



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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July–August 2005

Alaska's Arctic Wildlife Refuge Under Attack

Sometime this summer, the Senate will make the final round of decisions to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil development. In April, Congress narrowly passed a \$14 trillion budget resolution that includes provisions for opening ANWR. However, Congress must still make the changes in law needed to implement the budget resolution (called the "budget reconciliation"). Audubon Alaska, in concert with other environmental groups, is working hard in a last ditch effort to block oil drilling in the Refuge.

ANWR was first set aside in 1960 by President Eisenhower. The 19 million-acre refuge encompasses an intact Arctic ecosystem located north and south of the Brooks Range, including the biologically rich 1.5 million-acre Arctic Coastal Plain. The coastal plain supports the 120,000-animal Porcupine caribou herd (named for the Porcupine River), millions of migratory birds and a full complement of large predators such as wolves, grizzlies and polar bears. It includes rare and vital lowland tundra habitats such as coastal lagoons, Arctic salt marsh and willow shrub communities. This plain is now the focus of the oil industry's efforts. The Bush administration and the oil industry portray drilling and construction of pipelines in the Arctic as a benign activity which can comfortably coexist with wildlife. In fact, industrial oilfields are bustling with activity by people, trucks, airplanes, helicopters, barges and boats. Scientists have observed that various species of wildlife react differently to disturbance, depending on the nature of the disturbance, the specific setting and the season.

According to a special report issued by the Alaska State Office of the National Audubon Society, "Birds & Oil Develop-



Bald Eagle chicks

US Fish & Wildlife Service, Alaska Image Library

ment in the Arctic Refuge," seventy species of birds breed on ANWR's coastal plain. Millions of birds nest, migrate through or spend the winter in the refuge. Based on consultation with scientific experts and a review of technical reports and articles, Audubon Alaska reports the following concerns and conclusions:

- The construction and operation of a sprawling industrial oilfield would reduce bird populations through the inevitable loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitat in the narrow coastal plain.
- Disturbance associated with routine human activities, including helicopter traffic, is stressful and would harm birds, especially those nesting near oilfields or gathering in large numbers during molt or migration.
- Oilfields attract predators (e.g., foxes and ravens) that prey on birds, and in-

creased predation on nesting waterfowl is a significant impact of oil development at Prudhoe Bay and other central Arctic oilfields.

- If an oil spill were to reach coastal lagoons and wetlands, harm to loons, waterfowl and shorebirds could be especially serious and long-lasting.
- Birds with small, declining or vulnerable populations are most at risk from oil development in the refuge (e.g., Red-throated Loon, Common Eider, Long-

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Meeting Schedule

There will not be any meetings of Mount Diablo Audubon Society during July or August. The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, September 1**

Welcome New Members

Betty Bones Pinole
 Jack and Susan Cooper Walnut Creek
 Mary Ann Osborne Alamo
 Modesto and Diana Piazza Walnut Creek
 Conley and Gayle Roaseau Brentwood

MDAS Membership Renewal

It's time for many of us to renew our MDAS membership. If your July/August Quail has the number 200507 written above your name, your MDAS membership expires the end of July. You can renew your tax-deductible membership by completing the Renewal Application printed in the *Quail*. Send the application along with your check for \$25 or your Visa/MasterCard information to: Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Court, Danville, CA 94526. Or you can renew on-line at www.diabloaudubon.com/indes.php by clicking on the secure page, "Join Us", which is found on the left-hand of the home page. Complete the required information and submit the electronic form. Help us save on postage for renewal reminder cards by renewing your MDAS membership right away and be guaranteed receiving the September issue of the *Quail*.



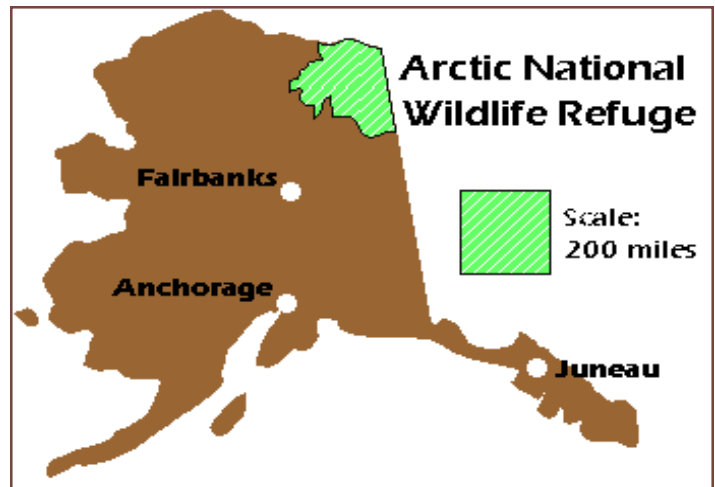
Desert Sparrow Hawk
Falco sparverius phalaena
 Birds of Golden Gate Park
 Joseph Mailliard
 1930

Arctic NWR Continued from page 1

tailed Duck, King Eider, Buff-breasted Sandpiper).

