



the Quail

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

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July/August 2017

A Caribbean Adventure—Birding Puerto Rico ♦ Beth Branthaver

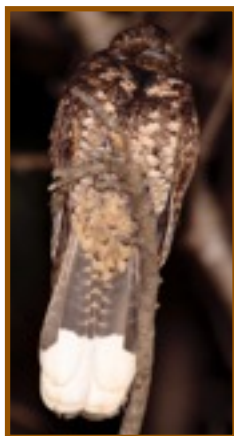
After my sister and her family moved from Davis, California to Puerto Rico, I decided to plan a visit to the island. Not knowing much about it, I did not initially think of combining the visit with a birding trip until I mentioned my plans to Eugenia and Gary Larson. They had been there numerous times and highly recommended the birding. After some investigation, I decided to join a Field Guides tour in March of this year that included 14 participants and two guides.



Technically speaking, Puerto Rico is an archipelago in the Caribbean that includes the main island of Puerto Rico and a number of other

small islands. It is a commonwealth of the United States with a population of approximately 3.4 million people.

The 5-day Field Guides tour circumnavigated the main island in a counter-clockwise direction starting and ending in the capital, San Juan. Puerto Rico has a variety of habitats including montane rain forests, dry coastal forest and scrub, mangrove forests and wetlands, pastures and ponds, inland lagoons, and various sandy and rocky ocean shorelines. I saw it all!



During the trip we were able to find all 17 Puerto Rican endemic species including the Puerto Rican (PR) Lizard Cuckoo, PR Screech-Owl, PR Nightjar, Green Mango and PR Emerald (hummingbirds), PR Tody, PR Woodpecker, PR Parrot, PR Flycatcher, PR Vireo, Elfin-Woods Warbler, Adelaide's Warbler, PR Bullfinch, PR Tanager, PR Spindalis, Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, and PR Oriole.

At one point, the Puerto Rican Parrots were down to just nine individuals. Through conservation and

habitat protection, the parrots now number in the 20s. Another special find was the Puerto Rican subspecies of the Sharp-shinned Hawk. It is estimated that there are only 150 of these birds remaining. Puerto Rico also hosts American Kestrels who have adapted to island life by specializing in eating lizards.



In addition to the endemic species, Puerto Rico hosts many of the Eastern Warblers, Caribbean residents, and some introduced species.



Another common resident that we saw frequently was the Green Iguana.

Our group spent long, productive days in the field. We tallied 123 total species by the end of the trip. To see the full trip report: fieldguides.com/triplists/ptr17.html.

For Field Guides tour details, itineraries, and more information: fieldguides.com

Beth's photos: Top L: Puerto Rican Spindalis; Middle L: Puerto Rican Woodpecker; Bottom L: Puerto Rican Nightjar; Top R: Puerto Rican Tody; and Bottom R: Puerto Rican Parrot

Meeting Schedule

There will be no meeting in July or August. The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 7** in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

September Program: Bird Photography—Birding Inspirations Through My Lens ♦ Jeffrey Rich

Meet our MDAS President, Paul Schorr. Paul and his wife Nancy, have lived in Antioch since 1971. They have two grown children and five grandchildren. After 36 years as an educator in the public school system, Paul retired in 2002. For twenty-two years during his working career he taught high school biology, ecology, and other science classes, and the last fourteen years were spent as an elementary school administrator. During those teaching years, he worked as a seasonal ranger-naturalist at Bryce Canyon and Yellowstone National Parks for ten years. His graduate studies were in fire ecology, and he used that research during his Park service programs to help educate the public about the valuable role of natural fires in ecosystems—not an easy task in the 1970s.

Paul's interest in birding began in 1970, during his first season at Bryce Canyon when he was on a staff that included several birders. As with many other birders, his interest really piqued after he retired and had more time to pursue his interest and involvement. Paul and Nancy have been

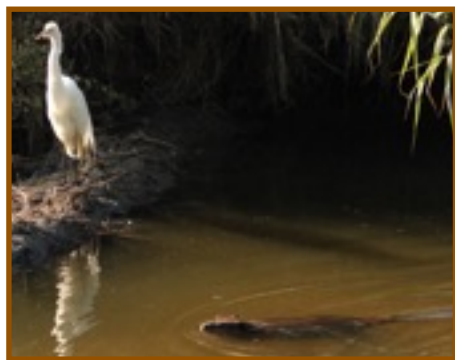
members of the National Audubon Society since 1976 and members of MDAS since the late 1990s. After retirement, Paul became more involved and was appointed to the Education Outreach Committee. While serving on this committee, his leadership led to the adoption of the "No Child Left Inside" Program which addresses the growing issue of "Nature Deficit Disorder" in children. By providing children with outdoor educational activities that focus on nature study and birding, the ultimate goal is to help them understand and appreciate their natural surroundings. Paul served as Vice President of MDAS for five years before being elected President in May.

