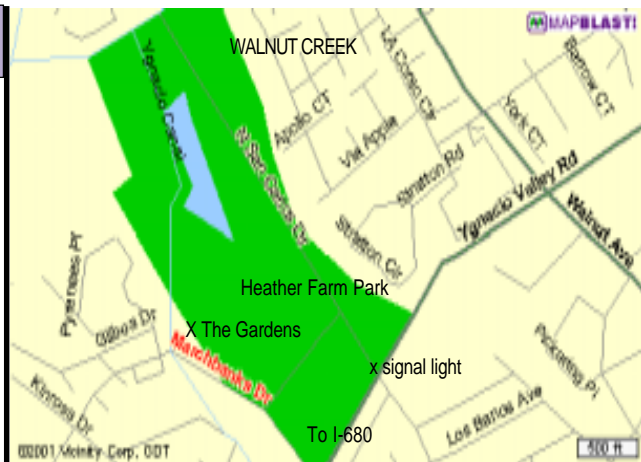


CALENDAR

MDAS general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month. The last meeting for the 2003-2004 year will be June 3 when we will hold our annual potluck. All are invited to attend the pot luck—see page 1 for details. **THERE ARE NO GENERAL MEETINGS IN JULY AND AUGUST.** The next general meeting is September 2, 2004.

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 exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.



The QUAIL

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

June 2004

Vol. 49, No. 9

Next Deadline: June 8

Connections

Save Our Open Space, Save Our Birds

Yesterday we were with a group of birders in East Contra Costa County, birding some of our favorite spots in Brentwood, Oakley, Knightsen, Bethel Island, and Jersey Island. We were dismayed at yet more evidence of growth encroaching on some of the best bird habitat in Contra Costa—open fields being readied for pouring foundations, curbs, and streets; new homes poking up in the distance; and more cars on narrow county roads. Many other local conservation organizations, and local and county governments and agencies are also concerned about the future of open space in Contra Costa. We can save our open space if we vote YES on the Open Space Measure in June and return our ballots.—Editor

Open Space Mail Ballot Starts June 11

This June, Contra Costa property owners will have an unprecedented opportunity to restore and maintain existing neighborhood and regional parks; protect lands around creeks, streams, lakes, and the Bay; and protect and preserve our most important remaining open spaces, wildlife habitats, farmlands, and shorelines.

On June 10, 2004, the Open Space ballot will be mailed to Contra Costa County property owners. The MDAS Board strongly endorses this measure and urges our members to watch for the Open Space ballot in the mail and to return it with a Yes vote! (Continued on p. 2)

Potluck, New Silent Auction Planned for June 3 Meeting

Potluck Details

MDAS will hold its annual end-of-the-year potluck on Thursday, June 3, at the Gardens at Heather Farms (See p. 8 for directions.) The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m.

Members should bring a dish—salad, casserole, entree, vegetable, or dessert—for 10. Remember to bring serving pieces (marked with your name and phone number) for your contribution and your own cutlery, plates, and cups.

The Chapter provides complimentary tea, coffee, and punch. You may bring other beverages.

Silent Auction

To make our biggest social event even more fun, MDAS has added a silent auction. Our generous donors have contributed art, backpacks, wine, and other special items. Each auction item will have a bid sheet in front of it, with a minimum starting bid listed on the top line. Bidders enter a bid along with their name and phone number on the first available line of the bid sheet.

The highest bid at the close of the auction at 7:40 p.m., will constitute the winning bid.

Member Slide Program

Dinner will be followed by a short business meeting when we will announce the winning bidders. Then we will be entertained by the ever-popular, member-provided slide program. You are invited to bring ten or fewer slides of your birding adventures.

In years past, the MDAS potluck has been an entertaining evening of food, fellowship, and a few tall tales of birds and birdwatchers. Come and join us for an evening of birding, shopping, slides, and an array of delicious dishes.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, June 3**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open
6 p.m.—Auction begins
7 p.m.—Dinner is served!
7:40 p.m.—Auction ends
8:00 p.m.—Auction results and Member Slide Program

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

Officers for 2004-05 Elected by Voice Vote

MDAS officers for 2004-2005 were elected by voice vote at the May general meeting. Returning for another year of dedicated service to MDAS are:

President	Mike Williams
Vice President	Joe Frank
Treasurer	Patrick King
Secretary	Mike Tischler

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June Measure to Preserve Contra Costa's Natural Lands

(Continued from p. 1)

This landmark measure would provide funding for the protection and preservation of new lands, including expansions on and around Mt. Diablo, as well as other important natural lands and wildlife areas throughout the county. Twenty-five percent of the funding raised through the Open Space Measure would support the maintenance and renovation of existing parkland and recreational areas throughout the county, including Tilden, Briones and Black Diamond Mines, the Iron Horse and Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trails, Pt. Pinole, Antioch, Oakley and Martinez Regional Shorelines, and many more park and recreational areas throughout the county.