•If the refuge is left whole and free of the influence of oil development, its birdlife can serve as sentinels, helping scientists evaluate the effects of environmental change on Arctic ecosystems.

How Can We Help? ANWR belongs to all Americans. Audubon Alaska is requesting that we urge our Congressional representatives to support protection of the Arctic Refuge by designating it as "wilderness" when the budget reconciliation bill comes to a vote. Senators Boxer and Feinstein have supported ANWR vigorously in the past, and they should be encouraged to continue their support. Also, please encourage friends and family who



live in Arizona (Senator John McCain) and Oregon (Senator Gordon Smith) to contact their representatives who did not support ANWR in the past. Two votes can turn the tide and lead to permanent protection—as designated wilderness—of the precious resources of the Arctic Coastal Plain.

For more information on this and other environmental challenges in Alaska, see www.audubon.org/chapter/ak.

By Nancy Wenninger

Audubon's WatchList

Despite the exciting recovery of Endangered birds like the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, more than one-quarter of America's birds are in trouble or decline, according to the National Audubon Society. Audubon identifies 201 species that show either significantly decreasing numbers or restricted range, or are under other threats.

Based on a stoplight model, *WatchList* places selected bird species in green, yellow, or red categories, depending on the danger they face. A centerpiece of conservation efforts at Audubon, the *WatchList* aims to halt the declines of America's birds and to rebuild their populations to healthy, green-light status.

WatchList serves to underscore some disturbing trends; since 1970, many songbird species have declined by as much as 50 percent or more. The California Thrasher and the southeast's Painted Bunting both show declines in excess of 50 percent, while the Cerulean Warbler

of the eastern U.S. has declined by more than 70 percent and the Henslow's Sparrow from the Midwest has dangerously dropped by 80 percent. The Hawaiian 'Akikiki from Kauai has dropped from about 6,800 birds in the early 70's to only 1,000 individuals today.

Ironically, these declines come at a time when bird watching is hitting an all-time high in popularity; the *National Survey on Recreation and the Environment* tallies 71 million Americans participating in 2001, up 250 percent from 1982, making birding the fastest-growing outdoor activity in the U.S. And, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Americans spent \$40 billion on wildlife watch-

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This bird is named for a renowned British explorer who searched for the Northwest Passage. Its scientific name comes from the Aztec word for Mexico, where the bird was first collected.

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Field Trip Schedule

By Elizabeth Dickey

July

30 Saturday

San Mateo Coast

August

13 Saturday

Bodega Bay

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php, or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Customary carpool expense is 37½ cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths; Category 2: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain; Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Where would you like to go next year? Please let us have your suggestions for field trip destinations. And, if you or someone you know would like to lead a trip, you can be a hero. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 925-254-0486, or Mike Williams, 925-376-1631.

July-August Trips

Saturday, July 30. San Mateo Coast. Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Meet at 9 AM at overlook at Pescadero Beach on Highway 1 opposite the end of Pescadero Road.

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. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Saturday, August 13. Bodega Bay. Carpools leave southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot at 7:30 AM. Meet in parking lot of Tides Restaurant on Bay side of Highway 1 in Bodega at 9:15. Possible birds at Bodega Bay: shorebirds, rails, Osprey, Black Oystercatcher, Belted Kingfisher, and much more. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906. Category 1.

Field Trip Reports

May 5, Mitchell Canyon. Cancelled because of threatening rain.

May 7, Mines Road. Mines Road, Del Valle Regional Park, and the San Antonio Valley, are wonderful places for birds and flowers. We visit a number of sites on our annual pilgrimage to the Diablo Range south of Livermore, and this year's trip was as good as any in recent history. Eleven members and guests will agree after seeing or hearing 88 species of birds and an untold number of flow-



ers on the trip up Mines Road to The Junction and beyond. At our first stop at Murietta's Well, we had great views of a Red-tailed Hawk nest with downy young, as well as Bullock's Orioles. A Great Blue Heron in Del Valle RP showed us all how to eat a gopher. It works best to wash it in water two or three times before swallowing it whole. Then when it sticks in your throat, take some sips of water to wash it down. A young Bald Eagle was seen from the parking lot before we watched the tanagers, swifts and swallows put on a good show from the bridge overlooking Arroyo Valle at the south end of the reservoir. Stops along Mines Road were made and we found many of the expected birds including California Thrasher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Phainopepla, Western Bluebird, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Pine Siskin. After a short stop at The Junction, we found Lawrence's Goldfinches, an adult Lewis' Woodpecker bringing food to its nest hole, and a mother Wood Duck with 8 ducklings.