For Nancy and Paul, birding now occupies most of their leisure time and travel. In addition to birding, Paul's other hobbies include photography, nature study, and fly fishing. Paul is also active in the Kiwanis Club of the Delta, Antioch, where he serves as a board member and previously served a two-term presidency. ~Paul Schorr

Good News For Beavers and Birds

No one invited the beavers to move into Martinez—but, they came anyway. The dam they built across Alhambra Creek made city officials worry about flooding and the animals were slated to be trapped until public outcry forced the city to install a flow device that would control water height instead.

Ten years later, the beaver-maintained pond has attracted new species of birds, fish, and wildlife including egrets, Belted Kingfisher, Hooded Merganser, and Green Heron.



A Great Egret and a beaver share the creek in Martinez, Cheryl Reynolds photo

The "engineers" are even celebrated every summer with their own "Beaver Festival," one of the largest wildlife events in Northern California.

Beavers and their dam-building create wetlands for waterfowl; augment invertebrate, frog, and fish populations;

and increase nesting habitat for migratory birds and songbirds. They recharge the aquifer, remove nitrogen, and provide drowned trees for obligate nesters. Tree-chewing by beavers actually promotes new growth that makes dense, bushy habitat for a variety of nesting birds. In addition, beaver ponds often supply the only reliable water source during the drought conditions California sees all too often.

The tenth annual festival will be held August 5 (see details on page 7) and will feature a myriad of wildlife and bird exhibits, entertainment, live music, and educational activities for children. The first 150 kids can "earn" a specially designed set of temporary nature tattoos by learning about how beavers help other species. Volunteers will help children use these to make nature journals they can take home to record the wildlife discoveries of their very own.

Advocacy requires strong, and sometimes, unexpected allies. In the past, Audubon has partnered with landowners, non-profits, and industry to create and protect essential resources for birds. The benefits of beaver wetlands to bird habitat and biodiversity have been too long overlooked. It's time to re-visit this eco-hero, the beaver, that Enos Mills, naturalist, and the force behind the creation of Rocky Mountain NP, once called "the original conservationist." ~Heidi Perryman, Ph.D., Beaver Festival Coordinator

Welcome New and Rejoining Members

Jane Russell	Pleasant Hill
Gloria Lin	Moraga
Doris Daniels	Oakley
Paul La Follette	Brentwood

MDAS on the Web

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

Q

Which bird was the first bird to be featured on a 1957 United Kingdom postage stamp?

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

LAWRSBOLNAW

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 September Quail will be August 7.**

May was the beginning of breeding season for many of our local birds. A few new arrivals came in from the south and some late-leaving birds remained.

A **Wood Duck** with six babies was at Heather Farm pond 5/9. FS

A late **Canvasback** was at Meeker Slough 5/11, AL, and at Vincent Park on the Richmond Shoreline 5/26. BD

BD also saw a **Red-breasted Merganser** at Vincent Park 5/26.

MM had **California Quail** in his Martinez yard for the first time in 30 years.

DO saw **Band-tailed Pigeons** at Sibley Volcanic Park 5/5.

A late **Rufous Hummingbird** was at Inspiration Point in Tilden Park 5/20. JSi

A **Surfbird** was seen 5/24 on Brooks Island. DL

A late **Long-billed Dowitcher** was at Waterbird Regional Preserve 5/19. AL

JL saw a late **Greater Yellowlegs** at Valle Vista Staging Area in Canyon 5/8, and AL saw one 5/19 at the Pt. Edith area.

Many **Least Terns** were seen near Pt. Isabel, Meeker Slough, and at the Richmond Marina from 5/1 to 5/19. ES, TB, JS, JK, AL

A **Caspian Tern** was at Heather Farm pond 5/3. RH

BM saw a **Prairie Falcon** active nest at Black Diamond Mines 5/24.

Western Wood-Peepees were seen at Upper San Leandro Reservoir 5/4 by JS, and 5/18 at Black Diamond Mines by P&NS.

A **Rock Wren** was near Wildcat Peak trail in Tilden 5/20. BF

Two **Canyon Wrens** were singing along Chaparral Root Trail in Tilden Park 5/24. BM

A **House Wren** was at Havey Canyon Trail near Wildcat Trail in Tilden 5/3. JD, LH

A **Swainson's Thrush** was at Havey Canyon 5/3, JD, LH, and at Black Diamond Mines 5/18. P&NS

Lawrence's Goldfinches were near Chaparral Root Trail in Tilden 5/24. BM

the Quail

MK saw a **Nashville Warbler** 5/24 along Summit Road on Mt. Diablo.

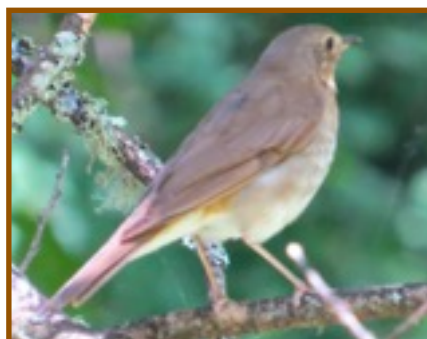
A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was on Seaview Trail in Tilden 5/18, JC, and Wildcat Peak Trail in Tilden on 5/20. BF

JB saw **Grasshopper Sparrows** in the grasses of Waterbird Preserve 5/6, and BF saw some on Wildcat Peak Trail in Tilden 5/20.

