



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

[www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php)

Volume 57, Number 9

June 2012

## Scott and Claudia Hein ♦ Up and Down Chile From Tierra del Fuego to the Atacama Desert

Chile is an amazingly large, diverse, and beautiful country. The windswept coast of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego is a gateway to Antarctica, while the Atacama Desert is the driest desert on the planet. Spectacular volcanoes rise toward the sky from a 15,000-foot plain—the Altiplano—while also erupting near the beautiful lakes and temperate rain forests of the Lake District. Of course you can't discuss Chile without mentioning the "Dragon's Back"—the high Andes.

While the landscapes of Chile are stunning, its wildlife may be more so. Birds range from the iconic Andean Condor soaring above the peaks of the Andes to the diminutive Chilean Woodstar hummingbird perched in a desert oasis near the border with Peru. Large, flightless Rhea trot past Magellanic Penguins in Patagonia, while endemic and frustratingly "skulky" Tapaculos call—almost always just out of sight—from the dense vegetation of a Southern Beech Forest. The riches of the Humboldt Current



Peruvian Pelican, Humboldt Current; Magellanic Penguin, Patagonia. Scott Hein photos

attract seabirds; many, many seabirds—albatrosses, petrels, diving petrels, storm-petrels, giant petrels, shearwaters—oh my!

Of course there is other wildlife to entrance you during your travels. Guanacos—the wild form of domesticated Llamas and Alpacas—are familiar residents of the lowlands and foothills, but give way to their beautiful and diminutive cousin, the Vicuña, in the high altitude of the Altiplano. Also inhabiting the Altiplano are the weird and wonderful, rabbit-like Vizcachas. Back

at sea level, Commerson's Dolphins cruise the Strait of Magellan and Sperm Whales dive into the Humboldt Current in search of squid (who in turn are hunting other prey).

MDAS members Scott and Claudia Hein will present photos of these amazing landscapes and wildlife captured during their November 2011 trip to Chile with *Wings Birding Tours*. Scott Hein is a freelance nature photographer whose passion is photographing the native plants, wildlife,

*Continued on Page 2 »*

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, June 7**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

6:00 PM Doors open

6:30 PM Dinner is served

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

8:00 PM Announcements

8:15 PM Speakers:

**Scott and Claudia Hein**

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 6. There will be no meeting in July or August.

### Annual Potluck Dinner

The potluck dinner meeting on June 7 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. Accolades and thanks are owed to our Hospitality Chair, Gerry Argenal, and her volunteers for setting the ambience.

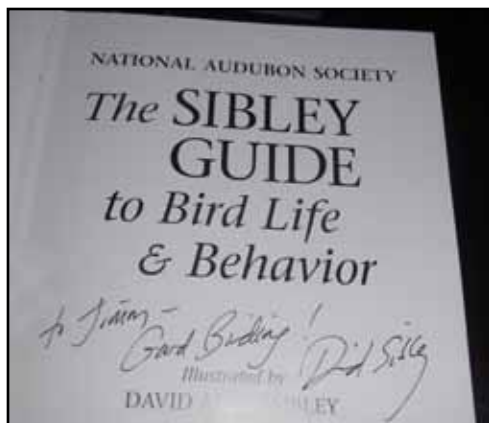
There will be a silent auction table at the June 7 potluck! The auction will include artwork and several wonderful books such as the *Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North America Birds* and *The Jepson Manual of Higher Plants of California*. You can bid on two vacation homes, one in Colusa near the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge and one in South Lake Tahoe. Please note: We will only be able to accept cash or checks for payment.

## President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

About 10 years ago I decided to go to a birding festival in Harlingen, Texas. My wife Bettie went with me even though she does not do much birding. Harlingen is way down the south tip of Texas near the Mexico border. We flew to Houston and then to Harlingen. Southwest Airlines actually flies into Harlingen. It is a city of about 65,000 people. It was my first birding festival and I was amazed at how many people were there. I remember that about 1000 people had come to be a part of the weekend in this small out-of-the-way part of Texas. We stayed at a nice little motel that was recommended by the festival. I went on a couple of the field trips with local guides and saw a few new birds for my life list. South Texas is a great birding area because it is the northern range of many Mexican species that can only be seen in Texas.

There were lectures in the evening by some well known bird experts. David Sibley was the most well known guest speaker. I got him to autograph my Sibley book that I bought there. I remember thinking at the time *What a smart thing for Harlingen to do!*



1000 people come to this little town, stay in hotels, eat at restaurants, do some shopping, spend money and really help the local economy.

An article in *Birdwatching* magazine this past issue put some real figures on this idea of birding festivals. It cited a report done by Bowling Green University on six birding sites around Lake Erie. The findings were amazing to say the least.

