



The QUAIL

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

June 2003

Vol. 49, No. 9

Next Deadline: June 5

President's Notes

by Mike Williams

I want to thank Maury Stern for doing an excellent job as our Program Chair for the last three years. He's brought us many, many great programs that we've all enjoyed. Our attendance is up at the general meetings over the last few years, partly due to Maury's good work. Maury has served on the Board of MDAS for many years. He is going to be spending more time in Arizona with his new grandchild, but he will continue to help MDAS with birdwalks, Christmas count, and other activities.

Alice Holmes will be our new Program Chair. She was formerly our Hospitality Chair. Her good work in that job is another reason our attendance has improved.

Joe Frank has been our Treasurer for a number of years. He would like this to be his last year (ending in June 2004) and would like to find a replacement. The treasurer's job requires some knowledge of accounting and computers. If you have any interest in this job, please contact me at 925-798-0303. We would like to begin training a new treasurer in the next 3-4 months.

Gloria Cannon has been the editor of the *Quail* since 1997. This will be her last year (ending with the July-August 2004 issue). If you are interested in writing and editing and have good Macintosh computer skills, this would be an excellent opportunity for you to use those skills. Please call Gloria at 925-422-1664 (days) or 925-753-0862 (evenings). She can begin training you in August.

Have a great summer & GO BIRDING!

You Are Invited to June 5 Potluck

MDAS will hold its annual end-of-the-year potluck on Thursday, June 5, at the Heather Farms Garden Center. (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 for your contribution and your own cutlery, plates, and cups. The Chapter provides complementary tea, coffee, and punch.

Dinner will be followed by a short business meeting. Then we will be entertained by the ever-popular, member-provided slide program. 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, slides, and an array of delicious dishes.

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

Slate of MDAS Officers Re-elected

MDAS elected officers at its May 1 general meeting.

Mike Williams was elected MDAS President; Joe Frank as both Vice President and Treasurer; and Mike Tischler Secretary. The newly elected officers will begin serving their one-year term of office in September.

Highlights from NAS Directors Meeting

The National Audubon Society (NAS) Board of Directors recently held its quarterly meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas, where they launched new urban Little Rock Audubon Center. Here are some highlights from that meeting.

The Executive Committee expressed concern about the ongoing health and vitality of Audubon's Chapters after the phase out of dues share. The committee is actively looking at new ways to assist Chapters in achieving Audubon's shared conservation objectives.

The Science Committee reviewed and approved five-year goals, focusing on Important Bird Area (IBA) program plans, including the integration of IBA data in the World Bird database, and strategies for coordinating the program across the Audubon family.

NAS administrator Greg Butcher demonstrated how Christmas Bird Count data is being used to identify and analyze population trends, including drop-offs in some species that may be related to the West Nile Virus. He also highlighted the Great Backyard Bird Count (nearly 50,000 checklists submitted 2003) and its role and potential to involve a broader audience in conservation, and placed Audubon's Citizen Science work in a (continued on p. 2, NAS Meeting).

Nature's Feathered Bandits

by Paul Webster

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

Few North American birds have been so reviled as the Sharp-shinned Hawk, a diminutive raptor of mountain forests and mixed woodlands. Even many naturalists up through the first half of the 20th century had little use for it. William Dawson, author of the monumental *Birds of Washington State* (1908) wrote: "It is idle to try to speak a good word for this gory little Hawk." Other examples from the literature on birds call the Sharpie "blood-thirsty," "audacious murderer," and "feathered bandit."

The Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) is an uncommon winter visitor to wooded lowlands of northern California. It breeds from the central Sierra forests northward in our state. The Sharpie's summer range stretches north to the tree line in Alaska and Canada, and it winters from the northern U.S. south to Panama. Like its larger relatives in the accipiter family, the Cooper's Hawk and the Northern Goshawk, most Sharp-shinned Hawks are migratory, and thousands pass southward each fall on major flyways along coastlines and mountain ridges.

The Sharpie preys on small birds by bursting from cover and overtaking them in a sudden rush. The long tail and short wings make it highly maneuverable as it barrels through trees and bushes in pursuit of prey, even attacking birds larger than itself. In winter it often shows up, hoping for lunch at bird feeders. Sharpies take chickens too, if available, and so earned the wrath of farmers, who used to shoot them on sight. During fall migration in 1905 one Pennsylvania farmer boasted of shooting 56 Sharpies from his chair in the front yard. And hunters shot thousands annually along migration

corridors; federal protection was extended to raptors in 1972.

