



# THE QUAIL

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society | [www.diabloaudubon.org](http://www.diabloaudubon.org)

## 8 pm Program: Birds of Belize

Belize is a birder's paradise with over 600 species, including 40 species of raptors. A part of the Yucatan Peninsula, this tiny, English-speaking country on the Caribbean Coast is on the migration path for some of our spring and summer species. Known for its biodiversity, Belize has become a mecca for bird lovers.

In this presentation, Rich Cimino will show us the variety of birds and habitats found in Belize's majestic tropical rainforests, fertile farmlands, numerous cayes, fresh water marshes, and savannas. Nearly half of the country's land and adjacent waters are protected under forest reserves, marine reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and other protected area designations.

Rich, who has been birding Northern California for more than 50 years, is the owner and field guide for Yellowbilled Tours, which offers annual birding tours throughout the United States, France, Guatemala and—of course—Belize.



Scarlet Macaws thrive in the rainforests of Belize. (Photo Rich Cimino)

Rich lives in Marin County. In support of the Olompali State Park, he leads a monthly beginning bird walk. He served for eight years as the conservation chair for Alameda County's Ohlone Audubon Society. He participated in the Altamont Pass Wind Turbine Area Golden Eagle and Raptor surveys, and compiles the Eastern Alameda County Christmas Bird Count, now in its ninth year. He has special interests in eco-sustainable tourism and birding photography.

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

## 7 pm: Ospreys

Cindy Margulis, executive director of Golden Gate Audubon, will speak on the SFBayOspreys.org initiative and how one Osprey nest on the edge of our Bay has been inspiring widespread bird love.



## Next Meeting: SEPTEMBER 6

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society will meet **Thursday, Sept. 6**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

**6:30 pm** Doors open

**7:00 pm** Birding Info

**7:25 pm** News

**7:40 pm** Snacks & Raffle

**8:00 pm** Main Program

**"Birds of Belize"**

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## 2018-19 Field Trip Schedule

**Plus:** MDAS T-shirts and Duck Stamps for sale!

# Making Connections

For me, a coincidental encounter with other birders during birding outings enhances the experience and makes the moment even more special and memorable.

This happened recently while Nancy and I were in Colorado for our grandson's high school graduation in May. We had a day to ourselves, so we spent the opportunity birding at Crow Valley Campground, a spot on the Colorado Birding Trail about 45 miles east of Fort Collins.



**PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

Most of the springtime campers at Crow Valley are birders, many with feeders and spotting scopes set up at their sites. The campground is adjacent to the Pawnee National Grassland, 193,060 acres of public, native short grass prairie that is part of the Colorado Birding Trail.

It was a very warm morning, so we birded in the shade of the large campground trees where we located the bird of the trip—an Orchard Oriole. After lunch, we decided to walk the campground trail, which led into some of the campsites. As we approached one site where we could see feeders set up, we met Steve and Nancy, two campers from Southern California who belonged to Sea and Sage Audubon in Irvine. As our conversation developed, we asked if they knew Bettina Eastman, an excellent birder and guide who is also a member of Sea and Sage Audubon. Bettina had helped us during an April trip to find a California Gnatcatcher and other coastal birds. Sure enough, they knew her well and were close friends. In fact, they texted her immediately to share with her this coincidental encounter far from our homes.

After bidding goodbye to Steve and Nancy, we continued on the trail past their campsite and had brief looks at a Brown Thrasher, which concluded our birding at Crow Valley Campground.

Down the line, I may have to think hard about the birds that we saw at Crow Valley Campground, but I will probably recall with greater ease the chance encounter with Steve and Nancy and our shared friend and birder, Bettina. After all, it's those unique connections, particularly in nature, that I find really make an impact and have a lasting effect, creating special memories. Hopefully, reading this will cause you to reminisce and recall fondly some of your own special birding/ birder encounters. —*Paul Schorr*

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The MDAS Board meets at 6:45 pm at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill on the second Thursday of every month except July and August.

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[www.diabloaudubon.org](http://www.diabloaudubon.org)

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**Brand new MDAS shirts** with Quail logo will be available at the September general meeting. The shirts cost \$25 each and are available in men's and women's sizes. Cathy Castillo, the MDAS Sales Manager, will be selling them near the raffle table. We can accept cash or checks made out to MDAS. We will continually place new orders, so there will be a selection of shirts available at each meeting. You may also order a shirt through Cathy and pick it up at the next meeting.



