

the Quail

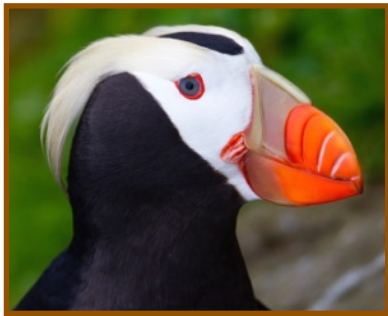
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
www.diabloaudubon.org

Volume 63, Number 6

March 2018

March Program, 8 PM : Birds of Alaska: the Great Land ♦ Norman Kikuchi, MD

Alaska is truly a birder's paradise and it should be at the top of any birdwatcher's list to make the pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. The name Alaska comes from the Aleut



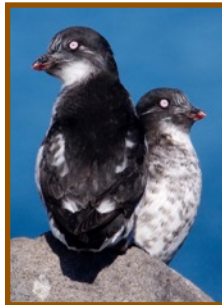
Tufted Puffin, Norman Kikuchi photo

word *Alyeska* which means "Great Land." It is a paradise for birds who find that the vast expanses of tundra and boreal forests offer less competition for breeding sites, along with relatively low density of predators per square mile, and an insect biomass that in summer, rivals that of the Amazon Basin. Alaska is an ideal place for birds to breed and raise their young.

Norman Kikuchi has been fortunate to visit the Great Land almost annually for the past 20 years, each visit yielding experiences wonderful and unexpected. His presentation will feature his photos from Nome on the Seward Peninsula, St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea, Barrow on the North Slope, and Homer on the Kenai Peninsula.

His childhood interest in birds began while stalking Ring-necked Pheasants in the foothills of Mt. Diablo, but his real bird epiphany occurred during his college days when he witnessed the impalement of a Western Fence Lizard by a Loggerhead Shrike on a Joshua tree spine. He was transfixed by the moment!

Norman graduated from the University of California, Davis with a degree in Zoology and a minor in Herpetology. He completed medical school and family practice residency at the University of California, Irvine. A two-year stint working in emergency room medicine in Saudi Arabia near the



Above: King Eider; bottom L: Least Auklets, Norman Kikuchi photos

Red Sea led to two decades of traveling the worlds' oceans in pursuit of underwater images. Highlights from this period include being knocked around in cages by Great White Sharks in South Africa and being bubble-netted by a mother Humpback Whale defending her calf in the waters off the Dominican Republic.

In 1997, Norman acquired the super telephoto Canon lenses. He switched to his present obsession, avian photography, and his ultimate goal, photographing all the breeding birds in the U.S. and Canada. He practices Urgent Care and Occupational Medicine in Redding, is a Santa Cruz Bird Club lifetime member, and a field trip leader for Santa Clara Valley Audubon.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be

Thursday, March 1 in the Camellia Room, 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* & raffle
**please bring your own coffee mug*
8:00 PM Program: Norman Kikuchi, MD ♦ Birds of Alaska

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM:
Thursday, April 5, Jill Hedgecock ♦ Elephants

7 PM Birding Information

By choosing native plants for our yards, we can restore vital habitat for birds and help them adapt and survive climate change. Nancy Wenninger, MDAS Conservation Chair, will present National Audubon's "Plants For Birds" program, designed to enable anyone to make a positive impact by planting California natives. www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

As you are probably aware, 2018 has been designated the Year of the Bird to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The National Geographic Society, National Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, BirdLife International, and more than 50 other organizations are joining together to celebrate the Act's ratification and its ever-increasing importance today. The central theme in this movement is "Why Birds Matter." I have encountered many poignant views in that regard from a number of birders and I would like to share some of those with you. I hope that you find them as meaningful as I found them.

