

CALENDAR

MDAS general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, February 5. Meetings for the rest of the 2003-2004 year are March 4, April 1, May 6, and June 3. There are no meetings in July or August.

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.



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.

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 send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.

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The QUAIL

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February 2004

Vol. 50, No. 5

Next Deadline: February 7, 2004

Connections

Vote No on Measure N!

by Gloria Cannon

The MDAS Board of Directors voted in December to oppose Measure N, the March ballot measure to expand Los Vaqueros Reservoir to five times its current size. MDAS joined 20 other conservation organizations to oppose Measure N, a citizens advisory measure put on the ballot by the Contra Costa Water District.

In 1988 to gain voter approval for Los Vaqueros, the CCWD promised that the reservoir would “give CCWD customers enough high-quality water to meet their needs, even during a prolonged drought.” Now only four years after completing the \$450-million Los Vaqueros Reservoir at Contra Costa ratepayers’ expense, our own water district wants to destroy that reservoir and build a massive, new \$1.5-billion project that will cover 4 square miles of land and drown 2600 acres of open space. It will be larger in its maximum expansion than Lake Camache in the Sierras.

An expanded reservoir won’t benefit Contra Costa County—the existing reservoir has improved our water quality and provides an emergency water supply in years of drought. In addition, the District also has identified and contracted for additional water supplies to meet future water needs. I served on the citizen advisory board that rubberstamped that action.

Former Senator John Nejedly, who chaired the 1988 campaign to build the Los Vaqueros Reservoir, opposes Measure N. He believes it is really a proposal to build a

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“Birds in Motion” Video to Be Presented at Feb Meeting

Our own enthusiastic member, Larry Arbanas, will present his video essay, “California Birds in Motion,” at the general meeting on Thursday, February 5.

A lifelong, passionate naturalist, Larry grew up in a family of professional still photographers for whom nature photography was a primary interest. Throughout his career as a professional video producer and commercial TV cameraman, Larry has provided video footage for such clients as *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Black Entertainment TV, Kraft Foods, and VH1.

His life and career direction changed dramatically in March 1989. He was profoundly moved by the tragedy of the Exxon-Valdez oil spill as he watched the efforts to rescue otters, seals, and sea birds from Prince William Sound. He redirected his efforts as a commercial video cameraman to telling environmental stories. With his videos, he hopes to raise consciousness and provide compelling evidence to facilitate documentation of, conservation of, and restoration of the natural environment.

His business, Earthwhile Nature Productions, has provided video footage for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Fish and Game, and John Robinson of Lanian Software. The

Cornell University Lab of Ornithology has recently requested his bird footage collection for inclusion in its museum, the Macauley Library of Natural Sounds and Images.

Larry is very pleased to be able to share his passion for birds in motion with the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society.

Birding Information

For Birding Information, MDAS president Mike Williams will challenge us with “What is That Bird?”

Meeting Schedule

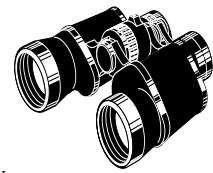
The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, February 5**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

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!

Observations

by Steve Glover



Forty-one **American White Pelicans** at Mallard Reservoir on 12/14 was a nice tally for that location (SG). A tremendous flock of 200+ American White Pelicans drifted west over Somersville Rd., Antioch, on 12/18 (J&DB). Another flock of 120+ flying southeast over Antioch was noted on 12/21 (K&DG).

A flock of 130 **Cattle Egrets** at Delta Rd. east of Knightsen on 12/20 was one of the highest tallies yet for Contra Costa County (SG, DQ).

Eight **Wood Ducks** were at the east end of Orwood Rd. near Byron on 12/20 (SG, DQ). Wood Ducks are rarely found in east county. A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Mallard Reservoir on 12/14 (SG). A flock of 100+ **Common Mergansers** along Sellor's Rd. near Byron on 12/20 was a very high count for East County (JR, GF). A pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Mallard Reservoir on 12/14 were at an unusual location, though they have been found there on rare occasions during past Christmas counts (SG).

An adult **Bald Eagle** was noted flying south over the Round Valley Regional Park parking lot on 12/9 (JE, DL, SG), and another had reportedly returned to Lafayette Reservoir by 12/9 (fide DL).