Lazuli Buntings arrived in large numbers from throughout the local area. They were seen in Tilden Park, Sibley Park, at Inspiration Point in Tilden, and at Briones Regional Park. JD, LH, DO, DH, AK, BF, MS

AL saw a **Red-winged Blackbird of the non-San Francisco subspecies** at Waterbird Preserve 5/21.

A **Hooded Oriole** pair was nesting in the Richmond Annex area 5/19. MR



Swainson's Thrush seen on the Earthquake Trail at Point Reyes during the June 3 Outer Point Reyes field trip (see the trip report on page 4), Isaac Aronow photo



JB John Blakelock, TB Tony Brake, JC Jim Chiropoulos, JD Judith Dunham, BD Bob Dunn, BF Brian Fitch, DH Derek Heins, RH Rosalie Howarth, LH Lydia Huang, AK Alan Kaplan, JK John Kenny, MK Marilyn Kinch, JL Johan Langeweis, AL Albert Linkowski, DL David Lumpkin, MM Michael Marchiano, BM Bruce Mast, DO Darlene Oster, MR Matt Ricketts, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, JSi Judi Sierra, JS John Sterling, MS Maury Stern, ES Emilie Strauss

—3—

In Memoriam

We are deeply saddened to report the passing of two long-time members of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. They both will be dearly missed.

Rich Richmond

Jean Richmond's husband of 68 years, Rich, passed away on May 14 at the age of 95. Rich often accompanied Jean on MDAS field trips and to monthly meetings, and though he considered Jean the birder in the family, he had well over 600 birds on his life list. To Jean, he was also an ardent supporter while she was writing her book, *Birding Northern California*.

Messages of sympathy may be sent to:

Jean Richmond
125 Via Serena
Alamo, CA 94507-1841

Ellis Myers

Ellis Myers was 93 years old when he passed away on May 30. He and Mimi had been married for nearly 70 years and had traveled extensively throughout their years together. Ellis was an excellent photographer and he loved to share his images of National Parks in weekly email messages that he called "National Park of the Week." From 2004, until his retirement in 2015, Ellis was the editor of the MDAS newsletter, the *Quail*, and up until his passing, Ellis continued to be a contributor to the newsletter with his monthly biographies of famous ornithologists and naturalists, including the article on page 8. Ellis had also prepared several more articles in advance, so we will be able to enjoy his fine research and writing for several more months.

Messages of sympathy may be sent to:

Mimi Myers
215 Calle La Mesa
Moraga, CA 94556-1603

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

July/August 2017

Trip Reports

Mt. Diablo State Park, May 3: It was hot, mostly quiet, and not much was stirring except nine birders, but we did find a total of 42 species. Driving up South Gate Road, we stopped short of the entrance in several places. The first of them produced copulating Bell's Sparrows. The Rock City area had Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Another special bird was the California Thrasher found near the entrance to Pioneer, just above Blue Oak. After lunch at Juniper Campground, we visited a grove of Red Columbines under the trees at Muir picnic area. The fire of 2013 burned all around this location, but the flowers and trees were saved. ~**Hugh Harvey**



Red Columbine, Rosita Harvey photo

John Muir National Historical Site/Mt. Wanda "Global Big Day," May 13: In conjunction with the annual May "International Migratory Bird Day," the John Muir House National Historic Site staff and MDAS partnered to sponsor a "Global Big Day" event. Ranger Denise Amador, John Muir House docents, MDAS, and several Golden Gate and Redwood Region Audubon participants, tallied 38 species during their walk on Mt. Wanda, named for one of John Muir's daughters. Due to the interest and enthusiasm of the birders, many stayed over four hours to bird. The Nature Trail was a rich source of song. At one spot, everyone just stood and listened, identified birds, then, listened some more. Some of the highlights included Orange-crowned, Townsend's, and Wilson's Warblers, both Warbling and Hutton's Vireo, Lazuli Bunting, Western

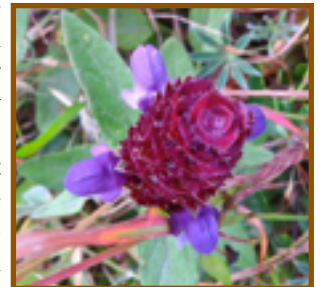


"Global Big Day" participants on the Mt. Wanda hike, Rosalie Howarth photo

Kingbird, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. ~**Rosalie Howarth and Elizabeth Leite**

West Briones Regional Park, May 18: Fifteen members spent a pleasant morning at the Bear Valley side of Briones RP. We walked to Homestead Valley and back, viewing 35 species of birds. Many Lazuli Buntings were in Homestead Valley. The usual place near the parking lot for Lazuli Buntings was impacted by an aggressive removal of the bushes along the road where the buntings usually hang out. We had an especially good look at a Western Woodpeewee at Homestead Valley, as well as at least two Brown Creepers, Black-headed Grosbeak, and multiple Acorn Woodpeckers. ~**Maury Stern**

Outer Point Reyes, June 3: Our group observed the perfect nature moment, a male and a female Peregrine Falcon gliding right next to each other on the same updraft just a few feet up in the sky, one of 68 species we saw or heard. It stood out as a unique experience because the two birds joined forces to harass a Red-tailed Hawk who dared to attempt to hunt within their territory. Experiencing bird behavior (rather than just counting birds) is at the center of our love for birdwatching.