Among raptors females generally are larger than males, and this sexual dimorphism reaches an extreme with Sharpies. The males average slightly more than half the size of females, roughly 110 grams to over 200 grams, so the male at about 10 in. is the size of a robin, and the female at 13–14 in. is slightly larger than a flicker. She approaches the size of a male Cooper's Hawk, which can make identification difficult.

Adult Sharpies are dark blue-gray above, the underparts are white, barred on breast and belly with cinnamon. The bird has a short neck, so that the head seems to sit on the shoulders, and the long tail often seems squared-off in flight. Immatures are brownish, flecked with white above,

NAS Meeting

(continued from p. 1)

global context. It was announced that a Coastal Bird Conservation program has been launched, and coastal bird expert Scott Hecker is hired to lead the effort.

Key Audubon issues discussed included Arctic Refuge, Clean Water Act, and wetlands issues, in particular the Water Resources Development Act; appropriation issues for Audubon's mission, such as centers, international family planning, and key conservation programs; and key federal natural resources and environmental programs. With prospects for federal funding dim in this year's budget, the committee looked at how Audubon can best make a difference over natural resources policy not only in Washington but also at the state and Chapter level. It was agreed that efforts to influence policy must continue to use and expand the work our state offices and Chapter grassroots contribute and develop a strategic approach to building longer-term political momentum by focusing on key states and Governors. The desired result would be momentum behind Audubon priorities in these states and Congressional districts, carrying to the national level and complimenting our efforts there.

and have whitish underparts; breast and belly are streaked broadly with cinnamon or brown; the flanks are barred.

The Sharpie was helped to its bad reputation by a lack of understanding about the relationship between predators and their prey. Accipiter populations depend on the numbers of small birds and fluctuate with the abundance of prey. We now know that songbird populations don't depend on the absence of predators but rather on other factors, especially the amount of suitable habitat. So we're freer now than our ancestors to admire the speed, agility, and grace of raptors, including that "feathered bandit," the Sharp-shinned Hawk.

The Quail

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

P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
(925) AUD-UBON
(925) 283-8266

MDAS Board of Directors

President: Mike Williams, 376-1631

Vice President: & Treasurer:
Joe Frank, 674-1219

Secretary: Mike Tischler, 689-5552
Sales Mgr: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732

Programs: Maury Stern, 284-5980
Field Trips: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486

Membership: Ann McGregor, 968-1677

Publicity: Shirley Ellis, 938-3703

Hospitality: Alice Holmes, 938-1581

Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631

Access: Beverly Hawley, 947-0479

Chapter Development: Joel Summerhill,
753-0862

Hands-On Conservation:

Nancy Weninger, 938-7987

Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar,

(510) 658-2330

Gloria Cannon, *Quail* Editor

Member-at-Large:

Jean Richmond

Gloria Cannon, Editor,
(925) 753-0862, P.O. Box 8367,
Pittsburg, CA 94565
gcannon4@excite.com

To My Mother

by Hugh Harvey

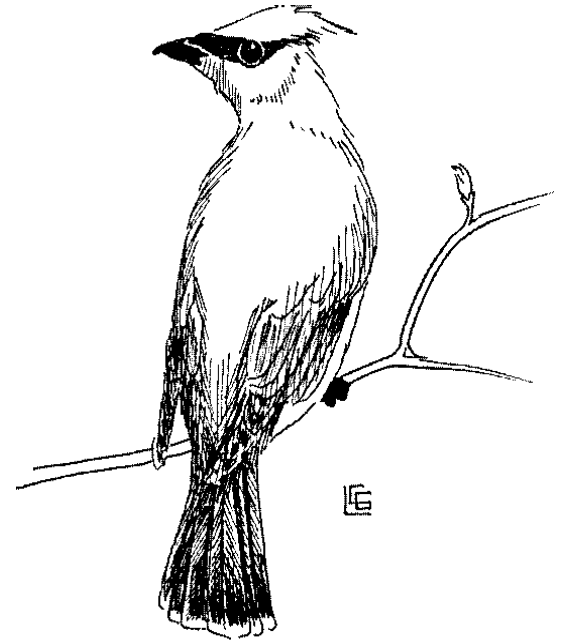
Hugh wrote this for his mother, but we dedicate this story to all mothers everywhere who instill an appreciation of the natural world in their children.—Quail editor

In 1957 while we lived in Cincinnati, a flock of birds flew out of the yard our apartment faced, and one of them hit our second floor window. We kids ran downstairs and outside to pick it up. My Mom identified it for us as a Cedar Waxwing. It soon revived and flew away.

