



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 56, Number 5

February 2011

East Bay Regional Parks Resource Enhancement Program



◆ Brad Olson

The Martinez Marsh Enhancement Project restored the marsh and widened Alhambra Creek. The restoration alleviates rainy season flood conditions in downtown Martinez and creates valuable wildlife habitat. EBRPD photos.

Our East Bay Regional Park District manages 98,000 acres of open space, 65 regional parks and over 1,100 miles of regional trails in Contra Costa County and Alameda County. In 1998 EBRPD developed the Resource Enhancement Program (REP) to coordinate and complete projects that protect, enhance, restore, create, replace, or mitigate for plant and animal habitats that have been lost or degraded due to human and natural causes. REP projects have protected or restored tidal marsh, fresh water marsh, grassland, chaparral and scrub and oak woodland. Several special status species have benefited including Delta smelt, Western Burrowing Owl, California Clapper Rail, salt marsh harvest mouse, San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Alameda whip snake, Diablo sunflower and Alameda manzanita.



Join Brad Olson as he discusses regional efforts to acquire, protect, and manage plant and animal habitats at the Martinez Regional Shoreline, the Berkeley meadow

and sites in Richmond. He will discuss the use of tools such as in-stream plunge pools for red-legged frogs, livestock grazing, planting native riparian vegetation to restore creek beds, grading to improve habitat and creating wildlife corridors.

Brad Olson has been working on natural resource conservation and restoration for more than 25 years. He has recognized expertise with special-status species conservation, mitigation and recovery efforts. He has worked for the East Bay Regional Park District for fourteen years and has also worked as an environmental consultant to the Port of Oakland, Caltrans and Natural Resource Conservation Service conducting restoration projects in California, Oregon and Nevada. Brad was Region 3 Director for California Society for Ecological Restoration four years and Rare Plant Chair for the East Bay chapter of CNPS for twelve years.

Seaside Heliotrope is a native perennial of Martinez Marsh. Its habitat has been protected by the Enhancement Project.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Mount Diablo Audubon's own Brian Murphy devotes much of his time to advising Eagle Scout candidates as they create their projects. Brian is particularly proud of Matt Patera, a junior at Campolindo High School, who has built and installed two bat houses near Moraga Parks. Matt set the plan, raised the money and completed the project by inventing a new way to install bat houses under bridges. His mounting bracket invention will be used by a U. C. Davis project on a pedestrian bridge over the American River. Matt will share his project with MDAS at our February meeting.



Matt Patera, with Cameron Patera and Tristan Westernoff, finish a bat house to be installed in a Moraga park.

Photo Jennifer Patera

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, February 3**, 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: **Brad Olson**
* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, March 3: **Stephen Joseph**

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I thought I would take my spot this month to give all of you the highlights of the two Christmas Bird Counts that our chapter sponsors. Maury Stern and I are co-compilers for the counts which means we put all of the data together when the counts are over and get them to National Audubon to go in their data base. Maury is the Sightings editor for the *Quail* also.

The East Contra Costa count was held on December 14, the first day of the count period. All bird counts must take place between December 14 and January 5. Over the 11 years we have done the count we have seen 181 species. We saw 115 species that we almost always see and then missed a few that may be present but we just did not see this year. Some of the good birds we did see were Wood Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker (20 in all!), 3 American Bittern (we have only seen Bittern 3 of the 10 years of the count. Wrentit and Phainopepla were seen and they have only been seen 2 of 10 years. The best bird was a well photographed Swamp Sparrow found by Ted Robertson's group near the Holland Tract. Their group saw a total of 110 species that day. We had 15 species of raptors on the count missing only Rough-legged Hawk of raptors we might see. There were 4 adult Bald Eagles, Peregrine and Prairie Falcon, 6 Ferruginous Hawks; just a great day for raptors.

