



THE QUAIL

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society | www.diabloaudubon.org

8 pm Program: Sandhill Cranes

Across the world, cranes are revered by many cultures—including our own. What makes cranes so special?

One of the oldest known birds, cranes have an extensive verbal and physical vocabulary. This presentation will help you understand the life history of cranes, as well as their distinctive physical and behavioral characteristics.

Presenter Paul Tebbel will focus on Sandhill Cranes but also discuss cranes within the Pacific Flyway, including breeding areas, migration routes and wintering grounds.



Photo John Kimura

Brush up on your basics before this year's Sandhill Crane Festival, scheduled Nov. 2-4, in Lodi. See www.cranefestival.com.

Paul Tebbel has been presenting on cranes for more than 20 years. For over a decade, he worked for National Audubon, managing a 1,400 acre sanctuary for Sandhill Cranes and other water birds. He directed three conservation nonprofits.

7 pm: Rhino Report

Jill Hedgecock will discuss promising developments, as well as disappointing setbacks, in the fight to stop rhino poaching. She will also talk about conservation projects in which she became involved due to the publication of her coming-of-age suspense novel, *Rhino in the Room* (Signed copies will be available for purchase).



Next Meeting: NOVEMBER 1

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society will meet **Thursday, November 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek.

6:30 pm Doors open

7:00 pm Short Program

7:25 pm News

7:40 pm Snacks & Raffle

8:00 pm Main Program

"Sandhill Cranes"

Inside

President's Corner	2
Bird Wide Web	3
Upcoming Trips	4
Christmas Bird Count	5
Q and A Puzzler	5, 7
Trip Reports	6
Wild Birds	6, 7

Plus: New class on identifying gulls. Page 3

Students Respond

In my October column, I suggested that when we share information regarding birds, we may not at first realize the impact our words might have, especially with children. I would like to continue that theme by sharing some of the fifth grade children's responses to the No Child Left Inside activities that MDAS sponsored in May. Most began their letters, "Thank you for teaching



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

us about the birds that live in our community." Following is a selection of their individual responses.—*Paul Schorr*

"The field trip was a learning experience. ... I learned that birds are the only animals with feathers."—*Harry*

"I learned that some birds build a nest that hangs."—*Achilles*

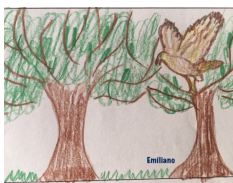
"The field trip was so peaceful and fun.

The part when we saw the Great Blue Heron was super exciting. I've never seen a bird like that before."—*Cheyenne*

"The field trip was great. The best part was touching an owl's feather (wing). I learned that some bird's nests hang from trees."—*Anayah*



"The best part of the field trip was when I saw a woodpecker. ... I have never seen a woodpecker."—*Guillermo*



"The bird I liked the best was the Anna's Hummingbird. That is because this bird can do a dance. The dance starts by going side to side, then going up and then going down."—*Emmanuel*

"My favorite thing I saw was the bird hovering in the air. Something new I learned was that the Anna's Hummingbird flashes its orange neck to impress another one."—*Aiden*

"Something new I learned was that some birds go far in the winter and come back."—*Jasmine*

"Something new I learned was that Black Phoebe birds build their nests under bridges."—*Ijeoma*

"My favorite thing that I saw was the Cooper's Hawk because it has beautiful feathers and how it catches its prey when it dives. Something new I learned was that some birds eat meat and others eat insects. The bird I liked the best was the Common Raven. I think that this was the best field trip in the world."—*David*

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD

President

Paul Schorr, pkschorr@comcast.net, (925) 757-5107

Vice President

Kent Fickett, k.fickett@comcast.net, (415) 269-4277

Secretary

Carol Pacht, carolpacht@comcast.net, (925) 253-0675

Treasurer

Steve Buffi, (925) 938-0929

Programs & Legislative Action

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

Sales

Cathy Castillo, artsycastillo@gmail.com, (925) 209-6665

Membership

Virginia Hamrick, vhamrick8@gmail.com, (925) 945-7761

Young Birders

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

Members-at-Large

Mike Eliot, mikeyeliot@gmail.com (925) 798-0303
Bill Chilson, billchil@comcast.net (EBB), (510) 619-6692

The Quail Editor

Lori Patel, thequail@diabloaudubon.org

ADVISORY

Webmaster & Calendar

Dal Leite, updates@diabloaudubon.org

Observations Editor

Maury Stern, mbstern2@yahoo.com, (925) 284-5980

Hospitality

Kathy Kellogg, ggollekyhtak@gmail.com, (925) 228-2690

Citizen Science & CBC

Elizabeth Leite, eleite@diabloaudubon.org

Email Meeting Reminder

Barbara Vaughan, (925) 376-8732

Honorary Advisor

Jean Richmond, (925) 837-2843

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.

