

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 51, Number 5

February 2006

The Secret World of Mushrooms

Mike Boom

Are mushrooms invisible super-organisms? Do mushrooms have sex lives? Are they likely to have strange inter-kingdom alliances? There is much more to mushrooms than meets the eye. Join Mike Boom for a revealing peek into the world behind the familiar mushrooms you see in the woods and fields. Learn to identify and appreciate the denizens of the mushroom world that you are most likely to encounter in California.

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

Mike Boom is a past president and newsletter editor of the Mycological Society of San Francisco. He currently serves as Education Chair. He has written articles about mushrooms and mycology for the East Bay Express, *Mushroom: The Journal*, and other publications. His articles are great fun to read as he writes with humor and clearly enjoys and appreciates his subject matter. He also leads fungus field forays and gives introductory mycology lectures for groups such as the San Francisco Park and Recreation Department docents and the Oakland Museum docents. Mike's other biological



AMANITA MUSCARIA. These are the mushrooms that bring to mind the *Danse Chinoise* to the music of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* in Disney's "Fantasia." According to one source, these are "Poisonous and hallucinogenic—esteemed by both maggots and mystics." A common name *Fly Agaric* comes from an ancient practice of mixing them with milk to stupefy flies. They're common in western North America, Europe and Asia.

interest is marine biology. He is an active scuba diver and produces underwater videos that have won prizes in competitions around the world.

Birding Information

Brian Murphy and Bob Wisecarver will update three of their local projects. Brian monitors and photographs the Shell Ridge Golden Eagles and is pleased to report that the female returned this November after leaving with an eye injury last June. Brian's photos will illustrate how Bob's Quail Habitat Improvement project feeds the local wildlife. And, we will see their latest project called 'Just for Ducks' which provides Wood Duck boxes in strategic locations.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 2**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek (see map on page 7).

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.

Welcome New Members

Patricia Bacchetti	Oakland
Jackie Bobrosky	Martinez
William Davis	Walnut Creek
Nancy Hanna	Walnut Creek
Thomas Kieny	Lafayette
Dolores Morrison	San Leandro
Laurie Morrison	Lafayette
Patricia Riggs	Lafayette
Michael & Lenora Robertson	Concord

MDAS Activists

Brian Murphy and Cathy Wacker spent a day installing six Wood Duck boxes on the banks of Walnut Creek. Come hear more about this activity at the Birding Information portion of the February general meeting

Bill and Leslie Hunt have been active in a WCOS program to grow native grass and lead groups in planting in Heather Farm Nature Area and Shell Ridge Open Space. These are not just a few plants, but several thousand, and has run into many planting sessions.

Bob Wisecarver and Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation crews have been busy in North Lime Ridge Open Space, trying to duplicate the success of the Borges Ranch Quail Gully project. Two fenced sections of gully have been fenced, painted, and brush piles installed so far. A grant request has been submitted to the county Fish and Wildlife Committee for money to fence and plant a third section. Willow sticks will be cut and planted just as soon as buds start to show. Two years ago, twenty out of twenty-eight willows survived and several are now up to eight feet tall. So little work for such great success! Incidentally, last year this project was awarded a "Beauty of Environment" certificate by the Walnut Creek Action For Beauty Council, so more than birds have noticed the work.

McNabney Marsh projects are still under development, with Chevron pipeline, and marsh drying and trenching still to be finalized. Final planting for the season was scheduled for January 14, weather permitting. *Bob Wisecarver*

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

The central Contra Costa Christmas Bird count was held on Saturday, December 17. It was a fairly rainy day and our number of species and overall number of birds were low. We had about 60 observers in the field that day. The total number of species seen was 145. Our average is around 150. Highlights were a Tufted Duck seen at the Bollman water treatment facility in Concord by Steve Glover, a Canyon Wren at Black Diamond by Jill Hedgecock's team. A Ross's Goose seen with Canada Geese by Bill Chilson's group was only our second in 25 years.

