

# CALENDAR

MDAS general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, Dec. 4. Meetings for the rest of the 2003-04 year are **Jan. 15 (there is no meeting on Jan. 2)**, Feb. 5, March 4, April 1, May 6, and June 3. There are no meetings in July or August. **THIS IS A COMBINED DECEMBER–JANUARY QUAIL. THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE MAILED MID-JANUARY.**

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

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

**MDAS Christmas Bird Counts are Sunday, Dec. 14 (potluck too), and Saturday, Dec. 20. See p. 7 for details**

*Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A one-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 95626. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please end exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.*



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



*Happy Holidays!*

# The QUAIL

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

December 2003-January 2004

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Next Deadline: January 3

## Condor Refuge Saved from California Fire

The wildfires that devastated vast stretches of southern California in October affected efforts to save the California Condor and to preserve a San Diego Audubon Sanctuary. One was saved, but the other was lost to fire (see page 2).

Although the Piru Fire burned much of the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge last month in the terrible fires in southern California, federal firefighters managed to save the refuge complex, which is the base of operations for California Condor reintroduction and management.

The Piru Fire, which started on October 23, burned across the refuge on October 26 and threatened the refuge compound used for the condor program. Three U.S. Forest Service engine crews from Los Padres National Forest and Angeles National Forest set backfires in front and behind the refuge compound, successfully saving it from the flames.

Prior to evacuation on October 25, field biologists observed 29 condors at the feeding site on the refuge. When the biologists returned on November 2, they observed 28 birds at the feeding site.

“The condors seemed to have weathered the firestorm and are back to business as usual,” said Marc Weitzel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s project leader. “We are extremely grateful to the Forest Service firefighters for saving our facilities.”

## Birds in Art and Myth Subject of December 4 Meeting

On December 4, we welcome Ted Pierce, a Bay Area birding instructor and writer. He will explore the fascinating history of birds in art, literature, and mythology of civilizations around the world. His presentation, entitled “20,000 Years of Bird Illustration,” will bring us a panorama of bird art from many cultures and civilizations beginning in Paleolithic times.

Birds have been depicted in every conceivable art form, mosaic, sculpture, tapestry, painting, pottery, cartoon, and fresco from the time of the ancients. Ted Pierce will explain how bird images were used in the cultures of the ancient Anatolians, Egyptians, and Chinese as well as the art of many Renaissance and modern masters such as Da Vinci, Bosch, Holbein, Blake, Audubon, and Picasso. His program explores the relationship between the natural history and the symbolic and religious meanings of the birds illustrated as it traces the development of avian images from ancient mythology to modern science.

Ted Pierce was raised in Yonkers, New York, where his education was in literature and the arts. In 1972, he moved to Manhattan where he lived near the Inwood Hill Park. He credits his interest in nature and birds to the beauty of its untouched woodlands, meadows, and 5000-year-old habitation sites as well as the vistas over looking the Hudson River and Jersey Palisades. In this area, he developed his botany, birding, and ecology skills; worked on park restoration programs; developed education programs for children; and began his writing career.

He has written numerous articles on conservation issues and parks, and he founded “Connecticut Nature Guides,” a company providing nature education courses to children and adults. In 1990, he and his family moved to California where he continues to write about birds and environmental issues. He teaches a birding course for the Piedmont Adult Education program and is writing a book on birding. His presentation on December 4 combines his interests in birds, archeology, literature, history, art, and mythology.

### Birding Information

Maury Stern will provide identification tips and anecdotes on backyard birds. Find out how much—or how little—you know about these familiar visitors to your yard.

### Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, December 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open  
7 p.m.—Birding Information  
7:25 p.m.—Business meeting  
7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing  
8:05 p.m.—Program

**Remember your coffee cup!**

**See p. 3 for January Program**

**The January general meeting is Thursday, January 15—the third Thursday.**

TIME VALUE MAIL



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

Non-Profit Org.  
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## San Diego Audubon Sanctuary Destroyed by Fire

California's Cedar wildfire, which raged out of control through the San Diego area, burned all of the Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, owned and operated by San Diego Audubon Society. The Silverwood Sanctuary extends over 728 acres and is the largest privately owned nature refuge in San Diego County.