Later that year our family visited Mammoth Cave National Park. One evening my Mom helped me purchase a pair of salt-and-pepper shakers in the shape of Cedar Waxwings. They were a huge purchase for me, costing the then-gigantic sum of 50 cents. One must realize that I was not yet 7 years old. During one morning of our visit, Mom sat on the grass outside our cabin and showed me some Purple Grackles. The cabins were still there when Rosita and I stopped on a cross-country drive to Maryland in 1996.

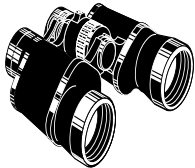
My Mom's interest in birds came from her father, after whom I am named. For many years we used his 1937 hard-bound National Geographic Guides and his gigantic field glasses. We used them to see pictures of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Kansas, and the then-named Sparrow Hawk, which perched under the overhang of the barn next door to our house here in Walnut Creek.

To be born into this world is a blessing, and we have all received many other blessings besides. One of those special blessings for me is that my eyes were opened to the natural world around me by my Mom when she introduced me to the world of birds. I shall think of my Mom, and thank her, too, whenever I am out looking at birds. *Thanks, Mom.*



Observations

by Steve Glover



Twenty-three **American White Pelicans** were at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 5/1 (SG, BW) while another 20+ were at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 5/2 (SG, RF).

The pair of **Great Blue Herons** previously reported as nesting at McNabney Marsh near Martinez were first found building their nest on 3/1 (JD). A **Green Heron** was noted on its nest near the intersection of Treat Blvd. and Oak Grove Rd. on 4/18 (HH). This nest was watched for years by our friend, Florence Bennett.

A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 5/6 was at a most unusual location (DV).

A **Clapper Rail** was at Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline near Richmond on 4/17 (MW).

This remains the only known spot in the county that is easily accessible.

An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found on 5/4 at Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline (RF). This is apparently the first spring record for the county although it would seem almost certain that they occur annually and anonymously amongst the hordes of Western Sandpipers.

A flock of fifty **Vaux's Swifts** was over Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 4/28 (SH).

A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** on 5/3 was only the second record for a Martinez yard in 18 years (DW). A male **Calliope Hummingbird** was at Sibley Regional Preserve west of Orinda on 4/25, and four more were in Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 4/30 (MR).

Three **Olive-sided Flycatchers** in Mitchell Canyon on 4/30 was a high count, particularly for so early in the spring (MR).

Two singing **Grasshopper Sparrows** were along Morgan Territory Rd. on 5/2 (SG, RF). This spot, only a mile or two north of the Alameda County line, may be the most accessible spot in the county for this species. Single **White-throated Sparrows** on 5/5 in a Concord yard (MR) and at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park (MR), were quite late for this species in the county.

At least two **Great-tailed Grackles** were at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 5/1 (SG, BW). This is the only known reliable nesting location for this species in the county.

Observers: Judith Dunham, Rob Fowler, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Steve Huckabone, Mark Rauzon, Mike Robertson, Doug Vaughn, Mark Wales, Bob Wisecarver

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 4, Wednesday—Annadale Sate Park. Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. at the 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 Category 2

June 7, 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 Drake's Beach 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, turn right and drive 1/2 mile, left onto Bear Valley Rd. about 3 miles, and left onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. again. Continue about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Rd. on left. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for more information. Category 2

Sat. and Sun., June 21-22, Yuba Pass. Meet Sat. at 7 a.m. at the Yuba Pass campground; we'll start birding at 7:30 a.m. On Sun., we'll bird in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Fastest route: take I-80 to Hwy 89 at Truckee. Go north on Hwy 89 to Hwy 49. Yuba Pass campground (which is the meeting spot) 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. The website at <<http://www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html>> has a complete listing for the surrounding area. There are campgrounds (vault toilets, no showers, piped water) at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Because weekends usually attract birders from all over California, reserve your lodging now. For more information, call Hugh and Rosita 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.