A Small Investment = Important Results

The measure will raise approximately \$8 million annually. The proposed rate for virtually all single family homes is \$25 a year or about \$2 a month—a very modest investment for ensuring that our most important remaining natural lands and clean water sources are preserved and protected.

Strong Fiscal Safeguards

The measure incorporates strong fiscal safeguards, including a citizen's oversight committee, annual audits, and a requirement that only 3% of the funds raised can be used for administration. Ninety-seven percent of the funds will go to projects throughout the county.

Western Snowy Plover Needs Help Now

The Western Snowy Plover, an Audubon WatchList Species needs your help! The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is reviewing petitions filed by the Surf-Ocean Beach Commission of Lompoc and the City of Morro Bay to delist the coastal population of the Snowy Plover. The Pacific Coast population of the Western Snowy Plover was listed as Threatened in 1993 after an exhaustive analysis of the bird and its habitat. This listing decision was made under a part of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that allows the USFWS to list a particular population of a species if it meets the criteria as a "distinct population segment." Now the USFWS is considering removing the Pacific Coast Population of the Western Snowy Plover from ESA coverage.

The Lompoc and Morro Bay petitions contain basically the same information and cite an unpublished master's thesis that found no significant genetic differences between the Pacific Coast Western Snowy Plover and other populations of Snowy Plover. The petitions also state that the protections instituted to protect the Western Snowy Plover are destroying coastal/beach economies.

Audubon's expert scientists have studied and reviewed the data and have not found sufficient evidence to remove the threatened status of the Pacific Coast Western Snowy Plover. In addition, data from Christmas Bird Counts show Western Snowy Plovers are declining, emphasizing the importance of coverage under the Endangered Species Act.

Prior to moving ahead with this plan, the USFWS must gauge public opinion. The public comment period closes June 19, so please write or email the USFWS and them not to move ahead with this irresponsible plan. Go to <<http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/summary.asp?subject=315%20>> to send an instant message to the USFWS on this issue. You can also send your letter to the Field Supervisor, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825-1846. Your message could point out the significant economic benefits of birdwatching and birding festivals to the economies of many California communities.

For More Information about this important Open Space Measure or how you can help make this measure successful, visit <www.contracostaopenspace.org> or call the Coalition for Open Space at (925) 381-4187.

Watch for your mail ballot on June 11, vote Yes, and mail it back promptly. Tell your friends and neighbors how voting YES will help save the last remaining wild lands in Contra Costa.

The *Quail* is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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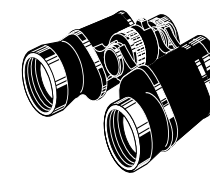
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Observations

by Steve Glover



A breeding-plumage **Common Loon** on Briones Reservoir on 4/10 was a nice find for our watershed reservoirs (DW).

A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at Jersey Island in East County on 4/25, providing one of only a few records for that area (NC).

Two **Ospreys** at Briones Reservoir 4/10 should be watched for possible nesting as one of only a handful of county nest records was from this site years ago (DW). An Osprey at Los Vaqueros Reservoir on 4/16 was at a site where we have belatedly learned they nested last year (BC, TL). The only known previous nestings for the county were at Briones Reservoir and Pt. Pinole. An adult **Bald Eagle** was over Briones Dam on the rather late date of 4/27 (KO). Perhaps someday they will stay to nest as they did for a couple of years at Del Valle Reservoir near Livermore.

An unusually large group of eight **Spotted Sandpipers** was at Heather Farms Park in Walnut Creek on 5/1 (HH).

An outstanding find was two breeding plumage **Franklin's Gulls** amongst the hordes of gulls and terns at Brooks Island near Richmond—discovered and photographed by a Fish and Wildlife biologist on 4/28 (KL).

A massive flock containing 200–300 **White-throated Swifts** and an estimated 1,000 **Cliff Swallows** (!) was over the quarry near the mouth of Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park (MDSP), on 4/26 (RS). This large of a concentration of Cliff Swallows has never been reported from Contra Costa County.

At least one male **Calliope Hummingbird** was in White Canyon, MDSP, on 4/16 (JT, SG), and two were at Pine Canyon, MDSP, on 4/17 (HH, MDAS). Another male Calliope was being harassed by a male **Rufous Hummingbird** in Bay Point on 4/19, an unlikely location for this little mountain gem (NC).

