



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 51, Number 4

December 2005 / January 2006

Galapagos Islands with Darrell Lee

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS are a world treasure. Sadly, they are threatened by the arrival of alien plant and animal species and by overfishing, development, and settlement on four of the islands.

Join us on December 1 as Darrell Lee from the Napa-Solano Audubon Society shares his 1995 trip to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands as well as reasons for concern about the health of the Islands. His 10-day boat trip provided opportunities to view Darwin's Finches and Flightless Cormorants as well as a unique experience snorkeling



Blue-footed Boobies.

National Geographic Society

Oak woodlands. Nancy Wenninger photo

with Galapagos Penguins and Green Sea Turtles. He sandwiched these experiences between trips to Cuenca and the colorful native marketplaces in the Andes above Quito. Darrell will explain why he recommends a 10-day boat trip to the Galapagos

Islands over the standard 7-day trip. In addition, he will tell us why the Nazca Booby is an obligatory fratricidal serial killer, while its Blue-footed cousin is a pacifist.

Darrell Lee is an avid birder and has been so since he was eleven years old. He is past-president of the Napa-Solano Audubon Society and a former Conservation Committee chair of the Anchorage Audubon Society. As of the first

Continued on page 2

January: Oak Woodlands



BEGINNING in January of 2006, Mount Diablo Audubon Society will sponsor a number of educational outreach and conservation activities, which will focus on our oak woodland habitat and the abundant wildlife that it supports.

On January 5, Glenn Keator will kick-off our project with a talk focusing on the importance of local oak woodlands and the oaks that live in them. He will focus on the interactions between oak

Continued on page 2

Meeting Schedule

The December meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, December 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek.

The January meeting will be **Thursday, January 5**.

6:30 PM Doors open

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Social time, refreshments*, door prize

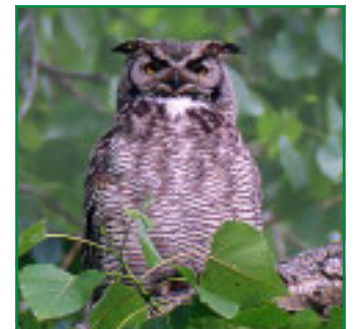
8:05 PM Program

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Birding Information

Hark, the Great Horned Owl Sings ~ In November, as the loss of light causes us humans to curl up by the fire and hibernate, the Great Horned Owl turns to thoughts of love, housekeeping, and reproduction. You may have heard them. The hooting has begun. Diana Granados of Native Bird Connections will share details of the mating and nesting activities of the Great Horned Owl, a very early and noisy breeder.

January: Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern will present their annual Christmas Bird Count countdown. Join us at 7:00 for tales of the adventures of the intrepid participants in the Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Count and the East County Bird Count. It is always fun.



Welcome New Members

Barbara Hayes	Concord
Sherry Laird	Martinez
Kevin Martin and family	Pittsburg
Margo Watson	Walnut Creek
Mark and Judy Williams	Walnut Creek
Beth Witrogen	Antioch

Oak Woodland *Continued from page 1*
species and the role of each species within these woodlands.

Of the world's 400 or more species of oaks, over 20 call California home. Despite this relatively small number of species, oaks play a major role in many of our local ecosystems including mixed-evergreen forest, oak woodland, and foothill woodland. Oaks also grow in areas that range from near sea level to over 8,000 feet in elevation. They live in high deserts, mountains, and foothills. Our local oaks are keystone species in their habitats—organisms of vital importance to a whole chain of other organisms that include bacteria, fungi, insects, mammals, birds, and other plants.

Glenn Keator received his PhD in Botany from the University of California at Berkeley. He is a free-lance teacher, writer, and botanist specializing in California natives and their uses in gardens. He has taught courses and led field trips on native plants for the California Academy of Sciences, the Yosemite Association, Golden Gate Park's Strybing Arboretum, and many other arboreta and nature centers around the country. His book entitled "The Life of an Oak: An Intimate Portrait", published by Heyday Books, has received glowing reviews both as a scholarly natural history and as a beautiful work of art. Glenn has written Nature Study Guides on ferns, Sierra wild flowers, Pacific Coast berries, and plants of the East Bay Parks. His books include "The Complete Garden Guide to the Native Perennials of California" and his latest is "Introduction to the Trees of the San Francisco Bay Region".

