



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 56, Number 9

June 2011

Mount Diablo Audubon Travels to Costa Rica

◆ Maury Stern

Members of MDAS who went on a trip to Costa Rica in February will present pictures and share experiences of the trip at our potluck dinner on Wednesday, June 1st.

Fourteen people joined an unofficial MDAS Costa Rica bird trip from February 3-20, 2011. Hugh and Rosita Harvey, David and Valerie Hutton, Norm and Debby Kirshen, Paul and Nancy Schorr, Maury and Susan Stern, Will and Kate Taylor, Nancy Wenninger and her sister Terri Davis, made a very congenial group. Edwin Ramirez was our guide. With a great sense of humor, he was always enthusiastic and eager to make sure everyone saw the birds. Edwin's friend Enrique (Kike) Gomez, our delightful bus driver, was also a knowledgeable birder. The trip was arranged by Kathleen Cameron of Majestic Feathers and accommodated birders who stayed for 9, 14 and the full 17 days. <http://www.majesticfeathers.com/>

Most mornings the group started about 6 AM with an hour of birding before breakfast. Then we would bird until lunch, fol-



Left: Great Green Macaw. Right: Rufous-tailed Jacamars are insect eaters and nest in burrows along stream sides like kingfishers. Both photos by Paul Schorr at La Selva Biological Station.

lowed by a siesta. The afternoon included 3 or 4 hours of birding. Dinner was followed by compiling the daily bird list. By 9 or 10 PM most birders were more than ready for a good night's sleep.

Costa Rica is near enough to the equator to have 12 hours of daylight and 12 of darkness. There is a wetter side of the country (Caribbean) and a less wet side (Pacific) with the northwest being the driest area. The country extends from sea level to 13,000 feet. The majority of the 4.6 million Costa Ricans live in the large central valley, which at 3500 to 5000 feet has the most temperate climate.

We traveled to most of the varied habitats during our 17-day trip. This allowed us to see 436 species with 35 hummingbirds, 7 trogons, 5 kingfishers, 12 woodpeckers and 32 tanagers. The multiple habitats included: Tropical Wet Forest at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge on the Osa Peninsula; Lower Montane Rainforest at the Wilson Botanical Gardens and Los Cusingos (former home of Alexander Skutch, who died in 2004 at age 99); Subalpine Paramo above timberline at Cerro de la Muerte (11,000 feet) which is the highest point on the Pan American Highway; Cloud Forest of the Savegre Val-

Continued on Page 8 »

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Wednesday, June 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

6:00 PM Doors open

6:30 Dinner is served

** Please remember to bring your own utensils and cup.*

8:00 PM Announcements

8:15 PM Speaker: **Maury Stern**

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

Annual Potluck Dinner

The potluck dinner meeting on June 1 will be at our regular meeting place at The Gardens at Heather Farm. Doors open at 6:00 PM. Members bring a main dish, salad, or dessert and their own utensils and coffee cup. Please mark your serving plates. Coffee, tea and punch will be provided. Bring your own wine if you wish.

Remember that this event will be on Wednesday, June 1, but it is at the same location as our usual monthly meetings.

Accolades and thanks are owed to our Hospitality Chair, Gerry Argenal, and her volunteer helpers for setting the ambience for this occasion.

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

As I write this month's President's Corner we have just held our yearly chapter elections. We have elected Paul Schorr as our new Vice-president; all other officers remain the same. We will have our annual pot luck dinner on Wednesday, June 1, which will be our final meeting until September.

Last Saturday the Wild Birds Unlimited store hosted an event that was really well attended and had a lot of the local groups and organizations there. "Give a Dam" from Martinez was there to talk about the beavers in their city. Native Bird Connections was there with five wild birds to show off including a beautiful Bald Eagle. None of the birds NBC has can be released into the wild because of some kind of injury that is permanent. Gary Bogue from Contra Costa Times was also at the store. It was a fun event.