- ♦ Birders spent \$26,438,398 during visits to the six areas over a year's time.

- ♦ Birdwatching created 283 full-time and/or part-time jobs in the region and \$1.9 million in tax revenues.

- ♦ 72% of all the people interviewed were willing to purchase binoculars valued at more than \$300 and 48% were willing to purchase a camera worth more than \$500.

The author of the study said that birding's potential to revive local economies is very low and concluded by this statement, "A greater focus is needed by the tourism

community on the birding opportunities in the region."

In the same magazine I think I counted ads for over 20 different festivals; most in places I have never heard of, like Deer Island, Maine. I have heard the number of about 60 million bird watchers in

America. It certainly is one of the most popular hobbies in the country, so when someone says to you "You watch what?!" Tell them some of these facts.

## Native Bird Connections and MDAS—A Partnership

Native Bird Connections has finished a second great year at Valhalla Elementary School in Pleasant Hill with a 3-part program for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students plus a 2-part program for the 3rd/4th and 4th/5th special needs students. More than 360 students, teachers and a few parents experienced a live-bird presentation, hands on with binoculars, and study-skin presentation, together with the final field experience watching for birds in their schoolyard. Again this year the students saw 41 species of birds, with a special low flyover this year of American White Pelicans. The program is curriculum based and has the support of administration as well

as teachers and parents. One parent came up to me later and praised the program by telling me she had never seen the "kids so focused and able to retain and give back so much information even after a few weeks".

I would like to thank MDAS members Sandy Ritchie and Debby Kirshen for all their help with Parts 2 and 3 of this program. I would also like to thank MDAS members who donate money for this program to be able to continue. If anyone is interested in volunteering to help with the bird watching segment of the program please contact us at [buteo@nativebirds.org](mailto:buteo@nativebirds.org); we could use your help this next year.

Diana Granados

## Welcome New Members

Diana Cavanaugh	Lafayette
Teresa Connell	Albuquerque, NM
Ann Donaldson	Oakley
Anne Murray	Walnut Creek
Lori Patel	Orinda

## Chile

» *Continued from Page 1*

and landscapes of the American West. Although his explorations have taken him from Alaska to Antarctica, the wild lands and parks surrounding Mount Diablo near his home remain his favorite photo locations. He strives to be a naturalist first and a photographer second, and believes that the best way to become a better nature photographer is by improving your knowledge of natural history.

His images have appeared in many local, regional, and national publications including *Bay Nature*, *Diablo Magazine*, *California Wild*, *Outdoor California*, and in newspapers ranging from the *San Francisco Chronicle* to the *New York Times*. His images have also been used in several books, including most recently, *Rare Birds of California*, and *Fifty Places to Go Birding Before You Die*.

Claudia is Professor of Chemistry and Department Chair at Diablo Valley College. She and Scott are both on the Board of Directors of Save Mount Diablo.



One explanation for the odd English name of this bird of the forest is that it came from its French-Canadian name Chouette. There is another account, more often heard.

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

AEHHLLNNOORRSTTWWW

*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 12.**

# No Child Left Inside

By Paul Schorr

The MDAS “No Child Left Inside” Program concluded this year’s activities on April 24 and 26 by taking two 5th grade classes, a total of fifty-two Jack London Elementary School students in Antioch, to Contra Loma Regional Park and Reservoir. Their teachers, Marnie Hassig and Evelyn Jones, and several parent volunteers were joined by thirteen MDAS volunteer leaders to enjoy two mornings of exceptional birding. The MDAS volunteers were Jimm Edgar, Brian Murphy, David Hutton, Jody Sherrard, Barbara Minneman, Austin Prindle, Jackie Bobrosky, Mike Tischler, Hugh Harvey, Gloria Cannon, Joel Summerhill, Nancy Schorr and Paul Schorr.

On Tuesday the group enjoyed weather that was clear and warm with high cloudiness; on Thursday the weather was cool and breezy with occasional light rain and brief periods of sunshine. On each day the students were divided into six groups and they rotated among six birding stations on or near Loma Island, each station being monitored by a MDAS volunteer(s) with a spotting scope. Each of the students adeptly used a pair of binoculars that had been purchased by MDAS for purposes such as this activity and other education outreach programs. Brian Murphy borrowed bird mounts from the Lindsay Wildlife Museum to use as teaching aids which complemented and enhanced instruction and learning. Following this activity the groups walked from the reservoir to an open area with views of the oak and buckeye-dotted hills, an introduction to the California savannah. From this location the students also learned the importance of habitats created for California Quail and other animals, the Western Bluebird/Tree Swallow nest boxes and the nearby bat houses.

