

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 54, Number 7

April 2009

Bob Stewart • Breeding Strategies of Bay Area Birds

Bob Stewart is always welcome as a speaker at our meetings. He last appeared with us in April 2006 to tell us about the birds and butterflies of Texas and North-eastern Mexico. Old-timers remember Bob when he led trips for Marin County and for Point Reyes Bird Observatory. His books *Common Butterflies of California* and *Butterflies of Arizona* are indispensable references. Please come and meet Bob at our meeting on April 2.

The available, up-to-date information about breeding birds has been augmented by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Birds of North America On Line. What is missing from the many studies analyzed and listed in this wealthy source are the field experiences of the authors, which often provide interesting details that are left out of the formal scientific publications. Using slides from many photographers, Bob will discuss breeding strategies within two major categories of hatchlings. Precocial young hatch with eyes open, are down-covered and are capable of feeding themselves shortly after hatching. Altricial young hatch blind, naked and virtually helpless.



Chestnut-backed Chickadee photographed at Garin Regional Park.

Photo courtesy of Verne Nelson.

Within the altricial group the relationships between male and female adults are fascinating and run the gamut from very tight togetherness in all aspects of breeding behavior (including singing) to promiscuity, with many variations in between. For instance, it is a fact that the small forest-dwelling Chestnut-backed Chickadee and the much larger marsh-inhabiting Northern Harrier have similar male/female roles.

In both species the female incubates the eggs and is fed by the male when she periodically leaves the nest. The female Chickadee flies out of its nest-hole cavity and begs with small "Chickadee" sounds for the male to feed her. Acting somewhat like a fledgling would, she follows her mate, insistently asking for food. The male

Continued on Page 2 »

BIRDING INFORMATION

EarthTeam is an environmental network for teens, teachers, and youth leaders. The EarthTeam Restoration Initiative creates a restoration program for SF Bay Area teens throughout the year at different sites around the Bay Area. Ongoing events offer students a chance to do hands-on environmental work locally, support teachers who want to promote environmental learning and stewardship, and help local habitat restoration efforts of government, nonprofit, and private organizations. The Eco Stewards aspect of the program involves urban youth in ongoing restoration projects at local creeks and wetlands, such as removing non-native plants, creek and shoreline cleanup, planting native plants, and environmental monitoring.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, April 2**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize

8:05 PM Speaker: **Bob Stewart**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, May 7:

Doug Bell

Wind Turbines and Avian Mortality

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

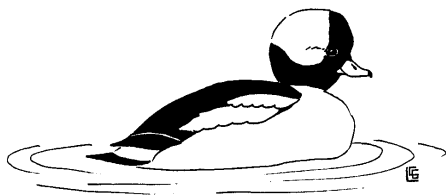
President's Corner

Jimm Edgar

This president's corner will be a catch-all of a number of timely items that are before our chapter. The one that continues to have the interest of so many people is the effort to stop the shooting of Acorn Woodpeckers at the Rossmoor property in Walnut Creek. As you know the woodpeckers have for years been using the Styrofoam-like molding on the buildings to store their acorns. This has resulted in damage to the buildings and a lot of noise for residents. After trying unsuccessfully for years to stop the storing and pounding, the Rossmoor association requested a depredation permit to shoot 50 of the woodpeckers and got it from U. S. Fish & Wildlife. As it stands right now, USF&W believes the permit may have been based on faulty information of the woodpecker population. They are going to go back and reassess the numbers. Our hope is that this may cause the permit to be pulled or at least not renewed. We have received a lot of press on this and some of it national. Diana Granados and I were interviewed by NPR and the piece was aired nationally on "All things considered." A lot of people I know heard it across the country.

We continue to be very involved with the reuse plan of the Concord Naval Weapons Station as well as the Altamont wind farms. The wind farms are a tough one for us. The killing of raptors continues to happen and the companies involved continue to drag their feet on complying with court rulings. Stay tuned.