All three of the residences occupied by the Resident Manager and her assistants were burned completely, but fortunately all Silverwood personnel were either out of the region or safely evacuated from the area. San Diego Audubon is assisting all three individuals both financially and in replacing some of their lost personal items and will accept donations to assist them.

San Diego Audubon will monitor the post-fire ecology on the Sanctuary to see how various species of flora and fauna respond and recover. The Sanctuary is closed to public visitation until further notice. For further information, contact Phil Pryde at 619-465-9492 or 619-594-5525, or Wayne Harmon at 858-488-2250.

### Connections editorial

## NAS Members Unite to Take Back Audubon

*This information applies only to National Audubon members. However, because of its importance, it is reprinted here from the Sacramento Audubon Society's The Observer.*

"As many Auduboners are aware, the National Audubon Society has made changes in its relationship with local Chapters that have significantly impacted Chapter finances, and the role of the Audubon grassroots in our organization.

"In 2000, the NAS Board of Directors changed the long-standing policy of sharing membership dues with Chapters. Under the new policy that will be fully implemented July 1, 2004, the dues share will drop to near zero for most Chapters. This loss of revenue has forced Chapters to cut back on newsletters and to reduce their conservation and education activities, the most effective activism in all of Audubon.

"In 2001, the NAS Board enacted a new Chapter Policy over the written objections of 74 chapters and over 88 Chapter leaders who signed on to a letter urging the Board to reconsider this policy. The letter asked NAS to engage in a true dialogue over this document and to seek a policy 'that meets the needs of ALL of Audubon, including Chapters.'

"At the 2002 Annual Meeting, the NAS leadership voted down resolutions brought by Chapter members to reform the governance of NAS by providing for access to information, competitive elections, and a greater voice for Audubon members and Chapters.

"In addition, National Audubon has embarked on a major effort to establish hundreds of Audubon Centers, which many Chapter leaders fear will ultimately replace Chapters by draining funds and volunteers from local conservation work. A number of chapters have already had serious conflict with NAS over this issue.

"In response to these actions by NAS, a grassroots organization, 'Take Back Audubon' (TBA) has sprung up, whose mission is 'to restore a true partnership  
*Continued on p. 4*

## Attention MDAS Members!

Your Mt Diablo Audubon Chapter is issuing its once-a-year request for support. Look for your letter in the mail. We only ask for your support once a year to minimize the resources and time we spend fundraising. For the rest of the year we can concentrate on the things we all love: leading bird walks, setting up homes for bluebirds and other needy nesters, teaching children about the environment and volunteering at McNabney Marsh.

Thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited of Pleasant Hill and Galaxy Press of Concord for again entirely underwriting the costs associated with this fundraising campaign.

The *Quail* is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

P.O. Box 53  
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(925) AUD-UBON  
(925) 283-8266

### MDAS Board of Directors

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## MDAS Will Hold Annual Christmas Bird Counts December 14 (SUNDAY) & 20

It's time to sign up to participate in the annual MDAS Christmas Bird Counts to be held on **SUNDAY, December 14**, and **Saturday, December 20**. Both CBCs will be held *dawn to dusk, rain or shine* on those days, according to Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern, the MDAS co-compilers and organizers of this event.

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

This is the 104th Christmas Bird Count. The first took place on Christmas Day, 1900, to protest the traditional bird shoot that killed every bird in sight. Today, there are counts in every state, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, and many Pacific islands. Over 45,000 volunteers will participate in about 1,700 counts this year. This is the longest-running ornithological database and provides valuable data on resident and migratory bird populations. As important as all this is, it is also a great social event and a lot of fun.

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

address indicated along with \$5 (helps to pay for publication of the CBC edition of *American Birds*). You can also sign up by calling Jimm at 510-658-2330.

