



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 56, Number 4

December 2010–January 2011

Secrets of the Mushroom World ♦ Michael Marchiano

This is a busy time of year for amateur and professional mycologists. The rains bring a mushroom explosion in the East Bay hills. As with birding, the thrill of the hunt becomes addictive for mushroom fanciers. Not only are they beautiful to look at, many wild mushrooms can be eaten. Each species of mushroom grows in its own unique habitat. Morels like the spring following a cold snowy winter. They like the soil of burnt forests or the soil around dying elm trees. Learn what conditions encourage the growth of Chanterelle, Porcini, or Oyster mushrooms as well as the poisonous Amanita Muscaria.

Michael Marchiano is a lifetime resident of Contra Costa County. He has hiked and explored Mt Diablo since he was nine years old. As an avid naturalist, he photographs local wild flowers, insects, reptiles, spiders, and mushrooms. He has collected mushrooms for culinary purposes for over thirty years. Join Mike for a revealing peak into the familiar mushrooms you see in the woods and fields. Learn to identify



and appreciate the mushrooms that you are most likely to encounter in California. This is Mike's season and we hope that he will share his recipes for his favorite mushroom dishes – Chanterelle Bisque and a stuffed Chicken Breast Marsala with golden Chanterelles.

Mike received his B.A. in History and Political Science from St. Mary's College in Moraga. He went on to graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley and at St. Mary's. He received a California lifetime teaching credential and taught for five years before entering the field of law enforcement. He spent 30 years with the El Cerrito Police Dept., the City of Martinez Police Dept. and the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office. Mike currently shares his love of local nature with school groups, civic organizations, Scouts, 4H groups, Audubon groups and other community organizations

BIRDING INFORMATION

In December, Denise Wight will explore the wonderful world of avian mimicry. From the well-known Mockingbird to the lesser known mimics, these birds copy not only the sounds of their own species but those of other bird species, and sometimes even the sounds of animals and mechanical objects.

Denise has been birding for over 25 years. She became seriously hooked when a Western Tanager and a Hooded Oriole visited the bottlebrush shrub in her backyard on May 1, 1986. She currently teaches a course in *Birding by Ear* at Albany Adult School and is recognized throughout northern California for her birding by ear skills.

January Birding Information will be our annual update of the Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Counts with Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern. It is always fun to hear the species count compared to last year and to follow the build up to unique sighting reports.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, December 9**, 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:

Michael Marchiano

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, January 6: **The Ghost Bird**

Note: The December meeting is the second—not the first—Thursday in December!

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

January Meeting: A Special Screening of *Ghost Bird*

To embark on a new year of programs related to our Audubon goals of habitat conservation and environmental education, come on January 6, 2011, to see a critically acclaimed feature film *Ghost Bird*. Following the Birding Information segment summarizing our Christmas Bird Counts, the film, which runs one hour, 25 minutes, will start by 7:45 PM.

In 2005, scientists announced that the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, a species thought to be extinct for 60 years, had been seen in the swamps of Eastern Arkansas. Other creatures have been wrongly presumed extinct, but the reappearance of the Ivory-bill was celebrated around the world as the rediscovery of a lifetime, prompting the largest recovery effort ever undertaken for a lost species. Millions of dollars poured in from government while ornithologists and birders flooded the swamps to find the rare bird.

Down the road, the town of Brinkley, Arkansas—itsself on the verge of extinction—was transformed by the hope, commerce and controversy surrounding their feathered friend. But continued sightings by expert birders were clouded by the absence of credible evidence. Now, six years later, the woodpecker remains as elusive as ever.

Since announcing the Ivory-bill's rediscovery, Cornell Lab of Ornithology in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, The Audubon Society, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal, state and local agencies, have attracted over 10 million dollars for the search expedition as well as habitat acquisition, preservation and rehabilitation. Secretary of the Interior,



Gail Norton, appointed more than fifty members to the largest recovery team ever assembled for an endangered species.

Ghost Bird explores possible explanations for the lack of conclusive documentation as well as the passionate obsession of birders and scientists embarked on this odyssey.

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

The first item I would like to mention is our upcoming Annual Christmas Bird Counts. Our MDAS Audubon chapter sponsors two counts; one in the central county and one in the east county. There is a good article in this issue of the Quail with all the details. If you have participated, please sign up again and if you have never done a Christmas Bird Count this would be a good year to start. They are lots of fun and all levels of birding skills are welcome.

The elections in November had some good news and bad news. Not passing Proposition 21, the State Park initiative, was too bad. It sure would have helped our parks, but maybe another time. One really good note was the defeat of measure W in San Ramon. Our chapter joined a host of other environmental organizations in opposition to this measure that would have expanded the city's urban growth boundary to allow more development in the Tassajara Valley. It went down to defeat by a 71.9% margin!

Our field trip chair, Hugh Harvey, continues to look for folks who would be willing to lead a field trip for the chapter. It does not mean you have to know every bird or lots of other details, it just means someone in charge for the day. "We're leaving now",

"Time to move along," Time for lunch." Please consider helping us out in this way. You can contact Hugh.

