



THE QUAIL

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society | www.diabloaudubon.org

8 pm: Wall of Birds

One wall,
375 million
years of bird
evolution.
That's the
premise

behind the Cornell Lab of
Ornithology's Wall of Birds.

Bay Area artist Jane Kim
(*photo Kelly Hsaio*), designed and
painted the vast mural—the only
one in the world to showcase all
modern families of birds. (*Photo*

Ink Dwell Studio) Commissioned in honor of
the Cornell Lab's 2015 centennial, the mural
depicts the story of birds, from the 30-foot
long Yutyranus, ancestor of the first
feathered dinosaur, to the tiny marvelous
spatuletail hummingbird. All
270 species represented are painted to
scale on the 2,500-sq. ft mural, which graces
the Cornell Lab's visitor center in Ithaca, NY.

Designing and painting the Wall of Birds
took more than two years, with 17 months of
on-site painting, much of it done by Kim on
scaffolding at night. "Like Michelangelo,"
said Cornell Lab Director John Fitzpatrick,
describing Kim at work.

In this talk Kim will discuss her new book
about the project, *The Wall of Birds*,



exploring the
intersection of art
and natural history,
the creative process,
and surprising
sociological lessons
that we humans can learn from birds. Co-
founder of Ink Dwell studio, Kim has
created monumental public art that
explores the wonders of the natural world,
including works for the National Aquarium,
the de Young Museum, and Yosemite
National Park. She is the creator of the
Migrating Mural campaign, a series of
public installations that highlight wildlife
along migration corridors it shares with
people. (*Photo Ink Dwell*)

For more of Kim's artwork, visit
inkdwell.com. To explore the Wall of Birds
interactively, see
academy.allaboutbirds.org/wallofbirds/.

Next Meeting: APRIL 4

The Mt. Diablo Audubon
Society will meet
Thursday, April 4, 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

"Wall of Birds"

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Plus: Tour native gardens
beloved by birds. p. 6



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7 pm: Grayson Creek Survey

Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks will present results of the
monthly Grayson Creek Bird Survey, a joint citizen
science project with MDAS. This photo-rich presentation
will highlight raptors and resident and migratory birds in
our local creek ecosystem.



Photo:
Heather Rosmann

Nemesis Bird

According to Merriam-Webster, the word nemesis can mean “a formidable and usually victorious rival or opponent.” Birders often use the phrase “nemesis bird” to describe a bird that has frustratingly eluded them.

In August 2018, we joined a tour group that took us throughout Great Britain. When we toured Grasmere,



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

England, we visited Dove Cottage, which for nine years was the home of the beloved English poet, William Wordsworth. While there, we purchased the book, *The Golden Store*, a collection of poetry by Wordsworth. As I read the selections, I came upon the poem “To the Cuckoo,” and I have reread it many times because, as a birder, I can readily relate to the dilemma that Wordsworth describes. Although he was not aware of the expression “nemesis

bird,” I think that you will find that the Cuckoo was indeed his nemesis bird.

To the Cuckoo

*O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I bear thee and rejoice.*

*O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?*

*While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.*

*Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.*

*Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;*

*The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.*

*To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.*

*And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.*

*O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!*

Happy Birding.—Paul Schorr

SUPPORT MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY: Register at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill, and owner Michael Eliot will donate 5 percent of your purchases to MDAS. You may also go to smile.amazon.com and designate “MT Diablo Audubon Society” as your charity of choice to direct .05 percent of your eligible Amazon purchases to our group.

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MDAS general meetings take place on the first Thursday of the month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek.

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.

For Young Birders Club, search Facebook for Mount Diablo Audubon Society Young Birders Club.

www.diabloaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/mtdiabloaudubon

www.meetup.com/Mount-Diablo-Audubon-Society

Come on board! There will be open positions on the MDAS Board of Directors as of June 30. We invite interested candidates to contact Nominating Committee Chair Rosalie Howarth at barhowarth@msn.com. Election of officers will be held at our general meeting May 2. We are also in special need of a Membership Chair, as well as a Webmaster to manage a redesigned MDAS site. Membership would be a full board position, while the Webmaster would serve on the Advisory.



Promoting Audubon: MDAS will be at the John Muir National Historic Site for its John Muir Birthday-Earth Day Celebration on April

20. We will bring our nesting box game for kids and brochures for people interested in learning about Audubon and the birds. We need a few volunteers to cover 3 shifts: 10am to noon, noon to 2pm, and 2pm to 4pm. Please consider joining us at this fun event. Admission and parking are FREE. Contact Susana de Trapaga, trapaga@sbcglobal.net, if you can help.



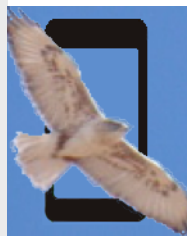
Are you ready to turn your passion for birds into action? Join Audubon California for Advocacy Day, May 7, in Sacramento! Every year, Mt. Diablo Audubon has one of

the largest groups in the Capitol. We spend the day visiting with our legislators and talking about birds, as well as funding for our priorities, and other conservation issues. Advocacy Day allows you to have your voice heard in the Capitol. It is a truly energizing and fun day, and a great opportunity to see democracy in action. We usually carpool and meet up in advance of the day to figure out talking points and roles. Everyone gets a chance to speak in the meetings. If you are interested in joining this year, please contact Ariana Rickard at arickard@audubon.org.

