



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 55, Number 7

April 2010

Birds of Costa Rica • Bob Stewart

Costa Rica, located between Nicaragua and Panama in Central America, is home to 850 species of birds. Famous for its friendly people, drinkable water and peaceful government, it also has an amazing diversity of other life—240 species of mammals, 221 reptiles, 174 amphibians, 350,000 insects and 10,000 species of plants. All of these life forms in a country that is only half the size of England and one-eighth the size of California. Twenty per cent of the land in Costa Rica is protected from development. The convergence of the Cocos and Caribbean plates, 50 million years ago, created islands that eventually formed a land bridge (about 3 million years ago) between North and South America which allowed birds and mammals to emigrate (cats, tapirs, deer, foxes from the north; monkeys, anteaters, porcupines, agoutis, sloths, armadillos from the south).

Many groups of tropical birds including manakins, puffbirds, barbets, woodcreepers, Ovenbirds, antbirds, motmots and toucans can be found in the diverse habitats of Costa Rica. However, the most numerous species seen on a visit are flycatchers, hummingbirds and tanagers. Tanagers are brightly colored, and many species are seen at one

time because of a flocking phenomenon occurring in the tropics. The flock can consist of a core of 5-10 different species, but up to 80 species can join the group, including more than 20 species of tanagers, euphonias, and honeycreepers. These flocks have territories so when they contact another flock a lot of singing occurs. Shrike Tanagers or antshrikes act as sentinel species giving off alarm calls to defend the flock against predators.

Abundant fruit in the wetter areas of the country induces many birds to forage predominantly as frugivores. Bellbirds eat large fruit, euphonias enjoy mistletoe berries, and parrots choose unripe fruit. Toucans eat by reaching, trogons by sallying, manakins swallow berries whole and tanagers mash by bill. Here birds play an important roll in pollinating and dispersing seeds, whereas in the dryer areas, seeds are dispersed by wind.

Bob has visited Costa Rica three times and will make a fourth trip in 2011. He is using some of his own slides, but most of the bird photographs are from a collection by Richard Garriques, a long time naturalist and writer who has just published a new field guide to the birds of Costa Rica.

BIRDING INFORMATION

With 7,100 islands stretching from the Malaysian-Indonesian complex in the south to close to Taiwan in the north, and sandwiched between the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean, the Philippines is a rewarding



Elegant Trogon. Photo by Bob Stewart



Green Honeycreeper. Photo by Kathie Bunnell

and challenging place to watch birds. The processes of geology and evolution have left one of the highest degrees of endemism known in the world, with some 200 species of birds found only within the Philippine archipelago. The tropical island habitats, forested lowlands and mountain ranges, along with areas of swamp and marshlands and its long coastline are favorable to a rich and diverse birdlife.

Moses de los Reyes, our MDAS Volunteer Coordinator, will share his love for his homeland and its birds. His video *Avian*

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Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, April 1**, 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 6: **Ron LeValley**
Forty Years on the Farallones

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

Mount Diablo Audubon was one of four Audubon chapters that sued Alameda County and several wind companies in 2007 over the high mortality of birds, mostly raptors, being killed by the wind turbines in Altamont Pass. We eventually won that law suit and a number of conditions were imposed that would lower the bird kills. Goals were set by the court that said there must be a 50% reduction as well as the taking down of the old turbines and replacing them with new larger turbines that reduce bird mortality by perhaps 70–80%. It appears that these goals have not been met. Dr. Shawn Smallwood, a member of the Alameda County Scientific Review Committee and longtime researcher in the Altamont, estimated that in the last four years since the lawsuit was settled there have been between 7600–9300 birds killed per year. Annually between 55–94 Golden Eagles and 714–718 Burrowing Owls as well as hundreds of other raptors.

The Altamont Pass is the oldest area on the United States to have wind farms going back to the early 1980s. Golden Gate Audubon has taken the lead on this issue and has tried to work with the wind companies to implement the terms of the settlement, but not much has happened. The 2009 draft Bird Fatality Study concludes there has been little reduction of kills.

