



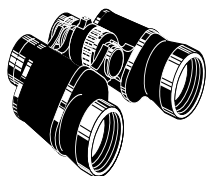
The QUAIL

Mt Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053
www.diabloaudubon.com

July-August 2003

Vol. 49, No. 10

Next Deadline: August 5



Observations by Steve Glover

American White Pelicans continue to be resident at McNabney Marsh near Martinez. Twenty-four were there on 5/15, and 12 were present on 5/29 (SG, BW).

A female **Wood Duck** with at least five ducklings was at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 6/7 (BP). Three males were noted in the general vicinity.

At least four **Black Rails** were heard "singing" on 6/4 at the Iron House Sanitary District in Oakley (SG). This is currently the most convenient site in the county for hearing this secretive species.

A **Spotted Sandpiper** on 5/15 at McNabney Marsh was slightly late and at an unusual location (SG, BW).

A **Bonaparte's Gull** at Iron House Sanitary District in Oakley on 6/4 provided a very rare June record for the county (SG). Most have usually headed north by early May.

Of great interest was a **Long-eared Owl** in Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park on 6/7 (DW). This late date is highly suggestive of breeding, a rare event in the county, though breeding was confirmed during the atlas project west of Moraga and strongly suspected at Morgan Territory. Breeding has also been expected in nearby Pine Canyon in years past.

A male **Calliope Hummingbird** was in Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park on 5/15, an unusually late spring date (BG).

Warbler flocks on 5/10 at Juniper Campground, Mt. Diablo State Park contained an estimated 30 **Hermit** and 20 **Townsend's Warblers**—numbers that harken back to the glory days of the 70s when such numbers were consistently found (MR).

A gorgeous vagrant male **Summer Tanager** brightened up Kennedy Grove Regional Park north of Orinda on 6/5 (JC, BG, LG). There are apparently still less than ten county records—about evenly split between winter and spring.

Several reports of **Grasshopper Sparrows** were received, including one on the Mott Peak Trail, Briones Regional Park on 5/17 (PK), at least six on 5/24 near Franklin Canyon, Martinez (SH, CH). A **Black-chinned Sparrow**, local and always noteworthy in the county, was below the kiosk on South Gate Rd., Mt. Diablo State Park on 5/17 (LC) **Observers:** Les Chibana, Judi Cooper, Bingham Gibbs, Larry Gibbs, Steve Glover, Claudia Hein, Scott Hein, Patrick King, Bob Power, Mark Rauzon, Denise Wight, Bob Wisecarver

No Summer Meetings

There will be no general meeting in July or August. The next general meeting is Thursday, September 4, at the Gardens at Heather Farms.

MDAS Membership Campaign Continues Remember to Renew Your Membership

Last year MDAS began offering Chapter-only memberships. Many members submitted applications for annual memberships, and those are now expiring.

If the date 200307 is printed after your name on the address label, it is time to renew your MDAS membership. This will be your last issue of the *Quail* unless you renew TODAY!

Membership dues are \$25 for one year. Remember that dues are tax-deductible, and the money remains with MDAS. You can renew online at our MDAS website <www.diabloaudubon.com> or by completing and mailing the renewal form printed in this issue of the *Quail*.

A membership application form is provided on page 3.

New Quail Editor Sought

Do you enjoy writing? Are you proficient with word processing, email, and the Internet? If so, a rewarding volunteer opportunity exists for the person who is interested in becoming the new editor of the *Quail*. Please call me, Gloria Cannon, at 925-753-0862, if you would like more information.

Death and the Goshawk

by Paul Webster

Paul Webster, our guest columnist, is an experienced birder and occasional visitor to Walnut Creek. Paul is a member of Seattle Audubon and MDAS. He is interested in making contact with potential weekday birding partners. If you're looking for a birding friend, please email him at <paul.webster@attbi.com> —Quail editor

A re-reading of the book by Edwin Way Teale, *A Walk Through the Year*, now twenty-five years old and a classic of American nature writing, has led me back to the hawks that [I saw in Washington] recently.

Our accipiters are three North American hawks of the forest with short, rounded wings and long tails. They are normally winter visitors here, breeding from our mountains north to the tree line in Canada and Alaska. The Sharp-shinned Hawk is the smallest, the middle accipiter is the crow-sized Cooper's Hawk, and the largest is the rarely-seen Northern Goshawk. The Sharpie eats birds almost exclusively; the larger accipiters have a somewhat more varied diet, including larger birds, but also squirrels, chipmunks, and mice. The Goshawk even takes Snowshoe Hares.

Teale describes a Goshawk's February visit to his Connecticut farm: "For a second time this winter the Goshawk appears. I glimpse it riding its tip-top perch on the loftiest branch of the highest hickory. Fluffy white feathers that flare out like short pants around its upper legs ruffle and flutter in the wind. Their moving, shining whiteness catches the eye. It draws attention to where the motionless bird is perching."