We took some time at our general meeting this month to honor long-time volunteer, Barbara Vaughn, who has held a number of board positions over the last 25 years. We are so fortunate to have a lot of great volunteers, but there is always room for more. We have upcoming events we must staff as well as other things needing to be done so please don't be shy. Our new volunteer coordinator, Moses de los Reyes, would welcome your call. I hope to see you at a meeting or field trip soon.



Observations

By Steve Glover

Nine **Cackling Geese** were at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 2/14 (DW). Eight of the birds appeared to be Aleutians and one appeared to be a minima. There were still nine Cacklers there on 2/24 (C&AA) and seven on 2/25 (HH).

At least 30 **Wood Ducks** were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 2/16 (RC). The stunning male **Harlequin Duck** continued to be seen at the Richmond Marina 2/19 (HN) and 2/26 (DL). A, or *the*, **Long-tailed Duck** was also present on 2/19 (HN). Up to two male **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were in the canal on Lindeman Road near Clifton Court Forebay 2/7-24 (AE *et al.*). A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** on lower Pinole Creek near Pinole on 2/20 was said to have been present for a week (AR). "Hoodies" are rarely reported in west county. Two pairs were present on 2/27 (IW) and six birds were there on 2/28 (LL).

The **American Bittern** at Contra Loma Reservoir near Antioch was present 2/8 (DM) and 2/20 (DQ).

A light-morph **Rough-legged Hawk** continued at Byron Hot Springs on 2/27 (KP). A **Prairie Falcon** on 2/25 at McNabney Marsh was an excellent find (HH).

A Black Oystercatcher near the mouth of Pinole Creek, Pinole on 2/27 was notably northeast for this species (IM). At least 50 **Wilson's Snipe** at Holland Tract east of Knightsen 2/27 was a nice tally for the county (KP).

Two **Eurasian Collared-Doves**, a species apparently intent on conquering the world, were at McNabney Marsh on 2/14 (DW).

A **White-throated Sparrow** in an El Cerrito yard 2/27 was said to be present for a week (RW).

An estimated 25 **Great-tailed Grackles** were at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 2/14 (DW). This is significantly more than have been noted there in the past.

Cheryl and Alan Abel, Robert Clark, Hugh Harvey, Don Lewis, Laura Look, Daryl Marusz, Harold Newman, Kathy Parker, Dave Quady, Amy Richey, Idell Weydemeyer, Denise Wight, Russ Wilson
Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at countylines@sbcglobal.net or (925) 997-1112.

Welcome New Members

Deborah Carr	Concord
Bill Kaufner	Oakland
Douglas and Ann Philip	Walnut Creek
Megan Sandr	Walnut Creek
Steve Stewart	Richmond

Bob Stewart

» *Continued from Page 1*

systematically finds and then transfers the food directly to the female's beak.

The Northern Harrier female incubates her eggs in a nest on the ground. To obtain food during this period, she flies off of the nest some one hundred feet high. The male, having caught some food for his mate, drops the food in mid-air and she neatly plucks it out of the air with her talons, to complete the transfer. The female Western Scrub-Jay is, also, the sole incubator of the eggs. She often sits almost motionless for three hours at a time and may go off of the nest only two to three times per day. The male, in this case, brings her food while she sits snugly during one of her three-hour stints.

Taking an organized approach to the role of male/female relations in breeding bird pairs, Bob will relate behavioral facts for each species and will include personal experiences from his many years of watching nesting birds, as a researcher and as a teacher.



Q

Ornithologist Alexander Wilson wrote that this bird "from its perpetual clamor and flippancy of tongue, is called by the residents of Cape May, the Lawyer." However, those folk may have chosen that nickname from the similarity of its name with the French name for lawyer.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 6 to learn more.

AAACCEEIMNORTV

Acorn Woodpecker Outstanding Solutions

I would like to thank everyone on the Acorn Woodpecker Task Group and all of the community members who have made a very great effort to convince Rossmoor to stop shooting this very important species to California and Contra Costa County.