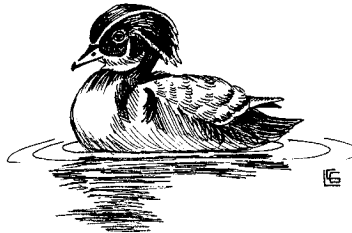
There is evidence that the new turbines do reduce mortality, but may be just as bad for Golden Eagles and bats. If turbines are placed in proper sites the collisions are reduced, the study shows. MDAS is working with Golden Gate Audubon and the other Audubon chapters to force the wind companies to comply. If necessary we will go back to court and get a restraining order to prevent them from operating.

As you can expect this is a tough issue for Audubon. On the one hand we are much in favor of renewable energy, but we are also an organization that has birds at our core. This is not over by a long shot so keep in touch and we will let you know when things happen.

One other important item that I hope you are aware of. Audubon is joining several other interested groups and organizations in trying to get a measure on the November 2010 ballot. It is the State Parks and

Welcome New Members

Gail Byrnes	Livermore
Anne Cain	Lafayette
Marjorie Fletcher	Berkeley
DuBose Forrest	Lafayette
Ronald Plummer	Tampa Bay, Florida
Nina Vance	Walnut Creek



Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act. It will add an \$18 fee to all car registrations in the state and raise enough money to make all state parks have free admission *and* put \$500 million annually into the state parks budget. The money can only be used in the parks or wildlife areas. There is a \$1 billion backlog of maintenance projects in the parks because of cuts. 500,000 signatures need to be gathered by April 15 to get it on the ballot. We got about 60 signatures at our March 4 general meeting and will have sign-up sheets at our April meeting. Our state parks have really suffered from budget cuts, we all know. This would really make a huge difference.

The International Bird Rescue and Rehabilitation Center has recently been overwhelmed with Brown Pelicans, an Endangered California species. Mysterious ailments resulting in starvation of the pelicans are not owing to an oil spill, therefore funds are not available to assist in the care of these animals. At the February board meeting, Mount Diablo Audubon granted a donation of \$350 to help in this emergency. MDAS has recently also provided assistance to IBRRRC for another emergency, that of the seabirds' plight along the Washington and Oregon coasts caused by an unusual deadly algal bloom.

I hope you got to our March meeting to hear John Schaust, chief naturalist for Wild Birds Unlimited nationally, to speak on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker story. What a fascinating story it was.

Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Maury Stern at mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB Sightings@yahoo.com.

A **Cackling Goose** was at McNabney Marsh on 3/5. JR.

Many **Wood Ducks** were seen at Valle Vista Staging Area on 2/12 and 2/16 by HH, NW, and RW. M&SS saw two pair in a Monterey Pine tree in their backyard in Lafayette.

A **Chukar** was reported to BW in Walnut Creek downtown on 3/4.

Up to four **American White Pelicans** were at the Lafayette Reservoir during February and into March. LR, M&SS.

An **American Bittern** continues at Contra Loma Marsh in Antioch. P&NS.

A **White-tailed Kite** investigated a possible nesting site behind her Lafayette house in mid-February, but didn't stay. KB.

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was seen by P&NS on a trip to East County on 3/7.

Merlins were seen in East County, P&NS, Heather Farm, HH, and the trees near the Mt. Diablo on-ramp to SR 24 in Lafayette, MS, all in early March.

Sandhill Cranes were in East County on 3/7. P&NS.

A **Pacific Golden Plover** was seen in the mud flats near Central Avenue in El Cerrito on 3/3. DE.

5,000 **Band-tailed Pigeons** were reported from Briones Regional Park on 2/21. CW. Earlier that week flocks of 300 were being seen.

TR saw a **Barn Owl** at Larkey Park in Walnut Creek on 2/16.

Western Screech Owls were at Larkey Park on 2/16. TR, HH. They also continued calling around MS's Lafayette home.

P&NS saw **Burrowing Owls** in East County on 3/7.

A very rare (for Tilden Regional Park) **Acorn Woodpecker** was seen 2/28 by AN.

On 3/5, FS saw **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at Heather Farm and P&NS saw some in East County.

On 3/7 P&NS saw first-of-season **Cliff Swallows** building mud nests in East County.

The previously reported **Black-throated Gray Warbler** continued to be seen on

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Just for Ducks

By Brian Murphy

Just for Ducks is a Mount Diablo Audubon *Connecting People to Nature* project to enhance Wood Duck populations in urban creeks for people to enjoy.