The last item is an observation about the service our chapter provides to many folks; the East Bay Bird sightings on Yahoo groups. I hope all of you subscribe. It is free and brings a lot of information to those who do subscribe. You receive e-mails every day about bird sightings in the East Bay only. Last month a Gray Catbird showed up in Oakland and I went to see if I could find it. I did find it and also found a lot of folks at the site who had come because of directions they had gotten on East Bay Birds. We compared notes about what had been written, where the bird had been seen, at what time, *etc.* Often the information was only hours old. I saw firsthand what a great service we provide. Another nice spin-off of EBB is helping visitors from another area who might need some help finding local birds. Last month a birder from England left a post saying he would like to see a list of birds and asked if anyone could help him. A week later or so he left another e-mail thanking everyone who had come forward to help him find the birds. It is just a nice means of tying the birding community together and nice we can be a part of it.

Welcome New Members

Marsha Lyn Davis

Martinez

Romy Myszka

Antioch

Q

This is a bird of the forest, but it is increasingly found in residential areas where

it is attracted to yards where there are bird feeders. As the birds move through the trees of the forest their relatively broad and short wings aid in the maneuverability they need.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 7 to learn more.

ACEHKOOPRSW

The Quail is published monthly except January and August by Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **The deadline for the February issue is January 11.**

Thank You to Our Donors

The Board of Directors of Mount Diablo Audubon Society wishes to thank all those who have contributed during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. These donations permit the on-going programs dedicated to preservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife, and promote an awareness of our natural wonders among young people.

California Condor (\$1000+)

Hugh B. and Rosita O. Harvey

California Gnatcatcher (\$250-\$999)

Steve Buffi and Anne Waters, William D. and Linda L. Chilson, Kenneth Evilsizor and Helen Lippitt, Beverly Hawley, Lynn Lakso, Donald W. and Susan E. Lewis, Martin and Sandra Stuart, Joel Summerhill, Nancy Wenninger.

California Thrasher (\$100-\$249)

Cheryl Abel, Sharon and Carl Anduri, Gus and Gerry Argenal, Patricia Bacchetti, Justyna Backiel, Donald and Jeanne Boyd, Jerry Britten, Ronald L. Clendenen, Jack B. and Susan S. Cooper, Doris C. and Peter J. Daniels, Kent Fickett and Rebecca Beemer, Don Groom, Virginia Hamrick, Scott & Claudia Hein, Mark Janlois, Bob and Ann Landfear, Carol Lane, Joan B. Mize, Marilyn M. Seifert, Ellis and Mimi Myers, Margaret L. O'Connell, Carol Pacht, Jannifer Lee Puyans, Dennis & Sharon Randall, Moses de los Reyes, Sandra Ritchie, Paul and Nancy Schorr, Donald and Beverly Steffen, Maury and Susan Stern, Michael and Rita Tischler, Bruce Williamson, Stephanie Woods.

California Quail (\$25-\$99)

Paul R. Andrews, Phillip Araki, Carol N. Baier, F. Norah Bain, Kristen Beckus-Baker, Ruth Beeve, Dorothy Bell, Bennett Berke, John and Diane Blackman, Beverly G. Bortin, James and Barbara Brunell, William and Deborah Carr, Alan Carreon, Phyllis Chambers and David Woods, Margaret Clark, Jan Rae Cook, Doug and Susan Couch, Michael D. Cousins and Patricia M. Cousins, Kathleen Cronin, Yolanda and Robert Cronin, Thelma D. and John L. Dana, William E. Davis, Jr., Linda Dugan, Jimm Edgar, Jon Elam, Shirley Ellis, Doug Elliott, Oscar Enstrom, Don Fallon, Doris P. Faulkenberry, Nancy J. Flood, Janet M. Goodman, Bill and Diana Granados, Carol Haglund, Judith Hamberg, Carol and John Harkin, Roger D. Harris and Meryl Q. Sundove, Alfred S. Harvey, Dora Henel, Alice Holmes, Ilene Holgrem, Donald H. and Ann V. Hughes, Fenton Hughes, Judy Johnstone, Jacqueline D. and Arthur L. Jones, Susan Dee and Edwin F. Katibah, Kathryn B. Kellogg, Dudley R. Kennedy, Ronald Kline, Donna Kramer, Betsy Krieg and Steve Lindow, Bruce and

