

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php

Volume 53, Number 5

February 2008

Important Bird Areas and YOU • Mike Perlmutter

The Important Bird Areas Program is a global effort to identify and conserve habitat vital to birds and other biodiversity. This program identifies critical sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds. In California, such sites must be less than 100,000 acres in size, possess a bird community distinct from the surrounding region, and meet other criteria. A site's designation as an Important Bird Area is a powerful distinction which can be utilized to leverage conservation efforts.

Mike Perlmutter, Audubon California's San Francisco Bay Area Conservation Coordinator, will speak in depth about the Important Bird Areas program and highlight Contra Costa County's designated Important Bird Areas: Brooks Island Regional Preserve, Eastshore Wetlands, Byron Area, Concord Marshes, North Richmond Wetlands, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Mike will discuss how Mount Diablo Audubon members can get involved with this program. Mike moved from the Bay State (Massachusetts) to the Bay Area in 1998. For seven years he worked for the National Park Service and



The Concord Marshes IBA is host to more than one percent of the global population of California Clapper Rail. Long-billed Curlew is also among ten sensitive species at this site.

Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy on community based ecological restoration projects in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. He holds a Master of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and a Bachelor of Science from Tufts University where he majored in Environmental Studies and Psychology. He is an avid nature lover who would be hard pressed to state a favorite bird or flower, although he will not hesitate to tell you about his favorite rock, radiolarian chert.

Mike will welcome input about conservation concerns and visions for the region, so please bring your ideas!



KQED Quest photo.

Radiolarian chert at Mount Diablo State Park.



Birding Information

Brian Murphy has worked with Bob Wisecarver for many years, creating habitat for local animals and birds. In addition, Brian was trained by Diana Granados and Jenny Papka to read and understand the subtle nonverbal communication of birds and mammals. He comments on how difficult it is to discover and learn the meaning of simple looks and postures of raptors and that becoming respectful is the foundation for working with wildlife.

On February 7, Brian brings these two skills together for us. He will present some amazing photos of wildlife taken in our open

space where he has used his communication skills. He will also discuss the importance of landscaping in residential neighborhoods that can help support wildlife visitors.

He cites two examples of this. Landscaping in Bob Wisecarver's neighborhood is currently supporting a nice deer herd that is so healthy that females sometimes produce three fawns. The other example is areas of Rossmoor that were oak grassland with a limited amount of food for deer. Today, Rossmoor has many additional acres of delicious landscaping that is supporting more deer than the original oak grassland would support.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 7**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize

8:05 PM Speaker:

Mike Perlmutter

* Please remember to bring a cup.

March 6: Amy Fesnock
Marbled Murrelet

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Welcome New Members

Jane Barnes	Concord
David & Bridget Claydon	Lafayette
Beverly Crane	Pleasant Hill
David Ferm	Concord
Brenda Hanschen	Orinda
Bob & Nell Harvey	Pittsburg
Kim Kuska	San Mateo
Jenny Papka	Orinda
Cathy Sanocki	Discovery Bay
Sylvia Simon	Danville
Anne Smith	Antioch
Ann Spaulding	Orinda
Cassie Tzur	Walnut Creek

President's Corner

First of all let me thank all of you who responded to our year-end appeal for donations to the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. We are planning some exciting things this spring and your generosity will really help. On January 26, I will represent our chapter at a dinner honoring Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*. I hope you are familiar with this important book. He builds a very strong case that our children have a 'nature deficit disorder.' For several reasons, kids are not getting outside as much and are missing out all that nature has for their lives. Audubon California is sponsoring the dinner and awarding Mr. Louv an Outstanding Citizen award that evening.

As you know we have established an Education Outreach Committee in the chapter. Paul Schorr had a very nice letter to the editor in the Contra Costa Times on December 29 that highlighted some of what we hope to do this spring. Classroom presentations and some field trips will take place; all to address this nature deficit situation. We think it will be a great way to introduce kids to nature and, of course, the wonderful birds we all enjoy so much.

I hope you all might get a chance to attend the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival held on Mare Island, February 2-3. This is one of the really great bird festivals with lots of exhibits, bird walks, field trips, etc. Our chapter will have a booth set up staffed by our volunteer folks. See the article on Page 3. I would highly recommend this event.

Observations Steve Glover

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at countyline@sbcbglobal.net or (925) 997-1112.

