



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 2011

Travels in California and the West

Summer is the time when many people take the opportunity to travel, to enjoy the varied vistas of the nation, to visit distant family or friends, to revitalize their outlook. Birders who can challenge today's gasoline prices may be interested in exploring one of the birding trails that have been recently mapped out. Here are three examples, excerpted from Audubon Magazine. Other trails are outlined at <http://audubonmagazine.org/features0807/birdTrailsPopUp.pdf>.

California's Eastern Sierra Birding Trail

Less than a generation has passed since heroic birder-conservationists, led by the late David Gaines, won the fight to save Mono Lake from being drained. Mono Lake remains a mecca for birders because of this proud chapter in conservation history, as well as for the abundance of birds found here. About 50,000 California Gulls nest on its islands, but they are outnumbered by the concentrations of Eared Grebes (close to a million) and Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes (tens of thousands) that stop over during their annual migrations. Mono Lake is just one of the attractions in this region, where the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada meets the edge of the Great Basin. Thickets in the foothills are home to Green-tailed Towhees, Lazuli Buntings, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and other colorful songbirds. In open pine groves you may chance upon a roving flock of Pinyon Jays, harsh-voiced birds named for their taste for pinyon seeds, while at higher elevations you could find the

soft-voiced Townsend's Solitaire or the flashy Western Tanager. Along rushing streams you might even be lucky enough to spot the American Dipper, an odd aquatic songbird that once captivated John Muir. For more information: www.monolake.org/trailmap/index.html.



Morro Rock, on California's Central Coast, is home to Peregrine Falcons.

California Central Coast Birding Trail

Some of the most beautiful coastline on earth lies between San Francisco Bay and the Los Angeles basin. Not so well known—except among serious birders—is the fact that these four counties also hold hundreds of avian species. This trail, sponsored by Audubon California, leads to 83 prime birding locations. The sites are scattered through an incredible array of landscapes, from the coast to redwood forests and marshes. And this trail doesn't end at the ocean's edge; it leads you to explore offshore waters as well as the Channel Islands where you'll find the Island Scrub-Jay's entire world population. Back on the mainland you will see other treasures, including the flashy Yellow-billed Magpie, found nowhere in the world but California. A high point—literally—is the top of Mount Pinos, at almost 9,000 feet; this was one of the best places to see wild California Condors before the last ones were captured for captive breeding in 1987. Today the program's offspring have been reintro-



Clark's Nutcracker

duced to the wild and can be seen at other sites along the trail. For more information: <http://ca-ccbtt.info>.

Oregon Cascades Birding Trail

The mighty Cascade Range stretches the length of Oregon, from north to south, separating the interior's arid country from the coast's rains and lush forests. These mountains are rightly famous as a place of awe-inspiring scenery, from the deep-blue Crater Lake to the towering snowcapped Mount Hood. Follow the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail and you will get to enjoy both the amazing scenery and a brilliant bevy of colorful birds. The trail, designed by a consortium of groups including the Audubon Society of Portland, features nearly 200 stops. Some are in the lowlands at the base of the mountains, such as along the edge of the Columbia River, where Bald Eagles and Ospreys are celebrities. But most of the real stars are at higher elevations. Brushy thickets may hold bright golden Wilson's and MacGillivray's Warblers and the elusive but smartly patterned Mountain Quail. The tall conifer forests are home to the Hermit Warbler, a striking bird with its center of distribution in the Oregon Cascades. Up at treeline, you may have to search carefully to find the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, but the brash, noisy Clark's Nutcracker is more likely to find you. For more information: www.oregonbirdingtrails.org/cascades.htm.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 1. There will be no meeting in July or August.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I played in a golf tournament in early June at a golf course in Petaluma called Rooster Run. I had not played the course even though it has been open for 25 years or so. I played with another Audubon member, Kent Fickett. We noticed almost immediately that there were what seemed to be an unusually large number of swallows on the course. After 4 or 5 holes we had counted 4 species including Barn, Tree, Violet-green, and Cliff Swallows. Tree and Violet-green seemed to be the most abundant. It also seemed unusual because there were not many trees



around the course and these swallows are cavity nesters. When we were about half way through the tournament we came to a grassy area adjacent to the fairway and saw about 40 bird boxes. (See picture.) Many of them were occupied by swallows, obviously taking advantage of a convenient nesting site. I did not have my camera with me that day, so I drove back up a few days later for some photos and hoping to talk to someone who could tell the story of the bird boxes. It seems the greens keeper, Dave Saly, had the idea to put up the boxes in hopes of drawing in more swallows around the course. He had certainly been successful. He oversees two courses and has used boxes on both courses. Members have donated material and time for the boxes. Swallows are, of course, voracious insect eaters, consuming hundreds and hundreds a day, thus preventing them from damaging the course and players. (Think mosquitoes.) The swallows had learned that if a golf cart drove on the fairway, it scared up insects, and they would fly back and forth around the carts as they drove hoping to get insects. It was very impressive.