**2018-19 Duck Stamps** will also be for sale at the September meeting, thanks to Don Lewis. The \$25 stamps allow buyers access to National Wildlife Refuges. The stamps are also a terrific way to support such lands and the birds who use them. Nearly all the purchase price goes to protect and acquire wetlands. This year's stamp features a pair of mallards by Minnesota's Bob Hautman, whose paintings appeared on two previous stamps. See Cathy Castillo to buy.

# A Good App to Start

*This is the second in a series of columns by MDAS Webmaster Dal Leite presenting online resources for birders. Further details and ways to access the resources described are available on the "Bird Wide Web" page on our website ([www.diabloaudubon.org/bird-wide-web.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.org/bird-wide-web.php)).*



This column's topic: **iBird Lite** (free from Apple App Store, Google Play)

For the beginning to intermediate birder, iBird Lite offers an introduction to what a mobile application can do to expand our awareness and appreciation for birdwatching. It's also a chance to see what a downloaded database of birding information can mean while in the field, far from a reliable cell data connection.



Unlike many of the other birding apps around, the iBird family of apps uses illustrations rather than

photographs, which significantly reduces the memory storage space required on a smart phone or tablet to download it, and makes it possible to concentrate on specific important features of a bird, rather than a full portrait image, no matter how well shot.

iBird Lite is the free, "sampler" version of the full iBird app, providing complete entries for up to 50 commonly seen birds in North America. It can be further customized for the user's region, even limited to nearby birds, reducing confusion and clutter with species very unlikely to be seen.

Clicking on an entry—such as Acorn Woodpecker—opens a wealth of info, including detailed drawings with optional field marks, plus links for range, sounds, etc. Closing the Acorn Woodpecker page, notice the Set View/Sort Mode link at the top of the Browse page. This lets you choose how the species will be listed, and even how specific information will be presented. Experiment and see the options; "Thumbnails" is the default setting.

Want to see only local birds? You can choose from the Search > link at the upper right to only be shown "Birds Around Me", which will open a map to your GPS location if you're online. If not, you can select California from the Location menu. Using the map allows you to pick a radius from your precise location from 25 to 150 miles.

Search options include an astonishing array of choices, including Size, Shape, and even Belly Pattern and Song Pattern. It's fun just to go through the search filters, either for initial learning or an engaging review of what you think you know.

Returning to the opening Browse page, click on the standard three-line mobile menu icon, and see more ways to use the app, and even a second method of accessing the Search filters. The Bird Help Forum link opens into the WhatBird Community pages, including free personalized bird ID help for North American birds, and photo sharing and discussion with a free log-in account. The desktop version of the Forum can also be accessed through the [whatbird.com](http://whatbird.com) website discussed in the previous article in this series.

# Upcoming Field Trips



**2 Thursday, Sept. 6,**

## **Jewel Lake, Tilden Park**

Leader: Maury Stern (925) 284-5980

Short morning walk to look for migrants. Meet 7:30 am in Nature Center parking lot. From Hwy 24 in Orinda, go north on Camino Pablo. Turn L on Wildcat Canyon Rd. Stay R at the Brazil Bldg. At the next main intersection, turn R and pass Lake Anza and the Carousel. Or take Fish Ranch Rd from the Caldecott Tunnel. Turn R at the top onto Grizzly Peak Rd. Turn R and downhill onto South Park Dr, then L at the bottom onto Wildcat Canyon Rd.

**2 Saturday, Sept. 8**

## **Antioch Dunes Nat'l Wildlife Refuge**

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

Carpool from Sun Valley at 9:00 am. Event 10-11 am. This is your chance to visit the only National Wildlife Refuge in our county. A one-hour docent-led tour will introduce us to the history of the only place on earth where one can see Lang's Metalmark Butterfly. The butterfly requires Naked-stem Buckwheat for its entire life-cycle. May be hot. No shade. May be dusty walking along graded fire trails. Bring sun protection and water. From Hwy 4 in Antioch, exit north on A Street. After about 1 mile, bend R onto Wilbur Avenue. Turn L onto Fulton Shipyard Rd and cross the railroad tracks. The entry gate is on the right.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. **Contact Leader for ?s or rain cancellations.** MDAS encourages carpooling (riders help with gas, tolls, or 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 rougher terrain

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

•**Sycamore Valley Rd Park and Ride:** Exit I-680 S at Sycamore Valley Rd and park one block east of the freeway.