Holland Tract and Palm Tract east of Knightsen in east county is a fine area to view flocks of swans and geese. On 12/19 a minimum estimate there included 8000 **Greater White-fronted Geese**, 983 **Snows**, 107 **Ross's**, 800 **Cackling**, and 435 **Tundra Swans** (SG, JT, JC).

The Brant continued at Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline in Richmond through at least 12/8 (LL).

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** was along Waterfront Road north of Concord on 12/15 (SG). **Surf Scoters** are commonly found as far east as Martinez Regional Shoreline but 1,300 there on 11/23 may be unprecedented (DW). On 12/15 there were 1,100 Surfs even further east near the Concord Naval Weapons Station docks, obliterating previous high counts for the Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count (SG). Five **Surf Scoters** on Mallard Reservoir on 12/15 were the first found there in 18 years of CBCs (SG).

A **Long-tailed Duck** was along the shore at Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline on 11/24 (KS). A female **Hooded Merganser** frequented Jewel Lake in Tilden Park 11/28 (CM) to at least 12/25 (PD). A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** was at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 12/8 (JT).

A young **Red-necked Grebe** on Mallard Reservoir on 12/15 was a long-overdue first for the Contra Costa CBC (SG).

Lastly, just a few words about our two Christmas Bird counts. Our central Contra Costa count saw 155 species. Our all-time high is 159, so this was a very good day. The weather and birds were quite cooperative. A first ever for the count was a first-year Red-necked Grebe seen by Steve Glover. A Red-naped Sapsucker on Mt. Diablo was found and photographed. We have only seen that species once in 25 years. On the eastern Contra Costa count, 138 species were about average for that count. We missed some birds we almost always see such as Bald Eagle at Los Vaqueros Reservoir. Again, Steve Glover found a first-time count bird, an American Redstart. As a side note, I personally did nine Christmas Bird counts this year. Every one of them was a fun adventure and only one had rain.

Jimm Edgar

A single **American White Pelican** flew over Richmond Parkway in Richmond on 1/5 (DW).

A **Bald Eagle** was at San Pablo Reservoir on 12/9 (BM).

A **Clapper Rail** was at Meeker Slough in Richmond on 12/23 (LL).

Seven **Black Oystercatchers** at West Brothers Island, Richmond on 1/5 was a nice concentration for the county (DW).

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was along Orwood Road near Byron on 12/19 (JT, JC). Two **Surfbirds** at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline in Pinole on 12/16 were likely further northeast than the species has ever been found in the county (LL).

An adult **Western Gull** at Holland Tract on 12/19 was the first to be found at that location; the species is scarce overall in east county (JC, JT, SG).

Two **Black Skimmers** at Meeker Slough, Richmond 1/5 furnished a very rare winter record for the county (DM).

White-throated Swifts are rarely noted on the valley floor in east county so 9 over the Byron Highway on 12/19 was noteworthy (JT, JC).

An apparent adult male **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at the Loop Road in Tilden Regional Park 12/14-16 (DV). Another Red-naped was beneath the Briones Dam spillway on 12/16 (BB). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was in Lafayette at the Orinda-Lafayette Presbyterian Church (fide DQ).

A **Pileated Woodpecker** was along the West Ridge Trail in Redwood Regional Park on 12/19 (RB). This is the only known spot in the county where this species is found with any regularity.

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was at Lafayette Reservoir on 12/16 (fide DQ).

The highlight of the season may have been a young **American Redstart** at Holland Tract on 12/19 (JT, JC, SG). This represents the second record for east county and a second winter record for the county.

Single **White-throated Sparrows** were at Mt. View Sanitary in Martinez on 12/5 (DW) and Holland Tract on 12/19 (JT, JC, SG).

Bob Brandriff, Josiah Clark, Pete Dunt-en, Steve Glover, Laura Look, Bruce Mast, Collin Murphy, Don Murphy, Dave Quady, Kirk Swenson, Jim Tietz, Doug Vaughan, Denise Wight

12th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival

Mount Diablo Audubon Society has been a sponsor and exhibitor at the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival for a number of years. It is a premiere venue for MDAS to express our commitment to environmental education and specifically to interact with children. Besides, it's a lot of fun! Taking place Friday, February 1 through Sunday, February 3, the event celebrates the return of over one million shorebirds and hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese, hawks and even monarch butterflies, which migrate through or winter in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Admission to the Festival on Mare Island is free; some special activities may require

a fee or require pre-registration. Festival-goers will be able to choose from hundreds of fun activities, including guided nature walks and birding outings for families and for adults, boat tours, wild-bird demonstrations, and art and photography exhibits.

