



the Quail

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

Volume 63, Number 3

November 2017

November Program : Kaua'i, the 5.1 Million Year Experiment ♦ Gordon Beebe

"The bird not found, and why..."

When Gordon Beebe traveled to the island of Kaua'i in 2016, he looked forward to exploring the many scenic trails, snorkeling in the reefs, and seeing some of the native bird species. There was one species of bird in particular he hoped to see, the I'iwi, a bright red honeycreeper with a long downward-curved bill. As the trip progressed, and no I'iwis were to be seen, he began to wonder what had happened to them. Once back home, he started doing research, and the more he uncovered, the more complex the story became.

The reason is best explained by examining the entire history of the island, so the presentation begins with the



Above: Ahupua'a system;
Above R: White-rumped Shama,
Gordon Beebe photos

volcanic birth of Kaua'i roughly 5.1 million years ago. It continues with the arrival of the first plant and animal species, and their subsequent adaptation to the new environment, which stimulated some of them to evolve to take advantage of unfilled ecological niches. The I'iwi is but one descendent of a long line of honeycreeper species that evolved from a single species that reached the islands millions of years ago.

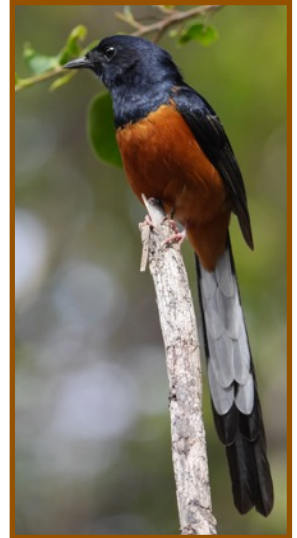
The presentation continues with the arrival of the first humans from Polynesia, who became the original Hawaiians. Were they as benign as people might like to imagine, coexisting with the environment, or did they have a detrimental influence on the

islands? Certainly the arrival of Captain Cook in the late 18th century, roughly 1,000 years later, had an enormous effect, as did the arrival of countless others in the years hence.

Archived photos and animated graphs illustrate the extent of their manipulation of the environment. The introduction of foreign animals and diseases are revealed in chronological order for viewers to grasp the impact to native species on the island. Native and introduced species of birds, other animals, plants, and scenic views are showcased in photos, audio, and video all taken on the trip. Graphics and animations illustrate significant events in the history of Kaua'i.

The presentation concludes by highlighting the efforts of many local and international groups to preserve and protect the native species and habitats on this fragile island paradise.

Gordon Beebe is a past president of Madrone Audubon Society, current website editor, and the Saturday bird walks leader. He is also a coordinator for the *Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas* and lives with his wife, Judy, near Santa Rosa, CA.



Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, November 2** in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

- 6:30 PM Doors open
- 7:00 PM Birding Information
- 7:25 PM Announcements
- 7:40 PM Refreshments* and raffle
- *please bring your own coffee mug
- 8:00 PM Program: Kaua'i, the 5.1 M Year Experiment ♦ Gordon Beebe

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM:
Thursday, December 7
Nicole Michel ♦ CBC Trends

7 PM Birding Information

Eagle Scout, John King, worked with MDAS Volunteer Coordinator, Brian Murphy, to install and maintain 12 Wood Duck nest boxes along Grayson Creek in Pleasant Hill. John will talk about how he enlisted the support of his neighbors to monitor the boxes and place them on private property adjacent to the waterway.

Identifying birds by ear is such a wonderful attribute to birding. During birding tours, Nancy and I have marveled at the ability of tour guides to identify birds by ear and then locate the birds for us to see. The guides' ability to distinguish similar sounding birds such as warblers is simply amazing, and I know that many members of MDAS have also developed similar strategies.

On one birding tour in particular, while we were birding with Wezil Walraven in North Carolina, his ability to detect birds by ear was made abundantly clear. As he drove slowly along the Blue Ridge Parkway with his window down, he would call out a bird he was hearing and bring the car to a stop on the shoulder of the road. We would quickly exit the car and he would most often locate the bird, usually a warbler, for us to see.

During MDAS field trips, it is always a joy to hear fellow birders like Terri Wills, Eugenia Larson, Hugh Harvey, Fred Safier, and others, call out birds they are hearing. In that regard, Nancy and I joined Denise Wight, birder-by-ear extraordinaire, on a Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) sponsored night hike in August. One of the purposes of the night hike into Mitchell Canyon was to hear,

and possibly see, nocturnal birds such as the Common Poorwill.

It was a memorable moment when we stood on Red Road in White Canyon in complete darkness and listened to a Common Poorwill in the surrounding chaparral. Then, as we scanned the road ahead with flashlights, the beams caught a poorwill on the road actively chasing and feeding on insects, probably moths. MDIA will likely offer night hikes again next summer, starting in June. Be sure to check the mdia.org website's "event calendar" for special hikes or check the "Community Events" *Quail* announcements.

If you are interested in learning more about bird songs and calls, the MDAS Education Committee plans to offer a "Spring Bird Sounds: Birding By Ear" workshop taught by Denise. The two fall workshops filled up quickly, so please refer to upcoming issues of the *Quail* for spring dates and more information.

Having a personal hearing loss of high-pitched sounds, I am always envious of those birders who have mastered the ability to learn the specific bird songs and calls. Their contributions always make an outing more rewarding for me.

Happy Birding!

Good News For New Zealand Kiwis

Recently, I watched another fabulous episode of "RARE: Creatures of the Photo Ark" on PBS. In Episode 3, National Geographic photographer, Joel Sartore, featured the rare Rowi Kiwi with a population estimated at just 400-500 birds and the valiant



Rowi Kiwi, Google Images photo

conservation efforts in New Zealand to prevent their extinction.

The photographer followed a scientist with Operation Nest Egg to locate banded kiwis on their nests in the remote forests near Franz Josef Glacier on the south island of New Zealand. The idea is to retrieve the egg from the nest burrow, incubate it, raise the chick at the West Coast Wildlife

Centre, allow it to gain weight for a year on a predator-free island, and then, to release the kiwi back into the Okarito Kiwi Sanctuary where it might have a fighting chance at survival.