**1 Saturday, Sept. 15,**

## **Healdsburg Vaux's Swifts**

Leader: Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979

We hope to see thousands of swifts enter a chimney on the grounds of the Rio Lindo Academy. This has been an annual occurrence since 1989, when human use of the chimney ceased. We will return home after dark. Carpool leaves Sun Valley Mall at 4:00 pm. 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 R. In Petaluma take US 101 N to Healdsburg, exit at Old Redwood Hwy/Healdsburg Ave (Exit 502). Go north to Bailhache Ave, turn R on Bailhache, which becomes Rio Lindo Ave. Follow it about 3 miles into the Academy's main entrance. Turn L at the first stop sign and another L just before the dormitory. In half a block, turn R toward the rear of the campus, park on the R past the chimney. Bring folding chairs, a picnic supper and enjoy the evening show. Alcohol, including wine, is not permitted on school property. The carpool will first stop in downtown Healdsburg for coffee/food/a bathroom. Please call leader if you want to carpool.

**2 Thursday, Sept. 20,**

## **Hayward Regional Shoreline**

Leader: Bob Richmond (510) 427-9843

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville at 7:45 am. Meet at 8:30 am at Winton Avenue entrance. From I-880, exit Winton Avenue, drive west 4.5 miles. Park near the trail head just before the parking lot gate. Because traffic is so unpredictable, if no one is there, wait a while. Passerines, shorebirds and possible early ducks. Time permitting, we will finish at the San Leandro Marina. Bring drinks and lunch.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Cheryl Abel	Martinez
Elisa Ballard	Martinez
John Corlett	Oakland
Donna Ellen	Livermore
Lisa Engstrom	Orinda
Ron Fraenkel	Walnut Creek
Ron & Lisa Graydon	Concord
Leide Marie Haitzma	Walnut Creek
Stephen Imialek	Brentwood
Rachel Lewis	Hercules
Leo Lieber	Orinda
Roberto Pombo	Pittsburg
Sandy Waite	Concord
Viviana Wolinsky	Oakland



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*(Photo Isaac Aronow)*

## MDAS thanks our Business Partners

**AlphaGraphics**  
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## Native Bird Connections

**Rakestraw Books**  
Danville

**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
Pleasant Hill

## Fall Classes



### Raptor Identification by Pamela Llewellyn

Two 2-hour classes and two 4-hour trips

Classes: Tuesday, October 2 and 9, 7-9 pm

Field Trips: Sunday October 7 and 14, 8 am-noon

Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Oak Room

(maximum 15 participants)

**Cost: \$45 MDAS member/\$50 non-member**

Join raptor specialist Pamela Llewellyn for this two-week workshop while she guides you through basic identification and natural history of the diurnal birds of prey seen in the San Francisco Bay Area. Two classroom presentations will provide a straightforward introduction to the identification of our local hawks, eagles, and falcons, and help you sharpen your raptor ID skills. Pamela has been leading local birding trips for Golden Gate Audubon for 15 years. Recommended for beginning and intermediate birders.

**To Register: [diabloaudubon.org/education.php](http://diabloaudubon.org/education.php)**



### Fall Bird Sounds Workshop:

#### Birding By Ear by Denise Wight

Two 2-hour classes and two 4-hour field trips

Classes: Thursday, November 8 and 15, 7-9 pm

Field Trips: Saturday, November 10 and 17,

8:30 am-12:30 pm

Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Oak Room

(maximum 15 participants)

**Cost: \$45 MDAS member/\$50 non-member**

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. Orinda native Denise Wight has been teaching birding since 1996. She was Program Chair for MDAS from 1992 to 2000.

**[www.denisewightbirds.com](http://www.denisewightbirds.com)**

**To Register: [diabloaudubon.org/education.php](http://diabloaudubon.org/education.php)**

**Outer Point Reyes, June 2:** On the top of our list for this year's "avian treasure hunt" at the OP was the incredible view of a gorgeous American Redstart, a rarity on the West Coast. Unlike vagrants in the fall (who rarely sing), this adult female gave us a live performance and sang for a few minutes as we stood squatting on a hillside just below the trail under the Monterey cypress canopy. We ended



the trip with a quick view of a female MacGillivray's Warbler, great views of Pacific-slope (*photo Beth Branthaver*) and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Western Wood-Pewees and a Bald Eagle flying overhead. Eleven members and one guest totaled 70 species by the conclusion of the unusually clear day. *Juan-Carlos Solis, Leader*

**Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, June 23-24:** You shudda been there.

John Muir once said that nothing could be better than time spent in the Cathedral of the Great Outdoors, better known as the Sierra Nevada. Well, maybe not really, but he should have said it. Seventeen members and guests visited Yuba Pass and the Sierra Valley north of Truckee and saw a number of exciting birds and mountain wildflowers.