More than 60 regional outings throughout the Bay Area include: morning and evening boat tours of the Napa Marsh from Kennedy Park daily; an early Saturday morning birding hunt for rails at Benicia State Recreation Area; a Bald Eagle and Osprey boat tour at remote Lake Hennessey in Napa County; 2-hour river cruises into the Napa Valley on the



The San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival is an event you will enjoy. While you're there, drop by Mount Diablo Audubon's display table. It's a delight to show children the different birds nests and to encourage them to learn about the outdoors.

Photo: John Klycinski

Napa River; an owl prowl at San Pablo Bay Discovery Center; a tour of the Suisun Wildlife Center; daily outings to Skaggs Island, in Sonoma County, the north bay's premiere hawk viewing property with as many as 19 species sighted in past Festival visits; a docent-led tour of Antioch Dunes

National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Contra Costa County; and a habitat hike at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center in Alviso in the South Bay.

As many as 20 guided outings are offered on Mare Island, along with a self-guided wetland walk to the Bay. New this year are American Volkswalk Association sanctioned 5k and 10k walks along wetland trails and through the historic and new neighborhoods of the former U.S. Navy shipyard founded in 1854. Outings will include guided tours of the Navy's oldest cemetery in the Pacific, founded 150 years ago in 1858.

St. Peter's Chapel, home to the most Tiffany stained-glass windows in a single site in the West, will be open for tours during the weekend. A free introductory Night Photography workshop on Mare Island will be offered.

Sacramento based Crane Culture Theater performs for the first time in the Bay Area Sunday afternoon. They will offer *Lord Of The Cranes*, an ancient Chinese folktale of good fortune and affinity with nature in this story theater program of dance, music and masked actors.

Photographers and painters of all ages and skills will be exhibiting original work that depicts local wildlife, wetlands, marshes, and native habitats from San Francisco Bay to the ridgetops of Mt. Tamalpais and Mt. Diablo.

Visit the Flyway Festival website at sfbayflywayfestival.com for an updated list of 2008 activities. For more information and directions, call 707-649-WING (9464) or visit sfbayflywayfestival.com.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



BIRDSEED SALE

All 20 lb. to 25 lb. bags

SUET SALE

Buy 4 — Get 1 FREE



Sale February 6 - 24, 2008

Activities at Wild Birds Unlimited

Saturday, February 9:10:30-3:00. **Native Bird Connections** will present on-going educational programs with live birds.

The **Great Backyard Bird Count** is Friday-Monday, Feb. 22-24. 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:

This fall and winter has not seen the Pine Siskins that we sometimes see. We have had only two sighting reports. We have had many reports of Goldfinches at the feeders. The numbers of American and Lesser Goldfinches being seen are the largest in many, many years. Both species love thistle (niger) seed and readily come to bird 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 and Cecil Williams

Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Q

This is a bird of the high mountain regions of the American West, where it is specialized

for feeding on large pine seeds. It has a special pouch under its tongue adapted to carrying the seeds to places, often at great distances, where they are cached for later use.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 7 to learn more.

AACCCEKLNRRRSTU'

February

- 2 Saturday Thornton/Cosumnes Preserve
- 7 Thursday (*Please note change of date.*) Grizzly Island
- 23 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park
- 28 Thursday Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

Come birding with us!

① Saturday, February 2

**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
Glascok 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 Glascok Road. Tundra Swans,
Sandhill Cranes, hawks and grassland
birds. Trip will go in light rain. If ques-
tions, call the leader.

① Thursday, February 7

Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

*[Please call the Leader if you plan to
attend this trip, as we need to inform
the Ranger in advance of the approxi-
mate number.]*

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.
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 SR 12. Follow SR 12
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 Su-
isun 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 en-
dangered wildlife and plants. We may
see the herd of Tule Elk. We may also
bird at the Rush Ranch if time per-
mits after finishing at Grizzly Island.



② Saturday, February 23

Tomales Bay State Park

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.
Carpool leaves 7 AM from El Nido
Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 in the
parking lot at Heart's Desire Beach in
Tomales Bay State Park. After crossing
the Richmond Bridge, follow US 101
north and take the first San Rafael
exit. Go two blocks, turn left on 3rd
Street. In San Anselmo turn right on
Sir Francis Drake. Follow Sir Francis
Drake Blvd. through Inverness. Just
over the ridge, turn right onto Pierce
Point Road. The park entrance is on
the right. Entry fee required.

