



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

[www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php)

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December 2013/January 2014

## Eye on the Wild

✦ Suzi Eszterhas

Thursday, December 5

Award-winning wildlife conservation photographer Suzi Eszterhas is one of the few women in her competitive, adventure-filled industry. She specializes in documenting the family life of endangered species. Based in California, Eszterhas spends several months each year in the field, photographing animals from the poles to the tropics. She is well known for her unprecedented work with newborns, including lions, cheetahs, tigers, gorillas, orangutans, penguins, bears, and sea otters.



Much of her work has been published in Smithsonian, Ranger Rick, National Geographic Kids, BBC Wildlife, and TIME magazines, as well as on Good Morning America and TODAY online. She is a fellow of the prestigious International League of Conservation Photographers and leads photography tours around the world.

Eszterhas is also the author of the new *Eye on the Wild* series, six books for children featuring stunning photographs and informative text. Each book follows one species, from birth to adulthood, through the lens of Suzi's camera. Visit [www.suzieszterhas.com](http://www.suzieszterhas.com) to learn more.

At the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, Eszterhas will share memorable anecdotes, technical expertise, and ridiculously cute images from her work photographing animal families in their wild habitats. Hear how she composes photos of tiger dens while riding on elephant-back in India, how she keeps herself safe while working with grizzly bears, how the animals respond to her and her camera, and how wildlife photography can help raise awareness of the problems facing wildlife today.

## Birders: The Central Park Effect

Thursday, January 2

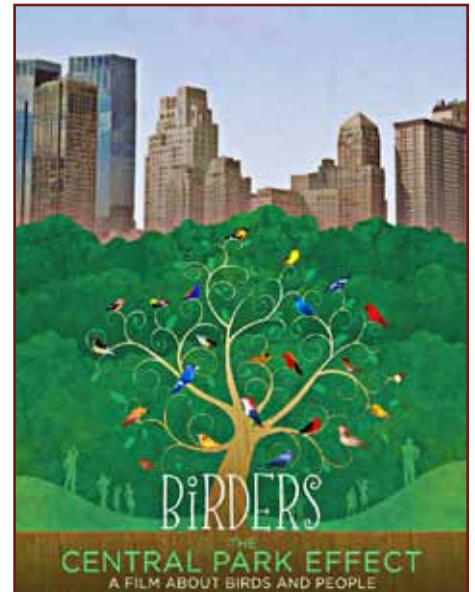
*Birders: The Central Park Effect* reveals the extraordinary array of wild birds who grace Manhattan's celebrated patch of green and the equally colorful, full-of-attitude New Yorkers who schedule their lives around the rhythms of migration.

Acclaimed author Jonathan Franzen, an idiosyncratic trombone technician, a charming fashion-averse teenager, and a bird-tour leader who's recorded every sighting she's made since the 1940s are among the film's cast of characters.

Featuring spectacular wildlife footage capturing the changing seasons, the film reveals that Central Park acts as

a magnet for the millions and millions of birds migrating along the Eastern Seaboard twice every year. Desperate for a rest-stop, the tiny birds funnel in to this oasis of nature amid a sea of steel and concrete—a phenomenon known as the "Central Park Effect."

Filmmaker Jeffrey Kimball's lyrical film transports the viewer to a dazzling world that goes all but unnoticed by most of the 38 million who people America's most famous park each year.



### BIRDING INFORMATION

At December's meeting, Brian Murphy will talk about "Adventures of Winged Cats", lessons learned from years of installing and cleaning Barn Owl nest boxes. He will discuss the human comedy of trying to build a better Barn Owl box rather than just following a plan that works for dealing with gopher, mice and rat issues.

In January compilers Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern will present our annual update of the Contra Costa County and the East County Christmas Bird Counts.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

## President's Corner By Jimm Edgar

The most recent issue of *Audubon* magazine had a very interesting story about turkeys. It was the cover article and talked mostly about turkeys in the south and east. There was a lot about the history of turkeys and a little bit about the spread to the west which was done mostly by wildlife agencies trapping them and moving them to suitable habitat in the west.



The article indicated that their numbers are going down in the south and east and studies are under way to see why. It did not talk about numbers in the west which all of us would probably agree are growing. I can remember the first wild turkey I saw. It was on a chapter field trip to Mines Road south of Livermore. We saw this single turkey over a half mile down a canyon and when it realized we were watching it took off and disappeared; far different than turkeys today. I took the photo about a week ago in our front yard. We live in the Oakland hills just below Highway 13. It is a neighborhood with just houses. There is really no open space nearby. These turkeys just meandered from yard to yard looking for something. Pretty interesting.