President's Letter

Dear Audubon Supporter,

Your Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is issuing its once-a-year request for support. We only ask once each year so we can minimize the time and resources we spend fundraising. For the rest of the year we can concentrate on the things we all love: leading bird walks, helping set up homes for bluebirds and other needy nesters, teaching children about the environment, helping preserve or restoring our local creeks, wetlands and open space for wildlife and people.

For 53 years, our Chapter has contributed to education, activities and policies important to our community's health. To remain strong and healthy, our Contra Costa community must include wildlife diversity and protect natural places for reflection, rejuvenation, and as a heritage for future generations.

Please help us to fund our local programs and to increase the number of people we educate and serve. The continued success of these fine programs is assured by your support and donations. Important community programs and goals in 2005-2006 fiscal year include:

- Further enhancement of the native vegetation at McNabney Marsh at Waterbird Park in partnership with Mt. View Sanitary District and East Bay Regional Park District.

- Establish a bird blind/viewing platform.

- Begin monthly bird walks in the spring for families at McNabney Marsh and Waterbird Park.

- Continued participation in restoration projects in Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek and in Martinez.

- Continued participation in the Quail Restoration Project in Walnut Creek.

- Expand our environmental outreach and activities.

- Further development of MDAS website (www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php) for education, communication, and membership growth.

- Continued expansion of our school-based educational programs and outreach.

- Forty five field trips, ten monthly meetings and ten issues of The Quail.

- Two Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Counts and the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas compilation and pre-publication planning (coming soon!).

You will be receiving additional information in the mail. You can make your donation on your credit card on our website www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php, by clicking on the button "Make A Difference" on the left side of the screen and filling in the information. Or, you can mail in your donation in the envelope you will receive.

For more information about these and our many other programs, please check our web site or contact me at (925) 798-0303 or wbuphca@sbcglobal.net.

Thank you for your support and good birding,

Mike Williams, MDAS President

You Can Help

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society runs totally on volunteer power. Help us keep it running smoothly by adding your power too!

One opportunity that is not only helpful but fun is to greet visitors at the MDAS booth at the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival in January. [See Page 7] Spend two hours at our table, then avail yourselves of one of the unique field trips offered.

To volunteer for this, or another task, call Shirley Ellis, Volunteer Coordinator, at 938-3703.

Your donation to Mt. Diablo Audubon Society is an investment in the future of native birds, wildlife, and the environment of Contra Costa County.

I'll Help Make a Difference

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

Amount enclosed: _____

In honor of: In memory of:

Make checks payable to MDAS.
Mail to: Ann McGregor, Membership
400 Oneida Court, Danville, CA 94526

Field Trip Schedule

By Elizabeth Dickey

McNabney Marsh Update

Another delay kept the water from filling the marsh until around November 23. CalTRANS was working on a culvert under the off ramp to the frontage road, and they need a dry area to work from.

The Chevron pipeline is still under discussion. We should be able to report a resolution of the matter in the next issue.

Mountain View Sanitary, who runs the marsh, is putting in for a grant from the county Fish and Wildlife Committee to cover the cost of a proposed viewing platform in the southwest area of the marsh. The grant was denied last year, so keep your fingers crossed for success this year. Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be listed as a cosigner and sponsor on the grant request.

Bob Wisecarver

December

3 Saturday Benicia State Park
7 Wednesday Alameda Creek
8 Thursday Hidden Lakes

Audubon Christmas Bird Counts

17 Sunday Central County CBC
21 Wednesday East County CBC

January

4 Wednesday San Pablo Creek
7 Saturday Putah Creek
11 Wednesday Sunol
19 Thursday Markham Arboretum
21 Saturday Santa Cruz
26 Thursday Thornton

Field trips are open to members and non-members, whether beginners or masters. Weather may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php.

Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths; Category 2: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain; Category 3: Extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool locations: Sun Valley—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. La Gonda—From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto La Gonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Acalanes —Pleasant Hill Road, just north of SR 24, at the corner of Acalanes Avenue.

