



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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February 2013

Plume Hunters in Oregon ♦ Renée Thompson

In 1885, more than five million birds were killed in the United States for the millinery industry, prompting the formation of the National Audubon Society. Author Renée Thompson will present a slide presentation detailing the plume-hunting trade in the marshes of southeast Oregon. Renée will discuss how her research inspired her novel, *The Plume Hunter*, and will touch on the men who shot the birds, the species of birds they killed, and the hats worn by women during the mid-to-late 1800s. She will also discuss Oregon naturalists William Finley and Herman Bohlman, the men who inspired her characters Fin McFaddin and Aiden Elliott, and explain why she



fictionalized Frank M. Chapman—the real-life curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City—and gave him a role in her novel.

David Sibley, author of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, said Renée's novel "offers a fascinating glimpse into the life of a bird hunter and the complex social, economic and personal issues swirling around the birth of the conservation movement." Bill Thompson III, editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, said, "Renée's gripping novel transports the reader to a time when our nation was trying its best to grow up, yet seemed mired in its own awkward 'teen' years. I read this book in one sitting, finding it no easier to put down than Fin did his hunting guns."

Cover photograph from *The Plume Hunter*, by Renée Thompson. Photo by Greg Downing.

Renée writes from Northern California about wildlife, her love of birds, and the people who inhabit the American West. Her husband, Steve, worked as a wildlife biologist at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and Renée and Steve have lived on or near wildlife refuges nearly all of their adult lives. Renée's first novel, *The Bridge At Valentine*, was hailed as "very original and very appealing" by Pulitzer Prize-winner Larry McMurtry, author of *Lonesome Dove*. Her short stories have appeared in *Narrative*, *Literal Latte*, *Arcadia*, *10,000 Tons of Black Ink*, and *Chiron Review*.

Renée will sell and sign copies of *The Plume Hunter* (\$15) after the presentation.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Presentation of the Al McNabney Environmental Distinction Award to Gary Bogue. The legendary Gary Bogue, everyone's favorite (but retired) nature columnist, will entertain us with his memoirs of 42 years with the Contra Costa Times, and before that as curator of the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, and even before that as animal lover and naturalist.

Among Bogue's lifetime achievements, he can be acclaimed for mobilizing his loyal readership to give generously to Lindsay Wildlife Museum, to Save Mount Diablo, Muir Heritage Land Trust, and other conservation organizations.

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,* raffle

8:05 PM Speaker: **Renée Thompson**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, March 7: Dr. Reg Barrett

President's Corner

Our Mount Diablo Audubon chapter has been without a Conservation Chair since 2010. We have had a number of folks step forward to tackle specific issues: the Concord Naval Weapons Station transfer, Mount Diablo land issues, development projects in the county, Burrowing Owl protection, etc., but no one person to direct and coordinate any of these issues. We are very pleased that Nancy Wenninger, a long time member, has volunteered to take on the role of Conservation Chair for the chapter. This comes at a time when we and the conservation community are struggling with the large issue of pesticide/rodenticide use. The damage to much of our wildlife, with birds of prey in particular, has become hugely apparent. It is the "Silent Spring" of the 21st century. There will be a lot more discussion of how you and our chapter might help on this issue. Stayed tuned.

I once again participated in a lot of Audubon Christmas Bird Counts this year; seven to be exact. Two were our own Contra Costa county counts. (Reports on these counts are in this issue of the *Quail* in the Trip Report section.) Some of the counts

By Jimm Edgar

I did were fairly small counts with only 12 or 15 counters (Marysville, California count). Others were large such as the Santa Barbara count that had 250 volunteers in the field on January 5 for their count! They had 215 species of birds that day which will put them at the top four or five counts in North America. I was with one other birder all day in the Santa Barbara cemetery and the east beach area. We had the only Black Skimmers seen on the count. Other great sightings for their count were Northern Waterthrush, Spotted Owl, Red Crossbill, Vermilion Flycatcher and Brewer's Sparrow. It was a fun time to be at their countdown dinner and hear the reports. Amazing.

I read a very good article in *Birdwatching* magazine called "The true cost of coffee." It is about the terrible loss of habitat that accompanies most coffee plantations. Mike Elliot's column in this *Quail* talks about the problem. I hope all of us might consider using the bird friendly coffee.

We have some great programs planned for this spring and of course our field trips. Hope to see you at one of them.

Backyard Bird Count

The 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18. This is an annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website.

Each participant must set up a free GBBC account to submit their checklists. You'll only need to do this once to participate in all future GBBC events.

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use the GBBC information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird

Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations.

- How will changing weather patterns influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other "irruptive" species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

If you do not wish to submit your observations on the Internet, take your tally sheets to Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill, and they will relay the data to GBBC. The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited

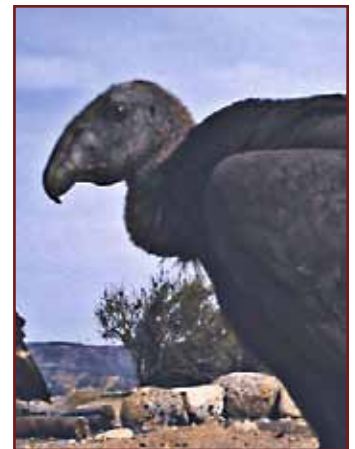
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Pinnacles National Park

With President Obama's signature, Pinnacles National Monument, designated as a national monument in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt, has become America's 59th National Park.

Rising out of the Gabilan Mountains east of central California's Salinas Valley, Pinnacles is the result of millions of years of erosion, faulting and tectonic plate movement. Within the park's nearly 27,000 acres of diverse wild lands, visitors delight in the beauty and variety of its spring wildflowers and more than 400 species of native bees.