### Dec 14 Potluck

On SUNDAY, December 14, the Central County Christmas Bird Count will conclude with a potluck dinner at 5:30 p.m. and everyone—Counter and non-Counter alike—is invited. That dinner will be held at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. The church is located just off Mt. Diablo Blvd at the east end of Lafayette. From Hwy 24 west, take the Pleasant Hill/Mt Diablo Blvd exit and then turn right on Carol Lane.

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

### Dec 20 Pizza Party

The East County Bird Counters will meet at 5:30 p.m. at the Round Table Pizza on Hwy 4 just west of Brentwood to count down the birds observed on December 20.

### MDAS Christmas Bird Count Volunteer Form

- 1.) I want to participate in the 2003 MDAS Christmas Bird Count(s).  
 I volunteer to help with BOTH Christmas Bird Counts on Dec. 14 and Dec. 20.  
 I volunteer only for the Central County Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 14.  
 I volunteer only for the East County Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 20.
- 2.) I will help as an observer in the following ways:  
 Put me wherever you need the help.  
 I would prefer a hiking area.  
 I would prefer a less strenuous area.  
 I will monitor a feeder or garden.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of birding experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

(Make \$5 checks payable to MDAS.)

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

## Health of Boreal Birds Focus of 104th Annual CBC

The National Audubon Society calls upon volunteers everywhere to join with birders across the western hemisphere and participate in Audubon's longest-running winter-time tradition—the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year, nearly 2000 individual counts are scheduled to occur throughout the Americas from Sunday, December 14, 2003, to January 5, 2004.

This year Audubon scientists are highlighting the fact that many of the birds to be counted are produced in the great North American boreal forest, which extends from Alaska to eastern Canada. Boreal species traditionally seen on the CBC that appear to be declining include Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and especially Rusty Blackbird.

The data, 100% volunteer-generated, have become a crucial part of the federal government's natural history monitoring database. Articles published in the 103rd CBC issue of *American Birds* helped ornithologists better understand the effects of West Nile virus on regional bird populations. For the full story, visit <www.audubon.org>

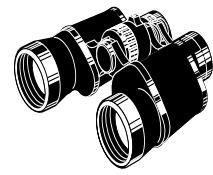
## Wear Your MDAS Cap on the CBC

Members are wearing their MDAS caps to meeting and on field trips. Let's wear them on the Christmas Bird Count days.

These handsome khaki caps with our distinctive Quail logo embroidered on them are available at the general meetings or from our website with S&H fee added. Only \$15! Great gift idea too!

## Observations

by Steve Glover



**Red-necked Grebe** at Briones Reservoir near Orinda on 10/19 was only one of a handful ever found inland in Contra Costa County (RS). Another was reported from this location in March of 1988; all other inland records are from Clifton Court Forebay near Byron.

The single **American White Pelican** continued at San Pablo Reservoir through at least 10/21 (SG).

The first pair of **Hooded Mergansers** of the winter was at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez, on 11/3 (JS).

Yet another **Broad-winged Hawk** was noted over Inspiration Point, Tilden Park—this one on 10/10 (SG). An adult **Peregrine Falcon** at Briones Reservoir on 10/19 was an unusual find for that location (RS).

The “fall of the **Lewis’s Woodpecker**” continued in October. On 10/11 a flock of five were seen flying to the north-

west over Sibley Regional Park west of Orinda (JL). On 10/14 at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, two were noted flying to the southeast, which is the expected direction. Later in the day, though, a total of 16 were watched flying northward (SG)! The last sighting was a single bird flying south over the Skyline Gate in Redwood Regional Park (SG). No less than 63 were recorded in Contra Costa County this fall!

**Acorn Woodpeckers** also continued to be seen along the pine-covered ridges of the Berkeley Hills. Numerous birds continued at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park to at least 10/21 (SG), three flew northwest over Sibley Regional Preserve on 10/11 (JL), and two were present there on 10/16 (SG).