Our last general meeting had a program by Judy Irving on her upcoming movie called *Pelican Dreams*. It was absolutely fascinating. Some amazing film footage and a very compelling story about these birds. The movie is scheduled to be out within the year. You will not want to miss it.

Our newly formed Young Birder's Club continues to grow. Our last field trip on November 9 had about 15 kids and some parents. Logan Kahle, who just turned 16, is our unofficial leader. We have, of course, chapter advisors, but we want this club to be really about the kids. It is a fun thing to watch and see it grow.

I mentioned last month in this column that Bill Chilson has taken on the project to update Jean Richmond's book *Birding Northern California*. It was first published in 1985. It has 72 locations covered in the book and, of course, much has changed in terms of roads, directions, birding quality, etc. It needs to be redone. We hope maybe 15-20 of you would be willing to take an area covered and visit it to see what needs to be changed. We anticipate this to take a couple of years, but it will be worth it. Please let me know if you can help.

Lastly, just a word on our upcoming Christmas bird counts. There is information in this issue about dates and other details. I hope you can help out.

## Christmas Bird Counts

It's time to mark your calendar and sign up for Mount Diablo Audubon's 2013 Christmas Bird Counts: Central County on Saturday, December 21, and East County on Tuesday, December 17. The species counts are high: Central County usually reports 150, and East County 140. And if you're new to the count, you can e-mail [ag70@value.net](mailto:ag70@value.net) to request sign-up forms. All birders, no matter what their experience level, are welcome. You do not need to be a member of Mount Diablo Audubon, and participation is free.

If you live within one of the count circles, you can still help by spending a few hours looking for birds at your backyard feeders. You can search for birds from dawn to dusk—or longer if you look for owls. Perhaps you know of a Barn Owl that roosts in a palm tree in your neighborhood, or maybe a White-throated Sparrow frequents your yard. You can find maps of the count circles at [http://www.diabloaudubon.com/newsletter/Quail\\_DecJan\\_1011.pdf](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/newsletter/Quail_DecJan_1011.pdf). Part of the fun is the camaraderie of dinner at day's end. Find out which group found the bird

## Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, December 5**, 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,\* raffle

8:05 PM **Suzi Eszterhas**

*Please remember to bring a cup.*

Thursday, January 2:

Birders: The Central Park Effect

## Welcome New Members

Ichien Chen	Martinez
Ronald Culmer	Dublin
Catherine Dailey	Walnut Creek
Lauren Koontzy	Martinez
Judy Quinlan	Concord
Kathleen Usher	Brentwood

**Q** This bird builds a nest consisting of a large globe with a tunnel for an opening. The nest, lined with downy feathers, is used for breeding in the spring and for shelter during cold nights throughout the year.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 8 to learn more.

ACCENRSTUW

of the day, learn what species were missed, check out where rare birds were seen, relish the day's field experiences.

Co-compilers Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern invite you to join them and 50,000 other observers across the nation who will participate in this, the 114th annual CBC.

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# Observations By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to [mbstern2@yahoo.com](mailto:mbstern2@yahoo.com) or (925) 284-5980 or send to [EBB Sightings@yahoo.com](mailto:EBB Sightings@yahoo.com). If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

Most of the wintering birds have returned a while ago and not many rarities are still in migration.

Five **Brant** were seen via a kayak at Brooks Island 10/19. CB.

Up to 13 **Wood Ducks** were seen at the bridge near the Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga on a Golden Gate Field Trip November 8. BL and MOS.

AL saw a **Redhead** at the Clifton Court Forebay in East county 10/20. There was one at Mallard Reservoir in the Point Chicago area 10/27, LK, TF, and 11/2, CS. Redheads have become uncommon in the Bay Area the last few years.

A single **Black Scoter** was seen 10/14, JH, and 11/6, AL, around the Meeker Slough, Richmond area.

A **Hooded Merganser** was at Marsh Creek Reservoir in Brentwood 11/7. A pair was at Valle Vista Staging Area bridge 11/8. BL and MOS.

P&NS saw 10 **Long-billed Curlews** in a grassy area of Brentwood 10/28.

A **Merlin** was at Mitchell Canyon 10/27. LK, TF. Another was along the Contra Costa Canal Trail 10/31. HH.