Long-eared Owls were found at the end of El Toyonal Ave. in Orinda on 12/14 (DA) and at Black Diamond Mines Regional Park on the same day (PM).

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, was still present through at least 1/8 (many obs.). Though quite rare in the county, there seems to be one found in most winters in recent years. A photo of this bird by Joe Morlan can be viewed at <http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/gallery.htm>.

A **Winter Wren** at Holland Tract east of Knightsen on 12/20 was the first to be found on the East Contra Costa

Christmas Bird Count and one of few yet found in East County (SG, DQ).

Five **Mountain Bluebirds** were found on the higher reaches of Los Vaqueros Reservoir on 12/20 (JE, NW). This species has been very rare in the county in recent years.

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** just east of Marsh Creek Reservoir on 12/20 was the first for the East Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count and the first to be found in East County during winter (JR, GF). An immature female **Hermit Warbler** at Inspiration Pt., Tilden Park on 12/16 was an unusual winter find for the county (JM, RF).

At least two **Vesper Sparrows** were along Empire Mine Rd. south of Antioch on 12/9 (SG, JE, DL). This species may occur annually in the county, but there are few recent records. A **Swamp Sparrow** was at Lafayette Reservoir on 12/14 (JCR). This is probably the first record for that location. Another **Swamp Sparrow** at Holland Tract east of Knightsen on 12/20

was the first to be found on the East Contra Costa CBC and the first to be found in East County away from Iron House Sanitary District (SG, DQ). Finally, yet another Swamp Sparrow, reportedly the first found in early December at Tilden Park, was still present through at least 12/16 (RF, JM). This may be the first record for Tilden Park. A hybrid sparrow, thought to be a White-crowned x Golden-crowned, was at Tilden Park on 12/14 (HG, GG).

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

A female **Great-tailed Grackle** was at a new golf course in Brentwood on 12/9 (SG, JE, DL).

Observers: David Armstrong, Jeanne & Darryl Bonner, Jimm Edgar, George Finger, Robbie Fischer, Steve Glover, Kiki & Debbie Gonzalez, Helen Green, George Griffeth, Don Lewis, Pat MacEachern, Joe Morlan, Dave Quady, Jean Richmond, John C. Robinson, Nancy Wenninger.

**Thank You
for Your Generous Donations!**

The Mt Diablo Audubon Society thanks all our generous donors who made the chapter's recent fundraising campaign a success. The funds raised will help offset the loss of dues from the National Audubon Society. Because of your help, we can continue to deliver the monthly programs, the newsletter, and our field trips program. We can continue our community outreach efforts and our public education programs. We can continue and potentially strengthen our conservation programs and make sure that we who care about birds and other wildlife and their habitat have a voice in choosing the future of Contra Costa. To all of those who contributed, thank you!

Results of MDAS Christmas Bird Counts Reported

by Jimm Edgar

Central County Count, December 14

Fifty-eight participants covered 18 different areas, and two other participants watched at feeders on our 51st Christmas Bird Count for central Contra Costa County on Sunday, December 14. I noted last year that it was one of the worst days I can remember, but this year was one of nicest I can remember—sun, no wind, crystal clear all day. Wonderful conditions for birding!

I want to thank all our counters both in the field and at feeders. They deserve a tip of the hat.

It looks like we will end up with a species count of 147 species for the day. It seems that our magic number of 150 species may be more and more elusive for this count area. Loss of habitat and access issues are preventing us from seeing many of our even regular birds. Western Grebe and Canvasback, for example, were missed this year for the first time ever. We have not had a boat out on the Delta for the last three years (if anyone knows someone with a boat who would take us out for a few hours, let me know). Security at the Naval Weapons Station is tight these days, and we cannot view the harbor area, so we missed some water birds we usually see.

We have not totaled the final individual numbers, but they seem pretty normal. Highlights include a Red-breasted Merganser seen at Mallard Reservoir, a Pygmy Owl at Briones, and two Long-eared Owls—one at the Naval Weapons Station and the other at Black Diamond Mines Regional Park. We also added two new species to the count—a Great-tailed Grackle at McNabney Marsh and a selasphorus species hummingbird found near Contra Costa sewage plant.

Our new hospitality chairs did a great job, and the potluck countdown dinner was a lot of fun. As always the food was wonderful. Thanks to everyone who participated.