The Quail is published monthly except in January, July and August by the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, PO Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053.

www.diabloaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon



How would you improve Walnut Creek city parks? Attend two evening community workshops to give feedback on what to keep and what to change to make Heather Farm Park, Civic Park, and Shadelands serve you better! Be sure to mention preserving the Natural Lake at Heather Farm, a prime birding spot for MDAS regulars.

Mon. Oct 29: Shadelands Art Center

Mon. Nov 5: Civic Park.

Go to <http://www.walnut-creek.org/departments/arts-and-recreation/recreation-parks/your-parks-your-future> to get on the mailing list for details and updates.—*Rosalie Howarth*



Simple strategies can take some of the intimidation and frustration out of gull identification.

New course:

Gull Identification by Lisa Hug
One-day Classroom and Field Study

Sat., Jan. 12, 9 am—4 pm

Bodega Bay Grange

Cost: \$40 MDAS member/\$45 non-member

Register: diabloaudubon.org/education.php

Two spots still open in "Birding by Ear"

A Bevy of Bird Blogs

If this column were on the web (which it will be), it could be called a "blog," because it is part of a log (a series of periodic entries) on the web—a "web-log," shortened to "blog." The subject of the Bird Wide Web blog is online resources, entertainment, and community for birders. The topic of this particular entry is birding blogs—online columns for birders.



For an astonishing outpouring of crystal-clear, well-organized photos keyed to the seasons, the work of Lillian Stokes in the **Stokes Birding Blog** is simply unsurpassed. A worthy companion to the Lillian and Don Stokes birding guides, this blog features new postings as well as a library reaching 12 years back. A true gem!



Some podcasts are also available in written form as blogs, with added illustrations, links, etc. An excellent example is Laura Erickson's **For the Birds**, which is updated even more often than her podcasts/radio shows. The "Doctor Ruth of Ornithology," Erickson displays a broad knowledge of all things bird along with decades of excellent bird (and family) photos, as well as discussions of the morality she finds in closely observing nature.

Another podcast-related blog is **Bill of the Birds**, from Bill Thompson III, editor of *BirdWatcher's Digest*. More like a web magazine than a true blog, it's loaded with weblinks and ads, and is about as "monetized" as a blog can be. Nonetheless, it's full of interesting tidbits, and is worth a visit if just for the wonderful list of links to *other* blogs, many far superior in a narrowly bird-ophile way.

Closer to home, our neighboring Audubon chapter with 7,000 members and 5 paid staff produces a roughly bi-weekly blog. Always well-written and timely, the **Golden Gate Birder** from GGAS covers a great variety of topics by a vast number of writers. One useful feature is the category index, which makes this blog a good source for background info. The Golden Gate Birder also offers a useful list of links to relevant blogs, mostly local, but also including **10,000 Birds**, which has to be seen to be believed.

It's possible to sign up for these blogs. Golden Gate Birder, for example, can be "followed" using Firefox Live Bookmarks and MyYahoo or through an RSS "feed" sign up. Stokes Birding Blog and Bill of the Birds use the term "subscribe," while For the Birds offers an email listing for new posts. 10,000 Birds promises a daily emailed update! These lists are not the same as "sightings lists"—the topic of next month's column.—*MDAS Webmaster Dal Leite*

Upcoming Field Trips



2 Saturday, Nov. 3

Charleston Slough, South Bay

Leader: Beth Branthaver (510) 502-4869

Shorebirds and waterfowl should be plentiful. Bring lunch and a beverage. Carpool leaves at 7:30 am from Sycamore Valley Rd Park and Ride. Meet at Terminal Rd in Mountain View at 8:30 am. Take I-680, exit Mission Blvd W. Continue through two traffic lights and take I-880 S. Exit to Hwy 237, connect to US 101 N at Moffett Field. Exit at San Antonio Rd, turn R (north) to Terminal Rd, turn R and park. Entrance is on the left.