The greens keeper had also installed 10-12 foot poles with cross bars to serve as landing spots for raptors. Gophers can be a big problem for a golf course. Although the bird boxes could probably be of a better design, they were effective and the whole concept was working. Kent and I are

thinking it might be something we could try and duplicate with some golf courses in our area.

We just completed another year of "No child left inside." There is a wonderful recount in this issue of the *Quail* on the event.

Paul Schorr, Diana Granados and their crew did another great job. There are so many worthy outcomes of this program, not the least of which is the hope that some of these students will become hooked on the nature and the joys of birding and exploring all that is in the outside world around them.

I hope you are enjoying the summer and we look forward to seeing you in the fall at our regular meetings.

Welcome New Members

Tracy Farrington	Walnut Creek
Elizabeth Leyvas	Crockett
Michael McCormack	Danville
Julia Starr	Moraga
Deirdre Supino	Pleasant Hill



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Scientific Name Change



Yellow-rumped Warbler is now *Setophaga coronata*.

The Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union has voted 7 to 2 to change the taxonomy of some warblers. The changes will become official with publication of the July 2011 issue of *The Auk*.

Although a proposal to split Yellow-rumped Warbler into four separate species failed (this year), the genera to which these birds are grouped now becomes *Setophaga*, instead of *Dendroica*. Thus, both Audubon's and Myrtle subspecies of Yellow-rumped Warblers will be called *Setophaga coronata*.

All birds of the *Dendroica* genera will switch to *Setophaga*; these include Yellow Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Also new to *Setophaga* is Northern Parula.

No English names are being changed.



This is a songbird that, unlike others but similarly to ducks, molts its wing and tail feathers all at once in the late summer. During this time the bird cannot fly.

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

AACDEEIIIMNPPRR

July

30 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

August

20 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

◆ **Important Notice** ◆

So far this year, the Chapter has supported 14 leaders on 44 scheduled field trips, though 5 trips had to be cancelled. We have a variety of trips available throughout the year, offering a broad range of habitats and bird species.

We will be losing the services of one leader who has left the area and we may have to alter our schedule accordingly.

If you want to go somewhere new, let us know. If you would like to lead a trip, let us know. If we are doing something wrong, let us know that, too.

The chance to do this is Wednesday, July 13. We will meet at Jean Richmond's house in Alamo at 7 PM to discuss next year's calendar. Our meeting will be less than two hours, light refreshment will be offered. For more details, please contact Hugh Harvey at 935-2979 or Jean Richmond at 837-2843.

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



Lupine at Pescadero Beach State Park

① **Saturday, August 20**
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 E Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road and SR 1 to Bodega Bay.

Possibilities at Bodega Bay include flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, as well as terns, gulls, cormorants and much more. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen.



Eared Grebe,
Bodega Bay

Come birding with us. You are welcome!

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.diabloadubon.com/index.php.

Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, bring a lunch and drink and join us during our midday break.

Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ②: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

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

If you're attending a field trip, please stop by the carpool point to pick up or ride with others. If you're a rider, be prepared to pay a share of the expenses. In this regard, perhaps a good rule is to pay the equivalent of a gallon of gas if the trip will be 20 miles round trip and prorated beyond that distance. Remember, carpooling helps the environment by burning less gas and reducing the number of cars on the road. This is especially important when the trip destination will necessitate travel on narrow roads or where there will be limited available parking.

Trip Reports

Briones, May 12. Fifteen members spent a clear, mild morning at Briones RP. We were greeted by Lazuli Buntings in the parking lot as well as 2 Great Blue Herons flying over. On our walk to and from Homestead Valley, we saw or heard Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, Acorn Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Bluebird, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lesser Goldfinch among the 40 species. *Maury Stern*