Nature is full of life and death. The latter doesn't affect us much, say, when large frogs gobble up small ones wholesale, but when the victim is a warm-blooded dove, its life seems more comparable to our own. Perhaps we understand the logic of the unimportance of individual life to nature; but when we feel regret at its passing, we possibly sense our own mortality. Teale carefully explains the

"deadly competition" in nature. It is deadly because it produces death, but our language carries the subtext of intention. The Goshawk is not cruel and does not intend to kill; rather, it intends to sustain itself in the way it best can, and death is incidental to that intent.

But nature also sets limits. Unlike the smaller accipiters, the Goshawk takes only running or

flying animals, and many of its potential victims know this. Teale describes "that delicate balance" when the prey freezes: "Later I see [the Goshawk] cross the yard in an arrowing advance that ends in a skyrocket climb to the summit of the hickory. On the way up it passes a lone Mourning Dove pulling itself tightly together, huddling motionless on one of the lower limbs, still and apparently



Northern Goshawk by Louis Agassiz Fuertes

Meet Ranchers Tim and Carolyn Rees, Birding Hosts in Sierra Valley

Recently Audubon was contacted by Tim and Carolyn Rees, who live on a working cattle ranch in the middle of the Sierra Valley near Loyalton. As many of you know, the Sierra Valley is a birding mecca. It's beautiful country with great birds, but there are very few places to stay when you go there. Tim Rees wrote that he and his wife have a guest house at their ranch that they are willing to rent out to folks from Audubon. To quote from his letter, "The guest house is free standing with western decor and a nice apartment. There are two double beds, and a hide-a-bed. We are asking \$110 per night and to please make reservations by calling us at 530-993-1560." The Rees live on the T Lazy R Ranch.

lifeless as a knot on the branch on which it rests. Surely the piercing eyes of the Goshawk have seen it. A return plunge with talons ready and the bird of prey could easily pluck it from the limb. But this, apparently, would be at odds with the Goshawk's psychology. [It] waits for the dove to fly. But the dove does not fly. Thus the smaller, defenseless bird escapes."

A Walk Through the Year is filled with scores of other thoughtful encounters with the birds and other animals at Teale's farm, and this gracefully aging book deserves the attention of a new generation of readers.

The Quail

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Carol Browner to Head Audubon Board

To The Audubon Family:

Two determined women who were committed to the environment founded the first Audubon chapter more than a century ago. After 107 years, Audubon is returning to its heritage in electing a determined woman who cares passionately about the environment to lead the organization.

Carol Browner, the longest serving Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, has been named Chair-elect of the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. Carol, who is the head of the board's Public Policy Committee, will be the first woman to chair Audubon, and one of the few to ever lead a conservation organization.

Carol will lead the board when our Chairman Donal O'Brien completes his term this fall. Audubon has been truly fortunate in having Donal to guide and help foster the organization for over 12 years. He has been a tireless champion for conservation and for the Audubon movement, and has set the standard for what an Audubon Chair should be. Undoubtedly, he will continue to be among the most influential conservationists in America for years to come.

Carol is one of the outstanding conservationists of our time. Again and again she has led the way in fighting to protect America's great natural heritage. Throughout her tenure at the EPA, Carol was guided by the philosophy that safeguarding the environment meant protecting where people live and how they live. She partnered with business leaders, community advocates, and all levels of government to promote common sense, cost-effective solutions to the nation's most pressing environmental and public health problems.

Carol will chair Audubon at a very important time in its history as it pursues a new vision to enlarge the conservation movement across the country. . . . Carol will help guide us as we seek to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences. By forming lasting partnerships, she will not only enlarge our constituency, but will help to better align our work at the local, state

and national levels. Her history at working with community and grass roots leaders will strengthen the relationships between our local Chapter volunteers, state offices and new constituencies.

Never shying away from a challenge, Carol's efforts to protect and restore our environment range from the health of our children to wildlife habitats. Some of her many accomplishments include the strongest public health based clean air standards ever for soot and smog, tough new emission standards for cars, SUVs, diesel trucks and buses, greatly expanded public right-to-know efforts, accelerated clean up of hazardous waste sites, which resulted in more than three times the number of Superfund clean-ups than in the entire history of the program; she created the successful Brownfields program to reclaim and redevelop abandoned, contaminated urban properties, significantly increased funding and strengthened standards for clean water and polluted runoff; and she worked closely with Congress to pass two pivotal environmental laws — the landmark Food Quality Protection Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. In addition, she anticipated the opportunity of using technology to leverage emerging science, and created the EPA's first Office of Children's Health Protection, a new Office of Environmental Information, the American Indian Environmental Office, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, and the Office of Reinvention.