December–January Field Trips

Saturday, December 3. **Benicia State Park.** Call Elizabeth Dickey for information, 254-0486. Leader: Terry Colborn.

Wednesday, December 7. **Alameda Creek.** Carpool: 8:00 AM, LaGonda. Meet at 8:45 AM at Vallejo Mill Historical Park on right just east of the intersection of SR 84 and Mission Blvd. in Fremont. Green-backed Heron, Ring-necked Duck, Spotted Sandpiper. Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330.

Thursday, December 8. **Hidden Lakes, Pleasant Hill** Meet at 8 AM in the parking lot at 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

Wednesday, January 4. **San Pablo Creek.** Meet at 8 AM in parking area of the northeast corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Road. From SR24 westbound, take Orinda exit north. Pass entry to Wagner Ranch School and turn right at stoplight. Park on left side of Bear Creek Road. Trail entry is about 100 yards down Bear Creek Road. Morning walk through riparian area to lake. In case of recent heavy rains we move to a different location that morning. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486.

Category 2

Saturday, January 7. **Putah Creek.** Carpool: 8:00 AM, Sun Valley. Meet at 8:45

AM at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasants Valley Roads, approximately 1 mile north from I-80. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area. Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Canyon and Rock Wrens, and Hooded Merganser. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Category 1

Wednesday, January 11. **Sunol Regional Park.** Carpool: 8 am, La Gonda. Meet at 8:15 AM in the parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Road. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 miles south on Calaveras; turn left on Geary Road and go 2 miles to park. Watch and listen for Turkey along Geary Road, Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens possible. Call Elizabeth Dickey for information, 254-0486.

Category 3

Thursday, January 19. **Markham Arboretum, Concord.** Meet at park 8:00 AM. From Clayton Road turn onto La Vista Avenue (six-tenths mile northwest of Treat Blvd.) and park at end. Galindo Creek runs through this little-known nature park and garden. Call Elizabeth Dickey for information, 254-0486.

Category 1

Saturday, January 21. **Santa Cruz.** Carpool: 7:30 AM, La Gonda. Meet in Santa Cruz at Neary's Lagoon at 9 AM. 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 Street. Turn left on Laurel and right on Blackburn to parking lot. Trip may include a visit to the Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges State Park. If you plan to go, call the leader. If no advance sign-ups are received, the trip may be canceled. Call Elizabeth Dickey for information, 254-0486.

Category 1

Thursday, January 26. **Thornton.** Carpool: 8 AM, Sun Valley. Meet 8:45 am in park at end of Glascock Road. Take SR 4 to Antioch Bridge (toll), go north on SR 160 along river to Rio Vista bridge. Turn right on SR 12 for 11.5 miles, then turn left onto Glascock Road. Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, hawks and grassland birds. Trip will go in light rain. If questions, call the leader. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486.

Category 1

Field Trip Reports

October 22, Abbott's Lagoon.

The trip started out very foggy and the birding slow. There were even no Acorn Woodpeckers at the Headquarters, which seemed odd. Eventually, however, we three birders found 56 species, of which the most exciting were Ferruginous Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, and Snowy Plover.

Fred Safier

**NEWS
FROM
WILD BIRDS
UNLIMITED**



Holiday Open House

Saturday, December 3

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

Many New Vendors Will Be Here

In the Backyard

Winter is our favorite time of the year for backyard birdfeeding. White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Red-breasted Nuthatches are all visiting the feeders. Large numbers of early arriving American Goldfinches are being reported.

Each fall and winter we are always on the outlook for Pine Siskins. 8-9 years ago thousands of this irruptive species stayed all winter. They were back in great numbers last winter. Many flocks of 50 or more were reported. It will be interesting to see if they return this winter. They often travel with goldfinches. Both species love thistle (nyjer) seed and readily come to bird feeders.

