



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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July/August 2008

Looking Forward to a Fall Season of Birding Programs

While Mount Diablo Audubon Society does not conduct general meetings during July or August, there are field trips that you can consider as mini summer vacations. And with car-pooling, they're reasonably fuel efficient. Come along to Pescadero Marsh and other spots along the San Mateo coast in July and to Bodega Bay in August. See Page 4 for details.

Our Fall speaker season opens on September 4 with Scott and Claudia Hein reporting on their trip to Trinidad and Tobago. Scott and Claudia devote much of their time to Save Mount Diablo and Scott is well known for his exquisite photos of Mount Diablo as well as his photos recording their adventures around the world. MDAS has been fortunate in recent years to have seen his photos of Antarctica, New Zealand, and areas of our own Midwest.

This summer, Stephen Joseph's book on Muir Woods will debut. On October 2, Stephen will present a special Muir Woods slide show and his book will be available. He is very excited about the fact that his other book, *John Muir's Botany*, is due out on October 1. We may be the first to see it. Stephen presented his program on John Muir's Botany to Mount Diablo Audubon in November of 2006. Check these websites: www.johnmuirbotany.com and www.stephenjosephphotos.com.

Amy Fesnock, Senior Wildlife Biologist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will discuss the biology and ecology of the Marbled Murrelet on November 6. The nesting habits of this bird remained a mystery until a chance discovery in 1974. A tree climber in Big Basin Redwoods State Park found a nest high in an old growth Redwood, well inland from their known habitat. Since then much has been learned about this threatened species.



Photo by Scott Hein

Green Honeycreeper at Asa Wright Nature Centre, Trinidad and Tobago.

The Rich Legacy of 'The Batman'

By Lois Kazakoff

Those who disdain community service because they doubt the effect of one person's contribution, should consider the story of Bob Wisecarver, who passed away May 29. He was 87.

Wisecarver was born in Oakland, and lived for decades in Walnut Creek, but he discovered his passion for nature and the out of doors roaming the Berkeley Hills. During the post-World War II boom that brought hundreds of thousands of newcomers to the Bay Area, Wisecarver recognized that future generations would not enjoy the activities he loved (especially fly fishing), unless the community started working to maintain homes for nature's creatures. Undaunted by the enormity of the project, he set out—ever the engineer—to find simple and practical solutions to protect and restore habitat, and to encourage others to join his cause.

He became the batman. He designed and built houses to help bats survive and thrive. He convinced vineyard owners to site the houses at just the right height to attract the bats, which thanked their new landlords by devouring half their weight in insects every night, reducing the need to spray pesticides.

He advised CalTrans on how to slightly modify bridge designs to leave a space in

Continued on Page 2 »

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



Bob Wisecarver (Left), with Brian Murphy and Gary Bogue, install a Barn Owl nesting box at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek, January 2007.

the expansion joints that were just the right size for bats. Visitors to East Bay MUD's Pardee Dam, site of another bat housing project, will find more bats and fewer biting mosquitoes.

If you drive east on I-680 in Martinez, you can see one of Wisecarver's bat houses perched on a tall pole at the edge of the McNabney Marsh of the Waterbird Regional Preserve.

More than a decade ago, he began recruiting volunteers to help restore an area in Walnut Creek to slow the disappearance of the quail, California's state bird. The brush that quail call home had disappeared over the years. Wisecarver had volunteers create brush piles as temporary habitat and then began planting native plants and trees. By the next spring, the quail had started to return. And Wisecarver had launched a small but continuing effort to gather native seeds and plant native plants. For the quail. For the owls. For the lizards. And ultimately, for all of us.

He recognized a large need and found a small way to do something about it. Then

he taught others to care, and showed that they too could do something about it. Even if small.

When I visited Wisecarver at his home in December, he knew he had but a few months to live. He proudly displayed the accolades he had received for his work from both governmental and community groups. Then, he talked about his great fortune in life. He was raised, he said, in Eden—in Berkeley, where he was surrounded by all the cultural richness of the university and within walking distance of the wild and wonderful hills that are now part of the East Bay Regional Park District.