After meeting at the top of the 6,700-foot pass, we headed downhill to the 5,000-foot valley, the first stop being Mt. Quail Road. Our first cooperative bird was a singing Green-tailed Towhee. At the "sparrow corner" east of Calpine, we had 4 more great birds--singing Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows, a singing Sage Thrasher and a Horned Lark. Crossing the marsh, we had beautiful Yellow-headed Blackbirds (*photo Danny Swicegood*), including fledglings with whitish pin feathers, Coots and Pied-billed Grebes with babies, Marsh Wrens and White-faced Ibis. We found an exposed American Bittern near the iron bridge, while a Bald Eagle was seen on a fence post far to the south. Sage Thrashers and Tree Swallows were at the Feather River Land Trust's Maddalena Ranch. Stilts, Avocets and a Swainson's Hawk were along Harriet Lane. White Pelican flocks were seen overhead many times. All of this before lunch in Loyalton. After a visit to the Rotary picnic area south of town, we took a break before dinner at the Mexican restaurant in Sierraville.

Returning to Yuba Pass, we stopped to watch a Sandhill Crane family which had a very small colt, as their chicks are called. A second family was found

across the highway with two larger colts. Only four participants chose to go uphill from the campground to seek a Common Poorwill. Their effort was rewarded when a Poorwill perched on a short stump below the level of the road. It was the best view we've had of this bird in many years.



Sunday broke as a beautiful day, and we gathered at Bassetts Station before going to the Sand Pond nature trail. We quickly had a Nashville Warbler and a singing Fox Sparrow. The native Western Azaleas had bloomed during the week, with their showy white blossoms. Along the back side of the pond, the group finally found a very bright and singing MacGillivray's Warbler. During our brief stop at the Bassetts store, Calliope and Anna's Hummingbirds fed at the feeders. We also viewed an Osprey nest near the Yuba River before driving back to Yuba Pass. In the meadow there, we viewed a number of nesting species, including White Headed Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadee, Warbling Vireo and the nest



construction project of a Western Wood-Pewee. The meadow was colored with purple Camas, Shooting Stars, Meadow Penstemon and American Bistort. Along the road, we

saw numerous Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches and some Pine Siskins, before taking a break for lunch. After eating, the checklist countdown indicated we had seen or heard 99 species.

For the first time, the leaders offered a Sunday evening tour of the Sierra Valley. Eight participants joined them and were rewarded with additional species. The marshes of Harriet Lane had more birds not seen the previous day, including Green-winged Teal with young, a Forster's Tern, a Green Heron and a Peregrine Falcon along with baby Stilts and at least one baby Avocet. After leaving the marsh, we found four Short-eared Owls flying over and perching on the dry sage. With minimal traffic, we parked and watched the owls for extended views. These birds and the earlier finding of an Olive-sided Flycatcher by one participant brought our weekend list to a total of 105 species. *Hugh Harvey, Co-leader*

### Farewell to Yuba Pass

*Our Audubon chapter has been having a field trip to Yuba Pass for just about forever. According to Jean Richmond, it is at least since the 70s. Rosita and I first attended this trip in 1990, almost a year after we married, and a month or so after buying our Jeep Cherokee. The trip was led by Dan Van Ziel and Barbara Burek; at that time she was the Quail editor. We returned for the 1992 trip and in 1995, we led this trip for the first time.*

*We have always camped, and over the years we have experienced wide weather differences, from snow on our tent to burning heat in the Sierra Valley. Two years ago, we were flooded early Saturday morning and had to abandon our tent. While I was still working, sometimes Rosita would lead by herself with help from several participants. Other times, I led by myself while Rosita was in Chile with her family.*

*This was the 24th year in a row we have led this trip. We had many discussions during the week, and at our Sunday lunch we announced to the group that it would be the last time we would be trip leaders. We are not abandoning Yuba Pass; we both love it very much. We have only decided that it is time for someone else to lead the trip to this marvelous location. Rosita and I thank the many who have helped us over the years, some of whom are no longer with us. —Hugh and Rosita Harvey*

**Lassen Volcanic NP, July 14-15:** Fifteen members and one guest attended. The weather was warm to hot and the skies were mostly clear, which made for good birding. The trail around Manzanita Lake and Creek provided sightings of an adult Bald Eagle, one American Dipper, and



several warblers (Hermit, Yellow-throated, Orange-crowned and Nashville). For the first time, we hiked the trail up to Paradise Meadow in the afternoon, which produced Western Tanagers, Chipping and Song Sparrows, two pairs of Rufous Hummingbirds, a Wilson's

Warbler, and a heard Pacific Wren. Sunday morning, we birded around Summit Lake and saw a pair of Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches and Black-headed