One of the biggest dilemmas that I have faced is the complete comprehension by many individuals that have not had any education into the complex lives of the Acorn Woodpecker and immediately understand the futility of shooting this species. So why is this beyond the comprehension of ten people on two Rossmoor boards who have been completely informed? The Rossmoor Mutuals shot 15 Acorn Woodpeckers in 2007 and needed to renew the permit to shoot 50 more. Is this a success story in solving their problem? Obviously, the answer is no. This year to date they have shot seven Acorn Woodpeckers; and this spring a species that does not migrate and stays around as a non-breeder waiting to inherit from breeders gone missing in action will bring a group to take over a disrupted territory. Since it is about inheritance they will remember. Is this solving the problem? I guess you get the point because obviously you don't belong to these Mutuals.

Right now US Fish and Wildlife Service (we wish Rossmoor could get the agencies they are dealing with correct) has USDA out counting Acorn Woodpeckers (hopefully a better biologist than the first one they used). Of course, you intelligent beings out there are going to look baffled and wonder isn't it going to be rather quiet out there this time of year and we have another eye roll because this obviously is going to be as unrealistic as stating there are 500 Acorn Woodpeckers in 5 acres (which is how they got a renewal based on fantasy).

Of course the Rossmoor people have finally gotten some guidance and they sealed some holes using correct materials. But did they do more than one windowsill? You guessed it. So when Woodpecker hormones start kicking in (drum roll please) and there is no netting and no complete fix on the materials, let me think, are the Acorn Woodpeckers going to use the "graineries" they are busy putting up? That's granaries, folks, spell check refuses

Outstanding Volunteers Recognized

By Moses de los Reyes

Barbara Vaughn and Shirley Ellis are sincerely recognized by the MDAS Board and members for being outstanding volunteers in their many years of service and valuable contribution. They are appreciated for their being generous in sharing their time during MDAS events, and being reliable and conscientious in the performance of their important assignments.

Barbara Vaughn's accomplishments include, but are not limited to the following: MDAS Chapter President from 1988-89, Publicity Chairperson, Field Trip Leader, Christmas Count Leader, and her latest job as Sales Manager. She has chaired some general meetings, volunteered for environmental fairs, and spoken about birding to a garden club at a senior center. She continues enthusiastically to contribute to the various activities of MDAS.

Shirley Ellis has volunteered her services with dedication for 20 years and since 1989 continues to help in assembling the scrapbook for MDAS. Among her valuable roles in the chapter are: Publicity Chairperson, Field Trip Leader, and recently as past Volunteer Coordinator. Shirley has chaired over general meetings, participated in a

to acknowledge their word. Mutuals, how about a miracle and the Acorn Woodpeckers use both?

So what have we got? A grenade with the pin pulled because that permit is available! And due to the bureaucratic process, a renewal is probably in the mail. Adding to the mix is a Mutual Operations Department as an iron hand in a velvet glove holding retired folks in a chokehold, ultimately responsible for an incredible, biologically important Acorn Woodpecker to be blown to bits—and the problem will NOT be solved.



Barbara Vaughn expresses joy and gratitude on receiving a gift certificate for gardening supplies. Shirley Ellis made the presentation at the March MDAS meeting.

special committee that recognized volunteers at a service event on March 16, 1997 in "An Evening with John James Audubon", with Dan Taylor from California Audubon in attendance. She was also a member of the committee that led the 50th Anniversary celebration of MDAS on October 3, 2002. Shirley is an energetic volunteer who continues to enhance the quality of MDAS as a chapter that truly cares for birds and their habitat.

We offer heartfelt recognition to both Barbara and Shirley for being great assets to MDAS. Thank you for your support!

Guess that puts us one blip closer to leaving the planet worse than when we found it... again....