After lunch, as on MDAS field trips, the groups tallied the number of species seen and/or heard, and the totals were 50 and 49 respectively. The total combined species count for both of the days was 55. Highlights included the following noteworthy observations: a roosting adult Barn Owl; a roosting fledgling Great Horned Owl with the adult flying by occasionally; Lawrence’s Goldfinch (a new recorded species for the park); male Hooded Merganser; Long-billed Dowitcher (another new species); Ash-throated Flycatcher; Western Kingbird; Common Yellowthroat; and Wilson’s



Great Horned Owl adult with owllet. The young owl fledged the day before the field trips, but showed up on the second day in a nearby tree.

and Yellow Warbler. A female Anna’s Hummingbird was observed sitting on its nest. A remarkable scene was a Great Blue Heron catching a pocket gopher, then drowning it and finally swallowing it.

The volunteers all had many teachable moments and they were rewarded with the subsequent excitement and enthusiasm of the students. At the conclusion of the days’ programs, each student received a copy of the book entitled *Backyard Birds of California*, which had been purchased by the Chapter. Throughout the activities the students were attentive, interested and appeared to retain much of what they had learned, and I am confident that they will recall their experiences for a long, long time. Hopefully, some of them someday will even become birders and when asked where it all began, they just might say, “Contra Loma Regional Park with volunteers from MDAS.”

The field activities at Contra Loma Regional Park were preceded earlier in the spring by classroom activities. On February 29, Diana Granados from Native Bird Connections initiated the program by doing an introductory lesson on bird anatomy and behavior. The Red-tailed Hawk that she used during the presentation drew much enthusiasm and excitement from the students, a great way to promote this year’s program. On March 21, Nancy and Paul Schorr collaborated to do a classroom presentation to introduce and instruct the students on the proper use of binoculars. In addition, each student received a checklist of birds for Contra Loma Regional Park. Concluding this lesson, the students were introduced to the Cornell book, *Bird Songs*, so they could learn and appreciate the vocalizations, as well as study the illustrations and information about

the target birds. These books were left with the teachers to use in the classrooms until the days of the field trips.



MDAS member David Hutton and students observing roosting Barn Owls.

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

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



Fledgling Great Horned Owl that was seen by the entire group on Thursday, 4/26. It had flown from the nearby nest only a few trees away.

## June

2 Saturday..... Outer Point Reyes  
 23-24 Sat./Sun..... Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

## July

21 Saturday..... San Mateo Coast

## August

18 Saturday..... Bodega Bay

### ② Saturday, June 2 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. Turn right across the bridge, go 3 miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at the Bovine Bakery for coffee and pastries, continue out of town towards Olema, then turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We are hoping for migrants. Bring lunch and liquids. Weather is unpredictable.

### ② Saturday/Sunday, June 23-24 Yuba Pass

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. After June 17 call Wild Birds Unlimited (925-798-0303) for information.

Make lodging reservations early! 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, High Country Inn (530-862-1530 or 800-862-1530) is across Hwy 49 from Bassett's. Also, in Calpine is Sierra Valley Lodge (530-994-3367 or 800-858-0322). More listings are at [www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html](http://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.

## Come birding with us.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the website at [www.diabloaudubon.com](http://www.diabloaudubon.com).

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

## Trip Reports

**North Briones, April 17.** Fourteen members and guests came to the North Briones Annual Wildflower and Bird Walk. After a brief remembrance of John Davis, we went up the trail to the lower lagoons and continued on to the big Maricich Lagoon. The day was a little overcast at the beginning, but became clear and about 65 degrees by 11 am. We saw 30 wildflower species in sparse amounts and 49 bird species. In addition California Newts were out as well as turtles. Highlight birds were: 5 duck species in the big lagoon, White-tailed Kite in the open grassland area, Golden Eagle, Hairy Woodpecker in a wooded area near the open grassland section, Western Kingbird close to the ridge, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, and Barn Swallow feeding at the Maricich Lagoon, House Wrens on territory at the entrance, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, many Orange-crowned Warblers, and Wilson's Warblers.

