

CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, Dec. 5. Meetings for the rest of the 2002-03 year are Jan. 2, Feb. 6, March 6, April 3, May 1, and June 5. There are no meetings in July or August. **THIS IS A COMBINED DEC.-JAN. QUAIL. THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE MAILED JAN. 16.**

If you are a new member or new to the area, let us know. We want to welcome you and tell you about our activities. All new members and visitors receive a free door prize ticket.

The MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

MDAS Christmas Bird Counts are Sat., Dec. 14 (potluck too), and Sat., Dec. 21. See p. 7.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A one-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, 95626. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please end exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.



Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.



Happy Holidays!

The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

December 2002-January 2003

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Next Deadline: January 3

MDAS Website Updated

If you haven't checked out our MDAS website (www.diabloaudubon.com) lately, you have missed some exciting new features.

Have you been out birding lately and spotted an interesting bird and want to share your discovery? Would you like to know what and where fellow birders are sighting some interesting birds right now? Then you will want to sign up for our new list serve which is appropriately named, "Sightings." Information on how to sign up for this electronic sharing is posted on our website.

Also new to our website is the electronic version of the *Quail*. You can find the electronic newsletter under the "Members Only" section of the website. To receive this information, go to the home page and follow the directions for requesting access to MEMBERS ONLY. Would you like to receive an email notice of future additions to the website and or time-sensitive news? You can sign up for this service under the NEWS AND UPDATES section of the website.

To make that Christmas shopping just a little easier, you can even purchase a Gift Membership online with a Visa or MasterCard in the JOIN US section.

Sign up for the Christmas Bird Counts, review observations from past counts, find good birding spots in the Bay Area, see some great bird photos, or study the Breeding Bird Survey—it's all on our website.

Let us know what additional information you would like to be available; email Ann McGregor at annmcg@pacbell.net.

Stephen Sharnoff to Discuss Lichens at December Meeting

Frequently whether on a hike on Mt. Diablo or a walk in a garden, the brightest splash of color in the landscape we see comes from one of nature's lowliest members—lichens. At the December 5 general meeting, Stephen Sharnoff will talk about "Lichens and Their Relationship to the World around Us."

Stephen Sharnoff is a well-known nature photographer whose primary interests are lichens and plants. He and his late wife, Sylvia, were the photographers for a new book, *Lichens of North America*, by Irwin Brodo from Yale University Press.

Lichens are symbiotic, composite organisms made up from members of as many as three kingdoms. The dominant partner is a fungus. Incapable of making their own food, fungi usually provide for themselves as parasites or decomposers.

The lichen fungi (kingdom *Fungi*) cultivate partners that manufacture food by photosynthesis. Sometimes the partners are algae (kingdom *Protista*) or, at other times, cyanobacteria (kingdom *Monera*), formerly called blue-green algae. Some enterprising fungi exploit both at once. "Lichens are fungi that have discovered agriculture," said lichenologist Trevor Goward.

At least two bird species, the Spruce Grouse and the Wild Turkey, are reported to eat lichens. More than 50 species of birds in North America are known to use lichens in nest building.

Easily overlooked but once noticed, lichens add a fascinating variety of color, pattern, and texture to the world around us.

Stephen Sharnoff will have many beautiful pictures of lichens and other natural objects to show in his program. His websites with pictures are at <http://www.lichen.com> and <http://www.sharnoff.com>.

Birding Information

MDAS past presidents and current MDAS co-compilers for the Christmas Bird Count, Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern are doing a Christmas Count presentation for the December Birding Information. Have you wondered why the count area is circular or why the weather is an important factor in a good Count Day or mediocre one? This is your opportunity to have your curiosity satisfied, as Jimm and Maury relate tales of Count Days gone by. You can also sign up as a volunteer for the Count Days or use the form on p. 7.

Cookie Bakers Needed!!

