

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 50, Number 7

April 2005

Trinidad and Tobago • Bob Stewart

Focusing on birds, bird song, butterflies and flowers, Bob Stewart takes us to Trinidad and Tobago on April 7. Bob has taught biology in public schools and at the College of Marin and has served as Landbird Biologist and Director of Education at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. For 15 years Bob worked for the County of Marin and is well known for the 2,000 plus outings he led for the general public on a variety of topics including bird behavior, butterflies, insects, mushrooms, grasses, flowering plants, habitats and general ecology. Since 1973, he has led birding and natural history tours to a variety of locations around California, the Southwest United States and Central America. Bob has made three trips to Trinidad and Tobago and is planning a fourth. He spoke to our group in April 2004, and previously in April 2002. Welcome back!

The local Carib Indians called this island nation Iere, Land of the Hummingbirds. Just seven miles off the coast of Venezuela, Tobago and Trinidad (often called T&T) became a Republic in 1976. Once a stronghold for pirates, Tobago has secluded beaches, pristine coral reefs, and lush rainforests (although tourism is growing rapidly). Trinidad is more commercialized on its east coast, except for such oases as Caroni Swamp, home of the Scarlet Ibis. Coconut palms line the west-coast beaches. In the central mountains there is the incomparable Asa Wright Nature Centre.

Join Bob as he takes you to Trinidad for a stay in the tropical rainforest at this famed birding destination. Share the awesome birdsong extravaganza early in the morning and see views of the Bearded Bellbird, Scarlet-bellied Macaw, White-necked Jacobin, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird,



Black-throated Mango, and the Stripe-breasted Spinetail. Join Bob and local naturalists for field trips into the surrounding area including a night trip to see the 8-foot, thirty year old, female leatherback turtles lay their clutches of 100 eggs in the sand. Relax on the Asa Wright veranda for pure bird watching excitement at any time of day and enjoy the unique African-Indian cuisine.

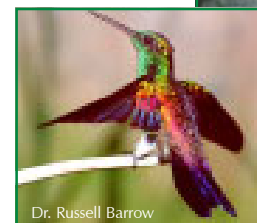
A short twenty-minute flight away is the island of Tobago where we will see the Blue-backed Manakin, the White-tailed Sabrewing, and the Rufous-tailed Jacamar. The Blue Waters Inn is located on the beach in an isolated cove where the snorkeling is said to be out of this world.

Some of Bob's other activities include leading two courses for the Point Reyes Field Seminars this Spring: *Wildflowers of Kehoe Beach and Abbott's Lagoon*, on March 26 and *Emphasizing Wildflowers: A Naturalists View of Point Reyes*, on April 2-3. Call (415) 663-1200 for more information or go to www.ptreyes.org. Look for his books *Common Butterflies of California* and *Butterflies of Arizona, A Photographic Study*.

Scarlet Ibis
National bird
of Trinidad and
Tobago



Jesse Cohen/Smithsonian



Dr. Russell Barrow

Copper-rumped
Hummingbird

Birding Information Birding by Ear

Denise Wight, longtime MDAS member, is an expert birder particularly skilled at birding by ear. In her birding classes she focuses on learning birds and their sounds in their individual habitats. During our April Birding Information, Denise will share various techniques for, and insights into, birding by ear. She will play recently recorded vocalizations of local Bay Area species. We can be sure that she will have some surprises for us.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, April 7**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on page 7).

- 6:30 PM Doors open
- 7:00 PM Birding Information
- 7:25 PM Announcements and business
- 7:40 PM Social time, refreshments*, door prize
- 8:05 PM Program

* Please remember to bring a cup.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Our local Chestnut-backed Chickadees are beginning to nest!

- They're looking for holes in dead trees to set up housekeeping. They'll also use nest boxes, which they line with moss or strips of soft bark, and cover with hair. These friendly little guys forage for insects, spiders and seeds, and they love peanuts, too.
- They're just nice to have around the house!

Come in and talk to our staff and let us help you pick out a house-warming gift for Your Chestnut-backed Chickadees!



Advanced Pole System®.

- Hang a peanut feeder just outside your breakfast room, and enjoy watching the Chickadees and other birds enjoy their breakfast, too!

- Bewick's Wrens and Oak Titmice would appreciate a suet feeder, too, along with the Chickadees, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, and White- and Red-breasted Nuthatches.