The Central CC count was held on Saturday, December 18. It had been predicted that rain would fall most of the day, but we got by until about 3 PM, so not too bad. This count, now in its 58th year has seen 221 species over the years. We ended up with 146 species for the day. Shirley Ellis, who keeps the chapter scrap books, sent me a copy of the article that was written in the CC Times in 1991 about the count that year. We saw 160 species that year; our highest ever. We also had 100 participants on that count. This year we had about 60. That can make a difference. We also could not get the boat out this year. The weather was just a bit unpredictable, so we missed

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Photo by Tom Bortz

some birds we might have seen out on the Delta waters. Osprey was good for the count, as was Snow Goose; but without a doubt the bird of the day was an Orchard Oriole that had been at a feeder at a home in Pleasant Hill for about a month. It was seen and photographed on count day. A photo is here for you to see. We had a reporter from the CC Times with a group this year and she wrote a very nice article on the count. I hope you saw it.

We continue to lose some habitat in the county, but all in all we have a pretty stable situation. Mount Diablo State Park in the central count and a couple of East Bay Regional Parks in the east count give us rich areas to go birding. I hope you may join us next year if you have not done a count. It is a lot of fun.

Q

This is not an Eagle, but in nearly every Hollywood movie, whenever an Eagle is seen, the shrill cry on the soundtrack is of this bird.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 6 to learn more.

AADDEEHIKLRTW

Welcome New Members

Amy & Jim Arth	Pleasant Hill
Richard & Laurie Griffiee	Pleasant Hill
Sally Lowery	Lafayette
Greta & Bill Lydecker	Alamo

History of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

In April 1953 a small group interested in the formation of a local Audubon Society met in the Community Room of the Coast Counties Gas Company, under the auspices of the Walnut Creek Recreation Council at that time headed by Wm. E. "Bill" Hassler.

Mr. Hassler acted as secretary for the evening. Chief speaker was the late Vaughn MacCaughy, a West Coast representative of the National Audubon Society. Other National representatives present were Alexander Sprunt, III, of the San Francisco office and the California northern summer camp, and Ferdinand Ruth, member of the East Contra Costa Junior College faculty and also of the summer camp staff.

First advice, given after the meeting adjourned was to postpone definite organization until the re-opening of schools in the fall. However those in attendance who had long hoped to have a local group of "bird watchers" felt immediate action preferable, lest the continuity of thought be broken and interest hard to re-awaken after a lapse of several months.

Accordingly, a second meeting was called that month. This, held at the Hasslers' was well attended, word having gotten around.

Mrs. J. C. McGeehon emerged as temporary chairman. Mrs. Elizabeth C. O'Meara undertook to serve temporarily as publicity chairman. Plans were made for the initial field trip on May third to Tilden Park.

During the nooning the chairman named a By-Law committee consisting of Albert O. Cooperrider, Mrs. Cecil Smith

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Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB Sightings@yahoogroups.com.

Three exciting rare birds were here recently.

1. A **Least Bittern** was seen 12/26 by RT and IT at the Martinez Shoreline Park, then by many, many more. It was still here as of January 10, 2011

2. A **Brown Thrasher** seen 11/24 by LL was a first Contra Costa County record per Steve Glover. The bird was at Point Pinole RP for about a week before it moved on, and was seen by MOS.

3. An **Orchard Oriole** was present for 1½ months at a private home in Pleasant Hill near Paso Nogal Park before being seen by HH and MS on 11/24. The bird stayed at least through the Central Contra Costa Christmas Count on 12/19.

TR saw a **Cackling Goose** at Heather Farm with a flock of 200 **Canada Geese** on 11/29. Also present over the next few weeks were a **Ross's Goose** and a **Greater White-fronted Goose**. Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Contra Loma RP on 1/10 P&NS.

A **Wood Duck** was at Heather Farm for one day on 11/25 HH.

There were **Eurasian Wigeon** at the Richmond side of the Albany Crescent 12/11 BP; and Miller-Knox RP on 12/24 DL, JC; and 1/10 LL

A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was with many **Green-winged Teal** at McNabney Marsh in mid-December IT.

Three **Ring-neck Ducks** were at Tilden RP, Jewel Lake on 1/9 JD.

On 1/2, AM found a **Tufted Duck** at Clifton Court Forebay in East CC County.