One man. One life. A rich legacy that we—and nature's creatures—can enjoy.

This column first appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle.

Welcome New Members

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Eileen Dowell | San Ramon |
| Kevin Gallagher | Danville |
| Linda Thompson | Alamo |

No Child Left Inside ————— By Paul Schorr

Field Trip to Contra Loma Regional Park

On Friday, June 6th, thirty-three 5th grade students from nearby Jack London Elementary School, their teacher, Evelyn Jones, and several parent volunteers were joined by eight MDAS volunteer leaders to enjoy a morning of birding at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch. The MDAS volunteers included President Jimm Edgar, Gloria Cannon, Joel Summerhill, Austin Prindle, Diana Granados, Carolyn Lie,



Brian Murphy Photo

Brian Murphy, and Paul Schorr. The weather was clear, warm and breezy and the group practically had the area to themselves.

The students were divided into six groups and they rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, each station being monitored by MDAS volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each

of the students adeptly used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by the chapter for purposes such as this and other Education Outreach programs. Following this activity the group walked from the lake area to an open area with views of the oak-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savannah. From this location

Brian Murphy explained the importance of the nearby California Quail habitats and the newly posted Western Bluebird houses along a fence line. A cooperative pair of Western Bluebirds substantiated the success of this conservation endeavor.

After lunch the group tallied their sightings, as in MDAS field trips. A total of 38 species included great views of: a pair of fishing Osprey, families of Canada Geese and Mallards, and a nesting Barn Owl (seen by at least one group). During the tally, a Belted Kingfisher flew by, providing good views and our 38th species! Regarding the Barn Owl, Diana Granados had explained to a group of students that Barn Owls will nest in palm trees. Moments later, one of the girls looked into a nearby palm tree, and calmly exclaimed, "There's one." The volunteers all had many teachable moments and they were rewarded with the subsequent students' excitement. The day's program concluded with Jimm Edgar presenting to each of the students a field guide entitled *Backyard Birds of California*, which the chapter had recently purchased. All in all, it was a very rewarding experience for young and old alike.

About Membership Renewals

When I joined MDAS, I was surprised that there was no membership identification card. But over time, I appreciated not being burdened with another card in my already crowded collection! And considering the cost of producing an updated card each year plus the waste of time and materials that could be better used for conservation, I'm grateful for absence of a card!

However, members sometimes wonder how to determine their renewal dates. An easy way to identify the expiration date is to look at the numbers following your name on the last Quail newsletter received. For example, if the grouping appears as 200807, then membership ends on the first day of July 2008. If the number shows as 200806, membership ended effective June 1, and another issue of the newsletter may not be received until renewal is made. Our Membership Chairperson mails postcards each month as reminders when (a) it is time to renew because only one more issue of the Quail remains and (b) membership term has expired and member needs to submit renewal by mid-month.

When members renew by mail, the most efficient response is to include the renewal postcard which clearly shows member's exact name spelling and specific address so that there is no doubt about names, numbers, *etc.* Credit card renewals by mail, also using the postcard, work well also except that any numbers and other handwritten information need to be clear and legible. Otherwise there may be a delay in processing the transaction until contact is made with the member by telephone or e-mail.

Blue Membership Renewal forms are available for those who wish to personally deliver their remittances at general MDAS meetings, usually at the front information table. Gold MDAS pamphlets are located in the same area for those wishing to complete a New Membership Application. Don't hesitate to ask someone at the front table if you need one of these forms and don't see them.

About National Audubon Society (NAS) Membership

Membership in our local Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is separate from NAS membership. And renewals are directed to

Observations

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at countylines@sbcglobal.net or (925) 997-1112.

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** at Heather Farm Park, Walnut Creek 6/4 provided just the second record for the park and the first since 1964! (FS, HH). A pair of **Harlequin Ducks** was reported by an unknown observer at the Richmond Marina on 5/3.

A flock of 75 **American White Pelicans** on 5/8 over Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park furnished one of just a handful of park records (MS).

An **American Bittern** along Jersey Island Road 5/17 (PS) and a fly-over **American Bittern** at Piper Slough, Bethel Island 5/26 (DD) were welcome sightings of this declining species. Two **White-faced Ibis** on 5/10 at the Richmond Sewage Ponds furnished an extremely rare record for west county (JR).

