

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php

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Filming Birds of the North, South, East and West Larry Arbanas

Earlier this year, Larry Arbanas was quite sure that he would be available this June 5 to talk with us and present his video footage in person. Since that time his filming career has skyrocketed and he could not pass up an opportunity to film this June in Massachusetts, again for the Macaulay Library of Cornell. He will not be here physically but will send us a beautiful new video combining music with footage from his travels in Alaska. So, bring your field guides!

During this last year Larry has completed a video presentation titled 'Birds of the Mono Basin' to be used as part of the program offered at the Mono Lake Visitor Center. In addition he has filmed Tule Elk for PBS, and traveled in Florida, Texas and Alaska filming birds for the Macaulay Library of Cornell.

He writes, "It's been a whole year since I last *didn't* see you. It turns out that these wonderful Cornell Lab of Ornithology film jobs have me on the road once again filming birds to fill in the empty holes in the Macaulay Library's most awesome collection of North American birds. Last year I traveled to Florida, Texas, and Alaska. The work started in March and ended in July with small breaks in between to catch my breath. I've wanted to go to Alaska for eons, it seems, so I considered myself very fortunate to be able to film in such an amazing place! Hopefully, the images that you see on June 5 capture the wildness of that place."

Larry continues from Carlsbad, NM, very near Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Texas, "I have been in the Lone Star State for almost a month. We are searching for the Gray Vireo and the Black-chinned Sparrow,



Pacific Loon in breeding plumage. Videographed at Teshekpak Lake by Larry Arbanas. This lake and surrounding pristine wetlands support the highest density of nesting waterfowl and shorebirds in Alaska.

not to be confused with the Black-throated Sparrow. In the gorgeous and spectacular Big Bend National Park in Texas, we were able to find and film the lovely Colima Warbler. This little jewel can only be found in the Chisos Mountains in the heart of Big Bend. The climb was brutal. It took four trips up and down the rocky trail to get our camping gear, my big high-definition camera, and Ben's audio recording equipment up and down those slopes. What a beautiful place to spend a week. Sometime next year I would love to share the resulting footage of this quest, as well as the footage of the Black-capped Vireo, the Golden-cheeked Warbler and other Texas specialties. I look forward to actually being there for a presentation with my old and original local California Audubon Society, MDAS."

Larry has recently moved to Bishop, California, an amazing birding destination and just a bit south of his beloved Mono Lake. A new and different version of the Alaska film you will see will be shown at the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua in late June. The film ties together the breeding birds that he filmed in Alaska and the birds we see in the Mono

Basin. Larry recommends the Chautauqua, which occurs June 20-22, and hopes to visit here soon.

Annual Potluck

The June potluck is held in our regular meeting place before the presentation by Larry Arbanas. Doors open at 6:30 PM. Members bring a main dish, salad, or dessert and their own utensils and coffee cup. Please mark your serving plates. Tea, coffee and punch will be provided; bring your own wine if you wish.



Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, June 5**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

September 4:

Claudia and Scott Hein

Trinidad and Tobago

Welcome New Members

Sharon Isenhour Walnut Creek
Judy Sherwood Alamo
Rea Simpson Livermore

President's Corner

I don't know how many of you saw the article in the SF Chronicle on Tuesday, May 6 about bird migration. It was entitled "Discovery may explain how birds navigate." It has been 40 years since scientists showed that birds use the Earth's magnetic fields to orient themselves during migration but did not how they did that. This article says that they have discovered a molecular mechanism to do just that. It is a hypothesis at this time, but if true it may mean that the planet's magnetic fields, which arch around the Earth, may be "plainly visible to birds, like the dashed line in the middle of the road." The article goes on to try and explain this quite complex theory and how the experiments were done. I did not begin to understand all of it, but what an interesting theory! Another reason we are so fascinated by these wonderful creatures. It is the migration time of year and I hope you are getting out to take advantage of it. Some of our upcoming field trips are timed to see birds in this migration.

On another note, one of our members, Diana Granados, has stepped forward to fill the empty position of chapter secretary. Diana is well known to us through her work with Native Bird Connections, but it will be great to have her on the board. We always have need of volunteers so I hope others will give us a call or email.