*Maurry Stern*

**Mines Road, April 21.** It was hot and the birding was slow. Weather may have affected more than just the birds, as we did not see many flowers, either. Sticky Monkeyflower had barely started to bloom, Lupines were seen along only one short stretch of the roadway. Still, the 17 participants ticked 67 species seen and heard. By far, the sighting of the day occurred at Del Valle Regional Park; while we were watching a Bald Eagle on a nest, a Golden Eagle soared high over a nearby ridge. *Hugh B. Harvey*

**Del Puerto Canyon, 25th April.** On and off showers during the morning greeted nine avid birders to the annual Del Puerto Canyon field trip. A brief stop at the Westley Rest Area on Interstate 5 provided good looks at Eurasian Collared-Dove and Western Kingbird. Once into Del Puerto Canyon, a Costa's Hummingbird and Bullock's Oriole were quickly found; a Golden Eagle put in a brief appearance soaring over the surrounding hills. Further up the canyon at the second abandoned farm, a group of Cedar Waxwings was observed accompanied by a pair of Phainopeplas. Lark Sparrows were seen at several points in the lower reaches of the canyon. A Rock Wren, several Green Herons and a Rufous-crowned Sparrow were found at a canyon just below Frank Raines Park. With the weather stabilizing, lunch was enjoyed at the ORV park where we found Lawrence's Goldfinches and several House Wrens. At the junction with Mines Road, we headed south on San Antonio Road for half a mile and were fortunate to observe two

Lewis's Woodpeckers. After compiling our list at the Junction Café, and in spite of the weather, it turned out we had seen or heard 59 species. Surprisingly, Great-horned Owl and Canyon Wren were no-shows this year.

David Hutton



Townsend's Solitaire at Black Diamond Mines. Beth Branthaver photo.

**Black Diamond Mines Regional Park, May 1.** Ten MDAS members and guests enjoyed a breezy but clear day to participate in the chapter's annual spring outing to BDMRP. They were duly rewarded with 57 species, seen and/or heard. The most significant sighting was a very uncommon Townsend's Solitaire, spotted by Jeff Acuff in the upper picnic area. It perched very cooperatively, providing excellent views for everyone. It even came to the overflow basin at the base of the drinking fountain. According to ebird, this species has only been reported one other time in May in CCC. Other highlights included: Lawrence's Goldfinch, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Say's Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Hutton's Vireo, Warbling Vireo (singing), three wren species (Canyon, Bewick's and House), Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, late-lingering Golden-crowned Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Bullock's Oriole and a Red-tailed Hawk feeding a pair of chicks. Paul Schorr

**Mount Diablo, May 10.** Twelve guests and members met at the car pool site for our field trip up Mount Diablo. We worked our way up the mountain and finished about 1 PM at Juniper campground. We had 35 species for the day which is a very low number. It was quite windy, particularly as we got higher up the mountain. For the first time I can remember we did not see a single warbler species. *Warblers are one of the targets of this trip.* We missed a lot of birds we usually see. Highlights were a Chipping Sparrow at the junction as well as a number of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Also a highlight was a great view of up to 4 California Thrashers at one spot. A few folks got a life bird with the Sparrow. No Black-chinned or Sage Sparrows were seen either.

Jimm Edgar

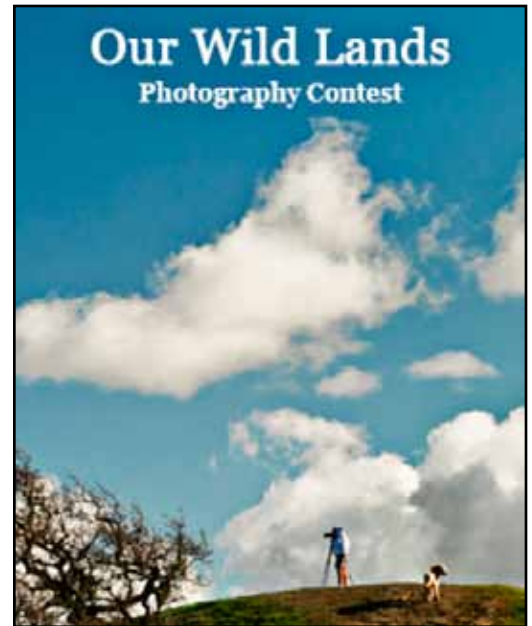
**Mitchell Canyon, May 15.** Twenty-eight members and guests spent the morning at Mitchell Canyon and Red Road in 60 to 75-degree weather with blue skies and ideal sun positions for excellent bird views. 50 species were seen. Highlights: a pair of adult Golden Eagles; Vaux's Swift over Mt. Zion; and an amazingly beautiful Lazuli Bunting in perfect light. We did not see the large numbers of flycatcher or warbler species reported previously the past week.

Maury Stern

The Muir Heritage Land Trust invites you to enter the inaugural Our Wild Lands Photography Contest. Focus your lens on the stunning landscapes and natural beauty of the Muir Heritage Land Trust properties.

