



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

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## Think Strategically, Act Locally • Steve Blank

Steve Blank, Chairman of the Board of Audubon, California, will share his vision and focus for Audubon California when we meet on February 1. Mr. Blank points out that, "All political surveys in California show that Audubon is the best respected and most trusted brand in the conservation community." As Audubon stands at the center of conservation and stewardship, he intends to build on that legacy. He understands that the chapters are the foundation of the organization and that it is there that growth will occur. He is working to make the state organization the communication hub for the grassroots conservation and education programs and practices. He is part of the strategy group that prepared the Audubon California 2010 Plan.

He says this about the local Audubon chapter members. "Most of you understood way before I did that birds and their habitats are harbingers of all our fate, and that if we are here on this earth as stewards for what is around us, then our role is clear. We need to direct conservation of critical bird habitat, we need to effect state and local policy that degrades or endangers birds and their homes, and we need to educate young and old on why preserving birds and their habitats is important." His focus will be to offer the tools, dollars, incentives, and resources to make chapters strong, influential and successful.

Mr. Blank brings to Audubon an extensive background in entrepreneurship. He is a faculty member of the University of California Berkeley Haas Business School where he teaches how to start and manage new companies and new product introductions. He has over 25 years experience in general management of high technology companies. He has been founder or participant in eight Silicon Valley startups since 1978. As a supporter of the Peninsula Open Space Trust's land-saving efforts he has contributed to establishing many acres of permanent open space and parkland in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. He is a member of the board of Pescadero Conservation Alliance and a director of Immersion Corporation, Macrovision Corporation, CafePress and Pharmix. In addition to his duties as the Chairman of the Board of Audubon California, he serves on the board of National Audubon.

### Birding Information

*Quail* Editor Ellis Myers will present an overview of birding in San Diego County. Ellis, a San Diego native, and his wife, Mimi, have most recently birded in the area just last



*THE SALTON SEA is a key stopover for millions of birds every year, including the threatened Brown Pelican, Snowy Plover and Yuma Clapper Rail. It's the premier spot for birders wishing to add Yellow-footed Gull to their life lists. This Gull commands his vista from near Obsidian Butte.*

*The Salton Sea is a national treasure. Its viability is high on Audubon California's priority list of conservation issues.*

month. He has written several *Quail* articles about Southern California birding, but would like to describe a few other sites of interest. He will also show a film clip of some of the backyard birds of the area, which he assures us will be just a little bit out of the ordinary.

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. (Map on page 9).

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

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

8:05 PM Speaker: Steve Blank

*\* Please remember to bring a cup.*

**March 1: Peter Pyle, Transpacific Migration**

## Welcome New Members

Wade Bedinger	Walnut Creek
Vicky Cupp	Antioch
Marylee Nurrenbern	San Ramon
Pat Silverstein	Lafayette
Marc Sylvester	Danville
Ronald Thomas	Martinez
Roger Wilcox	Walnut Creek

## President's Corner

I probably should wait until the next *Quail* to say anything about our education adventure into the local schools, but I can not wait. When you read this we will have had our first classroom experience into Willow Cove elementary school in Pittsburg. Native Bird Connections will bring live raptors into the classroom and let the kids see the birds in person. There will be about eight sessions with the school. Our hope is that it will get kids interested in nature and the great outdoors. More to follow.

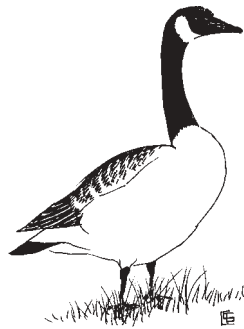
We have finished our two 2006 Christmas Bird Counts for Contra Costa County. The central count on December 16 saw 152 species which puts us on that exclusive list of counts that have seen over 150 species. Of the over 1600 counts nationwide only about 70 counts see over 150 species. Our east County count had 143 species which is also very good. A Bald Eagle seen at Rossmoor, Mountain Bluebirds in Mitchell Canyon and Redheads in the Bollman water treatment facility in Concord were highlights for the central count. Two Bald Eagles at Los Vaqueros reservoir, a Tufted Duck and Red-breasted Merganser at Clifton Court forebay and two Swainson's Hawks near Brentwood highlighted the east County count.

One last word. Our general meeting on Thursday, January 4, was just wonderful. Stan Senner, the Alaska executive director for Audubon Alaska spoke about Alaska and in particular, what is ahead for the possible development of Alaska oil fields. The beautiful lands of Alaska could well be turned into a lot of oil fields with devastating consequences for wildlife. Audubon is in the center of trying to bring a voice

## What You Can Do

✓ Become a docent with East Bay Regional Parks. The Parks District has recently inaugurated four new docent programs from the Black Diamond, Tilden, Coyote Hills, and Crab Cove visitor centers. You may be able to join a docent training class this spring. Phone the Volunteer Coordinator at (510) 544-2515.