The East Contra Costa count was on December 21. It was a calm, overcast day with no rain until the afternoon. We had almost 30 participants on seven teams that day. Perhaps because of so many storms the week before and finally a clear day, we saw almost all we could expect and **seven** new species for the count, now in its fifth year. 153 species were seen on the day. New were Eurasian Wigeon, White-throated Sparrow, Black-bellied Plover, Townsend's Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Great-tailed Grackle. Other good birds were Winter Wren, Caspian Tern, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Phainopepla and Varied Thrush. This many species for an inland count is most unusual and just shows what a rich area the eastern part of Contra Costa County is for all of us. *Jimm Edgar & Maury Stern, Co-compilers*

Join the Fun, Make a Difference

Membership in Mount Diablo Audubon Society offers opportunities and challenges that can lead to learning, fellowship, and accomplishment. Opportunities such as enjoying the field trips with knowledgeable leaders, and hearing from experts about our diverse natural environment. Challenges such as caring for local bird habitats, and for outreach to our community schools and to the public.

You can personally take advantage of the opportunities in many ways. Join one of the field trips; attend the meetings. You can strive to meet the challenges in various ways, too. A \$40 donation places an Audubon Adventures program directly into the hands of a Fourth Grade teacher in our area. Volunteer as a trip leader; or sign on to staff the MDAS table for an hour or two at one of our birding events.

Take an active role in the business of the Society. There are currently two openings for which volunteers are needed. If you have computer skills and just a few hours each month your new post as Membership Chairman is waiting for you. Call Ann McGregor, 968-1677, to learn just what this job entails.

Our web site is about to receive an overdue remodeling. Someone to assist Patrick King with this task will receive a great deal of thanks. Here's an opportunity to share your skills to make a valued contribution to your organization

and for our conservation efforts. Please call Patrick King, (510) 642-6522, daytime, to learn about the duties.

Shirley Ellis is our Volunteer Coordinator. Call her at 938-3703. It's certain that by taking a more active role, you'll make new friends, learn something new, join the fun, and make a difference.

One of our valued volunteers who stands out—but stands behind the scenes—is Gerry Argenal. She's the one who supervises and coordinates the refreshments at each of our meetings.

Thank you, Gerry, you're an indefatigable soul, and you make a great cup of coffee, too!



This bird can be found throughout the Central and Western United States. It is commonly seen in the agricultural fields near the Salton Sea foraging for newts, frogs and other aquatic morsels. Its name belies its usual appearance.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to page 6 for the answer.

ABCDEEEFHIIISTW

Field Trip Schedule

By Elizabeth Dickey

Field Trip Reports

February

- 1 Wednesday East Contra Costa
- 4-5 Saturday/Sunday *CANCELLED*
- 8 Wednesday Grizzly Island
- 16 Thursday East Briones
- 18 Saturday Bolinas
- 23 Thursday Davis Sewer Ponds

March

- 1 Wednesday Emeryville/Berkeley Waterfront
- 4 Saturday Capay Valley
- 9 Thursday Lafayette Reservoir
- 15 Wednesday Borges Ranch
- 18 Saturday Black Diamond
- 23 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
- 29 Wednesday Lagunitas Lake

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php, or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Customary carpool expense is 37½ cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths; Category 2: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain; Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool locations: Sun Valley—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley 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 LaGonda. 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 Road.

February Field Trips

Wednesday, February 1. **East Contra Costa.** Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 8:00 AM. Meet at Round Valley parking lot on Marsh Creek Road at 8:45 to arrange carpools for trip. This will be a circular trip to some of the good spots we have found throughout the East County Christmas count. By taking full advantage of car pooling, we will be able to make more roadside stops. Full day trip; will go in light rain. Leader: Jimm Edgar 510-658-2330.

Saturday/Sunday, February 4-5. **Los Banos/Panoche Valley.** *CANCELLED*

Wednesday, February 8. **Grizzly Island Wildlife Area.** [Please call the Leader, Maury Stern, 284-5980, if you plan to attend this trip, as we need to inform the Ranger in advance of the approximate number.] Carpool leaves at 7 AM from Sun Valley. Meet at 8:30 AM 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. The California Department of Fish and Game's Grizzly Island Wildlife Area is in the heart of the 84,000-

acre Suisun Marsh, the largest contiguous estuarine marsh in the United States. Grizzly Island provides habitat for more than 200 species of birds and is home to a variety of threatened or endangered wildlife and plants. We may see the herd of Tule Elk. We may also bird at the Rush Ranch if time permits after finishing at Grizzly Island. Category 1.