In the wild, total Rowi Kiwi births are extremely low—an increase of just two new birds per year. Under New Zealand's Department of Conservation active management plan, 95% of the retrieved eggs that are incubated hatch, increasing the total population by about 2% per year. It is estimated that by the year 2030, the population will nearly double, to 891 Rowi Kiwi.

The Rowi Kiwis, like many native birds, are at risk due to the introduction of non-native predators by humans. In the late 1800s, stoats (short-tailed weasels) were introduced to control the rampant rabbit population, but they preferred the ground-dwelling kiwis. Possums, another introduced species, is also a key predator, along with domestic and feral cats and dogs.

Through human intervention, the Rowi Kiwi population is increasing and the government of New Zealand has set a high bar, a predator-free nation by the year 2050. ~Maren Smith

And, *that's* good news for New Zealand's Rowi Kiwis.

Information: joelsartore.com

Welcome New Members

Amy & Brian Richardson	Walnut Creek
Karen Case	Clayton
Janet Kahn	Walnut Creek
Cameron Ward	Orinda

Q

What bird has helpers during the nesting period who are rarely the young from a previous brood?

Unscramble the letters

or look at page 7 for the answer.

TTHIUBS

MDAS on the Web

www.diabloaudubon.org
www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon
www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society/

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com, call Maury at (925) 284-5980, or send them to EBB_sightings@yahoogroups.com. If you report sightings to eBird, please also send them to Maury Stern. (see Observations page 3)

The *Quail* is published monthly except in January and August by the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. The deadline for the Dec.-Jan. *Quail* will be November 6.

Observations (9/12-10/8/17) — by Maury Stern

Many of the expected winter residents have returned, the southern migration of northern birds continues, and several exciting birds were seen.

A **Greater White-Fronted Goose** was seen at Pt. Isabel 9/24, AK, CM; and at Meeker Slough/51st Street. AK

The continuing **Canvasback** was at Meeker Slough and seen by VW, LD, BD, JeC, MiP during the month.

Flocks of **Band-tailed Pigeons** were in Orinda and Richmond 9/25 and 10/5 (probably related to the big acorn year we are having). JC, AK

SD saw two **Eurasian Doves** at Pt. Pinole 9/26, the first seen there.

JY saw a **Greater Roadrunner** in her Deer Ridge subdivision in the Antioch/Brentwood area 9/25.

There were **Black Swifts** flying over Las Trampas Ridge Park 9/22. DS

Vaux's Swifts were over Vollmer Peak in late September, AA, DW; and over JC's Orinda house 10/4.

JC saw a **Rufous Hummingbird** 9/24 at his Orinda home and EM saw one at his Alamo home 10/7.

A **Common Gallinule** was seen 9/15, HH, and 9/28, E&DL at H. Farm.

KB and BB saw a **Sandhill Crane** in Holland Tract 9/22.

An **American Golden Plover** was discovered at West County Wastewater District in Richmond by AL on 9/25. The bird was seen by many until 9/28. AM, DaW, JH, MR, DT, ES, BD, TH

A **Red Knot** was a Pt. Isabel 9/22. BB, KB

BB and KB also saw a **Dunlin** at Pt. Isabel 9/22.

JT saw a **Wandering Tattler** in the Pt. Molate/Pt. San Pablo area 9/8.

A **Common Murre** was at Meeker Slough near 51st Street on 9/15. LF Another was in the water between Richmond Marina and Brooks Island on 9/25. CM

A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was at the Skyline gate area of Redwood Regional Park 9/30. SJ

Nineteen **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were over JC's house in Orinda 9/25. E&DL saw one on the Heather Farm Pond island 9/28, and JA saw six at Briones RP's Blue Oak Trail on 10/5.

the Quail

SG and MK saw a **Red-naped Sapsucker** at the Valle Vista area 10/4.

A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was at Heather Farm 9/13, and another at Vollmer Peak 10/4. JC

JE saw a **Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker** at his Pinole home 10/4.

D&NK saw a **Merlin** in Pittsburg 9/12.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was at Valle Vista 9/22, ER, JoC; a later one was at DVC 10/3. DL

SD saw a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** 9/18 in Pt. Pinole Park.

A **Say's Phoebe** returned to Heather Farm 9/13. HH, FS

The **Tropical Kingbird** returned, its 4th year to Heather Farm 10/3. HH, FS, TF and MR. LW saw it on 10/4.

A very unusual **Eastern Kingbird**

came to Heather Farm 9/19. HH, FS, TF, and MR This vagrant sighting was confirmed as a first county record for Contra Costa County.

Later, DQ and JS saw the bird, and RL saw it on 9/20. It was not seen after 10/5.

A **Western Kingbird** was at Pt. Isabel 9/15. LF

A **Cassin's Vireo** was at Heather Farm 9/19, HH; and DW saw another at the Tilden Nature area 9/22.

One of the last **Swainson's Thrushes** of the season was at Wildcat Canyon Park 9/15. AK

DW, AA, and DAG all saw a returning **Hermit Thrush** at Vollmer Peak 9/15.

A **Varied Thrush** was at Wildcat Canyon Park 10/3, AK; and JC saw one just east of Vollmer Peak on 10/4.

Ten **American Pipits** flew by Wildcat Canyon 10/5. AK

GT and CC saw **Red-billed Crossbills** at Vollmer Peak 9/24.

A **Lapland Longspur** was seen 10/8 by ES at Ferry Pt., Miller-Knox RP.

DW and AA saw one **Pine Siskin** at Vollmer Peak 9/15.

A **Black-and-White Warbler** stayed the last two weeks of August at D&NK's Martinez home.

A **Nashville Warbler** was near Bailey Road in Concord 9/28, AF; and another was at Heather Farm. TF

AS and DW saw a **MacGillivray's Warbler** 9/30 at Vollmer Peak and AL saw one at Ellis Lake in Concord 9/27.