Hugh B. Harvey

May 11, Mount Diablo. 15 members and guests joined us for the trip up Mt. Diablo on a beautiful sunny day. We saw and/or heard 51 species. The absence of any sparrows except a single Lark Sparrow seemed odd, but we did have many good sightings of warblers all day including lots of Hermit Warblers and a few Wilson's Warblers. We had a very

cooperative Olive-sided Flycatcher at eye level that we had in the scopes for five minutes or more to study. Most intriguing at Green Valley Ranch Road just above Oak Knoll was the distinct call of a Greater Roadrunner. I know of no records for this species on Mt. Diablo.

Jimm Edgar

May 21, East Contra Costa County. Eight birders enjoyed a beautiful day in east Contra Costa County on Saturday, May 21. Our six target birds were Burrowing Owl, Swainson's Hawk, Yellow-billed Magpie, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat and Blue Grosbeak. We had them all by noon. We had a total of 56 species. Hugh B. Harvey

May 25, West Briones. Ten birders enjoyed a beautiful day in the hills. First sighting was a singing Lazuli Bunting in the parking lot and many other spring birds were well seen. Bullock's Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Black-headed Grosbeak were among the forty species seen.

Elizabeth Dickey

June 4, Outer Point Reyes. Despite some confusion about when and where we were supposed to meet, as well as who was the trip leader, two members drove to Point Reyes where we were able to find 55 bird species. The wind was fierce and daunting at Drakes Beach, the Nunes Ranch, the Fish Docks and the lighthouse. Highlights included an alternate-plumaged pair of Red-throated Loons, hundreds of Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, an Osprey at its nest, and Great Horned Owls. A loud unidentified song in the willows near the monument at Drake's Beach tantalized us into thinking we might have an eastern rarity. While driving home we listened to eastern bird tapes which proved inconclusive.

Hugh B. Harvey

it perched in a tree and on the wire outside the nest.

The next morning we were up early to join a bird walk at 7:00 AM. Jack Murray, our guide, told us the birds here are not the early ones. We drove down to Florida Wash and walked along the road. Jack told us that crossing the fence and walking along the wash as described in the guide books causes two problems. First you are looking directly into the sun, and second the birds are moving ahead of you.

As soon as we started walking a Rufous-winged Sparrow showed up singing and flitting in the bushes. He finally moved to a place where the light was good and we had a good look. Next came the Botteri's Sparrow for another good view. There were also Phainopeplas, Western Kingbirds, and Bell's Vireos. One of our group was looking for a Lucy's Warbler and although we heard several of them, none came into view. A Canyon Towhee also made an appearance. Jack told us that a Crissal Thrasher was a possibility, but we did not see one.

Our next stop was the Proctor Road parking area where we saw the Varied Buntings flying in and out of the bushes, along with Say's Phoebes and Olive-sided Flycatchers. Taking a short loop trail we saw Northern Cardinal, Verdin, Western Tanager, Summer Tanager, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Brown-crested Fly-



Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher

catcher, Bewick's Wren, Wilson's Warbler, Western Wood Pewees and White-throated Swifts overhead.

The last stop of the morning was at the feeders at the Chuparosa Bed and Breakfast. We saw the Black-chinned Hummingbird here along with the three hummingbird species we saw the day before. I was looking to add the Hepatic Tanager to my life list, and right on cue a beautiful male came down to a feeder in front of us and we had the perfect view for several seconds.

Another early morning hike is needed in order to look for the Trogon and the Red-faced Warbler. You start by driving

up to the parking lot at the end of the road and then hike up the trail for less than a mile. There are a lot of Black-headed Grosbeaks along the way and even some Robins. If you are lucky you can see the Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. About halfway up the trail we heard the Trogon calling at what seemed to be a far way off. The calling continued and then we saw it right in front of us with the bright red breast and green head with the white eye ring. The haunting far away call is why they sometimes refer to them as the ventriloquist bird. We saw two males in the area and then farther up the trail we saw another male Trogon. We continued on to a place where the Red-faced Warblers were seen. On arrival we saw several of them close by the trail carrying nesting material in their beaks. Painted Redstarts are seen here also, but this time they were making themselves scarce. On our trip back down the trail we came across the Trogons again and enjoyed watching them for several more minutes.