"Birds make any place a chance for discovery, they make a garden seem wild, they are a little bit of wilderness coming into a city park, and for a bird watcher every walk is filled with anticipation. What feathered jewel might drop out of the sky next?" ~David Sibley, Author

"Without birds, nature would lose her voice and the planet its most engaging envoys. Birds matter precisely because they matter to us. Environment is a concept. Nature

a label. Birds are real, elements that live within our sensory plane. They spread their wings and bridge the gap between our world and the natural world." ~Pete Dunne, Author and Director of Cape May Bird Observatory

"Birds are the catalyst for taking me outdoors and shaping the way I live and think. If we can all share this appreciation of the natural world and its positive impact on our lifestyles, the planet will be a different place." ~Richard Crossley, photographer and author of *The Crossley ID Guide*

"Birds are our link to emotions—the Great Egret flying toward me, landing on the railing outside the window as I mourned my father's death; the children I take outside and the joyful shout "I see the bird!" as they hold binoculars for the first time; the gritted teeth at a mockingbird's midnight song; the tear slipping down the cheek for a pile of feathers; the awe of migratory journeys. The list is long, complicated biologically, and metaphorically linked to our being." ~Diana Granados, Founder Native Bird Connections, past Board Member, Mount Diablo Audubon Society

Why Birds Matter

*Nature's gift to grace the sky.
Flights of fancy, spirits high.
With cheerful song they greet the day
And gently ease our cares away.*

~Andy Mauro, Buena Vista Audubon Society

This and That

➤ **Save Mount Diablo needs your help!** From March through May, volunteers over the age of 18 are needed to collect signatures in Antioch to qualify for a ballot measure that will protect more than 1,800 acres of beautiful hills adjacent to Sand Hill Creek. Together, we have a chance to protect thousands of acres of endangered species and bird habitat, stop suburban sprawl, and defend new regional parks in East Contra Costa County. Save Mount Diablo will provide you with background information before your shift and pair you up with more experienced people. **For more information, please contact Juan Pablo Galván, Save Mount Diablo Land Use Manager, at: jpgalvan@savemountdiablo.org, or call (925) 947-3535.**

➤ **The Education Committee is looking for volunteers.** If you are interested in helping set up member classes, contacting instructors, brainstorming ideas, collaborating with area conservation groups to provide birding expertise on hikes, and/or working with youth and classroom teachers to further the MDAS mission, please contact Maren Smith, Education Committee Chair at: marensmithbkk@yahoo.com or (925) 322-8477. We meet every other month.

➤ Ted Robertson, MDAS member, shared a link to an interesting *SFGate* article written by his daughter Michelle Robertson about the last quail left in San Francisco: m.sfgate.com/science/article/quail-san-francisco-cats-last-state-bird-12309957.php

➤ **Two Easy Ways to Give**

1. Register at **Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill** as an MDAS member. Each time you make a purchase, 5% will be donated to MDAS and Native Bird Connections. Since 2012, Mike Eliot has contributed over \$3300.
2. If you, your family members, 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."

Welcome New Members

Hilda Sau Chan	Pittsburg
Michael Kellogg	Crockett
John Havens	Walnut Creek
Shara McAlister	Lafayette
Elene Sayre	Lafayette

Q

What bird is allowed by Mule Deer to land on their head and body to pick parasites off of them?

Unscramble the letters or see page 6 for the answer.

BANCLFRJURASIYACI

MDAS on the Web

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

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 April *Quail* deadline will be March 5.**

Observations (1/5-2/4/18) ————— by Maury Stern

January was an early spring for some returning birds. Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds returned about 2-3 weeks earlier than normal. Some swallows came early. Going out the last few weeks, I have heard unexpected early breeding sounds of a variety of songbirds.

LK and DM saw a **Brant** off shore from the Canal Blvd. viewing platform in Richmond. 1/23

Two **Eurasian Wigeons** were at Miller-Knox RP in Pt. Richmond 1/14, JS; and four were there on 1/17. LK

On 1/23, LK and DM saw 1,500 **Surf Scoters** in San Pablo Bay, coinciding with the Herring Run.

A single **Long-tailed Duck** was at the Pt. Molate/Pt. San Pablo area 2/1, AM, JC, CM; and 2/2, AL.

PS saw a **Barrow's Goldeneye** (photo above by Paul Schorr) at Contra



Loma RP in Antioch in a flock of 15 **Common Goldeneyes** on 1/23.

