



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 58, Number 10

July/August 2013

Good News for the Pacific Flyway

Geese in migration. USFWS photo.

Each year at least a billion birds migrate along the Pacific Flyway, which stretches from the North Slope of Alaska to Central and South America. But these birds are only a fraction of those that used the flyway a century ago. Some species, such as the Black-footed Albatross and the Least Tern, are in serious trouble, and even many common birds, such as the Western Sandpiper, have become far less common. Habitat loss, water shortages owing to diversion for agriculture and development, diminishing food sources, and climate change all threaten the birds of the Pacific Flyway.

MILLIONS OF THESE BIRDS migrating along the Pacific Flyway come through California's Central Valley. Once, they found vast wetlands where they paused to rest and feed on their long journey. Now, they find some wildlife refuges, but most of the traditional places no longer invite them.

Science and technology now are available to help alleviate this problem. Audubon California and the Nature Conservancy have been working with PRBO Conservation Science* and Cornell Lab of Ornithology to predict when and where migratory birds need habitat along the Pacific Flyway.

Satellite images develop a comprehensive picture of the water available in the valley in the fall, a time especially challenging for shorebirds. Simultaneously, a map generated by Cornell's eBird citizen-science project shows when and where the birds



are. The combined results identify priority areas and provide a basis for coordinating with farmers to flood their fields when migrating birds need it most.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY/ESTUARY, which includes four national wildlife refuges, has been named Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. This is the 35th such wetland in the United States, sixth in California. There are more than 2,000 such sites worldwide.

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971 to encourage voluntary protection of wetlands. The San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast. It accounts for 77 percent of California's remaining perennial estuarine wetlands. The Bay/Estuary Ramsar site is home to more than 1,000 species of animals. It hosts more wintering shorebirds than any other U.S. Pacific Coast estuary south of Alaska. It is also important to more than 130 species of resident and migratory marine, estuarine and migrating fish species.

Ramsar sites benefit from increased conservation status and recognition, and can be eligible for greater conservation funding. They also typically benefit from increased tourism, fishing, recreation and public support. Birds benefit from them.

SONOMA LAND TRUST/SEARS POINT. At its June 4 meeting, the Wildlife Conservation Board of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife approved over \$20 million in grants to help restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat

Continued on Page 6 »

* As of June 2013 PRBO has changed its name to Point Blue Conservation Science. Their mission remains the same—to conserve birds, other wildlife and ecosystems through innovative scientific research, restoration, outreach and partnerships.

Meeting Schedule

There are no meetings during July or August. Please join one of the birding field trips; see Page 4.

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 5**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

President's Corner

Perhaps the most exciting thing that happened this past month was our first meeting of the MDAS Young Birders Club that Tracy Farrington is heading. Be sure and read Tracy's article on this page. The Bay Area Audubon Council met on June 8 at Richardson Bay Audubon Center. Representatives of the eight Bay Area Audubon chapters come together to hear what other chapters are dealing with and how we can perhaps help one another. We heard from Audubon staff member Anna Weinstein who works with issues of seabirds off the California coast. There are some tough issues—overfishing and climate change are just a few. We hope to have Anna speak soon at our general meeting.

Our conservation committee continues to grow and take on some tough conservation issues. Our new brochure talking about the issues of second-generation rodenticide use has proved to be a great success. If you have a group you would like to use it with, let us know. The committee is also trying to address the feral cat issue. As you know, feral cats account for a lot—70%, studies show—of bird kills.

Our end of the year potluck dinner on June 6 was a great success and a lot of fun, as it always is. We had about 100 folks at the dinner. It always amazes me that we never assign anyone what to bring and yet we always have exactly what is needed and some wonderful dishes of great food. The program was the trip to Chile that Hugh and Rosita Harvey led. I think about eight of our chapter members went on the trip. They

Q

Males and females of this species sing different, though similar, songs. The song of the female ends differently and with harsher notes. Before and during nest-building, the female may sing more than the male.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 8 to learn more.

BCEIKLLLOORSU

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 September issue is August 13.**

By Jimm Edgar

showed slides of the birds they saw and the places they visited. What a great trip.

Summer is upon us. We do not have a general meeting until September. We do have some field trips this summer. If you have an idea for a new place to have a field trip please let us know. See the planning session notice on Page 4.

Young Birders Club Meets



Young Great Horned Owls

On Friday evening, June 7, the Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club conducted its first meeting in the upstairs classroom, generously provided by Michael Eliot, at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.

The meeting was attended by a core group of six young birders ranging in age from 8 to 22 years old, and three of the younger kids were joined by parents. MDAS was represented by President Jimm Edgar, Ethan Chickering, Ariana Rickard and myself.