② Thursday, February 28

**Mt. View Sanitary District
McNabney Marsh
Martinez Regional Shoreline**

Leader: Lynn Lakso, 932-6367.

Meet at 9 AM at the Mt. View
Sanitary Visitor Center. Exit from I-
680 southbound at Arthur Road, turn
left and go under the freeway. Exit I-
680 northbound at Pacheco Blvd, turn
right onto Arthur Road and go under
the freeway. Arthur Road will turn
left. At 0.4 miles turn sharp left onto
Mt. View Sanitary's private road. Fol-
low the road through the entry gate,
alongside the freeway and through the
tunnel under I-680. Park and sign-in
at the Visitor Center. Trails may be
muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling
ducks; possibly bitterns and herons.
If you wish, bring a lunch and explore
Martinez shoreline in the afternoon.

March

- 5 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks
- 13-16 Thursday-Sunday Susanville/Honey Lake
- 20 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
- 26 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas
- 29 Saturday Black Diamond Mines

April

- 5 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 12 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 15 Tuesday North Briones Regional Park
- 29 Tuesday Del Puerto Canyon

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.

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. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Take the Acalanes Road/Upper Happy Valley Road exit off 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. **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.

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

Another Caution!

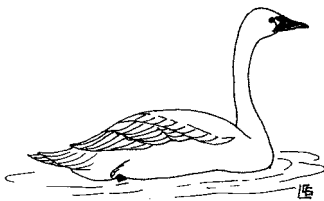
In the November Quail, it was reported that someone stole a catalytic converter from a car parked at the Winton Avenue entry to Hayward Regional Shoreline. Unfortunately, at this same location on January 7, three cars were broken into and belongings taken.

Please take care—anywhere!

Trip Reports

Charleston Slough and Alviso, November 17. Eleven birders enjoyed a warm, sunny day at Charleston Slough in Mountain View followed by lunch and more birding at the environmental education center in Alviso/Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR. Highlights were a very dull Common Moorhen, a dozen Bonaparte's Gulls flying around, an American Pipit, Say's Phoebe, and a Peregrine Falcon. Nine species of ducks including a few American Wigeon and both Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal were seen. Shorebirds were few with only Long-billed Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers, and a few Willets and Marbled Godwits present. After lunch, a walk out on the boardwalk at the EEC added Western Sandpipers. Two sleeping Barn Owls were in the barn owl box along the path. As we were leaving, a Peregrine Falcon flew over and later perched briefly on one of the nearby transmission towers. Several new birders were along, including a young 4th grader for whom many of the birds were lifers. Total birds seen and heard were 58.

Eugenia Larson



Mountain View Sanitary and McNabney Marsh, November 19. Thirteen birders spent a pleasant morning strolling through the marshes. A very enthusiastic young birder delighted us all and reminded us how important it is to take children out to see nature. Surprisingly, raptors were the highlight of the day with eight species including merlin and osprey. American pipits were a good sighting for several birders. 55 species were seen or heard. *Cheryl Abel*

Putah Creek, January 5. Although the day dawned blue and bright, the leader reluctantly cancelled the Putah Creek trip due to the guarantee of mud and the possibility of flooding resulting from the terrific storm of the previous day. To anyone who thinks he was excessively cautious, he apologizes. *Fred Safier*

Wildlife Refuges of the Central Valley, December 8-9. A lucky thirteen participants enjoyed two days of birding at several Sacramento Valley

the Quail

Tomales Bay

Continued from Page 8



The picnic area on the bluff is an excellent bird-watching spot. There are tables and benches, and the elevation provides good views of Tomales Bay. State Parks photo.

activity for the park. It offers a large parking area, picnic tables, restrooms and a sandy beach. A half-mile nature trail to the west leads to Indian Beach and an interesting little marsh area. Here you will find an interpretive exhibit about the Miwok.

The Jepson Trail winds up a gentle grade to the crest of the ridge. Along the way you pass through groves of old Bishop pines. Bishop pines occur naturally in only a few isolated locations along the Pacific Coast. These old trees are twisted and broken from years of exposure to blustery winds. The Bishop pine canopy is home to such birds as Dark-eyed Juncos, Purple Finches, Olive-sided Flycatchers, and, in summer, Pygmy Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Bushtits and Swainson's Thrush. Osprey nest in the crowns of the trees.