The event of the season was the discovery of Contra Costa’s first **Pinyon Jays**. Decades may pass between Pinyon Jay “irruptions” so reports from several counties to the south spurred several local birders to scour the ridgetops this fall. On 10/8, one

was seen flying northeast over Sibley Regional Park, providing the first record for Contra Costa and just the second for Alameda Co. (JL). The only other record for Alameda Co. was 75 birds flying south over the U.C. Berkeley campus on 10/5. What year? 1911! Another Pinyon Jay was noted flying south over the Skyline Gate of Redwood Regional Park, Contra Costa on 10/15 (BR).

Three migrant **Barn Swallows** over Inspiration Point, Tilden Regional Park on 10/8 were on the late side for Contra Costa County (SG).

The first **White-throated Sparrow** reported this fall was in a Kensington yard on 11/1 (AK).

Observers: Steve Glover, Alan Krakauer, Bob Richmond, Rusty Scalf, Judi Sierra

**Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your phone number with your observation.**  
**Northern CA Bird Box:**  
**(415) 681-7422**

## Profile of Stellar’s Jay

MDAS has just completed five years of observations in the initial phase of the *Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas*. Steve is now writing the profiles of the breeding species observed in Contra Costa. This is the last in a series of sample profiles that will ultimately appear in the Atlas. Steve welcomes your comments at <Sglover@aol.com>.

### Stellar’s Jay (Cyanocitta stelleri)

These pugnacious, crested corvids are common permanent residents of forested areas throughout the central half of the county; their harsh “shacks” resounding through the canyon bottoms are one of the characteristic sounds of the Coast Ranges. Though commonly associated with dense, shady forests, they are, in truth, most common near the open edges of such habitats where they share space with

Western Scrub-Jays. Despite the fierce look imparted by the spiked crowns of the stellars, scrub-jays maintain dominance in such situations.

In Contra Costa County, Steller’s Jays are found in forested areas throughout the Coast Ranges. They are quite widespread in the moist, fog-shrouded Berkeley Hills and are usually absent only from occasional patches of grassland. This ubiquitousness continues east to about Lafayette Reservoir, but thereafter their distribution becomes patchier as the climate becomes more arid and the habitats more open. In the Diablo Range, their range is essentially restricted to shady canyons, such as Pine and Mitchell on Mt. Diablo. Morgan Territory Rd. and vicinity essentially represents the eastern stronghold though a few birds are present as far east as Round Valley. Moderate populations persist in wooded portions of residential Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga and smaller numbers are found quite locally in “mature” neighborhoods around Alamo and Danville.

Habitat needs dictate that they are absent from the entirety of east county, from the river plain around Pittsburg and Antioch, the open grasslands around Tassajara, and, except for one notable exception, the urban and industrial areas around Richmond.

This exception was in block 550-195 where a fledgling was noted on 8 July 2001. This small group near Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline at Pt. Richmond was believed to have been present only since an invasion during the winter of 1998–1999 that brought birds to normally unoccupied locations throughout much of northern California. Only time will tell whether or not these colonizers will succeed in establishing a long-term disjunct population.

The future of Steller’s Jays in Contra Costa appears secure as most of their current range is locked-up in regional parks and watershed lands.

## News from Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.  
Pleasant Hill, CA  
798-0303

Visit Our Website at  
<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

**We’re having a Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 6 and You Are Invited!**

Free Refreshments  
Free Gift with Each Purchase  
Prize Drawings

Book Signing with Gary Bogue and his delightful new book,  
*The Raccoon Next Door*

Winter is our favorite time of the year for backyard birdfeeding. White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches are all visiting the feeders. American Goldfinch numbers are beginning to increase.

We are always on the outlook for Pine Siskins. Every year we see some in the fall for a few days. Then they are gone! Seven or eight years ago thousands of this irruptive species stayed all winter. So far this season, none has been sighted. They often travel with goldfinches. Both species love thistle (niger) seed and readily come to bird feeders. Please report any Siskin sightings.