In 1991 California Waterfowl Association started the Wood Duck project by providing artificial cavities for Wood Ducks to nest in, since most large old trees with cavities for nesting in were gone. CWA has a very nice design for nesting boxes with an oval hole to keep raccoons out of the box. The depth of the box is designed to keep the nesting duck, eggs and chick safe from raccoons reaching into the box!

CWA has been very successful in recovering Wood Duck populations in the valley so we are going to see if we can enjoy the same success in urban creeks.

Wood Ducks are very shy birds tending to like quiet, heavily wooded creeks. Due to high water that flows through many creeks in winter storms, the first boxes were installed along Walnut Creek, downtown along Civic Park above high water flows. The result was one box on San Ramon Creek producing eggs and chick, and three beehives. The box next to Creekside Drive hatched eight chicks. A dead chick found inside the box is now in Lindsay Museum's Natural History collection so everyone can see what a freshly hatched Wood Duckling looks like.

Rent will eventually be collected—from the boxes now occupied by honey bees—for us to enjoy at meetings. This year an Eagle Scout candidate from Tracy provided us



Wood Duck nesting box on San Ramon Creek in downtown Walnut Creek. Female Wood Duck. Photos by Brian Murphy.

with enough Wood Duck boxes to install 12 boxes in San Ramon Creek from Macy's, downtown Walnut Creek, to Creekside Drive. Then install four more boxes in lower Tice Creek and four on Tice Creek in Rossmoor. Three boxes were installed at Heather Farm Park because so many people who visit the park enjoy seeing Wood Ducks in the lake and canal. So the project is all about nesting cavities for Wood Ducks to breed in our creeks so people can enjoy watching them! If you enjoy projects like this, a membership to Mt. Diablo Audubon helps support more projects.

Observations » Continued from Page 2

the Iron Horse Trail near the Cherry Lane crossing in Walnut Creek. HH, FS.

White-throated Sparrows continued to be seen in Heather Farm and Valle Vista Staging Area. HH, PM, JR, FS, DW, NW, RW.

KB Kristen Baker, DE Daniel Edelstein, HH Hugh Harvey, PM Peggy Macres, AN Allison Nelson, JR Jennifer Rycenga, LR Latha Rajagopalan, TR Ted Robertson, FS Fred Safier, P&NS, Paul and Nancy Schorr, M&SS Maury and Susan Stern, BW Beverly Walker, CW Clifford Warner, NW Nat Weber, DW Denise Wight, RW Ray Witbeck.

Q These birds may not go as fast as a speeding bullet, but they can go faster than a speeding bullet train. One was clocked at a speed of 247 miles per hour. They may be found on every continent except Antarctica. Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 6 to learn more.

ACEEEFGILNNOPRR

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Spring nesting starts early in California. Some of our early 'cavity' nesters such as Chickadees and Titmice have already begun 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 also play a part in nest building by providing colorful string, yarn, hair and fibers (no longer than 1/2" long) for birds to use when building their abodes.

Chickadees, wrens, titmice, and nuthatches prefer a smaller house with a 1 1/8-1 1/4-inch hole size. 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 (1 1/2-1 9/16 inches). To attract Western Bluebirds you need to live very near open space or grasslands.

Each species has different and interesting facets to their nesting behavior. Stop by and pick up your FREE copy of our Housing Guide.



→ It's time to put out your oriole feeders. Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles arrive by April and they readily come to a nectar feeder.

→ Black-headed Grosbeaks will be arriving soon. Their favorite food is sunflower seed, suet and Bark Butter®. They nest in our backyards and seem to return every year to the same nesting area.

→ Provide Bark Butter® for your backyard birds. This is a phenomenally high source of protein which is vital during nesting season.



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

April

- 3 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 7 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 10 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 14 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park
- 19 Monday North Briones
- 22 Thursday Del Puerto Canyon
- 24 Saturday Mines Road
- 29 Thursday Mitchell Canyon

May

- 4 Tuesday Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline
- 8 Saturday East Contra Costa County
- 13 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 20 Thursday Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

③ Saturday, April 3 Garin Regional Park

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves at 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.



Garin Regional Park

② Wednesday, April 7 Orinda Connector Trail

Leader: Don Lewis, 284-5480.

Meet at 8 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 Monday, April 19 North Briones Regional Park

Leader: Cheryl Abel, 335-0176.

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

③ Saturday, April 10 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.

② Thursday, April 22 Del Puerto Canyon

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

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. Usually very warm!