Birding Optics Seminar

Saturday, December 10

Mike Williams, of WBU and a member of MDAS, will lead a FREE workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics" on Saturday, December 1 at 10:00 AM at Wild Birds Unlimited. Have you seen the fantastic new Stokes DLS binocs, or the Eagle Rangers 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 & Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com



Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet is a rare book. It is the engaging memoir of author Maria Mudd Ruth, who suffers from—in her own words—Attention Surplus Disorder. Ruth has written a number of books on natural history, including studies of hawks and falcons, snakes, the tundra, the deserts of the southwest, and the Mississippi River. (The Contra Costa County Library has seven of her titles.)

In 1999, while working on a book on Pacific Coast ecosystems for young readers, she was searching for information about old-growth forests when she encountered the curious and enigmatic Marbled Murrelet. Why was it, she wondered, that no Marbled Murrelet nest had ever been found until 1974? Perplexed and intrigued, Ruth became so obsessed with this question that she even moved her family from Virginia to the West Coast so she could be where the birds are, and where her quest for the full story of this remarkable "flying baked potato" of the sea could be satisfied.

The Marbled Murrelet is a small alcid related to the auklets and puffins. Most alcids nest in crevices in colonies along ocean cliffs, but this renegade flies as far as 40 miles inland to lay a single egg in a depression on a mossy branch near the top of an old-growth conifer.

First noted by Captain Cook's surgeon William Anderson in 1778, the Marbled Murrelet remained elusive. Although these birds ply the ocean off the coast from Central California to the Aleutians, only after a hundred years was an egg found (from the oviduct of a bird killed at sea); and it was not until the 1970s when its habit of nesting high in tall trees was confirmed.

The author narrates the trail of discovery of what is known today about the Marbled Murrelet, from Captain Cook's voyage, through the first find of a nest at Big Basin Redwoods State Park. She

joins researchers as they spend countless pre-dawn hours in the deep forests watching for birds to arrive with small fish to feed their young. Again, she accompanies scientists in a zodiac to net and radiotag Murrelets for telemetry tracking. Then it is on to the controversy between environmentalists, loggers, and the government concerning conservation of our dwindling ancient forests.

Maria Mudd Ruth is not a birder, and this is not a scientific treatise, but this is a book that is easy to read and enjoyable; and if you read it, you will learn a good bit about how scientific mysteries are solved.

Rare Bird. Rodale, Inc. (298 pp., \$23.95)

Galapagos Islands *Continued from page 1*

week in November he officially retired from a 34-year career with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. His job included time as Resident Investigator in Alaska, as a national computer expert doing international inspections, and as an instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia. He has used his work opportunities to bird in many different parts of the world including Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, England, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Israel, and Hong Kong. In addition, he has treated himself to birding vacation trips to Kenya, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Canada.

Darrell reminds us that Darwin said, "There is grandeur in this view of life." Join Darrell as he brings us the birds that inspired Darwin.

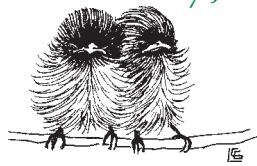


Males of this Pacific Coast shorebird species perform a display flight in which they climb high in the air and dive abruptly, with vibrating feathers producing an audible sound. Unscramble these letters, or turn to page 6 for the answer.

ABCEKLNORSTTU

106th Christmas Bird Count

By Jimm Edgar



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 at the American Museum of Natural History 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 of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. This database can be accessed through the BirdSource website at <http://www.birdsource.com>. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

Anyone is welcome to participate, since field parties are set up so that inexperi-

enced observers are always out with seasoned CBC veterans. A charge of \$5 helps to cover the costs of processing and publishing the data. Those who count birds at their home feeders do not pay. As long as you live within one of the CBC circles, you are welcome to count the birds at your feeder on the designated day.

You are invited to take part in this event as MDAS will conduct two separate counts, on Saturday, December 17, and Wednesday, December 21. 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, especially if you anticipate having an unusual species in your yard.

As darkness concludes the counts, there will be a count-down dinner at

St. Matthew's Lutheran church at 399 Wiget Lane in Walnut Creek for the central count; and the east count gathering is at Round Table Pizza in Brentwood.

Sign up by completing the form below, or call Jimm Edgar at (510) 658-2330.