I spent two days last week in Southeast Arizona with a friend whose parents live in Tucson in the winter. I had not been to SE Arizona in many years. What a great place it is for birds. We had 85 species on Friday,

many that are fairly rare even for Arizona. For years and years a family named Patton opened their yard for birders to come in and sit and watch the birds. Their home is in Patagonia, which is east of Nogales and almost on the Mexico border. They have long ago passed away but a foundation was set up to maintain the yard and the feeders. A caretaker lives there and watches over everything. They have about ten hummingbird feeders and about six seed feeders. SE Arizona is known for the many species of hummingbirds seen there. We saw about eight species the morning we were there. Nature Conservancy purchased a large piece of land along Patagonia Creek. They have a nice visitor center and miles of trails throughout the property. With water come lots of birds in the desert. We spent a very productive three hours there. If you have not been birding in SE Arizona you need to go. It is maybe the best birding spot in North America.

I hope we see you at the June potluck; and have a great summer.

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 value 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.

Drop-off dates: Friday, September 2, and Saturday, September 3, from 4-5 PM both days.

Pick-up dates: 9/24 Saturday, September 24, and Monday, September 26, from 4-5 PM both days.

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>.

The Quail is published monthly except January and August by Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **The deadline for the July/August issue is June 21.**

Kudos to Volunteers

On May 7, in conjunction with a Mothers' Day celebration at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill, Michelle de los Reyes, Tomi Izuno, Gwen Atihl, and Cevina Targum joined with Moses de los Reyes to host a membership drive for MDAS. It was a good event for MDAS, advocating our goals in conservation.



Cevina Targum and the MDAS exhibit

The next outreach activity will be Heritage Day at Borges Ranch on June 11. Heritage Day includes tours of the historic ranch house, gardening, spinning, quilting, and blacksmithing demonstrations, food, and various exhibits. This is a fun event for all. Why don't you come and say hello to our volunteers?

Volunteers are encouraged to help at Heritage Day. To volunteer for an hour or two at the MDAS booth, or for more information, please contact Moses de los Reyes, at (925) 755-3734. Thank you for your valuable support.

Q

This bird has exceptional eyesight that allows it not only to spot a beetle from a distance of 100 feet, but also allows it to detect ultraviolet light. The bird can perceive the iridescent reflection of urine squirted by voles and can follow their trails.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 6 to learn more.

AACEEEIKLMNRRST

June

4 Saturday..... Outer Point Reyes
 18-19 Saturday/Sunday..... Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

July

30 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

August

20 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

② Saturday, June 4 Outer Point Reyes

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:00 AM. Meet 8:30 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center in Olema. 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 for 6 miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to another stop sign. Go straight on Platform Bridge Road to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Turn right to Olema. Turn right at stop sign and take SR 1 north for 0.25 miles, then turn left on Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We are hoping for migrants. Bring lunch and liquids. Weather is unpredictable.



Point Reyes.
Lighthouse

National Park Service photo

② Saturday/Sunday, June 18-19 Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

Leaders: Rosita and Hugh Harvey, (925) 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 parking lot at the top of the pass at 7:00 AM

Saturday morning. Make motel reservations now! Closest motels are in Sierra City, 11 miles down Highway 49 to the west. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151 or 800-682-9848) is one of the most popular; or try 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. Also, in Calpine is Sierra Valley Lodge (530-994-3367 or 800-858-0322). More listings are at www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html Campgrounds are located at Yuba Pass and Chapman Creek downhill to the west. Sites are available first come/first serve for only three days at a time. Longer term reservations can be made at 877-444-6777, but there is an additional \$10 charge for this service. After June 13 call Wild Birds Unlimited (925-798-0303) for information.



Mountain Meadow Iris
 Maddelena Ranch, Feather River Land Trust
 Sierra Valley

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.diabloaudubon.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: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.