A female **Black Scoter** was in the Richmond Marina on 12/29 SD and JuD.

RC and DoL saw a **Barrow's Golden-eye** off the Martinez Shoreline on 12/30.

Hooded Mergansers were widespread. Jewel Lake on 12/4 JB, 12/10 JD, 1/10 AH; 12 near Arbolado Park in Walnut Creek 11/27 BH; 3 in Walnut Creek near downtown Walnut Creek MS 12/10; 2 at Pinole Creek 1/10 AR.

On 1/10, a single **Common Merganser** was in Jewel Lake AH.

An adult **Bald Eagle** flew over San Pablo Reservoir 12/19 DQ; and one was perched at Contra Loma RP on 1/9 KL.

15 raptor species were seen on the Eastern CC CBC on 12/14 JE.

LL saw a **Merlin** at Pinole Regional Seashore 11/26 and FS saw one at Heather Farm pond on 11/29.

Virginia Rail and **Sora** were seen at Contra Loma RP 1/1/11 by P&NS, and by LQ on 1/7.

There were 3 **Barn Owls** in the same palm tree in Contra Loma RP 11/29 P&NS.

MS heard 2 **Western Screech Owls** near his Lafayette home 12/20.

CF saw a pair of **Great Horned Owls** near Sugarloaf Hill in south Walnut Creek 1/7. MS had a pair near his home 1/6.

P&NS saw 2 **Burrowing Owls** at the base of the entrance sign to Contra Loma RP on 1/10.

An unidentified Empidonax flycatcher was seen 12/16 by JH, DK, DV. It was photographed 12/22 by MR. Tentative ID is a Least Flycatcher.

On 1/10, JM reported a **Northern Shrike** at Waterbird Park above McNabney Marsh.

MR saw 50 **Tree Swallows** at McNabney Marsh on 1/3. These are probably part of the large over-wintering flock in the Central Valley and Delta.

TR continued to have daily **Red-breasted Nuthatch** visits to his home near Larkey Park in Walnut Creek 11/29.

15 **American Pipits** were at Contra Loma RP on 11/29 P&NS.

FS saw a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** on Cherry Lane in Walnut Creek on 11/29. Another was seen there last year for several weeks.

A rare **Swamp Sparrow** was seen at Holland Tract in east county during the MDAS bird count 12/14, by JoC, TR, J-CS and JT.

White-throated Sparrows were widespread—seen at Heather Farm, Contra Loma, Pinole RS and Tilden Park Inspiration Point Trail HH, LL, LQ, P&NS, TR, DW.

Pine Siskin were seen until 11/29 EL, TR.

An **Evening Grosbeak** was at Lake Anza in Tilden RP on 12/19 DQ.

JB J. Black, JC Jane Chinn, RC Rich Cimino, JoC Josiah Clark, SD Sheila Dickie, JD Jay Dodge, JuD Judith Dunham, JE Jimm Edgar, CF Carol Fowler, HH Hugh Harvey, AH Allen Hirsch, BH Bob Hislop, JH Jeff Hoppes, DK Doris Kretschmer, DL David Lai, EL Eugenia Larson, DoL Don Lewis, LL Laura Look, KL Kathy Luis, AM Amy McDonald, JM Jeff Miller, BP Bob Power, DQ Dave Quady, LQ Louie Quintana, MR Mark Rauzon, AR Amy Richey, TR Ted Robertson, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, J-CS Juan-Carlos Solis, IT Ian Thomas, RT Rob Thomas, JT Jim Tietz, DV Doug Vaughan, DW Denise Wight.

SF Bay Flyway Festival

Mount Diablo Audubon Society will have a presence at the 15th annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, February 11-13, at Mare Island. We highly encourage you to attend and join one of the birding trips, enjoy the art and photography show, learn of the history of Mare Island, listen to a talk about raptors, browse the booths of other environmental organizations and vendors, visit the new Shoreline Heritage Preserve, or be one of the first to walk the new San Pablo Bay Walking Trail, a 2-mile wildlife viewing trail on the western shore of the island. Take this special opportunity to view the famous Tiffany windows in St. Peter's Chapel. Be sure to stop by the MDAS booth in the main exhibit hall.