We began with introductions and then welcoming remarks by Jimm. He also provided to all a copy of an article from the January–February, 2013, issue of *Birding* magazine. This story inspired him with the desire to have us establish our own young birders group. I think it's fair to say that the first meeting was always intended to remain general in tone. Bearing that in mind, I followed with an overview of ideas and activities discovered while exploring the member-created newsletters and web sites produced by young birder clubs in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois as well as the invaluable Cornell Young Birder Network on-line. What became important at this point, however, was that the conversation be guided by the young members.

Several ideas and topics were touched upon, for example: what young birders wish

Welcome New Members

Sherill Borg	Pleasant Hill
Betty Nelson	Lafayette
Fred Payne	Concord
Rachelle Mazar	Pleasant Hill

By Tracy Farrington

to achieve and what they would like to get out of the club; planning field trips; the possibility of using social media, i.e., Facebook and blogs; subject matter for meetings (sightings, trip reports, presentations, bird identification, instruction for beginners, etc.), and the importance of emphasizing mentoring while improving the skills and building enthusiasm among younger, less experienced birders. Chick suggested creating a young birders club tab on the MDAS web site. It was very well received. It was also proposed that as things progress, we establish a page in the *Quail* written and illustrated by club members. This followed from the concept that the club be run by and for the young members with adults acting as advisors and providing support.

The discussions were lively and included several thoughtful and important contributions from parents. Most wanted to place, at the outset, a good deal of emphasis on birding. And, yes, this should be the case. After all, it is the fundamental, necessary and passionate activity that brings us together in the first place.

To keep things headed in the right direction, then, we all agreed upon our inaugural birding trip. It is to be on Saturday, June 22, at Castle Rock Regional Park in Walnut Creek. This trip will focus on improving the skills of our younger, novice birders. Instruction will, no doubt, become a feature of nearly all the club's future outings.

It was agreed that our second meeting would take place on June 28, again at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.

Those of you who have questions, suggestions and, most importantly, know of a young person with an interest in birding, beginning or otherwise, please contact Tracy Farrington at: tracy_farrington@yahoo.com, phone: 925-788-6223.

Observations

By Maury Stern

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

Breeding is underway. Many fledglings are out feeding. Almost all the migrating birds have left and all the usual summer residents have arrived. A number of interesting birds have appeared including **Indigo Bunting**, **Yellow-breasted Chat**, **Pigeon Guillemot**, and **Least Bittern**.

JA saw nine **Wood Ducks** at the Upper San Leandro Creek near the Valle Vista Staging Area 5/29.

A **White-winged Scoter** was at the West County Wastewater Trail in Richmond 5/23. AL.

JS saw a late **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Ironhouse Sanitary District 5/14.

A **Hooded Merganser** male was at the bridge over the creek near the Valle Vista Staging Area 5/28, TH, and 5/30. JE.

AL saw a **Least Bittern** at the Dow Wetlands Preserve 6/3.

White-faced Ibis were at the Big Break Trail 5/17, JB, and 5/18, JE.

A **Bald Eagle** was seen by KS from the train to Davis along the Crockett waterfront between the Carquinez Bridge and the C&H Sugar plant on 5/24.

Swainson's Hawks were in East County 5/17 and 6/6. JB.

Two **Golden Eagles** were soaring at Briones RP 5/16. BH.

JS heard a **Black Rail** at Ironhouse Sanitary District 5/14.

A late **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Heather Farm pond on 5/12. HH.

AL saw a **Pigeon Guillemot** off Brooks Island 5/23. It was seen again 5/25. MC.

Five **Burrowing Owls** were in Brentwood 6/3. PS.

Lesser Nighthawks were in East County 5/22, SB, and 6/2. AL. They were in eastern Antioch and Byron Airport.

A **Prairie Falcon** with two fledglings was at Black Diamond Mines on 6/5. TF.

Olive-sided Flycatchers were common between Briones and Tilden Regional Parks. AK, LS, DH, LK.

Say's Phoebes were around Briones, Cas-



INDIGO BUNTING AT VALLE VISTA, MORAGA. MARK RAUZON PHOTO.

tle Rock Park, Big Break Trail, North Gate Road and Borges Ranch during the month. JR, TE, JB, SJ, TS.

DD found two **Canyon Wrens** in the cliffs of Castle Rock 5/29. Many years ago Kevin Hintsa found them there several times during our Christmas counts.

Eight singing **California Thrashers** were found along the Inspiration Point Trail 5/28. JC.

Yellow Warblers were at Mitchell Canyon 5/12, DH, and Heather Farm 5/20. HH.

