saw had just arrived from their far south wintering grounds: the Pacific-slope Flycatchers, a singing Warbling Vireo, and the hidden Wilson's Warblers we heard several times. But an added bonus for this trip were the flowers we saw—Hound's Tongue, Shooting Stars, Stone Crop, Buttercups, Sun Cups, Death Camas, and the beautifully delicate Mission Bells, a greenish-brown lily. We identified only 35 bird species, but the day was so beautiful that nobody minded the low numbers. ~Hugh Harvey



Pileated Woodpecker,  
Beth Branthaver photo

**Garin Regional Park, April 1:** It was an absolutely glorious spring day for eighteen birders, with the hills at their greenest. The only bird missing among the expected was the Black-headed Grosbeak; perhaps the first of this month is a trifle early for views. Otherwise, we had wonderful looks at three separate male Bullock's Orioles, and there were good sightings of White-tailed Kites, American Kestrels, House Wrens, Warbling Vireos, Savannah Sparrows, and Wilson's Warblers, in addition to three species of swallows, three species of woodpeckers, Anna's Hummingbirds, Bewick's Wrens, Spotted and California Towhees,



Bullock's Oriole,  
Isaac Aronow photo

and so on. A few lucky birders (not including the leader) also saw a Hooded Oriole. Many of us got to see as a Grasshopper Sparrow responded to a recording, but it disappeared quickly before all were satisfied; the leader was reluctant to agitate the bird further—apologies on both sides. The icing on the cake was an unexpected species; two Rufous-crowned Sparrows entertained us for some time, the first time we have had them on this trip. The final count was 62 species. ~Fred Safier

**Orinda Connector Trail, April 4:** On a beautiful morning, 11 birders set out; this is a short trail, but it has a lot of good habitat for a variety of wildlife. Almost immediately, we spotted a lovely Wilson's Warbler. The black cap stood out in contrast with his bright yellow body. Shortly, the trail branched to the right and over a bridge towards the Briones Dam. In the stream was a Great Blue Heron standing motionless. As we approached the first clearing we saw perched on one of the transmission towers a Peregrine Falcon (see photo page 2). We were to spot it several times during the trip. In the conifers, we saw juncos, nuthatches, and a Brown Creeper. At the dam, we heard the "kiddick, kiddick"



Participants enjoyed the variety of bird sightings, Chick Chickering photo

call of a Virginia Rail, but never got a good look at it. We got several good views of Tree Swallows sitting on the overhead telephone wires, and there were many Western Bluebirds along the trail showing their beautiful iridescent colors in the sunlight. Seeing a Black Phoebe made it an official trip. All together, we spotted 40 species. ~Chick Chickering



## Black-necked Stilt ♦ *Himantopus mexicanus*

Black-necked Stilts are striking birds without the usual cryptic coloring of most shore birds.

They have white underparts, black wings, backs and cap, and a small white eyebrow above the red eye. Their long legs are pinkish-red, and are, in fact, the second longest legs in proportion to their body of any bird, exceeded only by the flamingo. Their black bill is long, thin and slightly up-curved. They average around 14 inches long, with wings that are long and pointed, projecting past the tail tip. Males have longer legs than females and a greenish gloss on their back and wings during breeding season, whereas the females have a brownish tinge to these areas. Juveniles have brownish upper parts, dull legs, and a dark eye.

First described in 1776 by Phillip Ludwig Stadius Muller, a German zoologist, these birds nest in loose colonies, often with American Avocets. Their nests are constructed on the ground by both sexes usually on small islands or on clumps of vegetation. The nest is built by scraping into the soil with their breast and feet to form a depression about two inches deep. Although some nests are unlined, others line their nest during incubation with grasses, pebbles, shells and bones—anything found close to the nest.

The 3-5 eggs in the nest are buff colored and heavily spotted with brown and black. Both parents incubate the eggs for about 22 to 25 days. On very hot days, the parents may use “belly-soaking” to cool themselves, the eggs, or chicks. Belly-soaking is the transport of water in the ventral (abdominal) feathers. The chicks are able to leave the nest within 1-2 hours of hatching and are able to feed themselves. They take their first flight at 4-5 weeks, but the family remains together even after the chicks can fly.