An **Osprey** was an unusual find at Heather Farm Park, Walnut Creek 5/30 (R&HH, B&LG).

A female **Red Phalarope** made a rare Contra Costa County appearance at Point Isabel, Richmond on 5/12 (KJ).

Two **Black Skimmers** were at Meeker Slough near Point Isabel, Richmond on 5/18 (KD). Although still reported only rarely, the species has recently bred on nearby Brooks Island.

Two **Eurasian Collared-Doves** on 5/10 at Piper Slough, Bethel Island provided the first record for this once heavily birded location (BD).

A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was at a Lafayette feeder 6/12 (SS). Up to five **Calliope Hummingbirds** were in White Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park on 5/1 (HW).

A **Pileated Woodpecker** was around the parking area at Upper San Leandro

the two separate organizational addresses. For MDAS the fee is the same for both new membership and annual renewals at \$25 per year. However, there is some confusion about the remittance for NAS. In both our website and membership brochure there is reference to a first-time NAS membership for \$20; if you are already a NAS member, then your membership renewal is \$35.00 per year.

If you have any questions or comments about membership, you can contact Bev Walker at beewalk@comcast.net or phone 925-952-9925.

Bev Walker

By Steve Glover

Reservoir on 5/2 (DL). At nearly the exact same time, another **Pileated Woodpecker** was found on the hillside above the Rheem Theatre (DW).

Olive-sided Flycatcher at Piper Slough, Bethel Island 5/26 was a nice spring find (DD). A **Willow Flycatcher** at Lime Ridge Open Space, Concord on 6/9 was a nice find for spring; the species is far more common in fall (DW). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was in residential Lafayette on 5/14 (JT).

A calling **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was an interesting find on Old Millstone Lane in Lafayette on 5/14 but despite the relatively late date it is best considered a late migrant rather than a nesting bird (JT).

Two **Canyon Wrens** were found along the Chaparral Loop Trail in Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve on 6/3 (LL).

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at Piper Slough on Bethel Island Road near Willow Road West on 5/17 (PS).

Singing **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found in three separate irrigated pastures along Jersey Island Road on 5/9 (RM). There are just a couple of previous records from this area and the species has never been suspected of nesting in east county.

Three **Great-tailed Grackles** were at Heather Farm Park, Walnut Creek on 5/1 (HH).

David Diller, Kathy Durkin, Bingham Gibbs, Larry Gibbs, Hugh Harvey, Rosita Harvey, Kathy Jarrett, Laura Look, Ron Melcer, Jim Roethe, Fred Safier, Paul Schorr, Susan Stern, Jim Tietz, Denise Wight, Harv Wilson

Q

This species breeds only in California. One subspecies of this bird "winters"

in Mexico and begins "spring" migration northward along the Pacific Coast in December to their "summer" breeding grounds. In mid-May they travel a "fall" migration route southward along the Sierra foothills. There is also a nonmigratory subspecies that stays year-round in Southern California and the Channel Islands.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 7 to learn more.

ABDEGHIILLMMNNRSU

July

26 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

August

16 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

Come birding with us this Summer!

① ② ③ Saturday, July 26 San Mateo Coast

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

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. Take Crow Canyon Road to I-580, go west 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.

① Saturday, August 16 Bodega Bay

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Meet in parking lot of Tides Restaurant on Bay side of Highway 1 in Bodega 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 East 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.

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 join us during our midday break.

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.

Carpool locations: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

All leaders, members and prospective leaders are invited to a planning meeting for our next birding year starting in September and going through the summer of 2009. This meeting will be at Jean Richmond's house at 7 PM, on Wednesday, July 16. If you have a favorite destination, or even a place you think would be an interesting birding area, please plan to participate. Call Jean Richmond or Hugh Harvey for directions.

Birding Northern California

Jean Richmond's *Birding Northern California*, the signal book that outlines 72 places to bird in Northern California, has been placed on our website for all to see. From Alameda Creek to Yuba Pass in the alphabet and from Arcata in the North to the Panoche Valley in the south, Jean tells you where and when to go, how to get there, and what birds to look for.