A **Prairie Falcon** was also at Mitchell Canyon 10/27. LK, TF.

An unusual **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline in Point Richmond 10/27. KF.

**Pacific Wrens** were at the Big Break Trail near the Iron House Sanitary District 11/6. P&NS. JS saw them near Vollmer Peak in Tilden RP. 11/7.

**Golden-crowned Kinglets** were at Vollmer Peak 10/9, HN; 10/23, JB; and 11/7, JS.

A **Mountain Bluebird** was along Walnut Boulevard entrance road to Los Vaqueros Reservoir 11/2. MM, EC.

AF, JE, and ST, saw a **Townsend's Solitaire** at Morgan Territory RP 10/19. One was at the Tilden Botanic Garden 10/25. PB.

A **Blackburnian Warbler** was seen and photographed 10/25 at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline. BJM.

DW saw a **Clay-colored Sparrow** 10/20 at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch.

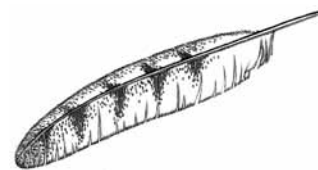
**White-throated Sparrows** came to the yards of JR in Alamo 10/20 and 10/27, EM in Moraga 10/24, and EL in San Ramon 11/6.

DH saw a **Pink-sided Junco** 11/1 in Tilden park and JR had a **Slate-colored Junco** in her Alamo yard 10/27.

A **Western Tanager** was at her Alamo yard 10/16. JR.

LK heard a fly-over **Lawrence's Goldfinch** 10/27 at Mitchell Canyon in Mount Diablo State Park.

CB Chris Bard, JB John Blakelock, PB Paul Brenner, EC Ethan Chickering, JE Janet Ellis, TF Tracy Farrington, AF Anthony Fisher, KF Kathy Francone, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Doug Henderson, JH Jeff Hoppes, LK Logan Kahle, EL Eugenia Larson, BL Bob Lewis, AL Albert Linkowski, MM Mike Marchiano, BJM BJ Matzen, EM Ellis Myers, HN Harold Newman, JR Jean Richmond, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, JS Judi Sierra, CS Catherine Spaulding, ST Steve Tracy, DW Denise Wight, MOS, many observers.



## Cheers for Our Volunteers

MDAS volunteers Diane Malucelli and Tracy Farrington were on hand to introduce Mt. Diablo Audubon's varied conservation and environmental activities to participants at the Activity Fair held at Ygnacio Valley Library Branch of Contra Costa County Library on Saturday, October 26. Librarian David Thomas conducted the unique venue for adults 45-54 and others interested in discovering and joining new local community activities, which included representatives from the Contra Costa Hills Hiking Club, Contra Costa Historical Society, Diablo Weavers, East Bay Regional Park District, Elderhostel/Road Scholar, Ruth Bancroft Garden, Sierra Club, Walnut Creek Civic Arts and Yoga Nature Adventures.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society is an organization staffed only by member volunteers, and each of these indispens-

able people merits our sincere appreciation. Do not forget to thank those of our hospitality crew and those who bring refreshments; our field trip leaders; those who work with youth in our No Child Left Inside program and in other ways. Others, behind the scenes, who spend countless hours for the benefit of our group and for the birds and wildlife, deserve our thanks as well.

Are you looking for a way to help? Please consider offering just a few hours over the course of the year to coordinate our outreach events at environmental fairs.



TRACEY FARRINGTON PHOTO.

The next opportunities will be the Flyway Festival at Mare Island in February, Earth Day at John Muir NHS in April, Heritage Day in June. Contact our Volunteer Coordinator Pro Tem Bev Walker at 925-952-9925 or [beewalk@comcast.net](mailto:beewalk@comcast.net).

## ② Saturday/Sunday, December 7-8 Sacramento Refuges

Leader: Terry Colborn, tlcgdc@aol.com or (530) 758-0689.

This weekend field trip will include visits to several wonderful wildlife refuges in the Sacramento Valley. Collectively these sanctuaries are home to tens of thousands of wintering ducks, geese and swans. Featured on this trip will be visits to Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, followed by Colusa National Wildlife Refuge and Gray Lodge Wildlife Area on Sunday. Many other locations will be visited. This is a very popular trip, and space is limited. Call the leader to reserve your spot, carpooling is essential. This is a great trip for beginners and seasoned birders alike. There are several motels in Williams; early room reservations are recommended. Participants may opt to arrive on Friday night for the 7:00 AM start time on Saturday.