Three pair of **Hooded Merganser** were in Grayson Creek in Pleasant Hill behind the Denny's Restaurant on 1/18. LR

KH saw a **White-winged Dove** at a private home in Crockett 1/11.

P & N S saw an **Anna's Hummingbird** (photo below by Lynn Larrow) gathering nest material in Tilden Park 1/20, and GS saw one on the nest 1/28, also in Tilden Park.



The Quail

A **Selaphorus sp. Hummingbird** was at Pinole Regional Park 1/14. SD

GG saw a **Rufous Hummingbird** 1/27 at Tilden and C&TW saw one at Miller-Knox Regional Park 2/3.

Allen's Hummingbirds were at Pt. San Pablo, Miller-Knox RP, and Bethel Island 1/17, LK; and 1/28 at Pt. Pinole, SD.

Over 20 **Common Gallinule** were at Contra Loma RP 1/23.

An **Iceland (Thayer's) Gull** was at the Byron Water Treatment Plant, seen on 1/17 by LK.

An early **Caspian Tern** was at Bethel Island 1/14. LK, JB, LC, NE, EM, OM, JM, MS

The most remarkable bird of the year so far is a **Laysan Albatross** that flew around the Carquinez Strait between the Benicia and Carquinez bridges for 90 minutes 1/23. EP (There is a video on Ebird under EP's name).

LK and DM saw 6,000 **Double-crested Cormorants** and 2,500 **Brandt's Cormorants** in San Pablo Bay during the 1/23 Herring Run.

On 1/21, DB saw five **White-faced Ibis** at the Wildcat Marsh off Richmond Parkway.

An unusual **Red-naped Woodpecker** was at Tilden Nature Area 2/2. AK, EK, GS

LW had a **Yellow-shafted Flicker** on Oak Knoll Court in Walnut Creek on 1/21.

The **Tropical Kingbird** of Heather Farm Park continues to be seen. HH (photo R by Cassie Tzur)

A **Tree Swallow** was at Pt. San Pablo 1/28, and on 2/2, AKr saw one investigating a bird box at Wildcat Canyon Park.

Barn Swallows, that used to be exceedingly rare in winter, were at Meeker Slough, 51st St. entrance 1/13, TH; Holland Tract 1/24, LK; and the West County Wastewater Treatment Plant in Richmond 1/28, JH.



LK found a **Winter Wren**—the eastern form that should be east of the Rockies—at Pt. Molate/Pt. San Pablo on 1/17 and 1/28. It had a different song from the very similar Pacific Wren of our area. JC saw the bird 2/1.

Four **Varied Thrushes** were along South Park Road in Tilden 1/20. P&NS

A **Vesper Sparrow**, present since November, 2017, was seen at Briones Regional Park 1/11, CM, and 1/26, AL.

A **White-throated Sparrow** was at JR's Alamo house.

JE had a **Harris's Sparrow** at his Pinole house 1/20.

A **Cassiar Junco** was at Bethel Island 1/24. LK This is a Canadian Rockies sub-species of the Dark-eyed Junco and winters in the U.S. Rockies.

An anonymous person saw a **Western Tanager** at Heather Farm 1/11.

A **Tricolored Blackbird** was with a mixed Blackbird flock at Contra Loma Park RP 1/23. PS

LK saw three **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** 1/31 at Holland Tract.

LK also saw 33 **Great-tailed Grackles** at Holland Tract 1/31.

A **Hooded Oriole** was at Bethel Island 1/17 and 1/24. LK



JB Jonah Benningfield, DB Don Bernstein, JC Jim Chiropoulos, LC Lucas Corneliusen, SD Sheila Dickie, JE Jack Edick, NF Nicolas Forestell, GG Gregory Gladkov, HH Hugh Harvey, KH Kevin Hintsa, TH Tim Holland, JH Jeff Hoppes, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, EK Erica Kawata, AKr Alan Krakauer, AL Albert Linkowski, AM Aaron Maizlich, CM Colin Meusel, EM Eddie Monson, OM Oscar Moss, DM Dominik Mosur, JM John Myles, SP Sergey Pavlov, EP Eric Pilotte, LR Latha Rajagopalan, JR Jean Richmond, PS Paul Schorr, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, MS Mark Schubert, JS Judi Sierra, GS George Suennen, LW L. Weiss, C&TW Chris and Terri Wills