2 Thursday, Nov. 8

Martinez Waterfront

Leader: Albert Linkowski (925) 935-2979

We will visit several areas along the Martinez shoreline. Bring lunch and a beverage. Meet at 9 am in the Waterbird Regional Preserve parking lot. From I-680, exit for Waterfront Rd. When driving north, this is the last exit before the Benicia Bridge. Go east about ½ mile and turn R onto Waterbird Way. Go around the corner to the left and then turn R into the parking lot. Note: Phone number given belongs to Field Trip Coordinator Hugh Harvey.

Field trips are open to members and nonmembers, beginners to advanced birders, but no dogs. 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

Carpool Meetups

•**El Nido Ranch Rd:** Exit Hwy 24 at St. Stephens Dr east of Orinda. El Nido runs parallel and north of 24. Park just E or St.

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

2 Tuesday, Nov. 13

Lafayette Community Park

Leader: Steve Taylor (925) 828-8810

Raptors, woodpeckers, nuthatches, sparrows and many other birds. This is a mostly level trail, which features a variety of mature trees and grassy hillsides along a stretch of riparian habitat. We will walk 1-2 miles total. Restrooms and water available. If it has rained a lot, the trail could be muddy. Meet at 9 am near the hockey court and walk the trail behind the Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Rd. From central Lafayette, go south on Moraga Rd. After .43 miles, turn L onto St. Mary's Rd. Drive 2 miles to the Community Center. From Walnut Creek, drive to the west end of Olympic Blvd past the roundabout. At the stoplight turn L on Reliez Station Rd and go over the hill. Reliez Station becomes Glenside. Follow to St. Mary's Rd and turn L, drive a short distance to the center.

2 Saturday, Nov. 17

Limantour

Leader: Albert Linkowski (925) 935-2979

Forest birds on the ridge and ducks, shorebirds and often loons and grebes on the bay. Bring lunch and a beverage. Carpool leaves at 7:00 am from El Nido Ranch Rd. Meet at 8:30 am at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes Nat'l Seashore. Take Hwy 24 to Oakland, then I-580 W to Richmond and the San Rafael Bridge. From US 101 N, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn L on 3rd St and continue west to turn R on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. At Hwy 1 at Olema, turn R for 0.25 miles, then L on Bear Valley Rd. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley.

Christmas Bird Count

The MDAS Christmas Bird Counts will be held this year on Saturday, Dec. 15 (Central County) and Wednesday, Dec. 19 (East County). This National Audubon citizen science project is perhaps our chapter's most important contribution to promote conservation. It is the longest-running citizen science project in existence, begun on Christmas Day, 1900. Data from the counts help determine the long-term health and status of bird populations across the continent. Combined with eBird records, the data set is an amazing historic resource.

Last year our combined Christmas Bird Counts were comprised of 26 individual surveys, conducted by parties of one to six birders out for up to 12 hours in the field. At the end of the survey day, we re-convened to share a meal and our reports. We will do so again this year.

Some survey parties have been established for many years. These birder friends look forward to completing a "Big Day" together, which may run from dawn to dusk, if owling is a goal. Other leaders welcome new participants, so the party members change from year to year. Some leaders beat the bushes for the best birders they can find to do the task, to find just one more species to add to our count. Others encourage newer birders with good spotting skills or recording ability to sign on. During the Count day, both individual species and numbers of actual birds will be tallied. Effort and weather conditions become part of the data set reported to National Audubon. Counts are carried out regardless of the weather. Of course, ours is always balmy than Anchorage AK or the East Coast.

MDAS has held a Christmas Bird Count since at least the 1950s. Over the years, set routes have been established to yield the greatest number of individual birds and diversity of species. Our chapter covers unique habitats ranging from the oak woodlands of Central County to montane stretches 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 in our lists. We have the good fortune of being able to access some private, privately managed, and off-limits public lands in our counts. Such access is due to the goodwill that our chapter leaders have established over the years. We can be proud of that!

If you participated previously and plan on counting again this year, you can contact your leader from last year directly and let me know, too. If you are new to the CBC and want to join a survey party, contact me: elite@diabloaudubon.org.