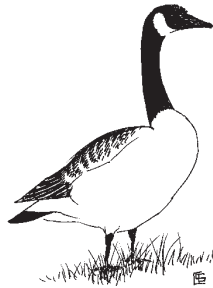
Mike & Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Observations

By Steve Glover

Pied-billed Grebes are known to nest both early and late in the season but two begging young being fed by an adult at Briones Reservoir on 2/19 was a full two months earlier than any of the confirmations during the Breeding Bird Atlas and is earlier than has ever been reported in the county (DW).



Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** and a single **Ross's Goose** were at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline, Point. Richmond on 2/12 (BP). Geese other than Canadas regularly appear on the lawn at this park in fall and winter and often include Cackling Geese.

The Martinez **Long-tailed Duck** was seen again on 2/9 (PB), 2/10 (LG) and 2/11 (JH). The tail was reportedly just beginning to grow in at the time of these sightings.

A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** were on Moraga Creek near Canyon on 2/20 (DL).

A **Ruddy Turnstone** at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline, Point. Richmond on 2/12 was a true rarity for the county (BP).

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Miller Knox Regional Shoreline on 2/12 was a winter rarity for the county and possibly the first found in winter in the western portion of the county (BP).

The male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** continued in a Walnut Creek yard through at least 1/22 but has not been seen since (LG).

Paul Brenner, Laura Gee, Jennifer Hyppio, Don Lewis, Bob Power, Denise Wight

Q These birds are fond of sculpins, gunnels, gadids and sand lance. Their most striking feature is their bright red feet. In flight, the feet trail and give the impression of a scarlet tail. During courtship, the two birds will twitter-hiss at each other, and the inside of their throat will be bright red like their feet.

Answer on Page 4

Field Trip Reports

February 5, Bodega Bay. Just before we arrived at Bodega Bay, the sun broke out of the sea of fog, and we were greeted with a gorgeous view of the harbor and the surrounding hills. Four members and a guest took advantage of the day to see or hear 61 bird species. Many coastal birds were seen including 5 species of grebes, 3 of cormorants, 9 of shorebirds, and 5 of gulls. Highlights were the adult Peregrine Falcon eating what appeared to be a gull, the hundreds of Brant and Marbled Godwits in the harbor, and an elusive Red-necked Grebe seen in the harbor entrance while we ate lunch.

Hugh Harvey

February 17, Sunol Regional Wilderness. Under threatening skies 3 members walked as far as the "W" Tree Rock Scramble, a rather quiet but enjoyable walk. We worked hard to find the 37 species we did find, the birds seeming to be as scarce as the birders. Though we could not find any of the hoped for

Rufous-crowned Sparrows or Western Bluebirds, we did watch a distant pair of Golden Eagles land near the top of Flag Hill, we heard and saw a Hutton's Vireo near the visitor's center, and we tallied 5 species of corvids for the day, 2 jays, American Crow, Common Raven, and Yellow-billed Magpie. *Hugh Harvey*

February 19, Morgan Territory. A steady drizzle, fog, wet trails and more shades of green than one could imagine were experienced by the seven members who explored the upper reaches of Morgan Territory Regional Preserve. 25 bird species were seen or heard. A number of early wildflowers—Buttercups, Milk Maids, Indian Warrior and a few Shooting Stars—were much easier to find than the Western Bluebirds, Acorn Woodpeckers, and the 2 jay species. We stopped at two places coming down the hill and found a Red-tailed Hawk, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and at least 2 Varied Thrushes.

Hugh Harvey

Field Trip Schedule

By Elizabeth Dickey

April

2 Saturday Garin Regional Park
 7 Thursday Tilden
 13 Wednesday East Briones
 16 Saturday Pine Canyon
 21 Thursday Ida Clayton Road
 27 Wednesday Del Puerto Canyon

May

5 Thursday Mitchell Canyon
 7 Saturday Mines Road
 11 Wednesday South Side Mount Diablo
 19 Thursday Napa River
 21 Saturday East Contra Costa Co.
 25 Wednesday West Briones

For the full list of field trips through Summer 2005, see the October 2004 *Quail*.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php, or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Trip directions and meeting times will be published in the *Quail*. Customary carpool expense is 37½ cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths; Category 2: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain; Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Welcome New Members

Rod Headington	Pleasant Hill
Robert McCloskey	Oakland
Lois Riddle	Brentwood



Willow Woodpecker
Dryobates pubescens turati
 Birds of Golden Gate Park
 Joseph Mailliard
 1930