We need volunteers to bring refreshments (cookies and sweets) for the December meeting. If you can help, please call Alice Holmes at 938-1581.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, December 5**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8). The January meeting is **Thursday, Jan. 2**.
6:30 p.m.—Doors open
7 p.m.—Birding Information
7:25 p.m.—Business meeting
7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing
8:05 p.m.—Program

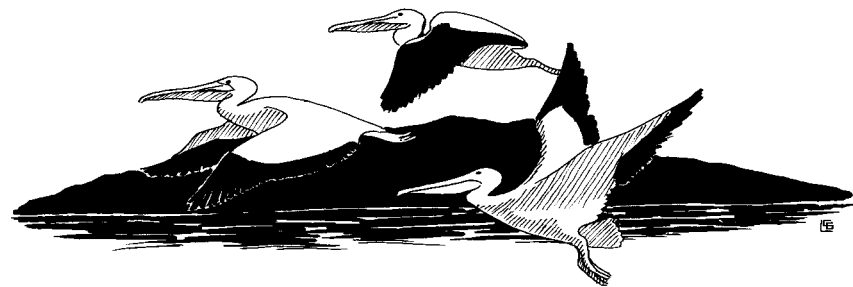
Remember your cup! We're serving Natural Origins Tea too!

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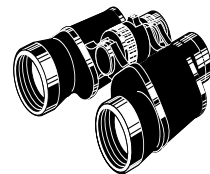


Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053



Observations

by Steve Glover



Five **American White Pelicans** were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 10/22 (GD); four were noted soaring over San Pablo Reservoir on 10/29 (SG); 12 were at Marsh Creek Reservoir west of Brentwood on 11/9 (SG); and 10 were on Los Vaqueros Reservoir on 11/9 (SG).

The long-lived male **Harlequin Duck** was still present near Brooks Island, Richmond, through at least 11/12 (SG). A flock of 50 **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 11/14 (SG). As many as 125–150 have wintered here in recent years. A female **Hooded Merganser** was at Moraga Country Club on 10/26, and three males and three females were there on 11/8 (JC). This is the third consecutive winter they have been found there.

An adult **Bald Eagle** was at San Pablo Reservoir 11/10 (JD). At least one adult winters at this site annually, making it the most reliable location in the county. Another adult was at Los Vaqueros Reservoir on 11/8 (GO).

Six Black Oystercatchers at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline 11/11 were as deep into the bay as they are found (DC). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** on 11/9 may have been the first recorded at Marsh Creek Reservoir (SG).

A **Common Moorhen** was at Lafayette Reservoir, where unusual, on 10/22 (SG).

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline 11/11 was a nice late-fall find for West County (DC).

A **Nashville Warbler** was at Marina Bay Parkway, Richmond, on 11/12 (SG). If this bird winters, it will be one of the few to ever do so in the county.

Single **White-throated Sparrows** were at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 10/27 (BB) and at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline on 11/11 (DC). It seems likely that dozens winter annually in the county, but most are from feeders and are never reported.

A male **Great-tailed Grackle** was at McNabney Marsh on 11/9 (DW). Although they now nest at this site, they have not been recorded in winter, so it will be interesting to see if it sticks around. There is only one winter record for the county. A fly-by **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at Inspiration Pt., Tilden Park, was rather late for a migrant (SG). **Evening Grosbeaks** are very rare in Contra Costa so a flock of 11 flying south-east over Inspiration Pt., Tilden Park, was an exciting find (SG).

Observers: Bob Brandriff, Dan Cooper, Judi Cooper, Gail DeLalla, Judith Dunham, Steve Glover, Gina Oltman, and Denise Wight

How to Call a Bird from a Bush (a Real Bush, not George W.)

“Spsh, Spsh” is the strange sound made by experienced birders when trying to flush passerines—vireos, warblers, orioles and such, and it works! “Spsh” mimics the call of certain tropical residents that our northern birds encounter during migration. Those tropical residents know the whereabouts of fruit and nectar, important staples for visiting North American species. But a word of caution: don't try this trick with Old World birds as their food requirements in Africa are different. The discoverer of this information is Neal Griffith Smith of the Smithsonian Tropical Institute in the Canal Zone. (from the *Quail*, March 1976)

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MDAS Will Hold 48th Annual Christmas Bird Count December 14 & 21

It's time to sign up to participate in the 48th annual MDAS Christmas Bird Count on December 14 and the second annual East County CBC on Saturday, December 21. Both CBCs will be held *dawn to dusk, rain or shine* on those days, according to Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern, the MDAS co-compilers and organizers of this event.