Townsend's Warblers were at Black Diamond 5/12. LW, AG; and JR found them with **Hermit Warblers** on the Conlan Trail near the Inspiration Point trail in Tilden park 5/13. DH also found **Hermit Warblers** at Mitchell Canyon 5/12.

A short visit by a **Yellow-breasted Chat** occurred 5/28 to the Valle Vista staging area. TH.

Grasshopper Sparrows were along the Conlan Trail 5/13. AG and JR. LL found them at the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline Park 5/25, and JC saw them along the Inspiration Point Trail 5/28.

A **Blue Grosbeak** was along the Big Break Trail 5/17. JB.

Lazuli Buntings were abundant at Castle Rock, Tilden, Briones, and Mitchell Canyon. JB, AK, DH, AG, JR, LS, BP.

An **Indigo Bunting** was a surprise at Valle Vista Staging Area near the entry kiosk 6/12. TH. It was seen again and photographed the next day by DW, JE, MR.

The first known **Great-tailed Grackle** of West County was at Wildcat Creek Trail in Richmond 5/13. LL.

Hooded Orioles with young were common through the area. JC, PS, B&JK, LLa.

A **Red Crossbill** was at Tilden Botanical Garden 6/2. LK.

A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at Black Diamond 5/13. LW; and another was at Castle Rock Park ball fields on 6/11. TF.

An **Evening Grosbeak** was on the Wildcat Trail between Lake Anza and Jewel Lake at Tilden Park 5/10. PC.

JA Jeff Acuff, SB Samantha Bacon, JB John Blakelock, PC Phil Capitolo, MC Mike Carnall, JC Jim Chiropoulos, DD Davor Desancic, JE Janet Ellis, TF Tracy Farrington, AG Ann Griffith, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, BH Bob Hislop, TH Tim Howe, SJ Stephen Johnson, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Kaplan, B&JK Bruce and Judy Kronmiller, LLa Lynn Lakso, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, BP Bernt Pettersen, MR Mark Rauzon, JR Jim Roethe, FS Fred Safer, PS Paul Schorr, CS Catherine Spaulding, JS John Sterling, LS Lori Stoneman, TS Tracy Swartz, KS Kirk Swenson, LW Liz West, DW Denise Wight.

Cheers for Our Volunteers



Bev Walker, Pat Schneider, Tomi Izuno, Jane Sedley at Borges Ranch.

Six MDAS volunteers braved 103 degree temperatures at Borges Ranch on Saturday, June 8, to celebrate the annual Heritage Day event. Tomi Izuno, Dave Kwinter, Carol Pahl, Pat Schneider, Jane Sedley and Bev Walker joined with other organizations to share local history and help develop a public appreciation of Walnut Creek wildlife and open space parklands.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

July

20 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

August

17 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

② Saturday, July 20 San Mateo Coast

Leader: Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979.

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. Meet at 9 AM at overlook at Pescadero Beach on Highway 1 across from Pescadero Road. Go south on I-680, turn west on I-580 to I-238, follow to I-880, then south to SR 92. Cross the San Mateo Bridge (toll) and continue to Half Moon Bay. Turn south on SR 1, go 15 miles to Pescadero Road, turn right into parking lot. Bring lunch and sunscreen—one can get badly burned on a foggy day at the seashore. Early returning shorebirds, gulls, possibly Bank Swallows. Category 1 or 2, with optional Category 3 extension to Año Nuevo Beach.



Pescadero Beach.

① Saturday, August 17 Bodega Bay

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Meet in parking lot of Tides Restaurant on water side of Highway 1 in Bodega Bay at 9:15 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 to Lakeville Road, turn right. In Petaluma turn left on E Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road and SR 1 to Bodega Bay. Possibilities at Bodega Bay include flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, as well as terns, gulls, cormorants and much more. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen.



Elegant Tern. Photo by Albert Linkowski.

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 ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ②: Moderate, one mile +, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: 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: **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. **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.

You have had a very successful year of field trips which is now almost finished. After the field trips scheduled for July and August, you will have completed 42 trips. One additional trip was rained out. By the time you read this, over 400 participants will have gone birding with MDAS.

On July 10, we will have our annual planning meeting for the coming year. It is scheduled to be at Jean Richmond's house in Alamo, at 7 PM. Light refreshment will be provided. The meeting is intended not to be just for the leaders, but it is a chance for the membership to express input to the planning process.

For further information, call Hugh Harvey at 935-2979 or Jean at 837-2843. Thank you for being such strong supporters of your field trips.