National Audubon would appreciate a donation to help with the costs of maintaining a small administrative staff to manage the data bank, as well as the web pages and the process of the count. Please help! <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>—Elizabeth Leite, Head Compiler MDAS CBC



Maren Smith surveys land on the west side of Mt. Diablo during last year's count. A Lark Sparrow makes it easy for birders at Los Vaqueros. (Photos Susana de Trapaga)

Mt. Diablo Audubon Thanks

ALPHAGRAPHICS

GALAXY PRESS

NATIVE BIRD CONNECTIONS

RAKESTRAW BOOKS

WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

(Pleasant Hill)

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Sandra Ahart	Walnut Creek
Stephanie Carman	Pleasanton
Pamela Llewellyn	Berkeley
Teresa Zaumseil	Walnut Creek

Q Which is the smallest dabbling duck in North America?

NDTIAEEGGWLEERN

Unscramble the letters or see page 7 for the answer.



Healdsburg, Vaux's Swifts, Sept. 15: Rio Lindo Academy has been welcoming the public for more than 10 years to watch Vaux's Swifts fly into a chimney that is unused this time of year. On this day, over 120 viewers included 11 chapter members. The number of swifts flying around was a spectacle well worth the 1-1/2 hour drive. Our first birds were Turkey Vultures and then a Peregrine Falcon, but even before the sun was gone, we started seeing and hearing the less than 5"



swifts flying over our heads, as well as behind the trees and the building with the chimney. A few flew into the chimney early, but it was about 7:30 pm when they started entering in large numbers (*photo Walt Duncan*). The official school count for the evening was 4,200 Vaux's Swifts, a number which pleased all in attendance. Some passing Brewer's Blackbirds and a flyover Killdeer brought our total species count to 5.—*Hugh Harvey*

Hayward Regional Shoreline, Sept. 20: Eleven members or guests toured the north end of the shoreline and were not disappointed. A good selection of migrant passerines and shorebirds was seen, along with some raptors. Though it became hot before the

last of the group returned to the cars, 64 species were identified. Highlights included: Willow and Pacific-slope Flycatchers; Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers; both White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows; several flyovers of Greater White-fronted Geese; Stilts and Avocets; Black-bellied, Pacific Golden and Snowy Plovers; Long-billed Curlew; Godwits; Willets; Dowitchers; Least and Western Sandpipers; Greater Yellowlegs; Red-necked Phalaropes; Surf-bird; Dunlin; White-tailed Kite; and Cooper's Hawk. A Short-eared Owl was seen by one participant as she returned early.

—*Hugh Harvey*

Outer Point Reyes, Oct. 6: Outer Point Reyes was windy, and the lighthouse itself was closed and inaccessible. However, our 16 participants spent considerable time at the Fish Docks, Drakes Beach and the tennis court at Inverness, allowing us to find 66 species of birds for the day. We had some very good sightings, including



3 owl species—six Great Horned (*photo Isaac Aronow*), a Barn and a Short-eared Owl. We also had 7 raptor species, the highlight by far being the Black Vulture soaring with Turkey Vultures over Inverness. At the same location, we were finally able to find a small, mixed flock in which we had magazine cover views of a Red-eyed Vireo.—*Hugh Harvey*

Fall Feeding

Fall is when some birds cache (store away) food. You may notice chickadees in the early morning flying to your feeder and immediately away with a morsel. They prefer sunflower and may eat a bit before stashing it under bark, leaves, or small knotholes within 130 feet of the feeder. Nuthatches will seek out heavier sunflower seeds and stash them in heavily furrowed tree trunks and under branches. They may also hide them under shingles or cracks in wood siding.



Wild Birds

Have plenty of fresh sunflower seeds, preferable hulled out, from early morning until dusk. Titmice are also foraging for storable seeds and can be seen flying to and from feeders all day. They often prefer small seeds in the shell like safflower and black oil sunflower. Juncos, which also start appearing in Fall, like millet, which should be spread on the ground or may end up on the ground from seed blends in feeders.

Jays love to cache peanuts in the shell and will bury up to 100 a day, usually in the ground. They may also rely on rain gutters and fill openings in tile roofs. It's fun to watch them trying to stuff as many as possible into their beaks before they fly off.

(*cont'd on page 7*)

Central Valley Birding Symposium
Nov. 15-18, 2018
Stockton, CA
Register Now
www.cvbirds.org



(cont'd from page 6)

They may fly as far as a few miles to bury their treasures. (Photo Mike Eliot)

As weather cools and natural foods disappear, these birds will become switch to feeders as a critical source of food. Keep them stocked with fresh seeds and nuts as foundational food sources. In addition, use suets and Bark Butter to provide essential fat and protein that help birds with much needed energy to maintain their high metabolic rates. Moreover, nyjer (thistle), which is also high in fat and protein, becomes more essential to goldfinches as winter approaches. And, don't forget to regularly fill nectar feeders for migrating and local hummingbirds.