Summary of MDAS Christmas Bird Count, 1988–2003

Date Held	Total No. of Individuals Seen	No. of Species Observed	Weather Conditions
1/2/88	53,742	153	cold, rainy
12/31/88	36,385	152	cold, foggy
12/30/89	33,703	158	pleasant
12/15/90	34,500	156	cold, 25 degrees
12/14/91	44,747	157	cloudy but nice
12/19/92	89,000	159	good weather
12/18/93	51,785	156	good weather
12/17/94	33,471	158	foggy
12/16/95	31,686	159	sunny, beautiful
12/21/96	30,083	144	very rainy
12/20/97	32,228	160	overcast
12/19/98	58,108	152	sunny, bright
12/18/99	70,000	157	sunny, springlike
12/16/00	58,125	151	sunny, beautiful
12/15/01	45,068	151	sunny, beautiful
12/12/02	50,464	141	high winds, heavy rain
12/14/03	not yet available	147	beautiful after early rain

East County Bird Count, December 20

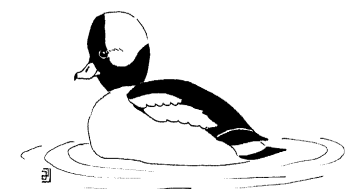
The East County Count is a 15-mile-diameter circle whose center is right about the middle of Brentwood. This is the fourth year for the East County count, and we are beginning to see some patterns develop. Last year we saw 135 species and reported 62,465 individuals. This year we had nine groups with 36 participants to cover the area. We had good weather most of the day, but there was a lot of heavy fog along the Delta that never lifted.

This year we gained some access to previously off-limits areas in the Los Vaqueros watershed. An employee of the watershed and one of our section leaders was able to arrange for some behind-the-scenes views. There are 30 square miles around the reservoir that are owned by the Contra Costa Water District with a variety of habitat. Having that access was valuable. In total, we found 142 species—our four year high—and added six new species for the count: Black-throated Gray Warbler, Swamp Sparrow, Wood Duck, Mountain Bluebird, Winter Wren, and Redhead were new. The Bald Eagle on the reservoir was there again along with a very high count of five Ospreys.

The east part of the county continues to see rapid development and the loss of open space. We are fortunate that Los Vaqueros, East Bay Regional parks, and other individuals and agencies have secured lands out there to protect some valuable habitat.

More CBC Details

To read the list of the birds observed by MDAS counters as well as the nationwide results, go to <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>, which has all the CBCs of all the chapters since 1900. Click on "Current Year's Results." To see MDAS results, select California and then either Central Contra Costa County or East Contra Costa County. Last year, 56,000 participants reported 73 million birds in 1980 locations.



drawing by Carol Lutz

Great Backyard Bird Count Scheduled for Feb. 13–16

What Is the GBBC?

Many bird species are showing population declines due to habitat loss or other human impacts. Now, people of all ages and backgrounds can help monitor bird populations, including several that are showing declines, by participating in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) on February 13–16.

The GBBC asks families, individuals, classrooms, and community groups to count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards, and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Participants enter their observations at BirdSource <<http://www.birdsource.com/gbbc>>, a user-friendly, state-of-the-art website. In 2003, 48,446 checklists were submitted, and 512 species were reported.

A project of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with funding provided in part by Wild Birds Unlimited and Ford Motor Company, the GBBC combines high-tech web tools with “citizen-science” observation of birds.

“We’re asking everyone, everywhere in North America to take a few minutes to tell us what birds they see on any or all of the count days,” says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “By tracking changes in bird distribution and abundance over time, such a vast database can serve as the S.O.S signal for species that may be in trouble.” This is especially important for species already showing population

declines such as quail, familiar in California and other parts of North America, but which are experiencing severe

population declines. One of the BirdSource’s ultimate goals is hemisphere-wide monitoring of birds.

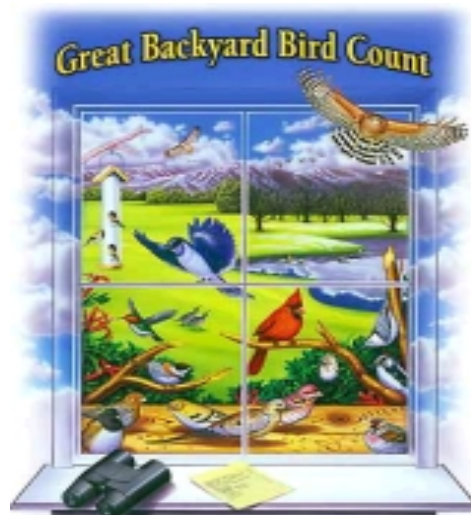
Because the GBBC charts findings in real time, scientists have already made connections between weather patterns and bird movements. Also chickadees and corvids appear to

be in decline, possibly because of their susceptibility to the West Nile virus.