Historic Naval St. Peter's Chapel

As always, this event is free. This year the venue will be centered at a different building from previous years, but you should have no trouble following the signs once you cross the bridge from Vallejo to Mare Island. For more information, please see www.sfbayflywayfestival.com/.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

February

- 5 Saturday Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
- 10 Thursday CANCELED.....Grizzly Island
- 12 SaturdayDon Edwards SF Bay NWR
- 17 Thursday..... Sunol Regional Park
- 24 Thursday.....Mt. View Sanitary/MacNabney Marsh
- 26-27 Saturday-Sunday Los Banos/Panoche Valley

March

- 2 WednesdayWalnut Creek Parks
- 5 Saturday.....Tomales Bay State Park
- 17 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
- 23 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas
- 26 Saturday.....Black Diamond Mines

April

- 2 Saturday..... Garin Regional Park
- 6 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 9 Saturday..... Pine Canyon
- 13 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park
- 18 MondayNorth Briones
- 21 Thursday Del Puerto Canyon
- 23 Saturday..... Mines Road

① Saturday, February 5

Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve

Leader: Joel Summerhill, 752-0862.

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 and continue to the end at Westgate Landing Park. Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, hawks and grassland birds. Trip will go in light rain. If questions, call the leader.

NOTE THAT THE SCHEDULED FEBRUARY 10 TRIP TO GRIZZLY ISLAND HAS BEEN CANCELED.

① Saturday, February 12

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR

Leader: Stephanie Ellis, (408) 946 6548 Ext. 13

Join Stephanie Ellis and Mike Mammoser for a morning of birding. Winter is prime time to see an abundance of waterfowl, shorebirds and American White Pelicans at the Refuge. We will start at the Environmental Education Center (EEC) at 8:00 AM and scan the pickleweed habitat of New Chicago Marsh. Next stop is the Alviso Marina to peek at salt pond A12. Here we have the opportunity to see Snowy Plovers. Dress warm.

RSVP required. Contact Kathi Kendrick (408) 946-6548 Ext. 10 or kkendrick@sfbbo.org. This trip is FREE.

③ Thursday, February 17

Sunol Regional Park

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves at 8:15 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville. Meet at 8:45 AM in the first parking lot on the left, Sunol Regional Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Road. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 miles south on Calaveras; turn left on Geary Road and go 2 miles to park. Entry fee required. Watch and listen for Wild Turkey along Geary Road. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, American Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens are possible. Bring lunch and a beverage.

① Thursday, February 24

Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

Leader: Steve Taylor, s-taylor@pacbell.net.

Meet at 9 AM at the Mountain 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 Mountain View Sanitary's private road. Follow 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 on your own in the afternoon.

① Saturday-Sunday, February 26-27

Los Banos/Panoche Valley

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

On Saturday we will leave from Sycamore Valley Road Park & Ride at 6.30 AM and bird Santa Fe Grade Road, together with the San Luis and Merced Wildlife Refuges; on Sunday we will bird Mercy Hot Springs and Panoche Valley. Target birds we hope to see include Mountain Bluebird, Mountain Plover and Long-eared Owl at Panoche while at the Los Banos Refuges we should see a full range of waterfowl and raptors. If you plan to go on the trip, please call the leader for details as soon as possible: David Hutton, 938-4485. Motel options in Los Banos include Best Western Executive Inn (209) 827-0954, Los Banos Days Inn (209) 826-9690, Vagabond Inn Executive Los Banos (209) 827-4677; and in Santa Nella, Holiday Inn Express (209) 826-8282. Participants need to bring lunch for both days. A communal (optional) dinner is being planned for Saturday evening. A fee is charged at Mercy Hot Springs.

Trip Reports

Limantour, November 20. This trip was canceled because of inclement weather.