A Peek into Bird Cams

There is something unselfconsciously voyeuristic about bird watching. For a birder, peeping at "peeps" with binoculars or a high-powered scope seems like the most natural thing to do. The epitome of this seemingly benign intrusion into the lives of other species going about their feathered affairs is the "bird cam."

The advent of high-speed internet streaming video has enabled researchers and hobbyists alike to observe the nesting behavior of Osprey pairs, the social encounters at Puffin roosts, and the inter-species interaction among visitors at bird feeders, among many other viewing opportunities.



BIRD WIDE WEB

Feeder cams are best viewed during the day. If you go to the **Sapsucker Woods Feeder Cam** (operated by the Cornell Lab) at 6pm PST, the birds will have all gone to bed. Come back in the morning, and there'll be plenty of visitors and even a live audio stream. By contrast, nest cams and roost cams, like the **Live Nest Cams** hosted at several locations by the Institute for Wildlife Studies (IWS), offer potential around-the-clock interest during the proper season. The same is true of Golden Gate Audubon's

Osprey Cam, which also offers a choice of nest views.

The Cornell cams are streamed by a YouTube service, which works on most devices, and there is also a dedicated **Cornell Lab Channel**, with symbols to show the time at the camera site and whether the stream is live. The IWS cams and **Audubon Bird Cams**, in contrast, are carried by Explore, which doesn't work well on all browsers, particularly those that don't use the Flash video player.

Compendium sites showcase marvelous collections of links for global locations and species. One of the best is **ViewBirds.com**, a nest and feeder cam list maintained by the University of Pittsburgh's Vicki Dziadosz, who lists links in taxonomic order for the nests and by geographic location for the feeders. Be sure to check daylight hours at the target location. Helpfully, cams that display best (if at all) on Windows/Internet Explorer devices are marked.

Another comprehensive resource is the **MangoLink** site, which breaks bird cams down into "Wild," "Captive," "Feeders in Gardens" and more. Again, many of these cams can be viewed only on specific device, browser, and video player combinations. In each case, though, there are enough still images to encourage exploration. Want to see a White-tailed Eagle in Estonia?

The extreme example of season-dependent cams is the **Gentoo Penguin** installation at O'Higgins Station, Antarctica, which stays dark nearly half the year. If it's between the Spring and Fall equinoxes in the Northern Hemisphere, the lights are on for the Gentoo Penguins. So, too, are the many wide-angle and telephoto cams maintained by researcher **Martin Grund**, who offers a multilingual website with access to an astonishing variety of roost locations and time frames. After years of up-close and personal observations, he probably knows the penguins by name. —MDAS Webmaster Dal Leite

For live links and past columns, see www.birdwideweb.com.

Field Trips

Wednesday, April 3, Orinda Connector Trail. Meet at 8 am at the northeast corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Rd, Orinda. Exit at Orinda from SR 24, turn north on Camino Pablo and drive just over 2 miles to the intersection. We will walk towards the base of Briones Dam looking for spring birds. We will be finished by noon. Leader: Don Lewis, (925) 284-5480. Category 2.

Saturday, April 6, Garin Regional Park. Carpool leaves 7:15am from Sycamore Valley Rd Park and Ride. Meet in parking lot at the end of Garin Rd at 8am. Take I-680 south and I-580 west. Take Castro Valley exit and continue west. Turn left onto Crow Canyon Rd and go under the freeway. Crow Canyon Rd becomes Grove Way and then A St. At A St and Mission Blvd turn left; stay left to continue south on Mission Blvd, which becomes SR 238. Go south about 3 miles to Garin Rd, turn left, and follow up the hill to its end. Spring migrants will be our goal. Lunch in the park after. Leader: Fred Safier, (925) 937-2906. Category 3.

Thursday, April 11, North Briones. Meet 8 am in the parking area at the north entrance of Briones Regional Park. Take Briones Rd off Alhambra Valley Rd and drive up this narrow winding Rd, park at the end. Wildflowers, spring birds and poison oak are along shaded trails. A continuation through grasslands to Sindicich Lagoons makes this walk about 3 miles round trip. Bring liquids. Leader: Maury Stern, (925) 284-5980. Category 3.

Tuesday, April 16, Pine Canyon. Meet in parking lot at end of Castle Rock Rd at 8 am. Turn south on Walnut Ave from the intersection with Ygnacio Valley Rd in Walnut Creek. At the traffic circle, turn right and continue on Castle Rock Rd past the high school to the end, which is the parking lot for Castle Rock Recreation Area and Diablo Foothills Regional Park. We will hike into Pine Canyon at least as far as the Castle Rocks. The trail crosses Pine Creek several times. Carry lunch and liquids. Spring migrants and Peregrine Falcons. Leader: Nancy Wenninger, (925) 938-7987. Category 3.

