



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 57, Number 5

January-February 2012

Southeast Arizona Birding ♦ Mike and Cecil Williams

Southeastern Arizona is considered by many birders to be one of the five best birding locations in the United States.

The Chiricahua Mountains are the largest of the "Sky Islands" of SE Arizona, rising steeply out of the desert to 9700 feet and covering forty miles north to south. The diverse habitats in this range attract many Mexican bird migrants and dispersals.

On May 9, 2011, the unthinkable struck Southeastern Arizona. After a very cold winter and months without rain, the forest and undergrowth were extremely dry having a moisture content less than that of kiln-dried wood. An illegal alien campfire ignited the dry grass and foliage and spread over 9,000 acres in one day. The areas of Portal and Cave Creek were threatened but a fortunate wind direction change saved them from probable loss.

The fire burned for more than seven weeks, consuming over 222,000 acres, 12% of which were severely burned, including the soil. Seventy four percent of the area experienced low severity burn. Many of the acres that previously had had controlled or low burns have survival potential. In other areas, the heat has sterilized the soil.



Curve-billed Thrasher. Photo by Jackie Lewis

Local ornithologists feel that birds either did not breed this season or that the breeding failed because of the fire. The Elegant Trogon census was down as well as the numbers of breeding hummingbirds. There are signs of hope. This fall a group of birders and naturalists were allowed to visit Rustler Park, which had been heavily burned. No one was prepared for the lush growth of wildflowers and ground cover that they found. Botanists suggest that the backburn done about two weeks before the crown fire probably removed enough fuel so that temperatures at ground level were never high enough to sterilize the soil.

Mike and Cecil Williams have a home in Portal, in the Chiricahua mountains, which was seriously threatened by the Horseshoe 2 fire. Their love for southeastern Arizona began in 1990 when Jean Richmond rec-

ommended that they take a birding trip to the area. After many trips to SE Arizona, they built a home in Portal. Their interest in birding began over thirty five years ago when a Pileated Woodpecker kept dropping stuff on their camp tent. In 1991 they turned an avocation into a vocation by opening Wild Birds Unlimited. They have supported MDAS in many ways including serving on the MDAS board. Mike has been Membership Chair, Vice-President and President and is presently Member at Large. Cecil has devoted many years to her position as Education Chair.

BIRDING INFORMATION

January Birding information will be our annual update of the Contra Costa County and the East County Bird Counts with Jimm Edgar and Maury Stern.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, January 5**, 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: **Mike Williams**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, February 2: Paul Donahue

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The Brazilian Pantanal: Birds and Jaguars in the World's Largest Wetland ♦ Paul Donahue

On Thursday, February 2, Paul Donahue will enlighten and entertain us with a vision of The Pantanal of southwestern Brazil, the world's largest wetland, a vast mosaic of rivers, creeks, marshes, swamps, lagoons, tall riparian forest, lower dry forest and savanna. The area extends into extreme eastern Bolivia and extreme northern Paraguay, but the majority lies in the Brazilian states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. This much water attracts abundant wild life. The Pantanal is home to large numbers of wading birds and other fish-eating birds, and it holds the world's densest population of Jaguars, the largest cat in the world.

Paul Donahue is an ornithologist, bird artist, photographer and environmentalist.



Jaguar (*Panthera onca*).

Working in South America since 1972, his time has been spent in the rainforests of the western Amazon Basin, particularly eastern Peru, where he has done extensive bird survey studies and tape recordings of bird vocalizations. In 1988, while working at a rainforest site in southeastern Peru, Paul began climbing into the forest canopy. Since then, Paul and his wife, Teresa Wood, have constructed two canopy walkways and dozens of observation platforms to view and study the wild life of the rainforest canopy. They have taught over two thousand people to climb safely into the forest canopy on ropes.

Lately, much of Paul's time in the tropics has been spent in the Pantanal wetlands of southwestern Brazil. Here, he has focused on the study of Zigzag Herons and of Jaguars. The Zigzag Heron is a tiny, enigmatic, little-known, retiring denizen of the tropical swamp forests. The Jaguar is the largest cat in the Americas and the third largest cat in



Zig-zag Heron (*Zebrilus undulatus*).

Both photos courtesy of Paul Donahue

the world and is easier to observe in the Pantanal than anywhere else within its range. It is a species he finds infinitely more intriguing than any bird. While working on a monitoring project in the Pantanal in 2009, Paul was charged by a Jaguar—a high point of his life.