The Pinnacles National Park Act recognizes the significance of park resources, specifically the chaparral, grasslands, blue oak woodlands, and majestic valley oak savanna ecosystems of the area, the area's geomorphology, unique flora and fauna, and the ancestral and cultural history of native Americans, settlers and explorers.



California
Condor
NPS photo

Pinnacles National Park is also well known as one of three California Condor release sites in the country. The park manages 31 free-flying condors. Each bird is monitored after its release to increase its chances of survival. Park biologists and volunteers monitor chicks hatched in the wild. They check blood and feather samples for signs of poisoning from ingestion of lead-contaminated food.

The rock formations of Pinnacles National Monument and the Gabilan Mountain Range divide the park into East and West Districts which are connected by trails, but not by a vehicle road. More than 30 miles of trails access geological formations, spectacular vistas and wildland communities. Pinnacles National Park is a day-use park, with occasional full moon hikes and dark sky astronomical observations led by ranger-interpreters.

Wanted: Pied Piper



From my perspective, there's no worse feeling than lying in bed at 3 AM and listening to the pitter-patter of little feet in the attic. RATS!! I imagine the havoc they are wreaking on my electrical wiring, the diseases they carry and the mess they are making in the insulation as I toss and turn. At moments like these, I feel desperate enough to resort to almost anything to get rid of the evil invaders.

In the past, I might have been tempted to use a poison like d-Con, a commonly available rodenticide which now requires only one feeding to be lethal. Unfortunately, the rats do not die immediately but continue to ingest the poison, thus becoming toxic "bombs." Recent studies demonstrate that these second generation poisons are so potent that they are lethal to raptors and other predators which feed on the poisoned rodents. If you haven't already seen Ted Williams' article "Building a Better Mouse-trap" in the January-February 2013 issue of Audubon magazine, you can find a link to it on Mount Diablo Audubon's website. I would recommend reading it before you choose a weapon of mass destruction.

The ideal approach is to contract with a "green" exterminator who seals off all entry points and then traps and removes the rodents which remain in the structure. However, this method is not inexpensive, which is a disincentive for many homeowners.

The MDAS Board of Directors has decided to focus in 2013 on widespread rodenticide use and its devastating impacts on non-target species, which include wildlife, pets and children. All have been victims of secondary poisoning.

By Nancy Wenninger

During the next few weeks, the Conservation Committee will work to develop a multi-pronged strategy to deal with this issue. We anticipate that we will be looking at what we can do with regard to advocacy, public education and special conservation projects. We hope to partner with Audubon California and other organizations already involved in the issue, such as WildCare,

the Center for Biological Diversity, the American Bird Conservancy, California for Pesticide Reform and Earthjustice.

But it won't be enough to say, "Don't use the rodenticides," or even to outlaw their use. The rodents remain and multiply, so reasonable alternatives must be offered as an important part of any public education program. If you have ideas or want to work on this project, please contact me, Nancy Wenninger, either by phone (925-938-7987) or by e-mail at nwenninger@aol.com.

Our general meeting in March will bring Lisa Owens Viani of the organization Raptors Are the Solution to speak about the problem, and Dr. Reg Barrett of the University of California to tell us about his research with fishers and other important wildlife of the Sierra Nevada and their risks of rodenticide exposure.

Welcome New Members

Valerie Colber	Moraga
Chuck Deutschman	Walnut Creek
Kathy Gilman	Walnut Creek
Linda Hughes	Lafayette
DeAnna Martin	Walnut Creek
Dita Rasper	Pleasant Hill
Ted Rubin	San Ramon
Carsten Schroeder	Walnut Creek
Bram Sonneck	Pleasant Hill
Renée Thompson	Granite Bay
Pamela Trees	Concord
Melanie Walas	Lafayette
Palma You	Alameda



This bird was first discovered in 1877 in Marin County. It was named by Major Charles Bendire for the man who collected the first specimen. The bird breeds only in California and southern Oregon, but most spend the winter in Mexico. Some stay throughout the year in Southern California and on the Channel Islands.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 9 to learn more.

ABDEGHIILLMMNRSU

Just for Ducks

By Brian Murphy

It's really something to look down into the creek and see Wood Ducks beginning the pairing up process in downtown Walnut Creek, behind our library .

Wood Ducks in the photo are easy to spot as the female has the white eye stripe while the colors of the male are hard to miss.

The female picks the cavity for nesting while the male accompanies her in the search for what she considers a good cavity in which to nest. She was either born in one of the Walnut Creek Wood Duck boxes or nested in one last year.



So we actually have 'urban creek' Wood Ducks downtown Walnut Creek returning to our creeks to nest in Wood Duck boxes! You can recover a Wood Duck population by just providing housing for them!

Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB Sightings@yahoogroups.com. If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

The irruption of Pine Siskins continued as well as a large influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches. There was big excitement when Swamp Sparrows were seen in West and Central Contra Costa County.

P&NS saw 1,500 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Holland Tract 11/23. They also saw 6 **Tundra Swan** there 1/12.

A **Brant** continued at Miller-Knox RP shore from 11/17 to 12/9. BoP, KH, BD, JC, BM, DH.

A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Miller-Knox from 11/15 to 12/13. KF, BoP, KH, BD, LL, JC, BM, DH. P&NS saw one at Holland Tract on 1/12.

A **Black Scoter** was around the Richmond Marina from 11/20 to 1/14. TB, BB, KH, KF, EL, JT, GT, BoP, BD, SD, JC, BM, DH.

PaB saw a **Barrow's Goldeneye** off shore of Martinez Shoreline Park on 11/15, and P&NS saw two in a neighborhood pond in Oakley 12/10.



Barrow's Goldeneye.
Photo by Albert Linkowski.