Judy Kronmiller, Richard Kurovsky, Timothy E. Lacy, Eugenia K. Larson, Steve Lof-tin, John H. and Randi Long, Mike Loper, David P. and Juanita K. Luther, Renette MacIntyre, Victor Maletic, Bill Maloney, Diane and Bob Malucelli, Kathleen Martin, Sharon K. McKee and Patrick F. McKee, Dolores Morrison, Elizabeth H. Nelson, Iola O'Grady, Thomas K. O'Keefe, Nathalie Oram, Margaret and C. J. Panton, S. T. Parr, Sharlene Pereira, Britt Petersen, Clint and Sue Phalen, Mr. and Mrs. J. Douglas Philips, Donald and Daisy Ray, Moreland and Jean Richmond, J. C. and M. B. Ricksen, Peter Robertshaw, Anne Sackman, Judy Secor, Frances L. Singer, Robert Slyker, Anne Smith, Ann-Charlott Stenberg, Sandra M. Stober and Mason F. Stober, Alison Stoddard, Fred W. Sullivan, Joanne Taylor, Mrs. Robert W. Thunen, Claudia Tierney, Beverley Walker, Peter L. and Dolores White, Roger Wilcox, Teri and Chris Wills, Ed and Marilyn Wojcik, Barbara Yost.

California Towhee (To \$24)

Janet Battislini, Britta E. Cascio, Carolyn E. Cogan, Bette Cooper, Claire and William Gilbert, Helen Grubb, Ms. Deanna Hauser, Ellen M. Ohan Jones, Mona Lange, Joan E. Mancuso-Adair, Anna E. McCarty, Dr. F. Michael Melewicz, Art Poirier, Nadine Rosenzweig, William P. Schaefer, Shirley A. Shevchenko, Bessie Smyth, Dr. Howard Sturtz, Joanne Thorne, Idell Weydemeyer, John O. White, Betty Ann Williams.



Mountain Plover Survey

Audubon California in January 2011 is conducting a survey of Mountain Plovers in California and could use your help. The survey will take place January 20 through 24 in sites all around the state. Some of the areas of specific focus include the Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, Tulare Basin, Imperial Valley, Panoche Valley, Carrizo Plain. If you want to participate, please contact Alex Hartman via email at chartman@audubon.org, or call 916-649-7600.

Trip Reports

Abbott's Lagoon, October 16. As in past years, we were greeted with mist and an overcast sky, temperature in the upper 50s and little or no wind. Ten participants showed for the trip. Early on we caught excellent views of several raptors (Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier), but we dipped on a confirmed sighting of a Ferruginous Hawk, a staple on several previous visits. The trail into the lagoons yielded excellent views of Say's Phoebe and a hybrid Northern Flicker—red malar of red-shafted variant coupled with yellow under-wing of yellow-shafted variant. Surprisingly we did not find any Snowy Plovers on the beach this year. One of the group espied a Peregrine Falcon perched on a small sand dune rise overlooking a flock of unperturbed coots and other ducks on the lagoon edge closest to the ocean. Among ducks, we found Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Greater Scaup, as well as a notable Cackling Goose among a group of Canada Geese. On the mammal side, a number of the group were lucky to observe several river otters in the lagoon, as well as a distinguished looking coyote seeking a meal. At the end of a great day's hiking we found we had encountered a total of 51 species. *David Hutton*

Berkeley Shoreline, November 11. Sixteen birders enjoyed a spectacular day and 72 species. Many ducks and shorebirds were on the mudflats, the best being a lovely Eurasian Wigeon, 5 species of grebes on the bay and six species of gulls flying overhead. November can be the best time of year in California to enjoy our winter birds and good birding buddies.

Bingham and Larry Gibbs

Charleston Slough/South Bay, November 13. An unseasonably warm day greeted 10 birders at the south of the bay. We walked out Charleston Slough and visited the west end of Shoreline Lake, drove to Palo Alto to visit Byxbee Park and the Baylands. After lunch we drove to the Radio Ponds in Redwood Shores. Sixteen waterfowl species were highlighted by Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal which landed right in front of us and a brief glimpse of a Eurasian Wigeon before it flew away. Also seen among the 68 species was an Osprey, Western Bluebirds, a Lincoln's Sparrow and a Bewick's Wren. *Hugh B. Harvey*

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

December

- 4-5 Saturday/Sunday Sacramento Refuges
- 9 Thursday Niles Area
- 14 Tuesday Christmas Count/East County
- 18 Saturday Christmas Count/Central County

January

- 2 Sunday Christmas Count Rarity Chase
- 8 Saturday Putah Creek
- 15 Saturday Raptors, Davis Area
- 19 Wednesday Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh
- 22 Saturday Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Schollenberger Park

February

- 5 Saturday Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
- 10 Thursday Grizzly Island
- 17 Thursday Sunol Regional Park
- 24 Thursday Mt. View Sanitary/MacNabney Marsh
- 26-27 Saturday-Sunday Los Banos/Panoche Valley

🕒 Saturday/Sunday, December 4-5 Sacramento Refuges

Leader: Terry Colborn, 916-705-8991 or tlcgdc@aol.com.

This weekend field trip to the northern Sacramento Valley will feature a number of well known habitats to view wintering waterfowl and other avian specialties. On Saturday we'll tour Sacramento NWR, a 10,700 acre complex. The mid-winter numbers of waterfowl peak at over 600,000 ducks and 200,000 geese on the seasonal ponds and adjoining open fields; twenty-five percent of the world's Aleutian Cackling Goose population winters at Sacramento NWR. Other species include Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. We'll visit several units of the complex to the east along the Sacramento River looking for Sandhill Cranes, Tricolored Blackbirds, raptors, herons, egrets and shorebirds. At day's end, we'll enjoy a group dinner; overnight in Williams.