At our May 1st meeting, our membership chair, Bev Walker, introduced me to a new member who was attending her first meeting. She lives in Livermore. Bev asked her why she had chosen to join Mount Diablo and she said "because of your website." A nice compliment for Patrick King who is our webmaster. I hope all of you will take advantage of our website also.

Our meeting on Thursday, June 4 is our final meeting until September and it is our annual potluck dinner. Please plan to attend. It is a fun evening and we have a good program planned. *Jimm Edgar*

No Child Left Inside By Paul Schorr

During the past year the MDAS Education Outreach Committee adopted the mission to establish, promote and provide direct hands-on outdoor activities for elementary school students. The intent of this program is to generate interest and an understanding of the local natural surroundings of these students, which hopefully will lead to a deeper appreciation of those natural systems, and a subsequent enhanced concern in protecting and conserving the plants and animals there. Our goals for this program were directly connected to "Nature-Deficit Disorder" that

was identified by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child In the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Louv addresses "why children need nature, how it was taken from them and how to get it back." Nature-Deficit Disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and high rates of physical and emotional illnesses. In February, Jimm Edgar had the great privilege of meeting Richard Louv at a dinner when Louv was awarded the prestigious Audubon Medal. Jimm returned from this event with much enthusiasm which he shared in the March issue of *The Quail* and during subsequent comments he made at the chapter's general meetings.

The Education Outreach Committee is comprised of Diana Granados, Cecil Williams, Claudia Hein and Paul Schorr. In 2007 the committee met to develop a framework and calendar for implementation of the program. A class of fifth-grade students at Jack London Elementary School in Antioch was selected for the program, and in February a planning meeting was held with the teacher, Evelyn Jones. It was decided that there would be classroom presentations in early April and May and on Friday, June 6, the students would be

bussed to Contra Loma Regional Park to engage them in culminating field activities. On April 11, Diana Granados did a wonderful introductory lesson and introduced the students to an American Kestrel, a Swainson's Hawk and a Great-horned Owl. (Please see the adjacent picture of Diana demonstrating the Swainson's Hawk.)



Diana Granados captures the attention of fifth-graders at Jack London School in Antioch with a beautiful Swainson's Hawk.

The students responded with much enthusiasm and they were genuinely excited about the birds and Diana's presentation. On May 2, Diana and Paul were accompanied by Gloria Cannon, and the focus of this lesson was to introduce the students to the

MDAS Field Checklists and to identify the target birds likely to be seen at Contra Loma Regional Park in June. In addition, a comprehensive lesson on the introduction and use of binoculars which the chapter purchased was conducted. Once again, the students were very interested, cooperative and respectful in their use of the binoculars. Diana brought some study skins and a stuffed Great Horned Owl on which the students enjoyed "field testing the binoculars." It should be noted that the chapter purchased thirty pairs of binoculars for this and subsequent field activities. This purchase was approved by the board in April, and thanks to Cecil and Mike Williams the chapter obtained the binoculars at a very reasonable cost.

On June 6, between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM the students will be involved in a variety of field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park that will culminate this year's program. The chapter will generously subsidize the school bus transportation cost. It would be greatly appreciated if members could join the committee members on that day for these activities. Scopes are needed so if you can provide one, it would be most helpful. Please contact Paul Schorr at (925) 757-5107 if you can assist on that day. I think that you will find it very rewarding.

Observations

By Steve Glover

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

A **Long-tailed Duck** continued at the Richmond Marina on 4/20 (DW). A male **Harlequin Duck** was reported at Brickyard Cove, Point Richmond on 3/25 and 4/8 (JA). Likely the same bird was in the Richmond Marina on 4/26 (BD). The male **Black Scoter** continued at the Richmond Marina on 4/6 (LL) and 4/26 (DW); four **Black Scoters** were reported there on 4/8 (JA).

Single **Osprey** were noted soaring over Briones Regional Park on 4/18 (HH) and Piper Slough, Bethel Island on 4/20 (SG, DW). A young **Bald Eagle** flew over Jewel Lake, Tilden Park and continued eastward on 4/13 (RS).

A **Solitary Sandpiper** in the ditch on Jersey Island Road near Oakley on 4/20 provided a rare record for the county (DW, SG). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was at Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline in Richmond on 4/6 (LL). Nine **Surfbirds** continued at Pinole Bayfront Park on 4/30 (BB).