This was our third trip to Madera Canyon and we have enjoyed each one while seeing different species each time. The only drawback to staying in the canyon is the lack of dining facilities. You either have to do your own cooking or go back to town to eat. The Chuparosa Bed and Breakfast, the newest facility in the canyon, is reported to serve a super breakfast. We are looking forward to our next trip.

An Evening with Kenn Kaufman

By Hugh B. Harvey

The California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco hosts a series of lectures on a variety of subjects. In May the lecture was actually an interview on stage with the noted author Kenn Kaufman. The questions were posed by Jack Dumbacher, one of the Academy's ornithologists, and, of course, Mr. Kaufman provided the answers. This was done in the comfort of the Herbst Theater in the War Memorial Veterans Building on Van Ness in San Francisco.

After a brief introduction of the two by Juan-Carlos Solis, the Public Programs Coordinator for the Academy, we

learned the basics of Mr. Kaufman's early adulthood; when at the age of 19 he hitchhiked across the United States and Canada trying to set the record for the most bird species seen in one year. The complete story is written as a book entitled "Kingbird Highway", but we heard the 5-minute version. Notable were his meeting Roger Tory Peterson and Point Reyes Bird Observatory's own Rich Stallcup, as well as hearing of a new organization at that time, the American Birding Association.

Most important, according to Mr. Kaufman, is diversity. As a child he was fascinated with all manner of living organisms, and he still is. He thinks the diversity of the natural world is good in its own right. He gave three reasons why he believes in the preservation of diversity:

- 1) It's cool.
- 2) He mentioned the oft-used pharmacological argument for diversity—the cure for cancer may be in some as yet unknown plant or animal.
- 3) Stability—diversity leads to a healthy, balanced natural world.

His appreciation for diversity may be seen in the titles of his North American field guides. There is one for birds, one for mammals and one for butterflies. Being familiar with the animal kingdom is like knowing one's next door neighbor—one will be more caring and understanding with one's neighbors when one knows their names. If we learn the animal's names we will be more understanding of their world and ours.

A new publication of his is a Spanish lan-

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June Observations

By Steve Glover

At least 50 Swainson's Hawks were hunting in a field on Herdlyn Road near Byron on 6/19 (AE). By 6/20 at least 100 birds were present there! (CP, KR). The latter number is the largest such flock ever noted in the county. This same field has hosted large flocks in recent years. As recently as the early 1990s, Swainson's Hawks were difficult to find in Contra Costa County. In recent years, however, they have been proven to be fairly common nesters in the eastern part of the county.

A Black Oystercatcher at the mouth of Pinole Creek, Pinole on 4/13 (ES) is as far east as one has ever been recorded in Contra Costa County.

A Spotted Sandpiper at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 5/29 (DW) may have been a late migrant but a copulating pair

at San Pablo Reservoir on the same day (RS) must surely be breeding locally. They were confirmed breeding at this site during the breeding bird atlas, the only known breeding location in the county besides the P.G. & E. property near Pittsburg.

As in recent years, several pairs of Forster's Terns have once again taken up residence at McNabney Marsh near Martinez and are still present as of early June (SG). Alas, no signs of breeding have ever been detected here or anywhere else in Contra Costa County.

At least eight Least Terns, including one apparently on eggs, were on or near the shell island at the northeast corner of the Albany Crescent near Point Isabel, Richmond on 5/15 (SG, GJH). This nest site, established in 2000, is the only one in the

county away from the traditional site at P.G. & E. near Pittsburg where birds have been nesting since first detected in 1982.

Surely the bird of the spring was a White-winged Dove at Bishop Ranch Regional Park near San Ramon on 5/30 (DB). There are still only about five records of this species for Contra Costa County.

Grasshopper Sparrows continue to be easily detectable on the grassy ridge at Bishop Ranch Regional Park near San Ramon. On 5/30 there were three singing males and at least five birds were present on 6/3 (DB).

Dennis Braddy, Art Edwards, Steve Glover, Gjon Hazard, Clark Peterson, Kathy Robertson, Rusty Scalf, Emilie Strauss, Denise Wight

Ornithology Opportunities

7th Annual Kern River Valley Hummingbird Celebration. July 30–31, Weldon. Featured Offerings: Hummingbird Banding; Binocular selection, care, and use; Excellent birding on site and in the rest of the South Fork Kern River Globally Important Bird Area. Six hummingbird species are possible at the Kern River Preserve feeders in July, August, and early September with over one thousand hummingbirds present per day: Black-chinned (numbers decrease from July through early September), Anna's, Costa's (low numbers), Calliope (rarely), Rufous (peak numbers in late August and early September), and Allen's (virtually impossible to separate from Rufous, even adult males, except during banding sessions). Costa's and Calliope are more numerous at feeders in the desert (Costa's) and montane (Calliope) regions of the Kern River Valley watershed. Allen's pass through in small numbers the latter third of June through the middle of August. The Kern River Valley has less than five records each of Broad-billed and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. Visit the Kern River Preserve in Weldon, California. Open every day of the year from dawn to dusk. http://kern.audubon.org/hummer_fest.htm.

Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival '05. August 10–14, Bisbee, Ari-

zona. Featuring Southeastern Arizona's exciting varieties of owls. Keynote speaker Pete Dunne, Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory. <http://info@swwings.org> or phone: 520-803-7412. Southeastern Arizona boasts great year-round birding! Resident birds include Scaled Quail, Gila Woodpecker, Bridled Titmouse, Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Yellow-eyed Junco, Verdin, Cassin's Sparrow, and more. The variety of butterfly species in the area is as diverse, exciting, and beautiful as the bird species.

Wings of the Warners Festival. September 16–18. Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, Alturas. This year's theme features the magnificent Sandhill Cranes. The migratory bird festival is a combined effort of the Modoc NWR and many other entities, and will be held in conjunction with the annual Hot Air Balloon Festival! The Refuge will have a booth at the Veteran's Park on Saturday where food and refreshments will be available and many activities for all ages will be held. On Sunday guided tours will be available both on and off the Refuge. For more information please contact the Alturas Chamber of Commerce at 530-233-4434 or the River Center at 530-233-5085. <http://modoc.fws.gov/upcoming.htm>.

Field Ornithology, City College of San Francisco. Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon Society will start September 13, 14 and 15. All classes meet at Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street. Free parking.

Field Ornithology I meets on Tuesdays. It is an introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution and behavior. Part A starts September 13 and ends October 25; Part B is a continuation of Part A. It begins November 1 and ends December 13. Field Ornithology II meets on Wednesdays. It is a continuing study of the identification and status of North American water birds, including grebes, tubenoses, and pelicans. Part A starts September 14 and ends October 26; Part B starts November 2 and ends December 14. Field Ornithology III meets on Thursdays. It is a continuing study of North American land birds including pigeon, parrots, cuckoos, owls, and nightjars. Part A starts September 15 and ends October 26; Part B starts November 3 and ends December 15. Optional field trips on weekends. Pre-registration is strongly advised. Registration for the Fall begins July 1st. For further information call 415-561-1860. <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan/>

Field Trip Report: Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley

June 18-19, 2005

Led by Rosita O. and Hugh B. Harvey

There is a saying that even our best plans often go astray, and those of us in the birding community are aware of and are victims of that aphorism. We control neither the weather nor the birds and are at the mercy of nature when trying to find those birds which are supposed to be where we want them to be. So it was this year, the eleventh time Rosita and I have led this trip. Going to sleep with the sound of rain on the tent, waking to find the pass covered with a layer of snow, scouting the area for the good birds and then taking the group to wait and not see those same birds all happened this year.

Fifteen members visited Yuba Pass and the Sierra Valley in some of the worst weather conditions we have ever experienced on this trip. Maybe because we were just crazy enough, we also found what may be a chapter record 130 species of birds over the two days. The Pine Grosbeak at the side of the road shortly after meeting at 7 AM was unexpected, but after waiting half-an-hour in freezing weather at the 6700-foot elevation of Yuba Pass to not see the Black-backed Woodpecker at its nest hole, we left the pass, headed downhill and stopped for another 45 minutes to not see a White-headed Woodpecker at its nest hole. We then walked the area at Mountain Quail Road in the Sierra Valley, at a more comfortable elevation of 5000 feet, where we had scant looks at Green-tailed Towhee and heard the brief calls of a Gray Flycatcher. Finally, at the Sparrow Corner, the intersection of Westside Road and Calpine Road, the birding started to take off. Fantastic views of the Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows were had, as these birds sang and displayed for us.

While crossing the marsh on Dyson Lane/Marble Hot Springs Road, we had many spectacular sightings including White-faced Ibis, Redheads, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, a nest-building Marsh Wren, the ever vocal Yellow-headed



Yellow-headed Blackbird, Sierra Valley

Blackbirds, American Coots with their reddish chicks, and a Sora. Because of California's placement on the left-hand side of the map, one of the leaders suggested that another rail we had seen crossing the road and calling might actually be the elusive West Virginia Rail. His suggestion was met with a stunned silence.