Prunella vulgaris, or Common selfheal (above) and Northern Elephant Seals at play (L), Isaac Aronow photos

After our falcon encounter, we enjoyed lunch accompanied by several overwintering Common and Pacific Loons (some in breeding plumage) flying across Drakes Bay along with Pigeon Guillemots nesting on structures showing their bright orange-red feet right before landing, visible without binoculars from over 100 yards away. For our non-avian encounters, we observed wildflowers and a noisy Northern Elephant Seal rookery on the beach near the Fish Docks including some "weaners" and some 300-600 pound "super-weaners." On the windy Estero Trail, we set out to search for a rarity vagrant, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, as well as Grasshopper Sparrows. Despite the windy conditions we came across the sweet and subtle song of three singing Grasshopper Sparrows. We got good scope views of this small, but magnificent, little bird perched atop a coyote bush. We missed the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, but were encouraged by the beautiful and melodious songs of Black-headed Grosbeaks and Swainson's Thrushes. Circling back to the Visitors Center, where our adventure started, on the Earthquake Trail, we were serenaded by two Warbling Vireos, at least four Wilson's Warblers, along with the begging calls of Violet-green Swallows fledglings being fed by adults in mid-air just above us, a wonderful way to end a memorable birding adventure at Outer Point Reyes. ~**Juan-Carlos Solis**



Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

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

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

August 2017

5 Saturday San Mateo Coast
19 Saturday Bodega Bay

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, contact the leader: eklarson@comcast.net. The Larsons will camp in Section D of the Manzanita Lake Campground, tents-only and non-reservable. If you prefer not to camp, there are several small



Mt. Lassen from Manzanita Lake,
Gary Larson photo

motels and B & Bs outside the Park. 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.

2 Thursday, July 27

Frank's Dump at High Tide

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

For a shorebird spectacle, we will visit this site late in the day with the sun to our backs and birds congregating to avoid the high tide. Leave the Sycamore Valley Park and Ride carpool location at 3 PM. **OR**, meet at the Winton Avenue entrance for Hayward Regional shoreline. From I-880, exit Winton Avenue, drive west 4.5 miles. Park near the trail head just before the parking lot gate. We will walk at least a mile to our viewing site. Many of the returning shorebirds will still have much of their breeding plumage. Some of these birds will stay the winter while some will continue on in a southerly migration.

The summer can be very hot at this time of day, so be sure to bring your sunscreen, plenty of liquids and a snack.

1 Saturday, August 19

Bodega Bay

Leader: Fred Safier (925) 937-2906

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 730 AM. **OR**, meet at the Tides Restaurant on water side of Highway 1 in Bodega at 915 AM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge. Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 to Lakeville Road, turn right. In Petaluma turn left on E Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road and SR 1 to Bodega Bay. Walk through or around The Tides to find the group viewing the harbor birds from the outdoor seating. Possibilities at Bodega Bay are flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, as well as terns, gulls, cormorants, near-shore pelagics and much more. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen.

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

Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride carpool location: Exit I-680S at Sycamore Valley Road (East) in Danville, or from I-680N, exit at Sycamore Valley Road and turn right. Park and Ride lot is on the left, one block 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

2 Saturday, August 5

San Mateo Coast

Leader: Beth Branthaver (925) 944-1856

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

Save the Date!

A Field Trip planning meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 19 at 7 PM. Anyone interested in shaping the 2017-2018 calendar is invited to attend. Former and future leaders are welcome, as well as any MDAS member with field trip ideas or suggestions.

The meeting will be held at Jean Richmond's home: 125 Via Serena in Alamo. Enter through the driveway gate. Light refreshments will be served. **Call Hugh Harvey for details: (925) 935-2979**

NCLI Turns Ten

This year marked the 10th anniversary of the MDAS-sponsored “No Child Left Inside” (NCLI) Program. During that time, over one thousand students have benefitted from this educational outreach program. This year’s program concluded on May 23 and 25 by taking the fifth grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch to nearby Contra Loma Regional Park and Reservoir.

Their teachers and parent volunteers were joined by sixteen MDAS volunteers to enjoy two mornings of good, introductory birding. The MDAS volunteers were Claudia Hein, Herb Long, Carol Pacht, Leary Wong, Barbara Minneman, Jackie Bobrosky, Bruce Kronmiller, Dave Shinn, Linda Shinn, Nancy Salsig, David Hutton, Maury Stern, Hugh Harvey, Rosita Harvey, Nancy Schorr, and Paul Schorr.