Thursday, April 18, Black Diamond Mines. Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:30am. Or meet the leader at 8am at the parking lot at the end of Somersville Rd. Exit Hwy 4 at Somersville Rd (south). Alternate route, go east

on Ygnacio Valley/Kirker Pass Rds, in Pittsburg turn right on Buchanan Rd. Turn east on Buchanan to Somersville Rd (Antioch) and turn right. Follow Somersville to the entry gate, entry fee required, proceed to the last parking lot. Woodland, chaparral and some grassland birds. Bring lunch and a beverage. Leader: Paul Schorr, (925) 998-0070. Category 3.

YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

Saturday, April 20, Mitchell Canyon: YBC Coordinator Juan Pablo Galván will lead this outing for birders age 10-20 and accompanying adults. For details, search Facebook for Mount Diablo Audubon Society Young Birders Club, or write jpgalvan9@gmail.com.

GRAYSON CREEK BIRDERS

Sunday, April 21: Citizen science survey of the creek, in partnership with Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks. Typically departs every third Sunday of the month, 8 am from the parking lot of the Pleasant Hill Library. Confirm date with Leader Alan Bade at alanbade@jps.net or (925) 330-1780.

Tuesday, April 23, Del Puerto Canyon. Carpool leaves at 7:30am from Sycamore Valley Rd Park and Ride. Meet on Del Puerto Canyon Rd west of I-5 at Patterson Exit (Diablo Grande Parkway and Sperry Rd) off I-5 (56 miles from Sycamore Valley Rd). Take I-580 E to I-5 S. We will stop at the Larry Combs Rest Area near Westley, as there are no facilities on trip until our lunch stop. Canyon Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, Greater Roadrunner and other goodies. Usually very warm! Bring lunch and drinks. Leader: Beth Branthaver, (510) 502-4869. Category 1.

Thursday, April 25, Mitchell Canyon. Meet at 8am in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$6 parking fee. From I-680 in Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Rd to Clayton Rd. Turn right on Clayton Rd and right on Mitchell Canyon Rd to the end. Gnatcatchers, spring migrants and residents, lots of wildflowers. Usually hot! Bring liquids and lunch. Leader: Maury Stern, (925) 284-5980. Category 3.

Tuesday, April 30, Mount Diablo State Park. MDSP is a treasure trove for birders. Although every season in the park has its special qualities, late April on the mountain has its own beauty; wildflowers add color to the

vistas. Carpool leaves at 8am from La Gonda. From I-680S, exit at El Pintado, turn right and right again; park along open space on left. From I-680 N, exit El Cerro, turn left, then right at second light onto La Gonda; carpool point is about one-half mile north. Meet at 8:45 Am at the South Gate entrance after birding South Gate Rd. Usually hot! Bring lunch and drinks. Entry fee required. Many migrant and nesting species are possible including Sage Sparrows, California Thrashers, woodpeckers, raptors and warblers. Leader: Steve Taylor, (925) 828-8810. Category 2.

June 22-23, Yuba Pass. Make motel reservations now! Closest motels are in Sierra City, 11 miles down Hwy 49 to the west. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151 or 800-682-9848) is one of the most popular; or try Yuba River Inn (530-862-1122) with cabins and kitchenettes (cash or check only). Bassett's Station (530-862-1297) at Highway 49 and Gold Lake Road has some accommodations and meals. High Country Inn (530-862-1530 or 800-862-1530) is across Hwy 49 from Bassett's. Also, in Calpine is Sierra Valley Lodge (530-994-3367 or 800-858-0322). More listings at www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html. Campgrounds at Yuba Pass and Chapman Creek downhill to the west. Sites available first come/first serve for three days at a time. Longer term reservations can be made at 877-444-6777, but there is an added \$10 charge for this service. Co-leaders: Nancy Wenninger, (925) 938-7987, Bill Chilson (510) 619-6692.

PARTNER HIKE:

CURRY CANYON RANCH

Required registration now open at savemountdiablo.org for this partnership hike with Save Mount Diablo to be held **Thursday, May 9.** Enjoy a chance to see Mt. Diablo's east side, not normally open to the public. Leaders Jerry Britten (925) 321-5332 and Maren Smith (925) 322-9477.

- 1 Easy. Little walking, smooth paths
- 2 Moderate, more than one mile, possibly rougher terrain
- 3 Difficult. Many miles, rough terrain

Carpool Meeting Spots

- Sun Valley Mall:** SW corner of mall lot at Willow Pass Rd and Contra Costa Blvd in Concord
- Sycamore Valley Rd Park and Ride:** One block east of I-680, off the Sycamore Valley Rd exit in Danville.

Trip Coordinator Hugh Harvey (925) 935-2979.

Trip Reports

Bodega Bay, Feb. 16: It was cold, it was windy, it rained, and the sun shone brightly at Bodega Bay for 6 MDAS birders. Lots of birds were seen from the deck at the Tides Restaurant, and more over the fence from the parking lot. We were nearly blown off the Head, and sat in our cars at Campbell Cove for a rain squall to pass. Out of 55 species seen or heard, due to the conditions, only 9 were passerines. But we had a clean sweep of the grebes, including two Red-necked Grebes after the rain squall, all three cormorants, more than 30 Black Turnstones (*photo Beth Branthaver*), one Ruddy Turnstone, hundreds of Marbled Godwits, Sanderlings, Dunlins, Brant and one Bald Eagle. It was a glorious day.