Hooded Mergansers were in small numbers scattered through the county: Pinole Creek, EL; Jewel Lake, RS; Walnut Creek near DeVito Equestrian Center, BH; Moraga Country Club Pond, JuC, NW, JS; Heather Farm Pond, TF.

JA saw a **Common Loon** at Lafayette Reservoir on 1/3.

There were 7 to 18 **American White Pelicans** at the Lafayette Reservoir during the weeks around New Year. M&SS.

An **American Bittern** was at Big Break Regional Shoreline 12/31. JA. There were 2 **Cattle Egrets** there as well.

An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen from Briones Crest Trail in Briones RP 1/1 by KaH. A first year **Bald Eagle** was soaring near the Bear Valley entrance to Briones RP 1/14. ZD.

P&NS saw a **Ferruginous Hawk** at Holland Tract 11/23. BW saw one around his Martinez neighborhood for a week. 1/14.

A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Concord Naval Weapon Station 11/29. TR.

BW saw a **Golden Eagle** over Hwy 680 and Willow Pass Road 11/13. MM saw one over his Martinez home 11/17. TR had one at the CNWS 11/29. JB saw one while hiking up the Black Diamond trail from Clayton.

A **Merlin** was at Richmond Landfill Loop 12/8 GT, and 1/2 TF and MS, 12/15 at Heather Farm area HH, and two at Lafayette Reservoir 1/3 JA.

Three adult **Peregrine Falcons** were at Richmond Landfill Loop 11/17. EL. There was one at Meeker Slough 1/9. KB.

Clapper Rails were at Meeker Slough 12/13, LL, and 1/9 KB.

Sora was at Meeker Slough 12/13, LL and one heard at Heather Farm Pond 1/8. HH.

Over 100 **Sandhill Cranes** were at Holland Tract 11/23. P&NS.

TF saw four **Thayer's Gulls** at Mallard Reservoir 11/13 and 11/15.

A **Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker** and one hybrid **Y/R-shafted Northern Flicker** were at Markham Nature Area in Concord 11/26. AL.

Eighty **Horned Larks** were near the Byron Airport 12/11. AL.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread throughout the area including East County. P&NS, AL, MM. BP.

A **Pacific Wren** was at Big Break Regional Trail in Oakley 11/18. P&NS.

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was near Heather Farm 12/15. HH.

Townsend's Warblers made backyard appearances in several yards. JuC 12/24 in Moraga. BP in Lafayette 1/8.

A bright **Palm Warbler** was along the Richmond Landfill Loop Trail from 11/15, DA, through 1/2, TF, MS. It was also seen by ErL, ES, GT, KF, and AL.

JeB saw two **Grasshopper Sparrows** along the Black Diamond Trail out of Clayton on 12/8.

There were two separate **Swamp Sparrows** seen. The one at the Richmond Landfill Loop was found by JS, 12/3, and seen until 12/9. JH, BD. The other was at Lafayette Reservoir discovered by GG on 12/15. It was present at least through 1/10. JR. Others viewing the bird were TF, BB, PB, BM, JA, HH, DL, MS.

E&GL had their first **White-throated Sparrow** after 18 years in their San Ramon yard 11/28. JR had two in her Alamo yard during the period.

Eighty **Great-tailed Grackles** were seen by AL on 12/11, between Waterbird Preserve in Martinez and Dow Wetlands Preserve in Antioch.

There was a small flock of **Red Crossbills** at Inspiration Point on 12/12. MP.

Pine Siskins were omnipresent. JB, TL, CF, MM, TF, LG, CS, IW, BH.

AL saw a single **Evening Grosbeak** at Inspiration Point 12/10. It was well photographed.

JA Jeff Acuff, DA David Anderson, PB Pat Bacchetti, KB Ken Berniker, JB John Blakelock, TB Tony Brake, BB Bob Brandriff, PaB Paul Brenner, JeB Jerry Britten, JC Jim Chiropoulos, JuC Judi Cooper, ZD Zach Dautrich, SD Sheila Dickie, BD Bob Dunn, TF Tracy Farrington, CF Carol Fowler, KF Kathy Francone, LG Lisa Gorrell, GG George HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, KH Kevin Hintsa, BH Bob Hislop, KaH Kate Hoffman, JH Jeff Hoppes, E&GL Eugenia and Gary Larson, TL Tom Lee, EL Ed Leong, DL Don Lewis, ErL Eric Lichtwardt, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, MM Mike Marchiano, BM Bruce Mast, MP Michael Park, BP Bernt Petterson, BoP Bob Power, JR Jean Richmond, TR Ted Robertson, JiR Jim Roethe, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, RS Richard Sinjac, CS Colin Smith, JuS Julie Starr, JS John Sterling, MS Maury Stern, M&SS Susan and Maury Stern, ES Emily Strauss, GT Glen Tepke, JT Jerry Ting, BW Brian Walker, NW Nat Weber, IW Idell Wedemeyer.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

February

- 2 Saturday Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
- 14 Thursday Grizzly Island Wildlife Area
- 16-17 Saturday-Sunday Los Banos/Panoche Valley
- 20 Wednesday Sunol Regional Park
- 23 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park

March

- 6 Wednesday Walnut Creek City Parks
- 12 Tuesday McNabney Marsh/ Mountain View Sanitary
- 21 Thursday Valle Vista
- 27 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas

April

- 6 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 10 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 13 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 16 Tuesday North Briones Regional Park
- 20 Saturday Mines Road
- 24 Wednesday Del Puerto Canyon
- 30 Tuesday Black Diamond Mines

① Saturday, February 2 Thornton Area/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. East of Terminous, 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. Bring lunch and a beverage. If questions, call the leader.



① Thursday, February 14 Grizzly Island Wildlife Area

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 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 Wildlife'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. Bring lunch and a beverage.