All members and guests are invited to participate. Every pair of eyes is helpful in seeing birds—you do not need to be an expert birder to participate, but you do need binoculars.

This is the 103th Christmas Bird Count. The first took place on Christmas Day, 1900, to protest the traditional bird shoot that killed every bird in sight. Today, there are counts in every state, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, and many Pacific islands. Over 45,000 volunteers will participate in about 1,700 counts this year. This is the longest running ornithological database and provides valuable data on resident and migratory bird populations. As important as all this is, it is also a great social event and a lot of fun.

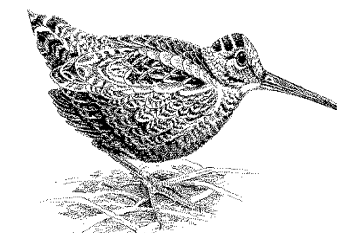
You sign up by filling out the form below and sending it to Jimm Edgar at the

address indicated along with \$5 (helps to pay for publication of the CBC edition of *American Birds*). You can also sign up at the December 5 general meeting when Jimm and Maury will be the speakers.

Dec 14 Potluck

On December 14, the Central County Christmas Bird Count will conclude with a potluck dinner and everyone—Counters and non-Counters alike—is invited. That dinner will be held at Grace Presbyterian Church, 2100 Trice Valley Blvd, Walnut Creek. Grace Presbyterian Church is located near Rossmoor across from the Jewish Community Center. Jimm will provide directions at the December meeting and they will be posted on our website.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Please bring your own table service and a salad, main dish, or dessert for 8 to 10 people, plus any serving utensils needed. Coffee and punch will be provided. Bring your own coffee cup please!



MDAS Christmas Bird Count Volunteer Form

1.) I want to participate in the 2002 MDAS Christmas Bird Count(s).

____ I volunteer to help with BOTH Christmas Bird Counts on Dec. 14 and Dec. 21.

____ I volunteer only for the Central County Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 14.

____ I volunteer only for the East County Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 21.

2.) I will help as an observer in the following ways:

____ Put me wherever you need the help.

____ I would prefer a hiking area.

____ I would prefer a less strenuous area.

____ I will monitor a feeder or garden.

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Years of birding experience: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

(Make \$5 checks payable to MDAS.)

Mail to: Jimm Edgar, 4614 Jacobus Ave., Oakland, CA 94618

A Great Gift Idea! Buy Natural Origins' Tea Products and Help MDAS

Natural Origins' provides 20% of its sales to MDAS when customers designate MDAS as their donation recipient. How do you find the tea and make the designation?

- Direct from Natural Origins'. Call toll free 1-877-448-3832 and request that MDAS receive donation benefits when you order.

- Order online at <www.naturalorigins.com>. At checkout, indicate MDAS as the donation recipient.

- Purchase Natural Origins' tea at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill (925-798-0303). MDAS receives an automatic credit of 20% of all tea sales. Note: WBU is the only retail outlet whose sales benefit MDAS!

- At MDAS general meetings, The Gardens at Heather Farm. Purchase at the meeting or pick up an order form.

In addition to wonderful teas, Natural Origins is offering Indian handicrafts at the general meetings.

January Field Trips

(cont. from p. 6)

January 30, Thursday—Sunol Regional Park. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. 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 1/4 mi north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:15 a.m. in the parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Rd. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 mi south on Calaveras Rd.; turn left on Geary Rd. and go 2 mi to park. Watch for Turkey along Geary Rd. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Canyon and Rock Wrens possible. Leader: Hugh Harvey, 932-4715 Category 3

The Singular Louis Agassiz Fuertes

By Ellis Myers

Certainly one of the most remarkable bird illustrators of all time, Louis Agassiz Fuertes was not only that, but he was also a pioneer in the history of ornithology as a science and birding as an avocation.