Diana Granados
Native Bird Connections
Chair,
MDAS Acorn Woodpecker Task Group

407. Striped-breasted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*). L. 9.5. Breast band streaked with white; rump white. Ad. ♂. Forehead, white, crown, nape, and breast-spot red. Ad. ♀. Center of crown with a black band of same width as white band on forehead. Notes. A loud *teburr, teburr*. Range.—Mexico north to southwest Texas and Arizona.

407a. Californian Woodpecker (*M. f. bairdi*). Similar to No. 407, but black breast-band with white only on its posterior margin. Range.—Pacific coast region from northern California to southern Oregon.

407b. Narrow-fronted Woodpecker (*M. f. angustifrons*). Ad. ♂. Similar to No. 407, but smaller, W. 5.2; the throat brighter yellow. Ad. ♀. With black crown-band wider than white forehead band. Range.—Cape Region of Lower California.



Color Key to North American Birds, Frank M. Chapman, 1912

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

April

- 4 Saturday..... Garin Regional Park
- 8 Wednesday..... Orinda Connector Trail
- 11 Saturday..... Pine Canyon
- 14 Tuesday..... North Briones
- 18 Saturday..... Mines Road
- 21 Tuesday..... Del Puerto Canyon
- 30 Thursday..... Mitchell Canyon

May

- 6 Wednesday..... Mount Diablo State Park
- 9 Saturday..... East Contra Costa County
- 14 Thursday..... West Briones Regional Park
- 27 Wednesday..... Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

June

- 6 Saturday..... Outer Point Reyes
- 13-14 Saturday/Sunday..... Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

③ Saturday, April 4 Garin Regional Park

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906

Carpool leaves 7:15 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. Meet in parking lot at the end of Garin Road at 8:00 AM. Take I-680 south and I-580 west. Take Castro Valley exit and continue west. Turn left onto Crow Canyon Road and go under the freeway. Crow Canyon Road becomes Grove Way and then A Street. At A Street and SR 238 (Foothill Blvd.) turn left. Foothill Blvd./SR 238 becomes Mission Blvd. Go south about 3 miles to Garin Road, turn left, and follow to its end. Spring migrants will be our goal.

② Wednesday, April 8 Orinda Connector Trail

Leader: Don Lewis, 284-5480

Meet at 8:00 AM at the northeast corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Road, Orinda. We will walk towards the base of Briones Dam looking for spring birds.

③ Saturday, April 11 Pine Canyon

Leader: Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987

Meet in parking lot at end of Castle Rock Road at 8 AM. Turn south on Walnut Avenue from the intersection with Ygnacio Valley Road in Walnut Creek. At the traffic circle, turn right and continue on Castle Rock Road 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. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Spring migrants and Peregrine Falcons.

③ Tuesday, April 14

North Briones Regional Park

Leader: Cheryl Abel, 335-0176

Meet 8 AM in the parking lot at the north entrance of Briones Regional Park. Take Old Briones Road off Alhambra Valley Road. Wildflowers, spring birds and poison oak are along shaded trails. A continuation through grasslands to Sincich Lagoons makes this trip about 3 miles round trip. Bring liquids.

① Saturday, April 18 Mines Road

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979

Because of limited parking along Mines Road, carpooling is essential. This is an all-day trip and often hot! Bring lunch and liquids. Wild Turkey, Lewis's Woodpecker and Lawrence's Goldfinch and many spring migrants are possible, plus great spring wild flowers. Entry fee required for Del Valle Regional Park. Call the leader for meeting time and location.

① Tuesday, April 21 Del Puerto Canyon

Leader: Jean Richmond, 837-2843

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. Meet on Del Puerto Canyon Road west of I-5 at 9 AM at Patterson Exit off I-5 (56 miles from Sycamore Valley Road). Take I-580 east to I-5 south. We will stop at the Westley Rest Area, as there are no facilities on trip until our lunch stop. Canyon Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, Greater Roadrunner and other goodies.