Studies have shown that constant, reliable sources of supplemental food improve the overall health and body condition of wild birds. Being seasonally savvy with fresh, appropriate foods for the birds in your yard will help them survive and provide you with enjoyment throughout all of the seasons.—Mike Eliot

Save the Date
Jan. 23-27, 2019

20th Annual
Snow Goose Festival
Chico, CA

www.snowgoosefestival.com

Q: Which is the smallest dabbling duck in North America?

A: Green-winged Teal

Green-winged Teal can be found in most of the United States some time during the year. On the West Coast, we find *Anas crecca* most often in the winter in shallow wetlands, coastal marshes, and flooded fields.

These ducks tend to breed in the forested wetlands of Canada. The only confirmed breeding in Contra Costa County was found 18 years ago during research for the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County*: a female with 3 half-grown young at McNabney Marsh.

Courtship begins in the fall and peaks in January and February. Males display an elaborate set of movements and sounds, with up to 25 males courting females on the water and in courtship flights. Most pairs form on the wintering grounds. The male defends his mate from copulation attempts by other males, but deserts her once incubation is under way.

The female chooses a well-concealed site on the ground, usually within 200 yards of water. She uses her feet to scrape a nest bowl where she lays her first egg, then adds plant material to build the nest 2-6 inches deep. She will lay 6-9 creamy white to pale-olive buff eggs, which incubate for 20-23 days. A few hours after the ducklings hatch, they can swim, walk, dive and forage. The female will continue to brood them at night or when weather turns cold. The young fledge in about 35 days.

The population of Green-winged Teal has increased over recent decades. The U.S. Fish and



Wildlife Service in 2015 estimated at least 4 million breeding birds. Green-winged Teal are second only to Mallards in the number of ducks taken by hunters, with about 1.7 million shot each year in the United States. Bag limits for ducks are changed annually based on population, helping to safeguard these species against decline.

The male has a chestnut-colored head with an iridescent green patch extending from the eyes to the nape of the neck (Photo Jean Halford). The chest is pinkish-brown with black speckles. A white vertical band separates the chest from the gray back and sides. The wings are brownish gray with a green speculum, while the bill, legs and feet are dark gray. The female appears mottled brown with a dark gray bill and a dark brown line from the bill through the eye. Her legs and feet are olive-gray.

Green-winged Teal have closely spaced, comblike projections called lamellae around the inner edge of the bill. They use them to filter tiny invertebrates from the water, capturing smaller food items than other dabbling ducks.

A group of teal can be called a "coil," "knob," "paddling," "spring" or a "dopping."

The oldest known Green-winged Teal was at least 20 years 3 months old: a female banded in 1941 and recovered by a hunter in 1960.

—Jean Halford

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

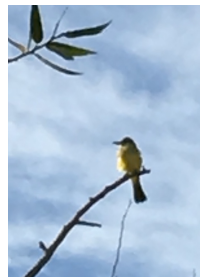
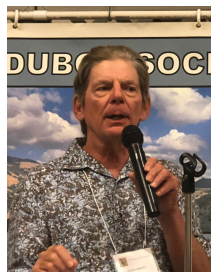
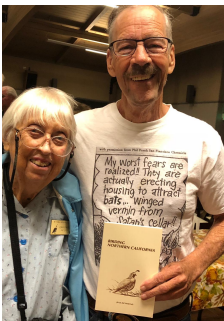
Address Service Requested



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



Ghost Ship: A Cormorant dries its wings on remains of the ship Forester, which carried out Pacific Northwest lumber and brought back dried coconut meat over 100 years ago. The ship has not left the Martinez Shoreline since a fire swept through it in 1975. (Photo Isaac Aronow)



Brian Murphy beams after winning an impromptu auction for a book authored and donated by longtime MDAS benefactor Jean Richmond. A Ferruginous Hawk wows participants in the first field trip for the Raptor ID class. Hugh Harvey discusses a new trip, as well as the reappearance in Heather Farm of a Tropical Kingbird, seen in the next photo. JoEllen Arnold shares a mammal in each hand with the audience for her talk on why bats matter. (Photos of people, Lori Patel; Ferruginous Hawk, Wayne Narr; and Tropical Kingbird, Fred Safier).