Carol is currently a partner at The Albright Group, a global strategy firm. She is also a senior fellow at the Aspen Institute's Program on Energy, the Environment and the Economy. Her numerous awards and honors include the American Lung Association's prestigious President's Award in 2000. She was also the recipient of the Mother of the Year Award from the National Mother's Day Committee, the Advocate for Children Award from the Ambulatory Pediatric Association, and Glamour magazine's Woman of the Year honor. Prior to leading the EPA, Carol served as Secretary of Florida's Department of Environmental Regulation. She also served on the staffs of Senators Albert Gore, Jr., and Lawton

Chiles. Audubon of Florida gave Carol the Guy M. Bradley Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998 for her work on restoration of the Everglades.

Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Carol as she begins what we know will be an exciting and productive term as Chair of the Audubon Board of Directors.

—John Flicker, President, NAS

Thanks to Our Field Trip Leaders

Going on a birding field trip is one of the pleasures of participating in MDAS. Our field trips give us an opportunity to experience the excitement of seeing a life bird (or almost any bird), of making new friends, and spending time out-of-doors in an avocation that we love.

Our trip leaders are crucial to making our field trips a pleasure. They are there to guide the group from point A to point B, help identify the birds, and just generally give a cohesive focus to the outing. Our dedicated field trip leaders give their time and expertise. Often they scout the trip ahead of time, familiarize themselves with birds in the area, often locate the specific spots where they can almost guarantee the presence of a particular species, and direct the group toward identifying the birds found.

Elizabeth Dickey is our MDAS Field Trip Chair. Even when she isn't leading the trip, she is frequently there to lend a keen eye and a lifetime of birding knowledge. She organizes over 45 trips a year for the chapter. She is a wonder.

The following leaders helped to make our field trip program a success this year:

Florence Bennett, Elizabeth Dickey, Jimm Edgar, Steve Glover, Hugh and Rosita Harvey, Pat McEachern, Jean Richmond, Joel Summerhill, Fred Safier, Maury Stern, and Barbara Vaughn.

Thanks for doing a great job!

Spring Field Trip Reports

Saturday, April 19, Pine Canyon—Eleven birdwatchers saw 60 species on this beautiful spring day. We heard Warbling and Cassin's Vireo's, Blackheaded Grosbeak, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow and saw Blue-gray Gnatcatchers as well as Peregrine Falcons, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Cooper's Hawk. There were many spring flowers in bloom; and although the stream crossings were a bit higher than usual, we had a great hike.—*Pat MacEachern*

Del Puerto Canyon, Thursday, May 1—It was a beautiful day for 20 people in ten cars up through the hills to San Antonio Valley and down Mines Road. Among the 73 species seen or heard were four Wood Ducks; a Barn Owl; and a Great Horned Owl with a chick in holes only a few feet apart on a cliff face; beautiful views of a female Costa's Hummingbird; 10 Lewis' Woodpeckers; Rock, Canyon, Bewick's, and House Wrens; Phainopelas; several warbler species; two Blue Grosbeaks (near I-5); and 15 Lawrence's Goldfinches at the fire station at the junction.—*Jean Richmond*

Saturday, May 17, East Contra Costa County—Ten birders had a good day of birding in East County. Out of the 59 species spotted, the highlights included long looks at nesting Swainson's Hawk near Knightsen, Burrowing Owls, Yellow-billed Magpies, Blue Grosbeaks, and at Iron House Sanitary District ponds, a Bonaparte's Gull.—*Joel Summerhill*

Saturday, June 7, Outer Pt. Reyes—Seven birders enjoyed a day of birding at Pt. Reyes despite overcast skies and quiet birds. Our best birds were on our walk to Chimney Rock near the Fish Docks. There we saw Double-crested, Brandt's, and Pelagic Comorants; thousands of Common Murres; and hundreds of Surf Scoters and Pigeon Guillemots. We also had excellent looks at a pair of Great Horned Owls. We saw a total of 43 species.—*Joel Summerhill*

New Audubon-California Director Visits Bay Area

Jerry Secundy is Audubon-California's newly appointed director. He visited the Bay Area Audubon Council in April. Here are some of the highlights from his visit:

Jerry and the Board of Directors has moved the Audubon-California offices from the state capitol to Los Angeles. (Jerry, a retired oilman, lives in Los Angeles.) Jerry said Los Angeles was chosen because most of the important environmental organizations on the West Coast are located in San Francisco, leaving great resources for funding and support in southern California virtually untapped.

Jerry supports local chapters in the Audubon family. He thinks they are important and has carried that message to National Audubon in New York.