BIRDING INFORMATION

"What happened to the Rossmoor Acorn Woodpeckers? Are they still being killed?" Diana Granados of Native Bird Connections and Chair of the MDAS Rossmoor Acorn Woodpecker Consulting Committee will, with the aid of Brian Murphy's photos, review and update the situation for Audubon members. Diana reminds us that, "Removing threads from the web of life weakens and fractures life in ways that only future generations, in total collapse, will understand." She leaves us with the words of John James Audubon. "The woods would be silent if no birds sang there except those who sang best."

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

By the time you read this we will have finished our two Christmas bird counts for Contra Costa County. It is always a fun time and we never know what might show up. I have been scouting a bit and there seems to be a lot of wintering birds; particularly waterfowl. The count period is December 14 to January 5. I plan to do about 8 bird counts around the Bay Area as well as the Marysville count. It is amazing the variety of birds we have in the winter months.

We had our regular MDAS board meeting on December 8. We meet on the second Thursday of each month and either meet at my office in Walnut Creek or at the Wild Birds Unlimited store. Any of you are welcome to attend any of our meetings. Our December meeting was very good. You must know that we have an excellent board of directors. There are 16 people on our

board and all of them do a lot of work for the chapter. We spent some time reflecting on what each member does and it is significant. We are planning to have a meeting this spring to do some strategic planning for the chapter. An area of concern is our membership numbers. We would like to see this grow, but we seem to lose members. We have great attendance at our monthly meeting but are not signing up new members. If you have some ideas let me know.

I would also like to encourage any of you to consider doing a birding information time. Our program chair, Alice Holmes, is always looking for people to do that. I think a lot of you have knowledge and skills that a 15-20 minute talk would be of interest to all of us.

I hope to see you at our meetings or on a field trip soon.

Welcome New Members

Linda Maddaus	Alamo
Julie Padilla	Walnut Creek
Ted Robertson	Walnut Creek
Sara Tancredy	Martinez

The Quail is published monthly except January and August by Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **The deadline for the March issue is February 7.**

Observations

By Maury Stern

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

The most unusual occurrence of the past month was the influx of Tundra Swans throughout the Bay Area, much farther west than their usual Central Valley wintering area. In Contra Costa County 4 were at Point Isabel in Richmond 12/2. JH; and 4 were at Marsh Creek Reservoir in east county 12/3. DW.

Single Snow Geese were at Marina Bay Parkway in Richmond 11/12, SD, ES; and Miller-Knox Park in Point Richmond 12/3. JuC.

A Eurasian Wigeon was at Miller-Knox on 12/2. JC.

ES saw 14 Common Mergansers on Lake Anza in Tilden RP, 12/5.

Three Hooded Mergansers were on a pond in the Moraga Country Club 11/23, JS; and 3 were in San Ramon Creek near Diablo Road 12/3. BH.

A Pacific Loon in breeding plumage was at Richmond Marina 11/26. BS.

PS saw a Golden Eagle at Contra Loma Reservoir in Antioch 11/18; and DW had 5 sightings in east county on 12/3.

On 11/13, LOV saw a Clapper Rail at the mouth of Baxter Creek along the Richmond Bay Trail.

KB saw a Sora at the back side of Lafayette Reservoir 11/20. This is very unusual there.



White-throated Sparrow

DB saw a banded Yellow-shafted Flicker at Rossmoor in Walnut Creek 11/25.

A Red-breasted Nuthatch has been in BP's yard for months in Lafayette. This is east of its usual habitat.

JR and RH saw a Brown Creeper in JR's Alamo yard 12/5.

Eleven House Wrens were at Clifton Court Forebay in east county on 11/11, as well as a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. DW.

A Western Bluebird was a new yard bird in Antioch for PS on 12/8.