Black-necked Stilts are sentinel birds, alert to predators. Nesting in open country and absent of cryptic coloration, they need to be wary. They participate in an anti-predator display called the “popcorn display” which consists of a group of adults circling around a predator and hopping side to side while flapping their wings, calling loudly all the while. Anyone who has walked in an area where Stilts are located has heard their loud, incessant calling.

These birds inhabit grassy marshes, shallow lakes, and mudflats. They also take advantage of human-maintained wetlands such as sewage ponds, irrigation ditches, or flooded pastures, so, have extended their breeding range into new areas more recently.

They do most of their foraging for food in both salt and fresh water; their long legs allow them access to deeper water than other shorebirds. Their feet are half-webbed allowing them to swim, although they rarely do. They eat mostly insects and crustaceans, and will peck and plunge their heads into water in pursuit of food.

Some populations of Stilts are migratory, wintering in warmer regions like the Caribbean or Baja California, and breeding in the northern United States. The Black-necked Stilts living in the Bay Area appear to live here year-round.

The average life span of the Black-necked Stilt is five years, but the oldest recorded bird was at least 12 years, five months old, first banded in Venezuela and found again in the Lesser Antilles.

Black-necked Stilts appear to have a stable population except for the Hawaiian subspecies, the Ae’o, which is federally endangered, due to habitat loss and hunting, with a population at just under 2000 birds. ~**Jean Halford article and photo**

### Community Events

► **March For Science-SF, Saturday, April 22, 11 AM (see page 10 for details)**

► **WBU’s “We Love Mother Nature” event, Pleasant Hill, Sat., May 6, 10 AM-4 PM**

Join the fun at this family-friendly event featuring a live bald eagle, a living bee hive, many nature, animal-rescue, and environmental organizations, along with artists, authors, and local celebrities like Joan Morris, Gary Bogue, and Chuck Todd. Learn about our environment, parks, local wildlife and how to protect them. Participate in activities, contests, and prize drawings, and get expert advice from our staff at 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. **To volunteer at the MDAS table, please contact Paul Schorr at: pkschorr@comcast.net. For information: pleasanthill.wbu.com or (925) 798-0303**

► **“Fiesta de Jardin,” The Gardens @ Heather Farm, WC, Sunday, May 7, 2-5 PM**

Salsa through the garden at this Latin-inspired celebration of spring featuring Havana’s tapas and mojitos, or craft beer and wine, and Cuban music by VL Trio. **For tickets (\$45 members/\$50 public): gardenshf.org or (925) 947-1678**

► **MDSP Mountain Talk: Why Bay Nature? Walnut Creek, Thursday, May 18, 7 PM**

David Loeb, Co-Founder of *Bay Nature* Magazine will retire in June after 17 years as Publisher of our area’s premier natural history magazine. Come hear his passionate stories about our area’s natural wonders. Admission is free! Ygnacio Valley Library, 2661 Oak Grove Road, Walnut Creek. **For information: roejenn@aol.com**



# Edward William Nelson

## Naturalist ♦ Ornithologist

### PART I

Edward William Nelson, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, was "one of the best and keenest naturalists we have ever had." Nelson was born in a small town near Manchester, New Hampshire in 1855. The boy developed an interest in the outdoors while growing up near the Merrimack River. At the onset of the Civil War, his father served in the Union Army and the six-year-old boy and his brother were sent to live with their grandparents on a small farm in the Adirondacks of New York, while his mother volunteered as a nurse at a hospital in Baltimore.

Toward the end of the war Nelson's father was killed, and in 1868 his mother moved to Chicago where she established a small dressmaking shop. The boy, then 13, spent many hours with his friends at the shore of Lake Michigan, a few blocks from his home, collecting insects, small animals, and birds. One friend introduced him to the bird books of Thomas Nuttall and Alexander Wilson, and his interest in birds thrived.

Nelson noticed the varied forms and colors of beetles that had fallen into the lake and whose dead bodies were cast up by the waves, forming a line along the shore. He began to pick up one of each kind. An entomological collector, a Mr. Mead, of New York, happened to be working along the beach and stopped for a friendly chat. He gave the boy some insect pins and showed him how to use them. During the next few