Black-throated Grey Warblers were common this migratory season. They were at Heather Farm 9/13, DK; at Wildcat Canyon 9/15, AK; at Heather Farm 9/23, HH, FS; in southeasten Lafayette 10/4, MZ; and in P&NS's Antioch yard on 10/5.

A **Green-tailed Towhee** was at JC's Orinda home 9/7 and 9/8. MP

AL saw a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the West County Waste Dump 9/25.

Fox Sparrows returned to Vollmer Peak 9/15, AA, DW; and Pt. Pinole 9/18. SD

A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at AK's Richmond home 9/14.

White-crowned Sparrows returned to Heather Farm 9/15. FS

Golden-crowned Sparrows returned to AK's Richmond yard 9/24.

A **Western Tanager** was at Heather Farm near the Contra Costa Canal 9/15, FS; AK also saw one at Wildcat Canyon 9/15; and FS and HH saw one at Heather Farm 9/23.

A late, young **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at Wildcat Canyon 9/15. AK

A very late **Lazuli Bunting** was at DVC 10/3. DL

Two unusual **Western Meadowlarks** were at Heather Farm 10/5. HH They haven't been seen there for many years.

SL saw a **Hooded Oriole** at his San Ramon home 9/23.

~

JA Jeff Acuff, AA Ann Ardillo, KB Keith Bailey, BB Beko Binder, CC Carol Chetkovich, JC Jim Chiropolis, JoC John Colbert, JeC Jeremy Cushman, LD Lynn Davidson, SD Sheila Dickie, BD Bob Dunn, JE Jack Edick, TF Tracy Farrington, AF Andrew Ford, LF Friedman, >>>continued on page 4

November 2017



*Eastern Kingbird,
Rosita Harvey photo*

Trip Reports

Vaux's Swifts, Healdsburg, September 16:

For 28 years, the Vaux's Swifts have been flying into a chimney at Rio Lindo Adventist Academy in Healdsburg during the swifts' southward migration in late August and September. Seven members and guests from MDAS joined about 200 other viewers to eat, socialize, and watch over



Vaux's Swifts are a blur as they enter the chimney at dusk, Maren Smith photo

7,700 birds enter the chimney after sunset. When the birds finally finished their activity, the crowd responded with a hearty round of applause. Other birds seen while waiting were Anna's Hummingbird, American Robin, Black Phoebe, and a small kettle of Turkey

Vultures, perhaps eyeing the sedate crowd looking for their own evening repast. ~Hugh Harvey

Hayward Regional Shoreline, September 18: The morning started with a scramble to figure out the best way to navigate massive traffic problems during the morning commute, but 14 participants gathered for the field trip and had a really good day of birding led by Bob Richmond. Almost immediately, we found an adult Red-tailed Hawk with its prey in the eucalyptus trees near the parking lot. Eventually, we made it to the edge of the bay and after

watching a hovering White-tailed Kite and passing Northern Harrier, we found a Peregrine Falcon perched on the rocks just offshore. Some participants said it was the best peregrine view they had ever



Red-necked Phalarope, Beth Branthaver photo

seen. Frank's Dump was filled with shorebirds including Red-necked Phalarope, Dunlin, Sanderling, Snowy Plover, Ruddy and Black Turnstones, Black-bellied Plovers, and Red Knots. A total of 62 species were identified over the course of the morning. ~Hugh Harvey

Outer Point Reyes, September 30: This time of year there are a lot of southbound migrants passing through California and a good place to see some of them is the Outer Point. Our trip did find some migrant birds; we also found four other large groups of birders, including Yolo, Sacramento, and Madrone Audubon Societies, and the Palo

Alto Adult School class led by Matthew Dodder, all looking for the same birds, so it was a little crowded everywhere we went. Though we started at the lighthouse, the high winds pretty much insured we would not see any small migrant birds. We did see some birds in the trees at the residence near the Chimney Rock parking lot, including a Prairie Warbler and a Blackburnian Warbler. We tried several other of the known



Above: Blackburnian Warbler; R: Prairie Warbler, Beth Branthaver photos

migrant traps, but things were mostly quiet. We did find Great Horned Owls and a Barn Owl at the Mendoza Ranch, and the pond below the road had an early Greater White-



fronted Goose and a Greater Yellowlegs. We did our checklist at the RCA radio station, but made one more stop at Vision Road and the Inverness tennis court trees. Here, we had a number of Hermit, Townsend's, and Black-throated Gray Warblers, and some of our group saw a Red-eyed Vireo. Though not everyone saw every bird, our 21 participants found 57 species. ~Hugh Harvey

Field Trip Year-end Report 2016-2017

Altogether, we had 47 scheduled field trips last year. Three were cancelled due to rain; Limantour, Niles, and Putah Creek. Grizzly Island was cancelled due to flooding and Sunol RP was cancelled due to a rock slide. We had a total of 600 participants and we had a total species count of 256—not too bad. Of these, four were heard-only: Golden-crowned Kinglet, MacGillivray's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Red Crossbill. A big thank you goes out to the field trip leaders. You certainly keep the name of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society shining brightly. ~Hugh Harvey, FT Chair

>>>Observation abbreviations continued from page 3

DAG Daryl Anne Goldman, SG Susan Greef, HH Hugh Harvey, JH Jeff Hoppes, TH Tim Howe, SJ Sharon J., DK Dave Kent, MK Marilyn Kinch, D&NK Deborah and Norm Kirshen, AK Alan Krakauer, E&DL Elizabeth and Dal Leite, RL Ron Lindeman, AL Albert Linkowski, SL Steve Lombardi, DL Douglas Long, AM Aaron Maizlich, CM Colin Meusel, EM Ethan Monk, MP Michael Park, MiP Michael Pyle, DQ Dave Quady, MR Mark Rauzon, ER Erica Rutherford, FS Fred Safier, DS Don Schaezler, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, AS Alex Smolyanskaya, JS John Sterling, ES Emilie Strauss, GT Glen Tepke, JT John Toldi, DT David Tomb, DaW Dave Weber, LW L. Weiss, DW Denise Wight, VW Virginia Wolinsky, JY Jill Y., and MZ Mara Zhelutka

November 2017 (Contact Leader for ?s or rain cancellations)

04 Saturday Charleston Slough/South Bay
 07 Tuesday McNabney Marsh
 18 Saturday Limantour

December 2017

02 Saturday Sacramento/Colusa NWRs
 09 Saturday Solano County Raptors
 16 Saturday Christmas Bird Count-Central Contra Costa Co.
 20 Wednesday Christmas Bird Count-East Contra Costa Co.