East Contra Costa County, May 14. Seventeen MDAS members and guests endured cool/cold and breezy/windy conditions in east Contra Costa County to participate in the chapter's annual spring outing there. They were duly rewarded with 67 species, seen and/or heard. Birded areas included Marsh Creek Trail in Oakley, Bethel Island Road, Jersey Island Road and the area along Delta Road in Knightsen. Highlights included: Blue Grosbeak (6+), Black-headed Grosbeak (pair), Black-chinned Hummingbird (3), Rufous Hummingbird, Western Kingbird (6+), Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow-billed Magpie (2), Hooded Oriole (2), Bullock's Oriole (2), Cedar Waxwing (15+), Western Tanager (2), Burrowing Owl (2), Great Horned Owl, Swainson's Hawk (several), Green Heron (4), White-throated Swift, American White Pelican (3) and Osprey. *Paul Schorr*

Veteran's Park/Shadow Cliffs May 19. After weeks of gray, cold, rainy weather we finally had a wonderful, warm (78 degrees) sunny day to bird. Thirteen participants enjoyed the weather and the 65 species seen. Highlights were nesting Brown Creeper, Barn Owls, young and adult, Bald Eagle, Osprey, four species of swallow, Wood Ducks, Western Wood Pewee, California Thrasher, and the many nesting Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egrets, and Great Blue Herons in the rookery at Shadow Cliffs. Many thanks for all the enthusiasm and help in finding all those birds.

Bingham Gibbs

Outer Point Reyes, June 4. This trip was cancelled because of rain.

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, June 18-19. There have been years when the campground at Yuba Pass was not available for use due to snow, but weather conditions this year seem to have set a modern record. In the last 21 years, never have we seen the meadow so covered with snow. The newly constructed bathroom facilities

in the campground had snow about halfway up the walls. Still, 14 birders had success in finding 98 species over the two days of the trip. Outstanding for us was finding 5 American Bitterns as we drove across the marsh at the north end of the Sierra Valley.

During the 4 days prior to the trip, some scouting was done and at least 6 Dippers were found. But many of them had fledged by Saturday and it was questionable what we might find. A stop at the San Francisco State University Sierra Nevada Field Campus was made and we found a Dipper fledgling on the side of the rushing Yuba River. It was fed several times by a parent, which flew up and down the stream with great speed. The Dippers are working the edges of the river because the water is so high, there are no exposed rocks in the middle. It was a joyous sight, followed by the views of Evening Grosbeaks feeding at some seed feeders in front of the dining hall.

Woodpeckers were especially scarce and hard to find, but we were able to find most of the other mountain specialties. The Sierra Valley was good with Green-tailed Towhees, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows, Sage Thrashers, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Phalaropes, Sandhill Cranes with chicks, American Avocets with chicks, Black-necked Stilts with chicks, American Coots with chicks, Pied-billed Grebes with chicks, Redheads, Northern Pintails and Northern Shovelers. We also saw



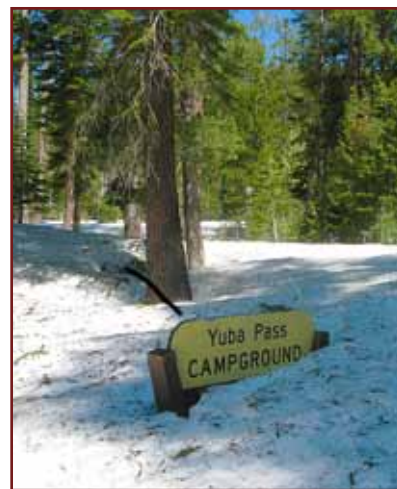
Swainson's Hawks, Lewis's Woodpeckers and a Lazuli Bunting.

Yuba Pass, with the snow and a very late spring, did have some nice birds, including the Cassin's Finches and Pine Siskins next to the road, nesting Tree Swallows, a pair of Pine

Grosbeaks, Fox Sparrows singing from atop the small pines, stunning Yellow-rumped Warbler males, Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers and Red-breasted Nuthatches feeding young at the nest.

We enjoyed the obligatory ice cream at Bassett's Station; in addition we had male and female Calliope Hummingbirds coming to their feeders. Four of us dined Saturday at Los Dos Hermanos, The Two Brothers, an excellent Mexican restaurant in Sierraville. After explaining about the birds to one of the waitresses, she pointed out one of the two brothers, still working that evening. Hopefully, the other brother was not working on Codorniz de Montana, Mountain Quail with all the trimmings! We heard plenty of them, too.

*Rosita and Hugh Harvey
Photos: Eugenia Larson*



Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to [EBB Sightings@yahoo.com](mailto:EBB_Sightings@yahoo.com).

Most of the winter migrants have left and the breeding season is well underway.

PdJ discovered the first known breeding Common Mergansers in Contra Costa County on 6/17 in San Pablo Creek near the Oursan Trail off the Orinda Connector Trail (EBMUD Property). There was a mother and 4 ducklings.