Grosbeaks as well as all three Nuthatches. Woodpeckers included Northern Flickers, White-headed, Hairy, and at least two Black-backed. In the afternoon, we birded above the parking lot for the trailhead of Mt. Lassen as well as around Lake Helen. New birds found here included a male Mountain Bluebird, several Clark's Nutcrackers, and a Townsend's Solitaire. Total birds seen and heard over the weekend were 53. *Eugenia K. Larson, Leader (photo Juvenile Red-breasted Sapsucker, Isaac Aronow)*

**Frank's Dump @ High Tide, July 18:** The high tide trip to Hayward Regional Shoreline in the late afternoon worked for nine members and guests. A number of shorebirds had already returned from the far north. Unfortunately, a few minutes after we arrived at the first corner of Frank's Dump, a Peregrine Falcon flew along the back side of the flats, scattering the several thousand birds which were present. After a suitable wait, the birds settled again, even closer to us than they had been originally, so we walked farther north to have the best views.

Along with the 1,500 or so Western Sandpipers, we had Black-bellied Plovers with black bellies, Short-billed Dowitchers, Red Knots, Wilson's Phalaropes and Snowy Plovers. A single Marbled Godwit flew past. We also had several Ring-billed Gulls, a Least Tern and a Caspian Tern, as well as a White-tailed Kite. Barn Swallows were zooming around right past us, but Cliff and Tree Swallows were also noted. The total species count was 32. *Hugh Harvey, Leader*

**San Mateo, Aug. 4:** The annual San Mateo Coast trip was attended by 19 Mt. Diablo members. The highlight



of the trip was a close view of a Red-throated Loon (*photo, Beth Brantbauer*) in breeding plumage at the Pillar Point Boat Launch. The group tallied 54 coastal species including: Common and Red-throated Loon, Surfbird,

Black Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope, Wandering Tattler, Black Oystercatcher, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Murre, Elegant and Caspian Terns, three Cormorants and a Surf Scoter. The trip concluded with lunch in the town of Pescadero, where the group had good views of Golden Eagle and Band-tailed Pigeon. *Bill Chilson, Co-Leader with Kent Fickett*

## Wildfires and Birds

With fires raging out of control in California, one wonders about the relationships between fires and birds. Research tells us that both positive and negative relationships occur.

During wildfires, adult birds easily escape, while young are left behind and perish. Rebuilding the population may occur only after new plant growth or re-entry of insect species on which the birds feed. However, some birds return to burned-out areas quickly. Black-backed



### Wild Birds

Woodpecker populations swell because they feed on wood- and bark-boring insects that arrive and lay eggs in burned trees almost immediately. Similarly, Red-headed Woodpeckers that nest high in trees often see a population boom right after fires.

Adult birds that escape to unburned territory may disrupt local birds, creating overcrowding and influx of non-native species. If new species dominate, they may cause local species to wane. Population shifts like this have been noted in areas by fire paths.

Sometimes, birds can cause wildfires. Research has shown that fires can be started by large birds, such as raptors on power lines. They contact two wires, leading to sparks or even burning birds that spread fire when they touch ground. Some birds may spread wildfires on purpose by picking up burning sticks and dropping them in unburned areas to flush out prey. Black Kites, Brown Falcons, and Whistling Kites are being studied for this behavior.

Scientists predict that we will need to be ready for bigger fires than those of previous generations. This may be devastating to birds in the path of fire, but have a positive effect by rearranging habitats, foods that birds consume, and distribution of species. This may help assure the diversity of species or may cause the demise of some and increase in others. Only time will tell.—*Mike Eliot*

## New Look for *The Quail*

No doubt you've noticed: *The Quail* has molted. After three years building community and infusing spark in the newsletter, Maren Smith has moved on to do the same for educational offerings at MDAS.

As the new editor, I have redesigned the newsletter for a time when most of us read more screens than newsprint. My ongoing goal is to reflect our increasingly visual and online ways of connecting. I have switched to larger, cleaner fonts in hopes of making the newsletter physically easier to read. I am more actively promoting MDAS' terrific website. I have moved Webmaster Dal Leite's Bird Wide Web column up front. The future of birding runs through our smartphones, and Dal is the perfect guide to the digital toolbox. Down the line, I hope to do more to showcase our robust Facebook page and the amazing photographers in our group. I dream of printing *The Quail* in color.



Chances are, you are not a fan of the new look. Most redesigns are unpopular. They remove familiar guideposts and can turn a first read into a game of "Where's Waldo?" I hope the new front page index helps with that. (By the way, if you're looking for the Q and A puzzler, rest assured: It will return next month). I ask for your patience. This is a beta launch, with bugs to be worked out. We can be woodpeckers together.