2 Saturday, November 4

Charleston Slough/South Bay

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

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. **OR**, meet at Terminal Road in Mountain View at 8:30 AM. Take I-680, exit Mission Boulevard W. Continue through two traffic lights and take I-880 ramp S. Exit to SR 237, connect to US 101 N at Moffett Field. Exit at San Antonio Road, turn right (north) to Terminal Road, turn right and park. Entrance is on left. Other areas of interest in the South Bay are Palo Alto Baylands, Alviso, and Redwood Shores. Shorebirds and waterfowl should be plentiful. Bring lunch and a beverage.



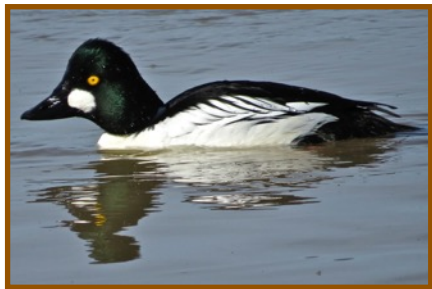
Black Skimmers and Black-bellied Plovers, Cassie Tzur photo

2 Tuesday, November 7

McNabney Marsh

Leader: Steve Taylor (925) 828-8810

Meet at 9 AM at the observation platform along the Mt. View Sanitary District entrance road. Exit from I-680 S at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. Or, exit I-680 N at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will turn left. At 0.4 miles, turn a sharp left onto Mt. View Sanitary's private road, through the entry gate, on the east side of the freeway, and park in the gravel area across from the wooden observation platform. We often see good winter ducks and shorebirds. Because Moorhen Marsh is currently closed, time permitting, we may continue to the north side of the marsh along Waterfront Road or to other areas in the Martinez area. The exact itinerary will be determined the morning of the trip. Bring a beverage and a snack, or lunch.



Common Goldeneye, Isaac Aronow photo

2 Saturday, November 18

Limantour

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Carpool leaves at 7 AM from El Nido Ranch Road, **OR** meet at 8:30 AM at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore. Take SR 24 to Oakland, then I-580

west to Richmond and the San Rafael Bridge (toll). From US 101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go two blocks, turn left on 3rd Street and



Surf Scoter, Beth Branthaver photo

continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1 in Olema, turn right for 0.25 miles, then turn left on Bear Valley Road. The Visitor's Center is off Bear Valley Road. This trip includes forest birds on the ridge and ducks, shorebirds, and often, loons and grebes on the bay. Bring lunch and a beverage.

Christmas Bird Count (CBC): Central County, Saturday, December 16 East County, Wednesday, December 20

For details or to sign up:

elite@diabloaudubon.org

see page 9 for an article with more CBC information

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 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

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

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

Grebe-a-palooza on Lake Almanor

article and photos by Maren Smith, Quail Editor

Anxious to see the nesting rafts of Western and Clark's Grebes on Lake Almanor, one of the largest breeding populations in California, and hopeful of witnessing the spectacular mating "dance," we headed to Chester, about a 4.5 hour drive from the Bay Area to partake in the 2nd Annual Plumas Audubon Grebe Festival, August 18-19, 2017.

The festival included 42 activities for a nominal fee from hikes to kayaking and everything in between. They also offered free events including a children's art contest with adorable entries displayed in the lobby.

We were a little late to the party, signing up the week of the festival, but we managed to sign up for three memorable activities: the informative John James Audubon documentary, a bird walk in the historic Olsen Barn meadow and adjacent riparian habitat along the North Fork of the Feather River, and the much-awaited pontoon boat ride on Lake Almanor,

It was well worth the long drive as we got to see four different grebe species. By the end of the trip, I could confidently tell the difference between the two main nesting species: the Western Grebe (*photo L*) with the black mask extending below the piercing red eye, like a bandit from an old cowboy Western movie, and the Clark's Grebe's (*photo below*) with its black



mop stopping just short of its eye like Clark Gable.

With a spotting scope, you can see the floating nests south of the causeway, located east of Chester past the large Olsen Barn. But a boat ride gives you a close-up view of these fascinating birds. Our knowledgeable guide kept the boat 300 feet from the birds, while regaling us with grebe facts.

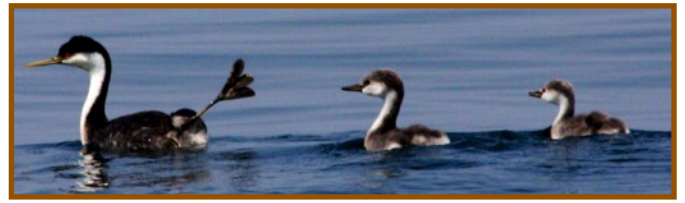
Grebes molt during the nesting season, losing their flight feathers. They are adept divers and swimmers, but poor walkers due to unwieldy feet resembling yellow paddles situated on legs towards the back of their body. They tend to nest in large colonies, making their nests out of aquatic plants, attaching them to underwater reeds in shallow water.

Late nesters, the grebes are found nesting on Lake Almanor from June-September.



The 2-4 (on average) bluish eggs become stained brown from plant matter over the course of 23 days. Upon hatching, the young climb aboard the adult's back (*photo L*), finding a warm spot beneath the feathers, called "back brooding." Once fledged, the young attempt to crawl back

on their parents, to no avail. We got a chuckle out of



watching the mother kick out a foot, as if to say, you are just too big for that nonsense, kiddos (*photo above*).