Bald Eagle,  
Gray Lodge



ELLIS MYERS PHOTO.

## December

7-8	Saturday/Sunday	Sacramento Refuges
12	Thursday	Niles Area
14	Saturday	Solano County Raptors
17	Tuesday	Christmas Count/East Contra Costa
21	Saturday	Christmas Count/Central Contra Costa

## January

11	Saturday	Putah Creek
25	Saturday	Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park
30	Thursday	Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh—High Tide

## February

1	Saturday	Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
13	Thursday	Grizzly Island
15-16	Saturday/Sunday	Los Banos/Panoche Valley
26	Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park

## ② Thursday, December 12 Niles Area

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 7 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..

## Come birding with us!

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders, but please do leave your dogs at home. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php). Phone area codes are 925 unless specified otherwise. 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 +, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Our Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is a conservation organization. As such, we encourage members to consider meeting at the carpool point to pick up or ride with others. It is important that given the cost of gasoline, those who ride with others offer to pay some of this cost. Don't forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees on some of our longer trips. Carpool locations: **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. **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **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.

## ① Saturday, December 14

### Southeast Solano County Raptors and More

Leader: Gary Fregien, (916) 708-0636.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:15 AM. Meet the leader at 8 AM at Suisun City McDonald's, Hwy. 12 and Sunset Avenue. Take I-680 north, cross bridge to Benicia (toll) and merge to I-80 east at Cordelia. Then take Hwy. 12 east toward Rio Vista for approximately 4 miles to Sunset Avenue where you will make a left turn at the signal light into the shopping center. The McDonald's is on the right. We will bird east on Hwy. 12 and Creed Road to the vicinity of Hwy. 113 and Robinson Road, possibly including Jepson Prairie. We will make several stops looking for migrating waterfowl, passerines and winter raptors, especially along Flannery and McCormack Roads in search of the elusive Mountain Plover. From there, given time, we may travel to the Bird's Landing area, where we should see Tricolored Blackbirds among other passerines, and possibly to Montezuma Slough for waterfowl. Plan to spend 3-4 hours birding, plus driving time getting there and back. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for seasonal conditions. Bring along hand-held radios, food and water. Car pooling is strongly advised due to limited access at stops and the distance traveled. Please call the leader if you plan to carpool from Sun Valley; he is driving from Sacramento to meet us in Suisun City.

**① Saturday, January 11  
Putah Creek**

Leader: Fred Safier, (925) 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.

**② Saturday, January 25  
Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park**

Leader: Eugenia Larson, (925) 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. Shollenberger 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. Ellis Creek is just south of the PRBO offices. All four sites are good for wintering waders, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors. Bring lunch and a beverage.



Las Gallinas

**① Thursday, January 30  
Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh**

Leader: Sandy Ritchie, (925) 685-8048.

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 at Children's Fairyland (entry fee), and follow road around to parking lot entrance on right between boathouse and aviary. Birding through the many ducks and gulls, we may find a Tufted Duck, a bird seen almost annually. We will then drive to Arrowhead Marsh for the high tide around 11 AM; the rising tide should flush out rails. The area is also good for shorebirds and often loons are on the estuary. A visit to Garretson Point will finish our trip. Bring lunch and drinks.

## Trip Reports

**Berkeley–Emeryville Shoreline, October 16.** Six members enjoyed a warm fall day along the Berkeley–Emeryville waterfront. The highlight was seeing a Pelagic Cormorant close in just off the Berkeley Shoreline. Shorebirds were scarce as were the hoped for flocks of fall warblers with only one Townsend's and numerous Yellow-rumps around. We did not locate the Eurasian Wigeon among the flock of American Wigeons seen the previous day behind the Sea Breeze Market at the foot of University Avenue in Berkeley. Forty-one species were seen plus three more heard (Belted Kingfisher, American Robin, and Nuttall's Woodpecker) for a total of 44.

*Eugenia Larson*



BETH BRANTHAVER PHOTO.