Hugh Harvey



Sunol Regional Park, Feb. 20: Seventeen birders joined this trip. When we first started, there were not many birds to be seen. As the day progressed, more birds became visible. In the end, we had seen a total of 44 different species. Highlights included good views of a Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Spotted Towhee plus many Acorn Woodpeckers which are very common at this location. A few people saw a Northern Pygmy-Owl near Little Yosemite. Alameda Creek was running high and fast, which was also enjoyable to hear and see.

Steve Taylor

Los Banos/Panoche Valley, Feb. 23-24: Our MDAS field trip group of 22 participants headed off very early Saturday for Gustine, and eventually Santa Fe Grade Rd. Santa Fe Grade Rd travels through a series of wetlands bordered by the North Grasslands Wildlife Area and numerous gun clubs. This is a great area for wintering waterfowl. We spent the morning viewing ducks, geese, a few pelicans, and several Wilson's Snipes while being serenaded almost non-stop by Virginia Rails and Soras. Some of us saw Blue-winged Teal and Lesser Scaup. We also saw numerous Red-tailed Hawks and several Great Horned Owls. After eating lunch at San Luis NWR, we traveled over to Merced NWR. From the observation deck, we had great views of Wilson's Snipes and a few glimpses of a couple of Soras. One of the fields opposite the deck was filled with Lesser Sandhill Cranes. On the auto tour route, we had more great looks at ducks and

geese. From the far viewing platform, we found a Lincoln's Sparrow and had close looks at both Snow and Ross's Geese, allowing for comparisons. There were quite a few blue morphs of both species. As we traveled back to the observation deck, we found a



lone Burrowing Owl lit up by the setting sun. We stayed to watch the geese fly into the fields and then departed. (*Photo of Long-eared Owl by Cassie Tzur*)

Sunday morning, the group gained 3 additional participants and caravanned 23 miles south of Los Banos to Little Panoche Rd, where we started birding slowly along both sides of the Rd. Our main goals were to visit Little Panoche Reservoir, drive the BLM Rd to the top of the Panoche Hills, then lunch at Mercey Hot Springs before entering the Panoche Valley. We



had fairly good birding for the day, without a lot of wind and warmer temperatures than Saturday. Our highlight birds were a Golden Eagle, 4 Ferruginous Hawks, Long-eared and Great Horned Owls at the hot springs, 3 falcon species, more Loggerhead Shrikes,

2 California Thrashers, Lawrence's Goldfinches and Tricolored Blackbirds. (*Photo of Merlin by Danny Swicegood*). When we finished at the Panoche Inn with drinks and ice cream, we learned we saw 86 species on Saturday and 47 on Sunday. Because we saw some species on both days, it came to 101 species for the weekend. *Beth Branthaver*

RAINOUTS: Feb. 14, Grizzly Island; Feb. 27, Walnut Creek Parks; March 6, Contra Loma; and March 9, Almond Ranch.

Gardening for the Birds

In the Bay Area, we have an outstanding resource for people who want to create bird-friendly gardens—the annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour.

On Sunday, May 5, the 15th Annual Tour will showcase 37 East Bay gardens that have excelled at attracting birds. This award-winning, self-guided tour features beautiful Contra Costa and Alameda County gardens that are pesticide-free, water-conserving, provide habitat for wildlife, and contain 60 percent or more native plants.

Below are descriptions of some gardens that have been particularly successful at attracting birds, along with a tip from each host for attracting our winged friends.

Kelly Marshall and Mike Weidner's garden, Clayton

Tip: Provide water, a diversity of native plants, and, if you can, keep your cat indoors.

Forty species of birds, including bluebirds that nest in the back yard, have been attracted to Kelly and Mike's Clayton garden. The birds are attracted by a bog and waterfall in the back yard, fountains in the front and side yard, and a plethora of native plants that provide nectar, berries, seeds, and insects. To keep birds and cats safe, their cat is an indoor cat only. This family provides feeders for hummingbirds,



orioles, woodpeckers, and finches. They let some plants go to seed, provide a nesting box for bluebirds, and a brush pile for quail to shelter in.

Laura Spain's garden, Concord

Tip: Replace all or part of your lawn with native plants, and put out a bird bath.

Inspired by the Bringing Back the

California Bush Anemone provides seeds and attracts insects for birds in Kelly Marshall's garden, while a mosaic bird bath made by Maria Sargent draws a crowd. (Photos Kathy Kramer and Maria Sargent)



Natives Garden Tour, driven by a desire to reduce water use and create

habitat for wildlife, and helped by a rebate from the Contra Costa Water District's "Lawn to Garden" rebate program, Laura sheet-mulched the lawn away. Now, a variety of birds, native bees, and butterflies visit the garden. Monarch butterflies flutter to the milkweed that was planted just for them. Aphids on the milkweed attract ladybugs and birds. Lizards sun themselves on the rocks. The bird bath is heavily used in the hot Concord summers.