On Sunday we'll search farm roads for Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagle; and visit Colusa NWR. We'll search for Barn and Great Horned Owls, Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser. Harris's Sparrow has been found in years past.

In the afternoon we'll bird the Sutter Buttes area. Target species include Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike and Golden Eagle. We'll tour Gray Lodge WMA where we expect to see large flights of Snow Geese, looking for Ross's Geese among them. We'll look and listen for Sora, Virginia Rail and American Bittern. We'll stay at the refuge until dusk when, as though on cue, thousands of ibis, ducks and geese take to wing and fly to nearby fields to feed during the night—truly a spectacle to behold as the sun sets over the Coast Range.

Space is limited and carpooling is essential. There are several hotels in Williams; early room reservations are recommended. This is a great trip for beginners and seasoned birders alike. Participants may want to arrive on Friday evening for the 7:00 AM start time on Saturday.

🕒 Thursday, December 9 Niles Area

Leader: Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330.

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 8:15 AM. Meet at the Vallejo Mill Park in Fremont at 9 AM. Take I-680 south to Niles Canyon exit, turn right (west), follow SR 84 about seven miles towards the Niles District. The park is at SR 84 and Mission Blvd. We follow Alameda Creek and visit some of the old gravel pits which have been re-landscaped as parkland.

🕒 Tuesday, December 14 Christmas Count/East County 🕒 Saturday, December 18 Christmas Count/Central Contra Costa County

Until the end of the nineteenth century ornithologists, lacking even a first-edition Peterson's Guide, made species identifications by comparing skins of birds they shot with stuffed birds in their private collection or those in a museum tray. A popular way to add to their reference skins was to participate in a Christmas Day hunt, a competition to shoot as many birds as possible.

But in 1900, Frank Chapman, a naturalist and editor of *Bird Lore*, forerunner to *Audubon* magazine, organized the first "Christmas Bird Census." Now, more than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day count of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest-running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends across the Americas. This database can be accessed through the BirdSource website at www.birdsource.com. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

You are invited to take part in this event as MDAS will conduct two separate counts, on Tuesday, December 14, and Saturday, December 18. Rain will not stay our dedicated birders from their appointed rounds. Every pair of eyes is helpful in this endeavor—you do not need to be an expert bird watcher. Just bring your binoculars and a sense of camaraderie and fun. You may opt for either or both days. Feeder-watchers are encouraged, as well, provided you live within one of the count circles, and especially if you anticipate having an unusual species in your yard. Maps are shown on Page 6.

As darkness concludes the counts, there's still fun to come as we congregate for a count-down dinner. Once again, dinner will be provided at the Diablo Creek Golf Course at 4050 Port Chicago Highway in Concord. Everyone is invited to the dinner, whether or not you're an active participant that day.

To sign up for the count or for the dinner, just call Jimm Edgar at (510) 658-2330, or Maury Stern at (925) 284-5980.

① Sunday, January 2

Contra Costa County Rarity Chase

Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.

This trip will attempt to find as many of the unusual birds found on the Christmas Counts as possible. Last year when there were none, we instead found 106 species in Contra Costa County. Call leader for meeting place and time.

① Saturday, January 8

Putah Creek

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 8:00 AM. Meet at 8:45 AM at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasants Valley Roads, approximately 1 mile north from I-80, west of Vacaville. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area. Bring lunch. Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser.

① Saturday, January 15

Raptors, Davis Area

Leader: Terry Colborn, 916-705-8991.

Wintering Raptors and Waterfowl of Solano and Yolo Counties. Meet 8 AM at southwest corner of Wal-Mart in Dixon, exit Hwy 113 from I-80, go south to East Dorset Drive. The open agricultural lands of Solano and Yolo Counties provide excellent foraging habitat for scores of wintering raptors, while the wetlands of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are the winter home for thousands of waterfowl including ducks, geese, swans and many shorebirds. This all-day field trip will visit several local winter habitats in search of Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks; Merlin; Prairie Falcon; Burrowing, Barn and Great-horned Owls; Long-billed Curlew, as well as the elusive and threatened Mountain Plover. We also expect to see a representative sampling of waterfowl and a variety of shorebirds at the Yolo Basin Wildlife Area, also known as the Vic Fazio Refuge. Bring a lunch and liquids; dress in layers. Heavy rains cancel.

② Wednesday, January 19

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh

Leader: Chick Chickering, 686-9231.

High Tide. Carpool leaves at 8 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM in parking lot by Lake Merritt. Take SR 24 to Oakland and I-980, take Grand Avenue exit and turn left on Grand. Enter park by Children's Fairland and follow road around to parking lot entrance on right between boat-house and aviary. After some birding here, we will drive to Arrowhead Marsh by 11:00 AM for the high tide. Hopefully the rising tide will flush out rails. Area is good for shorebirds and often loons on the estuary.