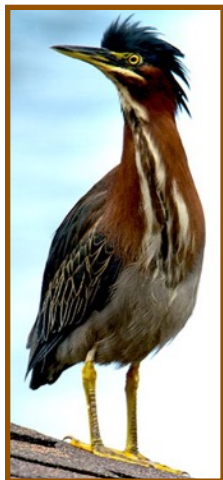
Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com, call Maury at (925) 284-5980, or send them to EBB sightings@yahoogroups.com. If you report sightings to eBird, please also send them to Maury Stern.

Trip Reports

East Contra Costa County, January

18: With air temperatures in the upper forties to mid-fifties, twelve members and one guest enjoyed

a winter's day of birding in Eastern Contra Costa County. Beginning at Big Break, the group continued on to Big Break Trail/Iron House Sanitary District, Cypress Grove Park in Oakley, Marsh Creek Trail, and then to the Knightsen area. Sixty-seven species were seen or heard and some highlights included: Five heron species (Great and Snowy Egrets, Great Blue, Green, and Black-crowned Night-Herons); seven sparrow/towhee species (Spotted Towhee, and Savannah, Fox, Song, Lincoln, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows); Sora; Virginia Rail; Common Gallinule; Bonaparte's Gull; Say's Phoebe; American Pipit; Common Yellowthroat; and Greater Yellowlegs. ~**Paul Schorr**



Green Heron, Lynn Larrow photo

Las Gallinas WTP/Rush Creek Marsh/Shollenberger Park/Ellis Creek, January 27: Highlights at Las Gallinas included a couple of Mute Swans, a female Common Merganser, a Sora, and a Virginia Rail. Ducks included Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Northern Shoveler, and Pintails. Marsh Wrens were singing a lot, though hard to spot down in the reeds, while a bright male Common Yellowthroat flew out of the vegetation for a couple of good views. Rush Creek Marsh was fairly dry close to the



Eurasian Wigeon, Beth Branthaver photo

highway, but there were scattered peeps farther back with many American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts in view. Shollenberger also had a Mute Swan, two Marbled Godwits, a Dunlin, some Long-billed Curlews, a few Least Sandpipers, and more avocets and stilts. The best bird of the day was the male Eurasian Wigeon along the main trail from the office building. While it was disappointing not to find the five species of Geese that were seen at Ellis Creek earlier in the week, it was still a productive day. A total of 73 species were seen during the trip. ~**Eugenia K. Larson**

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh @ High Tide, January 31: It was a special start to the day due to the Super Blue Blood Moon. The weather was beautiful for the 24 participants, and we had good sightings at both locations. The trees in the park at Lake Merritt were quite busy with songbirds. There were many Western Bluebirds and we had a surprise sighting of a Brown Creeper. On the water, the numbers continue to be down. We did see many Common Goldeneyes and a Barrow's Goldeneye amongst them. Between both locations,

a total of 16 different kinds of ducks were seen, including all three of the teal species at Garretson Point. Arrowhead Marsh sightings started well with a Burrowing Owl in full view on mound #1, and a small group of Snow Geese spotted on the way to the parking lot. There were a number of



Above: Burrowing Owl, Beth Branthaver photos

sightings of different Ridgway's Rails, and one lone Sora was seen. Once again, we saw no Virginia Rails. The dock that is usually covered with Willets, Marbled Godwits, and a handful of Black Turnstones had only people on it. We had to be satisfied with some long distance scope sightings of the expected shorebird species. The rainwater pond at Garretson

Point, although diminished in size due to the lack of rain, had enough water for some ducks, a large number of American Avocets and some waders. A total of 81 species were seen. ~**Sandy Ritchie**

New Sales Manager, Cathy Castillo

A big thanks and welcome to Cathy Castillo, the new MDAS Sales Manager who replaces Diane Malucelli (thank you Diane for your many years of service)! Also, a big thanks to Nancy Schorr and Linda Shinn for helping with sales at monthly meetings.