Garden Talks 12pm and 3pm "How to sheet-mulch your lawn away!" by Laura Spain

Al and Barbara Kyte's garden, Moraga

Tip: Provide water and a wide variety of nesting sites, cover, and feeding options.

The 15th annual Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour takes place on Sunday, May 5, from 10am until 5pm. Advance registration and purchase of one \$10 garden guide for your group required; donations requested. Artwork for sale, and music performed at many gardens. More than 40 talks. Register and check out photos and birdlists for the gardens at bringingbackthenatives.net.

Al has used specific plants (such as Toyon), water features, bird houses, and supplemental food to attract birds to his yard. After 45 years of gardening with native plants, Al now believes that the overall design of the plantings may be the most important element. A design that provides a wide variety of nesting sites, cover, and feeding options has the potential to bring in the most species. Such a design might include everything from tall trees to small plants and from dense shrubbery to open ground. To provide this in his garden, Al has developed a backyard concept of an oak/pine woodland with some areas of open space. Bird baths and feeders, nesting houses, a shallow stream riffle, brush piles, dust bath areas, and abundant plant cover have attracted over 90 species of birds, including thrashers, tanagers, and Black-throated Gray Warblers.

Garden Talks 11am and 12pm "Gardening for native bees" by Elsa Zisook; 1pm and 3pm "Al's best tips from 45 years of planting and growing California natives" by Al Kyte

Maria Sargent's garden, Danville

Tip: Plan for a long bloom season: include native plants that will provide year-round food for birds, and also give birds access to clean water.

The long blooming season in Maria's garden—which has drawn in 19 species of birds—begins when the dozen types of beautiful manzanita in her front garden begin to flower in December and January. The floral show continues with purple-blues of a half dozen types of California lilac, and a variety of wildflowers, lupines, monkeyflowers, and more. Birds are attracted to the five types of buckwheat, which flower in the summer, and on into the fall. —Kathy Kramer, a Golden Gate Audubon Society member and founder of the Bringing Back the Natives garden tour

Wondering which plants to incorporate into your own garden to attract birds? Check out the Audubon Society's terrific new native plant database at audubon.org/plantsforbirds. Another excellent database is the California Native Plant Society's Calscape.org, which provides information on all the native trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, grasses, succulents, vines and ferns that grow naturally in your area. In either database, just enter your zip code to obtain a list of bird-friendly plants that will attract the birds you love.

On the Pacific Flyway

The Pacific Flyway is the main western route through the U.S. for over 350 species of migrating birds. Migration south begins as early as August, while the return trip begins around March.

Some of our favorite hummingbirds, including Rufous, Allen's, Black-chinned, and Costa's (below) are making their way north right now. They are headed to Canada or Alaska, thousands of miles north of their winter



Wild Birds

homes. They often travel at night, covering as many as 500 miles without stopping. Many will stop off in the Bay Area and may be seen at your feeders soon.



Migrating birds visit most of Northern California from the Pacific Coast to the Central Valley. Estuaries, where ocean and fresh water meet, are favorite resting spots for shorebirds due to plentiful food in the shallows. These American avocets have a great view of San Francisco.



Several seasonal marshes in wildlife refuges north of Sacramento are winter homes to over 1.5 million ducks and 750,000 geese. Nothing compares to the



brehtaking view and sound of 50,000 snow geese taking off and circling together, a regular event at the refuges.

For some relaxing fun, take a day this spring and visit one of the many hot spots

within 75 miles of San Francisco.

These informative websites can you shape your plans:

www.fws.gov/refuge/Sacramento/seasonsofwildlife.html

www.wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/Yolo-Bypass-WA

www.fws.gov/refuge/don_edwards_san_francisco_bay/

—Member at Large Michael Eliot

BIRDING CLASSES

NEW

Beginning Birding Basics

Two 2-hour classes and two 4-hour field trips
Classes: Thursday, May 9 and 16, 7-9pm
Trips: Saturday, May 11 and 18, 8am-noon
Lafayette Library and Learning Ctr, Oak Room
Cost: \$45 MDAS member/\$50 non-member

Pamela Llewellyn, who recently taught a popular Raptor ID class for MDAS, returns to teach beginners how to identify typical Bay Area birds. Classroom presentations will introduce our local avifauna. We will cover the basics of identification, field guides and optics. During field trips, we will practice what we learned in class. Binoculars required. Learn from a Bay Area native and Berkeley integrative biology grad who has been leading local birding trips for the Golden Gate Audubon Society for 15 years.

To Register: diabloaudubon.org/education.php

Spring "Avian Treasure Hunt"

Three 2-hour classes and three 5.5-hour trips
Classes: Thursday, April 11, 18 and 25, 7-9pm
Lafayette Library and Learning Ctr, Oak Room
Trips: Saturday, April 13, 20 and 27, 8:30am-2pm
Cost: \$75 MDAS members/\$80 non-members

Just 4 spots remaining

Prepare for the migrant treasure hunt and sharpen your birding skills by better understanding how seasonal changes impact local bird distribution patterns. Expect broad migratory principles as well as practical birding tips. Naturalist **Juan-Carlos Solis** has over 20 years experience leading trips. See www.quetzaladventures.com.