③ Thursday, April 30 Mitchell Canyon

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980

Meet at 8 AM in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$3.00 parking fee. From I-680 in Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to Clayton Road. Turn right on Clayton Road and right on Mitchell Canyon Road to the end. Gnatcatchers, spring migrants and residents, lots of wildflowers. Usually hot! Bring liquids and lunch.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com. Bring a lunch and drink and join us during our midday break. Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths. ②: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain. ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain. Carpool location: **Sycamore Valley Road**—South of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

Trip Reports

Sunol Wilderness Regional Park, February 19. Ten members had a clear, warm day to hike in Sunol after days of rainy weather. Numbers of birds seemed to be down with only thirty-eight species seen or heard. Disappointingly, the Yellow-billed Magpies were absent again this year. The best bird was a White-throated Sparrow seen only briefly by the leader near the Interpretive Center. Other birds of note were a Loggerhead Shrike, a pair of White-tailed Kites courting, a cooperative Bewick's Wren, and singing Oak Titmice and Hutton's Vireos, the latter heard only. Wild Turkeys were seen along the drive into the park on Geary Road.

Eugenia K. Larson

Tomales Bay State Park, February 21. Nine members and one guest spent a pleasant morning in fair weather, mild temperatures and birdy conditions. We saw 59 species, including Brant, three loon species, three Ospreys with a very fine nest for two of them near the Indian Beach Cove, Band-tailed Pigeon flocks, Allen's Hummingbird, Pygmy Nuthatch, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Varied Thrush, Townsend's and Hermit Warblers, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin. There were large flocks of Chestnut-backed Chickadees with many songbirds along the trail between Heart's Desire Beach and Indian Beach. We left as the sky got overcast but the rain didn't come for about five more hours.

Maury Stern

Mountain View Sanitary District, February 25. Twelve birders enjoyed very good weather when storms had been forecast. The best birds of the day were the young Golden Eagle and a nice, close Prairie Falcon. Ducks weren't in great numbers, but all the expected species were found. Cackling Geese eating their lunch along with us at Martinez Shoreline was a nice final addition to our 66 species.

Bingham and Larry Gibbs

Walnut Creek City Parks, March 4. A day without rain is a day to go see birds and twelve chapter members did just that. In 4½ hours we visited three parks and one walking trail segment: Heather Farm, Howe-Homestead, Sugar Loaf Open Space and part of the Sugar Loaf-Shell Ridge Trail. The 47 species of birds seen or heard was diverse—Red-shouldered Hawk,

Earth Day

Attention all MDAS members and families: please join the volunteers from MDAS in celebrating John Muir's Birthday and Earth Day on Saturday, April 18, from 10 AM to 4 PM. MDAS will feature interesting exhibits on birds and their habitats along with very important information on the MDAS Chapter. Bring your family to a fun-filled day of activities and entertainment. The celebration will be at the John Muir National Historic Site at 4202 Alhambra Avenue at Highway 4 in Martinez. Admission is free for all events which include exhibits for children and adults, live-entertainment, and self-guided tours of historic homes and grounds.

As John Muir once said: "There is a love of wild Nature in everybody..." For MDAS members and families, our love of Nature, especially of birds and their habitats, is what brings us to the Festival. Let's come and celebrate and say hello to our wonderful volunteers who make MDAS' presence very meaningful in the community. Thank you for your active participation.

By Moses de los Reyes



Blue Mockingbird, photographed by MDAS member Glen Tepke at Sierra El Tuito, Jalisco, Mexico. Used with permission.

Killdeer, Bufflehead, Band-tailed Pigeon, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Anna's Hummingbird, Downy Woodpecker and Fox Sparrow. An early Violet-green Swallow was seen very briefly by a few at Heather Farm and a pair of Coyotes was in the Open Space, located south of Rudgear Road.