Thursday, February 16. **East Briones. Briones Regional Park.** Meet at 8 AM at the top of Briones Road off Alhambra Valley Road. This is approximately a 3-mile round trip through grasslands to the Sindicich Lagoon ponds. Interesting ducks are sometimes found here. Also raptors and grassland species. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 3.

Saturday February 18. **Bolinas Lagoon-Five Brooks.** Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Acalanes Ave. Meet at 8:45 AM in Five Brooks. Leader: Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987. Category 2.

Thursday, February 23. **Davis Sewer Ponds.** Carpool leaves at 8:00 AM from Sun Valley. Meet in Davis at 9:00 AM. From I-80, exit at Mace Blvd. and turn left; continue on Mace, which turns into Covell; turn right onto Powerline Road (E6) to Road 28 and go right to gate and sign-in box for the Wetlands. All-day trip. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 3.

November 10, Heather Farm. Six members enjoyed a pleasant walk around Heather Farm Park on a mild, sunny autumn morning. 31 species were seen, including Common Moorhen, Belted Kingfisher, and Western Bluebird.

Fred Safier

December 7, Niles Canyon/Quarry Lakes Regional Park. The trip to Niles Canyon/Quarry Lakes was certainly one of the most memorable field trips I have led. Five members and guests joined us for a wonderful day of birding. The 71 species may be a high for the trip, but it was the sightings and unusual birds that made the day. A good look at a flyby Peregrine Falcon got the morning off right. A male Hooded Merganser was beautiful. Two Green Herons standing within 20 feet of us with a Virginia Rail walking nearby was spectacular. 25 or more Wilson's Snipe flew out a few feet below our feet to settle on a nearby mud flat for easy viewing. We ended the day after lunch at the Niles nursery near the Vallejo Adobe where we had Townsend's Warbler and Red Bellied Sapsucker.

Jimm Edgar



California Shrike (Butcher Bird)
Lanius ludovicianus gambeli

Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard
1930

January 7, Putah Creek. Perfect weather—a mild day with no fog anywhere. Eight birders enjoyed beautiful scenery and 72 species, including most of the expected specialties—good looks at Phainopepla, Osprey, Hooded Merganser and Barrow's Goldeneye. In addition, we saw some unexpected and exciting birds, to wit: White-throated Sparrow and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Northern Shrike, and an Ovenbird.

Fred Safier

November–December Observations

By Steve Glover

Three Greater White-fronted Geese were at Martinez Regional Shoreline 11/6-24 (DD, JM, RF). Two Cackling Geese were at Martinez Regional Shoreline 11/11-24 (DD, JM, RF). Approximately 300 “Aleutian” Cackling Geese were at Holland Tract near Knightsen on 12/21 (JT, JC, SG), a location where they have proven to be regular in winter. Twenty-five Mute Swans at Mallard Reservoir near Concord 11/13 was a disconcertingly high count for this destructive introduced species (CL, LL).

A pair of Wood Ducks was an unusual find at Lake Anza in Tilden Park 11/24 (JP). A female Tufted Duck was at Mallard Reservoir 12/17 (SG). Up to 30 Barrow’s Goldeneyes were at the traditional Martinez Regional Shoreline site 11/15-18 (DD, JM, RF).

American White Pelicans were noted at Mallard Reservoir near Concord 11/11 (8; DD), Marsh Creek Reservoir west of Brentwood 11/20 (10; SGa), and Mallard Reservoir 12/17 (1; SG).

An adult Bald Eagle was noted over Inspiration Point, Tilden Regional Park 11/20 (JP). They are rare at Tilden but regularly winter at nearby San Pablo Reservoir.

A Clapper Rail at Martinez Regional Shoreline 11/10 was at a spot where their status is unclear (TW).