MDAS Christmas Count —2005

- I volunteer for the Central County Christmas Bird Count on December 17.
- I volunteer for the East County Christmas Bird Count on December 21.
- I volunteer for BOTH Christmas Bird Counts, December 17 and 21.
- 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: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

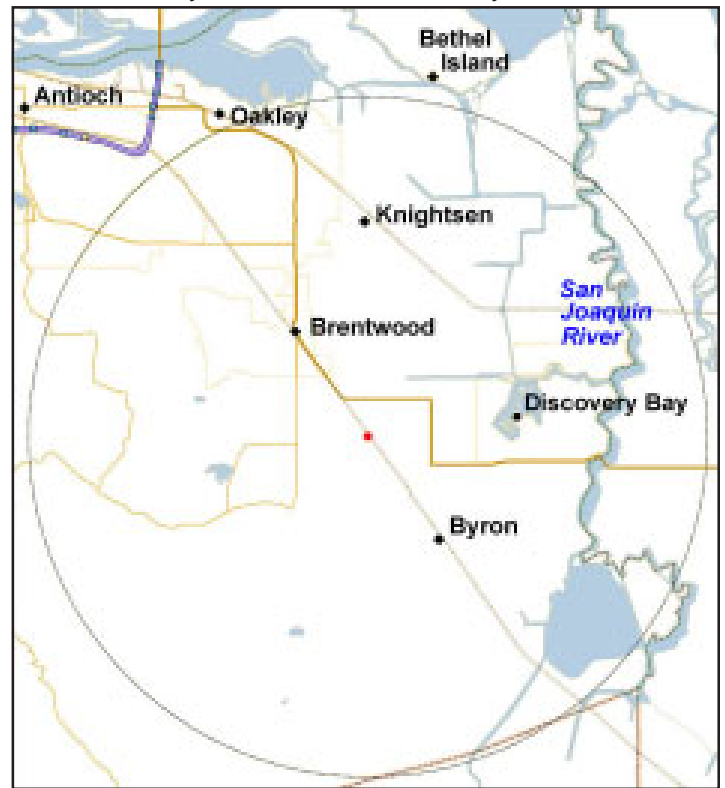
Years of birding experience: _____

Make \$5 check payable to MDAS.
Mail to: Jimm Edgar
4614 Jacobus Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

Central County Bird Count • Saturday, December 17



East County Bird Count • Wednesday, December 21



November Observations

By Steve Glover

Three Greater White-fronted Geese were found at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 11/6 (DD).

A pair of Clark's Grebes feeding young was at Clifton Court Forebay on 10/20 (JC, BG). Birds carrying nesting material on a similarly late date were noted at the same location several years ago.

Single American White Pelicans were at Los Vaqueros Reservoir 10/14 (WC) and Marsh Creek Reservoir 10/20 (JC, BG).

A Ferruginous Hawk was an unusual find at Sibley Regional Preserve west of Orinda on 10/28 (DV).

A Merlin over an Alamo home 10/22 was a nice yard bird (SH).

Fifteen Long-billed Curlews were along Holey Road near Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 10/20 (JC, BG). A Pectoral Sandpiper at Martinez Regional Shoreline 11/7 was a notably late migrant for the East Bay (DD).

Two Lewis's Woodpeckers were at Black Diamond Mines Regional Park near Antioch 10/31 (DD). As many as 7 Lewis's

Woodpeckers were found at the Los Vaqueros Reservoir Interpretive Center on 10/6 (BC). They were apparently found as early as 10/5. At least 12 were uphill from there on 10/14 (WC). Approximately 17 were found in the area of the interpretive center on 10/20 (JC, BG). Numbers like this (excepting migrants over the Berkeley Hills) haven't been detected in the county in many years.

A Williamson's Sapsucker visited an Oakland yard near Redwood Regional Park – and very close to Contra Costa County airspace – from 10/26-27 (SS, BP).

A congregation of 50+ Common Ravens was a sizeable, if somewhat ominous, sighting over Sibley Regional Preserve during the week of 10/23 (DV).

A Hutton's Vireo at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline 10/28 was at a location where this species may be resident (LL).

A Rock Wren at the Martinez Amtrak Station 10/21 was an unusual, but not unprecedented, find for the county; there are a smattering of records of migrants for this mostly sedentary bird (KS).