Maury Stern

Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh, November 22. Seventeen birders spent the morning at Mountain View Sanitary District ponds and McNabney Marsh. The target bird here is Green Heron and everyone had great looks at some through the scope. It was interesting to see how camouflaged they are while standing in the grasses at the edge of the water. A Red-shouldered Hawk was very cooperative and we observed it for some time. Waterfowl at McNabney Marsh included Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Northern Pintail, and American Wigeon. The highlight of the morning was a pair of Peregrine Falcons flying overhead. Overall it was a very slow morning birdwise. 46 species of birds were seen. *Cheryl Abel*

Christmas Count Rarities Chase, January 2.

It was a cold, stormy, dreary day, but that didn't deter fourteen serious birders from participating in the all-day, third annual MDAS Rarities Chase.

We started out at McNabney Marsh with about 50 Tree Swallows, a few ducks and fewer shorebirds. We patiently waited in the

rain, but were unable to re-locate the Least Bittern at Martinez Regional Shoreline. Heading out to East Contra Costa County we found the White-throated Sparrow at Contra Loma. Many of the usual species were located at Iron House Sanitary District, then we headed out to Holland Track for a bit of Central Valley birding experience, seeing Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swan, and Cackling, Snow (one blue phase adult), and Greater White-fronted Geese. We missed the previously seen Swamp Sparrow at Oarwood Track, but Clifton Court Forebay produced a Thayer's Gull for study and a close, adult male Tufted Duck. We ended the day at 4:30 PM with 104 species.

Denise Wight and Bingham Gibbs

Putah Creek, January 8. It was quite cold in the Putah Creek/Lake Solano area, but though it was foggy all day, the fog was high enough that visibility was excellent. We had good views of almost all the target birds, including Wood Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye,

H o o d e d Merganser, O s p r e y , American Dipper and Phainopepla. Mostly missing in action were some very common birds — sparrows were very sparse. The unexpected highlight birds

Photo by Denise Wight

were at least two Lewis's Woodpeckers, again, very well seen. The numbers: 19 birders, 72 species.

Fred Safier

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 drink and join us during our midday break.

Category ❶: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ❷: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ❸: 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.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

The 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is planned for February 18-21, 2011. The four-day event is free and is open to bird watchers of all ages and skill levels. Participants watch birds for any length of time on one or more days of the count and enter their tallies at www.birdcount.org. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. The 2010 GBBC gathered more than 97,300 bird checklists submitted by an estimated 63,000 volunteers from across the United States and Canada.

On the www.birdcount.org website, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. Participants may also enter the GBBC photo contest by uploading images taken during the count.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited.



History

 » *Continued from Page 2*
and Mrs. Hassler. The second Thursday of the month at 8:00 p.m. was chosen as the meeting date and time.

Thus the first regular meeting was held May 14th. The By-laws were considered with definite action put over to the June meeting when the nominating committee reported. Nominating committee was Mrs. George Hoffschneider, Mrs. Mary Whitcomb, and Paul Oplar.

At this meeting plans were made for the second field trip when the invitation to spend the day at Mulfontes in the Livermore hills was accepted.

In June with the By-Laws adopted and a regular corps of officers elected the Mount Diablo Audubon Society was on its way with Mr. Cooperrider its first president.

N.B. Historian's note – This is the truth, nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. That will appear anon – Isabella McGeehon.

The preceding was published in the Quail, Volume 1, Number 4, February, 1955. Spelling and punctuation has been preserved.

Don Edwards NWR

» Continued from Page 10

open to the public. American Avocet and Forster's Tern nest on the small dredge islands, occasionally joined by Black Skimmers. Roosting winter gull flocks include Thayer's, Herring, Ring-billed, Western, California, and Glaucous-winged Gulls. Rare gulls are also found here each winter. Check for Greater Yellowlegs and Least Sandpiper along the shore. Thousands of ducks use A16 in the winter, including Northern Shovelers, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, and Gadwall. During migration, many shorebirds roost on the islands and often include both Red-necked and Wilson's Phalarope. Black Tern can usually be seen in small numbers during spring migration.

To the east (right) of the EEC is Mallard Slough. When the tide is out, the slough's mudflats attract shorebirds and Green-winged Teal. Sora and Virginia Rail occupy the slough's bulrushes in winter, and always keep your eyes and ears out



Snowy Plover. Photo by Michael Kern.

for Clapper Rail. The Alameda Song Sparrow (an endemic South Bay subspecies), Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat and Red-winged Blackbird can be found here throughout the year.