Winter offers its own highlights along the trail. Mushrooms in every color and shape are popping up. You can also search for bird nests. With leaves off the deciduous trees, nests are visible. Listen and watch for woodpeckers.

And Tomales Bay State Park is renowned for its Spotted Owls. Pairs roost together beginning in February to early March. They begin calling to each other at dusk before foraging and at dawn when they return to roost. Spotted Owls usually mate for life. In Marin County, pairs gener-

wildlife refuges. December is a peak period for huge concentrations of waterfowl and a nice variety of wintering raptors.

Early Saturday morning at Sacramento NWR there were great flights of Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted, Snow and Ross's Geese. Numerous Long-billed Curlew and Northern Harrier cruised by. Present were Bufflehead, Gadwall, Pintail, Ring-necked

ally reside in the same location together for their entire lives. Nest building begins in late March and chicks hatch in late April to early May. Owlets fledge when they are a month old in late May to mid-June. The young can climb and glide into neighboring trees within a few days of leaving the nest. Both parents continue to feed and care for the owlets until they can capture prey on their own.

This charming state park, contiguous with Point Reyes National Seashore, but a world of its own, is surely a place that birders will always enjoy, and with the entire Tomales Bay environment, a habitat deserving of our careful stewardship for birds and for people.

This article was written in early January to be a complement to the subject of the February meeting—Important Bird Areas—as well as to the field trip to Tomales Bay State Park scheduled for February 23. So it came as an electric jolt when the Governor's office announced on January 10 the potential closing of 48 state parks, including Tomales Bay.

The MDAS Board of Directors urges you to write your legislators asking them to oppose closing of *any* state park or beach. An easy way to do this is to go to <http://ga3.org/campaign/KeepStateParksOpen>. You don't even have to know who your legislators are!

Californians rely on the state parks not just for recreation; the 48 parks slated for closure represent some of the most significant cultural, historic, and natural resources in the state. Our state parks represent places of living history. Each year, buses full of schoolchildren visit state historic parks as part of their lessons on California history. We cannot afford to let our children down.

Please write today!

Duck, and Northern Shoveler; several Red-tailed Hawks perched nearby. Suddenly, several hundred ducks quickly took flight and scattered as an adult Bald Eagle swooped in from behind. Spectacular!

From the observation deck along the auto tour loop, dozens of Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal were scoped, while a

Continued on Page 7

Ornithological Opportunities

9th Annual Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway. The premier birding and nature festival of the Northern Sacramento Valley will be held **January 25-27**, in Chico, California. With over 40 field trips, participants can enjoy guided tours into lush riparian forests, local foothills, grassland habitats, protected wetlands, lakes, rivers, and creeks along Altacal Audubon's Birding Trail. Along with many free events, participants can attend over a dozen workshops covering beginning birding, photography, bats, and birds. For more information visit the website at www.snowgoosefestival.org.

McNabney Marsh Birding Field Trip, Saturday, February 16; 9:00 to 11:00 am. Join Mt. View Sanitary District's Wetlands Biologist Dick Bogaert for a fun and informative hike around McNabney and Moorhen Marsh systems as we look for our favorite avian residents and migrants. We'll learn a little local history along the way, and we might even find something unusual such as Blue-winged Teal or Ring-necked Duck in the wetlands! Meet at the staging area on the plant road just before the freeway tunnel. Dress in layers. Bring binoculars if you have them. We have a few pairs to loan. Bring a warm drink if you want. Beginners are always welcome. Heavy rain cancels. For more information please contact: Dick Bogaert, Wetlands Biologist, 925-228-5635 x16 or DBogaert@mvsd.org.

Klamath Falls hosts the **2008 Winter Wings Festival** on **February 15-17** at the Oregon Institute of Technology. This community event celebrates the return of Bald Eagles, other raptors, and wintering flocks of waterfowl to the Klamath Basin. The Basin is home to the largest concentration of wintering Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states. The Festival arranges field trips to observe Bald Eagles as they fly in and out of their roosting area or forage in the nearby refuges and to view the spectacular flocks of waterfowl. Participants can also enjoy a variety of workshops,

Great Backyard Bird Count

In February, volunteers throughout the U.S. and Canada are invited to "Count for Fun, Count for the Future!"

Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The Great Backyard Bird Count is also sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited. During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15-18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site www.birdcount.org.