View from the new wildlife viewing platform, Maddelena Ranch, Sierra Valley. Note the plaque acknowledging the sponsorship of MDAS. Photo by Gabe Miller

Trip Reports

North Briones, April 18. Seven members had a good day birding in spite of cool weather and a few sprinkles. Wildflowers were beautiful as always with 25 species identified. Bush lupine were especially in peak bloom. For birds, blue-gray gnatcatcher provided good looks and was even a life bird for one member. Cedar Waxwings circled overhead several times. We watched a Golden Eagle eating prey, possibly a gopher, on the ground above Sindicich Lagoon. We were able to observe pairs of Lark Sparrows and Horned Lark at very close range. 51 species of birds were seen or heard. *Cheryl Abel*

Del Puerto Canyon April 21. Mount Diablo Audubon's field trip to Del Puerto canyon continues to be a very popular event. 17 participants turned out on a cool and changeable weather day. With a brief stop en route at the Westley rest stop on Interstate 5, notables found included Loggerhead Shrike, Western Kingbird and Eurasian Collared-Dove. Moving up Del Puerto canyon from the lower easterly end, the action quickly picked up; highlights included sightings of Chipping, Rufous-crowned and Lark Sparrows, Bullock's Oriole, and Bewick's, House, Canyon and Rock Wrens. Near Graffiti Rock we were not disappointed with very accommodating views of a Costa's Hummingbird at 15 feet. Farther on, a pair of Phainopeplas put in a showy appearance for us. At Owl Rock we found a family of Great Horned Owls (an adult with 3 owlets) perched in one of the numerous holes in the cliff face. Lunch was enjoyed at Frank Raines Park where a pair of Cooper's Hawks provided an entertaining flyover. At the junction with Mines Road we turned south on San Antonio Road for around a mile to look for Lewis's Woodpecker and Wood Duck, both of which were found. Notable here too we observed a Ferruginous Hawk wheeling above us. After retracing our route back to the Junction store for well earned refreshment, we added Lawrence's Goldfinch found feeding on adjacent fiddleneck plants, and completed our sightings list. All told we managed to observe or hear 74 species. *David Hutton*

Mines Road, April 23. Spring is different every year and this year has proved to be no different. We do not usually have rain into the third week of April, so many of the birds are not quite here yet. Still, three

members and four guests had a very successful trip up Mines Road, finding 71 species. Flower viewing was limited, due to the tall grass. Highlights were: Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Magpie, Bullock's Oriole and Eurasian Collared-Dove at Murietta's Well; Western and Clark's Grebes, White-throated Swifts and a Bald Eagle nest with two adults at Del Valle Regional Park; a California Thrasher being kicked off its perch by two male Phainopeplas at MP 5.75; a Green Heron and Greater Yellowlegs at our lunch spot near MP 17.6; Lawrence's Goldfinches, Chipping Sparrow and Western Bluebird at The Junction; and Lewis's Woodpecker, Wood Ducks and another adult Bald Eagle on San Antonio Valley Road.

A coincidental sighting at The Junction was of former member John Ascher. As a teenager in the late 80s, he quickly became one of the premier birders in MDAS. John, now living in New York City, was visiting his sister in Livermore. We were able to show the Lawrence's Goldfinches to him, his wife, Chaoyan, their 13-month-old son, Michael, and to John's brother-in-law, Dale. They joined us for what proved to be a long and difficult hunt for the Lewis's Woodpecker. *Hugh B. Harvey*

Mitchell Canyon, April 28. Twenty-nine birders came to bird Mitchell Canyon on a clear, comfortable day. We saw 57 species typical of the oaks, riparian areas, grasslands, and chaparral of Mount Diablo. Highlights were Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bushtit nest, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, California Thrasher, Nashville and Hermit Warblers, Western Tanager, Sage Sparrow, and probably the last Golden-crowned Sparrow of the season in beautiful breeding plumage. *Maury Stern*

Fernandez Ranch, May 3. Eighteen birders enjoyed a beautiful day on a new trip for MDAS to Fernandez Ranch. Everyone agreed the Muir Heritage Land Trust made a good choice in preserving this property. We found Hutton's Vireo and Lesser Goldfinch nests. Oak Titmouse and Dark-eyed Junco were feeding fledglings. A possible Golden Eagle was seen in the distance. It was interesting to watch a Red-tailed Hawk dive-bomb a Wild Turkey several times. 45 species of birds were seen or heard. Several well-rounded naturalists were in the group so we studied the many wildflowers and butterflies as well. *Cheryl Abel*

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Birdfood Sale

June 1 – June 19

Saturday, June 4 Native Bird Connections will be presenting programs with live birds.