**Abbott's Lagoon, October 26.** This year's trip to Abbotts Lagoon at Point Reyes turned out cool and foggy for the nine trip participants; temperatures were in the 50s and only rose to the low 60s in the afternoon as the sun emerged. Shortly after starting out from the trailhead we caught up with a very memorable sight, a fly-over of a Ferruginous Hawk being constantly harassed by several Common Ravens. On the way to the bridge we encountered the usual cast of suspects, White-crowned, Song and Savannah Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Marsh Wrens and a White-tailed Kite. A group of Western Bluebirds provided some color contrast amidst the drab green and brown tones of the local brush. Very few migratory ducks appeared to have arrived as compared with previous years; Northern Shoveler and Green-winged Teal were seen on the lagoon below the bridge. Several scaup sp. were found on the upper lagoon but the usual river otters appeared absent. At the lower lagoon, Dunlin, Least Sandpipers, Eared Grebes and Surf Scoters were well represented; a group of 15 American White Pelicans preening was a nice surprise. On the beach as in past years we were fortunate to find several Snowy Plovers. Lunch was spent among the dunes where we found our usual log seating. On tallying our list for the day, we found we had recorded 52 species.

*David Hutton*

**Young Birders Club, November 9.** The field trip to Mallard Reservoir and Waterbird Regional Park had a sizable turnout of kids, as well as many good birds to show them. Highlights included Redhead, Golden Eagle, Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover and Dunlin at Mallard Reservoir. Waterbird Regional Shoreline was not quite so productive. Still we found some interesting birds, despite the low numbers of ducks. Highlights included: Horned Grebe, Say's Phoebe, and seven Great-tailed Grackles. Another great day to be out birding in Contra Costa County.

*Logan Kahle*

# Mark Catesby

» Continued from Page 8



The largest white-bill'd Wood-pecker; The Willow-Oak.

and often lore associated with the species, such as the uses for the trees and shrubs. One such comment is this, about the "largest

white-bill Wood-Pecker": *The Bills of these Birds are much valued by the Canada Indians, who make Coronets of 'em for their Princes and great warriors, by fixing them round a Wreath, with their points outward. The Northern Indians, having none of these Birds in their cold country, purchase them of the Southern People at the price of two, and sometimes three Buck-skins a Bill.* He released the etchings in 20-plate installments for his subscribers, many from society's elite. He produced 180 copies, which meant that close to 40,000 prints had to be hand-colored. Most of this work he did alone, and it became his life's work for nearly 20 years.

Catesby's splendid drawings were the first to show the birds and animals artistically framed by their natural settings, a style followed by Alexander Wilson and later by John James Audubon. Catesby was also the first to attempt to establish scientific names based on generic relationships. He observed and painted some species that none of us will ever see alive—the now extinct Carolina Parakeet, Passenger Pigeon,

and Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Catesby was a fellow of the Royal Society, where he contributed a paper on "Birds of Passage" (1747) in which he outlined his discovery that some birds migrate. At the time, it was widely accepted that many "summer" birds spent the winter hibernating in the trunks of dead trees. Even as late as 1878 Elliott Coues accepted as truth the hibernation of swallows. The ever-observant Catesby was the first person to write of habitat destruction as a factor in the decline of North American birds.

Catesby died in 1749. Although no portrait of him is known to exist, he is remembered in the names of the American bullfrog, *Rana catesbeiana*, and the southern red lily, *Lilium catesbaei*. Catesby's original watercolors for the *Natural History* were purchased by George III in 1768.

Catesby's knowledge of natural history, his artistic talent, and his ability as an etcher and publisher were all self-taught. His accomplishments are worthy of admiration.

## Cactus Wren ♦ *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*

**a**

Cactus Wrens are birds of the dry deserts, and so are not seen in Northern California. It is said that the thornier the mesquite and the sharper the cholla, the more likely you are to meet this delightful bird. Their numbers are declining, owing to loss of habitat, but

they have recently been reported in Joshua Tree National Park, Salton Sea, and Anza-Borrego. The state bird of Arizona—the Cactus Wren pictured was found south of Tucson.



ELLIS MYERS PHOTO.

They are swift runners, suggestive of a thrasher. Like thrashers, they forage on the ground, poking under leaves for spiders or insects. They also will dine on beetles, grasshoppers and the fruit of the prickly pear. This food, and the desert insects, provide all the water they need—they do not frequent birdbaths or other water sources.

The nests that the male builds of grasses and other plant material are the size and shape of a football with an opening at one end. They usually place it in cholla. The thorns on these plants provide some protection against predators. Brilliant birds!

## Good News for Wrentits



Wrentits are said to be the most sedentary species in America, the young never dispersing more than a quarter-mile from where they were bred. They are found only from Oregon to Baja California. Wrentits don't migrate.