✓ Help reduce the cost of printing and mailing the *Quail*. Each copy in your mailbox means about one dollar that Mount Diablo Audubon could otherwise assign to our conservation efforts such as helping make children aware of nature. Just send an e-mail to [annmcg@pacbell.net](mailto:annmcg@pacbell.net) and write "e-mail Quail." Also include your correct e-mail address, as some systems do not display it automatically. We will notify you by e-mail when each new issue has been posted to the MDAS web site. Read the issue on the Internet, or print it from your computer.



**Q** Numerous along the shores of San Francisco Bay until the mid-1900s, but sadly almost annihilated by hunters for its tasty meat, the once-called "Candlestick Bird" gave its name to the Point and the Park.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to page 8 for the answer to this bird's identity.

BCDEEGILLLLNORUW

for wise use of the land and how to develop the oil fields without destroying the wildlife. We were very privileged to hear Stan speak. You all should attend our general meetings the first Thursday of each month at Heather Farm Garden Center.  
*Jimm Edgar*

## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



**BIRDSEED SALE**  
All 20 lb. to 25 lb. bags

**SUET SALE**  
Buy 4 – Get 1 FREE  
(Sale February 6–25)

### Activities at Wild Birds Unlimited

February 3 — 10:30-3:00  
Native Bird Connections will present on-going programs with Live Birds.

### The Great Backyard Bird Count

is Friday–Monday, Feb. 16–19. 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](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

It's fascinating to watch the maps explode with bird reportings.

### Bird Feeding

There have been dozens of reports of Townsend's Warblers at birdfeeders. They are eating sunflower chips and suet. Their beauty and antics have been entertaining many observers. Varied Thrushes continue to be seen in good numbers. Cedar Waxwings and large numbers of American Robins are gobbling up berries.

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, some warblers, 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](http://www.wbupleasanthill.com)

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## February

3 Saturday	Thornton/Consumnes Preserve
8 Thursday	Grizzly Island
16-19 Friday-Monday	Klamath Basin
21 Wednesday	Walnut Creek Parks
28 Wednesday	Concord Parks

## March

3 Saturday	Capay Valley
*15 Thursday	San Leandro Reservoir
31 Saturday	Black Diamond Mines

\* Note change of date.

## April

7 Saturday	Garin Regional Park
14 Saturday	Pine Canyon
26 Thursday	Del Puerto Canyon
28 Saturday	Mines Road

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php).

Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, bring a lunch and join us during our midday break.

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 Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Take the Acalanes Road/Upper Happy Valley Road exit of SR 24, west of Lafayette. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with Acalanes Road and on the north side of El Nido Ranch Road.

Customary carpool expense is \$3-5 for short trips, \$5-10 for longer trips, plus tolls and entry fees shared among driver and riders.

### ① Saturday, February 3 Woodbridge Road/Thornton Cosumnes Preserve

Leader: Ethan Chickering, 686-9231.

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



Western Robin  
*Planesticus migratorius propinquus*  
Birds of Golden Gate Park  
Joseph Mailliard  
1930

### Attention!

Everyone should remind themselves not to leave valuables in their car at trailheads. Some recent incidents in local news substantiate this advisory.

### ① Thursday, February 8 Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

[Please call the Leader 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.

### Friday-Monday, February 16-19 Bald Eagles of the Klamath Basin

Leader: Terry Colborn, 530-758-0689.

This trip is fully booked.

### ① Wednesday, February 21 Walnut Creek City Parks

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979.

Meet 8:30 AM at wooden railing at the natural pond, just past the community center in Heather Farm Park. This is down the hill from where our monthly meetings are held. We will tour the park, view wintering birds, then drive to Howe-Homestead Park south of Ygnacio Valley Road. Time permitting, we will visit two other park areas off Rudgear Road.

### ① Wednesday, February 28 Concord City Parks

Leader: Lynn Lakso, 932-6367.

Meet at 8:30 AM in parking lot at Newhall Community Park. From Ygnacio Valley Road in Walnut Creek, drive east towards Clayton. Turn left on Ayers Road and another left on Turtle Creek. Park in the first lot on the right near the sports fields. We will also visit Markham Nature Park. Continue on Turtle Creek to Treat Blvd and turn left. Turn right at Cowell Road, right on Babel Lane, right on Palmwood Drive, right on La Vista Avenue and enter the park. Wintering song birds, ducks and woodpeckers are possible. Bring a lunch.