A Sage Thrasher was seen upon exiting the marsh, but we quickly re-entered it on Harriet Lane. The Black Terns put on their best show; one flying less than 50 yards away finally crossed the road directly in front of us. We also had a male Wood Duck and a male Blue-winged Teal. By this time our stomachs were growling and we made haste for the Loyalton City Park and Museum for our lunch.

It was hard to decide which was better, the lunch or the birds. While we were there we had a Swainson's Hawk, a Prairie Falcon, a Merlin, an American Kestrel and a non-raptor Common Nighthawk. We then drove to see the Swainson's Hawk nest north of the park. An adult flew out of the nest, perched on a power pole and screamed; apparently it didn't like us stopping and peering into the maternity ward.

A visit to our old picnic site at the Rotary Club picnic area on Smithneck Road, southeast of Loyalton, proved equally satisfactory. We found Bullock's Orioles and their nests, a Willow Fly-

catcher pair making their nest, and Western Bluebirds, a Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting and Lewis's Woodpecker.

A drive up through the fire area on Antelope Valley Road gave us more Lewis's Woodpeckers, another Western Bluebird, Clark's Nutcrackers, and for some, an Osprey, a Townsend's Solitaire and a Pygmy Nuthatch. But the long day was not finished yet.

After dinner we headed downhill from Yuba Pass to the scenic overlook and attempted to call in a Common Nighthawk and a Common Poorwill. Though the Nighthawk gave us a marginal performance, three Common Poorwills responded. One came to the boulders below the stone wall where we stood. We lit it with flashlights while one participant photographed it numerous times. This is probably the best viewing we have ever had of the Poorwill.

Sleeping in Sunday morning and not starting until 8 AM was smart. Another 30 or so birders were already meeting at the parking lot with their own groups and itineraries, but they were gone by the time we assembled. A Warbling Vireo was soon found building a nest nearby, but the Black-backed Woodpeckers were taking upwards of two hours or more before changing places at their nest. We walked the logging road and adjacent forest areas and found Williamson's Sapsuckers, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Red-shafted Flickers, Western Wood-Pewees, a small flock of Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Chickadees, both Red- and White-breasted Nuthatches, a Brown Creeper, a Hermit Warbler, and the gray-headed form of Fox Sparrow. Before it was all over, most of the participants finally did get to see the Black-backed Woodpeckers, who had built their nest in one of the most convenient sites ever, about eight feet off the ground and 20 feet from the pavement.

After lunch we wound down the trip with a chase for the American Dipper, which was not found at the San Francisco State Sierra Nevada Field Station or at the waterfall 2.1 miles downhill from Bassetts. We did find Black-chinned and Calliope Hummingbirds at the Bassetts Store, and the only weekend sighting of an Evening Grosbeak

Continued on page 7

was here, too. Some of us continued up onto Gold Lake Road where we had some local specialties such as Spotted Sandpiper, Common Merganser and Buffleheads. A last stop for some included the hike to Frazier Falls where a Dipper was finally found along with a Townsend's Solitaire.

A trip of this nature would not be successful without the help and cooperation of all the participants. The leaders would like to especially thank Eugenia and Gary Larson, Jean and Rich Richmond, Tom and Jane Blaisdell of Woodstock, Georgia, and Gary Fregien for their help in scouting, driving, finding and pointing out many of the birds sighted during the trip. While he did not visit all the areas we did during the two intense days of birding, Rich Richmond had the only sighting of one of the most easy to hear but hard to find birds in the mountains. During his long wait to see the Black-backed Woodpeckers at their hole, Rich had a Mountain Quail walk right in front of him. Perhaps we need to change the Quail's status from uncommon to "Widespread and common, should be seen by even the most sedentary birdwatcher."

For a look at some of the birds seen by our group, go to www.pbase.com/tgrey/sierra05. Tom Grey of the South Bay was seen on several occasions taking his photographs while we were birding. He is a frequent contributor of birding reports to the website South Bay Birds.

WatchList

Continued from page 2

ing in 2001, up steadily from \$30 billion in 1996 and \$21 billion in 1991.

WatchList is preventative medicine to be used first and foremost to enlist federal, state, and local governments to focus their resources towards protecting these birds before they become endangered or threatened — when they would demand more serious action and major taxpayer support to recover.

Audubon *WatchList* is a unique project that recognizes three levels of concern:

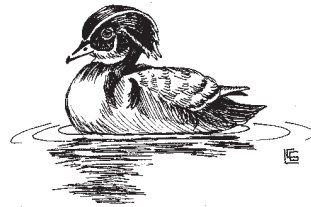
RED: Species in this category of global conservation concern are declining rapidly, have very small populations or limited ranges, and face major conservation threats. Audubon identifies several red-

listed species as probable candidates for inclusion on the Federal Endangered or Threatened Species Lists.