① Saturday/Sunday, February 16-17 Los Banos/Panoche Valley

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

On Saturday we will leave from Sycamore Valley Road Park & Ride at 6:30 AM to bird Santa Fe Grade Road, together with the San Luis and Merced Wildlife Refuges; we should see a full range of waterfowl and raptors. On Sunday we will bird Mercey Hot Springs and Panoche Valley. Target birds include Mountain Bluebird, Mountain Plover and Long-eared Owl. 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 Mercey Hot Springs. If you plan to go on the trip, please call the leader for details as soon as possible.

③ Wednesday, February 20 Sunol Regional Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644.

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville. Meet at 8:00 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. Possible entry fee. 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.

American Dipper:
Drawing by Megan Sandri



② Saturday, February 23 Tomales Bay State Park

Leader: Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Carpool leaves 7 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at Heart's Desire Beach in Tomales Bay State Park. After crossing the Richmond Bridge (toll), follow US 101 north and take the first San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left onto 3rd Street. In San Anselmo turn right onto 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.

Trip Reports

Berkeley–Emeryville Shoreline, October 10. Nine members enjoyed a warm fall day along the Emeryville–Berkeley Waterfront on Wednesday, October 10. Highlights included seeing a Common Murre just off the Berkeley Shoreline, numerous Western and Clark’s Grebes in the Berkeley Marina with a Pelagic Cormorant perched close by, several flocks of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the pines by the various restaurant/marina parking lots and a beautiful Townsend’s Warbler on the ground near our lunchspot. The tally for the day was 50 species. *Eugenia Larson*

Charleston Slough/South Bay, December 1. Four members braved the rainy forecast on Saturday, December 1st to bird Charleston Slough and Redwood Shores across the Bay. Many common ducks, gulls, waders, and a few shorebirds were seen at Charleston Slough, with two Black-bellied Plovers the most noteworthy. In Redwood Shores, along the slough on the west side of Radio Road were 3 Hooded Mergansers close in (2 females and 1 sub-adult male) and 3 Blue-winged Teal (2 males and 1 female). Just west of the slough were over 100 Long-billed Curlews with many Long-billed Dowitchers and some Least Sandpipers actively feeding. Eight Black Skimmers rested on the two small islands in the large pond at the end of Radio Road and one male Eurasian Wigeon was sleeping with other ducks close by. The rain held off on this warm day; 62 species were seen. *Eugenia Larson*

Niles Canyon/Quarry Lakes, December 13. What if we offered a field trip and no one came. That happened on our Niles trip. No one showed up at the car-pool meeting site, but I knew folks were

meeting us at the trip site so I went down by myself and met two other people for the count. This often is a scouting trip for the area I lead for the Hayward Christmas bird count. It gives an idea of what we might expect. The trip only went until noon. We had 48 species on a fairly nice day. Highlights were the fairly reliable Spotted Sandpiper along Alameda Creek. We also had a female Hooded Merganser in the creek which is a bird hard to find there. We had a Steller’s Jay in the EBRP staging area on Alameda Creek which is a bird usually seen at higher elevation. Acorn Woodpeckers were also there. They have now become a regular when only a few years ago they were rare. 85 Northern Shovelers in a pond at Niles Community Park was way more than we have ever seen there. This is a very nice area for a day or half day trip for those who live in the East Bay. *Jimm Edgar*

Contra Costa County Christmas Counts. The **East CC Count, December 18** had 33 participants and 148 species seen during the day. 148 is the highest count we have ever had in our 10-year history of the count. Ted Robertson’s group on Holland tract had 115 species! We missed a few birds we almost always see such as Yellow-billed Magpie and Cattle Egret. We saw many difficult birds to see such as Steller’s Jay, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Wood Duck, Varied Thrush, Redhead and Phainopepla. A Vesper Sparrow at Vasco Caves was only the second ever seen on the count. New birds that have never been seen were Hooded Oriole, Red-throated Loon and Brown Creeper. All three of these were seen by the group at Clifton Court Forebay. The **Central CC Count, December 22**, had 54 participants and 154 species seen that day. 150 is very good for us. We have had a high of 158 but that was probably 20 years ago. We have only broken 150 the last few years. Loss of habitat has taken its toll on birds we have seen. We missed Purple Finch again this year and also Hairy Woodpecker. We had a great raptor day with eleven raptor species seen. A Rough-legged Hawk seen that day was last seen on the count probably seven or eight years ago. It was a good year all over Northern California for invasion of many finch type species. Red-breasted Nuthatch is almost never seen on our count and I think we had six. Pine Siskin has not been seen in years on the count and we had many. Two groups had Golden-crowned Kinglet, a tough bird to see. Another good bird this year all over California was Red-throated Loon. We had two that day. A Yellow-headed Blackbird was photographed at the tidal area on the Concord Weapons Station. Blue-winged Teal and Semipalmated Plover were seen by the group in the Tesoro refinery; both tough birds for us to see. *Maury Stern and Jimm Edgar, co-compilers*

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh High Tide, January 13 The winter ducks and other birds at Lake Merritt are a true winter spectacle. This trip is timed with an extreme high tide, which should flush rails from their hiding places at Arrowhead Marsh. This year six chapter birders succeeded in spotting 22 waterfowl species, 5 grebe species, 5 of the raptors, 3 of the rails and 14 other shorebirds. Highlights include: the long-reported male Tufted Duck, a female Redhead, both Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, and Barrow’s Goldeneyes, all at Lake Merritt; a Merlin which flew off with prey at Garretson Point; Clapper and Virginia Rails plus a hiding Sora; both a Short-eared and a Burrowing Owl at Arrowhead Marsh; and the ubiquitous Black Phoebe. Altogether the group had 91 species for the day. What a way to kick-off the New Year.

Hugh B. Harvey

Continued on Page 7 »

Come birding with us!