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 5 parts water to one part sugar is suitable if you are feeding both species. If you are only feeding hummers, you can use a 4:1 ratio.
- Please report all oriole and grosbeak sightings.
- Lesser Goldfinches continue to visit feeders throughout the summer. Keep those thistle feeders full.



We are receiving some reports of Hooded and Bullock's Orioles visiting nectar feeders in Contra Costa County. Most of the sightings have been males, with only a few females being seen. The Hooded nest primarily in fan palm trees, while the Bullock's like to make their nests at the end of limbs. Please report all sights to (925) 798-0303.

There have only been a few reports of Black-headed Grosbeaks so far this year. Both males and females are being seen at backyard feeders. Their favorite foods are sunflower, Bark Butter and suet.



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.

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

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).

The migrant season is going strong with the return of many of the breeding birds from the south, birds going north or into the mountains, and the departure of most of the wintering birds.

A **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen in Pine Canyon on an MDAS Field trip 4/9. There was a previous sighting there about 15 years ago. The closest known occasional sightings are in Canyon near Pinehurst and at Redwood Regional Park near the Skyline Gate.

A male **Black Scoter** was seen in the Richmond Marina on 4/18 by RB, MP, and DW.

DW also saw an adult **Bald Eagle** over the San Pablo Reservoir on 4/18.

Golden Eagles were seen on a bike ride up North Gate Road at Mount Diablo SP by BH on 4/14 and near Mitchell Canyon by MD on 5/7.

A **Peregrine Falcon** was at Castle Rock on 4/9, JS, and 5/1, TR.

KB saw **Vaux's Swifts** fly over her Lafayette home on 4/25 and MD saw them at Mitchell Canyon 4/30.

A **Black-chinned Hummingbird** visited W&KT's Martinez home 4/10, and JC's Moraga home 4/16.

Calliope Hummingbirds in migration were seen by many at Indian Paint Brush in White Canyon near Mitchell Canyon 4/15-4/30. ZB, MD, DW.

This was a big season for **Rufous Hummingbirds** with one staying at DH's Walnut Creek home from 3/18-4/28. P&NS, L-MH, MS.

Olive-sided Flycatchers rebounded from low numbers to many sightings in Tilden RP, Black Diamond RP, Sibley RP, Mitchell Canyon from 4/19 on. ZB, MD, TH, PR, P&NS, MS, ZB.

Many **Hammond's Flycatchers** came through Mitchell Canyon from 4/15, with as many as 5. DW on 4/15. ZB, MD, JD.

Many **House Wrens** have been seen at Mitchell Canyon with some exploring nesting holes. MOS.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are common in Mitchell Canyon with one nesting pair observed 5/1, JD, MD.

DH saw a **Western Bluebird** in an oak at his house in Walnut Creek for a new yard bird on 5/3.

Swainson's Thrushes returned 5/6 to Tilden RP and Mitchell Canyon. JD.

Many **California Thrashers** are singing in the chaparral in our area.

Nashville Warblers were seen in Mitchell Canyon 4/24, ZB, 4/30, MD; and in their Antioch yard for a new yard bird on 5/1 and 5/2. P&NS.

Hermit Warblers were at Mitchell Canyon 4/28, HH, and 4/30, MD.

DW saw a **MacGillivray's Warbler** near the Inspiration Point parking lot on 4/18 and JA saw one at Mitchell Canyon 5/4.

Western Tanagers were at Mitchell Canyon on 4/24, ZB, 4/30, MD, at Tilden Nature area on 5/6. PR.

Rufous-crowned Sparrows were at Mitchell Canyon 4/15, DW, Black Diamond Mines 5/6, P&NS, and the Big Springs Trail in Tilden RP on 5/6. T&CK.