The groups enjoyed pleasant spring weather on both days. On each day, the students were divided into six groups and they rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, each station being monitored by MDAS volunteers with spotting scopes. Each of the students used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this activity and other education outreach programs.

Barbara enhanced her station with a life-sized replica that represented the wingspans of many of the birds to be seen, with the wingspan of the Golden Eagle as the maximum length. Then,



Barbara Minneman and Jackie Bobrosky measure a student's “wing span”

she and Jackie had the students measure their arm lengths according to the model. Most of their arm lengths approximated the wingspan of a Turkey Vulture, which they saw.

Following this activity, the groups walked from the reservoir to an open area with views of the oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savannah. There, they also learned about the Bluebird Recovery Project as they watched Western Bluebirds utilizing nest boxes along a nearby fence line.

After lunch, as on MDAS field trips, the groups tallied the number of species seen and/or heard—the total number of species for both days was 42. Highlights included the following: Barn Owl; a Red-shouldered Hawk with two chicks at the nest; Osprey; Mallard and Canada Goose families; Red-winged Blackbirds; Song Sparrow; Bullock’s Orioles; Common Yellowthroat; Great Blue Heron; and Green Heron.

On the second day, a young Northern Pacific Rattlesnake



Herb Long and Carol Pacht enjoy birding with the students

welcomed the volunteers when they were setting up for the day’s activities on Loma Island, a very cool sighting. However, a park staff member conveniently relocated the snake before the students arrived.

The field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities. On March 17, Jenny Papka from Native Bird Connections initiated this year’s program by doing a live-bird presentation to discuss bird anatomy and behavior with the students. Jenny’s presentation was sponsored and funded by MDAS. On April 19, Nancy and Paul collaborated to do a classroom presentation to introduce and instruct the students on the proper use of loaner binoculars which had been purchased by MDAS. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for Contra Loma



Claudia Hein and students observe a Tree Swallow in a nest cavity, Paul Schorr photo

Regional Park. Concluding this lesson, the students were introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so that they could learn and appreciate bird vocalizations, as well as study the illustrations and information about the target birds to be seen or heard during the field trips. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms before the field trips.

Through the “No Child Left Inside” Program, MDAS has made a strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of dedication to environmental education, and can be proud of this highly successful program which has served as a model for other education outreach programs. The success of the NCLI Program would not be possible without the continuing support and involvement of the MDAS volunteers. Their participation is greatly appreciated.

MDAS is grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District and the Contra Loma RP staff for their continuing support of the NCLI program

All of the volunteers were rewarded with the excitement and enthusiasm of the students. At the conclusion of the days’ programs, each student received a copy of the book entitled *Backyard Birds of California*, purchased for them by MDAS. Throughout the activities, the students appeared to retain much of what they had learned.

Hopefully, some of them will even become birders some day, and when asked where it all began, they just might say, “Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS.”
~Paul Schorr article and photos



Barn Swallow ♦ *Hirundo rustica*

Everyone is familiar with the beautiful Barn Swallow swooping gracefully in flight, a gregarious bird, although less so when breeding. The birds used to use caves and cliffs for nesting, but, have adopted man-made structures and now use them almost exclusively for nesting sites.

It is the most abundant and widespread swallow species in the world, found on every continent except Antarctica. Scientists discovered a new population of Barn Swallow in the 1980s that nest in Argentina and migrate in the opposite direction of most swallows and in a different season, traveling north for the winter and south to breed. This discovery means that the Barn Swallow species nests on five continents.

In the United States, Barn Swallows arrive from South America as early as March and pair up shortly thereafter. Their journey can be over 12,000 miles in duration, some going as far south as Argentina and back every year.

Females prefer to mate with males that have the longest and most symmetrical tail and with a dark red chest color. Shortly after arriving on the breeding ground, the male will begin singing a continuous musical twitter both from perches and in flight. He may chase a female as part of courtship. When they are paired up, they begin building the nest out of mud and straw, lined with feathers. It is plastered to the wall of a building or other structure. When building the nest, both male and female may make up to 1000 trips collecting mud for the mud nest. The female will lay 4-7 brown-spotted white eggs. Both parents incubate the eggs for 13-17 days, and feed the young while they are in the nest, about 3 weeks. After they fledge, the parents continue to feed them for a few weeks. Barn Swallows may have two clutches a year.

In Maplewood, Minnesota, Barn Swallows started nesting inside the local Home Depot store in 2000. They figured out that by flying in tight circles in front of the motion detector above the double doors at the entrance, the doors would open. Three years later, at least a dozen nests were found inside various entrances of the store.



Barn Swallows like open country and can range from sea level to 10,000 feet in elevation. Breeding habitat must include open areas for foraging, structures or cliffs to build nests on, and a source of mud to provide nesting material. Their diet consists mainly of insects, mostly flies, and they feed almost exclusively in flight. Partners in Flight estimates a population of 120 million globally, with 24% spending some part of the year in the United States.