To Register: diabloaudubon.org/education.php

JMLT



PURE MUIR GALA

Celebrate 30 years of land conservation in the East Bay.
Music. Wine. Gourmet dinner.

Live auction.

WHEN: Sat., May 4, 4-9pm (VIP Tour 3pm)

WHERE: John Muir Historic Site, 4202 Alhambra Ave., Martinez

January and February were interesting months, with a herring run attracting many sea and shore birds into the Pt. Richmond area, in addition to a number of birds overwintering in the area, plus some early arrivals, and early nesters.

Maury Stern

Observations

(Jan. 6-March 10, 2019)

Forty **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Holland Tract 1/19. PS

LC and L&MS saw 4 **Brant** in the waters off the Canal Blvd. viewing platform. J&CD saw 25 near Brooks Island 1/25.

There were 6 **Tundra Swan** at Holland Tract 1/19. PS

A **Cackling Goose** was on a Heather Farm lawn 1/18. HH

Wood Ducks were in Las Trampas Creek along the Lafayette-Moraga Trail Staging Area: 4 on 1/19.

A&WB, HH, WD; 10 on 2/19. PS

All 3 **Teal species** were at McNabney Marsh 1/23. PS

HH saw 12 **Blue-winged Teal** at McNabney Marsh on 1/31.

J&CD saw 900 **Greater Scaup** near Brooks Island 1/25.

EM and LC saw 1,600 **Surf Scoters** 1/13 from the Canal Blvd viewing platform in Richmond.

White-winged Scoters were off the Canal Blvd viewing platform 1/13. EM, LC

Two **Black Scoters** spent the winter just off the Richmond Yacht Club and were seen by 98 observers.

BH, ES, TF, and PG saw them early in the period.

Long-tailed Ducks were in the waters off Miller-Knox Park on 2/2, PB, LB, and 2/3, MK. Eighteen additional observers saw them.

J&CD saw 250 **Bufflehead** off Brooks Island 1/25.

FS saw a **Common Goldeneye** in the Heather Farm Natural Pond 1/16.

A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** was at Jewel Lake in Tilden 2/1. AK

GG saw a **Red-necked Grebe** in the waters of Meeker Slough near the 51st Street entrance 2/19.

Thirty **Eurasian Collared Doves** were at Holland Tract 1/28. DWE

White-winged Doves were at Holland Tract from 1/16 onward. SC, RS, PB and 10 more.

An **Anna's Hummingbird** was gathering nest material at the Walnut Creek home of HH, 1/18.

Rufous Hummingbirds were seen by JC in Orinda, 2/2, JN at Pt. San Pablo 2/10, and C&TW 2/15 at Vincent Park in Richmond.

SD saw 2 **Allen's Hummingbirds** 1/24 at Pt. Pinole.

A **Common Gallinule** was seen at Heather Farm Pond 1/16. HH

On 1/19, PS saw 35 **Sandhill Cranes** at Holland Tract, and DB saw more than 100 later in the month.

One **Snowy Plover** was on the Pt. Pinole Pier 1/21. JW

Sixty **Long-billed Curlews** were on Jersey Island 1/19. PS

JT saw a **Common Murre** off Vincent Park in Richmond 2/1.

A probable **Marbled Murrelet** was flying near the Canal Blvd viewing platform 1/12. LC, L&MS

A lone **Heermann's Gull** was with hundreds of other gulls 1/13 near Lucretia Edwards Park in Richmond. CBD. SD saw one at Ferry Point in Pt. Richmond 1/29.

A number of **Mew Gulls** were at Heather Farm 1/18. WD

LC, L&MS saw 30 **Iceland (Thayer's) Gulls** off the Canal Blvd viewing platform 1/12. HH saw 3 at McNabney Marsh 1/31.

A **Glaucous Gull** was seen off Sandpiper Spit in Richmond 2/3. EM, L&MS, LC

Caspian Terns were at Holland Tract in January, DH, Pt. Isabel, RJ, and Martinez Shoreline, AL.

Eighty **Red-throated Loons** were between Richmond and Brooks Island 1/12. LC, L&MS

Pacific Loons were around the Pt. Richmond and Richmond Shorelines in January. PB at Vincent Park 1/12. TK near Miller-Knox 1/13. 13 more people saw them as well.

LC and EM saw 300 **Brandt's Cormorants** off Miller-Knox Park 1/12, and 400 near Pt. Richmond during the herring run 1/27.

PS saw 8 **American White Pelicans** at Contra Loma Park in Antioch 2/3.

PS saw 2 **Osprey** at Contra Loma 2/3.

On 1/14, GC saw 39 **White-tailed Kites** at a sunset fly-in off Waterfront Road in Martinez.

EL saw 2 **Bald Eagles** at the Lafayette Reservoir 2/15.