Eight **Least Terns** were north of Point Isabel, Richmond on 4/20 (SG, DW).

Calliope Hummingbirds were in White Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park on 4/11 (DW), 4/20 (at least 4 males; SG, DW), 4/22 (JH), and 4/24 (2 males; BL). Another **Calliope** was in Donner Canyon on 4/16 (HH). A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was in Mitchell Canyon, where rarely found, on 4/26 (DW).

At least 7 **Hammond's Flycatchers** in Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park on 4/11 was a nice tally (DW). Smaller numbers of **Hammond's** continued to be found throughout April. A **Dusky Flycatcher** was reported in Mitchell Canyon on 4/13 (GT).

Single **Vaux's Swifts** were noted near Point Isabel, Richmond on 4/20 (SG, DW) and at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline near Pinole on 4/21 (LL). The phenomenon of **Vaux's Swifts** roosting in chimneys has often been noted but apparently not in Contra Costa County. On 4/23, however, flocks of **Vaux's** easily numbering in the hundreds descended upon several chimneys in residential Martinez to roost for the night. One of the houses suffered significant damage to the interior. Apparently most of the birds departed the next morning (CR).

Much Ado About Nothing

When the United States Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) begin aerial spraying of portions of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties* for eradication of the light brown apple moth (LBAM, *Epiphyas postvittana*) in October, 2008, we can expect the following, based on the experience in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties last fall:

- Massive die-offs of sea birds, such as cormorants and possibly the federally-protected Brown Pelican.
- Loss of colonies of honey bees.
- Hundreds of reports of respiratory distress, with possible life-threatening episodes among the very young.
- Little or no effect on the presence of the targeted moth.

This may sound like the voice of doom. Perhaps it is, but the purpose of this article is rather to ask you to study the facts and be informed on this issue. Unbiased opinions are not to be found on the website of CDFA at www.cdca.ca.gov, however. Nor here.

The moth could become an agricultural pest of significant economic importance, although it is not one in New Zealand, Australia or Hawaii, where it is present. It is interesting to note that the LBAM was not discovered in California because it was causing crop damage—it was not. Rather, it was found by an entomologist who collected insects as a hobby. The light brown apple moth is very similar to many other moths, and has likely been in California,

A male **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen around the intersection of Canyon and Pinehurst Roads near the hamlet of Canyon on 4/24 (DW). During the past couple of decades, most East Bay records were reported from this general area but most reports are now from nearby Redwood Regional Park which receives more thorough coverage.

A **Great-tailed Grackle** at Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek on 4/23 (HH) had apparently been present for a week. Three grackles were there on 5/1 (HH).

Several **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at Lime Ridge on 4/21 (MS).

Jerrie Arko, Bob Battagin, Bob Dunn, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Jeff Hoppes, Bob Lewis, Laura Look, Carol Raifsnider, Rusty Scalf, Maury Stern, Glen Tepke, Denise Wright

undetected, for many years; there seems little reason to declare an emergency.

The proposed method of eradication is with aerial spraying of slow-release plastic microcapsules (some small enough to be inhaled into the deep lung and retained) containing pheromone attractants (E)-11-Tetradecen-1-yl acetate and (E,E)-9,11-Tetradecadien-1-yl-acetate to disrupt the male moth's mating. *Checkmate*, the product used at Seaside/Monterey, also contains cross linked polyurea polymer, butylated hydroxytoluene, polyvinyl alcohol, tricapyryl methyl ammonium chloride and sodium phosphate, ammonium phosphate, 1,2-benzisothiazolin-3-one, and 2-hydroxyl-4-n-octyloxybenzophenone. (Do we want our children breathing that?)

As of April 29, CDFA reports that *"New formulations of the mating disruption pheromone are now available. These formulations will be tested to determine which formulation is the most efficacious at eradicating LBAM. The California Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment will evaluate the anticipated human health impacts of the formulation used over urban areas and transmit these to physicians in the treatment areas. The area for aerial applications is a 1.5 mile radius around each location where a LBAM is detected."* No mention of evaluation of health hazards to birds, bees, fish or pets! The manufacturer lists their product as mildly irritating to eyes and moderately irritating to skin in rabbits.

Let us *not* spray.