Trip Reports

Mountain View Sanitary District/McNabney Marsh, November 15. Sixteen MDAS members enjoyed a nice sunny day at the Mountain View Sanitary District ponds and the marsh area on the way in to the district headquarters. Some of the birds seen included Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, Pied-billed Grebe and Eared Grebe, American White Pelicans, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Black-necked Stilt, Black Phoebe, House Finch, American Robin, California Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Cedar Waxwing, and one scared deer

which took off running when we got too close to its hiding spot. *Steve Taylor*

Niles Canyon/Quarry Lakes, December 8. Ten members and guests met for the Niles area field trip. The day started quite chilly, but quickly warmed to near 60 degrees. We saw 66 species with a good sample of land birds, shore birds (3 Spotted Sandpipers), waterfowl and raptors. We had a 7-raptor day including 2 Osprey, 2 very cooperative Golden Eagles and an immature Peregrine Falcon. The falcon was found by Ken deMaiffe sitting high on the hill above Alameda Creek, but it flew after a while to chase the eagles and we could see there was no black in the under wing axillaries. It was the highlight of the day. *Jimm Edgar*

Q

"It is true that the Tell-tale is quite loquacious enough; nay, you, reader, and I, may admit that it is a cunning and watchful bird, ever willing to admonish you or me, or any other person whom it may observe advancing towards it with no good intent . . ."

John J. Audubon

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

AEEEEGLLLLLORRSTWY

MM and DW saw a Mountain Bluebird near Byron Highway, 12/3.

A small flock of Cedar Waxwings were eating berries in his Antioch yard 12/3. PS.

On 11/21, a Black-throated Gray Warbler was along Tice Creek in Rossmoor. BW.

White-throated Sparrows were widespread with both white morph and tan morphs seen. BH, RH, AK, BP, JR.

Slate-colored Juncos were in the yards of JR and MS; and DW saw one in Briones RP.

JA saw a Dark-eyed Junco (Pink-sided), usually found in the Rocky Mountains, in his Lafayette yard. 11/13.

AK saw an eastern sub-species of Purple Finch at his feeder in Richmond near Wildcat Canyon on 11/30.

JA Jeff Acuff, KB Kristen Baker, DB Dolores Butkus, JuC Juli Chamberlin, JC Jim Chiropoulos, SD Sheila Dickie, RH Rosita Harvey, BH Bob Hislop, JH Jeff Hoppes, AK Alan Krakauer, MM Mike Marchiano, BP Ben Pettersson, JR Jean Richmond, ES Ellen Sasaki, PS Paul Schorr, BS Bob Sikora, JS Julia Starr, MS Maury Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, LOV Lisa Owens Viani, BW Bev Walker, DW Denise Wright.



Varied Thrush. Sketch by Meg Sandri

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

January

- 8 Sunday Christmas Count/Rarity Chase
- 14 Saturday Putah Creek
- 20 Friday Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh
- 28 Saturday Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger

February

- 4 Saturday Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
- 9 Thursday Grizzly Island
- 15 Wednesday Sunol Regional Park
- 25-26 Sat./Sun. Los Banos/Panoche Valley

March

- 3 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park
- 7 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks
- 13 Tuesday Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh
- 22 Thursday Valle Vista
- 28 Wednesday Lagunitas

① Sunday, January 8

Christmas Count/Rarity Chase

Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.

This trip will attempt to find as many of the unusual birds found on the Christmas Counts as possible. Last year, after starting at McNabney Marsh, the group proceeded to Martinez Regional shoreline before continuing to the East County area. We found 104 species in Contra Costa County. Call leader for meeting place and time. Bring lunch and drinks.

① Saturday, January 14

Putah Creek

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 8:00 AM. Meet at 8:45 AM at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasants Valley Roads, approximately 1 mile north from I-80, west of Vacaville. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area. Bring lunch. Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser.

Trip Report

Charleston Slough, November 12. A small group of 6 members visited Charleston Slough and the South Bay. After birding the slough, we spent at least an hour chasing a previously reported Red-throated Pipit in Sunnyvale. Though we saw many American Pipits, the rarity was not seen. After lunch at the boat house at Shoreline Lake, we also visited the Palo Alto Baylands and the Radio Road Ponds in Redwood City. We missed some of the expected ducks, but we finished with 11 species of waterfowl, 4 of the grebes, 4 of the waders, 7 of the raptors, 6 of the gulls and 6 of the sparrows. When we did the checklist at the end of the day, we tallied 78. One participant said this was the highest she had experienced on one of our trips.