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders, but not dogs. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php. Phone area codes are 925 unless specified otherwise. 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 +, possibly rough terrain

Category ❸: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Our Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is a conservation organization. As such, we encourage members to consider meeting at the carpool point to pick up or ride with others. It is important that given the cost of gasoline, those who ride with others offer to pay some of this cost. Don’t forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees on some of our longer trips. Carpool locations: **El Nido Ranch Road**—Exit SR 24 at St. Stephens Drive east of Orinda. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with St. Stephens Drive. **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.

Trip Reports

Chile Trip, November. It will be hard to describe a 12-day, 170+ species bird trip to Chile in one paragraph. So many things happened in such a short time that it is not possible to cover it all, so here are a few words—instant immersion into full Spanish, the massiveness of urban Santiago, the cordillera of the Andes Mountains, Andean Condors, Yellow-winged Blackbirds in a marsh, the Giant Hummingbird at a Puya plant, the small town of Olmue and people in traditional costumes, Thorn-tailed Rayadito feeding young in a nest inside a cracked barn wall, a successful bird pelagic trip with five Albatross species, the street bouncing after we left the boat in Valparaiso, seeing the stranded freighter Ocean Breeze on one side of a beach while we watched Elegant Terns and Black Skimmers in the lagoon on the other side of the same beach, Diademed Sandpiper-Plovers and Gray-breasted Seedsnipe at 8000 feet in the Yeso Valley above Santiago, seeing the glacier Bill visited 37 years ago, both Flightless and Flying Steamer Ducks near Punta Arenas, the “parrot tree” with up to 50 Austral Parakeets, helping primary school students see the Magellanic Penguins at Otway Sound, crossing the Strait of Magellan by ferry, winnowing South American Snipes on Tierra del Fuego, King Penguins at their colony, the treeless, bushless Patagonia on our drive to Puerto Natales, Tawny-throated Dotteral, Chocolate-vented Tyrant and Black-throated Finch along the way, Torres del Paine in all its glory, a female Magellanic Woodpecker, Chilean Flamingos, Guanacos, gauchos and, oh, a little Chilean wine along the way.



Photos: Above, Bill Maddaus; Below, Eugenia Larson



Lago Grey, Torres del Paine National Park



The Towers, Torres del Paine National Park

Traveling to a new, far-away country is always an amazing experience! We had a fantastic Chilean guide, very compatible companions, excellent food, lovely lodgings, well-planned logistics, and, of course, the birds did not disappoint! Torres del Paine National Park is as spectacular as its pictures with snow-capped peaks, huge glaciers and massive ice bergs. Our pelagic trip out of Valparaiso was fabulous: many species of Albatross, Cape Petrel, Southern Fulmar, Peruvian Diving-Petrel and four species of large Petrels. Birding along the coast out of Santiago gave us great views of Humboldt Penguins, Peruvian Boobies, Peruvian Pelicans, and the beautiful Inca Tern. Day trips were made into the Andes Mountains where we walked across the terrain searching for new species of Seedsnipe, Ground-Tyrants, and the unique Diademed Sandpiper-Plover. Who could forget walking around the preserves close to the King and Magellanic Penguins as they waddled along their time-worn paths? Seeing the rare Huemul feeding in a quiet meadow, herds of Guanacos in the Patagonian steppe, Darwin's Rheas, the stark black female Magellanic Woodpecker, the over 8 inch Giant Hummingbird zooming around us, Andean Condors soaring overhead; all are visions that will stay with us for many years to come. It is hard to believe that we crossed the same Strait of Magellan by ferry where Charles Darwin had once been. I ended the trip with a quiet three days staying at Rosita's parents' farm out of Parral, south of Santiago. Here we roamed the fields, watched the sheep being sheared by hand, and walked in the mountains. Their warm hospitality and kindness will never be forgotten.

Eugenia Larson

Putah Creek, January 12. Eighteen members enjoyed brilliant sunshine and cool weather, though not so cold as had been expected, at Putah Creek and Lake Solano. Most of the target birds showed up in good numbers, including Barrow's Goldeneye, Common and Hooded Merganser, Green Heron, Osprey (well, only one, but that well seen as it lunched on a fish), Peregrine Falcon, Wilson's Snipe (very cooperative and very close), Red-breasted Sapsucker, Yellow-billed Magpie, and Phainopepla. The highlight bird among the 72 species, though, was the Pileated Woodpecker that streaked across Pleasants Valley Road and posed several times as we drove up, affording good views to just about everyone.

Fred Saifer

Avian Health and Migration

By Diana Granados

To quote the USGS National Wildlife Health Center: “Birds get sick.” Birds contract and carry diseases, which contribute biological factors for population control. In the world of birds, just reaching adulthood is risky. Birds reach adulthood in from one to five years depending on the species. Passing on the genetic codes for continuing the species is a hard won fight.

I would like to address the perspective of the bird’s view of the world in relationship to the issue of disease. Birds have specific biological traits that influence their lives. Some of these traits are also influenced by outside natural occurrences, often are in constant flux, which include weather and climate, habitat, food and water, other living animals including their own kind. For years I have used the three words Change, Choice and Challenge that birds face every day. What they inherit from their species and their individual strengths and weaknesses determines how they will handle the three “Cs” throughout their lives.

The year brought an ‘irruptive’ migration for Pine Siskins into our area. Last year also saw an irruptive migration of Snowy Owls throughout the middle of the country. So what is ‘irruptive migration’? It is a rule of Nature: move, adapt or die. It occurs when the necessary resources for survival are gone or severely impaired and the population as a whole must migrate. Pine Siskins usually have enough sustainable habitat and food sources that only a small percentage would migrate, teaming up with their migrating cousins, American and Lesser Goldfinches, and showing up at backyard feeders.