A Green-winged Teal was at McNabney Marsh 5/28. JA.

A new Great Blue Heron nest in tall eucalyptus trees was found near Happy Valley Road in Lafayette by DL on 5/26. At least one chick was present.

Green Herons nested at Heather Farm. HH, FS; and at Lafayette Reservoir near the dam. MS. P&NS had one fly over their yard.

An Osprey was at Contra Loma RP on 5/14. JA. Up to 4 Osprey have been regular at Lafayette Reservoir during May and June. MS.

A Swainson's Hawk was in Knightsen 6/2. DL. Another was photographed at BDRP by WN on 6/18.

Golden Eagles were seen regularly at BDRP the past month. DH, JR, DW, KO, BF.

Up to 3 Prairie Falcons including one juvenile have been frequent at BDRP. JA, JR, DL, DW, KO, BF, GT.

A Wandering Tattler was at Point Richmond Ferry Point 5/10. KE.

A Burrowing Owl family has been a constant presence at the Contra Loma RP entrance sign. P&NS, JA, AR, AH.

JA heard a calling Black Rail near the Iron House Sanitary District in east county on 5/14.

Black-chinned Hummingbirds were seen at Antioch Dunes NWR by JLu on 5/14 and on Bethel Island Road on 6/2 by DL.

Olive-sided Flycatchers were widespread through mid-June, reversing recent trends.

A late Willow Flycatcher was singing at BDRP on 6/15. BF.

Two Dusky Flycatchers were near Jewel Lake in Tilden RP on 4/10. JS.

Two Say's Phoebe nests were in 2 San Ramon locations on 6/8 and 6/9. SL, WH. WH saw one at the same location last year also. There were many individuals seen at BDRP. JA, P&NS, AR, DW, KO.

Both Rock Wrens and Canyon Wrens were nesting at BDRP. DH, PB, JD, DL, BT, JC, BF. ZB and EP found a nesting Canyon Wren inside a mine shaft on 6/18.

JL had a bathing Western Bluebird in her Walnut Creek backyard water bath on 6/2.

A rare breeding Hermit Thrush was seen 5/28 by DW on Redwood Trail near Canyon. This is not far from where the single breeding Hermit Thrush in the Breeding Bird Atlas was seen.

A Cedar Waxwing flock of at least 60 birds was seen in Wildcat Canyon RP on 5/31 by GM.

Breeding Phainopeplas were common at BDRP. DW, DH, JR, DL, BC, KO. BF.

A MacGillivray's Warbler was at Inspiration Point Trail in Tilden RP 6/16. HN. It was there on 6/17 also. MP.

Rufous-crowned Sparrows were at Las Trampas Ridge RP in early May, ES, and seen by many at BDRP. P&NS, BF, JC, DW, KO.

On 6/11, DW and KO saw and heard Sage Sparrow at BDRP.

Grasshopper Sparrows were in many locations: Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga on 5/30. MK; Franklin Ridge Loop Trail in Carquinez Shoreline RP 5/31. C&TW; Las Trampas Ridge on 6/1; BDRP, C&TW, DL, BF.

A Blue Grosbeak was near Cypress Road and the Contra Costa Canal in east county on 6/2. DL.

There were the most Lawrence's Goldfinches in Contra Costa County this month since I began birding 30 years ago. From San Pablo Reservoir to Las Trampas Ridge to BDRP, many people saw them from 5/12 to 6/18. JS, JA, P&NS, ES, BT, JC, JR, DL, SL, AH, GT, PdJ.

JA Jeff Acuff, PB Pat Bacchetti, ZA Zac Baer, KB K Bransletter, JC Judi Chamberlin, BC Bob Clark, JD Judith Dunham, BF Brian Fitch, KF Kathy Francone, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, AH Allen

Hirsch, WS Wen Hsu, PdJ Pieter de Jong, MK Mary Krentz, DL Don Lewis, SL Steve Lombardi, JL Janice Loo, JLu John Luther, GM Gail MacMillan, WN Wendy Naruo, HN Harold Newman, KO Kitty O'Neill, MP Michael Park, EP Eric Pilotte, AR Amy Richey, JR Jim Roethe, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul&Nancy Schorr, ES Emily Serkin, JS Judi Sierra, MS Maury Stern, GT Glen Tepke, BT Bob Toleno, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills.



Minnesota artist James Hautman's design of a pair of White-fronted Geese will grace the 2011–2012 Federal Duck Stamp.