# November–December Observations \_\_\_\_\_ By Steve Glover

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at [countylines@sbcglobal.net](mailto:countylines@sbcglobal.net) or 925 997 1112.

A Green Heron 12/17 at Newhall Park, Concord was an unusual find for central county in winter (LL).

A male Eurasian Wigeon at the Albany Crescent on 11/21 was joined by a female on 11/23 (JC, BP). Four Redheads at Mallard Reservoir north of Concord on 12/16 furnished a rare record for the Christmas bird count (SG). A male Tufted Duck found on the Eastern Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count on 12/20 at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron (KR, EP) was still present through at least 12/23 (MB). A female Barrow's Goldeneye was an unusual find at the Moraga Country Club on 11/18 (DW). Five Hooded Mergansers were along Grayson Creek, Pleasant Hill on 12/7 (PG). A male Red-breasted Merganser at Clifton Court Forebay on 12/20 was at a site where they are found most winters in very small numbers (KR).

A Rough-legged Hawk was a surprise find at Briones Regional Park on 12/18 (DD); a dark-phase Swainson's Hawk over Palm Tract east of Byron on

12/20 was at a site where they have been found annually in recent winters (SG, EP).

A Ruddy Turnstone at the Richmond Marina 11/5 was a true rarity for the county; 3 Surfbirds there the same day were more expected but still noteworthy (ES).

Up to 2 Burrowing Owls at Meeker Slough north of Point Isabel on 12/17 provided one of the few modern records for west county (NB). A Short-eared Owl at Meeker Slough on 11/5 may have been the first ever found in the western portion of the county, certainly in recent decades (ES).

An adult Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Newhall Park, Concord 12/16-17 was likely the same bird present there last winter (SG, LL).

This winter has been noteworthy for above average numbers of Varied Thrushes; one on 12/18 at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline near Pinole was particularly noteworthy as there are few west county records (LL).

Suburban White-throated Sparrows were in Danville 11/6 (BG), Moraga 11/23 (E&MM), Martinez on 11/30 (SF) and 12/4-16 (CA), and Kensington 12/21 (2 birds; MF). One at Meeker Slough 11/11 was a nice find for the Richmond shoreline (BB).

Three Great-tailed Grackles were along the Contra Costa Canal in Oakley 11/20 (GC, JS). Though it is expected that they will become common in east county, they remain sporadic in occurrence.

A Lawrence's Goldfinch 11/18 at Wildcat Canyon Regional Park provided a rare November record for the county (AK).

Cheryl Abel, Bob Battagin, Nel Benningshof, Matt Brady, Gloria Cannon, Judi Cooper, David Diller, Sheila Fahy, Mark Forney, Bingham Gibbs, Steve Glover, Phil Gordon, Alan Krakauer, Laura Look, Ellis and Mimi Myers, Ed Pandolfino, Bob Power, Kathy Robertson, Emilie Strauss, Joel Summerhill, Denise Wight

## Trip Reports

**Charleston Slough, Mountain View, and Radio Pond, Redwood Shores, November 18.** Six birders enjoyed a sunny, warm day viewing early winter ducks and shorebirds at several locations in Mountain View and Redwood Shores. Highlights at Charleston Slough included a pair of Blue-winged Teal, a Peregrine Falcon, at least three Common Moorhens, two Ring-necked Pheasants and more than a dozen American White Pelicans majestically flying over and landing in close. Eleven species of ducks and ten species of shorebirds, (including one each Black-bellied Plover and Dunlin) were seen. Some of the group found the Northern Waterthrush in a small marsh off Charleston Road reported earlier by Judi Cooper and Bingham Gibbs. Radio Pond in Redwood Shores produced a group of at least 15 Black Skimmers resting on one of the levees. Five more duck species, including two pairs of Hooded Mergansers and a male Barrow's Goldeneye

were seen on Radio Road and the lagoon on Davit Lane, as well as one Pacific Golden-Plover, American Pipits and another male Blue-winged Teal. Jean Richmond spotted a large group of Cedar Waxwings flying over Hwy. 101 as we headed home. Total species for the day: 80.

*Eugenia Larson*

**Mountain View Sanitary & McNabney Marsh, November 20.** Eleven members and spouses spent a cool, but productive morning birding in spite of low, overcast skies. Everyone had good looks at Green Heron and White-tailed Kite. Several river otters seemed just as curious about us as we were about them. Highlights included Mew Gull and Lincoln's Sparrow. Those who stayed to tally our sightings were able to add Osprey to their lists as one flew over at the last minute. 63 species were seen.