Trip Reports

Mitchell Canyon, May 2. Nineteen members enjoyed a warm day birding up Mitchell Canyon on Thursday, May 2nd. Warblers were scarce with only Orange-crowned viewed and one Wilson's Warbler heard. The highlights were a cooperative Wrentit, many singing male Lazuli Buntings, a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, a male Phainopepla and several vocal pairs of Ash-throated Flycatchers. Flowers were disappointing due to the dryness, although a few Chinese houses and Mount Diablo fairy lanterns or globe lilies were found along with yarrow, some yellow daisies, and sticky monkeyflowers. A total of 42 species were seen and heard.

Eugenia Larson

East Contra Costa County, May 18. This trip started with mild and very pleasant spring weather and remained so through the duration. Seven MDAS members and guests went afield to bird

Continued on Page 5 »

Trip Reports

» Continued from Page 4

the rural areas of eastern Contra Costa County including a portion of the Marsh Creek Trail, Piper Slough on Bethel Island, Jersey Island Road, areas around the community of Knightsen, and the Holland Tract. This year the target species seen included Blue Grosbeak, Swainson's Hawk, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Yellow-billed Magpie. Target species not observed were Burrowing Owl, Great-tailed Grackle and Yellow-breasted Chat. In addition to Blue Grosbeak and Western Kingbird along the Marsh Creek Trail, we also had a small, grazing flock of Long-billed Curlew. Northern Mockingbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds were here in abundance. At Bethel Island, in addition to Black-chinned Hummingbird and Bullock's Oriole, we saw Downy Woodpecker, Western Tanager, Swainson's Hawk and Swainson's Thrush, as well as Forster's Tern. Along Jersey Island Road we had White-faced Ibis and American Avocet. The Knightsen area produced the only Yellow-billed Magpie. Upon arrival on the Holland Tract, we were greeted by the song of a Common Yellowthroat, thus we parked to view the bird. After following the song back and forth through heavy marsh vegetation, the singing male finally revealed itself in a willow and, uncharacteristically, remained in open view for a considerable time. This observation was a nice substitute for the lack of Yellow-breasted Chat. We also picked up Caspian Tern, Belted Kingfisher and Black Phoebe, the "official" trip bird. As a couple of notes of interest, we found an occupied Swainson's Hawk nest and got to

watch the exchange of the mating pair, and we viewed two California Sea Lions in the slough. The group tallied 59 bird species for the day.

Gary Fregien

Outer Point Reyes, June 1. Bright sunny weather greeted participants in the annual late spring field trip to Outer Point Reyes, with stiff breezes blowing at the lighthouse



GREAT HORNED OWL; ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER; BETH BRANTHAVER PHOTOS

overlook. Twelve members turned out to see what we could find; we had two members from the Napa-Solano Audubon chapter join us as well. First stop was at Drake's Beach where several Swainson's Thrushes were heard. Notable sightings were obtained of a Wilson's Warbler, Wrentit, Common Yellowthroat, Bonaparte's Gull, Whimbrel, and Common and Red-throated Loons. At the Mendoza Ranch we found two Great Horned Owls as well as a Red-necked Phalarope and several Gadwall on the pond. Nunes Ranch was very quiet. With the strong



breezes at the lighthouse, not surprisingly we drew a blank at the cypresses, though many hundreds of Common Murres were observed on the rocks below. Lunch was enjoyed in the relative shelter of Chimney Rock parking lot. Pigeon Guillemots and several Pacific Loons were observed offshore at the Fish Docks as well as two more Great Horned Owls in the large cypresses behind the park residence. Last stop was at the old RCA Radio Station where after encountering a lone Black Phoebe we compiled our list for the day—a total of 68 species were found.



COMMON MURRE; POINT REYES. NPS PHOTO

Finally on the return to Walnut Creek, a number of participants decided to see if the recently observed Indigo Bunting could be located on Mount Burdell in Novato. Unfortunately this proved not to be the case, although the visit did lend some excellent views of an Ash-throated Flycatcher.

David Hutton

Just for Ducks

By Brian Murphy

Just for Ducks is a Mount Diablo Audubon Connecting People with Nature project started in 2006 to see if native cavity-nesting Wood Ducks would return to our wooded creeks in downtown Walnut Creek. The project has California Wood Duck Program as a partner to provide experience and expertise in managing Wood Duck nest box projects.

The urban creek environment offers many challenges with an abundant fox squirrel population, wild honey bees and bumblebees taking interest in cavity nest boxes intended for Wood Ducks.

As we learned from experience on how to deal with the unintended residents of Wood Duck boxes in downtown Walnut Creek, boxes became available for Wood Duck nesting.