How to Participate

To participate in the GBBC, count the highest number of each bird species seen at one time (to ensure the birds are not counted more than once) and keep track of the amount of time spent counting. Log on to BirdSource and click on California for a checklist of the most frequently reported birds in California. Instructions for participating can be found at the website. There’s no registration fee.

The BirdSource/GBBC website also includes useful information to make participation easy and enjoyable. There’s a vocabulary section, bird watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and more. Educators will find the bibliography and geography sections as well as suggestions for conducting the count with groups of kids. Those who would like to participate, but are not online, can submit their reports through the Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., in Pleasant Hill.



News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

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Upcoming Activities at WBU

Feb. 7—10:30 a.m.–3 p.m.—Native Bird Connections will present an exciting program featuring Peregrine and Prairie Falcons.

Feb. 18—Denise Weight’s Beginning Birding Classes resume. The class is taught through slides and includes many birding topics. There will be six consecutive Wednesday night classes, starting on Feb. 12, and two bird walks. Cost is \$60. Call Wild Birds Unlimited for details.

Feb. 13–16, Friday–Monday. The Great Backyard Bird Count occurs. Wild Birds Unlimited and National Audubon Society are major sponsors of this event. You count birds in your backyard and report the results online or bring them to WBU. It’s a great web site to investigate at <www.birdsource.org/gbbc>. It’s fascinating to watch the maps explode with as bird reports are entered into the database.

Birdfeeding Tip

Suet feeding is a great way to attract birds to your backyard. Suet is rendered (cleaned) beef fat to which various ingredients are added, such as nuts, peanut butter, insects, or fruit. These additions make suet very attractive to birds, especially in cold and wet weather. Melted suet is then formed into easy-to-handle cakes. Birds readily attracted to suet include woodpeckers, jays, chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches.

February 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.

February 4, Wednesday—Grizzly Island Refuge. Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at Refuge headquarters. Take I-680 north, then I-80 east to SR12. Follow SR12 through Fairfield; watch for sign to Grizzly Island Refuge on right and follow road to headquarters. Entry fee for refuge. Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along road; this is an outstanding area for raptors. For information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

February 7 & 8, Saturday & Sunday—Merced Refuges and Panoche Valley. This is a weekend trip to Los Banos and Panoche Valley. On Saturday we’ll bird Santa Fe Grade Road and the Merced Refuge; on Sunday we’ll bird Panoche Valley. If you plan to go on the trip, please call the leader: Steve Glover, (925) 828-7793. Possible motels include Best Western John Jay Inn in Los Banos, (809) 827-0958 or (800) 528-1234 and in Santa Nella on I-5, Holiday Inn, Mission de Oro, (209) 826-4444; Best Western (Pea Soup) Anderson’s Inn, (209) 826-5534; and Motel 6 (209) 826-6644.

February 11, Wednesday—Sindicich Lagoon, Briones Regional Park. Meet at 8 a.m. at the top of Briones Rd. off Alhambra Valley Rd. This is approximately 3-mile round trip through grasslands to the ponds. Interesting ducks are sometimes found here. Also raptors and grassland species. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 3

February 19, Thursday—Davis Wetlands. Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot or meet at 8:15 a.m. at the parking lot at the wetlands. To get to the Davis Wetlands, from Davis, take Pole Line Road north until it turns into County Road 102. Turn right (or east) on County Road 28H. Pass the Yolo County Landfill and Water Treatment Plant. Continue through the entrance gate and follow the green signs to the Davis Wetlands. The parking lot is 2.1 miles from the entrance gate. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 3

February 21, Saturday—Tomales Bay State Park. Carpool leaves 7 a.m., from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of SR 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at Heart’s Desire Beach at Tomales SP (\$5 entrance fee). From I-101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left on 3rd St., and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. Follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd. through Inverness. Just over the ridge, turn right onto Pierce Point Rd. The park entrance is on the right. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