The killing of Barn Swallows for their feathers was one of the major concerns that led to the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Naturalist George Bird Grinnell wrote an editorial in 1886 for the magazine *Forest and Stream* decrying the waste of bird life caused by the millinery trade's impact on Barn Swallows and other birds, which led to the founding of the Audubon Society.

~Jean Halford article and photos

Community Events

► 10th Annual Beaver Festival, Martinez, Saturday, August 5, 11 AM-4 PM

For a dam good time, bring the family to celebrate this keystone species, and to learn about citizen efforts to ensure that these



Martinez citizens have had a place to build their home. Enjoy food, music, kids activities, and environmental exhibits including the *MDAS table. **For information:** www.martinezbeaver.org *To volunteer for a shift at the MDAS table, please contact **Brian Murphy:** b-murphy21@hotmail.com, or **Maren Smith** at: marensmithbkk@yahoo.com.

► MDIA Summer Night Hikes with Denise Wight

This summer, beat the heat and join Denise Wight on a night hike with the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA). She will be leading night hikes on June 23, July 21, or August 11 at Mitchell Canyon (\$6 parking fee), Mount Diablo SP to listen for, and possibly see, Common Poorwills. The hikes are free, but reservations are required! **To reserve a spot and for more information:** MDIA website: mdia.org (events menu)

► Walk and Talk with Assemblywoman Baker, WC Homestead Park, Saturday, June 24, 9-1030 AM

You're invited to join the conversation! In partnership with Save Mount Diablo, enjoy a leisurely walk through nature with Assemblywoman Catharine Baker and learn what the legislature is doing for the environment. Meet at Howe Homestead Park located at 2950 Walnut Boulevard, Walnut Creek. **Please RSVP to attend:** asmrc.org/AF/WalkRSVP or call (925) 328-1515

Florence Merriam

Ornithologist ♦ Author

Part I

Of the many bird field guides available today, every birder likely has a favorite. It may be the classic Peterson's *Field Guide to Birds of North America*, (1934), Kenn Kaufman's or the *National Geographic* book of the same name, one of several guides by David Sibley, perhaps Chandler Robbins's classic *Birds of North America* (the "Golden" guide, 1966), or the ageless *Birds of the Pacific States* by Ralph Hoffmann (1927). The first field guide to be published in the United States was not Peterson, Robbins or Hoffmann, but Florence Merriam's *Birds Through an Opera Glass* published



by Houghton Mifflin in 1889. (Google Image photo L)

Florence Augusta Merriam was born in 1863 in upstate New York in a small village near the Adirondack Mountains.

Her father, Clinton Levi Merriam, was a distinguished businessman who served as a member of Congress from 1871 to 1875. Her brother, Clinton Hart Merriam (known as C. Hart Merriam to avoid conflict with the family patriarch), who was nine years older than Florence, would later lead the Death Valley Expedition of 1891 as Chief of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Division of Ornithology and Mammalogy, as noted in last month's article about Edward Nelson.

Both children had the opportunity to explore their rural surroundings and study the wildlife and natural history of the Black River Valley and the Adirondack Mountains. They were encouraged by their parents. Their father, Clinton Merriam, had been so interested in natural history that he had traveled to California to meet John

the Quail

Muir and discuss Yosemite Valley and its glacial origins. Both Florence and her brother found the birds of their neighborhood of particular interest to them.

Florence Merriam entered Smith College with the class of 1886. This was a time when all women wore hats and the vast majority of those hats were decorated with the plumage of birds—feathers of Snowy Egrets, White Ibises, and Great Blue Herons, even whole stuffed Brazilian Blackbirds. Devoted to the study and protection of birds, Miss Merriam started the Smith College Audubon Society while at the college. She spent many days afield, leading groups of students and absorbing at first hand the bird lore about which she would later write. By the time she was twenty-two, she had become the first female associate member of the American Ornithologists Union. Her brother was one of the Founding Members. At a time before the Audubon Christmas Count, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would compete with their guns to bring in the biggest pile of feathered prey. Miss Merriam, though, was a zealous advocate for the use of binoculars, not shotguns, to observe birds.

It was also while she was at Smith College that Florence Merriam began her writing and publishing career. Her well-written articles appeared in *Audubon Magazine*. Her simple purpose was to help "not only young observers but also laymen to know the common birds they see about them." In 1889 these articles formed the nucleus of her first book, *Birds Through an Opera Glass*. The illustrations for this book were from the book *History of North American Birds* by Spencer Baird, Thomas Brewer, and Robert Ridgway, through the courtesy of Ridgway.