Explore the Land Trust's Acalanes Ridge, Fernandez Ranch, Sky Ranch, Dutra Ranch and Gustin properties and submit your photographs for a chance to win prizes and lend your vision to celebrate these preserved lands. Proceeds from this event will benefit the Muir Heritage Land Trust and its work to protect the scenic beauty, rural character, and natural resources of Contra Costa's most important wild lands. [www.muirheritagelandtrust.org](http://www.muirheritagelandtrust.org).

Contest runs through July 15, 2012. Contest entries are being accepted now. Details at <http://muirheritage.contestvenue.com>.



## Kudos to Volunteers



Debby Kirshen, Cevina Targum, and Norm Kirshen talk to visitors during the Earth Day/John Muir Birthday event in Martinez.

At the John Muir National Historic Site on April 21, MDAS members pictured above and Kathy Gonzales, Diane Malucelli, Michelle de los Reyes and Moses de los Reyes represented the Chapter and helped kids learn about birds.

We thank them, and extend our appreciation also to Moses and Michelle de los Reyes, Eugenia Larsen, and Nina and Leary Wong for similar service at our membership drive in May.

# Observations

By Maury Stern

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

Migration is very hot at the moment. A number of exciting birds were seen in the past month including 14 **American Bitterns** in one area, an **Osprey** at Heather Farm, **Black Rail** at Martinez Shoreline, **Solitary Sandpiper** on Bethel Island, **Spotted Sandpipers** in breeding plumage, **Black Terns**, 2 **Northern Saw-whet Owls** at Valle Vista Staging Area, **Pileated Woodpecker** flying over Alamo-Walnut Creek area, many **Hammond's Flycatchers** in Mitchell Canyon, a **Townsend's Solitaire** in Black Diamond Mines RP, a likely **Gray Catbird** in Lafayette, a **Northern Parula** in Mitchell Canyon, an **Indigo Bunting** in Martinez, and many **Lawrence's Goldfinches**.

**Greater White-fronted Geese** were late at Bethel Island and Holland Tract on 4/22. LK et al.

**Wood Ducks** were seen while kayaking at San Pablo Reservoir 4/29 by JDu, LH, and WH.

A late **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Holland Tract 4/22. LK et al.

EL saw 2 **Hooded Mergansers** in Walnut Creek behind Trader Joe's downtown. 4/10; PS saw them at Contra Loma RP 4/16.

There were **Common Mergansers** at Contra Loma RP 4/26. PS.

On 5/11 a **Brandt's Cormorant** was found nesting near the Bay Bridge in Alameda County, but roosting in Contra Costa County. MR, ME, ELi, SM.

A **Pelagic Cormorant** was seen from Point Isabel on 4/22 by LK et al.

DLA had an **American Bittern** in his San Ramon backyard for 5 days near the end of April. On 4/22, AL saw 14 **American Bitterns** at the Iron House Sanitary District Trail in Oakley.

A flock of over 20 **Cattle Egrets** were at the Holland Tract in east county on 4/22. LK et al.

On 5/12, 6 **White-faced Ibis** flew over the area between Point Isabel and Marina Way. SD.

FS saw an **Osprey** at Heather Farm Pond on 5/8. Osprey is not listed on the bird list for Heather Farm.

A **Bald Eagle** was seen while driving by San Pablo Reservoir on 4/19. PB.

**Swainson's Hawks** were seen by LK et al at Black Diamond Mines RP, and Holland Tract on 4/22. DW saw over 50 Swainson's Hawks near Vasco Road and Camino Diablo on 5/16.

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was at Black Diamond Mines 4/17. TH.

**Golden Eagles** were seen by a number of observers near Mount Diablo between 4/11 and 5/15. BH, DH, MD, LK et al, MS. PS saw one at Black Diamond 5/1.

JD saw a **Peregrine Falcon** at Mitchell Canyon 4/30.

**Prairie Falcon** was seen twice at Black Diamond on 4/17, TH, and 5/1, PS.

A **Black Rail** was heard at Martinez Shoreline Park 4/22. LK et al.

A **Virginia Rail** was at Iron House Trail 5/9. FD.

A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Bethel Island 4/22. LK et al.

A **Wandering Tattler** was at Brothers Islands on 5/11. MR, ME, Eli, SM along with 5 **Red-necked Phalaropes**.

**Spotted Sandpipers** in breeding plumage were at Contra Loma, PS, Point Isabel, LK et al, 4/22. FS and HH saw one at Heather Farm Pond 5/8 and 5/12.

PS saw 25 **Long-billed Dowitchers** at Contra Loma 4/22, and AL saw 93 the same day at McNabney Marsh.

Up to 6 **Black Terns** were at the Iron House Sanitary District from 5/5 to 5/9. AL, JH, FD.