In 2008 a Wood Duck hen began nesting in one of the most unlikely locations, a box on the top of the bank of San Ramon Creek at the corner of Main Street and Creekside Drive with Highway 680 across the street. This spring she hatched out 12 ducklings as she continues to use that box.

In Walnut Creek at Civic Park a new Wood Duck box was taken over by Western Screech Owls while a Wood Duck hen is nesting in a box across the creek.

We have answered our original question from 7 years ago of "will wood duck return to nest in our urbanized downtown creek?" Yes they will if boxes are available for them.



The fluff ball by the tail feathers of the female is a baby Western Screech Owl. A second chick is also in the box, and it was nice of dad to be in the box (on the right) for a family photo.

No Child Left Inside *By Paul Schorr*

The MDAS “No Child Left Inside” Program concluded this year’s activities on May 21 and 23 by taking 75 fifth-grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch to Contra Loma Regional Park and Reservoir. Their teachers, Marnie Hassig and Evelyn Jones, and parent volunteers were joined by fourteen MDAS volunteer leaders to enjoy two mornings of good birding. The MDAS volunteers were Jimm Edgar, David Hutton, Jody Sherrard, Barbara Minneman, Austin Prindle, Jackie Bobrosky, Mike Tischler, Hugh Harvey, Gloria Cannon, Joel Summerhill, Claudia Hein, Nancy Salsig, Nancy Schorr and Paul Schorr. On Tuesday they endured blustery winds with clear, sunny skies; on Thursday the weather was warmer and the winds had subsided significantly. On each day the students were divided into six groups and they rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, each station being monitored by a MDAS volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each of the students adeptly used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this activity and other Education Outreach programs. Following this activity the groups walked from the reservoir to an open area with views of the oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savannah. From this location the students also learned the importance of habitats created for California Quail and other animals, the Western Bluebird/Tree Swallow nest boxes and the nearby bat houses. After lunch, as on MDAS field

trips, the groups tallied the number of species seen and/or heard, and the totals were 34 for each day. The total combined species count for both of the days was 40. Highlights included the following: a roosting adult Barn Owl and owlets in a nearby nest box; two Swainson’s Thrushes; Western Bluebirds tending to nestlings in a dead tree; White Pelican; Red-tailed Hawk; Mallard families; Common Gallinule; Nuttall’s and Downy Woodpeckers; Western Kingbird; and two new species for the park’s list—Eurasian Collared Dove and Brown-headed Cowbird. The volunteers all had many teachable moments and they were rewarded with the subsequent excitement and enthusiasm of the students. At the conclusion of the days’ programs, each student received a copy of the book entitled *Backyard Birds of California*, which had been purchased by the Chapter. Throughout the activities the students appeared to retain much of what they had learned, and I am confident that they will recall their experiences for a long, long time. Hopefully, some of them someday will even become birders and when asked where it all began, they just might say, “Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS.”

The field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities. On March 28, Diana Granados from Native Bird Connections initiated the 2013 program by doing an introductory lesson on bird anatomy and behavior. During her presentation she used a Great Horned

Owl and an American Kestrel which drew much enthusiasm and excitement from the students, a great way to promote this year’s program. On April 17, Nancy and Paul Schorr collaborated to do classroom presentations to introduce and instruct the students on the proper use of binoculars. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for Contra Loma Regional Park. Concluding this lesson, the students were introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so they could learn and appreciate bird vocalizations, as well as study the illustrations and information about the target birds

to be seen or heard during the field trips. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms until the days of the field trips.

In summary, MDAS, through the No Child Left Inside Program, has made a strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of dedication to environmental education, and during the past six years has brought this program to hundreds of children. MDAS can be very proud of this highly successful program, which has served as a model for other Education Outreach programs including Native Bird Connection’s “Outside Child.” The success of this program would not be possible without the continuing support and involvement of all of the MDAS volunteers. Your participation is greatly appreciated, and on behalf of all of the children, thanks to each of you.

It should also be noted that MDAS is deeply grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District and the staff at Contra Loma Regional Park for their continuing support of the No Child Left Inside Program.



PAUL SCHORR



BARBARA MINNEMAN

Above: Claudia Hein showing students a pair of Western Bluebirds tending nestlings.. Below: Roosting Barn Owl.

Pacific Flyway

» Continued from Page 1



Sears Point wetland restoration site. California DFW photo.

throughout California. Included is a \$5 million grant to Sonoma Land Trust for a cooperative project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State Coastal Conservancy, and other agencies to restore 955 acres of tidal marsh at Sears Point in Sonoma County. The 19 projects will provide benefits to fish and wildlife, including some endangered species. The funds come from bond initiatives approved by voters to help preserve and protect California’s natural resources.