Chipping Sparrows returned to Mitchell Canyon 4/24, ZB, and Pine Canyon 5/1, TR.

Sage Sparrows were seen along White Canyon in MDSP by ZB on 4/24.

SL saw **Grasshopper Sparrows** in Las Trampas RP on 5/5.

HH saw the long-present **White-throated Sparrow** at Heather Farm until 5/1.

Lazuli Buntings were widespread after 4/24.

Both **Hooded** and **Bullock Oriole** pairs have been visiting JC's feeders in Moraga since late March.

Pine Siskins were at the Oursan Trail near the Briones Dam on 4/26, JS, and on Mount Diablo 4/27, CA.

Lawrence's Goldfinches were at Pine Canyon 5/1, TR, and Tilden Park Big Springs and Seaview Trails on 5/6, T&CK, and 5/8, TR.

CA Cheryl Abel, JA Jeff Acuff, ZB Zach Baer, KB Kristen Baker, RB Richard Broadwell, JC Judi Cooper, MD Matthew Dodder, JD Jay Dodge, L-MH Liede-Marie

Haitsma, HH Hugh Harvey, BH Bob Hislop, TH Tim Howe, DH David Hutton, T&CK Ted & Christine Koundakjian, SL Steve Lombardi, CL Calvin Lou, MP Michael Park, TR Ted Robertson, PR Phila Rogers, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, JS Judi Sierra, W&KT Will and Kate Taylor, DW Denise Wight.

23 Organizations Sign Letter

REPRINTED FROM
THE BURROW GUARDIAN

On April 6, 2011 the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network (BOCN) delivered a letter to Governor Jerry Brown, California



Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird, and Director of the Department of Fish and Game John

McCamman urging for the immediate development and release for public comment a Burrowing Owl Comprehensive Conservation Strategy that will facilitate the maintenance of viable burrowing owl populations in California, help prevent the further elimination of breeding pairs and population declines across the state, and form a solid foundation by which regional and statewide population recovery and habitat protections can be achieved.

BOCN's letter was a joint effort with Defenders of Wildlife and was signed by 22 other California organizations representing more than 209,000 Californians who have a vested interest in the conservation of the western burrowing owl.

Because development and urbanization are drastically reducing suitable habitats used for nesting, roosting and foraging, and the control of fossorial mammals (e.g. ground squirrels) are eliminating burrows for which this species relies upon year-round for all aspects of their survival, California's population has witnessed drastic declines over the last thirty years. In 2009 surveys found the Imperial Valley burrowing owl population had declined by more than 36% and a report published in 2010 found pairs in the San Francisco Bay Area Interior region declined by nearly 28%.

A QUARTER-CENTURY AGO

FROM THE JUNE 1986 QUAIL

CONSERVATION NOTES

By Al McNabney

SHELL MARSH

To birds who will be looking to Shell Marsh for a place to rest, nest, and feed on their next trek south—what do we say? Do we extend the invitation to come back next year, or do we end up destroying a smallish but important wetland? The Planning Commission, City of Martinez has, in a show of understanding, turned down the application of the Development Co. to convert part of the marsh and surrounding hills into a business park. But the developer will be back before the Planning Commission in May to further argue that a business park will enhance the property and will be good (or at least not bad) for wildlife.

COUNTY GENERAL PLAN TO BE UPDATED

MDAS and other groups interested in life (human and wild) have called for a major update of the County General Plan. A broadbased advisory committee has been called for by the CCC Board of Supervisors and the committee is being established to

carry out initial phases of this important activity. Kent Fickett, a well-known MDAS member will serve as a member of the Committee.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE—WILL IT ALWAYS BE?

The State Water Resources Control Board has started the process of updating existing water policy. An important hearing will involve future allocations and uses of the State's waters. The Committee for Water Policy Consensus, of which MDAS is a member, is involved in developing policy positions. Watch this activity for its results will play a major role in the future of life of the Bay.