A nice tally of 10 Lesser Yellowlegs was recorded at Holland Tract near Knightsen on 12/21 (JT, JC). A Pectoral Sandpiper at Martinez Regional Shoreline 11/7 was quite late for the county (DD).



Red Phalarope at Lafayette Reservoir

A single Caspian Tern at Mallard Reservoir 11/11 (DD) and two birds at Clifton Court Forebay 12/21 (fide Jimm Edgar) followed hot on the heels of last year’s first winter records for the county.

Two or three Northern Saw-whet Owls at milepost 6 on Morgan Territory Road 11/16 were a very rare find for the Contra Costa portion of the Diablo Range (PG).

Pileated Woodpeckers continue to be found near Skyline Gate, Redwood Regional Park, in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. One was there on 11/20 (MR), one or the same was near the archery range 11/21 (SS), and two birds were in the area on 12/24 (NS).

A Barn Swallow was noted flying south over Holland Tract on 12/21 (JT), a noteworthy find despite a flurry of records in recent years.

A Black-throated Gray Warbler was a rare winter find in suburban San Ramon 12/26 (DB).

A lingering male Western Tanager was in Alamo 11/23 (JH).

Single White-throated Sparrows visited Richmond feeders 11/12 (AK) and 11/27–12/14 (LP); another visited a Walnut Creek feeder 12/12+ (LG). One at Holland Tract near Knightsen 12/21 was unusual for the location (JT, JC, SG).

A flock of 1500 Tricolored Blackbirds at Holland Tract 12/21 contained at least 15 Yellow-headed Blackbirds (JT, JC). A male Great-tailed Grackle at Holland Tract near Knightsen 12/21 was an overdue first for the East Contra Costa CBC (JC, JT, SG).

The 6th annual East CC Christmas Bird Count broke our record high species number by six at 153 species! Amazing for an inland count. An overcast morning was free of rain, but it rained most of the afternoon. Notable misses were Red-breasted Sapsucker and Rough-legged Hawk for the first time. Good birds included 15 Cattle Egret, a Bald Eagle at Los Vaqueros reservoir, Black Rail at Iron House Sanitation, Barn Swallow, many Lewis’s Woodpeckers, two Caspian Terns at Clifton Court Forebay and seven new species for the count. Eurasian Wigeon, White-throated Sparrow, Black-bellied Plover, Townsend’s Warbler, Red-breasted Merganser at Clifton Court, Vesper Sparrow at Round Valley, and Great-tailed Grackle.

David Bowden, Josiah Clark, David Diller, Robbie Fischer, Joel Herr, Sharyn Galloway, Laura Gee, Steve Glover, Phil Gordon, Alan Krakauer, Cindy Lieurance, Leslie Lieurance, Joe Morlan, John Poole, Lory Poulson, Marc Rauzon, Norma Solarz, Sue Stanton, Jim Tietz, Teri Wills.

Ornithology Opportunities

The tenth annual **San Diego Bird Festival**, February 9-12, sponsored by the San Diego Audubon Society. There will be pelagic trips, trips to Mexico, and birding by kayak. This year’s banquet speaker will be Pete Dunne, Vice President of the New Jersey Audubon Society and author of numerous books. Contact: San Diego Bird Festival, 4891 Pacific Highway #112, San Diego, CA 92110 www.sandiegoaudubon.org.

Salton Sea International Bird Festival, February 17-20, Imperial, CA. Over 400 recorded species, you can see up to 100

species per day. Salton Sea features desert, wetlands, agriculture and great birding on the Pacific Flyway. Contact: Salton Sea International Bird Festival, P.O. Box 156, Imperial, CA 92251. www.newriverwetlands.com/saltonsea.html.

The Great Backyard Bird Count returns for its ninth season February 17-20. The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology encourage bird enthusiasts to share their love of birds with a friend, a child, a scout troop, a class, or a co-worker-open-

ing new eyes to the joy of birding and the fun of creating a unique snapshot of winter bird abundance and distribution across the continent. Every pair of eyes is needed and everybirdy counts, whether in a backyard or any of the 730 million acres of public lands.