BIRDING NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



JEAN RICHMOND

Originally written for the *Quail* during the period of 1976 to 1985, when Jean was Editor, the book has long been out of print but not out of significance. Many requests have come to the Mount Diablo Board of Directors to revise and reprint this work. Of course, innumerable changes have occurred since this was published, and the task of updating the information, such as road information and telephone numbers, was deemed to be prohibitive. Still, there is great value there, and the Society wished to share that value with all birders.

Ellis Myers, current *Quail* Editor, and Steve Buffi, Treasurer, scanned, proofread and re-formatted the book and Patrick King, Webmaster, added the files to the website at www.diabloaudubon.com/birdingnocal.php, where it can be downloaded as a PDF file.

The following disclaimer is displayed:

The contents of the book have NOT been updated from the original published in 1985. Road names and numbers, area codes, park names, admission prices, etc. have NOT been updated. Validate all information from other sources prior to traveling to any site mentioned in the book.

To thank MDAS with a donation for this service, please visit the Make A Difference page.

Also on the website is a contact so that readers may offer feedback. If any member is interested in helping to monitor these comments, leading to a possible revision of the book, you would be received with open arms. Contact birdnocal@yahoo.com.

Trip Reports

East Contra Costa County, May 17.

Seven participants enjoyed a clear and very warm, yet breezy day visiting numerous locations throughout East Contra Costa County. Stops included Marsh Creek Trail, Jersey Island, Bethel Island and Delta Road in Knightsen. Throughout the day, the prominent view of Mount Diablo provided a beautiful background to the Delta surroundings. Fifty-two species were heard or seen and noteworthy birds included: Blue Grosbeaks (Marsh Creek Trail, Oakley); Swainson's Hawk, Burrowing Owl and Yellow-billed Magpie (Delta Road, Knightsen); Yellow-breasted Chat, both heard and seen (Bethel Island Road near Willow Road West, Bethel Island); and Bullock's Oriole (Marsh Creek Trail, Oakley). In addition, the group enjoyed great views of a very cooperative American Bittern along Jersey Island Road.

Paul Schorr

West Briones Regional Park, May 22.

A singing Lazuli Bunting greeted fifteen birders to the parking lot at the beginning of their walk toward Homestead Valley. The grassy hills were dry, flowers mostly gone, but 45 bird species were identified by sight or song. Highlights include the Great Blue Heron circling high overhead with the Turkey Vultures, a heard Western Screech-Owl, Band-tailed Pigeons, Western Wood-Pewee, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Orange-crowned, Townsend's and Wilson's Warblers, Violet-green Swallows inspecting an old woodpecker hole, the Acorn Woodpeckers using a new hole and singing Black-headed Grosbeaks.

Hugh B. Harvey

Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs, June 5.

Eight birders had 66 species on a quiet day in early summer in the Livermore Valley. Our best sighting might have been the California Thrasher who popped up five feet in front of us and surveyed all those intruders in his territory. However, three soaring Golden Eagles were right behind. A very strange looking White Pelican at Shadow Cliffs as well as an out of place looking Bufflehead added to the mix. We all enjoyed the rookery with Great-blue Herons, Great Egrets, one Snowy Egret, and many Double-crested Cormorants, although the trees look like they are suffering a little.

Bingham Gibbs

Outer Point Reyes, June 7. On a beautiful cloudless but somewhat windy day, 11

members and guests gathered at Drakes Beach, Point Reyes National Seashore for a full day's birding. Temperatures were on the cool side but out of the wind were in the low 60s. We made stops at a number of locations to seek out as broad a selection of birds as possible. All told we saw or heard 63 species. Among some of the more memorable highlights were at Drake's Beach, singing Swainson Thrushes greeted us on arrival. We were treated close-up at 20 feet to the sight of a Red-tailed Hawk being dislodged from the trees by several Brewer's Blackbirds at Mendoza Ranch; at the Fish Docks/Chimney Rock we found two Eurasian Collared-Doves and a Ringed Turtle-Dove; the Lighthouse yielded fly-by's of a Peregrine Falcon, numbers of Pigeon Guillemots, and of course the omnipresent hundreds of Common Murres on the rocks below. Back at the Bear Valley, Visitor Center, we took the Earthquake Trail loop and were treated to great views of a Wilson's Warbler, fleeting glimpses of a singing Pacific-slope Flycatcher, and only the songs of several Warbling Vireos.