Birding right around the EEC building can also be productive. Fox, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows are winter residents, while American Goldfinches and Anna's Hummingbirds breed here. Much of this upland transitional zone

is being restored to native plants. As this restoration matures, expect to find more and more birds using this area.

Stephanie Ellis is the Outreach and Communications Director for the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory.

Portions of the Refuge are part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project—the largest restoration project on the West Coast. The restoration of the South San Francisco Bay will transform approximately 15,000 acres of former salt ponds into tidal marsh and other habitats to improve the health of the Bay. However, the salt ponds have become important wildlife habitat over the past 150 years. To inform adaptive management of important bird habitats, the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory studies how birds use these salt ponds and other wetland habitats. Learn more by visiting our website at www.sfbbo.org.

a Red-tailed Hawk ♦ *Buteo jamaicensis*

"Everywhere, except in the highest Sierras, a large brown hawk may be seen circling with motionless wings high above the earth or perched upright in some solitary tree above a ditch or stream. If one watches closely the wheeling figure, when the light strikes it at the right angle, the whole broadly rounded tail shows dun red, or 'cow color,' in contrast to the brown wings and back. When a bird is perched and faces the observer, the head and throat show dusky brown, the breast is generally light colored, and the belly apparently crossed by a broad dark band." That is Ralph Hoffmann's description of this bird in his inimitable 1927 book *Birds of the Pacific States*. In Audubon's time this bird was called a Buzzard; the Raptor Foundation of the UK insists that its proper name is Red-tailed Buzzard.

It is not always easy to identify a Red-tailed Hawk with certainty, although its cow color is a key, except in young birds. The first step with identifying any hawk is to use its size and shape to decide what type you're observing. Is it one of the three

main groups: *buteo*, *accipiter*, or *falcon*? Buteos have broad, rounded wings and short, wide tails, and you often see them soaring without flapping. Red-shouldered Hawks, another common *buteo*, tend to be smaller than Red-tails with a banded tail and warm brown barring below. Swainson's Hawk has a dark trailing edge to the underside of the wing, and a dark chest. From a distance you might confuse a soaring Red-tail with a Turkey Vulture, but the flight of the Turkey Vultures gave them the nickname of Topsy Glider, and their longer, more rectangular wings are held above horizontal, forming an easily visible V. Hawks and Eagles soar with wings flat.

Red-tailed Hawks are large birds; a large female may reach a weight of three pounds and a wingspan of 4½ feet—but a Golden Eagle could be up to 13½ pounds with a span of seven feet.

Red-tailed Hawks soar very high in the sky, hunting for food. Their excellent eyesight—much sharper than a human's—can spot a mouse from a height of 100 feet. These hawks also hunt from perches. Prey includes small mammals, including: mice,



voles, shrews, moles, squirrels, chipmunks, rats, rabbits, opossums, muskrats, skunks, and bats. They will also eat snakes, turtles, frogs, lizards, salamanders, ducks, crows, woodpeckers, starlings, doves, blackbirds, kingfishers, robins, owls, crayfish, centipedes, spiders, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, earthworms, fish, even roadkill.

Ornithology Opportunities

Winter Wings Festival. February 18–20, Klamath Falls, Oregon. The Klamath Basin is home to the largest concentration of wintering Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states. Located in both south central Oregon and northern California, the Klamath Basin is a key stopover on the Pacific Flyway, hosting 80% of the birds that use the Flyway. A total of six separate nearby refuges comprise the total National Wildlife Refuge complex spanning nearly 200,000 acres. Do you want to be a bird photographer? Art Morris, author of the classic *The Art of Bird Photography*, will speak and lead workshops. www.WinterWingsFest.org