This year Pine Siskins arrived in large numbers with weakened immune systems, hungry, stressed by intimidation from seasoned travelers and existing resident birds competing for available resources, and new and unknown habitat. New to the game and low on the ‘totem pole’, some Pine Siskins become very susceptible to predation, starvation and disease.

Birds get sick. People report sick birds and react in the same category as the birds: confused, scared and intimidated. Is the *Salmonella* outbreak because of people and their backyard feeding? Come on, take a deep calming breath and take into consideration irruptive migration. The reality is the population hit a critical mass and had



Pine Siskin. Sketch by Megan Sandri

to move, adapt or die. If we react by removing feeders, cleaning with chlorine bleach, stripping the ground of leaf cover, keeping the birds dispersed so they won’t crowd, still that will not keep the birds from dying.

How many die because a few succumb to disease vs. how many die by being denied resources and natural patterns of behavior while experiencing a mass exodus from all they have known. My guess would be a greater number die because we pull feeders or chase birds away

Salmonella is out there; starving stressed migratory birds are out there. Try for some calm appraisal. We are providing a corridor for the population to survive. There will be casualties; do not add to the number. But do not panic that you have not sanitized your feeders and yard only to chase away a bird that may well have survived if you had taken a flexible, common sense response. Remember guidelines are not laws and nature is fluid, often in little need of our assistance.

My conclusion would be what is the greater picture; unanswered questions pass through my mind about Pine Siskins. Because they travel in large groups, would food competition from squirrels, woodpeckers and other animals make them more compelled to migrate? The Pine Siskin is an insect eater and will forage on the ground; is their immune system being eroded slowly by pesticide poisoning and other toxins, making this species more fragile in its biology, and, living in flocks, more susceptible to viral and bacterial infection? We should be very careful about attacking only one aspect of a situation when overall in nature there are population controls—some seeming very harsh. I believe that, when combined with issues such as pesticides we persist in using for controls, this is the bigger picture that should be addressed rather than admonishing people about their bird feeding.

Twenty Years Ago

From *The Quail*, March 1993

By Al McNabney

EUCALYPTUS, HERONS AND PEOPLE

Many years ago a pair of Great Blue Herons set up housekeeping in an OLD eucalyptus tree near Montair Public School, Danville. Each year these birds returned to the nest. Eggs were laid, chicks hatched and fledged, and eventually the family left the nest. Enter people. An individual living next to the school indicated he wanted to purchase the property on which the trees stood. Reason, to axe the trees so his view of Mt. Diablo would not be restricted. The school, probably in need of the money, indicated the land would be sold. Of course, no one contacted the heron family about this proposed action.

THEN, the mothers of the school children found out what was being proposed. The moms concluded even if the herons had NOT been notified, the moms were not about to let such a thing take place. MDAS and Audubon Canyon Ranch became involved. Letters were written. Public meetings were held. PTA people became involved. The Lindsay Museum and the California Department of Fish and Game all had a say. The harried school officers listened and attempted to decide what to do. All the while, the herons were routinely returning to the trees, using the nest, and producing young heron.

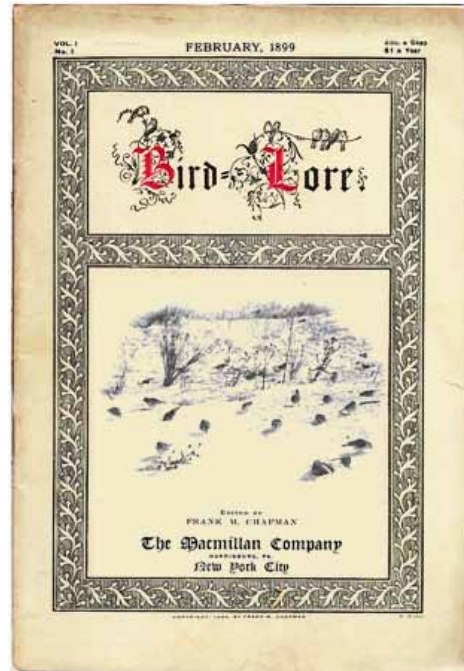
Finally, on February 11, a definitive meeting was conducted by the school board president. There were indications that the real purpose of the proposed buyer involved hewing the trees, subdividing the land, building a house, and selling the place. There was speculation such would produce a tidy profit. The heron family was blissfully unaware of all these machinations.

So what’s the outcome? It appears the particular tree in which the birds nest is dead. The school board president asserted his first concern was the safety of the school children. Will the land be sold???? What will become of the herons? Probably nothing will happen right away, because the birds are legally protected, but when they leave the nest tree this year they will undoubtedly have to find a new home. Will they be able to do that? Will they continue to produce more young? Those are some of the vexing problems facing those who worry about the future of our wildlife.

Frank Chapman —» Continued from Page 8

wings, heads, tails, or entire bodies of 3 Bluebirds, 2 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 9 Baltimore Orioles, 5 Blue Jays, 21 Common Terns, a Saw-whet Owl, and a Prairie Hen. In two afternoon trips he counted 174 birds and 40 species in all. His campaign for laws to protect birds and for ways to combat plume-hunting and to influence public sentiment were critical. In 1899 he launched the journal *Bird-Lore*, and in 1900 created the Christmas Bird Census as an alternative to the then popular Christmas bird shoot. It was at Chapman's urging that President Theodore Roosevelt declared Pelican Island the nation's first federal bird reservation in 1903.

He was a creative museum-builder, presenting groups of birds in natural settings, rather than lifeless drawers with rows and rows of bird skins. In developing these displays, he called on Louis Agassiz Fuertes, acclaimed young bird illustrator, and the two became fast friends. They journeyed together on collecting trips to various countries. In Mexico, on one of these trips, Fuertes discovered a new subspecies of Orchard Oriole, which Chapman named *Icterus spurius fuertesi*, after his friend. Fuertes's Oriole is currently under consideration for promotion to full species recognition. On returning from a collecting trip to Abyssinia, Fuertes drove to Chapman's home to report on his findings, and it was on his return drive that Fuertes's car was hit by a train and he was killed.