Hugh Harvey

① Friday, January 20

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh

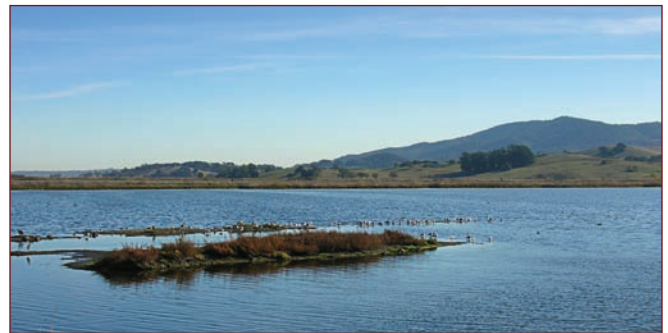
Leader: Sandy Ritchie, 685-8048.

Arrowhead Marsh/Lake Merritt—High Tide. Carpool leaves at 8 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM in parking lot at Arrowhead Marsh. High tide is about 9 AM. Take SR 24 to Oakland and I-980, continue to I-880 south towards the Oakland Airport. Exit at Hegenberger Road, turn right, drive about 1 mile toward the airport. Turn right on Doolittle Drive. At about .4 miles turn right on Swan Way, then left into Martin Luther King Regional Shoreline. Drive to the parking lot at the end. Hopefully the rising tide will flush out rails. Area is also good for shorebirds and often loons are on the estuary. After we are satisfied and a possible visit to Garretson Point, we will drive to Lake Merritt for continued birding. Lots of ducks, grebes and gulls should be present. We usually find a Tufted Duck. Bring lunch and drinks.

② Saturday, January 28

Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644.



Shollenberger Park

Carpool leaves Sun Valley parking lot at 7:30 AM. Meet at Las Gallinas at 8:30 AM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 22 miles to US 101 south, exit at Lucas Valley Road/Smith Ranch Road. Cross under the freeway to the east on Smith Ranch Road for 0.6 miles, cross the railroad tracks and turn left. Follow the road around the hill 0.7 miles until arriving at the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District parking lot. Rush Creek Marsh is just north and east of the Atherton Avenue exit from US 101 in Novato. Immediately past the Park and Ride lot on Atherton, turn left onto Binford Road and go north to the marsh. Shollenberger Park is in Petaluma, east of US 101. Exit at Lakeville Highway, go east to S. McDowell and turn right. Look for a half-right onto Cypress Drive, then enter the PRBO parking lot at 3820 Cypress. Go to the back and park near the picnic tables. Ellis Creek is just south of the PRBO offices. All four sites are good for wintering waders, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors. Bring lunch and a beverage.

**① Saturday, February 4
Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve**

Leader: Ethan Chickering, 686-9231.

Woodbridge Road/Thornton and Cosumnes Preserve. 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. Bring lunch and a beverage. If questions, call the leader.

**① Thursday, February 9
Grizzly Island**

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. **Please check with leader concerning entry fee unless you have a valid DFG Lands Pass.** See the article on Page 4 of the December *Quail*. You may purchase a Lands Pass at www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/landpass/ 15 days ahead of use, or buy anytime before use at sporting goods stores, CVS pharmacies, KMart or WalMart. The Lands Pass is not sold at Grizzly Island.

Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along road. The California Department of Fish and Game's Grizzly Island Wildlife Area is in the heart of the 84,000-acre Suisun Marsh, the largest contiguous estuarine marsh in the United States. Grizzly Island provides habitat for more than 200 species of birds and is home to a variety of threatened or endangered wildlife and plants. We may see the herd of Tule Elk. We may also bird at the Rush Ranch if time permits after finishing at Grizzly Island. Bring lunch and a beverage.

**③ Wednesday, February 15
Sunol Regional Park**

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644.

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, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens are possible. Bring lunch and a beverage.



**① Saturday/Sunday, February 25-26
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.

Trip Reports

Limantour, November 19. Fifteen members and guests saw 62 species of birds at the Bear Valley Headquarters and the Limantour area of Point Reyes on a pleasant day. Many of the usual channels and ponds contained less water than usual and consequently fewer shorebirds and ducks were seen than normal years. The land birding was quiet also and no unusual birds were seen.

Maury Stern

Come birding with us.

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 ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ②: Moderate, one mile +, 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**—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. **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.



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.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

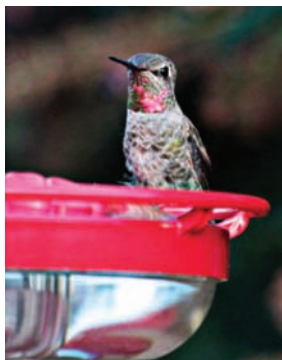


WINTER IS UPON US!