The depth of the lake water is critical, not only for availability of fish and plant material for nests, but to prevent predation by land mammals. In addition, if the water level dips too high or too low, grebes may abandon their nests.

Lake Almanor is a man-made reservoir in Plumas County, just south of Mt. Lassen. It is a hot spot for human recreation as well as a breeding colony for 35% of the grebes in California (and a nesting site for Bald Eagles and Osprey). Plumas Audubon surveys estimate over 3000 grebes this year.

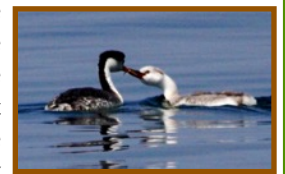
The dam was built on the North Fork of the Feather River in 1914 by Great Western Power, flooding the former meadow and valley, creating Lake Almanor (named for the Vice-President Guy Earl's three daughters—Alice, Martha, and Eleanor). The current Canyon Dam was doubled in size and completed in 1927.

Today, the reservoir is owned and operated by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and is used for their hydroelectric power system, sending water to the Butt Valley Reservoir which is then diverted by tunnels for electricity and agricultural needs in Northern California.

During the drought, water was at a premium, so it was released from the reservoir to thirsty crops and humans, but it was a disaster for nesting grebes that suffered low numbers of chicks hatched. This is an ongoing concern.

Nesting surveys done by Plumas Audubon in conjunction with California Audubon count the birds to provide data to inform PG&E of reservoir management practices that will benefit both humans and birds. There is a direct link between water levels in the lake and nesting success. In 2015, at the drought peak, only one chick survived for every three adults. Though the species is not listed as endangered, the drop in reproduction could become a conservation disaster.

Though we did not witness the courtship "weed ceremony," or the showy "rushing dance," we were lucky to witness the persistent begging calls of the young, the subsequent dive by the doting parents, and the tender presentation of a fish to a hungry, young grebe (*photo above R*). The grebes return to the vast Pacific Ocean with their young, so we felt fortunate to have this close-up view of these lovely birds. We are already plotting our return trip to this scenic area.



For more information: plumasaudubon.org (under "projects" select Grebes)



Bushtit ♦ *Psaltriparus minimus*

by Jean Halford

The Bushtit is a small, plain, active bird that lives in open woods or scrubby areas, particularly pine-oak woodlands and chaparral, as well as suburbs and parks. They will come to your garden if there are native shrubs and small trees planted, or if suet or peanuts are available. Bushtits come periodically and mob my suet feeder, with 14 or so hanging all over the feeder!

Bushtits are social birds that travel in flocks of up to 60 birds until breeding season when they break off into pairs. They can range widely in winter, sometimes moving long distances to escape cold weather.

Breeding season in California begins in February. Both males and females help build an impressive hanging nest that can take from two weeks to a month or more to build. The nest can hang up to a foot in length, with the entrance on one side near the top; three inches in width at the top, 4-5 inches in width at the bottom. The adults create a stretchy sac using spider webs and plant material; they add insulating material such as fur, feathers, and downy plant material.

They lay 4-10 plain white eggs and both parents incubate the eggs, sometimes at the same time! It takes about 12 days for the eggs to hatch. The altricial young are born naked with eyes closed. Their eyes open in eight days and the young fledge 6-7 days after that and are independent at 21-23 days.

Bushtits have helpers at the nest who aid in feeding the young. These helpers are usually unmated males or breeders whose own nest failed. Bushtit helpers are rarely young from a previous brood.



Female Bushtit, Jean Halford photo

One of the smallest birds in North America, about half of their four-inch length is made up of their tail. They are gray above, lighter below; males have a dark eye, females have a pale eye. Three subspecies of Bushtits consist of coastal birds that have a brown crown; the interior subspecies show a brown ear patch and gray cap; and in the southwest to Mexico some adult and juvenile males have a black mask and are called the Black-eared Bushtit.

Bushtits eat mostly small insects and spiders, often hanging upside down while foraging. The large flock can be almost undetectable in a tree or a bush until the birds fly out one at a time following the bird ahead of it.

On winter nights, foraging flocks roost communally in dense cover, often huddling shoulder to shoulder during a cold spell. While birds are using the nest, the parents and their helpers roost inside their hanging nest.

Their light ticking and lipping call notes keep the flock in touch with one another. These call notes can be intensified to indicate nesting activities or when mobbing predators. Individuals that get separated from their group make a series of high-pitched chip notes that carry well. (*Editor's note: the genus *Psaltriparus* derives from *Psaltria*, a female lute player, reflecting a Bushtit's high-pitched call; *minimums* means small.*)

Bushtit populations are relatively stable, however, their numbers declined between 1966 and 2014, according to the *North American Breeding Survey*. Partners in Flight estimates the global breeding population at 3.2 million, with 70% living in the U.S., 2% in Canada, and 27% in Mexico.

The average lifespan of a Bushtit is about two years. The oldest Bushtit on record was 8 years, 5 months.

Community Events

► Sandhill Crane Festival, Lodi, November 3-5

For 20 years, the festival has celebrated the return of the cranes, one of nature's wondrous spectacles. Enjoy the art show, workshops and presentations for free at Hutchins Street Square Exhibit Hall or register for a paid tour with Sandhill Crane experts. **For information: cranefestival.com**

► Baja's Birds & Gray Whales Tour, February 17-24, 2018



Join seasoned expedition leader, Juan-Carlos Solis, on an 8-day desert oasis adventure in a search of birds unique to the Baja California Cape's prime birding hot spots as well as 35-ton gray whales during their migration to Baja's coastal lagoons. The trip is limited to ten participants. **For information: www.quetzaladventures.com/bajabirding2018**

L: Black-throated Sparrow on a cardon cacti, Juan-Carlos Solis photo; R: Xantus's Hummingbird, Shellie Bailey-Shah photo



C. Hart Merriam

Ornithologist ♦ Mammalogist ♦ Ethnologist

One of America's leading naturalists, C. Hart Merriam was the first Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey. He was also one of the founders of the National Geographic Society.