Arizona Birding

By Paul Schorr

In early May, Nancy and I began a four-day birding tour of southeastern Arizona with Wezil Walraven, bird guide extraordinaire with incredible auditory birding skills. He is charismatic, witty and just plain enjoyable company who never lacks for interesting anecdotes and inspiring conversation. We had birded southeastern Arizona in 2006, so our goal for this trip was to revisit as many of the Arizona neotropical specialties as possible, hoping to add “life birds” as well.

Wezil picked us up at our Tucson hotel and took us to the Huachuca Mountains where we birded in Huachuca Canyon and Ramsey Canyon until late afternoon. Highlights included Blue-throated Hummingbird, Arizona Woodpecker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Chihuahuan Raven, Curve-billed Thrasher, Bridled Titmouse, Grace’s Warbler, Painted Redstart, Hepatic Tanager, Scott’s Oriole and Black-throated Sparrow. After the day of birding we checked into Casa de San Pedro, a wonderful B&B in nearby Hereford. All of the rooms surround a garden courtyard filled with flowering plants as well as a fountain and hummingbird feeders. The grounds of the Casa are landscaped with native trees and shrubs and there are many bird feeding and watering stations with numerous viewing locations both outside and inside the Casa.

Next morning we walked the short distance to the San Pedro River, which serves as an important corridor for birds migrating north from Mexico and Central America. Highlights of pre-breakfast birding were Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, Cassin’s Kingbird, Northern Cardinal, Pyrrhuloxia and Dusky Flycatcher. After a delicious breakfast, we birded from the parking area before departing and were rewarded with a pair of Gray Hawks and a Botteri’s Sparrow. The destination for the day was Miller Canyon, but along the way we stopped at a dry wash and added Eastern Meadowlark (*liliana*), Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, and Bullock’s Oriole. Our target bird in Miller Canyon was a Mexican Spotted Owl, which we found and had very close views. Our walk through the canyon yielded these additional species: Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Mexican Jay, and Ladder-backed Woodpecker. We had lunch with Edith and Tom Beatty at Beatty’s Guest Ranch, near the trailhead for Miller Canyon. They shared memories of the devastating effects of the Monument Fire of 2011 and the subsequent damaging flood waters on Miller Canyon and their personal property. We walked through their newly planted apple orchard and up the hill to the Beatty’s elaborate hummingbird viewing area where numerous feeders attract dozens of hummingbirds. There we saw White-eared, Magnificent, Black-chinned, Broad-billed, Broad-tailed, Costa’s and Anna’s Hummingbirds. We returned to the Casa to relax and enjoy some libations. Wezil returned to pick us up, and we had an excellent dinner at the Outside Inn in Sierra Vista. After dinner we returned to Ramsey Canyon for owling, and Wezil located a pair of Elf Owls at a nest cavity in a utility pole. They called repeatedly and we had exceptional views as the male brought food for the female. Farther up the canyon, near the Nature Conservancy’s Ramsey Canyon Preserve, he called in a Whiskered Screech-Owl and we had views of the owl perched less than twenty feet directly above us.

On the following day, we checked out of Casa de San Pedro with wonderful memories and the full intent to return. Our destination today was Cave Creek Ranch in Portal where we would spend the next two nights. On our route we visited the San Pedro National Conservation Area, birding the riparian area as well as the surrounding scrubland. Here we located new trip species: Inca Dove, Canyon Towhee, and Summer Tanager. We continued to Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area where we had lunch with nesting Great Horned Owls in the hay barn, which also serves as a picnic shelter. Then on to Rucker Canyon Road, passing through extensive mesquite scrubland. Along this unpaved road, Wezil suddenly brought the vehicle to a stop and backed up. “Crissal Thrasher,” he exclaimed! We hurriedly exited the vehicle and were rewarded with excellent views of a life bird for us as it sang from atop a nearby mesquite. Along Highway 80, we stopped at a rancher’s pond and picked up a Brewer’s Sparrow and a Green-tailed Towhee. After checking in at Cave Creek Ranch we watched many birds at feeders just outside the office, including a Blue-throated Hummingbird and a Scott’s Oriole. Cactus Wrens, which we had seen throughout the trip, were calling frequently and providing ubiquitous views. That evening we enjoyed a Mexican dinner outdoors at Portal Peak Lodge and celebrated another rewarding day of birding.