February 26, Thursday—Berkeley-Emeryville Waterfront. Shoreline. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to 880 West; turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. exit, turn left on Powell; go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy. Loons, grebes, and bay ducks. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1



Field Trip Reports

Abbots Lagoon, October 25. Six birdwatchers saw 60 species on this beautiful day at Point Reyes. Best views were of a small flock of Snowy Plovers skittering up and down the shoreline. As we sat and watched, these plovers came close enough to us to be viewed without binoculars, such a treat.—*Pat MacEachern*

Niles Cayon, December 10. Four members and guests braved very threatening skies for our annual field trip to the Quarry Lakes Regional Park in Fremont. Skies cleared for most of the morning, and it didn’t rain until almost noon. We saw 57 species, including about eight Spotted Sandpipers, one of the target birds for this trip. Good close looks at Common Merganser and night herons were rewarding. An Acorn Woodpecker in Vallejo Mill Park was unexpected on the west side of the East Bay hills.—*Jimm Edgar*

Putah Creek, January 3. The bird of the trip was not the Osprey. Nor was it one of the 20 or so Hooded Mergansers, or the Green Heron, or even the Dipper or the immature Bald Eagle. It was the stunning and totally unexpected Pileated Woodpecker that flew in right over our heads calling loudly and posed on a nearby tree in full view, sending chips flying, as we watched to our hearts’ content. Nobody (I’ve been on this trip since 1980) could remember ever seeing this species in this location before. Totals: 11 birders, 73 species.—*Fred Safier*

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.

New Board Members Elected at Audubon Members Meeting Dec. 6

New York, NY, Monday, December 8, 2003 - The Annual National Audubon Members' Meeting took place on Saturday, December 6, in Erlanger, Kentucky. This was the first Audubon meeting in which Carol Browner served as Board Chair.

The membership elected 12 directors to the Class of 2006, including six new directors: Lynn Dolnick, Lloyd Semple, Michael Stolper, Ione Werthman, John Whittle, and Steven T. Zimmerman; and six other directors were re-elected to serve another term: Leslie

Dach, Jack Dempsey, Vivian Johnson, David Walsh, John L. Whitmire, and Alan Wilson.

During the open session of the meeting, members presented five resolutions to the assembly. They included items related to Chapter financial support and National Board governance. After some discussion, and with the addition of a report on the Ad hoc Committee's progress by Bill McQuilkin, the Annual Meeting of Members voted unanimously to have the resolutions considered by the appropriate Board committees.

At the close of the meeting, Carol Browner urged the members present, Chapters, State, and Home offices to focus on the many challenges facing all of us in both making new progress and maintaining the gains already made on conservation and environmental protection throughout the country. She urged the Audubon Family to continue to rise to these challenges.

New Network of Urban NAS Chapters Formed

Last fall, Golden Gate Audubon hosted representatives from eight other large, urban Audubon chapters from around the country to talk about common interests and needs. Out of the gathering came a new organization: the Audubon Urban Chapter Network (AUCN).

Representatives discussed areas of mutual concern to Audubon chapters serving urban populations. The group discussed fundraising, financial stability and alternatives for urban chapter finances; leadership; diversifying chapter membership and leadership; and what urban chapters need from National Audubon Society. Ultimately, it was decided that the establishment of an ongoing coalition of urban chapters would be a valuable collaboration.

Chapters represented were Seattle; Atlanta; Tucson; Houston; Portland, OR; Santa Clara Valley; New York City; and Golden Gate Audubon. An additional six chapters indicated a strong interest in participating. In total, the group represented roughly 70,000 Audubon members.

The AUCN is intended to include local chapters affiliated with National Audubon Society that have these characteristics:

- Serves a contiguous metropolitan area of approximately 500,000 population or larger.
- Have approximately 2500 or more members.
- Have a paid staff or are actively working toward having staffed positions.

One important topic on the agenda was the relationship between Audubon chapters and the National Audubon Society office in New York. The group, as a whole, had extremely strong objections to efforts by the national office to bypass or, in some cases, ignore local chapters altogether in planning.

Several groups were concerned about NAS efforts to establish Audubon Centers around the country without first consulting the chapters that would be affected. Many felt that the national office has no interest in supporting chapters, and pointed out that dues-sharing has radically decreased and may disappear altogether next year. Considering the dedicated conservation efforts in numerous issues over many years, as well as essential environmental education work, the members of AUCN believe that Audubon chapters, both large and small, play a vital role in the total organization.—from "New Network of Urban Chapters," *The Gull*, January 2004, pp. 1-2.