April Field Trips

Saturday, April 2, **Garin Regional Park**. Garin Park is located in the hills just east of Hayward with great views of the Bay Area. There are plenty of parking and picnic tables at the park, and water is available. No services. From the parking lot, we'll take one of the many trails leading up into the hills. Carpool leaves 7:15 AM from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Meet in parking lot at end of Garin Rd. at 8 AM. Take I-680 south and I-580 west. Exit on East Castro Valley Blvd. and continue west. Turn left onto Crow Canyon Road and go under freeway. Crow Canyon Road becomes Grove Way and then A Street. At A Street and SR238 (Foothill Blvd.), turn left. Foothill Blvd./SR 238 becomes Mission Blvd. Go south about 3 miles to Garin Road, turn left, and follow to end. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906. Category 3.

Thursday, April 7, **Tilden Regional Park**. Meet at 8 AM in parking lot at the Nature Center at the north end of the park. Depending in part on the weather, we will walk either down Wildcat Creek or up the Laurel Trail. A half-day trip for local birds. Good beginners' trip. Call for information: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2.

Wednesday, April 13. **East Briones**. Meet at 9 AM in the parking lot at north entrance. Take Briones Road off Alhambra Valley Road. Wildflowers, spring birds. Poison oak along shaded trails. Call for information: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2.

Saturday, April 16. **Pine Canyon**. Meet in parking lot at end of Castle Rock Road at 8 AM. Hike up Pine Canyon. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Spring migrants. Leader: Pat MacEachern. Category 3.

Thursday, April 21, **Ida Clayton Road**. One of the best places for springtime bird watching in Sonoma County is Ida Clayton Road where a large number of our returning spring migrants can be seen. April and May are the best months. Ida Clayton Road intersects Highway 128 as it enters southern Knight's Valley in eastern Sonoma County. It climbs into the mountains on the northwest shoulder of Mount St. Helena. The terrain is steep and offers many nice vistas, including wonderful views of the north side of Mount St. Helena. Madrone Audubon summarizes target birds at www.audubon.sonoma.net/birding/RROS.html#anchor118754. Carpool leaves at 7 AM. from the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. This area is north of Calistoga in the Napa County mountains. This is a car birding trip with no meeting place in Sonoma County. The carpooling is needed due to limited

parking on some roads. Call for information: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 1.

Wednesday, April 27. **Del Puerto Canyon**. This canyon has Stanislaus County's most diverse natural environment. The habitats range from grasslands along the western valley floor to chaparral and Blue Oak woodland. Over 150 species of birds have been sighted in the canyon, including Yellow-breasted Chat, Costa's Hummingbird, Greater Roadrunner and Grasshopper Sparrow. The birds along with interesting geology, herps, insects and other wildlife make this a wonderful spring birding trip. Carpool leaves at 7:45 AM from LaGonda Way in Danville (see the Garin Regional Park trip for directions to LaGonda Way.) This is strictly a carpool trip. (Recommend stop at Westley Rest Area. There are no facilities on trip until noon.) Yellow-breasted Chat, Costa's Hummingbird, and other goodies. For more information, see http://www.stanislausbirds.org/del_puerto_canyon.htm. Leader: Jean Richmond, 837-2843. Category 1.

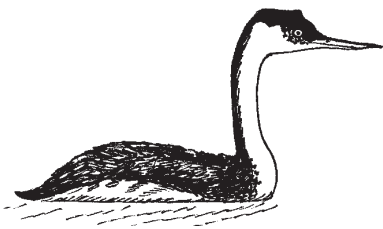
Ornithology Opportunities

Natural History of California Birds. Wednesdays, 7:30–9:30 PM, beginning April 6, 2005, plus Field Trip. Acalanes Adult Education Center, Del Valle campus, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek (near Rossmoor).

Study the life history of birds. Explore this popular leisure-time hobby/career. Labs, specimens, slide shows, and use of bird guides will keep us focused on birding skills, and gain understanding of where birds are and what they are doing. Slide lectures - specimens - microscope labs - literature reviews - updates on bird nomenclature - birding techniques for the yard and field - habits - landscaping for wildlife - travel tips. Beginners to advanced welcome.

Emphasis this semester: Labs on bird structure, e.g. feathers and flight. Birds in xeric habitats of Northern California, e.g., chaparral, San Joaquin Valley, deserts, etc. Field trip to Pinnacles National Monument (see article in March *Quail*), to demonstrate class theme (including recently released California Condors).