*Cheryl Abel*

**Wildlife Refuges of the Sacramento Valley, December 9–10.** See article on page 7.

**Lake Merritt and Arrowhead Marsh, January 3.** Nine MDAS birders met for

the first birdwalk of 2007. We birded Lake Merritt, Garretson Point, and Arrowhead Marsh and saw 73 species including a Tufted Duck. The East Bay Regional Parks District was doing its annual rail count at Arrowhead. In a flat bottom boat they were flushing out the rails and taking a count. As a result we saw at least 20 California Clapper Rails, a dozen Soras and a few Virginia Rails. Congratulations to Hugh for choosing the right date. I don't think he arranged for the rail count so that was a bonus. This was a fine beginning to the year.

*Chick Chickering*

**Putah Creek, January 6.** A day of superlatives at Putah Creek/Lake Solano. Expected pleasures materialized: Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Osprey, Phainopepla, American Dipper, the beautiful scenery. Unexpected pleasures were added: Peregrine and Prairie Falcons, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Virginia Rail, sun, no fog, and balmy temperatures, and some even saw a Pileated Woodpecker. 12 cars, 24 birders, 91 species!

*Fred Safier*



## Barn Owl Nesting Box at Heather Farm

On January 5, Brian Murphy and Bob Wisecarver, with the help of others, completed the installation of a nest box placed just to the north of the parking lot at our MDAS meeting place at the Garden Center at Heather Farm. For the benefit of Barn Owls, this is an area rich in rodents for midnight snacks.

*Top left, Brian Murphy and Bob Wisecarver attach a knee brace to the box; lower left, helpers from the Garden Center assist; right, Bob and Brian declare success along with Gary Bogue, Contra Costa Times columnist.*

## Trip Report

**Wildlife Refuges of the Central Valley, December 9-10.** Undaunted by reports of stormy weather, five intrepid birders enjoyed “a phenomenal weekend of birding.” Overnight rains gave way to partly cloudy skies as we gathered at Sacramento NWR on Saturday morning. A walk on the Nature Trail provided us with views of a Peregrine Falcon. We drove the auto tour loop to the observation deck where we scoped Snow and Ross’s Geese. Among the rafts of waterfowl, we picked out all three species of teal in the same field-of-view! Six Ring-necked Ducks were among several hundred Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead and Ruddy Ducks. As we continued along the route, an American Bittern flushed, giving us a good look at this elusive species. An adult Bald Eagle gazed down on us from its perch on a limb directly over the road!

After lunch, we moved on to the Packer Island Unit of the Sacramento River NWR. This under-birded area usually has a surprise or two. Our walk produced Cooper’s, Red-shouldered and several Red-tailed Hawks. A bumper crop of wild grape attracted American Robin, Varied Thrush, three Orange-crowned Warblers and a female Western Tanager. We added a pair of Downy Woodpeckers and several Hermit Thrushes before moving on.

Along little traveled back roads, we found a cooperative Burrowing Owl. Numerous Long-billed Curlews fed in an open field. At the Llano Seco Unit we added Sandhill Cranes, Loggerhead Shrike and a pair of White-tailed Kites. East of Willows we scoped over 200 Tundra Swans, one with a collar tag.

An early morning drizzle gave way to clearing skies on our second full day of birding. At Colusa NWR, we walked the Nature Trail to the blind where we found a pair of Hooded Mergansers. Along the auto tour loop we spotted Wood Ducks, and later found several drake Eurasian Wigeon. A pair of Northern Harriers coursed across an open field, flushing numerous Ring-necked Pheasants and Western Meadowlarks.

We arrived at Gray Lodge for late afternoon viewing of thousands of ducks and geese. Our walk to the viewing platform produced Bewick’s and House Wren. Along the auto tour we viewed thousands of waterfowl. Lastly, we stopped for a visit to the Harry Adamson hide, one of two such hides dedicated to honor Harry and Betty, founding members of Mount Diablo Audubon Society. The view from the hide of the ducks and geese, with the setting sun over the Coast Range, was a great way to close our weekend birding adventure. We tallied 76 species on the day and a total of 97 species for the weekend.

*Terry Colborn*

## Spring Migration in Tennessee

Bird watching in the eastern U.S. is substantially different from that on the west coast. Consider, for example, the bright, lush green colors of an eastern woodland in the spring; and the many species found east of the Rocky Mountains that do not occur farther west. And, of course, we cannot forget the eastern warblers – one of the most highly sought-after group of birds in North America. John Robinson’s tour group *On My Mountain* has planned a trip to Tennessee for May 6-11. This trip has been endorsed by the American Birding Association and specially timed to occur at the height of the warbler migration season. For MDAS members, a portion of the fee will be returned to benefit our programs.