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own

mini-sessions, free family activities, and special receptions. Trish Nixon, the raptor specialist at the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho, will be the keynote speaker on Feb. 15, 2008. Her talk will focus on Condor recovery and will be preceded by a welcome reception.

To obtain more information, visit the Winter Wings Festival website at www.winterwingsfest.org after mid-December, 2007, or contact Travel Klamath at 1-800-445-6728 or 541-882-1501 for travel information, or call Todd at 541-850-0084 for festival brochures and registration information. Festival participants enjoy reduced hotel rates at several partner hotels and transportation is provided on all of the major field trips.



Winner of the 2007 GBBC Photo Contest was this male Hooded Merganser by James Hendrickson of New Jersey.

digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species. Already, the count results show how the numbers of some birds species have changed in recent years, such as a decline in Northern Pintails and an increase in Hooded Mergansers, consistent with trends from the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey.

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on over 500 bird species, visit www.birdcount.org.

San Diego Bird Festival, February 6-11. San Diego is renowned for variety of birds and habitat and 224 species were seen by 2007 festival participants. Don't delay, many field trips are already filled. Contact: www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birdfest.htm.

Aleutian Goose Festival, March 28-30. Come join the "Celebration of Wildness" on the extreme coast of northern California. Experience an in-depth extended weekend March 28-30, in the home of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area, by choosing amongst the 60+ workshops/fieldtrips led by experienced, qualified guides. Outstanding birding, geology, Native American Heritage and more. Register online at www.aleutian-goosefestival.org or 1-707-465-0888.

Clark's Nutcracker

Nucifraga columbiana



In August, 1805, William Clark reported: *I saw to day Bird of the woodpecker kind which fed on Pine burs its Bill and tale white the wings black every other part of a light brown, and about the Size of a robin.* Eight months later, Meriwether Lewis made more accurate notes and determined this bird to be a corvid, not

Trip Reports

small flock of Black-necked Stilt huddled together in a sheltered cove. A first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull flew over.

At the Parker Unit of Sacramento NWR, the birds were sparse, but we managed a pair of Peregrine Falcons, several pairs of Western Bluebirds, and a flock of over 50 American Pipits, all from the parking lot!

On our way to Llano Seco, we stopped at a small wetlands where—in the scope—we watched an American Bittern, perfectly camouflaged against the reeds. Nearby over 400 White-faced Ibis were plucking crawdads from a flooded field.

From the viewing platform at Llano Seco we spotted a Loggerhead Shrike; a Peregrine Falcon zipped in and landed on a small island; across the water, a dozen Sandhill Cranes foraged. An adult female Cooper's Hawk slipped in and perched nearby. A lone Canvasback was picked out among the hordes of ducks. Hundreds of Tundra Swans and over a thousand Snow and Ross's Geese came in to roost on the flooded rice fields as the setting sun lit up their underwings from below. The cacophony of sound was awesome.

We were joined by five additional par-

a woodpecker. Alexander Wilson gave it the name Clark's Crow.

The Clark's Nutcracker's favorite food is the seeds of the whitebark pine. The two have a symbiotic relationship: the pine relies for its reproduction on the bird's distribution of its seeds, while the nutcracker depends on the food source the pine supplies.

The Clark's Nutcracker hides many thousands of seeds each season. Verified in laboratory studies, the bird has a tremendous memory and can remember

where to find most of the seeds it hides. In jays and crows, taking care of the eggs is for the female only. But the male nutcracker actually develops a brood patch on its chest just like the female, and takes his turn keeping the eggs warm while the female goes off to fetch seeds from those caches only she remembers.

Participants on Sunday morning as we headed for farm roads west of Williams in search of raptors. We were soon rewarded with a couple of cooperative Rough-legged Hawks, a Prairie Falcon, several beautiful sunlit American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks and a White-tailed Kite. A Great Horned Owl was a special treat.

At Colusa NWR construction had closed the main road to vehicles, so we walked-in and were able to add Belted Kingfisher, Moorhen and a beautiful Orange-crowned Warbler.

Late morning in the Sutter Buttes we were fortunate to find a pair of soaring Golden Eagles. At Gray Lodge WMA, a visit to the Harry Adamson hide afforded us one last opportunity to review the field marks of the ducks. We watched as no less than 1,500 White-faced Ibis flew overhead in several contingents on their way to their evening roost. Nearby, we spotted a pair of Great Horned Owls, while a Virginia Rail and a Sora called out from the marsh. A perfect ending to a great weekend of birding.