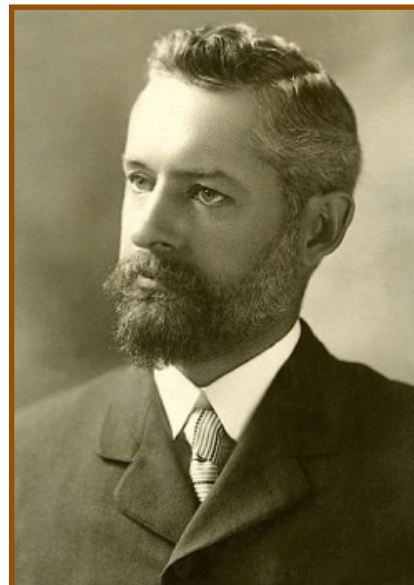
*Nelson's Sparrow, sketch Megan Sandri*

months hundreds of beetles and other insects were pinned in orderly array in his boxes. Mr. Mead identified the specimens, and the boy seemed destined to be an entomologist. But on October 9, 1871, the great Chicago Fire left the Nelson family homeless. With only a few belongings, mother and sons were forced to leave the house hurriedly. In the ensuing turmoil, young

Nelson's road to becoming an entomologist was cut short when his precious insect boxes, which he had tied together and carried by hand, were somehow lost. One of the birds the boy collected near Lake Michigan was a sharp-tailed sparrow. Joel Asaph Allen, then of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology and later founder and first president of the American Ornithologists' Union, heard of this and asked to examine it. Doctor Allen discovered that the specimen was a geographic form

previously unknown to science. Allen's friendly interest resulted in young Nelson's decision to follow a scientific career.

In 1872, Nelson enrolled in Cook County Normal School—established in 1867, the first teacher training institution in Illinois and now Northeastern Illinois University—and soon thereafter he was invited to join a fossil collecting trip to the Badlands of Wyoming. Will Wentworth, son of the school principal, was also a member of the party.



*Edward William Nelson in the early 1900s, American Society of Mammalogists photo*

From Fort Bridger in southwest Wyoming they continued west to the Salt Lake Valley, and then to Elko, Nevada and Nevada City, California. Nelson collected birds at each stop.

Later, Nelson and Wentworth traveled to Oakland for a visit with Will's uncle. Nelson had an opportunity to see the bird life on the marshes along the East Bay shore and at Lake Merritt. In March, 1870, California Governor Henry Haight had signed a bill making Lake Merritt the first wildlife refuge in North America—wildlife was abundant.

Nelson's interest in natural history continued to grow after his return to Chicago, and he became acquainted with noted ornithologists such as Robert Ridgway. His collections from his western trip formed the beginning of his school's museum. He continued his interest in natural history and taught for a while in Illinois, but found field explorations more exciting than classroom lectures, and in the winter of 1876, Nelson went to Washington, D.C., to meet Spencer Baird, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and to enlist his help in securing a position as a field naturalist. Edward William Nelson was 21 years old and anxious to begin his career as a field ornithologist.

In Part 2 of this biographical sketch, a look at Nelson's career, which extended from the icy north in Alaska to the sweltering wilds of Central America and from arid Death Valley to steamy Washington, D.C., will show why Edward W. Nelson has been honored with the names of 18 species and subspecies of birds, 55 species and subspecies of plants, ten species and subspecies of mammals, five species of fishes, four species of land shells, two species of reptiles, one amphibian, and one butterfly. But wait, there's more! Nelson Island and Nelson Lagoon are on the coast of Bering Sea, and Nelson Range, a short mountain range in southern California, have also been named for him. ~Ellis Myers



## State's 10-Year Plan for the Salton Sea is a Big Step Forward

Located about 130 miles east of San Diego, the Salton Sea is a study in contradictions. It is massive, yet practically unknown to most Californians. The landscape is barren and apocalyptic, but full of life. It is natural, but man-made. The environment puts birds at risk, but it is also vital for their survival.

The Salton Sea has been declared an Audubon Important Bird Area of Global Significance. More than 300 bird species rely on the deep water, shoreline, mudflats, and wetlands at the Salton Sea, as well as the river channels and agricultural drains leading into it. Tilapia live in the deeper waters, providing essential food for many species, including California Brown Pelican, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Caspian Tern.



White Pelicans at the Salton Sea, Robin L. photo

Perhaps the sea's greatest value for birds is its ability to support very large numbers of waterbirds during the winter months, including up to 90% of North America's Eared Grebes, 50% of Ruddy Ducks, and 30% of the American White Pelicans. The mudflats and shorelines are also essential for hundreds of thousands of shorebirds.