### Birding Optics Seminars Saturday, December 13

Mike Williams, of WBU and a member of MDAS, will lead a FREE workshop on “How to Buy Birding Optics” on Saturday, December 13, at 10:30 a.m. at Wild Birds Unlimited. Have you seen the Eagle Rangers that close focus at under 6 feet? Have you looked through the fantastic Swarovski ELs? There will also be many other brands of binoculars and spotting scopes on display. As seating is limited, please RSVP.

### Volunteers Needed Dec. 14

Doc Quack needs volunteers to build quail habitat in Contra Loma Park, Antioch, on Dec. 14 from 2–5 p.m. Doc. Quack, a biologist with East Bay Regional Park District, works to restore quail populations in the parks. The work will consist of helping to plant trees, quail bush, and other wildlife friendly habitat. Great family activity! For info, call (510) 544-2320.

## Birds of Chile Author to Speak at January 15 MDAS Meeting

“An Exploration of Chile’s Birds” will be presented by Alvaro Jaramillo of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory at our general meeting on **Thursday, January 15 (NOTE: January 15 is the third Thursday—a one-time change from our regular meeting date).**

Alvaro Jaramillo was born in Santiago, Chile, but moved to Toronto, Canada, as a boy and there began birding. His love for birds and nature led to an undergraduate and master’s degree from the University of Toronto and a career in biology. He currently holds a post as biologist at the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory and is a birding tour guide for Field Guides, Inc. His early research on the cowbirds of Argentina led to a general curiosity about blackbirds and orioles, and to the publication of his book, *New World Blackbirds: The Icterids*.

Alvaros’ research on the birds of Chile has culminated in the fulfillment of a life-long dream, the publication of a new field guide to the *Birds of Chile*, which was released in November 2003.

Chile is unlike any other country in South America. A thin strip of land between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes, its climate is temperate, not tropical. The great desert in the north, the Atacama, and the Andes Mountains form a considerable barrier to dispersal of birds and animals. As such, the forests, and Mediterranean zone scrublands of Chile are effectively islands, each with a distinctive plant and bird life that sometimes shows more similarity to habitats found in the ancient continent of Gondwana than to that of neighboring countries.

This program will explore Chile from the northern desert, to the temperate forests, south to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. The birding in Chile is superb and includes some of the most incredible pelagic birding (five species of Albatross) anywhere in the world. Like California, Chile is blessed with a cold and very productive ocean due to the Humboldt Current. The diversity of birdlife is exemplified by the Slender-billed and

Austral Parakeets found high in the cold, and sometimes snowy, forests of the Andes; the wonderful tapaculos, an assortment of three species of flamingos in the northern highlands; and the much sought after Diademed Sandpiper-Plover and Magellanic Plovers of the far south.

Alvaro will also give us a background look at how a book like his comes together. Join him to explore Chile and to discover how geography has shaped the unique avifauna of the region.

### Birding Information

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

## Bluebirds Fly Thanks to CBRP

The California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP)

reported 14,642 fledglings from 199 monitors in 2002. CBRP members put up nestboxes for 17 species of cavity nesters, especially bluebirds, then monitor the birds’ progress through the nesting season, and report yearly on the fledgling results. Last year, 7733 Western Bluebird fledglings were reported, followed by 1987 Wood Ducks, 1570 Tree Swallows as well as hundreds of flycatchers, owls, wrens, chickadees, finches and kestrels.

The CBRP is an affiliate organization of MDAS. CBRP founder and its longtime Program Director is Don Yoder, also known to many MDAS members as “Mr. Bluebird.” If you want to participate, call Don at (925) 937-5974.



## Habitat to Be Restored at Heather Farm Park

As Walnut Creek has become more urbanized, the city has pushed more recreational functions into the open space of Heather Farm Park, including a large softball complex. The birds and their habitat were threatened, and MDAS member Hugh Harvey took them under his wing.