② Wednesday, April 14 Mount Diablo State Park

Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330.

Mount Diablo State Park is a treasure trove for birders. Although every season in the park has its special qualities, April on the mountain is especially beautiful because wildflowers add brilliant color to the vistas. NOTE: Carpool leaves at 8 AM from LaGonda. From I-680 southbound, exit at El Pintado, turn right and right again; park along open space on left. From I-680 northbound, 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 Road. 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.

Come birding with us in April!

Trip Reports

Grizzly Island, February 11. What a day it was for the 17 birders on this field trip! We made our way slowly across the grasslands below the Potrero Hills as we approached the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area, stopping in several places to view raptors, waterfowl and song birds. Beyond the headquarters we birded several of the regular stops for this trip, before continuing to the end of the road at the eastern portion of Montezuma Slough. Along the way we saw 13 waterfowl species, 8 raptor species, many other birds and numerous Tule Elk. During and after lunch at Rush Ranch, we added 2 raptors and 2 owls to bring our day list to 76 species. Highlights were one Bald and one Golden Eagle, a Merlin devouring a blackbird atop a short power pole, distant Lark Sparrows, several Say's Phoebes, an American Bittern, many Tree Swallows, one Barn Owl at the ranch, 2 Burrowing Owls and 3 Ferruginous Hawks on the way north as we left. We had the interesting distinction of crossing Hill Slough over the old one-lane bridge as we arrived and leaving over the newly constructed and wider bridge. Thanks go to Ken Poerner, Land Steward for Solano Land Trust, for helping us with the owls. *Hugh Harvey*

Sunol, February 18. Eleven members enjoyed a sunny, warm day birding at Sunol Regional Wilderness. Among the 43 species seen and heard was a White-throated Sparrow of the white-striped morph. Many Band-tailed Pigeons were observed flying over and perched above the creek-side trail. At least a dozen Wood Ducks were observed from both sides of the Calaveras Road bridge before the park entrance. Wild Turkeys were displaying on Geary Road and also heard in the park. Two Varied Thrushes were noted by Bob Dunn before the group arrived in the park. A pair of Common Mergansers, several Fox Sparrows, one Red-breasted Sapsucker and a Hermit Thrush were also seen. A special treat was seeing a Western Screech-Owl in a Wood Duck nesting box via a remote camera and viewed on a screen in the Education Barn.

Eugenia Larson

Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh, February 25. Sixteen members saw 56 species on a fairly good day wedged between two very bad, rainy days. Most of the ducks and shorebirds were nowhere to be found; perhaps they have already started north, but we hunted and pecked finding most of the usual suspects. Tried very hard to find a Long-tailed Duck amongst the many, many Surf Scoters and Scaup on the Bay, but no such luck. It was good to be able to be out and looking, anyhow!. Thanks to the very helpful group for all that we did find. *Bingham and Larry Gibbs*

Tomales Bay, February 27. This trip was cancelled because of inclement weather. *Maury Stern*

Walnut Creek Parks, March 3. Due to the constant rain, the trip was cancelled. I drove to Heather Farm to tell anyone who came of the cancellation. While waiting in the car, I watched a beautiful male Western Bluebird foraging from the trees on the lawn in front of the wooden railing. Two birders came, I told them of the cancellation, about seeing the Bluebird, and then I left. Species seen or heard—1. *Hugh Harvey*

③ Saturday, April 24 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.

③ Thursday, April 29 Mitchell Canyon

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Meet at 8 am in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$5.00 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/index/php. Bring a lunch and drink and join us during our midday break.

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.

Carpool location: **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

New Location for EBB Sightings

The EBB Sightings List Serve has moved and is now at EBB_Sightings@yahoo.com. Sponsored and maintained by Mount Diablo Audubon, this is a focus for messages and discussion of rare-bird sightings throughout Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. It has an active following, with several postings each day. In general, the site is restricted to noteworthy observations, and should not be used for casual chitchat.

Regardless of whether you have been a user of EBB Sightings in the past, or if you wish to join in on the fun, you must register anew. Here's how:

If you do not currently have one, you will need to sign up for a free Yahoo! account at www.yahoo.com. If you have an account, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/>. Under "Find a Yahoo! Group", enter "EBB_Sightings" and click on "Search". On the following page, click on the title "EBB_Sightings" and then "Join This Group!"