② Saturday, January 22

Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Schollenberger Park

Leader: Eugenia Larsen, 806-0644.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley parking lot at 7:30 AM. Meet at Las Gallinas at 8:30 AM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 22 miles to US 101 south, exit at Lucas Valley Road/Smith Ranch Road. Cross under the freeway to the east on Smith Ranch Road for 0.6 miles, cross the railroad tracks and turn left. Follow the road around the hill 0.7 miles until arriving at the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District parking lot. Rush Creek Marsh is just north and east of the Atherton Avenue exit from US 101 in Novato. Immediately past the Park and Ride lot on Atherton, turn left onto Binford Road and go north to the marsh. Schollenberger Park is in Petaluma, east of US 101. Exit at Lakeville Highway, go east to S. McDowell and turn right. Look for a half-right onto Cypress Drive, then enter the PRBO parking lot at 3820 Cypress. Go to the back and park near the picnic tables. All three sites are good for wintering waders, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors.

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.

Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, 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 locations: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **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. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Exit SR 24 at St. Stephens Drive east of Orinda. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with St. Stephens Drive.

We Need You to Lead

We are always in need of leaders for our field trips and would love to have new volunteers. We have 46 trips planned for this year, but four of them still need a leader. If you are interested in leading a trip to the Thornton area (2/5), Grizzly Island (2/10) or Mountain View Sanitary (2/24), please let me know: call 935-2979, or e-mail hughrosita@gmail.com.

At times, the previously scheduled leaders have conflicting schedules. This is the case with two of these trips. The other two do not have leaders at all. If we cannot find someone to lead them, they may be cancelled. Of our current leaders, five of us will be on the Costa Rica trip in February. Please consider whether you might want to join us in leading chapter field trips.

Hugh Harvey, Field Trips Chair

Observations

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

Three **Brant** continued to be seen at Brooks Island from Canal Street in Richmond. BP, 10/16.

PD and MT saw **Wood Ducks** in Las Trampas Creek along the Lafayette-Moraga Bicycle Trail Staging Area near Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Blvd. on 10/25. This has been a reliable place to see Wood Ducks for many years.

BP on 10/16 and TR on 11/3 saw the **Harlequin Duck** at Brooks Island, or at the end of Canal Street in Richmond.

S&ST saw two **Peregrine Falcons** near the Mount Diablo Junction on 10/18.

On 10/22, C&TW saw **Lewis's Woodpeckers** at Los Vaqueros Reservoir.

There was a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at Heather Farm 11/9, BH.

At Heather Farm on 11/2, there was a possible **Western Kingbird**. A Tropical Kingbird would be more likely this time of year, TR.

A **Rough-winged Swallow** seen at Heather Farm on 11/16 was quite late in the year for that species. HH.

By Maury Stern

HN, BB, &NA saw **Golden-crowned Kinglets** at Sibley Regional Park and Tilden Park Inspiration Point Trail, 10/19, 10/22.

On 11/19, SD saw **Western Bluebirds** at her Richmond home.

HH saw an **American Pipit** at Heather Farm on 10/14. This is very unusual there.

S&ST saw a flock of 50 **Cedar Waxwings** on the north side of Mount Diablo, 10/25.

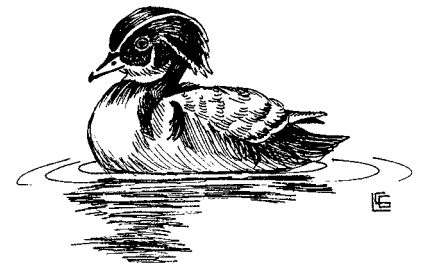
Tan-striped **White-throated Sparrows** were seen on 10/22, 10/27, 10/31, 11/6, 11/10, and 11/14 at Tilden Inspiration Point Trail, Bay Trail near Point Isabel, Upper San Leandro Reservoir in Moraga, and Heather Farm; NA, BB, HH, JH, RS, DW.

Pine Siskin visited AK's Richmond Feeder near Wildcat Canyon and EL's feeder in San Ramon. 11/2, 11/7. This may be the first year in a while to see many Pine Siskin visiting Niger seed feeders along with the goldfinches.

NA Noah Arthur, BB Bob Battagin, PD Sheila Dickie, PD Pat Doughty, HH Hugh Harvey, BH Bob Hislop, JH Jeff Hoppes, AK Alan Krakauer, EL Eugenia Larsen, HN Harold Newman, BP Bob Power, TR Ted Robertson, RS Rusty Scalf, S&ST Susan and Steve Taylor, MT Marilyn Trabert, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills.



Bev Walker, Membership Chair, stands with the Mount Diablo Audubon Society information display outside the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Pleasant Hill, during a recent membership drive. This photo was taken by Volunteer Coordinator Moses de los Reyes. Please contact Moses if you can participate in future at environmental events, such as at the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival at Mare Island in February.