*The Quail's* former editors are beloved, so I expect you're giving me a hard squint. Who am I to remodel the house built by Ellis Myers?

I am a novice birder but experienced worder. I taught writing at Duke University, where I earned a Master's in English. The plan had been to get my doctorate and teach. Instead, I caught a dot-com wave west. I worked for years editing copy and designing layout for websites, newspapers, and magazines. I also worked as a columnist. Currently, I edit an online newsletter for the Friends of the Orinda Library.

I loved words first, but the birds have been gaining. A few years ago, I took my mom to the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival. Rookies, we were awed by the generosity of birders. Two members of our group lugged heavy, expensive scopes and were not satisfied until we'd all enjoyed the view they'd sacrificed to provide. I run into that spirit all over MDAS—not just from Maren, who has coached me through my first *Quail*, but from all the volunteers who pour hours into this group. I love MDAS, too, for its important work conserving wildlife and wild places.

Find me at the next meeting. Mine is an unfamiliar face. For years, I belonged to MDAS but could not break away from family life to attend programs. During that time, I interacted with Audubon largely through *The Quail*. I love this newsletter as much as you may, and I will do my best to honor it.—*Lori Patel*



# Observations

(May 8 to Aug. 4, 2018)

It's been relatively quiet, as is usual for this time of year, but two special birds were seen. A **Bell's Vireo** was found on Bradford Island in the delta by L&MS 6/18 and then seen by 18 other birders. An **Indigo Bunting** was sighted in mid-June at Briones Park along the Abrigo Trail. DW, WWho and LH discovered the bird, and 31 more people saw it.—*Maury Stern*

LK and AL saw a **Greater White-fronted Goose** on Bradford Island 5/21. AL saw another four there on 6/9.

A **Canvasback** was at Meeker Slough 5/19. LDS

A late **Ring-necked Duck** was at Heather Farm Pond 5/29. FS

C&TW found a late **Lesser Scaup** at the Martinez Shoreline Park 5/19.

A **Common Merganser** was at the south end of San Pablo Reservoir 6/29. LF Another was near San Ramon Creek in Danville 7/5. EM

KS saw a **Vaux's Swift** over the Lafayette Community Park 6/3.

An unusual **Costa's Hummingbird** was at a private feeder in Walnut Creek off Livorna 7/15. EM

**Rufous Hummingbirds** were at JC's Orinda home 5/14, and another at Mitchell Canyon 5/20. TR, DB, EB

WH and KW saw an **Allen's Hummingbird** at the Tilden Botanical Garden 8/1.

AL saw a **Long-billed Dowitcher** near Pt. Edith Trail along Waterfront Road 6/1.

A Breeding plumaged **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Valle Vista Staging Area 7/8. JL

FW saw a **Greater Yellowlegs** 5/26 at Miller-Knox Park.

A **Red-necked Phalarope** was in a pond at Miller-Knox Park in Pt. Richmond 5/23. MC

A **Pigeon Guillemot** was off Ferry Point in Pt. Richmond 5/23. SS, OJ, SA

LK saw a **Bonaparte's Gull** from the Canal Blvd. viewing platform in Richmond 6/3.

286 **Caspian Terns** were on Brooks Island 5/21. LK

A **Common Loon** was seen from the Richmond viewing platform 7/18. CM

An unexpected feeding **Black Skimmer** was near Brickyard Cove in Pt. Richmond 7/8. CH

JS saw an inland **Brandt's Cormorant** at the Valle Vista Staging Area 5/22.

Two **Least Bitterns** were at the Dow Wetlands Preserve in Antioch 5/11. AL

DWe saw a **Swainson's Hawk** over Marsh Creek Trail 5/15.

Seventeen **Red-tailed Hawks** congregated in a kettle at the Moraga end of Wilder Ranch 7/27. JR The next day, there were 14 in sight at Wildcat Canyon. AK

A **Merlin** was at Sibley Park 5/12. JM, JL, WP, JG, RS, EK, DHu

ER and JC saw a **Willow Flycatcher** at Briones 5/12, and another was at Bradford Island 6/16. SS, JC

A **Cassin's Kingbird** was spotted in El Cerrito 5/5. DG

A **Bank Swallow** was at Bethel Island 7/24. JT Last year, a number were in this area.

JB saw an unusual **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at his Morgan Territory home 8/4.