Cathy has always been a nature lover, enjoying the beauty and wonders around us. "When I'm feeling creative, I like to center my creativity around nature's beauty, patterns, tastes, smells, and sounds. I dabble in a little sketching, watercolors, cooking, and gardening with nature at my core."

In her 40+ years of teaching, she often used plants, rocks, and birds as a means to teach the topic at hand to her students, finding that children have a profound interest and awe for all of nature's wonders. Cathy was fortunate to work under Paul Schorr for many years— not only because he was an excellent leader, but because they shared this common connection of sharing nature with children.

Cathy and her husband Jack have two adult sons, Jack and Michael, and two dogs, Buddy and CoraLee. She belongs to the Walnut Creek Garden Club and also supervises student teachers part-time at CSU, East Bay.

She joined MDAS last year and enjoys the speakers and the camaraderie of the collective group, so when the call went out for support she felt she needed to contribute in some way. Cathy is pleased to join everyone at MDAS working to support the enjoyment of birding.

Quail Editor Position Open

If you are creative and enjoy writing, editing, and learning about birds, this might just be the dream volunteer job for you! Contact Maren Smith at: marensmithbkk@yahoo.com.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

March 2018 (Contact Leader for ?s or rain cancellations)

07 Wednesday Contra Loma Reservoir
13 Tuesday McNabney Marsh
22 Thursday Valle Vista
24 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park
28 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas

April 2018

04 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
07 Saturday Garin Regional Park
12 Thursday North Briones
17 Tuesday Pine Canyon
19 Thursday Black Diamond Mines
21 Saturday Mines Road
24 Tuesday Del Puerto Canyon

1 Wednesday, March 7

Contra Loma Reservoir

Leader: Paul Schorr (925) 998-0070

Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 7:45 AM. **OR**, meet the leader at 8:30 AM at the Channel Point Parking Lot in Contra Loma Regional Park. Go east on Highway 4 and exit at Lone Tree Way in Antioch. Continue south to Golf Course Road and turn right. Continue on Golf Course Road to Frederickson Lane, turn right, and continue into the park and the entrance kiosk. (Fee required at kiosk) Turn left and continue to first parking lot on right, the Channel Point Parking Lot. Expected species include waterfowl and woodland, riparian/marsh, shore and grassland birds. Bring lunch and liquids.

2 Tuesday, March 13

McNabney Marsh

Leader: Steve Taylor (925) 828-8810

Meet at 9 AM at the Mt. View Sanitary viewing platform. (Special projects are underway at the MVSD ponds, so they are not currently open to the public) From I-680 southbound, exit at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. From I-680 northbound, exit at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road, and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will turn left. At 0.4 miles turn sharp left onto Mt. View Sanitary's private road. Follow the road through the entry gate, alongside the freeway, to the viewing platform along the road, before the tunnel. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and herons. We may also bird at Martinez Regional Shoreline. Bring a snack and liquids.



2 Thursday, March 22

Valle Vista

Leader: Don Lewis (925) 284-5480

Meet at 8 AM at Valle Vista staging area off Canyon Road in Moraga. From SR 24 in Orinda, take Moraga Way to Moraga. From Mt. Diablo Blvd in Lafayette, take Moraga Road south to Moraga. At the Chevron station, go south one mile on Canyon Road to Valle Vista. Expect 55-60 species; we should be finished by noon. Bring snack and liquids.



Above: Spotted Towhee; Below L: Merlin, Isaac Aronow photos

2 Saturday, March 24

Tomales Bay State Park

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Carpool leaves at 7 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. **OR**, meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at Heart's Desire Beach in Tomales Bay State Park. After crossing the Richmond Bridge (toll), follow US 101 north and take the first San Rafael exit. Go two blocks, turn left onto 3rd Street. In San Anselmo turn right onto Sir Francis Drake. Follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd. through Inverness. Just over the ridge, turn right onto Pierce Point Road. The park entrance is on the right. (Entry fee required) Bring snack, lunch, and liquids.