* Including El Cerrito, El Sobrante, Hercules, Kensington, Pinole, Richmond, San Pablo. Also San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties.

Update: On May 12, Monterey County Superior Court Judge Robert O'Farrell declared that the light brown apple moth situation was not an emergency and that aerial spraying could not proceed until after an Environmental Impact Report was completed. It is not clear, however, whether this applies only to Monterey County or to the entire State. A Santa Cruz judge issued a similar order for that county the previous week. The CDFA claims an EIR cannot be finished until next January and plans to appeal. The ruling applies only to aerial spraying. Application of the pheromone pesticide on the ground is allowed.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

June

- 5 Thursday..... Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs
7 Saturday Outer Point Reyes
21–22 Saturday-Sunday..... Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

July

- 26 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

August

- 16 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

Come birding with us!

② Thursday, June 5

Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 7:30 AM. Meet at Sycamore Grove at 8:00 AM. From I-680 south, take I-580 east toward Livermore. Exit at N Livermore Avenue toward Central Livermore. Turn right on 1st Street, then left onto S L Street, which becomes Arroyo Road. Continue 3.8 miles to Veterans Park, just beyond Sycamore Grove. The two are adjacent and this end usually has more birds. After birding one of the largest Sycamore groves in the state, we will drive to Shadow Cliffs for lunch. Entry fee required.

② Saturday, June 7

Outer Point Reyes

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Meet 9:00 AM at Drake's Beach parking lot. From I-80 in Vallejo, follow SR 37 19.1 miles to Atherton Avenue, exit and turn left, cross US 101 to San Marin Drive and continue for 3 miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd, turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to the stop sign. Turn right and drive to SR 1, turn left and pass through Point Reyes Station. At the green bridge turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Continue for about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Road on left. We are hoping for migrants. Weather is unpredictable.

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.

As another Audubon year comes to a close, we have completed 34 of 39 scheduled field trips. Many of the trip participants and leaders also took part in our two Christmas Bird Counts. Not only do we thank the membership for supporting this activity, but a big thank you is owed to the 16 leaders. They have taken us from local parks, to the South Bay area, Marin and Sonoma Counties and as far as the Susanville area. Field trips have long been an important part of MDAS. With your continued support they will continue to be a major chapter activity.

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.

Saturday/Sunday, June 21-22

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

Leaders: Rosita and Hugh Harvey, 935-2979.

This is always a productive and well-favored weekend trip to the northern Sierra which requires driving and walking, some of it over rough terrain. Saturday we will bird in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Sunday we will be birding in the Yuba Pass area for mountain birds. Meet at the top of the pass at 7:00 AM Saturday morning.

Make motel reservations *now!* Closest motels are in Sierra City, 18 miles down Highway 49. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151) is one of the best; Buckhorn Lodge (800-991-1170) has new cabins; Also in Sierra City is Yuba River Inn (530-862-1122), with cabins and kitchenettes (cash or check only). Bassett's Station (530-862-1297) at Highway 49 and Gold Lake Road has some accommodations and meals. Golden West Saloon Restaurant and Motel is in Loyalton (530-993-4467). There are campgrounds at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Other accommodations, including some campgrounds, are listed at www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html. San Francisco State University maintains its Sierra Nevada campus six miles above Sierra City on Highway 49. They have a useful web link to accommodations in the area at www.sfsu/~sierra/accom.htm. In the middle of the Sierra Valley near Loyalton, the T Lazy R Ranch is a working cattle ranch with a guest house for rent. Owner Tim Rees can be reached for reservations at 530-993-1560. After June 16, call Wild Birds Unlimited (925-798-0303) for confirmation of trip information.

Trip Reports

North Briones, April 15. Eight members enjoyed a cool, but sunny day. Highlights included several pairs of western bluebirds, three species of swallows, Horned Lark, and much singing by Orange-crowned Warblers and Hutton's Vireos. Everyone enjoyed a short rest at Sindicich Lagoon. Wildflowers were profuse, especially the sticky monkey flower and vetch. 52 species of birds were seen or heard and 28 species of wildflowers were identified.