**Lawrence's Goldfinches** have been seen in ones and twos. MB 5/11 in the horse field at Valle Vista; 5/21 LK at Pt. San Pablo; DW 5/26 near Vollmer Peak in Tilden Park; 5/28 JB at his Morgan Territory home; and 8/3 PY at Upper Meadow Trail in Tilden.

A very rare **Parula Warbler** was spotted at the Diablo Foothills area 5/21. LK, NA

SL saw a very rare **Blue-winged Warbler** also at Diablo Foothills. 5/20

A relatively late **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at Rock City on Mt. Diablo 5/9. CD

DWe saw a **Yellow-breasted Chat** 5/26 at the upper picnic area in Black Diamond Mines Park.

An unusual **Green-tailed Towhee** was near Vollmer Peak 5/26. DW, CA

A **Brewer's Sparrow** was at Black Diamond 5/6. MO-W

Two **Black-chinned Sparrows** were at Sibley 5/12. RS, JL, JM, JG, DHu, WP, EK

JC saw a **Bell's Sparrow** near the summit of Mt. Diablo 6/4.

AK saw three **Grasshopper Sparrows** at Wildcat Canyon 5/13.

A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Mt. Diablo 5/28. MS

A late **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was on the Orinda Connector Trail 5/19. ER, JCo

JBo had a pair of **Western Tanagers** at her pond 5/12.

**Blue Grosbeaks** were along the Marsh Creek Trail in Oakley. 5/15 DWe and 6/18 LF.

An **Indigo Bunting** appeared on Summit Road at Mt. Diablo 6/17. RR

**Tricolored Blackbirds** were in the area. C&TW saw one at Waterfront Road wetlands 5/5. JC saw two at Black Diamond 5/12. ML saw a colony of 200 at the north end of Los Vaqueros Reservoir 5/19, and 500 were there 5/26. JC, DH

EMo spotted a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in a marsh on Bethel Island 6/16

To submit sightings, write Maury at [mbstern2@yahoo.com](mailto:mbstern2@yahoo.com) or call (925) 284-5980.

CA Clay Anderson, NA Noah Arthur, SA Sabina Aurilio, EB Eddie Bartley, JBo Jackie Bobrosky, MB Madeline Brane, JB Jerry Britten, DB Dan Brown, MC Mike Carnall, JCo Jim Chiropoulos, JCo John Colbert, CD Cathy Dippes, LF Lee Friedman, JG Juan Garcia, DG David Grasseschi, CH Christine Hayamizu, DH Derek Heins, LH Lydia Hoben, WWho Wendy Hoben, WH Wen Hsu, DHu Deborah Hurst, OJ Oliver James, LK Logan Kahle, EK Erica Kawata, AK Alan Krakauer, JL Johan Langewis, AL Albert Linkowski, SL Steve Lombardi, ML Marty Lycan, CM Colin Meusel, JM John Missing, EM Ethan Monk, EMO Eddie Monson, MO-W Marissa Ortega-Welch, WP Wendy Parfrey, RR Robert Raffel, TR Ted Robertson, JR Jim Roethe, ER Erica Rutherford, FS Fred Safier, RS Rusty Scalf, KS Kevin Schwartz, LDS L.D. Scott, JS Judi Sierra, SS Sammy Smith, MS Margaret Strubel, JT John Toldi, DWe Dave Weber, FW Fred Werner, KW Kitty Whiteside, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills, PY Pam Young

Art by Megan Sandri



# No Child Left Inside

During the past 11 years, the MDAS-sponsored "No Child Left Inside" program has provided outdoor education to over 1,000 students. This year's program concluded on May 22 and 24 by taking the fifth grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch to nearby Contra Loma Regional Park. Teachers and parent volunteers joined MDAS volunteers to enjoy two mornings of good, introductory birding. The MDAS volunteers included Claudia Hein, Cathy Castillo, Donna Kramer, Dave Shinn, Linda Shinn, Nancy Wenninger, David Hutton, Hugh Harvey, Kent Fickett, Kathy Kellogg, Karol Prinz, Brian Murphy, Nancy Schorr and Paul Schorr. The groups enjoyed pleasant spring weather on both days. On each day the students rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, with each station monitored by a MDAS volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each student used a pair of binoculars purchased by MDAS for education outreach.



Later, the groups walked to an open area with views of the oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savanna. 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, and the total number of species for both days was 42. This was a surprisingly high number since a pair of Cooper's Hawks was nesting nearby. Highlights included a Red-shouldered Hawk with chicks at the nest, and the Cooper's Hawk on the nest with chicks.