GREAT HORNED OWL AT WHITEWATER DRAW



CACTUS WREN

The next morning began with an early breakfast at Portal Peak Lodge and then on to Cave Creek where we added the splendid Elegant Trogon near the South Fork Bridge. We continued up the canyon after lunch and Wezil located Red-faced Warblers and a Black-chinned Sparrow, both for us and for a Japanese birding group that we had encountered along the road. Although they apparently did not speak English, their Utah guide was fluent in Japanese and their excitement when Wezil identified the birds, internationally “spoke” for itself. That afternoon, during a light rain, Wezil took us to Jackie Lewis’s home in nearby Paradise where we birded with her from her front porch. Her feeders attract a multitude of species and we added Juniper Titmouse and a rare-for-the-area Lewis’s Woodpecker. After returning to Cave Creek Lodge and relaxing a short while, we had dinner at the Portal Peak Lodge where we did our trip checklist, but the best was yet to come! That evening we returned along the unpaved road to Rustler Park and Wezil was able to call in a very responsive Flammulated Owl—our “trip bird.”

During our four days of birding, we tallied 133 species and three life birds—Cordilleran Flycatcher, Crissal Thrasher and Flammulated Owl. If you would like additional information about our trip or about our guide, please do not hesitate to contact us.

William Swainson

» Continued from Page 10

these was Bullock's Oriole, which he credited to William Bullock, an amateur collector who had brought back many specimens from a trip to Mexico in 1823.

Swainson often moved in high-ranking circles. He collected plant specimens for Kew Gardens and animals, birds and insects for the British Museum. He counted many prominent naturalists as his friends, among them Prince Charles Bonaparte, John Torrey, Constantine Rafinesque, the poet and bird illustrator Edward Lear, and John Audubon. Bonaparte named the Swainson's Hawk for him; Audubon named Swainson's Warbler; and Thomas Nuttall named Swainson's Thrush.

Audubon wished to describe the birds of his illustrations, but confessed that he was neither a writer nor a scholar. He insisted, however, that "no man living has studied [birds] as I have done." Swainson agreed to undertake the task of editing Audubon's words. Swainson was adamant though, that his name should appear in publication equally with Audubon's. Not able to accept that, Audubon turned to

William MacGillivray to complete the revisions. Swainson and Audubon remained personal friends.

Swainson devoted several years furthering a new general classification of animals based on the quinary system introduced by MacLeay. Composed in 1819, well before Darwin, the belief was that all nature was designed, and was governed by the magic number five. Swainson defined the five orders of birds: Raptorial, Incessorial (passerines) Natatorial (swimmers), Grallatorial (waders), Rasorial. (fowl). Each of these five orders was then divided into five suborders. The Raptorials were vultures, falcons, owls, the Dodo, and another yet to be discovered. During its prime, the quinary system held a good following, but by 1840 it was, like the Dodo, quite extinct.

After suffering financial losses and the death of his wife, Swainson migrated to New Zealand with his five children and his second wife. He arrived at Wellington in 1841 where he farmed and where he continued to collect and sketch. He died in December, 1855.



Mexican Trogon, from *A Selection of the Birds of Brazil and Mexico*, by William Swainson.

Bullock's Oriole ♦ *Icterus bullockii*

a The June Quail reported in error that a Baltimore Oriole had been sighted on the Del Puerto Canyon field trip. In fact, the bird was a Bullock's Oriole. Let's compare the orioles most likely to be seen in Contra Costa. Few Baltimore Orioles venture west of the Great Plains; Bullock's do not go east. (But a male Baltimore Oriole *was* sighted in late May in San Mateo! Some Baltimore Orioles come to coastal California in winter rather than Mexico or Central America. The San Mateo bird may have been heading back to the midwest.

The *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County* tells us that Bullock's is the more common of the two species in our area. Hooded Orioles are relatively new here, unknown in the county until the mid-1930s. Hooded Orioles prefer such habitats as do House Sparrows—populated areas (with feeders) away from extensive open areas. Palm trees are their favorite nesting sites.



Bullock's Oriole. Photo courtesy Glen Tepke.

The adult male Bullock's Oriole shows an orange face with a black crown and a thin black stripe through the eye. The wings have a large white patch. The head and nape of the Hooded Oriole are orange; and the bird has a black mask and bib. There is a white wing bar.

Bullock's Oriole and Baltimore Oriole were once thought to be the same species; and so in 1973 the two were combined and named Northern Oriole. That's the name you'll find in field guides published from



Baltimore Oriole. USFWS photo.



Hooded Oriole. Ellis Myers photo.

that time until 1995, when DNA evidence showed not only that they were distinct, but not even close, with five other oriole species between the two in taxonomic order.

Cool Birds on Hot Days By Mike Eliot

Now that summer is here, we have to be extra vigilant about keeping our birds hydrated and cool. Bird baths are very effective in attracting birds and can be the most important thing we can provide in hot weather.