Clinton Hart Merriam was born in 1855 in New York City. He was named for his father, Clinton Levi Merriam, and his mother, Caroline Hart. The name Clinton was in honor of the distinguished Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York.

His boyhood days at the family estate of Locust Grove in central New York State, at the base of the Adirondack Mountains, allowed him a freedom to know the woods and fields and to build a passion for their birds and animals.

Hart's sister, somewhat younger than himself, now best known as Florence Merriam Bailey, shared her brother's love of nature and followed him both in his childhood meanderings and in careers in which both achieved eminence. (see the *Quail* newsletter for July-August 2017 and September 2017)

His father had provided him with a single-barreled shotgun when he was only thirteen or fourteen and, later, had taken him to a taxidermist in New York City to learn how to prepare specimens. By the age of fifteen, young Merriam had already begun a private collection of bird skins. About this time his father, then serving as a Representative in Congress, took the boy to Washington and introduced him to Prof. Spencer F. Baird. With this connection and with his youthful ambition, he found himself attached to a government expedition, the Hayden Geological Survey of 1871, and spent the summer in the Yellowstone region, where he collected more than 300 bird skins and 67 nests with eggs.

In 1872 and 1873 he attended prep schools in New Jersey and Massachusetts. In 1873, he joined with other young naturalists in forming the

first ornithological club in the United States, the Nuttall Ornithological Club.

Merriam enrolled in Yale's Sheffield Scientific School continuing his interest in natural history. He developed an interest in anatomy and thought to make medicine his career, and went from Yale to the College of



C. Hart Merriam, National Academy of Sciences photo

Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia, receiving his M.D. in 1879 at the age of twenty-four. In March of 1878, while a medical student in New York, he assisted in organizing the Linnaean Society of New York and was elected its first president. From 1879 to 1885 he practiced medicine at Locust Grove, but he was also very active in studying the local fauna and adding to his collections. He developed a growing interest in mammals as well as birds. In 1877, he published a *Review of the Birds of Connecticut*. His observations in *The Birds of Locust Grove* were published in 1881. This was followed three years later with *Mammals of the Adirondacks*.

At this time, such a great interest in ornithology had developed throughout the country that the Nuttall Ornithological Club, although continuing as a local society, was expanded by transition to a larger, national organization, The American

by Ellis Myers

Ornithologists' Union (AOU). Its founders, who held their first meeting in New York in September of 1883, included Spencer F. Baird, George N. Lawrence, Charles E. Bendire, Elliot Coues, and Robert Ridgway. Merriam, 27, was one of the younger members. He was elected secretary of the new organization and became chairman of its important Committee on Bird Migration.

Merriam's interest in mammals continued to grow and his private collection of them grew as well. Private collections of birds were numerous, but similar collections of mammals were very rare. Merriam carried on a large correspondence, promoting interest in mammals by purchasing specimens and by employing collectors. Among those who sent him specimens, in 1883, was Vernon Bailey, a farmer's boy of Elk River, Minnesota, and his future brother-in-law. This boy sent so many difficult to obtain species that Merriam formed a close friendship. In 1884, Merriam described his first new species, *Atophyrax bendirii*, a small shrew obtained for him in Oregon by the ornithologist, Major Charles Bendire. His collection of mammals had then numbered perhaps seven thousand specimens and was probably superior even to those of the American Museum in New York City or Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

In the spring of 1885, Congress established a section of ornithology in the Entomological Division of the Department of Agriculture. At the recommendation of Professor Spencer Baird, Merriam was given the position of Chief, with the title of Ornithologist. In 1905, this Division became the Bureau of Biological Survey; in 1939 it joined with the Bureau of Fisheries, and continues now as the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior.

Merriam brought in Vernon Bailey as a field agent; and he was ranging the West, sending in previously unknown species for study and description. Merriam soon made a personal journey to the West, going with Vernon Bailey to >>>cont. on page 9

>>>*continued from page 8*

the San Francisco Mountain region of Arizona to study the distribution of birds, reptiles, mammals, and plants.

Merriam was one of 33 founders of the National Geographic Society in 1888, serving on the Board of Directors for 54 years. He was Chairman of the U. S. Board on Geographic Names for nine years (1917-1925). He was active in founding the Washington Academy of Sciences. In 1919, when the American Society of Mammalogists was founded, he was elected its first president.

In 1891, Merriam organized the Death Valley Expedition, which explored the mountains and deserts of southeastern California and Nevada with good success. This expedition was led by Dr. T. S. Palmer, since Merriam himself, after starting with the party, had been chosen by President Harrison to act as a Bering Sea Commissioner to study fur seals and spent the summer on the Pribilof Islands in Alaska.

He directed the 1899 Harriman Alaska Expedition, a unique exploration of the Alaskan coast with John Muir, George Bird Grinnell (*Quail*, October 2013), and William Dall, among other noted scientists. On returning, he edited the twelve volumes reporting on the observations and collections.

Merriam maintained a long friendship with Theodore Roosevelt. As a youth in New York, Roosevelt's admiration for Merriam's book *Mammals of the Adirondacks* led to a meeting of the two. At that time, Roosevelt had serious thoughts of a career as a naturalist (*Quail*, April 2013). When he came to Washington as Assistant Secretary of the Navy he sought out Merriam and continued the relationship when he became President. Merriam was one of his principal advisers when Roosevelt organized his noted African trip after leaving the presidency.

His field work in California enamored Merriam to the state and he finally built a home in the redwoods near Lagunitas in Marin County. During his travels in California he had many contacts with the dwindling

the Quail

tribes of Native Americans in the state. He collected examples of Indian handiwork, especially basketry. Eventually, his collection became a large and valuable one.

At the age of fifty-five, he devoted himself to field studies among the California Indians and made detailed notes about them. His notes and manuscripts are now with the Smithsonian Institution. He published a few papers in ethnological journals and two books of folk tales. His total publication count was very large, numbering nearly 500 titles.