Duck Stamps

Mount Diablo Audubon Society encourages all birders to support the Federal Duck Stamp program through purchase of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly called the Duck Stamp. Since 1934, Duck Stamp sales are a major source enabling the acquisition of prime waterfowl habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition to waterfowl and wetland-associated songbirds such as Vermilion Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, LeConte's Sparrow, and Tricolored Blackbird, fish, amphibian, reptile and mammal species dependent on wetland habitats have benefited. An estimated one-third of Endangered and Threatened species in the U.S. find food or shelter on these Refuges.

Many of the most popular birding destinations are National Wildlife Refuges. Examples include Lower Klamath and Sonny Bono Salton Sea Refuges in California, Ding Darling in Florida, Aransas and Santa Ana in Texas, Bosque del Apache in New Mexico, and Great Dismal Swamp in North Carolina and Virginia.

The price of the Federal Duck Stamp is expected to increase from \$15 to \$25. This increase is necessary to offset the reduced buying power of the stamp since the last price increase in 1991. The 2011–2012 Federal Duck Stamp will go on sale at the end of June, 2011.

No Child Left Inside

By Paul Schorr

The MDAS “No Child Left Inside” Program concluded this year’s activities on May 24 and May 26 by taking fifty-seven 5th grade students from Jack London Elementary School in Antioch and Pioneer Elementary School in Brentwood to Contra Loma Regional Park and Reservoir in Antioch. Their teachers, Terri Hamilton and Christy Burkhalter, and several parent volunteers were joined by sixteen MDAS volunteer leaders to enjoy two mornings of good birding. The MDAS volunteers were Brian Murphy, David Hutton, Maury Stern, Jody Sherrard, Barbara Minneman, Austin Prindle, Mike Tischler, Carolyn Lie, Jenny Papka, Claudia Hein, Rosita Harvey, Hugh Harvey, Gloria Cannon, Joel Summerhill, Nancy Schorr and Paul Schorr. On both days the groups enjoyed weather that was clear, warm and breezy. The students were divided into six groups and they rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, each station being monitored



Students observing a fledgling Barn Owl. Both photos by Paul Schorr.

by a MDAS volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each of the students adeptly used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this and other Education Outreach programs. Brian Murphy borrowed bird mounts from the Lindsay Wildlife Museum to use as teaching aids which complemented and enhanced instruction and learning. Following this activity the group walked from the lake area to an open area with views of the oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savannah. From this location the students also learned the importance of habitats created for California Quail and other animals, the Western Bluebird/Tree Swallow nest boxes and the nearby bat houses. After lunch, as on MDAS field trips, the groups tallied the number of species seen and/or heard, and each school’s group was able to record 42 species. The total combined species count for both of the days was 51. Highlights included the following observations: a roosting adult and fledgling Barn Owl; a Burrowing Owl atop the park entrance sign; a Red-shouldered Hawk with a snake in its talons flying overhead; an American Kestrel harassing a Red-tailed Hawk; and several views of a flyby Cooper’s Hawk. In addition, the students had oppor-

tunities to see birds with their young which included: Mallards, Canada Geese, Black Phoebe, Wild Turkey, Lesser Goldfinch and Common Moorhen. A female Anna’s Hummingbird and a female American Robin were observed sitting on their nests. The volunteers all had many teachable moments and they were rewarded with the subsequent excitement and enthusiasm of the students. At the conclusion of the days’ programs, each student received a copy of the book entitled *Backyard Birds of California*, which had been purchased by the Chapter. In addition, Steve Taylor, an MDAS member, donated three pairs of binoculars which were awarded to three lucky students during a raffle after lunch. Throughout the activities the students were attentive, interested and appeared to retain much of what they had learned, and I am confident that they will recall their experiences for a long, long time. Hopefully, some of them someday will even become birders and when asked where it all began, they just might say, “Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS.”