For countless hours, Hugh and other Restoration Task Force members have worked to see that the new Master Plan for Heather Farm Park included provision for natural areas, habitat restoration, and open space. On Tuesday, November 5, the Walnut Creek City Council voted on the new Master Plan. In among the skate park, the basketball and bocce ball courts, and equestrian paths was habitat restoration for the ponds that Hugh had worked so hard for. The City Council approved the Master Plan 5-0. Hugh made this statement to the City Council:

*I'm Hugh Harvey, a park neighbor, and a member of the Habitat Restoration Task Force, but I am here tonight representing Mount Diablo Audubon Society.*

*Many events have happened in our personal lives as well as on a world scale since I last spoke to you in June of 2002. Yet the world still turns, the sun still rises and the seasons still change. Fall has come again and the birds have migrated, most of them settling down for the winter, many of them in Heather Farm.*

*This morning, though it was before 8 o'clock, I found 25 species in the park. Undoubtedly, there were at least half-a-dozen more which I did not find. Mount Diablo Audubon Society supports the Master Plan for Heather Farm Park, and in particular the Habitat Restoration.*

*I would like to hand to you a recently prepared list of the 133 bird species which have been identified in the park. In fact, you are the first to receive the*

## October Field Trip Reports

**Thursday, October 2, Richmond Shore Line.** High fog; only the leader showed up. Once past the dogs and the anise bushes, lots of shorebirds were visible, mostly Willets. Highlights were a Common Yellowthroat that perched on the top of a dwarf willow for a full half minute and a Clapper Rail swimming across Meeker Slough. Thirty-five species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

**Wednesday, October 8, Wildcat Canyon.** Seven birders enjoyed the walk along Wildcat Creek, but not many birds were seen. A Brown Creeper and a Townsend's Warbler were the most interesting of the 31 species seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

**Thursday, October 16, Vic Fazio Wildlife Refuge.** Four birders enjoyed a beautiful fall day in the Valley. A flock of about 50 White Pelicans circled overhead and later landed. Marsh wrens were unusually cooperative, and everyone had excellent

### A Christmas Gift No One Will Want to Return

The *Entertainment 2004* book is the perfect Christmas gift and still costs only \$30 this year for the same terrific values. They are available at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill; at the general meeting; or on the Internet.

To order any Entertainment Book online go to [entertainment.com](http://entertainment.com). Then enter the city or ZIP code and the state, and follow the directions on the screen. When you are asked to enter the group number, the number for MDAS is 175587. Check out the home, garden and auto sections!

*list. It is hoped that many park visitors will be able to take advantage of this list in the years to come. We would hope that increased awareness will lead to additions to it. Thank you.*

Copies of the bird list are available from Hugh Harvey and will soon be available at Heather Farm Park.

views; Lesser Yellowlegs and Loggerhead Shrike were good sightings among the 29 species seen and heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

**Wednesday, October 22, Arrowhead Marsh.** Another great fall day for three birders. High tide stirred up the Clapper Rails, and one perched and preened on a bush so everyone had a long satisfying look. There were a number of American Pipits on the lawns. A total 44 species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

**Wednesday, October 29, Lafayette Reservoir.** The weather was changing with strong west wind in exposed areas. Two birders saw only 24 species, and the high point was an Osprey overhead near the end of the walk.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

## Take Back Audubon

*continued from p. 2*

between the independent Chapters and the National Audubon Society through a real voice in the NAS organization and in all decisions that affect Chapter.' To date, 37 Audubon Chapters and over 100 Chapter leaders have endorsed Take Back Audubon.

"Presently, TBA is engaged in an effort to elect an alternate slate of candidates the NAS Board of Directors at this year's Annual Meeting on Dec. 6, 2003. They are seeking proxies from Audubon members to ring to the meeting to vote for this slate, and to support resolutions that will be presented to democratize Audubon and to restore the Chapter dues share.

"The TBA slate is made up of chapter leaders that will give Audubon members a choice, by offering candidates that will stand up for interests of local Chapters. . . ."