TERRORISM—U.S. PARKS AND YOU*

Visitors to U.S. Parks are likely to find reservations for accommodations cannot be obtained. All sold out due to increased U.S. tourism. Visitors to some parks will find management differences, since Park Administration and or facilities have been leased out. With increased visitation to parks we hope the people will give a thought to the future. Our population is growing. Forest lands are being gobbled up in huge chunks for timber products; developers have bought up what used to

be prime open space. At the present rate of population growth, our parks will be totally inadequate—what legacy will we be leaving? Maybe terrorism by-products will produce thoughts that may eventually turn our view of parkland acquisition and maintenance to a better way.



Sketch: Megan Sandri

* *History.com*: On April 14, 1986, the United States launched air strikes against Libya in retaliation for the Libyan sponsorship of terrorism against American troops and citizens. Five military targets and "terrorism centers" were hit, including the headquarters of Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi.

a American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

"Every one knows the Sparrow-Hawk, the very mention of its name never fails to bring to mind some anecdote connected with its habits, and, as it commits no depredations on poultry, few disturb it, so that the natural increase of the species experiences no check from man. During the winter months especially it may be seen in the Southern States about every old field, orchard, barn-yard, or kitchen-garden, but seldom indeed in the interior of the forest.

"Beautifully erect, it stands on the highest fence-stake, the broken top of a tree, the summit of a grain stack, or the corner of the barn, patiently and silently waiting until it spies a mole, a field-mouse, a cricket, or a grasshopper, on which to pounce. If disappointed in its expectation, it leaves its stand and removes to another, flying low and swiftly until within a few yards of the spot on which it wishes to alight, when all of a sudden, and in the most graceful manner, it rises towards it and settles with incomparable firmness of manner, merely

suffering its beautiful tail to vibrate gently for awhile, its wings being closed with the swiftness of thought. Its keen eye perceives something beneath, when down it darts, secures the object in its talons, returns to its stand, and devours its prey piece by piece. This done, the little hunter rises in the air, describes a few circles, moves on directly, balances itself steadily by a tremulous motion of its wings, darts towards the earth, but, as if disappointed, checks its course, reascends and proceeds. Some unlucky Finch crosses the field beneath it. The Hawk has marked it, and, anxious to secure its prize, sweeps after it; the chase is soon ended, for the poor affrighted and panting bird becomes the prey of the ruthless pursuer, who, unconscious of wrong, carries it off to some elevated branch of a tall tree, plucks it neatly, tears the flesh asunder, and having eaten all that it can pick, allows the skeleton



American Kestrel

and wings to fall to the ground, where they may apprise the traveller that a murder has been committed." *John J. Audubon*

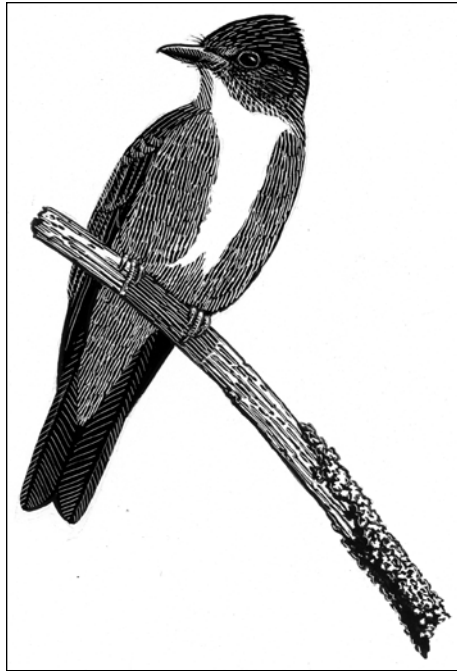
Kestrels need open space where grasshoppers, voles and other preferred prey are plentiful, but also where perches such as fences and power poles are available, where they wait for prey to come into view. They also prefer forested areas nearby, because they use abandoned woodpecker nests—they seldom build their own.