Destinations will include Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge and other sites in the Dover area. Throughout the trip, John C. Robinson, author of *An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Tennessee* and speaker at last October’s meeting, provides his signature birding services focused on helping others become better at identifying birds.

An itinerary and more information about this trip can be found at [www.OnMyMountain.com](http://www.OnMyMountain.com). Or call 707-864-8279. Don’t delay, as enrollment is limited.

# Great Backyard Bird Count

What mid-winter activity is fun, easy, free, and helps bird conservation? What can parents and teachers do with children that connects them to a whole new world of natural wonders? This February, the tenth annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, will give everyone a chance to discover the birds in their neighborhood and “Count for the Record.”



*Nuttall's Woodpecker is found mostly in Northern California, although its range extends into Southern Oregon and Baja California. They prefer oak woodlands, but are frequent visitors to feeders in Contra Costa County backyards. In Southern California, the similar Ladder-backed Woodpecker prevails.*

*Photo by Doreen Uphouse, courtesy of Great Backyard Bird Count and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.*

During February 16–19, 2007, people of all ages, from beginners to experts, are invited to join this event which spans all of the United States and Canada. Participants can take part wherever they are – at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges. Observers simply count the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting, and enter their tally on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

Visitors to the web site can also compare their sightings with results from other participants, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Together, these counts offer a real-time

snapshot of the numbers and kinds of birds that people are finding, from Boreal Chickadees in Alaska to Anhingas in Florida.

“The Great Backyard Bird Count is a community celebration of birds, birding, and nature,” said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “We often fail to notice how rich our surroundings are, but counting birds, even for just 15 minutes, is not only educational—it can provide a lasting source of enjoyment, turning a daily walk into a treasure hunt.”

“We are encouraging people to go outside and count birds for the first time this year,” said Paul Green, Audubon’s director of Citizen Science. “By submitting their counts online, birdwatchers can quickly see how the dots they put on the map form new patterns that tell new stories about the birds that share

the world in which we live, including our own backyards and parks.”

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the GBBC, and Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are challenging people everywhere to “Count for the Record,” by participating in greater numbers than ever before. Greater participation, with more checklists submitted, provides more information about bird population trends – and helps to better inform conservation efforts.

Last year, participants submitted more than 60,000 checklists – and reported 7.5 million birds overall and 623 different species. The count helped chronicle the early spring migratory routes of Sandhill Cranes, documented lingering migrants such as Orange-crowned Warblers and Tree Swallows, revealed the ongoing range expansion of introduced Eurasian Collared-Doves, and recorded declining numbers of American Crows.

Participants who want to hone their bird watching skills can learn more from the Great Backyard Bird Count web site, which offers identification tips and access to photos, sounds, maps, and natural history information on more than 500 bird species. People can also submit photos to an online gallery showcasing the dazzling array of winter birds found during the GBBC.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a free event, sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited. For more information, visit [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

## Cheers for Our Volunteers

Our Chapter activities during the month of December 2006 were very successful owing to our exceptional volunteers. On Monday, December 11, seven volunteers spent nearly six hours working on the mailing of our annual fundraising letter. The team members included: Linda and Harvey Green, Helen and Don Holm, Mimi and Ellis Myers, and Beverly Walker.

Cecil and Mike Williams provided the work space at Wild Birds Unlimited. In addition, they not only paid for the postage for the 1300 letters, but Cecil made four trips to Post Offices to find appropriate postage stamps. This was a generous endeavor for all these volunteers and we appreciate and thank them!

Thanks to all who participated in our two Audubon Christmas Count days. This is an important activity and we applaud all who volunteered their time and skills.

A special thank you goes out to our President, Jimm Edgar, who carried out his role as organizer of the Christmas Count while recovering from a health issue. We are fortunate indeed to have him working for us.

The potluck dinner following the counts was interesting and enjoyable. The food was beautiful and delicious! We are lucky that many of our members are good cooks! Consider joining us next year. For several years the diners at the potluck dinner have been treated to a

delicious ham. Gene Fletcher has made this generous donation. In addition, he encourages people to help themselves to leftover ham to take home. We enjoy this thoughtful gesture. Gene is appreciated and we thank him.

Gerry Argenal set up the tables by herself and provided beautiful centerpieces for the tables. She is an angel to continue doing a super job as Hospitality Chairperson. We *must* find some help for her. Many months of searching for this assistance has been short of what is needed. Please think about this and consider volunteering your help as a New Year’s resolution. This can be an opportunity for you!

Cheers for our Volunteers!