YELLOW: Category includes the majority of species identified. Yellow-list birds are declining, but at slower rates than those in the red category. These typically are birds of national conservation concern, and those that can be saved most cost-effectively.

GREEN: Species in this category are not declining, have unknown trends, or have very large population sizes. These species are not included on the Audubon *WatchList*.

Like the proverbial canary in the coalmine, birds are primary indicators of environmental health, and what hurts birds also hurts the people who share the same space. We should in no way take *WatchList* birds for granted; we should rather listen to what their declines are telling us about the ecosystems we both inhabit.



RED *WatchList* birds also on the MDAS Birds of Northern California list are:

Emperor Goose
Black-footed Albatross
Short-tailed Albatross
Pink-footed Shearwater
Black-vented Shearwater
California Condor
Black Rail
Snowy Plover
Mountain Plover
Long-billed Curlew
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Heermann's Gull
Elegant Tern
Marbled Murrelet
Xantus's Murrelet
Craveri's Murrelet
Spotted Owl
Nuttall's Woodpecker
Bell's Vireo
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
McCown's Longspur
Lawrence's Goldfinch

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Red-breasted Nuthatch

Birdfeeding Tips

- Keep your peanut and suet feeders well stocked. Woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees and jays will thank you by visiting all summer long. Try safflower seed if squirrels or blackbirds are a nuisance. They do not like safflower, which is a high-energy source. Doves and titmice really appreciate it. Other birds, such as finches, chickadees and jays, will acquire a taste for it.
- Squirrels will tend to avoid bird feeders if you establish a feeding station just for them 15–20 feet away from your other feeders. Offer a variety of foods: squirrel mix (sunflower, peanuts, and corn), corn on the cob, and squirrel suet.

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Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*

Somewhat smaller than the similar Laughing Gull of the Eastern Seaboard, Franklin's Gull is a freshwater bird of the Northern Plains and the Canadian Provinces. They are often found in agricultural fields, following tractors cultivating the fields and taking advantage of the disturbed grasshoppers and other insects.

Colonies of as many as 20,000 Franklin's Gulls gather in breeding season in the wetlands, where they build nests near lakes—on the ground, or on floating platforms of old reeds anchored to freshwater vegetation. When agriculture or development encroaches on a nesting marsh, suitable habitat may become too scarce for a large colony and the birds move elsewhere. Wintering sites may be as far south as the Caribbean, Chile or Peru.

Sir John Franklin, for whom this species was named, was the indefatigable British explorer whose naval career included the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. He became obsessed with finding the Northwest Passage. His expedition in 1845 never returned; all died from scurvy or from starvation. Franklin's Gull was first described by Johann Wagler, a German herpetologist and ornithologist, from a specimen taken in Mexico; thus the species name *pipixcan*.

Franklin's Gulls are not often seen in Northern California, but several were reported in April this year at such places as Pescadero Marsh, Pigeon Point, and Lake Merced. The bird pictured here was a welcome sighting at Lake Merritt in Oakland.



Franklin's Gull. Lake Merritt, Oakland. Ellis Myers Photo

Laughing Gull. Cape May, New Jersey. Photo courtesy of Terry Neumyer



Continued from page 4

guage version of his popular Birds of North America field guide. He says there are 28 million Spanish speakers in the United States and we cannot ignore them. The bird watching community does not mirror the North American population. He consistently sees the same Caucasian middle- and upper-class audiences at his public appearances. He worked hard to convince his publisher, Houghton Mifflin, to do this book, but expects it to lose money. Nevertheless, he hopes it will do well enough to allow him to also translate his butterfly guide to Spanish.

Moths are a closet favorite of Mr. Kaufman's now, and he is working on a field guide of North American insects, which will not be fully illustrated. Physical limitations to the use of this guide in the field preclude illustrating all 90,000 species, so it will probably have around 2000 illustrations.

Finally, he bravely took questions from the audience. After a few queries about birds or bird behavior that the questioners had observed, he was asked how best to learn the birds' songs. His reply was the recommendation of a variety of bird recordings available on the market, but

he really suggested getting out into the field and watching the birds, hearing them sing and learning to join the song and identification in this manner. He said, "Each bird has a distinctive voice, it wants you to see it, go and find it. Rise to the challenge."

Rosita and I would like to thank Gerry Argenal for the gift to us of the tickets to this event. It was a very memorable evening. Kenn Kaufman's comments of rising to the challenge, though offered to the group, are certainly felt on the personal level. They shall be with us always when we are in the field.