Cheryl Abel

Pine Canyon, April 12. Sixteen birders enjoyed superlative weather and a leisurely hike into Pine Canyon. The great mix of habitats in the canyon can yield a good variety of species, although previous cool weather seemed to have delayed migration somewhat and kept the numbers down. Altogether we saw a total of 51 species, including quite a few Bullock's Orioles and Cassin's, Hutton's and Warbling Vireos. The stars of the day were the birds soaring amid the high rock formations in the canyon: Turkey Vultures, Common Raven, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, White-throated Swift and Violet-green Swallows. After waiting patiently, most in the group caught a glimpse of the female as the Peregrine Falcons made their nest exchange. The falcons, which have nested in the canyon for a number of years after being reintroduced, are under increasing pressure from human disturbance. The past two years they were forced to abandon their nest. We are keeping our fingers crossed for a successful breeding season this year!

Nancy Wenninger

Del Puerto Canyon, April 26. Twenty members and guests made the trip on a lovely day with mild temperatures and mostly light wind except in the San Joaquin Valley where it was very windy, and in Raines Park which had cool breezes. Although calm at the lower end of Del Puerto Canyon Road, there were no sparrows seen or heard. Among 61 species seen or heard were a singing Lark Sparrow at MP-3, a male Costa's Hummingbird at mp-3.5, four Golden Eagles, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Western Kingbirds, five swallow species, two Rock Wrens and a Canyon Wren, Phainopeplas, grosbeaks and orioles but no warblers. Lawrence's Goldfinches were seen by one member at Raines Park. Along San Antonio Valley



Nancy Wenninger photo

Martinez Regional Shoreline Cleanup

Six dedicated volunteers enjoyed perfect weather and beautiful scenery on MDAS May 3 cleanup at Martinez Regional Shoreline. Working along the Pickleweed Trail on the western end of the shoreline, the crew removed an entire truckload of rubbish and discarded "treasures." East Bay Regional

Park District Ranger Carol Alderdice did most of the heavy lifting and provided lots of encouragement. Thanks to all who participated and made this a successful event. (Left to right) Nancy Wenninger, Mike Tischler, Rita Tischler, Diane Malucelli, Bob Malucelli, Rick Thorn.

Road were a pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers at a nest hole a quarter mile south of the junction, and three male Wood Ducks on the grassy pond two miles beyond. At the former CDF fire station at the junction a pair of orioles were working on a nest which had light blue material woven into it; a House Finch nest atop a cactus contained three very small chicks. *Jean Richmond*

Mines Road, May 3. After meeting at Murrieta's Well at the beginning of Mines Road, 16 members and guests proceeded to Del Valle Regional Park and Mines Road for a full day of birding. When it was all finished, what had seemed like a relatively slow birding day was actually a great day. Despite a few misses, we saw or heard 82 species. We had many flowers along the roadsides, but due to the dry spring, the large carpets of flowers across the meadows were long gone. Highlights were the Great Horned Owl nest with an adult and chick at our meeting place, White-throated Swifts and other birds at Del Valle, two California Thrashers below MP 5.75, an Olive-sided Flycatcher on the hillside above the road here, and Lewis's Woodpecker and Wood Ducks south of the junction. The famous Lawrence's Goldfinch was seen by only a handful of the 30 birders from Golden Gate Audubon and our Chapter at the southern end of the San Antonio Valley. We were consoled with a singing Chipping Spar-

row, Lark Sparrow and Western Wood-Pewee while we searched for the elusive pot of goldfinches. *Hugh B. Harvey*

Mitchell Canyon, May 8. Twenty members and guests spent a wonderful morning at Mitchell Canyon in fair weather, blue skies, and no wind. We saw 54 species of birds, a number of butterflies, wildflowers, and a 3½ foot rattlesnake. Highlights included: at least 75 American White Pelicans soaring high in the sky not far from White Canyon; Olive-sided Flycatcher; Western Wood-Pewee; very close-up looks at a Dusky Flycatcher; Townsend's Warbler; and Western Tanager. We also saw several birds at nest holes or on the nest: Hairy Woodpecker; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Cassin's Vireo; Violet-green Swallow; and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. *Maury Stern*

Mount Diablo, May 15. The trip up Mount Diablo was well attended, with 10 members and guests. We had two guests all the way from Florida who found the trip on our website. The day was slated to be hot and windy. Although the temperature did get too hot it was very windy which kept the birds sitting tight. We had 43 species which included highlights of Hermit Warbler, Brown Creeper, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Cassin's Vireo. We ran into Denise Wight's birding group and they too had not seen many birds all day.