# San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival



The Flyway Festival was founded to set one weekend aside each year to celebrate the migration of shorebirds, waterfowl and other wildlife through San Pablo Bay, and to offer access to areas of San Francisco Bay's north shore not normally open to the public. Now in its eleventh year, this event is a wonderful collection of outdoor excursions, art shows and competitions, environmental information booths, vendor birding expo, and more. Mount Diablo Audubon continues this year as a partner. Come enjoy the weekend of February 2-4 with us at Mare Island. In addition to presenting a display booth focused on encouraging children to learn about birds, MDAS will sponsor a bird walk to be led by Denise Wight. Bob Wisecarver and Brian Murphy will show their work with quail habitat restoration and installing nesting boxes for bats and owls.

Also at the Festival, Native Bird Connections and Wild Birds Unlimited will have a presence. All events are open to the public and free of charge unless otherwise noted. The web page for the Festival is [www.sfbayflywayfestival.com/index.asp](http://www.sfbayflywayfestival.com/index.asp). Or call 707-649-WING (9464) for additional information.

To reach the Festival, take the Benicia bridge and follow I-780 to I-80 east toward Sacramento; exit at Tennessee Street and go west to the Mare Island entrance. Proceed straight to Azuar Drive, then right one block to Building 897.

## Cheers for Our Cheerleader

Shirley Ellis, who for many years has been our Volunteer Coordinator, is one volunteer who works harder than most and receives less recognition than she deserves. Her stick-to-itiveness and ever-present good humor is legendary.

## Native Plants for Native Birds

By Pat Bacchetti

### Berries for Thrushes

Since we are having an increased occurrence of Varied Thrush this year, I thought that it would be interesting to discuss the plants that attract these beautiful birds. This would also apply to their cousins the Hermit Thrush and the American Robin. Although the thrushes eat a varied diet of arthropods and worms when breeding, berries comprise a large part of their winter diet. Providing fall- and winter-fruiting plants can attract these birds to your garden. I've discussed three such plants already: Pink-Flowering Currant, Toyon, and Coffeeberry. Two other plants of interest to East Bay gardeners are Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*), and the Barberries in the genus *Berberis* (formerly *Mahonia*).

Huckleberries are woodland plants, and they love the shade of trees and north-facing slopes with moist, acidic soils. Though they grow slowly for the first two years, they provide deep-green foliage through the summer and winter months, and beautiful reddish-hued new growth in the spring. The leaves are small and finely serrated. Spring brings small, pale pink bells of flowers under the green leaves. By fall, the flowers have developed into bluish to purple berries that are one of our most flavorful wild fruits. The birds find them as delectable as we do. Huckleberry enjoys some summer water, as well as a mild application of an acidic fertilizer once or twice yearly. They are quite amenable to pruning to keep them in shape. One of the best places to see Evergreen Huckleberry (and many birds, as well) is the EBRPD's Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve, just north of Redwood Regional Park in Oakland.

Barberries, or holly grapes, can come in a variety of forms. There are

eight California species, ranging from tall shrubs to low-growing groundcovers. Berries can be yellow, blue, or red. All spread by rhizomes, and can form dense thickets if left alone for several years. The most common form seen in the East Bay is *Berberis pinnata*, or California holly grape. It's a medium-sized evergreen shrub with glossy green holly-like leaves. They prefer a shady, well-drained exposure, and produce blue berries in the fall. There are two common nursery cultivars. 'Ken Hartman' is taller and more open, and the 'Skylark' cultivar is denser. They can both form 6-8 ft. tall thickets or hedges when mature.

*Berberis aquifolium*, or Oregon Grape, is the most common cultivar found in nurseries, with spiny green leaves and yellow flowers. It grows in the extreme northern counties of the state up throughout Oregon. It, too, is one of the larger shrubs in the *Berberis* genus, getting 6-8 ft. tall.

The two ground-cover forms, *Berberis aquifolium* 'Compacta', and *B. aquifolium* var. *repens*, stay low to the ground and can tolerate heat and drought if they receive some shade during the day. Although both are very hardy plants, they are less likely to set berries in the fall.

I have a completely unscientific theory that the reason that there are so many Varied Thrushes this year is that we had a particularly good year for berrying shrubs. The toyons and currants in my garden were packed with berries this fall and winter. I've enjoyed watching the two Hermit Thrushes in the garden perch on the ground, jump up into the shrubs to snatch a berry, retreat to a lower branch, and swallow it whole. No Varied Thrushes yet, but I can always hope.