*If you are a member in good standing of National Audubon, you can participate by filling out a proxy statement provided at <[www.smbas.org/tba](http://www.smbas.org/tba)>. There you will also find biographies of the candidates, copies of the proposed resolutions, and background information on Take Back Audubon. Members are asked not to return the NAS proxy that came in the mail.*

## December & January Field Trips

*Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair*

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

### December 2003

**Thursday, December 4, Hidden Lakes, Pleasant Hill.** Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot at corner of Morello Ave. and Chilpancingo Parkway. Oak woodlands and ponds. This has been a good area for blue birds and sparrows. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

**Wednesday, December 10, Niles Canyon Gravel Pits.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. at Vallejo Mill Historical Park in Fremont. Take I-680 south through Dublin to SR 84; go west 7 miles to park entrance on right. Varied habitats; Green-backed heron, Ring-necked duck, Spotted sand piper, often many land birds. Leader: Jimm Edgar, (510) 658-2330 Category 2

**SUNDAY, December 14, Mt Diablo Christmas Bird Count.** See page 7 for more information.

**Saturday, December 20, East Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count.** See page 7 for more information.

### January 2004

**Saturday, January 3, Putah Creek.** Carpool leaves at 8:15 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 9 a.m. at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasants Valley Rds., approximately 1 mi north from I-80. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area. Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Canyon and Rock Wrens, and Hooded Merganser. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906 Category 1

**Wednesday, January 7, San Pablo Creek Trail.** Meet at 8 a.m. in parking area of the northeast corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Rd. From Route 24 westbound, take Orinda exit north. Pass Wagner Ranch School and turn left at last stoplight. Morning walk through riparian area to lake. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

**Thursday, January 15, East County.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. on Jordon Lane in Oakley. Take SR 4 east to Vintage Parkway in Oakley. Turn left, then right onto Walnut Meadows, and left onto Jordon Lane. Parking is on a residential cul-de-sac so carpooling is important! Call Elizabeth Dickey for information, 254-0846 Category 2

**Saturday, January 17, Santa Cruz.** Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. For LaGonda Way directions, see the December 10 trip to Niles Canyon. Meet in Santa Cruz at Neary's Lagoon at 9:15 a.m. Take I-680 south to SR 237; west to I-880 and south on Hwy 17. In Santa Cruz, turn north on SR 1 to Laurel St. Turn left on Laural and right on Blackburn and park on street. Trip will include a visit to the Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges State Park. Bring lunch and water. Because this is an out-of-town trip, two circumstances will cancel it: no advance signups and bad weather. If you plan to go, call the leader. If it is raining on Saturday morning, call the leader. Leader: Joel Summerhill, \*82-925-753-0862 or 925-381-8609 (cell phone on Saturday) Category 1

**Wednesday, January 21, Sunol.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. For LaGonda Way directions, see the December 10 trip to Niles Canyon. Or meet at 8:15 a.m. in the

parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Rd. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 mi south on Calaveras Rd.; turn left on Geary Rd. and go 2 mi to park. Watch and listen for Turkey along Geary Rd. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens possible. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 3

**Thursday, January 29, Thornton.**

Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet 8:45 a.m. in park at end of Glascock Rd. 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 mi, then turn left onto Glascock Rd. 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

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

## Pacific Flyway Festival, January 23–25

The 8th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival is Friday, Jan. 23, through Sunday, Jan 25, at Mare Island. The festival celebrates the return of over 1 million shorebirds and thousands of waterfowl which migrate through or winter in San Francisco Bay. Bay.

The Family Wildlife Exploration and Birding Expo on Mare Island is held indoors in Building 897. Over 60 non-profit and resource agencies offer information about natural resources, recreation opportunities, historical sites, and environmental education. It features programs and exhibits—some just for children, demonstrations, wild bird visits and much more. Look for the MDAS booth! For further information, visit the website at [sfbayflywayfestival.com](http://sfbayflywayfestival.com).