Early on, the Wrentit was placed as the only member of the *Chamaeidae* family. Later, they were classified as Old-World Flycatchers, *Muscicapidae*; and until recently as Old-World Babblers, *Timaliidae*. But in 2010, the American Ornithological Union assigned the Wrentit to yet another family of birds, the *Sylviidae*, Old-World Warblers.

Fortunately for the Wrentit, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act specifically names the *Sylviidae* family for protection. The family *Timaliidae*, which the Wrentits used to belong to, is not protected under the law. So on November 1, in a ruling published in the Federal Register, US Fish & Wildlife Service makes clear that it is illegal to hunt, pursue, capture, sell, or kill Wrentits, or to possess their eggs, feathers and body parts, without a waiver from USFWS.

Developers will now have one more wildlife species to consider, and one more set of permits to get before they can convert chaparral to shopping malls.

# Birds Don't Take Holidays

By Mike Eliot

Feeding your backyard birds becomes even more important as natural food sources dry up and cold weather sets in. High energy seeds like nyjer, sunflower and chopped nuts will be readily eaten. Suets and bark butter provide extra calories for those cold nights and will attract many varieties of birds such as woodpeckers, titmice, nuthatches, and jays. Providing several options gives you the best chances of seeing different kinds of birds.

Winter brings more and different birds to feeders in this area. White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches are arriving. Large numbers of American and Lesser Goldfinches are being seen at thistle feeders. Last year we had an irruption of Pine Siskins, so you may see them along with the goldfinches. Mourning and Eurasian Collared Doves have also increased in numbers this fall and are doing a good job of cleaning under and around seed feeders. They prefer safflower seed and white millet.



TOWNSEND'S WARBLER.

Townsend's and Yellow-rumped Warblers are a sure sign of winter. If you feed suet and they find this food, you may see them every day. They are more shy about coming to feeders than finches, so be patient.

While you are at it, make sure to keep water sources clean and available. Birds need to keep their feathers extra clean to help provide the proper insulation against cold. During our current drought, they may also have a harder time finding natural drinking water.

In addition, make sure to clean feeders often. Damp nights and colder weather increase the chances of mold forming. Check the bottoms of feeders for caking of food or shells with a white or gray coating. You can also smell many kinds of mold.

Also, now is a good time to take down nesting boxes and clean them with a mild solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water, then rinse and let dry before putting back up.

# Mount Diablo Audubon Society

*Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.*

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Quail Editor



*Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.*

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Passenger Pigeon and Red Oak. Mark Catesby.

## Mark Catesby Naturalist • Illustrator • Explorer

The first naturalists of the New World were Thomas Hariot and John White, of the short-lived Roanoke Island settlement. On returning to England, Hariot published *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* in 1590, recording the Wild Turkey and eighty-five other birds as well as opossum, skunk and other mammals. White painted such birds as the Bald Eagle, Red-winged Blackbird and Red-headed Woodpecker. More than a hundred years passed before John Lawson, in 1708, published *A New Voyage to Carolina*, in which he listed over a hundred species. Lawson might have become more noted had he not been burned at the stake by Tuscarora Indians in 1711.

A luckier explorer was Mark Catesby. Born in Sudbury, England in 1683 to a prominent family, he had an "early Inclination ... to search after Plants, and other productions of Nature." His sister Elizabeth had married—without her parents consent—

Dr. William Cocke. In 1710 Dr. Cocke became the personal physician to the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia Colony, Alexander Spotswood. In 1712 Mark Catesby accompanied his sister to the New World to join him in Williamsburg. Fascinated by the flora and fauna Mark found in the colonies, he stayed for seven years. Following a return to England, Catesby negotiated with the Royal Society of London (chaired by Sir Isaac Newton) for an expedition of discovery. He arrived in South Carolina in 1722 and explored the colonial wilderness on foot and horseback, at times with Native Americans as guides, for five years taking notes, making drawings, and collecting specimens. He visited Puerto Rico and Hispaniola, and spent some months in the Bahamas before returning to London.

Catesby etched his drawings onto copper plates. He organized 220 etchings into his two-volume masterpiece, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and The Ba-*



The Bull Frog; Helleborine: The Lady's Slipper of Pensilvania. [*Rana catesbeiana*]

*hama Islands*. The first volume featured birds and the plants associated with them; the second included mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

To prepare the illustrations for publication, Catesby even learned to etch his own copper plates, producing 220 plates himself to be hand colored. For each of the plates Catesby wrote short descriptions, including careful observations on habitat,

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