Recently, I had the good fortune to read a biography of Fuertes written by his daughter, Mary Fuertes Boynton. Titled *Louis Agassiz Fuertes, His Life Briefly Told and His Correspondence*, this book describes a man unique in his dominant love for birds and for his friends.

Before I had reached Chapter 3, Fuertes had become one of my heroes.

Louis Fuertes was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1874, and was named for the great Swiss naturalist, who had died two months before. His father, Estevan Antonio Fuertes was Professor of Civil Engineering at the young Cornell University. He was an avid amateur astronomer, and the student observatory at Cornell is named in his honor.

Louis had the privilege of growing up in a college town that had easy access to the countryside where wildlife beckoned. The town library had one of the original elephant folio sets of *Audubon's Birds of America*. Louis was allowed to look at the pictures at length, but only with a librarian on hand to turn the pages for him. The pictures became his inspiration, and by the age of 14, the boy was drawing birds from the wild, and drawing the attention of members of the Cornell faculty as well. By age 18, Louis Fuertes' drawings of birds were on exhibit; by age 21, his drawings of birds were on exhibit at the national meeting of the American Ornithologists Union!

The major part of this book is an edited collection of letters to and from Fuertes. He had become a protégé of Allot Coupes, among the leading ornithologists of his time. Fuertes' mentor, however, was Abbott Thayer, a principal champion of the concept of protective coloration in nature.

Popular as a lecturer, Fuertes was on the faculty of Cornell for only four years. He made a comfortable living from his studio. Yet his book illustration work led him to a quandary, because publishers wanted the birds to be set off from their surroundings, while Thayer's ideas of camouflage and protective coloring meant that the backgrounds were important to a full understanding of the species. Most settings in Fuertes' paintings are subdued, but one in particular, of a Ruffed Grouse in autumn (March, Plate 54) could be a textbook case for Thayer's hypotheses.

In 1898, Fuertes undertook the first of many collecting trips to places then in need of field study. The first was to Florida, with Abbott Thayer and two other young people. Later trips included Alaska, Texas, the Bahamas, Yucatan, Colombia (twice), and Abyssinia. This last trip brought Fuertes back to Ithaca in June 1927. Later in the summer, he and Mrs. Fuertes drove to visit Dr. and Mrs. Frank Chapman in Tannersville, about 100 miles to the east, to show the pictures Fuertes had drawn from the Abyssinia collections. Chapman, who had been with Louis on over 60,000 miles of expedition trails, called them the finest Louis had ever done. On the return to Ithaca, a train struck the Fuertes' car at a grade crossing. Louis was instantly killed.

Among lasting memorials to the great illustrator is the Fuertes

Room at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, a good collection not only of his drawings and paintings, but also of birds mounted by him. The Louis Agassiz Fuertes Wildlife Sanctuary in New York is named in his honor, as is a local council of the Boy Scouts. Some bird species also carry his name, such as the Rusty-faced Parrot, *Hapalopsittaca amazonina fuertesi*.

A sampling of the art of Louis Agassiz Fuertes from more than 2500 pieces in the collections of Cornell University can be found at the Internet address: <<http://cidc.library.cornell.edu/>>.

Louis Agassiz Fuertes and the Singular Beauty of Birds, edited by F. G. March and with an introduction by Roger Tory Peterson, is part biography, part a sampling of Fuertes' letters from his expeditions, part a wonderful set of 60 color plates; it is available in the Orinda Library (Call number 759.13). *Louis Agassiz Fuertes*, by his daughter, Mary Boynton, is a delight. Published in 1956, a copy is to be found in the Fremont Main Library.