A male Phainopepla was at Round Valley Regional Park on 10/20 (JC, BG).

A late male Wilson's Warbler was at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline 10/28 (LL).

A white-throated sparrow visited a Pinole feeder 10/23 to at least 10/28 (LL).

Bill Chilson, William Clark, Judi Cooper, David Diller, Bingham Gibbs, Steve Hutchcraft, Laura Look, Bob Power, Kirk Swenson, Sylvia Sykora, Debbie Veiss

San Diego Coastline *Continued from page 8*



Brown Pelican at Point La Jolla

parking lot is an area referred to as the myoporium grove. Here there is the noted "dripping faucet," monitored by local birders as a drawing point for many species who choose the coastal sage habitat as their own. Wrentit and California Thrasher are two birds you might find here. We saw two Orange-crowned Warblers enjoying a sip in September. There is a hiking trail down to the bay side that seems to be longer back up than it was going down. On the ocean side, a road leads down to tide pools, a nice diversion.

Seacoast Drive, in Imperial Beach, affords a viewing deck from which you can look to the east, across the Tijuana Estuary, for Forster's Tern, Great Egret and Great Blue Heron. Don't fail to visit the other side of the estuary, where there is an interpretive center of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Take a trail into the 2500-acre coastal wetland to look for Belding's Savannah Sparrow.

From the O.C. all the way to B.C., the San Diego County coastline beckons birders with these and other destinations for any number of birding weekends in California.



Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala*

All along the coast of California, especially where waves spray the rocks of jetties, a Robin-sized, strikingly black-and-white bird can be found, if you are lucky. It is the Black Turnstone, aptly named for its characteristic habit of checking under pebbles and shells for a snack. Turnstones can also sometimes be observed to forage atop kelp beds off

the shore. They also favor gravel bars at the mouths of rivers or along lagoons. The bird pictured was photographed at Arrowhead Marsh during an MDAS field trip in October.

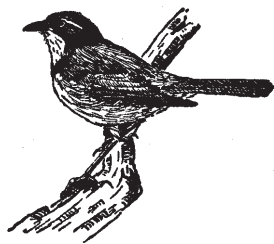
Black Turnstones migrate in spring to arrive at their breeding areas along the western coast of Alaska by late June, where they reunite with their mate from the previous season. They are strongly defensive of their nesting site, returning year after year to the same place and lining a shallow depression in

the ground with grass. Pairs are monogamous, but do not spend the winters together. Divorce and remarriage is not unknown, however, and should the female be late in returning home, the male may choose another.

A species of concern on the Audubon Watchlist, Black Turnstones may number as few as 80,000 individuals. They are at risk from potential oil spills, not only from direct contact, but also from decimation of their prey species.

Ornithology Opportunities

Winter Bird Festival. January 13–16, Morro Bay. The Morro Coast Audubon Society in collaboration with California State Parks, Central Coast Natural History Association, and others, host the Winter Bird Festival. All-day and half-day tours will take participants to a wide variety of habitats, including deep water pelagic, oak woodland and riparian, wetland and estuary, and the unique grassland habitat of the Carrizo Plain. Workshops will cover an array of topics ranging from beginner birding classes to gull identification. Morro Bay is one of the few remaining estuaries on the Pacific flyway. The festival bird lists have totaled over 220 species for the weekend, making this area on the central California coast a prime birding destination.



California Jay
Aphelocoma californica californica
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard
1930

For another chance to observe and celebrate Bay Area birds, come to the tenth annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, January 27-29. The free event, sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program, and 35 other agencies, is based on Mare Island in Vallejo. Festival attendees will enjoy once-a-year access to restricted parts of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area, and various privately owned properties. The event coincides with the peak of winter shorebird and waterfowl migration along the Bay Area segment of the Pacific Flyway, when more than one million shorebirds stop to rest or overwinter on the Bay. The festival includes both outdoor tours and indoor exhibits. For more information call 707-649-WING (9464), or visit their website at sfbayflywayfestival.com or .