Cost: \$80 10 Evening Sessions and Field Trip. Pre-register at Acalanes Adult Ed. (925) 935-0170 or register at first class. For more information, call Phil Gordon at (510) 538-3550.



Godwit Days. April 15–17, Arcata. Held at the peak of spring migration, shorebirds abound and special opportunities are planned to see many other species, including Marbled Murrelet, Spotted Owl, and Snowy Plover. Nearly 100 small group field trips, lectures, workshops, boating excursions, and community activities are led by experienced local guides. The “Humboldt Big Day” trip consistently observes over 110 species in a single day! Register on-line at www.godwitdays.com for an excep-

Pigeon Guillemot

Cephus columba

Pigeon guillemots forage by diving in shallow nearshore waters. Because of this, they and the fishes they eat are highly vulnerable to oil spills. In fact, the birds’ population is declining as a result of past oil spills, pollution, and warming climate conditions.

The pigeon guillemot uses its wings to swim while searching for food—it seems to be flying under water.

In spring, pairs gather together and perform a courtship “water-dance”—calling, diving and chasing each other. Pigeon guillemots nest in rock crevices and under tree roots high up on rocky cliffs and steep slopes. They can

tional weekend of birding on the scenic Redwood Coast. For further information or assistance with registration for Godwit Days call 800-908-WING.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory and Ventana Wilderness Society’s Big Sur Ornithology Lab announce an **Ageing and Sexing of Passerines Workshop** on Monday-Friday, April 18-22. Peter Pyle, Institute for Bird Populations Biologist, and author of *The Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part I*, will be the primary instructor.

The action-packed week will consist of presentations, study of specimens, field mist-netting, banding, and processing at three locations on the central coast of California, field trips to renowned birding locations, and a social on Thursday evening. Participants will be trained in a synthesis of methods pertaining to identification, ageing, and sexing of landbirds in the hand and in the field. Cost is \$650 (\$550 early registration, by March 18th). Breakfasts, lunches, and one dinner are included; lodging not provided.

For more information and a registration form please see www.ventanaws.org/PeterPyleWorkshop.htm or contact the Big Sur Ornithology Lab (831-624-1202 or jessicagriffiths@ventanaws.org).

Spring Wings Bird Festival. May 13-15, 2005, Fallon, Nevada. Spring Wings is



climb the vertical rock promontories by scrabbling with their claws and with a furious flapping of wings.

Both parents feed their chicks, bringing them an average of 16 loads a day, one fish at a time. Chicks eat the fish whole, head first. They gain weight rapidly, tripling their weight within 10 days.

a celebration of the migration through Northern Nevada’s Lahontan Valley. These internationally renowned wetlands offer spectacles of large flocks of shorebirds and waterfowl as they travel the Pacific Flyway. The festival boasts tours; seminars; banquet; and free admission to the Convention Center with nature-related arts and crafts, vendors, and activities for kids of all ages. Come celebrate the migration!! Contact: Spring Wings and Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, Spring Wings PO Box 6332, Fallon, NV 89407 775-428-6452

Walk on the Wildside! Festival. May 14th, 2005, 10 AM–4:30 PM, Beach Lake Preserve, Sacramento. (916) 875-WILD

If you’d enjoy a fun, free family-oriented day in the country with lively entertainment and up-close views of many wildlife species, mark your calendar and plan to attend *Walk on the Wildside!*

This fun outdoor celebration of International Migratory Bird Day highlighting local efforts in protecting native Central Valley habitats and wildlife offers a great opportunity to access normally closed wildlife areas. Take a guided tour of restored wetlands and check out heron rookeries on the Bufferlands. Spruce-up your garden with California Native Plant Society–Sacramento Chapter’s native plant sale showcasing many local native species that are hard to find!

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

____ Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for the year 2005.

____ Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

____ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 for the year 2005.

____ For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive four quarterly issues of the *Audubon Magazine*.

____ I'm enclosing an additional donation of \$_____.

Name _____

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____ Visa ____ MasterCard ____ Expiration Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to:

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:
Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Court, Danville, CA 94526

the Quail

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(925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

Mount Diablo Audubon Society general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Garden Center at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Board of Directors meets at 7 PM on the second Thursday of every month in the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 94526. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA 94556.