3 Wednesday, March 28

Lake Lagunitas

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

This very popular birding trip to Marin passes through varied terrain in the beautiful area of the northern slopes of Mount Tamalpais. Carpool leaves from Sun Valley Mall at 7:30 AM. **OR**, cross the San Rafael Bridge to US 101 north. Take the first San Rafael exit, go left on 3rd Street. In San Anselmo turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. to Fairfax. Go left on Fairfax Bolinas Road, follow to left turn on Sky Oaks Road, and continue to kiosk. (Entry fee of \$8 last year) Drive to parking lot near foot of Lagunitas Dam. Approximate meeting time is 9 AM. After birding the nearby area, we will hike around Lake Lagunitas. We have often found Pileated Woodpeckers here. Bring snack, lunch and liquids.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. **Contact Leader for ?s or rain cancellations.** MDAS is a conservation organization; as such, we encourage carpooling (riders help with gas, tolls, or entry fees). **Drivers who carpool for 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

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

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.



California Scrub-Jay ♦ *Aphelocoma californica*

by Jean Halford

The California Scrub-jay is a common backyard bird that is fun to watch since it is extremely animated, squawking as it flies onto a feeder, hopping here and there, chasing other birds away. So isn't a "party" of jays an appropriate name for a group of jays? Other collective names are a "band," a "cast," or a "scold."

The Western Scrub-Jay (photo R by Jean Halford) was split into two species in July 2016: the California Scrub-Jay and the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay. But according to the "The Bird Book" published in 1914 by Chester A. Reed, there were 10 species in the genus *Aphelocoma* including California and Woodhouse's Jay—no "scrub" at that time. Now there are only five jays in that genus, so perhaps more splits will be coming.

Our bright blue and gray jays are found in scrub, oak woodlands, and suburban yards of the western coastal region, from British Columbia to Baja California, Mexico. They are omnivorous, their diet changing depending on what food is available. In summer, a great portion of their diet consists of insects, spiders, and snails. In winter, they prefer acorns, and other seeds, nuts, and berries. They may feed on rodents, small amphibians, and reptiles. These jays are also known to eat other birds' eggs and nestlings.

Jays will also become tame enough to land on a hand to grab a peanut. There was a jay at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve that for years would follow the birding group around since someone always had a peanut to share. Finally, a rule was established that feeding could only occur in the parking area of the Preserve, because the jay was making it more difficult for birders to see smaller birds it had scared away!

California Scrub-Jays breed in isolated pairs, not in cooperative flocks like most other jays of the same genus. These pairs typically stay together all year on their permanent

territory. In Contra Costa County, jays have been observed gathering nesting materials as early as March 3. The nest site is a large bush or tree, usually fairly low, 5-15 feet above the ground, but occasionally higher. The nest is built by both sexes, and made into a thick-walled cup of grass and twigs, lined with animal hair and rootlets. The 3-5 eggs are light green spotted with brown or olive and the female incubates the eggs alone for 15-18 days, with the male sometimes feeding the female during this time. The young leave the nest 18-22 days after hatching but are cared for by their parents for at least another month.



The California Scrub-Jay is a strikingly handsome bird, bright azure blue with clean white underparts. Its bill is stout and hooked, giving it extra power and grip to help hammer open acorns. They will cache acorns during the fall to save for a needier time, burying them in loose dirt, leaves, mulch and even potted plants. On occasion, I have found an oak tree sprouting in one of my patio pots, so obviously, the jays do not retrieve all of their cached food sources. This food source is not wasted, however; many germinate into trees.

Research on the California Scrub-jay has found that their brain-to-body mass ratio rivals that of cetaceans (dolphins and whales) and chimpanzees. Researchers at UC Davis have also reported an odd behavior not usually associated with animals: they seem to mourn the loss of flock members, screeching loudly near a dead jay for as long as 30 minutes and remaining close to the body for a day or two.

Another unusual relationship these jays have is with Mule Deer who allow the birds to hop on their body and head to feed on ticks and fleas, standing still and holding their ears up to give the jays easier access.

The California Scrub-Jay population appears to be stable. The oldest known jay lived to be at least 15 years 9 months old.