**Eurasian Collared-Doves** were at the Big Break area 4/22. LK et al.

A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found in one of the Wood Duck boxes at the Valle Vista Staging Area by MK on 5/12. Two were subsequently seen by CW, DL, and KP over the next 4 days.

Two **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were at Mitchell Canyon on 4/22, as well as one **Calliope Hummingbird**. LK et al.

**Rufous Hummingbirds** continued to be reported from local backyards. MB 4/10 in Walnut Creek, TH 4/14, and PS 4/16 in Antioch.

A **Pileated Woodpecker** flew west over his house near the Walnut Creek-Alamo border on 4/14. It was very well-described by AJ, an excellent 12-year old birder.

First reports of **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were from the Inspiration Point area of Tilden RP by PR and SHa on 4/19. MP

heard one on 4/24 near the Botanic Garden; 5 were heard at San Pablo Reservoir on 4/29 by JD, LH, WH.

4/18 was the first sighting of **Western Wood-Pee-wee** at Mitchell Canyon by PS. Others were present in the next few days. AL, ES, MM, DH.

**Hammond's Flycatchers** were first reported 4/13 at Mitchell Canyon by MR. MD, LLi, PS, DH, LK et al saw them over the next few days.

The first **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** report was 4/14 by MD.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** arrived 4/16, at Black Diamond. PS.

BF saw a **Cassin's Kingbird** near Nimitz Way on 4/25.

BH saw **Western Kingbird** on 4/11 along North Gate Road of Mount Diablo. MS, PS, AL saw them over the next 3 days.

MD saw **Cassin's Vireo** at Mitchell Canyon on 4/14.

PR and SHa identified **Warbling Vireos** at Tilden Nature Area on 4/13.

**Yellow-billed Magpies** were at Holland Tract 4/22. LK et al.

A **Purple Martin** flew over his Lafayette house 4/16. JA.

AL saw 9 **Rock Wrens** at Black Diamond on 4/19. LL saw 2 on 5/4.

**Canyon Wren** was at Black Diamond Mines on 5/1. PS.

**House Wrens** were at Mitchell Canyon 4/30, JD, and Black Diamond 5/4, JHa.

A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Mitchell Canyon 4/24. TF.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** returned to the area starting 4/14 at Mitchell Canyon. MD.

A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at Black Diamond Mines 5/1. JA, PS.

LLi identified the first **Swainson's Thrush** of the season 4/16 at Mitchell Canyon.

A juvenile **Gray Catbird** spent a few minutes in his Lafayette yard 5/12. NL. Of note is that an adult Gray Catbird was there a year ago for a short time also.

**Phainopeplas** were seen at Black Diamond by PS, TH, LL between 4/16 and 5/4.

**Nashville Warblers** were first noted by MR at Mitchell Canyon on 4/13.

A very unusual **Northern Parula** was at Mitchell Canyon 5/13. LK, J-CS.

A late-leaving **Yellow-rumped Warbler** of the Myrtle type was at Heather Farm 5/8. FS.

# Harry C. Adamson

Harry Curieux Adamson, founding member and second President of Mount Diablo Audubon Society, passed away peacefully at his home on April 22. Harry was 95 years of age and died of natural causes. Harry was born on November 14, 1916, in Alki Point, Seattle, Washington. He grew up just outside Hayward, California. In 1941, during a hike with the Berkeley Hiking Club, he met Elisabeth (Betty) Liebhard; shortly thereafter, Harry left on a four-year tour of duty with the army. On a leave home, Harry and Betty were married October 8, 1944. Their marriage remained strong until Betty's death in February, 2010.

Harry and Betty moved to Lafayette in 1953, and in that year met with others to form Mount Diablo Audubon Society, which became a chapter of National Audubon Society on January 14, 1954. Harry was President in 1955-56, and Betty served as *Quail* editor for a term. They led field trips for the group, and they traveled the world together, observing native birds and cultures of the different regions.

Harry gained world-wide acclaim for his ability to express his love of wildlife onto the canvas in a way that captured the heart of the viewer. He was still painting until his health began to weaken about a year ago. In 1954, Harry drew the California Quail that is on the masthead of this newsletter. He also contributed the White-tailed Kite for Ohlone Audubon Society. Over the years, Harry donated paintings and prints for various conservation projects and causes. He was named the first California Waterfowl Association Artist of the Year, and the 1979 Ducks Unlimited Artist of the Year. His works can be viewed at the Blue Wing Art Gallery, 405 Main Street, Woodland, California, [www.bluewinggallery.com](http://www.bluewinggallery.com) or at [www.HarryAdamson.com](http://www.HarryAdamson.com).