East Contra Costa Bird Count @ December 14



Central Contra Costa Bird Count @ December 18

Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop » Continued from Page 10

Northern Harriers, and the less common Merlin, Peregrine Falcon or Golden Eagle may be spotted. In the open grassland of the Meadowlark Ridge Loop, you may find American Kestrel, Western Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike and Western Meadowlark.

Fernandez Ranch

This beautiful area just opened to the public in the summer of 2010. Cross the bridge over Rodeo Creek from the parking area to two trails that offer superb birding. The Black Phoebe Trail to the left borders a riparian woodland, then angles uphill as the Whipsnake Trail, giving access to an oak forest. Alternatively, the Windmill Trail to the right of the bridge borders grassland and a narrow riparian corridor before heading up into the oaks. Note that the Woodrat Trail connects the Windmill Trail to the Whipsnake Trail, so one can bird the area as a loop (just under 3 miles round trip). In the open grasslands, watch for Western Kingbird, Western Bluebird, Lark

Sparrow and Western Meadowlark. Raptors include Red-tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture and American Kestrel. During the breeding season, the oak forest and riparian habitats are bustling with Nuttall's Woodpecker, Western Scrub-Jay, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit and White-breasted Nuthatch. Also watch for California Quail, Wild Turkey, Band-tailed Pigeon, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, House Wren, Warbling Vireo, Lazuli Bunting and Black-headed Grosbeak. During migration, Western Tanager and various warblers, vireos and sparrows can be found along Rodeo Creek.



Birding the Carquinez Loop Trail was funded in part by the Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund, The San Francisco Foundation, PG&E, the Coastal Conservancy and an anonymous donor.

Request your Carquinez guide by visiting www.sfbbo.org. A few copies will be available at the December MDAS meeting.

Alvaro Jaramillo is senior Biologist at San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and Stephanie Ellis is Outreach and Communications Director.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats through science and outreach. Birds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health; they are highly visible and cost-effective to track, and are sensitive to environmental change. The Bird Observatory pays close attention to impacts on birds and their habitats and gathers crucial data specific to local bird populations. We also actively provide opportunities for people to be directly involved in the nature and science of the San Francisco Bay Area. Join us, volunteer, and support bird conservation science in the Bay Area. Visit our website at www.sfbbo.org.



The Suisun Song Sparrow is an endemic subspecies of the Carquinez Strait region.

Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo.

Cooper's Hawk ♦ *Accipiter cooperii*



In earlier days, a Cooper's Hawk had few friends, as it had a reputation that gave it the familiar name Chicken Hawk. These rap-

tors still have a bad name among our local birds, as a study of Cooper's Hawks in the Berkeley-Albany area found that three-quarters of their food consisted of Mourning Doves, American Robins, Rock Pigeons, Western Scrub-Jays, and House Sparrows. The study found the nesting density of this species to be 1.3 pairs per square mile—the highest ever recorded—and concluded that this was related to the plentiful supply of city-dwelling bird species.

Cooper's Hawks are so like Sharp-

shinned Hawks that they are difficult to identify with confidence. Cooper's tails are longer, relative to the bird's overall size, and it has a rounded tip compared to the Sharpie's square tail. There are other subtle differences, too. Females are larger than males, and a male Cooper's is about the same size as a female Sharp-shinned.

Charles Lucien Bonaparte named this species in honor of William Cooper (1797-1864), an American zoologist, ornithologist and paleontologist, who founded what was to become the New York Academy of Sciences. Cooper, a friend of John James Audubon and of Thomas Nuttall, had shot the original type specimen in New York State. The Cooper Ornithological Society was named for William's son, James.

How Harry Got His Dovekie

By Harry C. Adamson as told to Hugh B. Harvey

"I don't remember exactly where it was, but . . .", Harry started. In reality, it started sometime when he was young and started paying attention to birds. By 1934 he was keeping a list. He met Betty, his future wife, in 1941 while on a hike with the Berkeley Hiking Club. Within a year they were engaged.

When the United States was drawn into war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Harry entered the Army. After basic training near San Diego, he was retained to help train newer recruits. Eventually he was transferred to Ft. Bliss, Texas. While on a leave home, he married Betty on October 8, 1944. Shortly after, Harry found himself on the Queen Mary, headed for Scotland and then England.

By the spring of 1945, Harry was working his way across France with his anti-aircraft unit. He remembers sleeping on the floor of a bowling alley in Luxembourg. Harry made it to Germany by the end of the war, but he feels he was not sent home sooner because his lengthy time of service back home did not count as overseas time. At one point during his wait, he went deer hunting with a Thompson sub-machine gun. He says now that it was lucky for all involved that he did not see a deer.