For questions about EBB Sightings, you may contact the Site Administrator, Ann McGregor, at annmcg@pacbell.net.

Morro Bay

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Western Gull at Morro Bay

One of the best ways to see the birds of Morro Bay is from the water. There are many outfitters who rent kayaks, canoes and electric boats. Ospreys are often seen perching on top of boat masts in the harbor.

Morro Coast Audubon Society manages two birding properties in Los Osos at the south edge of the bay. Sweet Springs Nature Reserve is an excellent area for bird watching. Its 24-acre natural site contains an acre of freshwater ponds and marshes, 14 acres of salt water ponds and 9 acres of upland scrub. Brant by the thousands and ducks by the hundreds can be seen on the water or along the shore in winter. Trails lead through the eucalyptus and cypress and past where egrets forage in the stream to an observation platform at water's edge; then you might return through the plots where volunteers are reestablishing native plants and wildflowers.

Also in Los Osos on the south side of the estuary is the Audubon Overlook. From the small roofed deck, you can view the shorebirds such as Marbled Godwits, Willets, Long-billed Curlews and sandpipers who forage in the mudflats of the estuary. Terns, Brown Pelicans, and a fleet of American Coots join the party.

Morro Bay State Park, Montaña de Oro State Park, and Morro Strand State Beach are other spots on the California Central Coast Birding Trail. At Montaña de Oro birders can spot both land birds along the trails and sea birds from bluff overlooks. Birds found here are Double-crested and Pelagic Cormorants, Black Oystercatchers, Wandering Tattler, Surf Scoters, Brown Pelicans, Eared and Western Grebes, Surfbirds, Pigeon Guillemots, Common Murres, Common and Pacific Loons, shearwaters and alcids.

Peregrine Falcon • *Falco peregrinus*

Peregrine Falcons have adapted to living in many cities and make use of tall buildings that provide suitable ledges for nesting. They depend on the ever-present Rock Pigeons and European Starlings for food, diving and catching their prey in mid-air. Peregrines have few natural predators.

The Peregrine Falcon, swiftest and deadliest of all avian predators, is becoming a night hawk. It has developed a different killing technique to go with its new urban lifestyle. Buildings illuminated at night and the shadows cast on their ledges offer a perfect ambush for the birds' convenience. One study revealed that almost 80 percent of prey were brought to the nest after dark.

There are clear advantages for the Peregrine in moving from the countryside to downtown.

On the Internet there are now many webcams showing live views of these skyscraper nests, including those on the PG&E Headquarters in San Francisco, the City Hall in San Jose, the State Capitol in Lincoln, Nebraska, the Rachel Carson State Office Building in Harrisburg, Pennsylva-



Photographed at Morro Bay by Mike L. Baird

nia, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City, Utah, the Kodak Tower in Rochester, New York, to name just a few.

In Contra Costa County, Peregrine Falcons breed only on Mount Diablo, as confirmed by the Breeding Bird Atlas.

Nearly decimated by the effects of DDT, Peregrine Falcons were an endangered species, but they are now increasing in number and were de-listed in 1999.

Morro Bay State Park has estuary, salt marsh, pine, riparian and chaparral habitats. The Central Coast Natural History Museum is located here. A heron rookery is a popular attraction. The Great Blue Herons and the Great and Snowy Egrets roost all year at the rookery located near the entrance of the museum. You can locate the rookery from the bay, by the cluster of dead trees. Droppings from these large birds have altered the eco-system causing a high acidity level that the trees are unable to withstand.

Morro Strand State Beach was formerly called Atascadero State Beach—that name from the Spanish for mudflats. Just north of the Rock, this is a popular area for birdwatchers and stretches for over two miles of ocean beach that is also popular with Western Snowy Plover. Among the 66 species of common resident birds are Black-crowned Night Heron, Long-billed Curlew and Great Blue Heron.

To celebrate the diversity of the birds of California's Central Coast, the Morro Coast Audubon Society hosts a Winter Bird Festival each January. More than 200 species are usually sighted during the Festival weekend.

Birding Information

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Archipelago will introduce us to many songbirds, parrots, woodpeckers, hornbills, cuckoos, and the Monkey-eating Eagle. Many of these birds are threatened with extinction due to loss of habitat and intensive hunting pressure. Moses will briefly discuss conservation efforts.