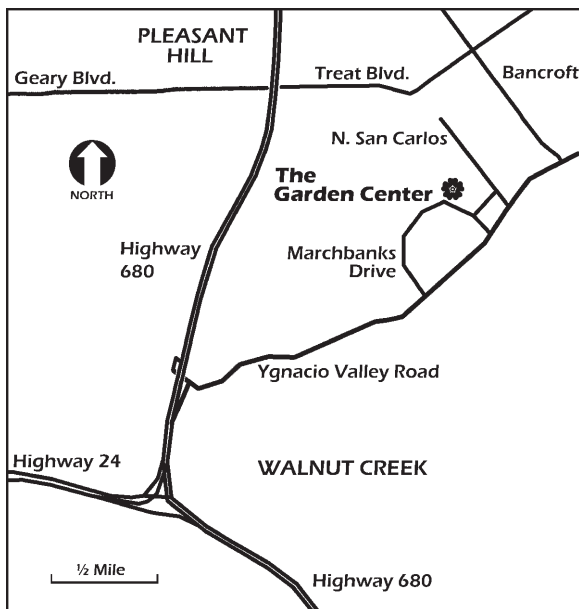
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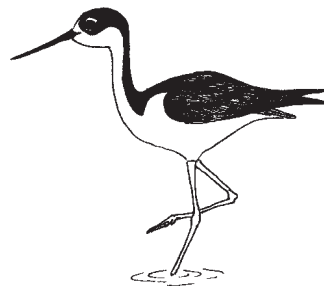
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Deadline for the May issue is April 5.



Driving directions: From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into parking lot. From Highway 680 south, take Treat Blvd. to Bancroft. Go right to Ygnacio Valley Road, turn right and go one block past signal at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). At Marchbanks Drive turn right. The Garden Center is located on the right in the second block.



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Bird Island, Point Lobos State Reserve

Quickies

Weekend birding in California

Point Lobos State Reserve

There are few – if any – prettier places to bird in California than at Point Lobos, just south of Carmel. The park indeed can be called the crown jewel of California's state park system.

There's good bird watching at Point Lobos any time of the year.

The Point Lobos State Reserve, with its rocky coast, sandy coves, offshore islands and ocean water, diverse vegetation of coastal scrub, meadows, oaks and pines, attracts the usual resident and seasonal birds as well as wandering vagrants. In spring, along the beaches or shoreline rocks, migrating shorebirds pass through on their way north. Their stay may be short, often less than a day, but it is a stop that is repeated year after year. In the summer and fall, hundreds of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters pass through this area. With the arrival of the

wintering birds, one or more of the three loon species might be spotted.

From the forest canopy high in the trees to the ocean waters framing this ecological sanctuary, there's a habitat for any bird's desire. A walk through the reserve at various times of the year might yield Pygmy Nuthatches, Band-tailed Pigeons and Pine Siskins high in the trees, with Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Brown Creepers checking for insects at mid-level, and California Quail and Spotted Towhee working on the forest floor. A check of the coastal scrub could offer a chance to see its resident denizens: Anna's Hummingbird, Wrentit or White-crowned Sparrow.

Along the shoreline a glance at the rocks or just offshore should give you an opportunity to observe the resident Pelagic Cormorants, Killdeer and Western Gulls, perhaps even a Heermann's Gull. Brown Pelicans are common as they glide over the water or roost on Bird Island. You may be lucky enough to see one plunge-dive into the ocean to capture a fish. Pelicans have not nested here since the 1960s, but there is evidence that they may return, as

local numbers have been increasing and they have recently been observed exhibiting courting behavior.

At Whaler's Cove you might see a raft of Eared Grebes as they are momentarily up, then momentarily beneath the water. Guillemot Island, viewed from the North Shore Trail, is the best place to observe nesting Pigeon Guillemots, or to compare Pelagic with Brandt's Cormorants in breeding plumage.

South Shore Trail is where you'll find Black Oystercatchers foraging among intertidal rocks at Weston Beach; look for Mergansers and Snowy Egrets at low tide. Take the wildflower-bordered Bird Island Trail to Pelican Point and look out to the large sea bird colonies on Bird Island. From this trail, also, you'll marvel at the beauty of China Cove's brilliant turquoise water as you look down to where the harbor seals are hauled out on the rocks and where sea otters play. This trail connects to the South Plateau Trail, which leads for three-quarters of a mile back to the entrance station through pine woods with its distinct habitat for warblers.