Titmouse by Louis Agassiz Fuertes



Ruffed or Spruce Grouse by Louis Agassiz Fuertes painted for The Birds of New York by Elon Howard Eaton in 1910. The original painting is now in the collection of the New York State Museum

McNabney Marsh at Waterbird Preserve Open to the Public

Nearly 15 years after a devastating oil spill from the Shell refinery, officials from the East Bay Regional Park District dedicated the recovered wetland on Saturday, November 2. Among the dignitaries who gathered to observe the occasion were U.S. Congressman George Miller, California Assemblyman Joe Canciamilla, Contra Costa County Supervisor Gail Uilkema, and EBRPD Board members Ted Radke, Beverly Lane, Jean Siri, and John Sutter.

In their remarks, many speakers emphasized the tremendous cooperation among the many organizations and individuals who made protection of the marsh possible. Several speakers shared recollections of Al McNabney, in whose memory the wetland was named. Al, MDAS conservation vice president for over a decade, was a tireless advocate for preservation of the marsh and for opportunities for public access and environmental education at the site.

The efforts of members of the Shell Oil Spill Trustee Committee were also recognized, including Mt. View Sanitary District's Dick Bogart, Mike Rugg of the California Department of Fish and Game, and corporate representatives of Shell Oil. Nancy Wenninger, EBRPD manager and MDAS conservation chair, spoke on behalf of the Board of Directors and the members of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, and Tina Batt represented the Muir Heritage Land Trust.

An estimated 150 people attended the ceremony, including a great turnout of 30 to 40 Audubon members. Many birds were also present and enjoyed the festivities, including several American White Pelicans, which have become regular denizens of the marsh.

Certainly Al was also there in spirit, celebrating the miraculous recovery of the marsh which has become one of the most productive wetlands in the Bay Area.



Awakening children like these to the wonders of nature and the importance of conservation is why MDAS is excited about the opening McNabney Marsh to the public.

January Program Focus on Wildlife Control Issues in EBRPD Parks

Should hunting be allowed in East Bay Regional Parks? Is it reasonable to reintroduce into the EBRP system those species that once lived in the East Bay hills but have disappeared? What can be done to control feral cats in a park? For our **January 2** program, Dave Riensche will discuss issues such as these during his presentation, "Wildlife Control Issues in the East Bay Regional Park District."

Dave Riensche, known as "Doc Quack" during his many years as a Naturalist at Coyote Hills Regional Park, has been teaching children of all ages for over a decade about nature appreciation and wildlife conservation. He is now involved at the district level with wildlife control issues, especially feral cats, but also with quail habitat restoration, Least Tern nesting, and Tree Swallow nesting issues. He is helping to re-establish Valley Quail and other native species identified as "threatened, endangered, rare, or locally extinct" in the parks. He will be discussing these issues and others pertaining to the EBRPD.

He holds a M.S. in Environmental Education and a B.S. in Biology (Wildlife Environment). He has also done graduate work in Natural Resource Management. Dave Riensche teaches biology and ecology at Las Positas College.

He is the author of over 35 *Bird News* articles, several brochures and bird checklists, 14 published research papers in professional ornithological journals, and *Of Marsh and Mud: A Guide to San Francisco Bay Shoreline Life*. He is working on a new book, *Birds of the East Bay Regional Park District*.

Birding Information

Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern make a return visit to tell us about the results of the two MDAS Christmas Bird Counts. We'll hear all about the final count of species from both the Central County and the East County Counts and how the counts compare to previous years.

Audubon Adventures

Are you interested in teaching children to observe, understand, and appreciate birds, other wildlife, and the relationship of the human species to the natural world? Consider subscribing to, or sponsoring a classroom in *Audubon Adventures*. The program is targeted for grades 4-6 and any public or private classroom can enroll. Materials include 32 student newspapers for each topic; a Teacher's Resource Manual with hands-on suggestions and copy sheets; Resource Directory for Internet; CD-Rom, book and video resources; a 20-minute video on wildlife, and Internet access to National Audubon experts. The cost of Audubon Adventures is \$40 per classroom. If you want to sponsor a class or nominate a class for sponsorship, call Cecil Williams at 925-798-0303.

Spread of West Nile Virus Spells Disaster for Birds

Scientists do not yet understand the full effects that the West Nile virus will have on populations of native North American birds, but already more than 60 species, numbering in the thousands in terms of individual birds, have been diagnosed as having died from the virus in north-eastern United States.