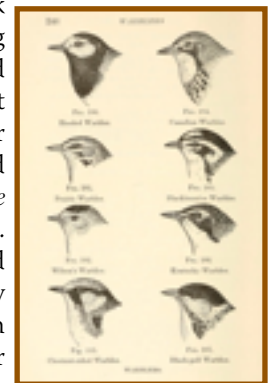
Having left Smith College without a degree, in order to assist with her father's affairs, Miss Merriam



unfortunately contracted tuberculosis, and found it advisable to seek a more favorable climate in the west. In 1894 she attended six months of lectures at Stanford University, and then in the spring—the bird-nesting season—she traveled to Twin Oaks, near San Marcos in San Diego County, observing the birds and taking notes that she used in writing her book, *A-Birding on a Bronco*. She followed that with a stay in the San Francisco Mountain country in Arizona for a "final dose of climate." Florence Merriam then went to Washington, D. C., where her brother was living. She worked with the Women's National Science Club and the Audubon Society, giving bird talks and advocating for women to follow her interest in the natural world, especially birds.

In 1898 came *Birds of Village and Field*, a book

for beginning birders and one of the first popular American bird guides (Google Image photo R). It organized the species by color with simple keys for identifications



and more than 200 drawings by Ernest Thompson Seton, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and John L. Ridgway.

Editor's Note: Part II in this series, by the late Ellis Myers, will follow in the September Quail

2017 Audubon California Advocacy Day at the Capitol

Eight members of Mt. Diablo Audubon joined nearly 70 other California and National Audubon members and staff to take part in the Advocacy Day in Sacramento, Thursday, June 8. They split into two groups to meet with legislators or their representatives to discuss legislative priorities and concerns. Prior to the meetings, participants were briefed on Audubon's four areas of focus and given talking points: Protecting California's Natural Resources ("Green Shield"), Wildlife Funding (Parks and Water Bonds), Funding and Support for the Salton Sea, and Climate Change. Experiencing the political process in person was empowering. ~Maren Smith



Photos below L Top L: Group 1 included Maren Smith, Rosemary Nishikawa, Carol Pacht, and Rosalie Howarth. They met with Senator Glazer (L middle photo) along with Garrison Frost, MDAS and California Audubon, and Bill Hoppes from Ohlone Audubon. They also met with Assemblywoman Catharine Baker (L bottom photo).

Photos below R Top R: Group 2 included Heather Rosmarin, Ariana Rickard, Mike Mecham, and three members of Napa-Solano Audubon. They met with representatives from Senator Bill Dodd's office (R middle photo) and with Assemblyman Tim Grayson's office (R bottom photo). Governor Jerry Brown (top R) kept watch over us the entire day. Maren Smith and Ariana Rickard photos



Education Committee News

The newly formed Education Committee has met to brainstorm ideas that promote the goals of our chapter. The MDAS Education Committee arranges classes for chapter members and the public, serves as a resource for information on local classes through other organizations, and provides links to educational materials and programs available online.

Beth Branthaver, Chairperson, created a member survey, and, then, the committee got busy putting member ideas into action. You asked for classes. We heard you. We are pleased to announce our first "Birding By Ear Workshop" with Denise Wight (see information box below). Due to its popularity, the class, launched at our June monthly meeting, filled in less than 24 hours. So, a second class has been scheduled and we will add more classes as long as there is interest.

► **The September class, announced at the June 1 MDAS Potluck Dinner meeting is FULL. A 2nd class has been scheduled in October. There is also the possibility of a 4-class/2-field trip class starting in late October IF there is interest—the perfect refresher course before the annual Christmas Bird Count (\$60/\$65). If you are interested in either class, please contact Maren Smith ASAP at: marensmithbkk@yahoo.com.**

In addition, we are in the process of contacting teachers for other classes, will be offering a sketching class, and a how-to-create-a-California-natives-bird-friendly-garden class next spring. Other area educational classes for adults will be listed on the MDAS website. Please check out the new Education Committee page at: diabloaudubon.org/education.php.

The committee is investigating partnerships with local conservation groups to support hands-on birding opportunities for youth as well as curriculum resources for teachers for classroom use. ~Maren Smith

If you would like to get involved with the Education Committee or have suggestions, please contact Beth Branthaver at: bbranthaver@sbcglobal.net.

"Just For Ducks" Turns Ten

The "Just For Ducks" urban creek program has been helping Wood Ducks for ten years. **For more information and photos check out: www.diabloaudubon.org/connecting.php.** Following, is the Wood Duck Update as of 5-29-17: At Civic Park in downtown Walnut Creek, one hen is still on eggs while another box across the creek already hatched 12 ducklings. That mother is a second-generation duck, having hatched from the box across from it last year! Fresh bedding has been installed in case she wants to do a 2nd nesting. On San Ramon Creek, a hen is on eggs while a nearby box hatched 13 ducklings. That box also has fresh bedding material for a 2nd nesting, and is a second-generation duck, too—the hen was born last year in that box and is now a mom sitting on eggs in her own nest box. That is 25 ducklings in the creeks so far with more being incubated. ~Brian Murphy

Meet our Vice President, Kent Fickett

Kent recently retired after more than 40 years as an Energy and Environment Professional. He lives in Orinda with wife Beckee Beemer (also an Energy and Environment Professional). He is working on turning his two-year old grandson Rowan into a birder.