Bird-Lore, later to become Audubon Magazine, was begun by Frank Chapman in 1899. This is Volume 1, Number 1.

Chapman's *Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America* (1895) may be considered the first of the popular field guides. His editorials in *Bird-Lore*, and his important books, such as *Bird Studies with a Camera* (1900) and *Color Key to North American Birds* (1903) made him perhaps the most articulate ornithologist of his generation. He continued writing, including his *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover* (1933). Frank Chapman died in 1945.

Allen's Hummingbird ♦ *Selasphorus sasin*

a

In 1852 on a beach on Cape Cod, an eleven-year-old boy found a bird, which he gave to his friend, a taxidermist, who identified it as Cory's Shearwater, then mounted the specimen and returned it to the boy. Thus began the life-long interest in birds for Charles Andrew Allen. He became an ardent collector of birds and small animals, which he gave to scholars. After finishing school, Allen worked as a fisherman and at various jobs. One of these was at a furniture factory. Dust from the planing mills ultimately affected his health and he moved to California, ending up working as a ranch manager and living in a small cabin at the forest's edge near Nicasio. He continued his collecting.

Noting the tail feathers of a hummingbird he had collected, he thought the bird to differ from the ordinary Rufous Hummingbird and that it might be a separate species. He sent the specimen to William Brewster, co-founder of the American Ornithological Union.

Many species of birds have feathers that exhibit iridescent colors. Most noteworthy, of course, are the hummingbirds, whose glowing gorgets place these tiny jewels at the top of everyone's list of favorites.

The shimmering iridescence of the gorget is termed structural color: it is not the pigment color of the feathers.

Light has a wave nature, which is what makes interference, and, in turn, iridescence possible. When two light waves reflect off of something in such a way that the peaks of light waves (with the same wavelength) fall on top of each other, the result is constructive interference, meaning that the two amplitudes add. If a peak falls on a trough, however, the result is destructive interference, and no wave is seen at all. Of course, the peaks do not necessarily either fall on other peaks or on troughs. The amount that the peak of one light wave is shifted from another is called the phase shift. Phase shifts can be caused by gratings, slits, and thin films. The small structure present in hummingbird feathers in effect acts as a grating, which in turn causes the perceived color of the feathers to appear different depending on the angle from the light source (the sun), to the bird, and to your eye.



These two views of an Allen's Hummingbird were taken minutes apart. Photos courtesy of Glen Tepke.

Birding Festivals

Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be an exhibitor at the **17th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival**, February 8-10, on Mare Island. Our volunteers will host a booth where we will show a selection of bird nests to attract children and intrigue them into the enjoyment of nature and the outdoors. We will also point out the danger of rodenticides to wildlife, pets and children.

The San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival is based on the former Mare Island Naval Shipyard, the U.S. Navy's oldest installation in the Pacific and a National Historic Landmark. Mare Island is flanked by the Mare Island Strait to the east and San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge to the west. To the north lies the wetlands of Napa Sonoma Marshes. This setting in combination with its rich maritime and naval history makes it a unique attraction for birds as well as people.

With over 60 events on the schedule, including an art show, you'll find lots to do and see! Try birdwatching along the San Pablo Bay Walking Trail or the Shoreline Heritage Preserve; join a guided trip to Skaggs Island for raptor viewing, or a boat trip on the Napa River. Watch the raptor presentation by Native Bird Connections, and explore the birding and wildlife expo. All events are free. Check the website at www.sfbayflywayfestival.com for a schedule, and plan to enjoy a pleasant weekend.

Be sure to stop by the MDAS table.

The Klamath Basin Audubon Society welcomes you to the **34th Annual Winter Wings Festival** in Klamath Falls, Oregon, February 14-17.



Experience the beauty of the Klamath Basin, where hundreds of eagles and other raptors and thousands of ducks, geese, and swans take up residence in the winter. A huge assortment of birding and nature-related activities for all ages and skill levels will capture the interest of novice birder or lifelong birding enthusiast. In particular, nature photographers of all skill levels will be impressed by the rich diversity of wildlife present in the Klamath Basin, as well as the depth, variety, and quality of photography-oriented workshops, field trips, and instruction. There are 60 field trips and workshops, spread over four full days to choose from! Featured talks will be given by photographer George Lepp, and by naturalist Alvaro Jaramillo. Look over the visitor guide at <http://winterwingsfest.org/guide/> and you will be convinced that this is one of the best-planned and managed of all birding festivals.



Black Skimmers, San Diego Bay

San Diego Bird Festival, February 28-March 3. The 17th annual festival takes wing on scenic Mission Bay with keynoter Dr. John Fitzpatrick, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and special guest Bill Thompson III. Festival HQ is steps from San Diego's famous "Mile of Birds" river estuary. Events include field trips, pelagic trips, workshops, Birding & Optics Expo, a Big Sit, and Family Free Day, plus a post-festival Baja endemics trip. San Diego Audubon Society, www.sandiegoaudubon.org.

Don't miss the **2013 Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival!** Save the dates of April 26-28 for the Bay Area's best birding and nature extravaganza! Enjoy birding at the height of spring migration with some of the best naturalists around. For more information, visit: www.pointreyesbirding-festival.org. Tickets go on sale in late February, and all proceeds benefit the habitat conservation work of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

649 and Counting

The record of the widely-seen Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) at Watsonville, Santa Cruz County from September 28 through October 2, 2012 has been accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. The species is added to the official state list at the beginning of the cuckoos (family *Cuculidae*), after Ruddy Ground-Dove and before Yellow-billed Cuckoo on the species list. It is annotated with an asterisk (on the CBRC review list) and a "P" code (photographed).