Hugh B. Harvey

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Spring nesting time comes early in California. Some of our early 'cavity' nesters have already started establishing housing. Others will begin soon. As natural habitats continue to disappear, nesting boxes not only provide cavity-nesting birds with needed nest sites, but they also give you an opportunity to learn more about their fascinating courtship and family life. You can play a part in nest building by providing colorful string, yarn, hair and fibers (no more than 3' long) for birds to use when building their abodes.

Chickadees, wrens, titmice, and nuthatches prefer a smaller house with a 1½-1¼-inch hole size. The house should be mounted 6-10 feet up in a tree or foliage, at least 15 feet from feeders. These birds may have more than one brood each year.

Bluebirds, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and swallows are larger birds and need bigger houses with larger hole sizes (1½-1¾ inches). To attract Western Bluebirds you need to live very near open space or grasslands

Stop by and pick up your FREE copy of our Housing Guide.

Each species has different and interesting facets to their nesting behavior. Watch for the male Bluebird to feed the female and sing sweet warbled notes as he raises a quivering wing to further entice her. The male House Wren will work hard making 2 or 3 nests to attract a female. As part of courtship he takes the female to each site to choose her favorite nest.

Serendipity Revisited!

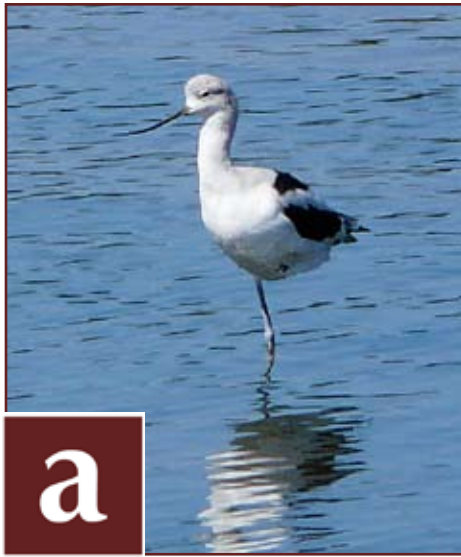
Last year we were very fortunate to be in SE Arizona and be able to see the Tufted Flycatcher—one of the 2-3 times ever seen in the US. In February we were very lucky to see the Blue Mockingbird—only the 5th time ever seen in the US. (Ironically, the last sighting in 1995 was at a house only 200 yards from our AZ home). It is dark blue, almost black like a Steller's Jay and it has very red eyes! The bird behaves just like a thrasher. It stays on the ground in a thicket and grubs around. Hundreds of birders from all over have come to see this very unique bird. Maybe we should be in SE Arizona more frequently.



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303
Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

American Avocet • *Recurvirostra americana*



The Avocet name is actually derived from the Italian *avosetta*, which in turn may have been an affectionate diminutive of the Latin *avis*, suggesting a graceful, beautiful bird. Though graceful, the Avocet can be quite aggressive to intruders when they are nesting. Hoffmann, in his *Birds of*

the Pacific States (1927), says “the intruder hears a loud *wheep* and becomes aware of a large black and white bird flying straight at his head, its long slightly upcurved bill pointed at his face. One has hardly time to note the cinnamon-brown of head and neck, as one involuntarily dodges and the bird sails past.”

Breeding plumage is obtained in the first year, from January to March, and is a beautiful rusty cinnamon along the head and neck. Basic plumage returns in July or August to a gray head. This bird was photographed in September at Point Isabel.

American Avocets line a shallow depression on a beach or mudflat with grass, and the female lays three or four eggs. Both the male and female incubate the eggs and care for the chicks. The precocial chicks leave the nest within 24 hours after hatching. Day-old Avocets can walk, swim, and even dive to escape predators; but they won't fly until they are about a month old.

Connecting People to Nature

By Brian Murphy



With a large number of Western Bluebirds in North Lime Ridge Open Space in Walnut Creek, an 11-box bluebird trail was set up on February 28th. A very interesting experience as the second box was installed: as we moved away to the next tree, a pair of bluebirds flew into the tree to check out the new box. As we were installing the fourth box a pair of bluebirds flew into the next tree where we planned to install a box as if to say “put a box on this tree!” On the way to installing the tenth box, a pair of bluebirds were hunting in the grass near the tree where the box was to be installed.