The Pink-Flowering Currants should be starting to bloom this month. Keep your eyes open for them when hiking. One such shrub was bursting into bloom last week in Point Reyes. The pink cascading flowers are favorites of the Anna's Hummingbirds who are feeding nestlings.



uges. With the scores of waterfowl, there are often hundreds of Bald Eagles present, along with numerous other raptors including Golden Eagle, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, and Short-eared Owls. By driving the adjacent roadways, one can usually find Bald Eagles feeding on



Terry Colborn photos

fallen Tundra Swans, giving the birder exceptional views and great photo ops for the photographer. In spring, good numbers of shorebirds can be found along the edge of Indian Tom Lake, while Mountain Bluebirds, Loggerhead and Northern Shrikes can be seen in winter.

*Tule Lake NWR*

A stop at the Tule Lake NWR Visitor's Center is a must in any season. You can check out the Sightings Log Book and watch a number of birds at the feeders. Great Horned, Barn, and Northern Pygmy-Owls have all been spotted from the Visitor Center parking lot. In winter, the auto tour loop may produce a significant number of raptor species; Bald Eagles are common. Short-eared Owl is often present in late afternoon, and American Tree Sparrow has been recorded in many winters.

These are but a sample of the many fine places one can go birding in the Klamath Basin. Next month, I'll describe a few other sites, including Lava Beds National Monument and Crater Lake National Park.

For additional information go to: [www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/](http://www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/) and [www.Klamath.org/visitors](http://www.Klamath.org/visitors)

## What's Up at CNWS?

After the recent turn of events, concerned citizens are wondering, "What is the future of the Concord Naval Weapons Station?" Currently, its future is on hold. The City of Concord was proceeding with an orderly planning process for the base's reuse and had just appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee. Suddenly, the Department of the Navy announced it was seriously considering another option: the conveyance of the Inland Area (5,000± acres) to a private developer, the Shaw Group, in exchange for various services provided to the U.S. government.

According to its website, the Shaw Group Inc. is a leading global provider of engineering, procurement, construction, technology, maintenance, fabrication, manufacturing, consulting, remediation and facilities management services. Headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the company reports over \$4 billion in annual revenues and employs approximately 22,000 people in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region.

Shaw and now others are vying for the opportunity to complete an "early exchange" in which they would essentially replace the Navy as the owner of the property. Critics fear that, with private-sector ownership, profit would be-

come the primary driver to maximize development, and parks, open space and other community facilities desired by the public would become only secondary considerations.

Under any scenario, however, the City of Concord retains ultimate authority over land use. Shaw has pledged to work cooperatively with the city, and the Navy has promised not to proceed until Concord is more comfortable with the proposal, which is currently under review. The Navy's decision has already been postponed until January 22, and may well be further postponed.

The Shaw scenario offers some potential benefits. The base reuse process is very long and complex, during which public amenities are often whittled down. A favorable outcome is not necessarily guaranteed. As a private developer, Shaw can bypass bureaucratic red-tape and expedite development of the site, including faster delivery of public amenities. The company has expertise in remediation of environmental contamination, which would be an advantage with CNWS.

As long as the City can provide the opportunity for a public planning process up front with full participation by all stakeholders, the Shaw scenario could be a winner for the residents of Concord and the region.

*By Nancy Wennenger*

## Long-billed Curlew *Numenius Americanus*

This stately bird was photographed during a Mount Diablo Audubon field trip to the Hayward Regional Shoreline last September.

Have you wondered why this is called a "Long-billed" Curlew? Isn't it obvious? Is there a "Short-billed" Curlew? Well, there once was! Then, its name was changed to Hudsonian Curlew; but now it's no longer considered a separate species. Lumped with Whimbrel, it's the subspecies we have in America. The genus name "numenius" is derived from the Greek words meaning "new moon." It's not hard to note the similar shape of the Curlew's bill and the crescent Moon.

John J. Audubon described seeing several thousand Long-billed Curlews



congregate each night at their resting places near Charleston, South Carolina. The birds were prized as game birds, and could be bought in butcher shops for the table.

Today, these shorebirds are an Audubon WatchList species, one of the most threatened in North America, with a population of less than 20,000.



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### Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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#### The Garden Center

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



## Ornithological Opportunities

**San Diego Audubon Bird Festival**, February 7-12, 2007, San Diego. San Diego is renowned for its variety of birds and habitat. Trips include overnight and day trips to Mexico, pelagic, birding by kayak, Anza-Borrego Desert, oak woodlands, bay and seashore. Workshops include Birding by ear, Raptor, Shorebird and Butterfly ID, Digiscoping, Optics. Three day Optics and Vendor Fair. Kevin Karlson, photographer and author will be banquet speaker. For more information visit [www.sandiegoaudubon.org](http://www.sandiegoaudubon.org).