Early in his career, about 1939, Harry began sketching birds at Gray Lodge. With the view of the Sutter Buttes and the great variety



Harry and Betty Adamson in Sacramento at the unveiling of his painting of Mallards that was used for the 2008–2009 California Duck Stamp.

of birds, this was one of his favorite scenes to paint. It became his and Betty's dream to establish a hide there, so that visitors could enjoy viewing the waterfowl without disturbing them. This became a reality in 2009, when two hides, one dedicated to Harry and one to Betty, were established with the support of California Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, National Audubon Society, and California Department of Fish and Game.

Harry's love for the earth, birds and animals of all types, and people of all cultures was evident in his art and in his life

**Black-throated Gray, Hermit, and MacGillivray's Warblers** were in large numbers at Mitchell Canyon from 4/13 on. MR, MD, DH, LLI, TF, AL.

FS saw a **Western Tanager** in Walnut Creek 4/13. Many reports followed. MD, PS, RB, KB.

6 **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** were at Sibley Park 4/14. TH, and Black Diamond 4/16. PS.

**Chipping Sparrows** were in White Canyon, Mount Diablo SP, 4/24. TF, and Black Diamond Mines 5/4, JHa.

**Sage Sparrows** were in the chaparral along Red Road at MDSP on 4/18, PS, and 4/29. J-CS.

Many **Grasshopper Sparrow** sightings were reported. Tilden RP, Waterbird Park in Martinez, Nimitz Way, Black Diamond, North Gate Road. AL, BF, PS, MP.

JR's **White-throated Sparrow** was present until at least 4/16 in her Alamo home and BW saw one in her Walnut Creek yard on 4/16.

**Golden-crowned Sparrows** stayed at least until 5/9. FD, TF, JD, LL, JHa.

The **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** stayed from 1/29 to 4/8 at the Antioch yard of PS.

**Blue Grosbeak** was at Bethel Island 4/22. LK et al.

PR and SHa reported the first **Lazuli Bunting** of the season on 4/19 from Inspiration Point.. Many more were quickly seen in the next few days. ES, MM, PBr, DH, BF.

An **Indigo Bunting** was present from 4/13 to 4/18 in a private Martinez yard. It was seen and photographed by HH.

A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Bethel Island 4/22. LK et al.

A pair of **Hooded Orioles** continue at JR's feeder in Alamo.

BH saw an early **Bullock's Oriole** on North Gate Road 4/11.

**Lawrence's Goldfinches** were widespread being seen at Black Diamond, Mount Diablo, and an Alamo backyard waterbath. PS, TH, ES, MM, LL, BH, JHa, SH, BC, MP.

JA Jeff Acuff, PB Pat Bacchetti, KB Kristen Baker, MB Martha Breed, PBr Paul Brenner, RB Richard Broadwell, BC Bill Chilson, FD Frank DeMartino, MD Matthew Dodder, JD Jay Dodge, SD Shirley Doell, JDu Judith Dunham, ME Meredith Elliott, TF Tracy Farrington, BF Brian Fitch, JHa Jim Hargrove, HH Hugh Harvey, SHa Sylvia Hawley, DH Derek Heins, BH Bob Hislop, WH Wendy Hoben, JH Jeff Hoppes, TH Tim Howe, LH Lydia Huang, SH Steve Hutchcraft, AJ Aidan Jenkins, LK Logan Kahle, LK et al Logan Kahle, Jack Dumbacher, David and Margaret Mindell, MK Melani King, DLa Dan Lane, EL Elizabeth Leite, DL Don Lewis, LLI Louis Libert, EL Eric Lichtwardt, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, NL Norm Lustig, MM Mike McClaskey, SM Stuart Mook, MP Michael Park, KP Kathy Parker, MR Mark Rauzon, JR Jean Richmond, PR Phila Rogers, FS Fred Safier, PS Paul Schorr, J-CS Juan-Carlos Solis, MS Maury Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, CW Cal Walters, BW Betty Young Weber, DW Denise Wight.

# Alexander Wilson

» Continued from Page 10

time was to sell subscriptions to finance publication of such a work, and Wilson traveled widely in this quest that proved to be equally as difficult as his recent expedition. He did manage to sell to people of high regard, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. In 1810, Wilson departed on a trip that took him to Pittsburgh, and then south on the Ohio River to Louisville, Kentucky.

In Louisville, Wilson met with John James Audubon at Audubon's general store, which he had established in partnership with Ferdinand Rozier, selling lace from Nantes, France, wines, tea and other goods. Audubon, then 25 years old, and Wilson spent some time together, hunted for birds, and seemed to become friends.