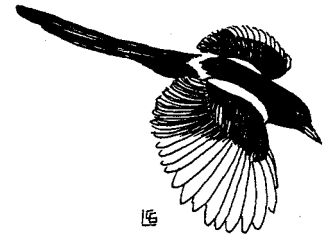
David Hutton

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, June 21-22.

Whether Spring came early this year is a matter of question; that the mountains are dry this year is not. Flowers were apparent, but the meadow at Yuba Pass was dry. Water was evident in the Sierra Valley, but the plants in the marsh seemed sparser than in years past. Still, when the weekend was over, 105 species were seen or heard by the 19 members or guests.

As we have since the extremely cold 2005 trip, we went downhill and toured the Sierra Valley on Saturday, driving around the large, nearly 5000-foot elevation valley before stopping for lunch in Loyalton. We then drove through areas burned during the 1994 Loyalton fire, before breaking for dinner. After dinner some of us drove to the scenic overlook, looking and listening for Common Nighthawks and Common Poorwills, which this year proved to be less than satisfactory.

Sunday we met at the top of the pass for the mountain birds, which proved to be quite satisfactory. Most of the expected species were seen or heard. We drove up Gold Lake Road to collect our final woodpecker species at a nest hole, then retired to the tables at Bassett's Station to eat ice cream, watch the hummingbird feeders and work on our checklist. While many



departed for home at this point, some of us made our annual pilgrimage downhill to see the American Dippers in the Yuba River.

Highlights of the trip include the Gray Flycatcher and Green-tailed Towhee on Mountain Quail Road, the Vespers and Brewer's Sparrows at the sparrow corner, Sage Thrashers, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, nesting Marsh Wrens, Sandhill Cranes, White-faced Ibis and American Bitterns on Marble Hot Springs Road and a Wilson's Phalarope and a Swainson's Hawk nest on Harriet Lane. A Lewis's Woodpecker family nested in a power pole on Smithneck Road, a Pygmy Nuthatch and White-breasted Nuthatch were found near each other on Antelope Valley Road and a White Pelican was on the nearby reservoir. In the evening the Common Nighthawk was finally heard once, while the Common Poorwill was more vocal and even very briefly seen.

At the 6701-foot Yuba Pass, we had a number of special birds including a nesting Dusky Flycatcher, nesting Red-breasted and Williamson's Sapsuckers, nesting Mountain Chickadees and White-headed Woodpeckers, an Olive-sided Flycatcher, numerous Western Tanagers, singing Hermit Thrushes, Cassin's Finches, Pine Siskins and a single Evening Grosbeak. A Red-breasted Nuthatch was busy excavating a small nest hole, but probably the most unexpected bird was a nesting Pine Grosbeak in the campground. Nesting Black-backed Woodpeckers and Williamson's Sapsuckers were seen at Snag Lake Campground on Gold Lake Road. Calliope Hummingbirds were plentiful at Bassett's Station, though they seemed to prefer the hummingbird feeders to the ice cream. The leaders would like to thank the following for their help, Jean Richmond, Eugenia Larson, Gary Fregien and Ann Blandin, as well as the Sullied Doves for their enthusiasm and support. A special thanks also to David Takeuchi, who for many years has driven Tom and Jane Blaisdell, of Woodstock, Georgia. Their appreciation of our collective efforts is our reward.

Rosita and Hugh Harvey

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Bob Wisecarver died recently at age 87. He was a great friend of wild-life (especially bats) and was heavily involved in the restoration of our wild spaces.

We knew and worked with Bob for 20 years. We remember when he first came into our store in 1991 or 1992. He said words to the effect "this birdhouse won't work—no clean out". We wondered "who is this guy". Well, we learned who he was. And, over the years, we learned more and more and more from Bob. He gave us a great amount of help and personal time.