His wife, Virginia Elizabeth Gosnell, formerly his secretary, whom he had married in 1886, died in 1937. C. Hart Merriam died five years later at the age of 87, in Berkeley, California.

Editors Note: Ellis Myers passed away in May, but he had written this article in advance for our November issue for which I am grateful. He is sorely missed.



*In 1900, E.W. Nelson named a subspecies of Wild Turkey for C. Hart Merriam, *Meleagris gallopavo merriami*. This photo is not likely to be that bird, as it was photographed in Moraga, and not in the Rocky Mountains, Maren Smith photo. Happy Thanksgiving!*

►MDAS Christmas Bird Count Sign-ups

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is the longest running citizen science project in the nation. This year marks the 118th Count. Our MDAS CBCs will be held on **Saturday, December 16 (Central County)**, and **Wednesday, December 20 (East**

County). Chapter involvement in this National Audubon citizen science project is one of our most important contributions to promote conservation. The data is used in many significant ways to determine the long-term health and status of bird populations across the continent. It was used in Audubon's 2014 "Climate Change Report," a ground-breaking research document that predicted how climate change may affect the ranges of 588 North American bird species, and in 2012 the EPA included CBC data in a report as an important indicator of climate change. The data shows, unfortunately, that many of our avian friends are in great trouble. **For information: www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count**

MDAS has held a Christmas Bird Count since shortly after our chapter's founding. Today, our chapter "circles" cover two distinct areas. Previously, we only completed a Central County Count, but about fifteen years ago, the East County Count was added. As a chapter, we survey unique habitats ranging from the oak woodlands of Central County, to montane on Mt. Diablo, and a riparian piece of the Delta. Each habitat hosts its own species and, accordingly, over the years wintering songbirds as well as waterfowl and shorebirds have appeared on our lists. Due to the goodwill established by our chapter leaders over the years, we have the good fortune of being able to access some private, privately-managed, and off-limits public lands in our Counts.

Some of our survey parties will be out dawn to dusk. We will be counting regardless of weather. Your reward will be knowing you are contributing to the data collected while enjoying a warm and friendly Countdown Dinner at the conclusion of the day. ~**Elizabeth Leite, CBC Chair**

Online sign-ups: Previous CBC participants, please let me know if you intend to participate and in which survey(s). If you are new to the CBC and want to join us, please contact me at:

eleite@diabloaudubon.org

November 2017

👉 Legislative Action Update

SB 5 – Parks Bond – PASSED. After a real roller coaster of a week, during which we saw potential defections and holdouts from Assembly members from the Bay Area, Northern California, and the Central Valley, the Assembly got its act together and passed SB 5. This bond will provide hundreds of millions of dollars for local, regional, and state parks, with a special focus of spending on “parks-poor” communities that have traditionally not benefited as much from parks bonds. It also has \$200 million for the Salton Sea, tens of millions for Central Valley wetlands, and additional investments in coastal areas, wildlife corridors, and climate adaptation projects.

SB 249 – Off-highway Vehicle Office Reform – PASSED. This bill was substantially watered down and faced a lot of opposition, but it squeaked through.

AB 890 – Closing CEQA Loophole – PASSED. We weren't sure this bill would survive, but it managed to get through earlier this week—good news for our chapters.

SB 49, 50, 51 – Preserve California Package – SB 49 DID NOT PASS, SB 50 and 51 PASSED. SB 50 (CA has first right of refusal if the federal government tries to sell federal land in CA) and 51 (scientific data protection) passed earlier in the week. SB 49 (baseline protection for water and air quality, endangered species) was more controversial and difficult, and did not pass.

SB 100 - 100% Renewable by 2045 – DID NOT PASS (Wasn't brought up for a final vote, as far as I know). This bill is likely to come back in some form next year.

AB 109 – Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investments – PASSED. After a couple of years of work, our coalition was able to secure \$15 million/year for investments in wetlands in the GGRF. ~Ariana Rickard, Legislative Action Chair

For more information: www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-it-s-a-wrap-for-the-california-1505533018-htlstory.html

🌲 Save Lafayette Trees Update

Save Lafayette Trees (SLT) has initiated a second lawsuit, this time against East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD) and PG&E in order to protect 204 trees in Briones Regional Park. EBRPD has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PG&E signed March 22, 2017, paying \$245,000 for these trees.

Originally, Save Lafayette Trees had a Tolling Agreement, with EBRPD, an agreement to not cut any trees in Briones RP until the Lafayette legal matter is resolved with EBRPD, but EBRPD would not extend the Tolling Agreement. So, this is another CEQA lawsuit filed September 29, 2017 in Contra Costa Superior Court.

SLT had their third settlement meeting with PG&E and the city of Lafayette on October 5. Should the settlement talks not result in a mutually satisfactory outcome, the first court date to resolve this issue is scheduled for November 8, 2017 in Contra Costa Superior Court.

~Kent Fickett, Vice President

🌿 Bird Surveys Support Local Creek

Heather Rosmarin, an active MDAS Legislative Action Committee member, has been instrumental in relaunching Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks. She and other MDAS members, including Alan Bade, Wendy Gollop, Georgette Howington, and Adena Rosmarin, have become advocates for protecting Grayson Creek, a vital riparian wildlife habitat corridor in Pleasant Hill. Activities include engaging with the community about the importance of creeks, monitoring and providing comments on development projects, proposing a multi-benefit Grayson Creek Green Corridor, participating in creek clean-ups, and initiating citizen science projects. The group is partnering with MDAS to document avian wildlife along the creek through regular bird surveys. With my help they have compiled data from eBird and the 2016 CBC, and in October they conducted a habitat assessment of Grayson Creek with the help of Tracy Farrington. Bird surveys will occur on a regular basis with increased frequency during important nesting and migratory periods. If you would like to help or are interested in learning more about this project, please contact Heather at: pleasanthillcreeks@gmail.com.

~Elizabeth Leite, Citizen Science Chair

▶ Education Committee Update

The September Birding By Ear class taught by Denise Wight is a wrap and a second group is currently taking the October class. The Raptor ID class is just around the corner.