Jimm Edgar



Osprey. Photo by Steve Wilcox.

Road east from Gualala; if you're lucky and at the right time, you might find Mountain Quail, or Red Crossbill.

The 195-acre Gualala Point Regional ("County") Park is just south of the river. It has open meadows mixed with coastal forest. The park contains a campground, trail system, and sandy beaches. The views of the coast overlooking the river's mouth are superb. Take your canoe or kayak and explore the Gualala River for a different bird's-eye point of view. The Visitors Center at the park

Question: What is 840 miles long, 12 miles wide but just 2.3 square miles in area?

Answer: The California Coastal National Monument.

Established in January 2000, this National Monument protects all the islets, sea stacks, and rocks above mean high tide level along the entire California coast from the Mexican border to Oregon. It is managed by the BLM.

Many of the rocks, pinnacles, and exposed reefs are at The Sea Ranch and the Sea Ranch Association is now a steward of the California Coastal National Monument. They are responsible for obtaining natural history data about the islets, and for monitoring them against interference from nonnatural incursions. One such disruption comes from Gualala's July 4th fireworks display which has caused some of the Brandt's Cormorants to abandon their nests

The many small islands off the coast are very important to birders.

has outstanding displays of early California history, Native American life, and the turn of the century logging industry.

Adjacent to the Park and extending for ten miles to the south is The Sea Ranch, a residential community of distinctive homes perched on the coastal bluffs or tucked in among the redwoods. This community has an active group of birders, who conduct a Christmas Bird Count. This year, 94 species were counted. Their "yard list" at Sea Ranch numbers 221 species, including even a Wandering Albatross, whose single appearance merited mention in the *Auk*. Some of the trails at The Sea Ranch are open to public access, while others are private.

Approaching The Sea Ranch and Gualala from the south along twisty Highway One can be somewhat tedious and tortuous from the driver's seat; but from the passenger seat the views are wonderful, and for both driver and passenger the goal of interesting birding, a beautiful landscape, and a sensational seascape is well worth the trip.

[Thanks to Diane Hichwa of The Sea Ranch for contributing to this article. Ed.]

Ornithological Opportunities

2008 Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, June 20-22, Lee Vining. This is not your ordinary birding festival. Three days of evening presentations, seminars, field trips, music, and great birding! All proceeds support continuing research in the Mono Basin. Look at the program at www.birdchautauqua.org and see the difference. Don't delay—some field trips have already been filled.

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



Families enjoy the presentation at the Mount Diablo Audubon table at John Muir National Historic Site on Earth Day, where they try to identify birds nests of different species. Kids earn a prize for a correct answer (usually they know a hummingbird's nest!)

A big thank you for the following people who helped at these environmental events:

Earth Day at John Muir National Historic Site, April 19. Beverly Hawley, Kathy Kellogg, Ron Kline, Carol Mathews, Barbara Minneman, Mike Robertson, Nina Wong.

Mothers' Day Event and Audubon Membership Drive at Wild Birds Unlimited, May 10. Helen Holm, Kathy Kellogg, Ron Kline, Carol Mathews, Gail Rodens, Don Yoder.

Heritage Day Celebration at Borges Ranch, June 14. Moses De Los Reyes, Ron Kline, Diane Malucelli, Sandra Ritchie, Mike Robertson, Maury Stern, Cevina Targum.

And an even bigger thank you goes to Shirley Ellis, who has announced her retirement as Volunteer Coordinator effective on June 15, the day after Heritage Day at Borges Ranch. Shirley has been volunteering for Mount Diablo Audubon Society in various jobs for twenty years! She plans to continue her service to MDAS as she will keep the chapter scrapbooks. So, we will still have the benefit of her wit and her determination.

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/

Some Call It Serendipity! Others Call It Luck!

By Mike and Cecil Williams

One week before our trip to our “real” home in Portal, Arizona, we received all these emails from friends and rare-bird alerts about a Tufted Flycatcher (whatever that is) in the Portal area of SE Arizona. (For those of you that don’t know, this is one of the top five birding spots in the US. It is close to the Mexico border and vagrants came over into the Arizona mountains to escape the heat and dry of Mexico.)