California Duck Days, February 24-25, Davis. Enjoy this wetland festival in the heart of the Pacific Flyway. Field trips and workshops, pre-registration required. Yolo Basin Foundation-CDD, P.O. Box 943, Davis, CA 95617. Phone: (530) 757-3780.

EBRPD Opens Brushy Peak

By Nancy Wenninger

In November 2005, East Bay Regional Park District opened a new open space preserve in eastern Alameda County which features unique cultural and natural resources, as well as excellent opportunities for bird watching.

Brushy Peak Regional Preserve is located north of I-580 and east of Vasco Road in Livermore, at the end of Laughlin Road. The preserve includes more than 2,000 acres of open space and trails. An area landmark visible from I-580, Brushy Peak is not vegetated by brush as the name implies, but rather by coast live oaks stunted by exposure to the elements. Habitat within the preserve includes rolling grassland, oak woodland and seasonal wetlands. One hundred twenty-two species of birds and 28 species of mammals occur there, including sixteen special status species.

Brushy Peak rises to an elevation of 1,700 feet above surrounding grasslands at the juncture of three distinct geographic regions: the Bay Area, the Delta and the Central Valley. A network of ancient trade routes once linked the prehistoric inhabitants of these different regions. The native Californians were drawn to the peak's rock shelters and abundant bird life for economic, social and ceremonial events. The peak's rock outcrops still hold special spiritual significance for modern Native Americans as a place of renewal and mystery.

Later, fortune seekers crossed the Altamont Pass from coastal regions to the Sierra during the Gold Rush. After the decline of mining, outlaws who preyed upon miners in the Sierra settled in the Livermore Valley area and used the rock outcrops and canyons as hideouts. According to legend, the famous



Photo by Kevin Cox

Mexican bandit Joaquin Murietta used Brushy Peak as his favorite hideout. Homesteaders settled the area around Brushy Peak during the 1870s, and used the site for family picnics and community gatherings. Weathered barns and corrals have been preserved as a reminder of Livermore's rich agricultural and ranching history. Cattle-grazing still occurs as a tool to manage the parkland.

California annual grassland is the dominant plant community composed of native and non-native annual and perennial grasses and wildflowers. The preserve is home to many California ground squirrels whose burrows create the structure for a complex ecosystem. Other species which inhabit the burrow chambers include the California tiger salamander, the California red-legged frog, the San Joaquin kit fox and the Western Burrowing Owl. Brushy Peak is rich in both num-

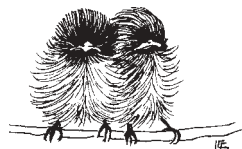
bers and diversity of raptors, including the Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon. Other birds commonly seen include Western Meadowlark, numerous sparrow species and various shorebirds in Frick Lake, a vernal lake located near the entrance to the preserve. This area is very hot and dry in the summer; however, winter and spring promise interesting birding and a challenging hike.

The peak itself is managed by the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District (LARPD). Because of the sensitive cultural and biological resources located there, public access is currently restricted to LARPD-led tours. However, EBRPD visitors are welcome to enjoy the rest of the preserve on a number of loop trails.

You will find maps of Brushy Peak at http://www.ebparks.org/resources/resources_maps.htm.

Painless MDAS Fund Raisers!

Don't forget that when you recycle your used HP and Lexmark inkjet printer cartridges by bringing them to the general meetings or dropping them off at Wild Birds Unlimited, MDAS will earn \$2.50 for each. We will also accept cell phones, pagers & PDAs. Place them in a sealed plastic bag. No refilled cartridges, please.



2006 Entertainment Books are a great value at only \$25! Save 50% on travel, restaurants, entertainment, retail and much more. They make welcome gifts for your friends. They are available at the

monthly MDAS meetings, and also at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill. Not only will your budget benefit from your purchase of this coupon book, but Mount Diablo Audubon will also profit.

Check-lists of Northern California Birds, in the new taxonomy, are available at the MDAS meetings, for just 25 cents each.

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**Activities at
Wild Birds Unlimited**

February 4 — 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM

- **Native Bird Connections**
will present on-going programs with live birds.

Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count is Friday–Monday, February 17–20. 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 bird reportings.

Bird Feeding Tips

- Last fall and winter saw an explosion of the nomadic Pine Siskins. It had been 9–10 years since we have seen them in such large numbers. This year we have only had a few reports. It's interesting how erratic is their presence. So the numbers of Goldfinches are down considerably from previous years. Watch for both at your thistle seed feeders.

- 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. It is then formed into easy to handle cakes. Birds readily attracted to suet include woodpeckers, jays, chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches.

Mike & Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com



White-faced Ibis
Plegadis chihi

“On the west side of the San Joaquin Valley in summer above the bending cat-tails from almost any quarter of the sky one sees lines of Ibis appear, their long necks and curved bills straight out and their feet extended well beyond the tail. Their lines tend to form a V but constantly break and re-form. As they prepare to alight, they tumble and dart downward, swooping suddenly this way and that. After alighting they often stretch their wings over their backs; then they fringe the edge of

the shallow water, standing in the same attitudes that the Egyptian artists portrayed thousands of years ago. When they feed they often walk steadily forward, thrusting the whole head and neck under water. In flight they flap till they get under way and then flap and sail alternately. The head makes a curious knot-like effect in the outline of a flying bird,

thicker than the bill in front or the neck behind; the slender legs project beyond the square-tipped tail and then broaden out into the feet. The birds when startled or when calling to one another utter a low *cruck, cruck*. The *general color* at a distance is *black*, but a close view in good light brings out the *rich chestnut of the neck and under parts*, and the *purplish bronze green of back and tail*. The white about the base of the bill is only noticeable when a bird is facing the observer at fairly close range.”

Birds of the Pacific States, Ralph Hoffmann, 1927.

Salton Sea *Continued from page 8*

shorebirds. Endangered Yuma Clapper Rails nest here along with Least Bitterns, Cinnamon Teals, Redheads and Ruddy Ducks. There is an observation blind here at Unit 1 of the NWR.

From Gentry Road, drive east on Eddins Road almost to the town of Calipatria to the intersection at Sperry Road. On the left is the “pig farm,” and this is the place to look for Common and Ruddy Ground-doves. Patience and perseverance may be required.

At the Wister Waterfowl Management Area, on the eastern side of the Sea, a number of rare migrants were recorded in December. Included were Rufous-backed Robin, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, and Smith's Longspur. Look for warblers and tanagers, possibly an American Redstart.

There are many places around this oasis in the hostile desert where the birding can be fruitful. You cannot expect to visit them all in a single weekend. South of Calipatria are Finney Lake and Ramer Lake, a good place to see Fulvous Whis-



ting-Duck. This is habitat, also, for White-winged Dove and Crissal Thrasher. North from Niland, Bombay Beach is worth checking out, as is the delta of the Whitewater River at the north end of the Sea; on the west side is Salton City. A nature trail—cactus garden—bird sanctuary, developed by volunteers, provides a place where Greater Roadrunners and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers might be added to your trip list.

With its fabulous diversity of observed species, and its position on the Pacific Flyway, it is easy to see why the Salton Sea might well be awarded the title of “Avian International Airport.”

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

____ Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year.

____ Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

____ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 for one year.

____ For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive four quarterly issues of the *Audubon Magazine*.

____ I'm enclosing an additional donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Card Number: _____

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Name on Card: _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to:

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:

Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Court, Danville, CA 94526

the Quail

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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.