A Liberty ship was waiting to bring him home from France by late fall. They made a brief stop in the south of England before beginning the 22-day voyage to New York. Mostly everyone was seasick, he says; they went on deck rarely. One day they made only 50 miles in the heavy seas, which looked like mountains next to the ship. The ship must have been off Nova Scotia, he thinks, when one day he did go outside. He was getting over his seasickness. He had some German army field glasses and looking over the side, he saw a bird on the water. "I knew what it was right away," he says. The sighting of a Dovekie was unmistakable. The bird was so close that he could see it flap its wings in the still heaving seas, without using the glasses. What an experience, to find an 8-inch bird on the stormy surface of the Atlantic Ocean while returning safely from the ravages of war in Europe! He also admits he saw his first Glaucous Gull out there.

The ship dropped one sick person in Boston, before transiting the Cape Cod Canal. Harry saw many Black Ducks during the transit. The entrance to New York

harbor was emotional, with the Statue of Liberty greeting the ship as it headed for the New Jersey shore. All the weight he had lost during the crossing was put back on during his stay in New Jersey. He eventually started flying home in a twin-engine C-47, the military equivalent of the famous DC-3. They had engine trouble in Akron, Ohio. Snow grounded the plane for three days in Dallas, and they hit an air pocket and abruptly dropped several hundred feet as they came over the Tehachapi Mountains toward the Central Valley, home and Betty. He thinks he might have arrived faster by train.

Many years later, Harry and Betty attended a dinner function in El Cerrito. Introducing himself to his dinner partners, he learned that one had been a German soldier during the war. This man had been on the eastern front pushing toward Leningrad. Harry told him he was lucky to be alive. His dinner partner said that they were all, Germans and Allies alike, just pawns.

Harry also remembers a story about Roger Tory Peterson and a Dovekie. A little research found the facts of the story. Seems the already famous man was invited to a Christmas Count with the Bronx County Bird Club. They were visiting an inland lake when a small bird was seen floating on the water. Though it did not seem to move much, all agreed that it was, indeed, a Dovekie. Peterson, admitting to having seen it move its head, thought it was sick and would not survive the night.

With the announcement of their find, the truth came out that a painted wooden carving had been placed in the pond, with the specific purpose of catching one of the members of the count team in a big lie. Little did the perpetrators know they would also catch others and the famous author. Even after claiming to have seen the carving move, Roger Tory Peterson, himself, later said, "Well, at least we identified the species correctly."

Birders in the United States and the world were lucky to have Roger Tory Peterson pave the way for them. Mount Diablo Audubon Society has been lucky to have Harry Curieux Adamson pave the way for us. The artistic skills, intelligence and humor of both have laid the foundations for the joys we feel as birders today. The more we know of their stories, the more we can appreciate our own discoveries and experiences.

NEWS
FROM
WILD BIRDS
UNLIMITED



HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, December 4

- ✓ Free Refreshments
- ✓ Free Gift with Each Purchase
- ✓ Free Gift for the Birds
- ✓ Prize Drawings

Backyard Birdfeeding

Winter is our favorite time of the year for backyard birdfeeding. White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Red-breasted Nuthatches will be visiting the feeders along with Lesser and American Goldfinches.

This Fall the weather has been so mild and dry that many birds did not migrate south from Oregon and Washington. Once we see a few winter storms the yard bird numbers will swell appreciably.

Each fall and winter we are always on the outlook for Pine Siskins. They often travel with goldfinches. Both species love thistle (nyjer) seed and readily come to bird feeders.

Watch for Townsends and Yellow-rumped Warblers on your suet feeders. Once they find this food you will see them every day at the feeders.

Birding Optics Seminar Saturday, December 11

Mike Williams, of WBU and a member of MDAS, will lead a FREE workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics" on Saturday, December 11 at 10:00 AM at Wild Birds Unlimited.

Have you seen the fantastic Vortex Vipers that close focus at under 6 feet? There will also be many other brands of binoculars and spotting scopes on display.

As seating is limited, please RSVP.



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303
Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Ornithology Opportunities

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 14-17. In its 15th year, this is the premier winter event on the Central Coast and features over 80 bay, ocean and land field trips and workshops. Special Family Day events are new this year. Featured speakers are wildlife biologist and artist John Muir Laws and raptor biologist Kara Hagedorn. www.morrobaybirdfestival.org.

Annual Snow Goose Festival, Butte County, January 27-30. Experience the sights and sounds of the Pacific Flyway migrating waterfowl at the Snow Goose Festival! A weekend full of fun, adventure and learning for all ages with field trips, presentations and workshops available to all. www.snowgoosefestival.org.

Galt Winter Bird Festival, January 29. The City of Galt is pleased to bring you the 4th annual Winter Bird Festival. Many migratory and resident birds call Galt their winter home. You will find the Winter Bird Festival to be exciting and an educational opportunity to celebrate the winter birds and habitat we call home. Come take a tour, and listen to song birds, take a photo tour, watch the Sandhill Cranes. <http://www.ci.galt.ca.us>.

The next **Great Backyard Bird Count** takes place Friday, February 18 through Monday, February 21, 2011. The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada, are already in the planning stages for the event and we'll be staying in

touch over the next few months to help you prepare for the biggest, best count ever!