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Mount Diablo Audubon Society general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Garden Center at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Board of Directors meets at 7 PM on the second Thursday of every month in the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 94526. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA 94556.

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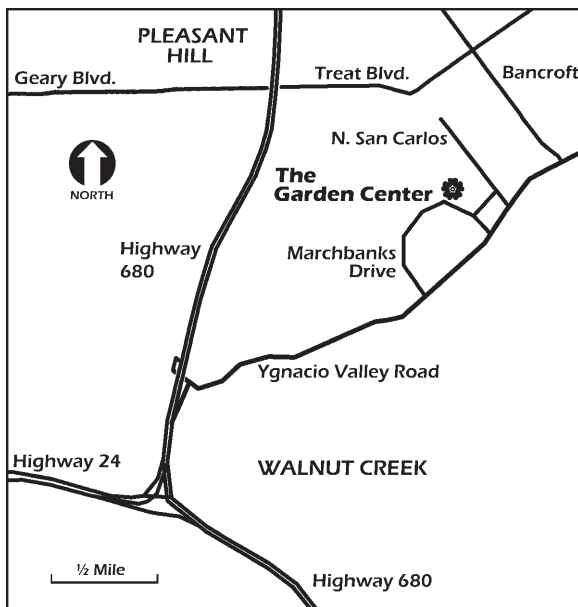
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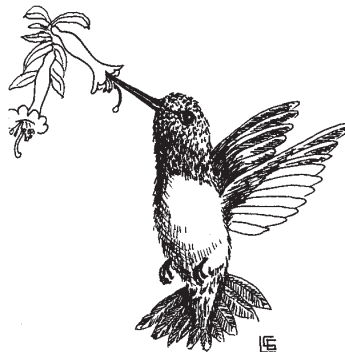
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Driving directions: From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into parking lot. From Highway 680 south, take Treat Blvd. to Bancroft. Go right to Ygnacio Valley Road, turn right and go one block past signal at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). At Marchbanks Drive turn right. The Garden Center is located on the right in the second block.



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Canyon Towhee

Quickies

A Weekend at Madera Canyon

By Mike Tischler

When my wife Rita first mentioned flying to Tucson for a weekend birding trip at Madera Canyon I thought the idea was too extravagant. However after thinking about all of the birds I could add to my life list I warmed to the idea. We were able to get one night at Santa Rita Lodge in Madera Canyon on short notice, and two more nights at nearby Green Valley. If you leave Oakland early in the morning you arrive in Tucson between 9:30 and 10:00 AM and are on your way to Madera Canyon by 10:30.

When birding in the desert you always need a lot of liquid, so we stop and pick up an inexpensive ice chest, bottled water and ice. Since there is no food in Madera Canyon we also get a deli sandwich for lunch and some snacks for later. We then head south on Interstate 19 and take the Continental exit, then follow the signs to Madera Canyon.

Our first stop was the Madera Picnic area where you can have lunch in the shade and watch birds at the same time. First to appear are the Gray-breasted (Mexican) Jays looking for a handout. Yellow-eyed Juncos, Bridled Titmice, and Acorn Woodpeckers were also abundant. Rita saw a female Tanager but I missed that one.

After lunch we drove up the road to Kubo's Cabins where the Flame-colored Tanager has been seen the last two years. We met a father and son from New Jersey who had seen the Tanager come to a nearby feeder. After a few minutes the female Flame appeared and went to the nest in the Sycamore trees. Shortly thereafter the male made an appearance bringing food to the female and then posing on the end of a branch for a good look. While watching the Flame an Arizona Woodpecker was looking for lunch in the nearby oak trees. We also spotted several Black-headed Grosbeaks nearby.

After checking into the Santa Rita Lodge you have your choice of sitting out front and watching the hummingbird feeders,

or sitting inside and watching the feeder outside the back window. We saw the Broad-billed, Blue-throated, and Magnificent Hummingbirds regularly taking turns at the feeders. The Acorn Woodpeckers were also competing with the hummingbirds at the feeders. The feeders were surrounded by wire cages that were too large to prevent other birds or animals from reaching the feeder, so I asked and found out they were to keep the bats away from the feeders. I was told the bats can drain a feeder overnight.

As dusk begins to fall the guests start to gather outside and try to determine which of the holes in the telephone pole the Elf Owl is nesting in. This year there were two nests, so the group was split up. As the sky was getting darker I happened to look at one of the holes in the pole next to our cabin and there was an Elf Owl looking back at me. He was in the opening for a minute or two, then flew off to feed, never to be seen again. On our trip there last year the owl was bringing food back to the nest so we saw

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