Hammond's Flycatchers are fairly common migrants in Mitchell Canyon, MDSP; but you have to be there on the right day, as exemplified by 7 there on 4/16 (SG), just one on 4/19, and an impressive 11 on 4/26 (RS).

A hybrid male **Hermit x Townsend's Warbler** was in White Canyon, MDSP, on 4/26 (RS). Though this combination must occur annually in the county, it is rarely reported. A migrant male **Common Yellowthroat** was an unusual find in Mitchell Canyon, MDSP, on 5/7 (D&PB). A singing **Yellow-breasted Chat** was in lower Mitchell Canyon, MDSP, on 4/26 (RS). Despite the promising habitat, chats are rarely reported there.

Lingering **White-throated Sparrows** were in a Walnut Creek yard on 4/20 (LG) and in Mitchell Canyon, MDSP, on 4/26 (RS).

Observers: Dennis and Patricia Braddy, Bill Chilson, Nathan Crawford, Laura Gee, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Keith Larson, Tom Leeman, Kitty O'Neill, Rich Stallcup, John Toldi, Denise Wight

Renew Your MDAS Membership

Keep the *Quail* coming to your house by renewing your Chapter membership now. Send in the application form (below) along with a check to the address on the form. Or renew at the MDAS website <www.diabloaudubon.com>. Dues are \$25 a year.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

____ Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for the year 2004-2005.

____ 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 2004-2005.

____ 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 _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

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

Vote Registration Information

The best guarantee of a free democracy is the active participation of every voter in local, state and federal elections. Make your voice heard by Voting! There are several websites that make it easier to register to vote and to update your voter registration if you have changed your residence or mailing address or your name.

Voter registration cards are available at the following locations:

- local Post Offices.
- Department of Motor Vehicles offices.
- local Libraries.
- local City Clerk Offices.
- Contra Costa County Elections Office, 524 Main Street, Martinez.

You can also go to the California State elections website at <<http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/votereg1.html>> and ask that a voter registration form be sent to you.

Fill out Voter Registration Cards **CLEARLY** in dark ink and always make sure you **SIGN** your name in order for your registration to be valid. If you live in an apartment, always make sure you fill in the apartment number of your residence address.

THE LAST DAY TO REGISTER IS ALWAYS 15 DAYS PRIOR TO ANY ELECTION. The last day to register for the November 2 general election is October 18, 2004.

Absentee Voting

Any registered voter may vote by "absentee ballot." To apply for an absentee ballot, you may use one of the following methods:

1. Apply in writing to: Contra Costa County Election Department, P.O. Box 271, Martinez, CA. 94553. You **MUST** include the name and date of the election you are applying for (e.g., June 2, 1998 Primary Election), your printed name and signature, your residence address, the address you would like the ballot mailed to and a telephone number where you can be reached during normal business hours.
2. Obtain an **absentee ballot application** by using the application you receive in the Sample Ballot which is sent to each registered voter approximately 20 days prior to the election.
3. Apply in person at the Contra Costa County Election Department at 524 Main Street, Martinez, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The first day an absentee ballot can be issued or mailed to a voter is 29 days before an election. The last day that the Contra Costa County Election office may accept applications by mail is 7 days before an election. Or a voter may go to the Contra Costa County Election office, in person, up to and including Election Day, and receive a ballot.

If you know you are going to vote absentee, it is in your best interest to apply as early as possible. Absentee ballot applications may be requested at any time; but, by law, a ballot can be issued only 29 days prior to an election at the earliest.

Once you have submitted your application for an absentee ballot, if you do not receive it within 7 days, please contact the Contra Costa County Elections Department at (925) 646-4160.

Returning Your Absentee Ballot

An absentee voter **MUST** return an absentee ballot by mail or in person to the Contra Costa County Election Department or any polling place in Contra Costa County by 8 p.m. Election Day. Any ballot that arrives after 8 p.m. on Election Day is not counted. In order for your ballot to count you **MUST** sign the envelope your ballot is returned in and indicate your residence address (not mailing address). For more information, go to the Contra Costa Election Office website at <<http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/department/voteab.htm>>



—drawing by Carol Lutz

Field Trip Reports

April 15, Thursday, Lake Lagunitas and Bon Tempe—Ten birders tallied 52 species, several heard only. We saw four Common Mergansers at close range; an Osprey overhead carrying a fish; six Wild Turkeys, including two displaying; many Band-tailed Pigeons; and a Black-throated Gray Warbler. We heard one call from a Pileated Woodpecker and saw several places with recent workings. The weather was mostly overcast, cool, somewhat windy in places.—*Jean Richmond*