There was a **Ferruginous Hawk** at Fernandez Ranch 2/23. CA

The **Western Screech Owl** in the tree on the Lafayette Moraga Trail was seen again 2/19. PS

Q: Which North American duck benefits from lake acidification? *Answer on page 11.*

A **Great Horned Owl** was roosting off KB's Lafayette deck 2/17.

PS saw a **Burrowing Owl** at Contra Loma 2/3.

Short-eared Owls were seen just before sunset on Waterfront Road in Martinez 1/14, GC, and 2/14, HH. One was at the Wildcat Creek and Marsh Area off Richmond Parkway 1/26. BM

A **Merlin** was at Meeker Slough 1/10, AKr, DW. One was at Heather Farm 1/18, HH, WD, and 1/25, HH, TF, BD.

A **Peregrine Falcon** was on one of the islands at McNabney Marsh 1/31. HH

A leucistic **Black Phoebe** was in Moraga 1/27. KSp

An early **Pacific-Slope Flycatcher** was at Black Diamond Mines 3/9. DA

The **Tropical Kingbird** at Heather Farm during the last 5 months was seen by 21 reporters since 1/9.

Violet-green Swallows were at Wildcat Marsh on 2/6. JH

Northern Rough-winged Swallows were at Heather Farm Pond 3/4. HH, WD, FS

A **Marsh Wren** was at Heather Farm Pond 3/4. HH

The long-staying (eastern) **Winter Wren** continues at Pt. San Pablo/Molate. JT, AH

Barn Swallows were at Heather Farm 1/25, ML, BD and Lafayette Reservoir 2/14. JT

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were in scattered locations. GC, 1/12, and DL, 1/13, on the Bay Trail near 51st Street; PG at Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, 1/21; KF, 1/21 at Kennedy Grove off San Pablo Road.

A single **Varied Thrush** flushed along the boardwalk near Jewel Lake in Tilden 2/2. PY

Cedar Waxwings were at Heather Farm 1/16, HH. MS sees them daily

along his street in Lafayette where there are many *Pyracantha* berries.

Overwintering? A **Hermit Warbler** was at Miller-Knox 1/19. PB

AS saw a **Wilson's Warbler** along the Arnold Industrial Place frontage road off Hwy 4 in Concord 2/11.

An unusual **Sagebrush Sparrow** appeared along Meadow Lane in Concord 2/17. CH

Twenty-five people reported the **Nelson's Sparrow** along the San Francisco Bay Trail near 51st Street in Oakland. 1/8 KP, 1/9, JM, TF, PG, 1/18, AL, JH, GC and BT.

EM saw a Slate-colored **Fox Sparrow** 1/9 and 2/10 at the Canyon Lakes Golf Course.

A red **Song Sparrow** of the *rufina* sub-species was at Booker T.

Anderson Park in Richmond LS. 2/3

A **Swamp Sparrow** showed up at the Antioch Marina 1/7, C&TW, and Meeker Slough 1/10. AKr

PS saw a **White-throated Sparrow** at his

Antioch home 1/6. JR had another in her yard, and SD had one at her Richmond home 1/28.

Slate-colored **Junco** were in Orinda, JC, 1/19, as well as Lafayette, MS, the whole period of time.

A **Summer Tanager** was a surprise along Tice Creek at Timber Bridge in Walnut Creek 3/3. GW



DS and DSc saw a **Western Tanager** 1/27 and 1/28 in Lafayette near Condit and Windsor Court.

Tricolored Blackbirds were at Contra Loma Park 2/3. PS

A large flock of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Holland Tract 2/17. DB

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

CA Cheryl Abel, DA David Armstrong, A&WB Alan and Wendy Bade, KB Kristen Baker, DB Don Baumen, LB Lily Beckman, PB Phred Benham, SC Srikand Char, JC Jim Chiropoulos, GC Graham Chisholm, LC Lucas Corneliussen, CBD CB Dawson, SD Sheila Dickie, WD Walt Duncan, J&CD Judith and Charles Dunham, BD Bob Dunn, KF Kelly Franson, TF Teale Fristoe, PG Philip Georgakakos, GG George Griffeth, CH Cindy Handlin, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, AH Adrian Hinkle, BH Ben Holloway, JH Jeff Hoppes, RJ Rosemary Johnson, AK Alan Kaplan, AKr Alan Krakauer, TK Trevor Kienzle, MK Melani King, DL Derek Lecey, EL Elizabeth Leite, AL Albert Linkowski, ML Marty Lycan, BM Bruce Mast, JM Joe Missing, EM Ethan Monk, JN Julie Newman, KP Kir Pridatko, JR Jean Richmond, FS Fred Safier, RS Rich Saxton, DS Daniel Scali, AS Alyson Schmidt, PS Paul Schorr, DSc Diane Schreiber, KSp Kathryn Spence, LS Lucas Stephenson, L&MS Lucas and Mark Stephenson, MS Maury Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, JT John Toldi, BT Bob Toleno, DWe Dave Weber, JW Jay Weiner, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills, GW Grant Winslow, PY Pam Young

Art by Megan Sandri

Want to know where birds in Contra Costa and Alameda County are now? Join the MDAS East Bay Birding - Sightings Yahoo Group. See diabloaudubon.org for details.