Bird baths should be very shallow, usually 2-3 inches in depth at most. Some birds will completely immerse in water while others just preen from the edges.

Change water at least every other day, even daily on hot days. Some birds will splash around for 20-30 minutes, using a lot of water.

Watch for build-up of algae or leaves and cleanse with a brush. Use only bird bath algacides, not bleach, to get rid of algae.

Baths should be placed in open areas, at least 5 feet away from shrubs and trees where cats can hide and pounce. They should also be high enough to help deter rats and squirrels.

Birds are not easily attracted to still standing water. Drippers that bubble water up or outward make baths easier to spot and keep the water fresher. Water wigglers cause wave motion in the water helping birds find baths, while keeping algae and mosquitoes down.



Supply water misters on hot days for hummingbirds, who love to wet their wings in mid-air. You can also stand in your yard with a hose that has a fine spray and hold it skyward. Hummers in our yard have swooped down very close and enjoyed the cool wet spray while we enjoyed the show.

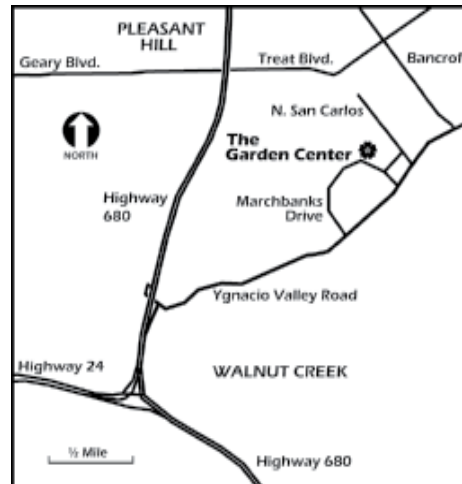
Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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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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.

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Swainson's Hawk, juvenile. Glen Tepke photo..

William Swainson Friend of Bonaparte and Audubon

William John Swainson was born in October, 1789, in Liverpool, England. As a boy, he collected plants, birds, shells, spiders and insects; and he was fond of drawing them as well as sketching the scenes of the countryside. His father tried to encourage him in other pursuits, but natural history and drawing held him captive.

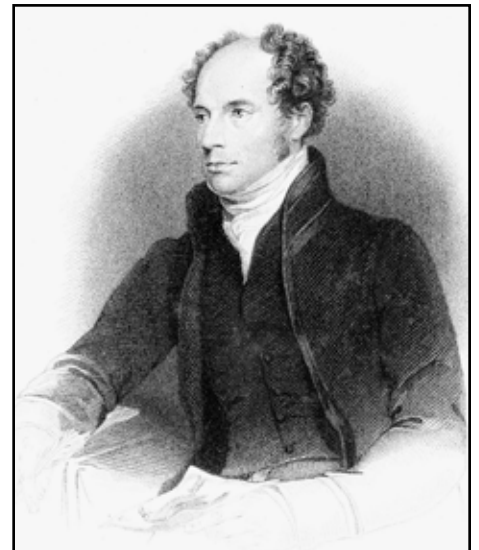
In 1803, when William was 14, he began work in the customs office, where his father was an officer, but three years later he found a junior post in the Commissary-General (Supply Corps) of the British army, first in Malta and then in Sicily. He wrote, illustrated and published his first book about collecting and preserving natural history specimens at age 19. Swainson's light duties allowed him plenty of time to further his collections of plants and animals from Italy, Malta and Greece, to visit the great art galleries of Florence and Rome and to develop his talent for landscape painting and scientific illustration.

In 1815, in poor health at age 26, Swainson retired from the army on half pay and returned to England. His passion for collecting continued, however, and later that year he went with an Austrian scientific expedition to explore the interior of Brazil. He sent back large collections of indigenous plants and animals to British and French museums.

In 1820, Swainson applied for a vacant post of keeper at the British Museum. Although he brought with him impressive references from distinguished naturalists and fully expected to get the job, with no academic background he was passed over to his great disappointment.

He married in 1823, and with his wife, Mary, went to France where he spent six months visiting galleries and theaters and sketching at the Jardin des Plantes.

Back in London, he taught himself lithography in order to make his own illustrations for his book, *The Birds of Brazil and*



William John Swainson

Mexico. The lithographs in his two volumes (finally published in London in 1834-35) were of fine quality and technically important pioneer efforts, but publication had been so long delayed that the book's contents were somewhat out of date.

Although Swainson never traveled to North America, he nevertheless described and named many Mexican birds. One of

Continued on Page 8 »