According to survey results, the majority of participants learned new ways of thinking about bird vocalizations and were satisfied with the length of the class, although a third of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in a longer class with more field trips, if offered, and 100% said they would recommend the class to others.

Looking ahead to 2018, the Education Committee is working on more classes and a longer version of Birding By Ear. Stay tuned! ~Maren Smith, Education Committee

🏠 Cornell Lab's Project FeederWatch

Looking for a simple citizen science project in your own backyard? Look no further than the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada's Project FeederWatch. Choose two days in a row to observe the birds in your yard and record the data. Help scientists track feeder bird populations and get familiar with your backyard visitors. The season begins on November 11, 2017 and runs through April 13, 2018. **For more information:** www.FeederWatch.org

✔ Two Easy Ways to Give

1. Register at **Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill** as an MDAS member and each time you make a purchase, 5% will be donated to MDAS and Native Bird Connections. Since 2012, Mike has made over \$3300 in donations to these two groups.

2. If you, your family members (calling all Millennials!), or your friends shop online at Amazon, please register “MT Diablo Audubon Society” as your favorite non-profit charity at smile.amazon.com. For every eligible purchase, MDAS receives 0.5% of your purchase. You shop. Amazon gives.

Cache is King

Ever stop to think about where the word “cash” comes from? Well, it stems from the French word *cache*, meaning “to hide” and refers to storing valuables to be used later, *caching*. A bird’s “cash” is usually made up of seeds and nuts, as well as insects and invertebrates—food that can be stored for months without spoiling will do.

Birds cache during the fall in order to have the necessary food supply to live through cold winters in areas where seeds or foods are difficult to find, from several months to year-round.

Chickadees are the most famous cachers. Their brains are well-developed to remember hundreds of places that they cache seeds, using landmarks and the orientation of the sun. Food is often stored in tree bark, knot holes, clusters of leaves or pine needles, and even gutters on roofs. They store one type of food, one piece per location.

Titmice usually cache only large sunflower seeds, removing the shells and storing them within 100-130 feet of the feeder from which they came, in loose tree bark or rotting areas of trees.

Nuthatches cache mostly seeds, but do so for only several hours to a day before they are retrieved. White-breasted Nuthatches prefer shelled sunflower seeds due to the small size and weight, storing the seeds in deeply furrowed tree trunks. Red-breasted Nuthatches, however, prefer heavier seeds in the shell, poking them into crevices or rough-barked branches.

Jays cache both seeds and larger nuts, like peanuts in the shell. Pinyon Jays have an expandable esophagus that allows them to carry as many as 40 pine nuts to a site. Jays work in mated pairs to hide seeds or nuts so that either one will be able to retrieve them later. These jays may transport seeds over six miles to a caching site. Steller’s Jays bury pine nuts in the ground. Some species of pine trees are dependent upon jays to disperse their seeds. It is thought that the rapid dispersal of oak trees after the last Ice Age was due to the transport of acorns by jays. ~Mike Eliot, WBU



the Quail

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS)

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

MDAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:	Paul Schorr	.....pkschorr@comcast.net..(925) 757-5107
Vice President:	Kent Fickett	.....k.fickett@comcast.net..(415) 269-4277
Secretary:	Carol Pachl	.....carolpachl@comcast.net..(925) 253-0675
Treasurer:	Steve Buffi	.....(925) 938-0929
Programs:	Ariana Rickard	.....rickard@post.harvard.edu..(347) 754-0143
Field Trips:	Hugh Harvey	.....(925) 935-2979
Conservation:	Nancy Wenninger	.....nwenninger@aol.com..(925) 938-7987
Education:	Beth Branthaver	.....bbranthaver@sbcglobal.net..(925) 944-1856
Sales Manager:	Diane Malucelli	.....dmalucelli@att.net..(925) 674-0920
Membership:	Virginia Hamrick	.....vhamrick8@gmail.com..(925)-945-7761
Young Birders Liaison:	Tracy Farrington	.....tracy_farrington@yahoo.com..(925) 788-6223
Volunteer Coordinator:	Brian Murphy	.....b-murphy21@hotmail.com..(925) 937-8835
Publicity & Social Media:	Rosalie Howarth	.....barhowarth@msn.com
Member-at-Large:	Mike Eliot	.....mikeyeliot@gmail.com..(925) 798-0303
Member-at-Large:	Chick Chickering	.....elchick447@comcast.net..(925) 686-9231
Quail Editor:	Maren Smith	.....marensmithbkk@yahoo.com..(925) 322-9477

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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

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

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



Mt. Diablo Audubon Society thanks our Business Partners:
AlphaGraphics, Walnut Creek
Galaxy Press, Concord
Native Bird Connections
Rakestraw Books, Danville
Wild Birds Unlimited, Pleasant Hill

The Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7 PM the first Thursday of each month except in July and August in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94598.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll me/my family in the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. (MDAS dues are tax-deductible)
- For an additional \$20 please enroll me as a first-time member in the National Audubon Society (NAS). (includes 6 bi-monthly issues of Audubon Magazine)
- Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. (or 2 annual \$250 payments)
- I am enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

Please send the Quail by “Go Green” email US Mail

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____ email: _____

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

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

Address Service Requested



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



A Yellow Warbler eating fennel at Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds,
Isaac Aronow photo



In October, for Birding Information, Kelly Davidson Chou, Mt. View Sanitary District Biologist (bottom L, Maren Smith photo) presented an update on the Moorhen Marsh pond improvements, and tide gate control and nesting platforms in McNabney Marsh.

Max Tarjan, PhD, the Waterbird Program Director for San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) presented a program on SF Bay salt marsh restoration, and also gave us an update on California Gulls and waterbirds in the Bay. (top L, Maren Smith photo) **To learn about volunteer activities with SFBBO: sfbb.org/volunteer/index.php**

Brian Murphy (below middle, Georgette Howington photo) at the MDAS table for the WBU October event; and September Birding By Ear field trip (below R, Maren Smith photo)

“Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.” ~John Muir