Installing Bluebird boxes is one thing; to have interest and participation from some of the intended residents is a real treat!



A family in the Woodlands subdivision next to the open space has agreed to monitor the Bluebird trail which will be a great outing for the family every two weeks. The first photo shows Bob Brittain installing the first box. The view from the top of the hill is the reward for walking the bluebird trail—a nice spot to stop and catch your breath after an uphill walk.

Garin Regional Park

» *Continued from Page 8*

which would slice through the foothills parallel to Mission Boulevard. To block development of the highway, the Meyers sisters donated 1,200 acres to EBRPD, to be called Dry Creek/Pioneer Regional Park and to be used exclusively for a public park with no roads to be built through it. Located at the end of May Road off Mission Boulevard



Western
Screech-Owl
at Garin
Park

in Union City, their cottage and gardens are being lovingly restored and will soon be open for public visitation.

The battle against development of the foothills and ridgelines continues. In 2000, the Center for Biological Diversity and other environmentalists sued the developers to try to prevent the destruction of nearly 2,000 acres of hilltop habitat for their luxury home and golf course development. CBD was not successful, but the recent collapse in the housing market has brought the building to an abrupt halt—unfortunately not before massive grading and disturbance of hillsides and habitat occurred. If and when housing sales resume, approximately 1,500 additional acres will be conveyed to EBRPD as mitigation for impacts to habitat caused by development.

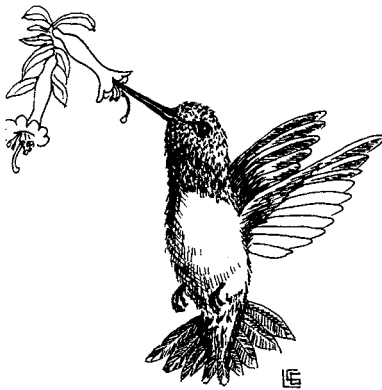
The park's farming history is preserved in its Garin Barn visitors center, which has farm equipment on display outside and historical displays inside. The center, however, is open only on weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day. In early fall, an Apple Festival celebrates the farming tradition and the 160 antique apple varieties harvested from the three-acre orchard.

For birders, Garin Park is an underappreciated treasure.

Nancy Wenninger contributed to this article.

Ornithological Opportunities

Birds in Art, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, Open until April 18. Free with Museum admission. Birds in Art comprises original contemporary works by sixty painters and sculptors from around the world. The exhibition is organized annually by the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin. In some ways "It's Hip to be Square" could be a Birds in Art motto as eleven two-dimensional pieces are square. In these works, the artist invites the viewer to step into the space to savor a transitory moment of time, be it Adele Earnshaw's Barn Swallows jetting past freshly laundered sheets on a clothesline, Paula Waterman's conclave of five crows conferring on frozen ice or Ron Meier's linocut depicting a bright red ibis contrasted against a dramatic green scrim of plants and water enlivened by lily pads. A new "found" medium is seen



this year in *Corvus Deflatus*, a sculptural crow made using tire scraps scavenged along the highway by Kalamazoo artist Karen Bondarchuk. The sculpture's title is a play on both the genus *Corvus*, which includes crows and the deflated tires that make up the work. On another level, the sculpture reflects the faltering automobile industry and a bygone era of prosperity and livelihood for many. www.wildlife-museum.org.

Olympic BirdFest 2009, Sequim, Washington, April 3-5. www.olympicbirdfest.org.

Godwit Days, Arcata, April 16-22. www.godwitdays.com.

Heron Festival and Wildflower Brunch, Clear Lake State Park, Kelseyville, April 25-26. www.heronfestival.org.

Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival, April 29-May 5. Field trips to Butterbrett Spring, Canebrake Ecological Reserve, Kern NWR, Kelso Creek Sanctuary, Kern River Preserve, Owens Lake. <http://kern.audubon.org/KRVSNF.htm>. 245 species were seen during the Festival in 2008. Come and look for Mountain Quail, Northern Goshawk, Spotted Dove, White-headed Woodpecker, LeConte's Thrasher, Black-chinned Sparrow, Williamson's Sapsucker, Gray Flycatcher, Pinyon Jay, Cactus Wren, Green-tailed Towhee, Scott's Oriole.

the Quail

is published 10 times a year by the

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053 (925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

MDAS Board of Directors

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
 Vice President: Mike Williams, 376-1631
 Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929
 Board Secretary: Diana Granados, 963-9753
 Sales Manager: Diane Malucelli, 674-0920
 Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581
 Field Trips: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979
 Membership: Beverley Walker, 952-9925
 Volunteer Coordinator:

Moses de los Reyes, 755-3734

Hospitality: Gerry Argenal, 768-6325

Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631

Corresponding Secretary:

Beverly Hawley, 947-0479

Webmaster: Patrick King, 510-642-6522

Chapter Development: Paul Schorr, 757-5107

Hands-On Conservation:

Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987

Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330

Member-at-Large: Brian Murphy, 937-8835

Jean Richmond, 837-2843

Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103

215 Calle La Mesa

Moraga, CA 94556-1603

ellis.myers@earthlink.net

The Quail is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **The deadline for the April issue is March 10.**



MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

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 Audubon Magazine.

Please send The Quail by: E-mail US mail

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

Card Number: _____

____ Visa ____ MasterCard _____ Expiration Date

Name on Card: _____

Please make your check payable to:

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:

Membership Chair, 1932 Golden Rain Road #4, Walnut Creek, CA 94595

The Garden Center

Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.,



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

Return Service Requested



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

TIME VALUE MAIL



Three bat houses stand along the Old Homestead Trail, which leads from the Garin Barn Visitor Center to the Newt Pond Wildlife Area at Garin Regional Park.

Garin Regional Park

Garin Regional Park is glorious in springtime.

A variety of fine locations for birding awaits you, including riparian habitat along Dry Creek, oak woodland, semi-abandoned orchards, a pond, a small marsh, and open grassland. It is a perfect time to spot both residents and returning migrants busy with courtship, nesting, and raising young. You will see Western Bluebirds on the fence posts and American Robins in the meadows. Nuttall's Woodpeckers and Yellow-rumped Warblers are in the trees along the streams; ducks will be in Jordan Pond, and Black Phoebes are on guard. Your bird list should include thrushes, swallows, raptors, sparrows, finches, woodpeckers, and many others.

Stretching more than four miles along the foothills east of Mission Boulevard, Garin and Dry Creek /Pioneer Regional



Within the red barn at Garin Regional Park a working blacksmith shop is open on summer weekends. The Garin family once grew apricots here.

Parks provide the backdrop for the communities of Hayward, Union City and Fremont. The land rises from the

urban flatlands to an elevation of 1,660 feet, providing panoramic views of the entire San Francisco Bay, as well as Mount Diablo, Sunol Ridge, Monument Peak and Mount Rose in the Ohlone Wilderness. The first parcel was acquired in 1965 from the Garins, a ranching family, and the two parks have gradually expanded to a current combined total of nearly 5,000 acres.

About 85% of the property is annual grassland, with drainages vegetated by oak/bay woodland. Stock ponds dot the landscape and provide habitat for the endangered California red-legged frog. Raptors, including Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons, forage on the ridgelines. Other species include the protected Alameda whipsnake, deer, coyote, bobcat and a number of species of rodents, reptiles and amphibians. Cattle continue to graze there, as they have for more than 150 years.

These parks were created, in part, as a result of community opposition to development. In 1961, the California Highway Commission announced plans for a freeway

Continued on Page 6 »