Annual Snow Goose Festival. January 27-29, Chico. 7th Annual Snow Goose Festival. Contact Phone: 891-5559 x313. This region is home to lush migratory bird habitat and abundant waterfowl, as well as native raptors and varied terrestrial wildlife. Workshops include bird identification, art in nature, and creating habitat and nesting environs. Visit www.snowgoosefestival.org.

2006 Entertainment Books



A marvelous Christmas gift and only \$25! Buy for friends and for yourself.

Save up to 50% on restaurants, travel, entertainment, retail and much more. Two easy ways to purchase:

- (1) Buy at the MDAS December general meeting.
- (2) Pick up your great savings book at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill.

Native Plant Planting

The Watershed Nursery (<http://home.earthlink.net/~thewatershednursery>) and the Mountain View Sanitary District are teaming up again to continue planting native wetland plants along the eastern shore of McNabney Marsh in Martinez, adjacent to the East Bay Regional Park District's Waterbird Regional Preserve.

The dates and time for these Saturday work sessions are: November 19, December 3 and 10, and January 7, from 9 AM to 1 PM. All planting equipment will be provided, and refreshments will be available. Bring gloves, sturdy shoes, hat, rain jacket, layers, sun block, binoculars.

Please RSVP to (510) 548-4714 so they will know how many people to expect.

Heavy rain will cancel. Call (510) 845-7665 if you have any doubt about cancellation.

the Quail

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Mount Diablo Audubon Society

- a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •
- P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
- (925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

Mount Diablo Audubon Society general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Garden Center at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Board of Directors meets at 7 PM on the second Thursday of every month in the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-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, 94526. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA 94556.

MDAS Board of Directors

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Quickies

Weekend Birding in California

San Diego County Coast

From San Onofre south to Border Field State Park, there is a myriad of birding spots to explore and enjoy. You can't scout them all in a single weekend, but surely you can amass a bird list that would be quite impressive. Turn your binoculars seaward, and you may be rewarded with views of gray whales, sea lions, harbor seals, Bottle-nosed and Pacific Dolphins. Along the mud flats of the lagoons, you may see fiddler crabs scurry along. Also, look for any number of butterfly species, who share the air with the birds.

Some of the interesting locations are these:

San Elijo Lagoon is a large coastal wetland between the cities of Solana Beach and Encinitas. It has a diversity of bird species as it has a diversity of plant communities: coastal strand, salt marsh,

freshwater marsh, riparian scrub, coastal sage scrub, and mixed chaparral. This is a favorite resting place for Brown Pelicans, and you might also find Black Skimmer, White-tailed Kite, or Northern Pintail. Look for Snowy Plover, and for Least Bell's Vireo and California Gnatcatcher.

At Torrey Pines State Reserve a recent tally listed 72 species, including, in—small numbers—Little Blue Heron, Wandering Tattler, Black-vented Shearwater, and Clapper Rail, and—in larger numbers—Royal and Elegant Terns, Black-bellied Plover, Heermann's Gull, Bewick's Wren, Horned Lark, Barn Swallow, and, of course, Black Phoebe. Home of the rare Torrey Pine, this is a singular place. Two other things to look for from its bluffs: hang gliders, and the elusive green flash at sunset, frequently seen.

Point La Jolla at Ellen B. Scripps Park along Coast Boulevard is the premier spot for pelagic birds and their bird-watchers. It is situated where the currents bring in the food for marine life and birds from the undersea La Jolla Canyon, just offshore.

La Jolla's rocky shore, south of the children's pool on Coast Boulevard is a good place for gulls and terns, as well as for turnstones and other shorebirds.

Sunset Cliffs Boulevard on Point Loma is another vantage point for birds of the rocky coast. Looking down from the parking areas to the rocks below, you might be able to see three different cormorants together.

On south along the crest of Point Loma you come to Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. This is where the migrants come to be admired. Here, in September, was a Bendire's Thrasher, foraging on the grass and occasionally hopping up onto the tombstones. In an earlier year, we found a Black-throated Green Warbler. This is always a popular stop for birders.

At the southern tip of the promontory is Cabrillo National Monument—from December to February a great spot to watch for migrating whales. In spring and fall this is one of the best places to see migrating birds. Just beyond the first

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