Jerry and the A-C Board of Directors named Craig Palmer to be Development Director. Charged with fundraising, Palmer will be targeting institutions and preparing for a capital campaign. Funds raised will be used to support the Richardson Bay Audubon Center, hire a full-time environmental scientist for the Bay Restoration Project, and fund a large cadre of citizen-scientists to do comprehensive research studies of the Bay.

Julia Levin has been appointed as a legislative analyst. An environmental attorney, Levin will focus initially on the Bush Administration's efforts to weaken the rules for jurisdictional waters of the United States.

The Bay Area Audubon Council is composed of representatives from the eight Bay Area Audubon chapters and meets quarterly.

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA
798-0303

Visit Our Website at
<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

Summer Birdfeeding

Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles are being reported throughout our area, but, just like last year, in much smaller numbers than previous years. Southern California and Arizona, just as in 1999 and 2000, are seeing more orioles than normal. Perhaps some did not migrate as far north this year due to our cool spring. The lack of oriole sightings in back yards could also be due to the abundance of natural food after good rainfall this winter. Have you seen any of the spectacularly beautiful nectar-feeding birds? Please call in your reports so we can map the sightings.

We are receiving many reports of Black-headed Grosbeaks. The males have an orange breast and collar and black head. Females have a buffy, lightly streaked breast and eyebrows. They certainly live up to their name with a very large bill, which is ideal for eating their favorite food—sunflower seeds. They will readily come to bird feeders. These grosbeaks nest in our backyard and return year after year. Please report your sightings.

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 black birds are a nuisance. They do not like safflower, which is a high-energy food source. Doves and Titmice really appreciate it. Other birds such as finches, chickadees, and jays, will acquire a taste for it. Establishing a squirrel feeding station 15-20 feet away from bird feeders will help keep squirrels occupied and full. They will then tend to avoid bird feeders. The key to having a successful squirrel feeding station is to offer a variety of foods: squirrel mix (sunflower, peanuts, and corn), corn on the cob, and squirrel suet.

Birding Classes Offered

Alice Hoch is offering two 6-week field classes (one on Tuesday mornings and one on Thursday mornings) this fall.

Alice teaches field identification, life styles, and ecology of local birds. Each morning the class visits a different birding spot. The class is designed for both beginning and experienced birders.

A longtime member of Ohlone Audubon Society, Alice has been teaching bird-watching since 1975.

One class will meet on six Tuesdays (beginning Sept. 2 and ending Oct. 7); and the other will meet on six Thursdays (beginning Sept. 4 and ending Oct. 9). Each meeting will be from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Class size is limited, so register early. Register by Aug 26 by calling Alice at 510-657-0475.

Be prepared to birdwatch at the first class meeting.



Bodega Bay Field Trip Slated for August

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

Field trips are open to MDAS members and nonmembers alike. You do not have to be a birding expert; only one who enjoys nature. Bring binoculars, field guides, and lunch. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders. MDAS has a limited number of loaner binoculars available. Call the leader at least one week in advance if you want to borrow a pair.

Saturday, August 16, Bodega Bay. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 9:15 a.m. at the Tides Restaurant in Bodega Bay. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. Go north on 101 to

Washington St. exit in Petaluma. Go west on Bodega Hwy. to SR 1, turn right to Bodega Bay. The Tides is on left, opposite gas station. Shorebirds, rails, waterbirds, migrants. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906
Category 1

Note: Marin Audubon is planning a field trip to Mono Lake on July 26, 27, and 28 (tentative). Call Bruce Bejema, 415-456-6271, to confirm the dates and to get recommendations on places to stay. Directions: take Hwy 120 east through Yosemite and over Tioga Pass. Saturday morning, meet at Nicely's in Lee Vinning for breakfast at 7 a.m. or meet at Moraine Campground following breakfast.

Best Birding in Napa & Solano Counties Offered

The Napa Solano Audubon Society is offering the fourth edition of their *Best Birding in Napa and Solano Counties* for \$17 including S&H. To purchase your copy, send a check made out to Napa Solano Audubon Society to Margaret Baron, 1188 Walnut St, Napa, CA 94559.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for the year 2003-2004.
- Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.
- Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 for the year 2003-2004.
- For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive the *Audubon Magazine* (4 quarterly issues).
- I'm enclosing a donation of \$_____.

Name _____

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Phone with area code: _____ Email _____

Visa MasterCard Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____ Name on Card: _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to: MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to: Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, CA 94526

Calendar

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except in July or August. The new MDAS year begins with the Thursday, September 4, general meeting. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the meeting begins at 7 p.m. with Birding Information, a business meeting, social time when we break for coffee and cookies. The main program begins at 8 p.m.

This *Quail* is a combined July-August issue. The next *Quail* will be mailed about August 22.

The MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

Visit our website for the latest birding information:
<www.diabloaudubon.com>



Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.

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 end e-mailing bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.

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