The **2011 Audubon Assembly** will be held in San Diego in conjunction with the **San Diego Bird Festival** on March 3-6. It's the first Assembly in Southern California and includes trips, events and workshops for the entire family. Buy an ASSEMBLY PASS (\$125) and get free admission to all Assembly events and workshops including a banquet with seabird expert Peter Harrison and a Saturday night private party to meet new Audubon President David Yarnold. For online brochure: www.sandiegoaudubon.org/2011%20Brochure.pdf

Travel with Golden Gate Audubon offers two fabulous spring trips. Honduras, March 19-26, and Big Bend and the Texas Hill Country, April 8-17. For information contact Chris Bard, chrisbard@earthlink.net, call 510-522-5699, or visit the webpage, www.goldengateaudubon.org/field-trips/travel-with-golden-gate-audubon/

Don't miss the **2011 Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival!** Hold April 29-May 2 for the 2011 Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival.

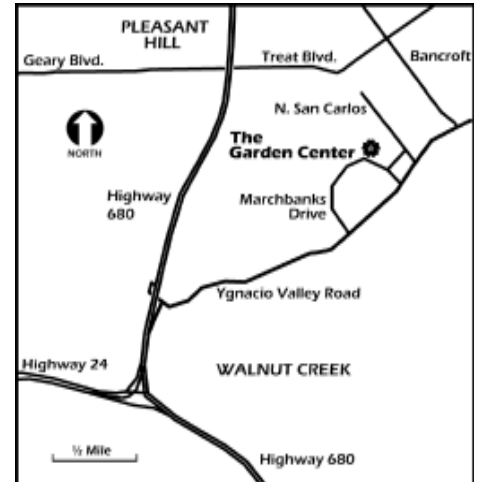
Did you attend the Festival last April? If so, you know about the top guides, fabulous bird walks, outstanding pelagic trip to Cordell Bank, and tremendous camaraderie experienced by the 500 people who attended. Festival attendees took part in over 50 walks and outings, and saw 200 species of birds (not to mention dozens of mammals, butterflies, and marine mammals!) in Western Marin and Sonoma Counties. www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org.

For a large and growing number of people, birds are the strongest bond with the living world of nature.

Alexander F. Skutch

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

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
 Vice President: Mike Williams, 798-0303
 Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929
 Board Secretary: Diana Granados
 Corresponding Secretary: Barbara Vaughn
 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, 796-0303
 Webmaster: Betts Sanderson
 Chapter Development: Paul Schorr, 757-5107
 Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
 Breeding Bird Atlas Marketing: Ann McGregor, 968-1677
 Member-at-Large: Brian Murphy, 937-8835
 Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Your membership dues are tax deductible.
 I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.
 For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society.

Please send The Quail by: US mail E-mail _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

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

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



Western Bluebird. Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo

Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail

By Alvaro Jaramillo and Stephanie Ellis

In the Bay Area, the Carquinez Strait is unique. It is an 8-mile channel that connects the marine environment of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays to the Suisun Bay and the Sacramento River Delta. The strait offers an aquatic corridor for birds moving to and from the Central Valley and the Bay or coast. On the west side of the strait it is cooler and moister, while it is drier and warmer inland on the east side. This change in microclimate influences the distribution of plants, bugs, and in turn, birds. The Bay Area's two major regional trails, the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the San Francisco Bay Trail, converge at the Carquinez Strait creating a 50-mile Carquinez Loop Trail. Because of the variety of habitats found in this region, the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop trail offers many great birding opportunities.

The *Birding the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail* guide is the result of a



Black-bellied Plover.

Photo by Alvaro Jaramillo

collaboration of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the San Francisco Bay Trail. This lovely guide features a full-color map, site descriptions and short species lists for nine sites along the trail. Two of the highlighted areas in the guide include the Waterbird Regional Preserve and Fernandez Ranch.

Waterbird Regional Preserve

The Waterbird Regional Preserve is most commonly known as McNabney Marsh by birders to commemorate the tireless efforts of Al McNabney in the preservation of this important freshwater marsh. You would not

know it by looking at this very productive 100-acre wetland today that in 1988 a huge oil spill filled this marsh with crude. Much work in restoration efforts to bring back the marsh and protect it brought success in returning the marsh to the birds and wildlife. The size of the marsh, and the mix of open water, as well as dense emergent vegetation make it a breeding area for various waterfowl such as Canada Geese, Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail, and shorebirds such as Black-necked Stilt and American Avocet, as well as marsh-loving species like the American Coot, Common Moorhen, Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe and even American Bittern. During migration, the numbers and diversity of waterfowl increase, with American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye occurring at this time. Watch the mud at the edge of the marsh for migrating shorebirds. Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater Yellowlegs, Least and Western Sandpiper, and Dunlin are common. Great-tailed Grackles have bred in the marsh alongside Red-winged Blackbirds.

Continued on Page 7