The **2011 Audubon Assembly** will be held in San Diego in conjunction with the **San Diego Bird Festival** on March 3–6. It's the first Assembly in Southern California and includes trips, events and workshops for the entire family. Buy an **ASSEMBLY PASS** (\$125) and get free admission to all Assembly events and workshops including a banquet with seabird expert Peter Harrison and a Saturday night private party to meet new Audubon President David Yar-nold. The 2011 Bird Festival is highlighting pelagic birding, with a pelagic trip offered each day. Extend your 2011 San Diego Bird Festival experience with the Belize Birding Bonanza trip sponsored by San Diego Audubon's Avian Adventures and operated by Wildside Nature Tours. For online schedule and brochure: www.sandiegoaudubon.org/2011%20Brochure.pdf

Travel with Golden Gate Audubon offers Big Bend and the Texas Hill Country, April 8–17 and Ecuador—The Birds of the Andes, October 14–28. For information contact Chris Bard, chrisbard@earthlink.net, call 510-522-5699, or visit the webpage, www.goldengateaudubon.org/field-trips/travel-with-golden-gate-audubon/

2011 Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival! April 29–May 2. Did you attend the Festival last April? If so, you know about the top guides, fabulous bird walks, outstanding pelagic trip to Cordell Bank, and tremendous camaraderie experienced by the 500 people who attended. Festival attendees took part in over 50 walks and outings, and saw 200 species of birds (not to mention dozens of mammals, butterflies, and marine mammals!) in Western Marin and Sonoma Counties. www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org. Last year, nearly every walk and outing sold out well before the Festival weekend, so be sure to send your e-mail address to prbnfestival@gmail.com so you will be notified when registration opens for the 2011 Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival.



Turkey Buzzard
Cathartes aura septentrionalis
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard, 1930

The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too.

Chief Luther Standing Bear

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.



MDAS Board of Directors

- President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
 Vice President: Mike Williams, 798-0303
 Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929
 Board Secretary: Diana Granados
 Corresponding Secretary: Barbara Vaughn
 Sales Manager: Diane Malucelli, 674-0920
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Forster's Terns. SF Bay NWR Photo by Ken Phenicie

Don Edwards SF Bay NWR

By Stephanie Ellis

The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge was founded in 1974 and spans 30,000 acres of diverse habitat for migratory and breeding birds. The mudflats, open bay, former salt pond, tidal marsh and vernal pool habitats host over 280 different species of birds. The Refuge is a critical stop on the Pacific Flyway for millions of migratory shorebirds and waterfowl during spring and fall migration. It is also an important home to endangered resident species such as the California Clapper Rail and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse.

There are three main areas for visitors to explore. The Refuge Visitor Center is located in Fremont, off Thornton Avenue. From the Visitors Center, you can access trails through LaRiviere Marsh, a former salt pond restored to tidal marsh in the 1980's. Here you have an excellent chance of hearing a Clapper Rail. If you are lucky, you may even see one. In the small South Bay

town of Alviso, you can access the Refuge through the Alviso Marina County Park, or through the Refuge's Environmental Education Center (EEC). From the Alviso Marina, a popular biking route is Alviso Slough Trail, a 10-mile loop where you can observe thousands of waterfowl on the former salt ponds. A large former salt pond, Pond A12, directly adjacent to the parking lot, offers a chance at viewing the threatened Western Snowy Plover. Birding is phenomenal at any time of year at the Refuge, and at any of these sites. However, for those new to the Refuge, the most diverse birding opportunities are around the EEC. Refuge maps and directions are available at both the Visitor Center and the EEC, and online at <http://www.fws.gov/desfbay/>.

New Chicago Marsh, to the west of the EEC, is a pickleweed salt marsh that attracts waterfowl and shorebirds. Canada Goose and local duck species breed here, augmented in winter by incoming migrants.



American Avocet chick.

Photo by Jacqueline Deely

Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet and Savannah Sparrow nest here, as well as the occasional Snowy Plover. In winter, Golden Eagle and Peregrine Falcon can occasionally be seen on the power towers along the entrance road, while White-tailed Kite and Northern Harrier can appear anytime. Rarities have included Tundra Swan, Little Gull, Ruff, and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

North of (behind) the EEC is a large salt pond, Pond A16, whose perimeter levee is

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