May 1, Saturday, Mines Road—Warm weather, sunny skies and dry hills greeted 10 members who made the trip up Mines Road. Seventy-two bird species also greeted us, though they seemed to be somewhat more shy. Luckily, some of the highlights were fairly easy spotting, such as the Phainopepla, Lawrence's Goldfinch, White-throated Swift, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and even the Lewis' Woodpecker. The Spotted Sandpipers, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Western Tanager were more challenging to find, even after first hearing them.—*Hugh Harvey*

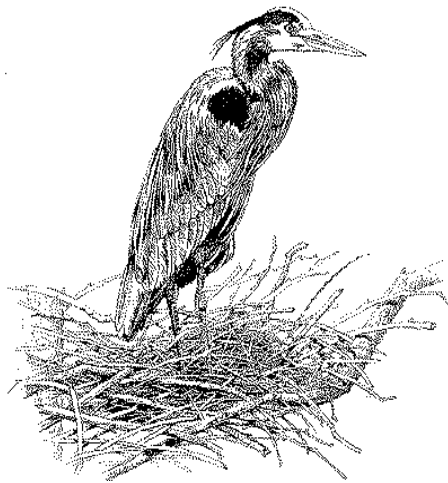
May 15, Saturday, East County—Eight birders, including two new birders from San Jose, saw 56 species on a pleasant, sunny Saturday. We had long looks at most of the target birds—eight Burrowing Owls, five Swainson's Hawks, two Blue Grosbeaks, Yellow-billed Magpie, and three Black-chinned Hummingbirds but only heard calling Yellow-breasted Chats. Other highlights included a high-flying flock of White-faced Ibis and a White Pelican with breeding mandible.—*Joel Summerhill*

June Field Trips

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.

June 2, Wednesday—Annadel State Park. Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet 8:30 a.m. at parking lot of Annadel Park. Go north on Interstate-680, west on I-780 to Vallejo. Go north on State Route 29 to State Route 121/12. Go left to SR 12, turn right and drive about 17 miles. Turn left onto Los Alamos Rd., right on Melite Rd., and then left on Montgomery Rd. for 0.6 mi. Turn left on Channel Dr., 2 mi. to road end. Pileated Woodpecker possible. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486



Audubon Canyon Ranch Open

Audubon Canyon Ranch is now open on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through July 11. This year the Audubon Canyon Ranch, located near Bolinas Lagoon, is home to nine Great Blue Heron nests, 56 Great Egret nests, and one Snowy Egret nest. Bring friends and family to visit this special sanctuary operated by Marin Audubon.

June 12, Saturday—Outer Point Reyes. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at Bear Valley Visitor's Center at 9:15 a.m. 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. From I-101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left on 3rd St., and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1 at Olema, turn right 0.25 mile, then left onto Bear Valley Rd. Visitors' Center is off Bear Valley. We will carpool from Visitor's Center due to limited parking along route. Bring lunch and liquids. Be prepared for variable weather. For more information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

June 19 & 20, Saturday & Sunday, Yuba Pass. Meet Saturday and Sunday at 7 a.m. in the parking lot of Yuba Pass campground. We'll spend Saturday looking for mountain birds. Sunday in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Lots of walking on sometimes rough terrain. Be prepared for biting insects and mountain sun. Bring lunch and liquids on both days. Fastest route: take I-80 to Hwy 89 at Truckee. Go north on Hwy 89 to Hwy 49. See story on the right for information on reservations. For more information, call the leader, Hugh Harvey, 935-2979. Category 2

Difficulty of field trip:

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

Category 2: Moderate, 1 mile or more, possibly rough terrain.

Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Reservations a Must for Yuba Pass Trip

Mid-June is a popular time for Audubon chapters from all over northern California to schedule field trips to Yuba Pass. If you plan to go, make motel reservations now.

Yuba Pass campground is at the top of the pass. Sierra City—18 miles down Hwy 49—is the closest town and has the following motels/hotels/B&Bs: Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151); Buckhorn Lodge (800-991-1170); Bush & Heringlake Country Inn (530-862-1501); Sierra Buttes Inn (530-862-1300); Yuba River Inn (530-862-1122). Sierra Skies RV Park (530-862-1166) has some cabins as well as RV spaces. There are campgrounds (vault toilets, no showers, piped water) at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass.

Two websites are helpful but prices are not current:

- <http://www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html>
- San Francisco State's Sierra Nevada campus has web links to B&Bs: <<http://www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/accom.htm>>.

Tim and Carolyn Rees, owners of the Lazy R Ranch, rent a guest house at their ranch in the middle of the Sierra Valley near Loyalton. It has two double beds, and a hide-a-bed. Make reservations by calling 530-993-1560.