New at WBU.

When MDAS members make purchases in our store, we will donate 5% of the total to Mount Diablo Audubon Society. Please let our sales staff know when you come in that you are a current member of MDAS so that your purchases will count.

These donations will be split between the MDAS general fund and the Educational Programs of Native Bird Connections



Here are some bird feeding tips for winter:

1. , Early January is the hatching time for the first brood of Anna's Hummingbirds. , Watch for them at you feeders. , Keep nectar in good supply and wash feeders at least weekly to prevent mold. On very cold nights bring the feeder inside to prevent freezing.
 2. , American & Lesser Goldfinches will spend the winter and are here good numbers. , Keep your thistle seed and feeders (or other feeders) dry by putting a baffle over the feeders. , Baffles act and look like an umbrella. , They do a good job of protecting the feeders.
 3. , Keep feeders and the areas below them clean to prevent spread of disease. , Also, replace any wet birdseed with clean, dry seed.
 4. , During cold, wet days bird's caloric intake greatly increases. , Provide high-energy food: peanuts, suet and sunflower seeds. , These are very attractive to titmice wood-peckers, chickadees, nuthatches.
- Please report any sightings of Pine Siskins this winter to WBU.



Mike and Anne Eliot
Wild Birds Unlimited
 692 Contra Costa Blvd.
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 Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Stone Lakes NWR

» *Continued from Page 8*

Woodpeckers, Western Bluebirds, Western Screech-Owls—and they are where Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets have established their rookeries.

The wetlands give habitat for Pied-billed Grebes, American Coots, and Virginia Rails, as well as American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, and Sandhill Cranes. American Avocets and Greater Yellowlegs feed in the shallow water, accompanied by Dunlins and Black-bellied Plovers. On the Pacific Flyway, the refuge invites thousands of White-fronted Geese, Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, ducks and shorebirds to stay awhile in spring and fall.



USF&WS Photo.

The Stone Lakes NWR Visitor Center is at 1624 Hood Franklin Road, west of I-5. Consider sampling a visit to Stone Lakes NWR together with a trip to The Nature Conservancy's Cosumnes River Preserve, just a few miles to the south.

Greater Yellowlegs ♦ *Tringa melanoleuca*



You might see a Greater Yellowlegs bobbing its head and body. This is an alarm signal that the bird is

stressed, perhaps aware of a nearby predator. It is a wary and noisy bird; always watching for danger and quick to give a piercing alarm cry. This is the behavior that gave early observers the idea that the birds were sentinels and thus the name of Teltale Tattler referred to by Audubon.

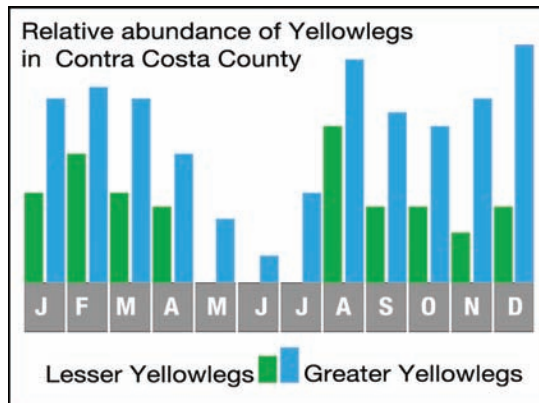
Although the Greater Yellowlegs and Lesser Yellowlegs appear to be almost identical, except for size, they are distinguishable also by the shape, length and color of the bill. A Greater Yellowlegs has a bill one and a half times the length of its head measured from base of the bill through to the nape, and it is slightly upturned. The shorter, straight bill of the Lesser Yellowlegs is uniformly dark. Some say the safest way to distinguish the two



is the call: a harsh series of three or more notes in Greater Yellowlegs versus a softer, mellower single or double note of the Lesser Yellowlegs. An almost infallible way to tell during the summer months is that its a Greater. Lessers aren't here then!

Both Greater Yellowlegs and Lesser Yellowlegs prefer fresh water habitats. Very active as they forage in the shallow water, they catch swimming insects, crustaceans, or small fish by quick lunges. They also probe into the mud for food.

Recent sightings of Greater Yellowlegs in Contra Costa County reported to eBird include Waterbird Regional Preserve, Richmond Landfill Loop, Miller-Knox Regional Park, Meeker Slough and the Albany mudflats, Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and Valle Vista in Moraga.