This brings the California state list to 649. Stay tuned: the CBRC, at its annual meeting in late January, was expected to resolve issues surrounding the Taiga/Tundra Bean-Goose and the Common Crane. Perhaps the state list will cross the 650 mark.



Photo courtesy of Dinuk Magamma

Go Green!

🌱 Save a tree. Sign up to receive your Quail by e-mail. Just send a request to the Editor at ellis.myers@earthlink.net

🌱 Plant a tree.

🌱 Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come.

Chinese proverb

Your Choice of Coffee Can Help Birds

By Mike Eliot

Did you know that the type of coffee you drink can have a positive or negative effect on wild birds?

In the time it takes for you to drink one cup of coffee, several acres of tropical rain forests are plowed under for coffee production, reducing bird habitats and resting places for migratory birds.



The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center promotes the production of “Shade Grown Coffee” and has developed a certification program that assures many shade grown coffees to be “Bird Friendly.” These coffees are not only grown in shade, but share other great qualities for the birds and environment as well. All of these coffees have also been inspected and certified to meet USDA standards.

Coffees that have the Bird Friendly® Seal of Approval are organic, using no fertilizers and pesticides, because they are not needed in maintained forests. They are better tasting because, in the shade, the beans take longer to ripen, resulting in more flavor. They are also fair trade products, meaning that growers get stable pricing that allows them to maintain higher standards of living for themselves and their workers.

Birds benefit because trees and vegetation are retained, providing shelter and habitats for birds and other wildlife, maintaining biodiversity. In addition, water resources are protected because erosion is stopped on hillsides, resulting in better water quality for all life.

There are several resources for where you can find coffees that have earned the Bird Friendly® seal. Here is the Smithsonian website that can help you locate bird friendly coffee on line or in your area: If you want a recommendation, I have tried and like *Birds and Beans* at: <http://bird-sandbeans.com/>

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

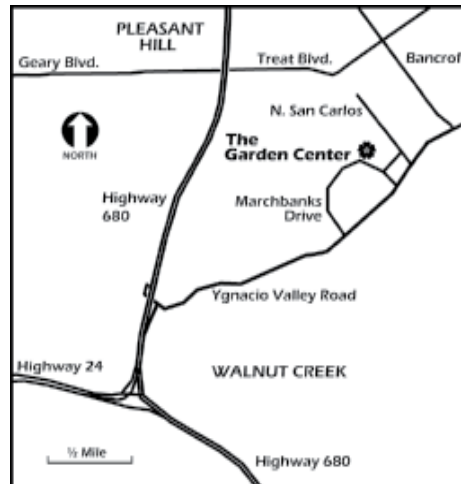
Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.

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Quail Editor



Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society thanks our Business Partners for their generous support:

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Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Membership dues are tax deductible.

I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society.

Please send *The Quail* by: US mail E-mail _____

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Please make your check payable to:
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*Diorama of South American birds, 1930.
American Museum of Natural History Photo.*

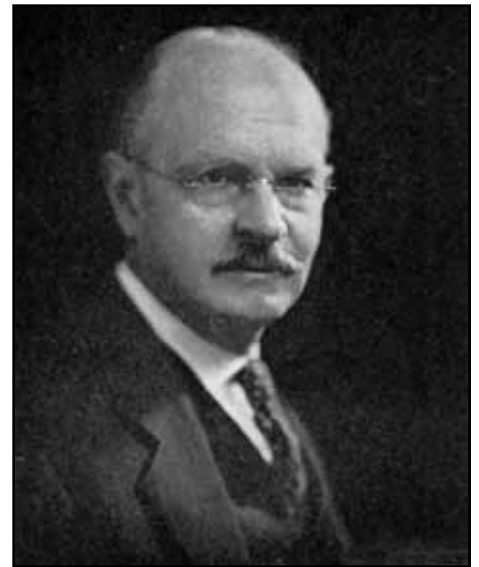
Frank M. Chapman Apostle of the Birds

Frank M. Chapman, though not widely known as one of the important ornithologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was highly influential to the birding world. He is best known for two accomplishments: he was the originator of the journal *Bird-Lore*, which later became *Audubon Magazine*; and he was the originator of the Christmas Bird Count. In addition, he initiated the diorama concept for display of museum specimens.

Chapman was born in 1864 in a country home in what is now West Englewood, New Jersey, about 20 miles north of New York City and across the Hudson River. His father was a member of a New York law firm; his mother a musician with a love of nature. Chapman's musical appreciation remained throughout the years. His son was a gifted singer, and his daughter-in-law, Gladys Swarthout, became a star of the Metropolitan Opera Company. The two considered Chapman their critic and mentor.

As a boy, Chapman attended the Englewood Academy, graduating in 1880 at the age of 16. Rather than attending college, he worked for the American Exchange National Bank of New York, where his father had been counsel until his death four years earlier. Chapman's keen interest in birds, however, could not be satisfied on weekends and holidays, and in 1886 he resigned from the bank, lured by the prospect of doing field work in Florida.

Returning to New York with a fine collection of birds, he obtained permission of the American Museum of Natural History to compare them with the museum's specimens. This opportunity led to his being appointed assistant to Dr. J. A. Allen in the museum's Department of Mammals and Birds. In 1901, Chapman was promoted to the rank of Associate Curator of Birds, and in 1908 he became Curator of Birds. In 1920, a separate Department of Birds was established, of which he was named



Chairman. He remained at the helm until he retired in 1942, after 54 years of service to the museum.

In the 1880s and 1890s, fashionable women adorned their hats with feathers. In 1886 Frank Chapman walked from his Manhattan office to the heart of the women's fashion district, counting the stuffed birds on the hats of passing women. Chapman, a talented birder, identified the

Continued on Page 8 »