Field Trip Report

On the first winter Saturday in May, 10 members and guests toured Mines Road. They were not disappointed as they found rain, cold, birds and flowers, and an occasional glimpse of blue sky. More than 70 species were identified, including all those for which we had hoped, such as Lewis' Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Phainopepla, White-throated Swift, Osprey, Green Heron, Common Merganser, Wood Duck, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Magpie, and even a nesting Anna's Hummingbird. Displays of flowers were around seemingly every corner but were especially spectacular in the San Antonio Valley south of the Junction.—*Hugh Harvey*

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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

Birdseed & Suet Sale! June 4–22
Stock up for the summer!
Exciting Bird Program!
Saturday, June 7
Native Bird Connections will be in the store for a program featuring a Great Horned Owl!

We have never had so many sightings of Rufous Hummingbirds (males of course). Normally we only see them for a few days as they migrate up the coast. We've have had one visiting for about three weeks. Many have been seen around Mt. Diablo, Orinda, Moraga, and Lafayette.

Interesting hummingbird statistics:

- They can consume up to one-half their weight each day, feeding 8-10 times/hour.
- Some migrate up to 2000 miles twice a year.
- They weigh less than a penny.
- They can also fly upside down and backwards.
- Their heart is larger in proportion to body size than any other warm-blooded animal.
- If an average sized man had the rapid metabolism of a hummer, he would have to eat over 250 pounds of ground beef each day.

Birdfeeding Tips

Change the nectar in hummingbird and oriole feeders every 3-5 days to prevent mold. Make 2-3 quarts of nectar at one time. Rinse out and refill your feeders every 3-5 days. Keep the rest of the nectar in the refrigerator. You will then have minimal problems with mold. A ratio of 4-5 parts water to one part sugar is suitable if you are feeding both species.

Last year Lesser Goldfinches continued to visit feeders throughout the summer. Keep those thistle feeders full.

MDAS Membership Renewal Campaign Continues

The first year of our MDAS Membership is quickly coming to an end, and many of us will need to renew our membership for another year. You can also join as a life member in two payments of \$250 each.

If your membership expires at the end of the summer, it is time to renew. The date of your last issue of the *Quail* is now printed to the right of your mailing address with the year immediately followed by the month. For example: If you have the number 200307, that means the last *Quail* you will receive is the July/August issue in the year 2003.

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

Be an Early Bird and renew your membership today!

National Geographic Calls on Kids to Become "Habitat Heroes"

Preserving animal habitats is the focus of National Geographic's annual conservation public-awareness campaign this year. "Geography Action 2003! Habitats: Home Sweet Home" hopes to persuade a million kids to become "Habitat Heroes" by taking action to preserve the wild places that birds, animals and plants call home.

Today as many as a third of all plant and animals species in the United States are at risk of becoming extinct, but simple actions, such as recycling just one aluminum can a day, can help save their habitats—and their lives.

Students, teachers, and parents will find a wide range of habitat-related information and activities, including in-depth discussion of what habitat loss means, how it can be prevented and what individuals can do to help, at the program's Web site <nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction>. The site encourages students to learn about habitats firsthand by visiting one of the 540 National Wildlife Refuges in the United States, a 95-million-acre network of protected lands. Also included on the Web site are hands-on habitat-conservation activities, contests, games and links to other conservation Web sites. A comprehensive calendar lists habitat-conservation activities nationwide.

Actor Leonardo DiCaprio started the call to habitat-conservation action in the April 2003 issue of National Geographic Kids magazine, inviting readers to join the Society's million-kid movement to protect the Earth by pledging online to become a "Habitat Hero." This Web site suggests ways kids can protect the environment, such as recycling magazines or cans, planting a butterfly garden, pulling up invasive species or carpooling to school—preferably in a hybrid car.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service are partners in this year's Geography Action! program.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for the year 2003-2004.

Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 for the year 2003-2004.

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive the *Audubon Magazine* (4 quarterly issues).

I'm encosing 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

CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except in July or August. **The last meeting for the 2002-03 year is the Thursday, June 5 potluck.** The new MDAS year begins with the Thursday, September 4, general meeting.

If you are a new member or new to the area, let us know. We want to welcome you and tell you about our activities. All new members and visitors receive a free door prize ticket.

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.

TIME VALUE MAIL

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 66
Concord, CA



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