Recent laboratory tests have shown that West Nile virus is 100% lethal to crows, but the mortality rate is likely to vary among susceptible species. What concerns wildlife officials most, perhaps, is that, while crows and blue jays—the birds most commonly affected—are numerous enough to withstand population losses, many raptor and songbird species are not.

Although birds of the Old World (Europe and Africa) have adjusted to the presence of the disease, our New World birds have not previously been exposed. They have no built-up immunity and may suffer devastating population losses due to this introduced disease. Nationwide, all species but falcons have been identified as having tested positive for the virus.

“When its gets into an area where there are no natural immunities, that’s when it hammers the wildlife,” a biologist said. In addition to humans and birds, the virus has been identified in horses, squirrels, and, most recently, alligators in Florida.

One major tool to monitor the westward spread of the virus is surveillance for dead birds, particularly crows. California is using sentinel flocks of chickens as an early alert system.

Actually, many wildlife specialists are almost more worried about the public’s reaction than about the impact of the virus itself. “I don’t want to regress 40 years and start spraying the whole world with DDT. . . . I think the point is that we are going to have to learn to live with this disease, as we have had to learn to deal with the AIDS virus and the common cold,” one researcher said.

In any case, there may be very little that wildlife and health officials can do to contain the spread of West Nile virus in the U.S. They will be monitoring the impacts of the West Nile on the bird and mammal populations, but there is basically nothing that can be done to intervene in the process. Wildlife populations will have to adapt to the disease.

The American Bird Conservancy is also concerned about what mosquito abatement practices will be used as the public becomes more alarmed about the spread of the virus by mosquitoes, which have been identified as the major vector. Pesticides that could be sprayed to kill mosquitoes could also be lethal to other insects and to birds that feed on them. The full implications of the West Nile virus could mean that the natural processes of the ecosystem are profoundly disturbed.

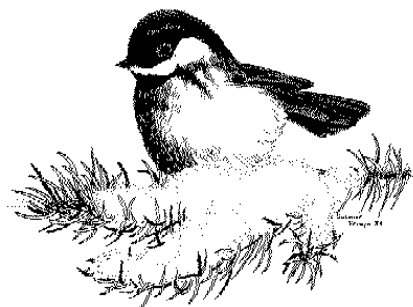
To protect important bird habitat, a balanced perspective on mosquito control for West Nile virus should reflect the important ecological role of non-target insects as natural mosquito predators, pollinators, and important food resources for birds. The American Bird Conservancy has a Position Statement on the West Nile virus at <http://www.abcbirds.org/pesticides/west_nile_position_statement.htm>. Take the time to read it—this is one area where knowledge and awareness are extremely important.

To see a map of the spread of the West Nile virus, go <http://cindi.usgs.gov/hazard/event/west_nile/west_nile.html>.

If you must handle birds or other potentially infected animals, use a protective barrier (e.g., gloves, inverted plastic bags).

Field Trip Report

Abbott’s Lagoon, October 26. Eleven birders had a great day at Abbott’s Lagoon and other Pt. Reyes locations. We saw a total of 73 species on this beautiful fall day, including a flock of more than 20 Townsend’s Warblers, four species of grebes, and nine species of raptors.—Joel Summerhill



A Christmas Gift No One Will Want to Return

The *Entertainment 2003* book is the perfect Christmas gift and still costs only \$30 this year for the same terrific values. They are available at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill; or at the general meeting; or on the Internet.

To order any Entertainment Book online go to <www.entertainment.com>. Then enter the city or ZIP code and the state, and follow the directions on the screen.

When you are asked to enter the group number, the number for MDAS is 175587.

The *Entertainment 2003* book of savings can be a triple value during the Christmas shopping season! Buy one for all your hard-to-please friends and relatives; buy one for yourself and use the coupons toward special gifts; and use your own book for a free lunch or dinner out after shopping.

Be sure to check out the golf and wine sections—new last year and now even better!