Ornithology Opportunities

The **2011 Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua** is a birding festival of a different sort. The usual field trips and workshops are available, but also, in the American tradition of Chatauqua, you will find cultural events, such as musical performances and presentations on astronomical research. Friday through Sunday June 17-19 at Lee Vining, California. www.birdchautauqua.org

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



Dana Gardner's scratchboard drawings commissioned for the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County* are available at meetings of Mount Diablo Audubon Society, or by calling Diane Malucelli, our Sales Manager, at 925-674-0920. This original art is signed by the artist and is ready for framing. The Olive-sided Flycatcher is priced at \$40; others are priced between \$40 and \$75.

Among the books that this renowned artist has illustrated are *Birds of Costa Rica*, by F. Gary Stiles and Alexander Skutch, *The Minds of Birds* and *Origins of Nature's Beauty*, by Alexander Skutch. Learn more about Dana Gardner at gardnerbirds.com.

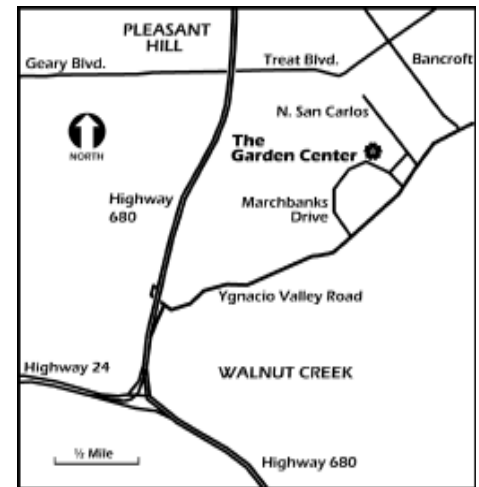
All proceeds go to the education and conservation programs of the Society.

A perfect summer day is when the
sun is shining,
the breeze is blowing,
the birds are singing,
and the lawn mower is broken..

James Dent

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.



MDAS Board of Directors

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Yellow-headed Caracara along the banks of the Río Grande de Tárcoles, Costa Rica. Photo by Norm Kirshen.

Costa Rica

THIS STORY
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ley where the Resplendent Quetzal lives in the oak and avocado forests; Riparian habitat and Mangrove Forest near the Rio Tarcoles, Carara National Park and Villa Lapas; Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest in Guanacaste Province and the Hacienda Solimar Ranch where the Jabiru storks nest; Tropical Moist Forest at Rancho Naturalista in the Turrialba Valley on the Caribbean side; Tropical Rain Forest at Sueno Azul near La Selva Biological Station where the Great Green Macaws hang out; Sarapiquí and the San Carlos plain on the way to Arenal Volcano in the Premontane Tropical Rain Forest.

Seeing the birds was our primary objective, but we also saw monkeys, sloths, Eyelash Pit Viper, two types of iguana, basilisk whiptails, crocodiles, caimans, anteaters, coatis and agoutis. We



Eyelash Pit Viper at Arenal Hanging Bridges. Photo by Paul Schorr

usually saw between 90 and 110 bird species per day with a low of 32 and a high of 118.

The Resplendent Quetzal was the highlight bird for most, but the many parrots, macaws, King Vultures, Jabiru Storks, motmots, and an amazing variety of colorful tanagers and hummingbirds as well as owls and raptors were enjoyed as well.

Many bird families and species were unfamiliar to us, for example: tinamous, guans, limpkins, thicknees, potoos, puffbirds, barbets, toucans, woodcreepers, spinetails, antbirds and antshrikes, tityras, cotingas, manakins, bananaquits, oropendulas and euphonias.

On our way back to the Bougainvillea Hotel where



Resplendent Quetzal. Photo by Norm Kirshen.

we had started our trip, we stopped in San Ramon, a town of 50,000 with about 200 North Americans, and met Edwin's wife Sora and his daughter Fabiola.

Eco-tourism is the number one industry in Costa Rica—ahead of pineapple and coffee growing and electronics. Costa Rica is a safe and easily-traveled country with friendly people (Ticos). Most of us will be returning there again. We'll return to say "Pura Vida"—which in Costa Rica means: hello, good day, good life, thank you and much more.