San Francisco Spotted Towhee
Pipilo maculatus falcifer
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard • 1930

Ornithology Opportunities

Olympic Birdfest 2010, April 9-11, Sequim, WA. A bird watching vacation for beginners to experts, from leisurely strolls to active hikes. Enjoy the show from guided birding trips, boat tours, silent auction, salmon banquet, and more. Stay on for a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands. Register at www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org. Bird-Fest program information and registration can be found at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

John Muir National Historic Site, Saturday, April 17. This year's special Earth Day and John Muir's birthday event will feature over 50 exhibitors offering a host of activities and environmental awareness information for children and adults. Enjoy Scottish bagpipers and dancers, Frank Helling performing as John Muir, nature walks with a ranger, tours of the John Muir historic home, silent auction, recycled fashion show and guest speakers. Mount Diablo Audubon Society will have an information table. Admission to the park is free; food and beverages will be available for purchase. See www.johnmuirassociation.org for more information.

The Redbud Audubon Society and the Clear Lake State Park Interpretive Association have combined to present the **Heron Festival and Wildflower Brunch** at Kelseyville on April 24-25. Take a pontoon boat tour to view heron and cormorant nests, watch the thousands of grebes in courtship displays on the lake, and see nesting Osprey families. All activities are

free, except the pontoon boat tours and the Wildflower Brunch. The State Park entrance fee is waived that weekend for Heron Festival attendees. See live owls and other birds of prey in a fun and informative show called "Raptor Speak." Native Bird Connections curator Jenny Papka will demonstrate raptor behavior up close with these lively birds. www.heronfestival.org.

The Aleutian Goose Festival has been reinvented with a new name: the **California Redwoods Bird & Nature Festival** premieres May 7-9. The Aleutian Goose Festival celebrated the return of these endangered birds. Thousands of small Aleutian geese flocked to Castle Rock National Wildlife Refuge in Del Norte County as a stopover on their spring migration route.

The California Redwoods Bird & Nature Festival promises a better festival in many ways, notably because it shifts from wet March to warmer May. More birds will be migrating, courting, singing, and nesting. It also coincides with International Migratory Bird Day, celebrated every year on the second Saturday in May throughout the Americas. In addition, wildflower shows in Crescent City and Humboldt County occur on the adjacent weekends, assuring prime botanizing for native plant enthusiasts.

Rhododendrons will be glowing in the redwood forests and wildflowers everywhere will be showing off their blossoms. The high country of the Smith River watershed will be more accessible. The Klamath and Smith rivers will still be full of water for drift trips. Last, but not least, the weather will definitely be better-dry and warm.

"A bird in the bush is worth two in the hand"

Frank Chapman
Ornithologist and conservationist
(1864-1962)

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.



MDAS Board of Directors

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American Coots, Morro Bay. "There's always one . . ."

Morro Bay

Audubon California's Important Bird Area of Morro Bay and the central coast of California have so many diverse and interesting locations that it would be folly to try to describe them all. You'll just have to go and see for yourself. Should you drive to Southern California, Morro Bay is an excellent half-way point where you might take a break and spend a day or a week to check out the birds.

Morro Bay is a major stopover and wintering area for as many as 20,000 shorebirds who annually find food on the mudflats or roost in the shoreline uplands. On the ocean side of the sand spit is a population of Snowy Plover. Black Brant migrate from Alaskan shores to forage on the rich eelgrass beds.

Contributing to the designation of Important Bird Area is the presence of thirteen sensitive species, such as Peregrine Falcon, Black Rail, and Long-billed Savannah Sparrow, as well as more than one percent of the global population each of Pacific Black Brant and Long-billed Curlew.

Dominating Morro Bay at its harbor entrance is Morro Rock, where Peregrine Falcons nest and raise their young. The best way to catch a sighting of the Peregrine Falcons is to drive clockwise around to the parking lot on the south side of Morro Rock. You may very likely find that someone has already set a scope on a bird, perhaps 300 feet high on the rock. In 2009 there were two nesting pairs, one on the south side and



Morro Rock, home to Peregrine Falcons one on the north. April is a good time to watch the Peregrines, as this is a time when fledglings learn how to be falcons. Check out www.morrorockperegrines.com for updates. At the Rock, also look for Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Common Yellowthroat, and Canyon Wren, as well as gulls and cormorants.

Morro Bay, as viewed from Sweet Springs Nature Preserve

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