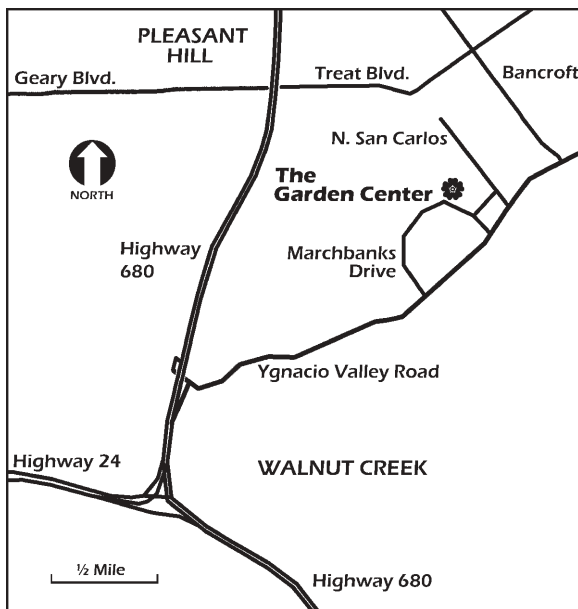
Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership 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

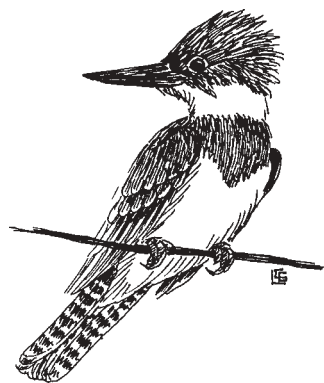
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Deadline for the March issue is February 8.



Driving directions: From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into parking lot. From Highway 680 south, take Treat Blvd. to Bancroft. Go right to Ygnacio Valley Road, turn right and go one block past signal at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). At Marchbanks Drive turn right. The Garden Center is located on the right in the second block.



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Yellow-footed Gull • Obsidian Butte, Salton Sea

Quickies

Weekend Birding in California

Salton Sea

In Imperial County is a geological, ecological, historical, and ornithological enigma—the Salton Sea. It is generally known that the sea dates only from 1905 when a break in the Imperial Canal carrying water from the Colorado River to the agricultural fields filled the basin. But it must be remembered that the early Cahuilla Indians lived on the shores of an earlier, larger, Lake Cahuilla. This freshwater lake had dried up, “poco a poco” the Indians said, by the time of the first Spanish explorers. The area plays a unique role in California’s economy, with ever-changing emphasis on different aspects of agriculture, recreation, and energy production from geothermal and solar sources.

The Salton Sea has much to offer bird watchers. One birder’s guide sums up: “Hot, smelly, muddy, full of flies, and

some of the best birding in the world. That’s the Salton Sea.” The Sea is tremendously attractive to birds, and it is a critical link on the Pacific Flyway. It is one of the “Important Bird Areas” of California as defined by Audubon California. Sensitive species of concern include Yuma Clapper Rail, Long-billed Curlew, Gull-billed Tern, as well as Wood Stork, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Black Skimmer, Western Snowy Plover, and eleven other species.

Target species that birders are willing to travel hundreds of miles for a good chance to add to their lists include Yellow-footed Gull and Ruddy Ground-Dove. Laughing Gulls and Black Terns are also found more readily here than elsewhere in California. Blue-footed Booby might be a lucky find.

You would do well to start your birding trip with a visit to the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, which is located at the west end of Sinclair Road in Calipatria. From Westmorland, take North Center Street, which becomes Forrester Road, Walker Road, and then Gentry Road, to Sinclair Road. Or, traveling south on Highway 111 through

Niland, turn right onto Sinclair. Unfortunately, the Visitor Center is closed on Saturday and Sunday (but picnic tables and restrooms are available). This is an area where you might see Verdins, Abert’s Towhees, or Gambel’s Quail.

Take McNerney Road, west from Gentry, to Obsidian Butte, a good place to scope the sea and to look for shorebirds. Along the way, watch for White-faced Ibis and possibly—in late summer—Wood Storks. Obsidian Butte is where the Yellow-footed Gull seen here was photographed in mid-September. Keep an eye out for pelagic birds. Magnificent Frigatebirds, Blue-footed and Brown Boobies, Laysan Albatross, and a number of different Shearwaters and Petrels have all been seen at the Salton Sea. Look for American White Pelicans, Laughing Gulls, Black and Gull-billed Terns, and Red-necked and Wilson’s Phalaropes, too.

Drive to the end of Vendel Road to look for Burrowing Owls that stand as sentries over the irrigation ditches, and to check the ponds at the end for ducks and

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