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

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MDAS Board of Directors

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Calendar of Birding Events

San Diego Bird Festival, Feb. 4-8

Ken Kaufman will be the keynote speaker at the San Diego Birding Festival, Feb. 4-8. Everyone is invited to taste the range of flavors this festival offers. Besides adventure birding trips to the Anza-Borrego Desert and Cuyamaca Mountain, there will be kayaking around San Diego Bay. Whatever style of birding you desire, you'll find it at the San Diego festival. For more information, see the festival's website at <<http://www.sandiegonaaturefestivals.org/birdfest/glance.htm>> or call 619-516-0139.

Salton Sea Bird Festival, Feb. 13-16

The Salton Sea Bird Festival showcases 400+ species. The keynote speakers at the Feb. 15 banquet will be two authors (Guy McCaskie and Phil Unit) of *Birds of the Salton Sea, Status, Biogeography and Ecology*, the definitive book on the ecology of the Salton Sea. For a lighter note, Nicole Perretta, known as the Loud Lunatic, will entertain with over 130 bird vocalizations. For information on field trips and registration, go to festival's website at <<http://www.newriverwetlands.com/saltonsea.html>>.

Migration Day, Natural Bridges State Park, Santa Cruz, Feb. 14

Celebrate the fantastic journey of migrating animals that pass through the Central Coast—elephant seals, salmon, shorebirds, salamanders, songbirds, whales, and monarch butterflies—at this one-day event. Music, crafts, interactive booths 11 a.m.-4 p.m. For information, call 831-423-4609 or visit the website at <www.santacruzstateparks.org/parks/natbridges>.

California Duck Day, Davis, Feb. 14

The Yolo Basin Foundation is sponsoring California Duck Day on Feb. 14 with field trips and workshops. Registration is required and costs \$20. For more information, call 530-757-3780.

Board Urges Vote No on Measure N

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peripheral pipeline, pump more water from the Delta, and ship it to southern California.

Whether or not this is the covert reason behind Measure N, an expanded Los Vaqueros is a bad deal for Contra Costa. Before a larger dam can be built, the existing reservoir will be drained and the existing dam destroyed. During construction of the new reservoir, we will lose Los Vaqueros water quality, and its drought and emergency supply benefits for 3-7 years. BUT we the ratepayers will still be paying on the 30-year bonds for the destroyed dam.

CCWD has not identified a single partner or a source of funding for the new, mega-reservoir. The District has not provided detailed cost estimates or identified mitigations for the harm to the Delta and to Contra Costa. Although the District hasn't figured out who will pay for the new one or what the economic impacts will be, CCWD will consider voter approval of Measure N binding and will proceed with its plans to drain the reservoir and tear down the existing dam.

The water district has refused to do an Environmental Impact Report. It appears that the District doesn't want us to know about the potential problems, such as how the expanded dam could harm our water quality, parkland, wildlife, and fish, or how a huge reservoir would remove obstacles to more growth in the Bay Area. The additional 400,000 acre feet of water that will be sucked out of the Delta could support more than 2 million new users.

In a worst case scenario, assume that initial funding is provided, and our Los Vaqueros is destroyed. But the next federal and state appropriation to rebuild the dam is NOT made, just as appropriations for the San Luis Drain were not made. In these times of large government deficits, CalFed

may not find the money to build the dam. Then we could be left with the bond obligations and nothing more.

For all these reasons, MDAS has joined the growing coalition opposed to Measure N. That coalition includes Golden Gate Audubon, Save Mount Diablo, the Sierra Club, Save San Francisco Bay Association, Greenbelt Alliance, the Bay Institute, California Native Plant Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, East Bay Trails Council, Alliance of Contra Costa Taxpayers, and other local organizations.

Yes, California has grave and important water issues. But CCWD has not done its homework or presented persuasive information that this scheme is better for ratepayers, better for the Delta, better for the environment, and better for water quality and reliability. VOTE NO ON MEASURE N!

For more information, go to http://californiawatercrisis.org/desrory_los_vaqueros.htm or <http://www.StoptheDamWaste.com> or <http://www.NoonMeasureN.com>.