Mt. Diablo
Audubon

Celebrate Earth Day by Joining Us for this Unique Event!

McNabney Marsh Earth Day Cleanup & Bird Watching Saturday, April 13, 2019

Bird Watching with the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

7:00am to 9:00am

Cleanup at McNabney Marsh

9:30am – Noon

Meet at Waterbird Regional Preserve Staging Area

We will start the day with a bird watching event hosted by the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society followed by a cleanup around McNabney Marsh on Waterbird Way in Martinez. Children 10 years and above (supervised by an adult) are welcome to participate. Reservations and signed liability forms are **REQUIRED**. Heavy Rain cancels.



Contact Heidi Petty for more info or to RSVP: hpetty@ccrpd.org.

2019 Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count has been held every February for 22 years. A joint project of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon, the worldwide event provides a snapshot of where birds are just before the beginning of Spring migration on our continent. Participants report through eBird the birds they see on any of the four days.

This year's data, from Feb. 15-18, includes approximately 28,000 checklists from all over the globe. By early March, close to 6,700 species and over 31 million individual birds had been reported. The GBBC was the first online citizen science project to collect data on wild birds and to display the results in real time. Check out the map: <https://ebird.org/gbbc/livesubs>.

MDAS held its Bodega Bay birding trip on the Saturday of GBBC. I entered some checklists for birds I saw on this trip, and I also reported from Lafayette Reservoir. Probably some of you participated as well, even unknowingly, by entering an eBird checklist during the weekend.

Mark your calendars for the next GBBC: Feb. 14 - 17, 2020.—*Citizen Science Chair Elizabeth Leite*

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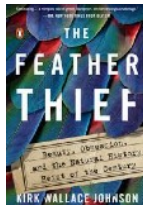
Register now at audubon.org

Meet the Author

Wed., April 24, 7pm

Rakestraw Books

3 Railroad Ave., Danville



“An enthralling tale of a truly bizarre crime.”
Publishers Weekly

Q: Which North American duck benefits from lake acidification?

A: Common Goldeneye

Common Goldeneyes are diving ducks that are common in California in winter in our larger reservoirs, in the San Francisco Bay and other larger estuaries. Smaller groups, pairs or single birds occur on smaller bodies of water, such as Lake Merritt, where this photo was taken. This species has a very large range, with an estimated population of 2.7 million to 4.7 million individuals, breeding in Russia, Canada, Alaska and other northern areas.

Common Goldeneyes, aka *Bucephalus clangula*, breed in cavities of large trees close to clear, cold water, as around rivers, lakes or bogs. These cavities can be 5-60 feet above the ground. The birds readily use nest boxes and often return to the same nesting site

year after year. When nest sites are scarce, females may lay eggs in each other's nests. The female Goldeneye may lay eggs in the nests of other species of ducks, especially other cavity-nesting ducks. The female lays from 5-10 eggs, which she incubates for 28-32 days. After the young hatch, they leave the nest within



1 to 2 days, led to water by the female. Leaving the nest can be quite dangerous it would seem, with nests as high as 60 feet, but the young seem to take it in stride, jumping one by one out of the nest hole while the mother duck calls from below. The ducklings can feed themselves right away, but the female protects them until they are 5-6 weeks old. At 8-9 weeks, they fledge.

After breeding, the ducks head further north to large lakes, rivers or coastal areas to undergo a period of flightless molt which lasts 3-4 weeks. The males leave for this migration while the females are still incubating. Large molt gatherings of ducks are common during this period starting in early June and peaking in late August.

Common Goldeneyes tend to prefer acidified water, where competition for acid-tolerant insects is reduced because fish that could feed on such insects cannot themselves survive in such conditions. These ducks are also attracted to northern areas with industrial effluent discharge, which keeps the water free of ice in areas that would otherwise typically freeze in winter. The concentration of birds at these sites is of concern since the waste may be contaminating them.

These birds are fast-flying ducks that can reach speeds of over 40 miles an hour. They are often called “whistlers” by hunters, because of the peculiar penetrating whistle made by their wings in flight. At times, these sounds can be heard even before the ducks are clearly seen.

The oldest Common Goldeneye was a male that was at least 20 years 5 months old. He was banded and found again in Minnesota.—*Jean Halford*

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

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Hummingbirds are attracted to the tubular, red flowers of native fuschia, notes Kathy Kramer, whose Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour returns Sunday, May 5. For details, see p. 6. (Photo David Harper)



From Left: Kent Fickett calls on audience members to share birding observations. Maren Smith announces that Danville's Rakestraw Books will host a reading April 24 by the author of The Feather Thief (Details on p. 11). East Bay Regional Parks Director Beverly Lane shares the good news that, after years of deliberation, the Concord Naval Weapons Station appears weeks away from turning over 2,500 acres for park use. Heidi Perryman wows the crowd with her extraordinary and entertaining tale of advocating for beavers in Martinez and beyond. See martinezbeavers.org. (Photos Lori Patel)