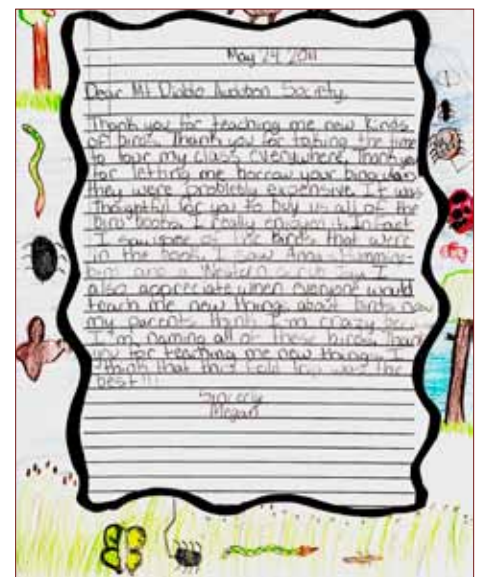
The field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities at both schools. On March 31, Diana Granados from Native Bird Connections initiated the program by doing an introductory lesson on bird anatomy and behavior. The Swainson’s Hawk that she used during the presentation drew much enthusiasm and excitement from the students, a great way to promote this year’s program. On April 14, Diana, Nancy and Paul Schorr collaborated to do a classroom presentation to introduce and instruct the students



on the proper use of binoculars which had been purchased by MDAS. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for Contra Loma Regional Park. Concluding this lesson, the students were introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so they could learn and appreciate the vocalizations, as well as study the illustrations and information about the target birds. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms until the days of the field trips.

In summary, MDAS, through the No Child Left Inside Program, has made a strong commitment to fulfilling its mission of dedication to environmental education. The successes of this program would not be possible without the continuing support and involvement of all of the MDAS volunteers. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thanks to each of you.

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



NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Summer Birdfeeding

- This very cool and wet spring and summer played havoc with nesting of some species. Some species may have given up. Others may only have one brood. We did not begin to receive reports of fledgling Nuttalls and Downy Woodpeckers, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, House Finches until very late May.
- Troubled with Band-tailed or city pigeons? Put a wire cage around your tube feeder or over ground feeder stations. It really works to deter them!
- 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. For other birds such as finches, chickadees, and jays, it is an "acquired" taste. Introduce safflower by combining it with black oil sunflower in a feeder.
- 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.



We are receiving 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 seem to return year after year.



Mike and Anne Eliot
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303
Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Yosemite National Park Continued from Page 10

while Dusky Grouse are to be found in the Rockies. Willow Flycatcher, a California endangered species, inhabits most of Yosemite's meadows, including Poopenaut Meadow in Hetch Hetchy. Other species of special concern are Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Northern Goshawk, Northern Harrier, Harlequin Duck, Long-eared Owl, Vaux's and Black Swifts, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Yellow Warbler.

The most regularly seen resident birds include those who are comfortable around the park visitors—Steller's Jay, American Robin, Common Raven, Acorn Woodpecker, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Mountain Chickadee. Near rivers and streams, watch the American Dipper dart in and out of rapids and listen for their beautiful melodious song. In spring, look for Western Tanager foraging in the conifers.

Other birds to look for, depending on season and life zone, are Pine Grosbeaks, Evening Grosbeaks, Green-tailed Towhees, Calliope Hummingbirds, Williamson's Sapsucker, and Black-backed and Pileated Woodpeckers. High up on the Tioga Pass Road, look for Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch.



Hetch Hetchy, with Wapama Falls (left) and Kolama Rock (right)

The famous groves of Giant Sequoias in the park have the usual forest birds such as Brown Creepers and Mountain Chickadees, but may also shelter White-headed Woodpeckers. As you drive the road to Hetch Hetchy, you will admire the many wildflowers and perhaps a bear. Continue to the dam and admire the view up the Tuolumne River to Wapama Falls and Kolama Rock; then walk across the dam and through the tunnel. Look here for Canyon Wren and Mountain Quail.

In general, quiet forests and meadows away from developed areas (particularly in the mornings) are the best places to see some of the less common birds. Any part of the park, however, at any time of day and at any time of year, is a good place to see some of the finest scenery in the entire nation.

Art Exhibit for MDAS Artists

In association with the Arts and Cultural Foundation of Antioch, Joel Summerhill has arranged a September Art Exhibit for Mount Diablo Audubon Society members at the Lynn House Gallery in downtown Antioch. You are invited to participate by submitting your work within the broad theme of Nature, in any media.

Exhibit Date: September 10-24, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 1-4 PM.

How to enter: E-mail Diane Gibson-Gray at Diane@Art4Antioch.org.

Art Limits: 2 pieces per artist, art work cannot exceed 30" x 40" per piece, or total value of \$1,500. Hanging work must have wire hanger on the back and must be suitable for all ages to enjoy.

Awards: \$100 Best of Show, \$75 1st Place, \$50 2nd Place, \$25 3rd Place and two Honorable Mention ribbons

There is no cost to enter the show, but because of space constraints we'll need to limit it to the first 35 artists. The Arts and Cultural Foundation will provide light refreshments and wine at a free artists reception on September 10 from 2-4 PM.