The Salton Sea has hosted two Christmas Bird Counts for decades, and the lake draws thousands to birding festivals and other events.

Beginning in 2018, thanks to a 2003 agreement between the State of California and Southern California water districts, the Salton Sea will get a lot less water from the Colorado River, eventually up to 40 percent less. The shrinking sea will also expose up to 64,000 acres of the lakebed and result in massive dust storms that could create the worst air pollution crisis in North America. Tens of thousands of acres of habitat will disappear.

Audubon California is fully participating in the state process, offering testimony before the State Water Resources Control Board and the many subcommittees created as part of the management planning process.

Last month, Audubon California, Defenders of Wildlife, Pacific Institute, and Sierra Club celebrated the release of the state of California's 10-year plan to address the ongoing crisis at the Salton Sea. The groups are committed to working with state officials as they build on the plan to address the fallout

from tens of thousands of acres of exposed playa that will result from water diversions beginning next year.

"While the plan briefly discusses outreach, the State and other stakeholders must work harder to provide community members with the information they need to understand what is happening at the Salton Sea and how they can contribute to the solution," said Frank Ruiz, Audubon California's Salton Sea Director. "Only with full engagement of the community will the crisis be elevated to the statewide attention it deserves."

The 10-year plan follows on the heels of a report by Audubon California, Point Blue Conservation Science, and Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc., that detailed the need to maintain 58,000 acres of habitat for birds at the Salton Sea – roughly what the birds are using at the site today. ~Garrison

**Frost, Audubon California**

## Young Birders Club Explores the Bay

A small contingent of the MDAS Young Birders Club conducted a field trip on Saturday, March 25 to that portion of Foster City shoreline known to birders as Shell Bar. This location was suggested by Michael Pang who was keen on finding alternate-plumage Red Knots on this visit.

The day was notable for its pleasant weather, sunshine, and a gentle breeze; and notable, as well, for the abundance of shorebirds. The tide was a little less than half-way out, so there was still some close-in exposed mud, absolutely carpeted with birds. Estimates ranged from 7-8000 Western Sandpipers; 1000 Dunlin; 400 Marbled Godwit; hundreds of dowitchers and Willets; 80, or more, Black-bellied Plovers, many in alternate plumage; 40-50 Long-billed Curlews; and at least 100 American Avocets, nearly all in breeding colors. Lamentably, we were unable to find a single Red Knot. The species count for the day came to 34. ~Tracy Farrington, YBC Liaison



American Avocets in breeding plumage, Erica Kawata photo

## Celebrating With Citizen Science

Join John Muir House NHS staff in celebrating International Migratory Bird Day by participating in a Bird Walk and Count on Mt. Wanda. MDAS is co-sponsoring this event on **Saturday, May 13 at 830 AM**. Tracy Farrington will lead for MDAS along with Park rangers. Meet at the Mt. Wanda parking lot at the southwest corner of Alhambra Avenue and Franklin Canyon Road, about 1/8 mile south of the visitor center at 4202 Alhambra Avenue, Martinez. The parking lot entrance is on Franklin Canyon Road where you'll also find the trail head, a trail map, and birders. **For information, contact Elizabeth at (925) 588-3524.** ~Elizabeth Leite, Citizen Science

For a plant list of the area: [www.nps.gov/jomu/learn/nature/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jomu/learn/nature/index.htm)

## Super Bloom Adventure: Carrizo Plain National Monument, April 2017



One of the sunniest places in California, the 250,000-acre Carrizo Plain NM, created in 2001, is a remote area in San Luis Obispo County situated between two mountain ranges. Winter rains created a profusion of wildflowers. ~Maren Smith



Upper L: map; Far L: Munz's Tidytip; L: Horned Lark; Center: Pronghorn Antelope surrounded by Goldfield blooms; Lower R: spring wildflower explosion; Upper R: Loggerhead Shrike fledglings await a meal from mom, Maren Smith photos. **For information:** [www.blm.gov/nlcs\\_web/sites/calst/en/prog/nlcs/](http://www.blm.gov/nlcs_web/sites/calst/en/prog/nlcs/)



## Legislative Action Committee Update

✓ Do you love science? Show your love on Earth Day, Saturday, April 22, at the San Francisco March for Science!