The field activities were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities. In March, 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, which featured a Peregrine Falcon, a Swainson's Hawk and an Eurasian Eagle-Owl, was sponsored and funded by MDAS. On May 9, Nancy and Paul introduced the proper use of binoculars. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for



Above: Cathy Castillo and Claudia Hein help students locate waterfowl. Center Left: Kent Fickett teaches students how to identify a Common Yellowthroat. (Photos Paul Schorr)

Contra Loma. Students were also introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so they could learn and appreciate bird vocalizations, as well as study target birds for the field trips. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms until the days of the field trips.

Through the No Child Left Inside Program, MDAS has made a strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of environmental education. MDAS can be very 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 all of the MDAS volunteers. Their participation is greatly appreciated, and on behalf of all of the children, thanks. My heartfelt thanks to all of the volunteers who stepped-up to conduct the activities on May 24, so Nancy and I could attend our grandson's high school graduation in Colorado. MDAS is grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District and the staff at Contra Loma Regional Park for their continuing support of the No Child Left Inside Program.

All of the volunteers had many teachable moments and were often rewarded with the students' subsequent enthusiasm. At the conclusion of the days' programs, each student received a copy of *Backyard Birds of California*, which had been purchased by MDAS. Throughout the activities, the students appeared to retain much of what they had learned, and I am confident that they will recall their experiences for a long, long time. Hopefully, some of them will even become birders and when asked where it all began, they just might say, "Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS." —Paul Schorr

## Advocating for Birds

The Year of the Bird and the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act were at the forefront of the message Audubon activists from all over California shared with elected representatives at the State Capitol on June 20. Four Mt. Diablo Audubon members traveled to



*Members of MDAS and Napa-Solano Audubon on the steps of the Capitol (Photo Ariana Rickard)*

Sacramento to discuss local issues, as well as state bills, with our representatives.

Chapter members, advocates and Audubon California staff—nearly 70 in all—took part in 57 meetings with legislators and/or staff. During breaks between meetings, some of the 14 groups dropped in on hearings, checked out the Senate and Assembly chambers, went birding in the park and caught up with Auduboners from across the state. For many members, connecting with each other and with Audubon state staff was an inspirational experience.

Advocates pushed for protections for migratory birds, protecting our coasts and public lands from oil spills, environmental education, and protecting important habitat for birds and people.

It was a great day for saving birds.  
– MDAS Legislative Action Chair  
Ariana Rickard

## Open Space Victory

East Bay birders and other open space fans have reason to celebrate. After weeks of shifting vote counts, Martinez' Measure I edged out a win in June. The citizen initiative, which requires voter approval to convert public open lands for development, defeated the city council's competing measure by just 103 votes.

In the spring, MDAS joined the Sierra Club and Thousand Friends of Martinez in endorsing Measure I, known officially as the Martinez Open Space and Park Protection Initiative. The Martinez City Council fought hard against the initiative, filing a lawsuit against it and devising its own decoy measure to confuse conservation-minded voters.

Congratulations, Martinez residents, on this important victory.

## Save the Date, Save the Trees

Save Lafayette Trees invites the public to attend the Lafayette City Council meeting Sept. 10, 7 pm, Lafayette Library. PG&E has been invited to answer questions related to its plans to cut heritage oaks and redwoods near its natural gas pipelines in Lafayette and Briones. MDAS has endorsed the efforts of Save Lafayette Trees and donated to defray its legal costs. **To learn more, see [savelafayettetrees.org](http://savelafayettetrees.org).**

## Birders Join the Festival Worth a Dam

Members of MDAS joined festival goers and many wildlife and conservation groups to celebrate this year's Beaver Festival, June 30 in Martinez. For the first time, the annual festival was held in Susana Park, a well-shaded area bordered by a creek where a family of beavers has taken up residence. Volunteers shared MDAS materials, meeting and activity information, and participants enjoyed playing the "Whose Nest?" game, matching nests to birds.



*(Above) A chalk rendition of the rodent of honor. (Left) Maren Smith, Carol Pacht, Susana de Trapaga and Mike Mecham work the booth to represent MDAS. (Photos Maren Smith)*

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*A papa Quail looks after his chicks. (Photo Jean Halford)*



**In case you missed it:** At the June meeting, Juan Alvaro spoke on birds of Cuba. (Photo Rosalie Howarth)



From Brian Murphy comes this shot of a Western Screech Owlet tucked into a wood nest box on Tice Creek. Says Brian, "Cavity nesting Western Screech Owls are always welcome to use wood duck boxes to nest in. Compared to the small natural cavities they nest in, the wood duck nest box is a mansion!" Says the owlet, "I love what you've done with the place!"