One suggestion of his we had no interest in doing. He wanted us to sell large platforms for people to use to feed Turkey Vultures. Then he would supply them with road kill for the feeder, which he would leave at our store. This was another example of his sly humor. We think.

He was a very special person to us. He is one of the 4 people that have had the largest positive environmental impact over the last 20 years in Contra Costa County. The others are Contra Costa Times Nature Columnist Gary Bogue, Seth Adams of Save Mount Diablo and the late Al McNabney of Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

We are proud to have known Bob, who in our mind is and always will be the real "Batman".



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
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Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Ornithological Opportunities

Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival. August 6-10, Sierra Vista, Arizona. Sierra Vista lies at the foot of the Huachuca Mountains, minutes away from some of the most famous birding spots in the United States such as Garden, Sawmill, Huachuca, Ramsey, Carr, Miller and Ash Canyons. These places have been known historically for their great biodiversity of birds, butterflies, odonates and other insects, mammals, reptiles and close to 1,000 species of plants. www.swwings.org

10th Annual Kern River Valley Hummingbird Celebration. August 9, Kern River Preserve, Weldon, California. Learn how to photograph, feed, identify and garden for hummingbirds. http://kern.audubon.org/hummer_fest.htm.

Monterey Bay Birding Festival. September 26-28, Watsonville. Fall is a magical time of year for birding along the Monterey Bay. Over 400 species of shorebirds, ducks, geese, seabirds and songbirds gather along this beautiful coast to overwinter among the wetlands, sloughs, shores and woodlands. This year's schedule includes special outings to the Big Sur Condor Project, and a special presentation on the Snowy Plover, as well as beginner's field trips. www.montereybaybirding.org/

Oregon Shorebird Festival. August 29-31. The Oregon Shorebird Festival, one of the longest running bird festivals in Oregon, will celebrate 22 years in 2008. Birdwatchers of all skill levels are encouraged to join us and experience firsthand the wonder of shorebird migration on the scenic south coast. The festival is headquartered at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology in the small fishing community of Charleston, OR. The festival usually attracts between 60 to 100 birders from all over the nation but primarily from the Pacific Northwest. The Festival is small compared to the larger wildlife festivals that have premiered in the past ten years; this keeps the festival intimate so visitors are able to interact more closely with field trip leaders, guest speakers and other festival attendees. So join us for days filled with shorebirds and evenings with good conversation and great presentations. www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/shorebirdfestival.htm.

President's Corner

MDAS members and water conservation.

Many if not most of you reading this issue of the *Quail* are going to be asked by EBMUD to cut back our water usage by 19%. I also think most of us are probably not water wasters and have been trying for years to be careful, so now what do we do? I have a few ideas, EBMUD has suggested a few more and I suspect many of you have some creative thoughts on how to conserve.

Here is what I would like to suggest: could you send me by email or letter your ideas and I will compile them and in an upcoming *Quail* we will publish them. This could really help all of us to conserve the 19% we need to do. My email is: jedgar@ag70.younglife.org and address is 4614 Jacobus Ave., Oakland, CA 94618-2220.

Getting started:

Start a compost pile as an alternative method of disposing of food waste instead of using a garbage disposal. Kitchen sink disposals require lots of water to operate properly.

Raise your lawn mower blade to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture.

The best water-saving device is you and your family. *Jimm Edgar, President*

Urban Spraying Halted

On June 20, CDEA Secretary A.G. Kawamura changed course, stating (in part): "Since we discovered the light brown apple moth (LBAM) in California in early 2007, we have invested in the development of alternatives that would improve our eradication efforts. We are fast-tracking an approach known as the Sterile Insect Technique, in which large quantities of sterilized, infertile insects are released so that the wild population cannot reproduce.

"We now plan to begin limited releases of the sterile moths in 2009, with a full-scale program up and running in 2011. This is exactly the kind of effort and innovation that Californians deserve from their public servants."