Education Committee Updates

► Waterbirds of Central CA & SF Bay Class, Merritt College

Here's a fun and affordable community college deep dive into Bay Area Waterbirds from March 14-April 28, with evening classes 3/14 and 3/21 and five weekend field trips. Instructor Daniel Edelstein has over 30 years experience as a birder, naturalist, biologist, consultant and writer. **Find out how to register at danielmerrittclasses.blogspot.com/ or email the instructor at: danieledelstein@att.net.**

► Spring Avian Treasures and Birding By Ear classes FULL!

Both classes offered by the MDAS Education Committee for spring are now full. If you are interested in future classes or have ideas for possible classes and instructors, please contact Maren Smith, Education Committee Chair, at: marensmithbkk@yahoo.com.

Merritt College
Waterbirds of Central CA
& The SF Bay Area:
ID, Behavior, & Ecology
 BIOL 48, Class 28168, Section S1-LEC
 INSTRUCTOR: Daniel Edelstein, M.S.
 Avian Biologist Since 1990 & Certified Wildlife Biologist Assoc.

(*) = Ducks, herons, shorebirds, & gulls/terns

Slide Show/Lecture: 3/14 & 3/21/18 7-8:50 PM, Room 5417, Merritt Campus
 5 Field trip dates: 3/31, 4/7, 4/14, 4/21, & 4/28/18 (9 AM - 2:50 pm)

Nesting Season is Coming

Mid-winter is the time when many backyard birds begin to search for nesting sites. Some, like wrens, chickadees, titmice, and bluebirds are cavity nesters, while most others prefer to construct nests high in trees.

If you wish to watch birds nesting, you can provide nest boxes for the cavity nesters. Always consider what's best for both you and the birds. Crafty boxes mainly designed for decoration are not good for birds.

Appropriate nest boxes are sized for the species of bird you wish to attract. First, birds notice the opening and its size. If the hole is too large, birds will reject it for fear of giving predators access. The height of the opening above the floor is also sized for each species to provide adequate safety and access.

Box material and thickness of walls is important to keep the box warm in cold weather while preventing too much heat in hot weather. Some paints, varnishes, and decorations can be harmful or fatal to birds.

Well-built boxes also provide ventilation and drainage openings, as well as interior ladders to allow fledglings to climb out. They should not have exterior perches that make it easier for predators to attack.

Good boxes are easy to use. They often have hinged tops, allowing occasional viewing, and side or front doors to allow for easy cleaning after nesting season ends.

When installing nest boxes, the opening should be widely visible to birds flying by and to people watching the nest activity. Putting them out in mid-winter allows birds time to get used to them before nesting season starts. Place them at a safe height so that birds feel safe from ground predators.

Nesting material is available that birds can use to line nests, helping with warmth while making a comfortable place for nestlings in the spring. Lint and other fibrous materials can be toxic or can tangle on birds' feet.

After nesting season, boxes should be taken down and cleaned thoroughly to prevent mite and insect infestations. ~Mike Eliot, WBU

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:	Maren Smith	.....marensmithbkk@yahoo.com..(925) 322-9477
Membership:	Virginia Hamrick	.....vhamrick8@gmail.com..(925)-945-7761
Sales Manager:	Cathy Castillo	.....artscastillo@gmail.com..(925) 209-6665
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	.....ggolleyhtak@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 6:45 PM at WBU on the 2nd Thursday except for July and August. Please check the MDAS website diabloaudubon.org for cancelled or rescheduled Board meetings.



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 White-crowned Sparrow enjoys a morning bath, Beth Branthaver photo



In case you missed it, at the February meeting:

- Bob Powers (top L) instructed the crowd of about 120 people (bottom far L) on the properties of birds' colorful feathers, illustrated with graphs, big words, and his incredible photos. Maren Smith photos
- Juan Pablo Galvan (L), Save Mount Diablo Land Use Manager, told MDAS about the "Save Sand Creek" signature gathering campaign in Antioch and asked for volunteers to help curb urban sprawl and protect wildlife and birds who live there. (see page 2 for more information) **Info: jpgalvan@savemountdiablo.org**



~ Mike Meacham's CBC team in Pine Canyon (below L) and a Peregrine Falcon seen during the CBC, Grace Mannell photos

*"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."
~Albert Einstein*