We tallied 106 species, including 18 species of waterfowl and 16 raptor species.

Terry Colborn

the Quail

is published 10 times a year by the

Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •

P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
(925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

MDAS Board of Directors

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
Vice President: Mike Williams, 376-1631
Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929
Board Secretary: Claudia Hein, 671-0401
Sales Manager: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732
Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581
Field Trips: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979
Membership: Beverley Walker, 952-9925
Volunteer Coordinator: Shirley Ellis, 938-3703
Hospitality: Gerry Argenal, 768-6325
Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631
Access: Beverly Hawley, 947-0479
Webmaster: Patrick King, 510-642-6522
Chapter Development: Paul Schorr, 757-5107
Hands-On Conservation:

Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987

Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330

Member-at-Large: Jean Richmond, 837-2843
Don Yoder, 937-5974

Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103

215 Calle La Mesa

Moraga, CA 94556-1603

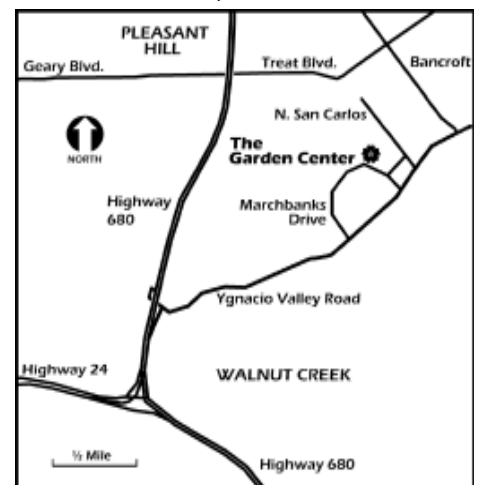
ellis.myers@earthlink.net

The Quail is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **Deadline for the March issue is February 11.**



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.



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

Return Service Requested



TIME VALUE MAIL



Spotted Owl photographed at Heart's Desire Beach

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 66
Concord, CA

Tomales Bay and Tomales Bay State Park

Tomales Bay is one of the Important Bird Areas that Audubon California has designated for special watch to assure its protection as primary habitat for birds. It is a narrow, 15-mile-long tidal estuary situated along the rift of the San Andreas Fault where the Point Reyes Peninsula on the Pacific Plate slides northwestward along the California shore. This geology has brought together a unique variety of habitats, with forested, granite Inverness Ridge along the west, and gentle hills and open savanna on the east; in between are the eelgrass beds, tidal marsh, coastal dunes, and calm waters of the bay.

Over 200 species of birds use the Pacific flyway to migrate each year from north to south in the winter and back again in the spring. Tomales Bay lies directly on their flight path; it's one of the best places for these birds to rest in all of California. The number

of birds seen on the bay can be amazing. Among the 58 species of waterbirds in Tomales Bay you might find three loon species, six species of grebes, pelicans, four herons, 28 geese and ducks, as well as Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Northern Harrier and many others including gulls, coots and phalaropes.

Winter may host 20,000 or more Surf Scoter, Bufflehead, Greater Scaup, and as much as one percent of the world's population of Pacific Black Brant. Nine species of concern, including the Brant, are listed. Others are Black Rail, Least Bittern, Northern Harrier, Western Snowy Plover, Long-billed Curlew, California Swainson's Thrush, and Bryant's Savannah Sparrow. Yellow Rail has almost disappeared from our state, but of all California Yellow Rails remaining, ten percent are here in winter.

Guardians of this critical area include the Point Reyes National Seashore, Marin County Parks and Open Space and Tomales Bay State Park.

This area—and all of Marin County, plus lands north to Bodega Bay and east to Sonoma—is the traditional homeland of the Coast Miwok people. The bay provided clams, oysters, abalone and salmon; the hills yielded huckleberries, acorns and nuts, deer, elk, rabbits and more. Ca-

noes made of tules allowed communication and trade with their many villages along the coast. Life was full, and good. Then, throughout the Mission period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the people were brought to work at Mission San Rafael and Mission San Francisco de Asis. As the Native American population decreased, cattle ranching and dairy farming became dominant on both sides of the Tomales Bay estuary.

Tomales Bay State Park is a place for people and for wildlife. It is an interesting place to visit any time of the year, including winter. Heart's Desire Beach is the center of

Continued on Page 5



*Reconstructed
Miwok bark
houses at
Indian Beach.
State Parks
Photo.*