Fall Bird Sounds Workshops: Birding By Ear by Denise Wight

Two 1.5 hour classes and one 3-hour field trip

Class #1: TH September 14 and 21, 615-745 PM, Sun., September 24, 8-11 AM Tilden FT (this class is FULL)

Class #2: Wednesday, October 11 and 18, 615-745 PM, Sun., October 22, 8-11 AM TBD

Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Oak Room (maximum of 20 participants)

Cost: \$30 MDAS members/\$35 non-members

ClassDescription: Fall is a great time to begin learning about bird sounds. We will start with learning the songs and calls of some of the birds that live in our area all year, as well returning winter species. This workshop will offer a wide range of tricks and hints on how to learn and connect the birds to the sounds they make.

Author Bio: The San Francisco Bay Area has been my home since I was seven years old. I grew up in Orinda, collecting rocks in the nearby creeks, and building forts on the oak and bay covered hillsides. I have been birding seriously since May 1, 1986, when a male Western Tanager and a male Hooded Oriole visited the bottlebrush bush in my backyard in Martinez.

I began teaching birding classes in 1996, when I took over Norah Bain's classes at the Orinda Community Center. From 1997-2006 I taught evening classes and field trips through Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill. I enjoyed being a co-leader on Shearwater Journeys pelagic boat trips from 1993 to 2011, and have led classes and field trips for the Lindsey Museum, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Mount Diablo Interpretive Association, Golden Gate, and Mount Diablo Audubon Society, as well as for private groups. I taught Birding by Ear at Albany Adult School for seven years, and I continue to teach BBE classes for Golden Gate Audubon at the Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley. I was program chair for Mount Diablo Audubon Society from 1992 to 2000. **For more information: www.denisewightbirds.com**

Trichomoniasis is Back

Trichomoniasis, which affects pigeons, doves, and their predators, has returned to California, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). This protozoan disease causes lesions on bird's throats, making it hard for them to swallow, leading to death by starvation or choking. It is spread by contaminated feces, food particles, and water.

No cases have been reported in the area at this time. However, if you find a dead dove or pigeon that does not show signs of predator attack or hitting a window, you may want to have it examined for disease. The CDFW can do this in their laboratory, or you can take the dead bird to the Lindsay Wildlife Hospital which can then send the bird to Sacramento for testing.

If you hear of an outbreak or find a dead dove or pigeon, adjust your bird feeding habits temporarily. The basic rules of safety are to discourage large concentrations of birds and maintain feeders and bird food.

Here are some guidelines to help keep birds healthy: (1) Keep stored seed in a clean, cool, dry place, but not in airtight containers. (2) Fill bird feeders with only enough seed so they empty each day; dispose of leftover seed. (3) Stop ground feeding birds. Instead, use trays that keep seed off the ground for easy clean-up. (4) Provide multiple feeding stations in different parts of the yard to help keep birds from gathering. (5) Regularly clean areas around feeders of droppings and food waste. (6) Clean feeders regularly and use a 10% solution of bleach to water. Vinegar can be used on wood surfaces in place of bleach. (7) Change water and clean bird baths every 2-3 days with a 10% bleach solution. (8) Watch for weak or unhealthy looking birds. (9) If you know of an outbreak or have had birds test positive, take down feeders and bird baths for a couple of weeks. (10) Exclude larger birds from feeding with small birds by using tray-less, tube feeders making it difficult for large birds to land or feed, or use squirrel-proof feeders or feeders with cages.

We will keep you posted; please let us know if you hear of outbreaks, too.

~Mike Eliot, WBU
the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS)

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

MDAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

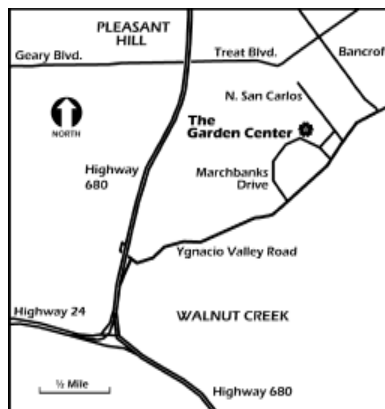
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Honorary Advisor:	Jean Richmond(925) 837-2843

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 young Red-shouldered Hawk was spotted by Hugh Harvey and photographed by Cassie Tzur at Heather Farm Park as it enjoyed a tasty meal.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

~Margaret Mead

☺ Have a great summer! See you at our next MDAS meeting September 7.

Photos: Top and bottom R: At the June meeting, MDAS members feasted on a delicious potluck buffet spread, always a fun and festive event. Bottom L: Pres. Paul Schorr thanked Bev Walker, past Membership Chair, for her service. Top L: VP Kent Fickett thanked past President, Jimm Edgar, as Paul Schorr listens. Center: Jimm Edgar was given National Audubon’s Great Egret Award for his significant long-term contributions to Audubon. Maren Smith photos



the Quail