MDAS Annual Treasurer's Report – 2011

By Steve Buffi, Treasurer

Mount Diablo Audubon Society remains in an excellent position to serve our community. We had another successful year. The annual year-end fundraising drive continues to be strong and our total chapter membership is strong, too.

The financial health of MDAS, due to the generosity of our members, allows us to actively pursue our mission. During the year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and continued our community education outreach efforts for young people such as the "No Child Left Inside Program." Your generosity supports our monthly presentation program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, the EBB Bird Sightings list, and much more. You have read about these important community efforts in this and prior issues of the Quail. Each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community.

The General Fund balance covers operations and reserves, the Conservation and Education balance is used towards these efforts, and the Breeding Bird Atlas reflects the books held for sale and the results of book sales.

Funds	July 2010 – June 2011			Fund Balance 7/1/2011
	Revenue	Expenses	Net	
General	\$27,416.42	\$28,293.25	-\$876.83	\$93,784.88
Conservation & Education	\$196.18	\$0.00	\$196.18	\$16,920.69
Breeding Bird Atlas	-\$29.16	\$0.00	-\$29.16	\$20,716.17
Total All Funds	\$27,583.44	\$28,293.25	-\$709.81	\$131,421.70

Ornithology Opportunities

See the December 2011 issue of *The Quail* for Birding Festivals in January.

The 16th annual San Diego Bird Festival takes wing on scenic Mission Bay March 1-4, 2012, with Kenn Kaufman as keynote. Festival headquarters is just steps away from the "Mile of Birds" along the San Diego River estuary. Nearby islands, Mexico's Islas Los Coronados, comple-

ment the ocean view and offer the possibility of adding exotic pelagic bird species to festival-goers' birding lists. From sea to desert to mountaintop, San Diego County has a lot of birding to offer, with more than 500 species of record. The 2012 Bird Festival offers four pelagic trips. Information, including details of a post-festival Costa Rica trip, is at www.sandiegoaudubon.org/images/PDF/birdfestival2012.pdf, or email birdfest@cox.net or call 858-273-7800 to receive a free brochure.

"Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient."

Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)

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.



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MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

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Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. USF&WS photo.

Stone Lakes NWR

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, just 12 miles south of the State capital, between the Sacramento River and Highway I-5, is an Important Bird Area of California. It merits this designation because the area shelters more than 10 thousand shorebirds and more than 25000 waterfowl. It is a critical area for nine species: Least Bittern, Northern Harrier, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Loggerhead Shrike.

The refuge was established in 1994, and it consists of Beach Lake, North Stone Lake, South Stone Lake, and the associated wetlands and uplands, with riparian woodlands of Valley Oak and Fremont Cottonwood.

Until November, 2011 the refuge has not been open to the public, except for guided tours. But a new Blue Heron Trail adjacent to refuge headquarters is now open daily and offers a look at the grassland and seasonal wetlands. [The rest of the refuge remains closed.] To fully experience the

diversity of the refuge, sign up for one of the 2-mile round-trip walks to an observation platform at North Stone Lake. Throughout the fall to spring, several special docent or staff led hikes are available to the public. Hikes meet at a specified meeting location and time, so check for information at www.fws.gov/stonelakes/tours.htm.

In spring, vernal pools morph into rings of colorful goldfields and other wildflowers, while Green Herons and American Bitterns nest near the ponds and lakes amidst the cattails and tules. The refuge hosts the largest breeding colony of Double-crested Cormorants in the Central Valley. There are Great Blue Heron rookeries here too; and a few Swainson's Hawks and Burrowing Owls also nest.

Extensive grasslands within the refuge are important foraging areas for many birds of prey: White-tailed Kites, Golden



Sandhill Cranes at Stone Lakes NWR USF&WS photo.

Eagles, American Kestrels, Prairie Falcons, Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, and Swainson's Hawks. The grasslands are also nesting habitat for Killdeer, Ring-necked Pheasants, Western Kingbirds, Western Meadowlarks, and Northern Harriers.

The oak woodlands support an abundance of insect prey that in turn supports a wide variety of migrant and resident songbirds, including MacGillivray's and Yellow Warblers, and Song Sparrows. The trees of the riparian areas also give shelter for cavity-nesting species—Acorn

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