Allen's Hummingbird • *Selasphorus sasin*



Photo by Siegfried Matull

It's sometimes nearly impossible to distinguish Allen's Hummingbirds from Rufous Hummingbirds. Females and immatures of both species are almost totally alike, as seen in the field. Male Allen's have green backs, while male Rufous usually have brown backs. If a bird looks to be an adult male Rufous, it most likely is; but if a bird looks to be an adult male Allen's, it might be a Rufous.

Allen's Hummingbirds eat mostly nectar, but also take spiders and insects they find in flowers. These make up the birds' source of protein. They will also eat sap from sapsucker holes. The hummingbirds

need to drink twice their own weight in nectar each day. For that, they need to visit a thousand or more flowers each day. Some of their favorite flowers are California natives suitable for your garden: salvias (sages), penstemon, mimulus and diplacus (monkey flowers), aquilegia (columbines), and epilobium (zauschneria, California fuchsia).

Feisty and fearless, the male Allen's Hummingbird is also curious. Gary Bogue, in his book *The Raccoon Next Door* tells of a "lady (who prefers to remain nameless) who was taking a topless sunbath on her back patio one hot June afternoon. As she

was lying there broiling under the sun, an extra-thick coating of bright red lipstick on her lips to keep them from getting chapped, she felt a tiny shivery tickle on her lips. Carefully opening one eye, she found herself staring at a male Allen's Hummingbird that was hanging in the air mere inches from her face—tasting all over her bright red lips with his tongue. She said that when his eyes met hers, the little rascal gave her a very big wink. Honest."

Charles Andrew Allen (1841-1930), a Civil War veteran, was a collector, taxidermist, and an avid observer of birds. From Massachusetts, he suffered health problems from his occupation at a planing mill and came to Southern California where he continued collecting bird specimens for scientific study. He later settled in Marin County. Allen was the first to recognize the feathering differences between Rufous Hummingbirds and the species that now bears his name.



Intermediate Wren-Tit
Chamaea fasciata fasciata
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard • 1930

the Quail

is published 10 times a year by the

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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The Garden Center

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.



Mount Diablo Audubon Society
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Bird observation tower at Valley Sanitary District wastewater treatment pond, Indio

A Little-Known Desert Oasis

Many birders travel to Riverside and Imperial Counties, lured by the promise of Yellow-footed Gull at the Salton Sea, or Vermilion Flycatcher and other species at Covington Park and Big Morongo. If you are among this group, you should take the time and opportunity to visit the Coachella Valley Wild Bird Center in Indio, half-way between these two popular destinations.

The Coachella Valley Wild Bird Center is a volunteer-run, non-profit corporation that was created for the care and rehabilitation of orphaned, injured or sick native wild birds, with the ultimate goal of releasing as many as possible back into their habitats. Their goal is also to provide educational programs for schools, clubs and organizations. Programs use permanently injured or otherwise unreleaseable wild birds as teaching tools to promote public awareness of wild birds' needs. Programs



Linda York, founder of the Coachella Valley Wild Bird Center, leads a school group on a tour of the facilities, beginning at the flight cages for unreleaseable birds, then around the ponds to view waterfowl from the observation towers and back for lunch.

encourage the maintenance and conservation of the habitats of the area's wild birds. There are also training workshops held periodically to teach the latest techniques in wildlife care.

The Center, at 46-500 Van Buren St., Indio, is open every day from 10 AM until 5 PM (Summer, 9-1). Guided bird walks, approximately 1½ to 2 hours long, are

led on the first Saturday of each month, October-May. A typical morning birdwalk may yield over 60 species, not including the captive birds which are also available for viewing. This is the best place in the Coachella Valley to find Cinnamon Teal, a signature species for the property. Other finds would include Pied-billed Grebe, Great Egret, Sora, Common Moorhen, Black-necked Stilt, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Great Horned Owl, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Marsh Wren, Abert's Towhee, various dragonflies. Winter may bring Ferruginous Hawk and Peregrine Falcon.

The wetlands adjacent to the Center are integral to the operations of the Valley Sanitary District, which serves Indio and the surrounding communities. The Center opened in 1995 under the directorship of Linda York. The Valley Sanitary District and the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians have contributed to the success of the Center and its wetlands project.

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