**Salton Sea International Bird Festival**, February 16-19, Imperial. Sponsored by California Department of Water, the tenth annual Salton Sea festival on President's Day weekend will feature an awesome lineup of bird tours, keynote speakers with a wealth of information on the Salton Sea and the birds of Imperial Valley. Gary Kramer, MDAS speaker last September, will be the banquet speaker. Specialty tour for LeConte's Thrasher; birding and geology trip to Obsidian Butte; Birders' Fair. Register at [www.newriverwetlands.com](http://www.newriverwetlands.com).

**San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory Workshops with Alvaro Jaramillo: Waterfowl**, February 6, 8 and 11, Alviso. Ducks are among the most gorgeous birds in our region. Covered is the biology, migration and behavior of ducks

with an understanding of why the Bay Area is a wintering duck Mecca. Limited to 15 students. [www.sfbbo.org/birdingworkshops.htm](http://www.sfbbo.org/birdingworkshops.htm).

Grab your binoculars and head for the **Olympic Peninsula BirdFest**, Friday, March 30 to Sunday, April 1, in Sequim, Washington. The stage is set for the Olympic BirdFest: quiet bays and estuaries, beaches on the Strait of Juan de Fuca, an island bird sanctuary, a five-mile-long sand spit, eel grass beds, and the beautiful Dungeness River valley. Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, and Pygmy-Owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. You can bird for a few hours, or all day from the dawn chorus to the evening owl prow. We will wake you with coffee, nourish you with locally grown organic food, and celebrate a traditional salmon bake. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, kayaking, salmon banquet, and many other presentations. A schedule for all events of the festival will be found at [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

Remember the **Bringing the Condors Home** exhibit at the Oakland Museum through mid-April. Admission is free on the second Sunday of each month. See the December-January *Quail*.

#### MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society 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*.

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## TIME VALUE MAIL



*At Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, thousands of Tundra Swans congregate in winter. Note the Bald Eagles on shore.*

# Quickies

## Weekend Birding in California

### **Klamath Basin – A Year-Round Birding Destination Part 1.**

*By Terry Colborn*

Long recognized as a Mecca for winter birding, the Klamath Basin is truly a year-round destination for the adventurous birder. A multiple day trip in any season may produce 100 or more species. The Klamath Basin consists of the southern portion of Klamath County, Oregon, and northeastern Siskiyou and northwestern Modoc Counties, California. Within the Basin are a variety of habitats including coniferous forest, lakes, streams, rivers, ponds, freshwater marshes, juniper woodlands, oak chaparral, Ponderosa Pine forest, sagebrush grasslands and open agricultural lands. This rich diversity supports a wonderful array of species in all seasons.

Within the Klamath Basin are dozens of birding sites including national, state

and county parks, federally managed wildlife refuges, a national monument, local community parks and other designated wildlife areas. In this brief article, I've highlighted some of my favorites.

#### *Klamath Marsh NWR*

Fed by the Williamson River, which runs through it, the Klamath Marsh is a prime waterfowl breeding area. Yellow Rails have been heard at night in the marsh in May and June. The best way to access the marsh is by canoe, however driving through the refuge on Silver Lake Road in the spring or fall may produce numerous species of raptors including American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, Northern Goshawk, and on rare occasion, a Gyrfalcon. Great-horned Owl is a resident. Other summer species include American White Pelican, American Bittern, Sandhill Crane, Wilson's Snipe, Black Tern, Williamson's Sapsucker, Dusky and Gray Flycatcher, all three nuthatches, Mountain Bluebird, Nashville and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Cassin's Finch, to name a few.

#### *Upper Klamath NWR – Rocky Point*

Consisting of a maze of marshes, the Rocky Point area of Upper Klamath Lake NWR is a great place to visit from spring to early summer in search of breeding Sora and Virginia Rail, Red-necked Grebe and Least Bittern. The best way to search for these species is by canoe; a well-marked canoe trail meanders through the marsh. Other breeding species of interest include Red-winged and Yellow-headed blackbirds, Forster's and Black Terns, as well as herons and egrets. The surrounding mixed conifer forest hosts dozens of breeding species including Blue Grouse, Townsend's Solitaire, White-headed Woodpecker, Red Crossbill, Hermit Thrush, Western Tanager, Warbling and Plumbeous Vireo, Vaux's Swift, Northern Pygmy-owl, and of course, Bald Eagles. Accommodations include a campground with tent and RV sites, a motel and small cabins.

#### *Lower Klamath NWR*

Over one million ducks, geese and swans winter in the Klamath Basin Ref-

*Continued on page 8*

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