The exhibit will be free and open to the public. The event will also be publicized in the local newspapers, ACFA newsletter and website and cable billboard.

The Lynn House Gallery is located at 809 West First Street, across from the AMTRAK station. <http://art4antioch.org/lynn-house.asp>.

a

American Dipper ♦ *Cinclus mexicanus*

Once called Ouzel, this unique bird has been the American Dipper since at least 1900, but in 1894 it was Water-Ouzel to John Muir, and it was his favorite. There could be no more fitting an account of the American Dipper than that written by John Muir—a complete chapter in his admirable book *The Mountains of California*. This is an excerpt; the entire book can be found at http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/the_mountains_of_california.

“The waterfalls of the Sierra are frequented by only one bird,—the Ouzel or Water Thrush (*Cinclus Mexicanus*, Sw.). He is a singularly joyous and lovable little fellow, about the size of a robin, clad in a plain waterproof suit of bluish gray, with a tinge of chocolate on the head and shoulders. In form he is about as smoothly plump and compact as a pebble that has been whirled in a pot-hole, the flowing contour of his body being interrupted only by his strong feet and bill, the crisp wing-tips, and the up-slanted wren-like tail.

“Among all the countless waterfalls I have met in the course of ten years’ exploration in the Sierra, whether among the icy peaks, or warm foot-hills, or in the profound yosemite cañons of the middle region, not one was found without its Ouzel. No cañon is too cold for this little bird, none too lonely, provided it be rich in falling water. Find a fall, or cascade, or rushing rapid, anywhere upon a clear stream, and



American Dipper. Drawing by Megan Sandri

there you will surely find its complementary Ouzel, flitting about in the spray, diving in foaming eddies, whirling like a leaf among beaten foam-bells; ever vigorous and enthusiastic, yet self-contained, and neither seeking nor shunning your company.

“If disturbed while dipping about in the margin shallows, he either sets off with a rapid whir to some other feeding-ground up or down the stream, or alights on some half-submerged rock or snag out in the current, and immediately begins to nod and courtesy like a wren, turning his head from side to side with many other odd dainty movements that never fail to fix the attention of the observer.

“He is the mountain streams’ own darling, the humming-bird of blooming waters, loving rocky ripple-slopes and sheets of foam as a bee loves flowers, as a lark loves sunshine and meadows. Among all the mountain birds, none has cheered me so much in my lonely wanderings, —none so unflinchingly. For both in winter and summer he sings, sweetly, cheerily, independent alike of sunshine and of love, requiring no other inspiration than the stream on which he dwells. While water sings, so must he, in heat or cold, calm or storm, ever attuning his voice in sure accord; low in the drought of summer and the drought of winter, but never silent.”

Just for Ducks Update

By Brian Murphy

Just for Ducks is a Mount Diablo Audubon project to increase Wood Duck populations in urban creeks. This season, California Waterfowl Association Wood Duck Project banded four hens: two in boxes on Tice Creek and two in boxes on San Ramon Creek. The San Ramon Creek boxes produced 13 ducklings so far and the Tice Creek boxes produced 21 ducklings so far.

On the first day of summer, a hen had renested on San Ramon Creek sitting on 12 eggs. A hen is nesting in a box on Tice Creek with 12 eggs. The hatch is expected around July 17th. Incubation is supposed to be 28-32 days, although nature may say otherwise as hens lay one egg a day. Then, it gets interesting as eggs do not

start incubation until the hen arranges the eggs in the box to begin incubation and eggs laid over a period of 14 days all hatch at once! Then once hatched, duckling remain inside the box for 15-24 hours before mom whistles and they jump out of the box, into the creek to feed for the first time. Chances of seeing ducklings inside a box as well as jumping out of the box are almost just being very lucky since it happens in such a short period of time.

An absence of old trees with natural cavities is why there has been a decline in Wood Duck populations in urban settings. Last year 25 chicks hatched out of 3 boxes on Tice and San Ramon Creeks. Increased monitoring this season should provide better results this year.



Wood ducks are very shy birds but the large body of water at Heather Farm Pond will provide people with an opportunity to watch them as they are less nervous on lakes than in the confines of a creek.

Ornithology Opportunities

4th Annual **Beaver Festival**, Martinez, August 6. Mount Diablo Audubon Society will participate in this event. To volunteer please contact Moses de los Reyes at 755-3734 or moses_inc@comcast.net. Visit www.martinezbeavers.org for more information about activities and location. Please plan to support the efforts of Worth A Dam, and learn how beavers are good for birds.