The march celebrates public discovery, as crucial to the freedom, success, health, and group, marching in support of the following and Diversity. A rally with invited speakers Plaza at Steuart and Market Streets in San 1230 PM, we will march down Market Fair to celebrate science. Our Mt. Diablo banner with our name on it and marching show your support for science and birds!

Please register ahead of time with with an estimated headcount for the event. individual) and type in "Audubon". Then you

Please contact Rosalie Howarth if you are and share any ideas for signs, too! ~Rosalie Howarth

**For information:** [marchforsciencesf.com](http://marchforsciencesf.com) and to register: [www.eventbrite.com/e/march-for-science-san-francisco-tickets-32343546418](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/march-for-science-san-francisco-tickets-32343546418)



understanding, and distribution of scientific knowledge safety of life on this planet. We are a nonpartisan goals: Communication, Funding, Policy, Literacy, will start the event at 11 AM in Justin Herman Francisco. After the rally, at approximately Street to Civic Center Plaza, ending with a Audubon contingent will be carrying a with binoculars around our necks. Join us and

[eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com) (free) to provide organizers Click on the option "Group" (rather than can join our Audubon group.

planning on joining us at [barhowarth@msn.com](mailto:barhowarth@msn.com)

✓ The Legislative Action Committee remains busy writing comment letters about Delta water plans, federal legislation, while also tracking state and federal bills. We will be participating in the March for Science and are setting up meetings with our representatives. **Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 18, 12-130 PM at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill.** If you'd like to get involved, or learn more about MDAS conservation priorities, please attend this meeting.

✓ In addition, MDAS will be participating in the **June 8 Audubon California Advocacy Day in Sacramento again.** A very full and fun day is planned beginning with a welcome at 8 AM by Audubon California Executive Director, Brigid McCormack. This year, the focus will be on funding for state wildlife protection, parks and open space, water, and ensuring that California remains at the forefront in fighting and adapting to climate change. Attendees will also have a chance to speak with their representatives about their own priorities from their districts. California's birds need you. Please join us! ~Ariana Rickard

**For information:** [rickard@post.harvard.edu](mailto:rickard@post.harvard.edu)



## Spring is in the Air

If you haven't yet noticed, birds are showing new colors and new birds are arriving early. Goldfinches are in full mating yellow and have become more territorial. Males will often squabble at feeders and fight over females.

Goldfinches nest in shrubs or trees preferring open branches where females build small cupped nests. In three weeks, fledglings make their first uncoordinated attempts at feeding, or at least crying for a bite at feeders. Now is



a great time to clean and restock your finch feeders with fresh nyger (thistle). Last fall's supply has dried up and should be discarded. Goldfinches will also be seen feeding on sunflower seed, amongst colorful House Finches.

We recently received reports of Bullocks and Hooded Orioles feeding at hummingbird feeders in the area. It's time to put out oriole feeders, which are more effective and use diluted nectar. Orioles are also fans of grape jelly and fresh fruit, like apples and oranges.



Orioles remain throughout the summer and may nest in your yard preferring larger, taller trees like oaks, cottonwood, and pines.

Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds have begun to show up early on their migration north, easily discerned from our Anna's by their bright orange coloring. A few remain throughout the summer, but most make the one-way journey 3000 miles from Mexico and Central America to Alaska, returning south in August and September. When feeding at local hummingbird feeders they are often aggressive and hungry! If they nest in your yard, they will build tiny, cylindrical nests high in pine or close-branched trees, laying two eggs in the one-inch opening. Keep your feeders clean with fresh nectar every 3-4 days. Enjoy! ~Mike Eliot, WBU

## Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS)

*Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.*

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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

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A very relaxed California Scrub-Jay was photographed "bird sunning" on the Tomales Bay field trip (see trip report page 4), Beth Branthaver photo. **For information on "bird sunning": [www.thespruce.com/bird-sunning-386442](http://www.thespruce.com/bird-sunning-386442)**



*"Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."  
~Rachel Carson, biologist, ecologist, and author of Silent Spring*

In April, for Birding Information, we were treated to a display of the diverse bird life found on Jerry Britten's (above L) 5-acre parcel on Morgan Territory Road in Clayton through his stunning photographs and personal anecdotes. Then, JD Bergeron (above) explained the International Bird Rescue's (IBR) emergency response, education, research, and rehabilitation efforts to aid oiled, sick, injured or orphaned water birds, over 4000 each year. Maren Smith photos **For more information: [bird-rescue.org](http://bird-rescue.org)**