December & January Field Trips

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

Field trips are open to MDAS members and nonmembers alike. You do not have to be a birding expert; only one who enjoys nature. Bring binoculars, field guides, and lunch. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

December Field Trips

December 5, Thursday—Hidden Lakes Park. Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot at the corner of Morello Ave. and Chilpancingo Parkway. Oak woodlands and ponds. This has been a very productive area in the middle of housing areas. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

December 7 & 8, Saturday & Sunday—Sacramento Valley Refuges. On Saturday, meet in the parking lot at the visitor’s center at the Sacramento Refuge at 8 a.m. Go north on I-5. Exit I-5 at the Norman exit and go north on frontage road. Follow the signs to the Sacramento NWR. There is an entrance fee, and the ticket is good for all the national refuges. On Sunday, meet at 8 a.m. in the first parking lot at the entrance booth at Gray Lodge. There is a \$5.00 per person entrance fee. (Note: California Wildlife Campaign cards are good for a year and will also be usable for the Grizzly Island trip in January as well as Gray Lodge. They are also good at the Los Banos Refuge). To get to Gray Lodge, take I-80 to SR 113. At Tudor, take US 99 north to Pennington Rd. in the town of Live Oak and follow Pennington Rd. to Almond and the refuge entrance. There are several turns, and the road eventually runs north. Leader: Steve Glover, 828-7793 Category 1

December 11, Wednesday—Niles Canyon. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. 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 1/4 mi north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. at Vallejo Mill Historical Park in Fremont. Take I-680 south through Dublin to SR 84; go west 7 mi to park entrance on right. Leader: Jimm Edgar, (510) 658-2330 Category 2

Saturday, December 14—Central County Bird Count, see p. 7.
Saturday, December 21—East County Bird Count, see p. 7.

January Field Trips

January 8, Wednesday—San Pablo Creek Trail. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking area of the northeast corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Rd. From Route 24 westbound, take Orinda exit north. Pass Wagner Ranch School and turn left at last stoplight. Morning walk through riparian area to lake. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Save the President’s Day weekend (Feb. 15–16). Steve Glover is leading a trip to the Susanville area to look for Sage Grouse. Look for details in the February Quail.

January 11, Saturday—Putah Creek. Carpool leaves at 8:15 a.m. from the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 9 a.m. at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasants Valley Rds., approximately 1 mi north from I-80. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area. Possibly Osprey, Phainopepla, Canyon and Rock Wrens, and Hooded Merganser. Leader: Florence Bennett, 689-3106 Category 1

January 16, Thursday—Bollinas Lagoon—5 Brooks. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet at 8:45 a.m. in front of Audubon Canyon Ranch. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From I-101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left on 3rd St. and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. At Olema, turn left and go south on SR1. Past the Bollinas turnoff, park in pullout across Canyon Ranch. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

January 22, Wednesday—Lake Merritt. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at parking lot between the Boat House and the abandoned aviary at Lake Merritt. Go west on Hwy 24 which becomes I-980. Take 29th St. exit; go straight through light at 27th St. and continue on Northgate Ave. to end at Grand Ave. Go left on Grand to park entrance by Children’s Fairyland. Ducks, grebes, herons. Lake Merritt is most reliable place for Barrow’s Goldeneye. Leader: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732 Category 2

January 25, Saturday—Santa Cruz. Carpool leaves at 7:45 a.m. 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 1/4 mi north to El Pintado. Meet in Santa Cruz at Neary’s Lagoon at 9:15 a.m. Take I-680 south to SR 237; west to I-880 and south on Hwy 17. In Santa Cruz, turn north on SR 1 to Laurel St. Turn left on Laurel and right on Blackburn to the parking lot. Trip will include a visit to the Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges State Park. Bring lunch. If you plan to go, call the leader. If no advance sign-ups are received, the trip may be canceled. Leader: Joel Summerhill, *862-925-753-086, or gcannon4@excite.com Category 1.

(Field Trips continued on p. 7.)

Difficulty of field trip:
Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths.
Category 2: Moderate, 1 mile or more, possibly rough terrain.
Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.