13th Annual **Kern River Valley Hummingbird Celebration**. Kern River Preserve, Weldon, August 6. Six hummingbird species are possible at the Kern River Preserve feeders in July, August, and early September with over one thousand hummingbirds present some days: Black-chinned, Anna's, Costa's (low numbers), Calliope (rarely), Rufous, and Allen's (virtually impossible to separate from Rufous, even adult males, except during banding sessions).

Weather in the Kern River Valley in mid August is usually very hot, but it can be variable. For your comfort, we suggest bringing water, snacks, a hat, sun screen, insect repellent, and sturdy shoes. There are no food vendors at the preserve so participants should bring lunch and drinks for the day. This event is free although a \$10.00 donation per adult will help defray the cost of feeding all of the birds at the Kern River Preserve. http://kern.audubon.org/hummer_fest.htm.



Western Field Ornithologists Conference. Sierra Vista, Arizona, August 17-21. If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Besides a program of speakers and workshops, field trips to southeast Arizona hotspots will be offered. Look for Scaled and Montezuma Quail, Zone-tailed Hawks, a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers, Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, and Cassin's, Botteri's, Rufous-winged, and Five-striped Sparrows. To register and see full details go to www.westernfieldornithologists.org.

Monterey Bay Birding Festival. September 22-25, Watsonville. The Monterey Bay Birding Festival, home of one of the most spectacular birding and wildlife venues in North America, is designed for birders of all levels and offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn and appreciate world-class habitats such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. www.montereybaybirding.org

Kern River Valley Autumn Nature and Vulture Festival. Kern River Preserve, Weldon, September 24. Visit the Southern Sierra's Kern River Valley to experience one of the U. S. and Canada's largest known Turkey Vulture migrations and the height of fall landbird migration at desert oases. You will enjoy birds, vultures, geology, botany, natural history, Native American studies, moths, reptiles, and children's activities. <http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>.

One day's exposure to mountains
is better than cartloads of books.
John Muir

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. Doors open at 6:30. Everyone is invited.



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MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society.

Please send The Quail by: US mail E-mail _____

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Please make your check payable to:
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Half Dome and Merced River, Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park is known to many only by its crowded valley—some know of Yosemite Falls and Bridalveil Falls, of Half Dome and El Capitan; others may recognize that there are giant sequoias there, too, at Mariposa or Tuolumne Grove; others come to ski at Badger Pass or to view the heavens from the dark skies of Glacier Point. But Yosemite National Park, with its placid meadows, streams and rivers fed by spectacular waterfalls, its towering peaks, alpine lakes, and thousands of acres of forest, is a pristine wilderness where nearly 200 species of birds thrive. The majestic Sierra Nevada offers birders the most beautiful scenery in California as well as some of its most exciting birding. From Yosemite Valley across Tioga Pass and down the eastern slope of the mountain range to Mono Lake, birders can find a stunning variety of habitats as well as species.

The Yosemite region encompasses a diversity of life zones, rising from the foothills of California's Central Valley at 2000-

feet elevation into the high country, where craggy windswept peaks tower over 13,000 feet. From the foothills of the Sonoran, the Transition of Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite Valley, the Canadian, the Hudsonian of Tuolumne Meadows and above to the Arctic-Alpine Zone, this enormous diversity is what makes Yosemite's landscapes simply spectacular.

The Sierra Meadows is recognized as an Important Bird Area. The species of concern that validate this title are Great Gray Owl, Spotted Owl, Sooty Grouse, and Willow Flycatcher. From 65% to 75% of California's Great Gray Owls are in Yosemite, and these birds differ from all other Great Grays in North America. They are classified as *Strix nebulosa yosemitensis*; others are *S. n. nebulosa*. Look for Great Gray Owls at dawn or dusk around meadow edges, such as the meadow directly behind the Chevron service station at Crane Flat, or at Peregoy Meadow near Bridalveil Creek campground. These owls nest only in large

broken-top trees. Spotted Owls are seen in many locations throughout the park, their preferred habitat being mixed conifer forest between 4250 and 7250 feet elevation. From Glacier Point Road, be the first in the morning to take the Sentinel Dome trail and you might find Sooty Grouse—they often feed right on the trail. In spring, males will be displaying; from mid-July through August, females will be with young. In 2006, the American Ornithologists' Union split Blue Grouse into Sooty Grouse and Dusky Grouse. Sooty Grouse is the coastal form, occurring in the Sierra and the Cascades,

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Common Raven at Yosemite National Park.
Photo by Ethan Winning