The Tufted Flycatcher inhabits mountain evergreen and pine-oak woodlands in Mexico and as far south as South America. It is a small flycatcher, similar in size to the Empidonax flycatchers, with a spiky crest. The first US sighting was in Big Bend, TX 11/3/1991. The current sighting is one of the handful ever in the US.

We were very excited, but didn’t really expect to see the bird. These very rare vagrants often seem to stay just 3–5 days. We arrived late Sunday and got up early Monday to look for it. We looked, we looked, and we looked. No luck. The wind picked up and was blowing so hard the bird might be back in Mexico. There were no reports from anyone seeing the Flycatcher on Monday. Tuesday morning it’s even windier. We didn’t even bother to go out.

We got a phone call at 12:30 PM. “The Tufted Flycatcher is there” yelled Jackie Lewis, a very excited local birder and owner of a fantastic birder’s B&B. “Hurry, hurry, here are



the directions...” We went up the mountain road to about 6500 feet elevation.

We went. It was there! What a wonderful LIFE bird. It looks just like you crossed an Oak Titmouse with an empidonax flycatcher and colored it like a Rufous Hummingbird or a Cinnamon Teal. The crest stayed up all the time and was bright cinnamon. Breast was the same color in softer tones.

Thanks to Jackie Lewis and others that directed her and us to the bird. Thanks to Jackie, also, for this magnificent photo. Birding is such a fun sport, especially when people are so helpful. And it sure helps to be lucky!

NEWS
FROM
WILD BIRDS
UNLIMITED



The beautiful Black-headed Grosbeaks have arrived.



- These large orange, black and white birds love sunflower seed and suet.
- Females do not have the striking color of the males—they are streaked brown with other or light buffbreasts. They have white “eyebrows.” Still, they’re unmistakable with their large beaks.
- Grosbeaks have a very beautiful song.
- To learn more about them and to hear their call, go to our website at www.wbupleasanthill.com. Then, at the bottom right of your screen, click on “Rightbird”
- You’ll find information there, too, about many other favorite birds.
- This photo of a male Black-headed Grosbeak at a feeder was submitted by Mary S. of Antioch.

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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.



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California Coastal National Monument at Mendocino Coast

Birding at Gualala and The Sea Ranch

The town of Gualala—and its environs—is a great place for birding. Here, where Sonoma and Mendocino counties face each other across the Gualala River, there is good birding throughout the year. As the seasons change, the river changes, the sandbar at the river's mouth shifts, and different species can be found.

In winter three species of loons might be spotted offshore. Three cormorants are usually here too. Brandt's Cormorants maintain a major nesting colony on Gualala Point Island, a short distance offshore where Pigeon Guillemots and Western Gulls also nest. Common Mergansers are very regular in the river. Greater Yellowlegs and Least Sandpipers are among the shorebirds that frequent the sandbar when the river is low. Black Oystercatchers, with their distinctive orange bills, are unmistakable on the offshore rocks. Gulls are always

present on the sandy beach to the south of the river mouth. Harlequin Ducks are seen most winters. Often a Peregrine Falcon can be seen perched on a snag on the island in the river.

A scope may let you identify such oceanic birds as Sooty and Black-vented Shearwaters offshore. Alcids regularly seen are Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Murrelet, and Rhinoceros Auklet.

Five miles north of Gualala, just past Anchor Bay, Fish Rocks is another seabird nesting area, which may have Tufted Puffins in summer.

Away from the coast many land birds find homes, or spend their summer vacations along the Gualala River or in the forests. Look for Purple Martins, who nest

under the bridge on the Sonoma County side. Other swallows—Tree, Cliff, Rough-winged and Violet-green—are common. Acorn Woodpeckers, Red-breasted Sapsuckers and Hairy Woodpeckers may be sighted along the river. Orange-crowned, Yellow, Wilson's, and MacGillivray's Warblers nest in the riverside riparian habitat. Common Yellowthroats nest in a small marsh just north of the bridge. Warbling and Hutton's Vireos are



Violet green swallows squabble for nesting box.
Photo by Siegfried Matull, Gualala

common. Hermit Warblers, too, are common in the nearby Douglas firs. Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, and Olive-sided Flycatcher are easily observed. Winter Wren is a common resident and its beautiful song can be heard almost throughout the year. Drive along Old Stage

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