However, when Wilson asked Audubon to subscribe to *American Ornithology*, Audubon had pen in hand, but then demurred, persuaded by Rozier (in French) that his own work was better. Indeed, Audubon's drawings were superior, though Wilson's poetic text was admirable. Following this incident, Wilson was miffed and jealous of the younger Audubon, who became somewhat contemptuous of Wilson. At the time, Audubon had not planned to publish his work, and *Birds of America* was not published until 25 years later.



**Little Owl**

*This is one of the least of its whole genus; but, like many other little folks, makes up, in neatness of general form and appearance, for deficiency of size, and is, perhaps, the most shapely of all our owls. Nor are the colours and markings of its plumage inferior in simplicity and effect to most others. It also possesses an eye fully equal in spirit and brilliancy to the best of them.*

Alexander Wilson

Volume 4, Plate 6 of Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology*, showing from top left: Sea-side Finch, Sharp-tailed Finch, Savannah Finch, and Little Owl.

In *American Ornithology*, Wilson described 56 species of American birds as new, including those we know as Marsh Wren, Song Sparrow and Whip-poor-will. Several specimens sent back from the Lewis and Clark Expedition were first described by Wilson, including Lewis's Woodpecker and Clark's Nutcracker. These specimens were provided to him by Thomas Jefferson and William Clark. For his pioneering studies, Alexander Wilson is recognized with the names Wilson's Warbler, Wilson's

Phalarope, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Plover, and Wilson's Storm-Petrel.

Deservedly designated "The Father of American Ornithology", Wilson compared himself to a schoolboy, and his poetic masterwork *American Ornithology* to a bouquet of wildflowers which he brings home to his mother: "Look my dear 'ma, what beautiful flowers I have found growing on our place. Why all the woods are full of them! red, orange, blue and 'most every color."

## Northern Saw-whet Owl ♦ *Aegolius acadicus*

**a**

Chouette means "little owl" in French, and this is a little owl, although not the smallest. That distinction belongs to the Elf Owl,

It has been written that John James Audubon gave this bird its saw-whet label, but Audubon knew this bird as the Little Owl, or Acadian Owl. He wrote: "The Little Owl is known in Massachusetts by the name of the "Saw-whet," the sound of its love-notes bearing a great resemblance to the noise produced by filing the teeth of a large saw. These notes, when coming, as they frequently do, from the interior of a deep forest, produce a very peculiar effect on the traveller, who, not being aware of their real nature, expects, as he advances on his route, to meet with shelter under a saw-mill at no great distance. Until I shot the bird in the act, I had myself been more than once deceived in this manner."

In Contra Costa County, Northern Saw-whet Owls are said to be uncommon residents, most being in the Berkeley–Oakland Hills, from Tilden Park to Redwood Park. A pair are being reported as occupying a Wood Duck box at Valle Vista.

The Northern Pygmy Owl is also found in the same area. Both species have rounded heads without ear tufts, and they are about the same size, though the Pygmy Owl is a bit smaller. The Saw-whet Owl's tail is inconspicuous, while the Pygmy Owl holds a longer tail at an angle to its body. Another distinguishing mark is the red-brown color of the streaking on the underparts of the Saw-whet contrasting with the black streaking of the Pygmy Owl.

Although they will eat large insects, these owls live mostly on mice and voles.



They may eat just part of the rodent and stash the rest for later. Should the prey freeze in the bird's northern habitat, the owl will incubate it before devouring it.



## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Recently we have been receiving several new guests in our backyard and in our home feeders in the West Contra Costa hills. As the White-crowned Sparrows have moved on, we are seeing an influx of Cedar Waxwings, which have decimated the holly tree next door, leaving virtually no berries.

Our goldfinch population has been steadily increasing, as well as large numbers of House Finches. Along with the parents, we are seeing many new fledglings, who are learning to fight for a perch on one of the feeders. We have also seen a few Black-headed Grosbeaks.

Our Bark Butter feeder has a new daily visitor—a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Two days ago, we had our first Western Tanager on our bottle brush tree. What a beauty!



We have 18 perches available on three tube feeders and another 10 on a finch tube. From 7 AM every morning they are covered with our regular goldfinches, House Finches, Golden-crowned Sparrows, and various visitors. The feeding frenzy continues until dusk.

A family of five Mourning Doves picks up after the perch feeding birds. With all of the birds in the surrounding trees flying back and forth to the feeders there are about 80 to 90 birds at a time feeding in our yard. Along with a few towhees and an occasional Cooper's or Sharp-shinned Hawk, we have a lot to look at and feel good about every day.

When you come in to the store, please let our employees know that you are an MDAS member, so we can add that to our records. This helps increase our donation to MDAS.

Mike and Annie Eliot  
**Wild Birds Unlimited**

692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303

Visit us at [www.wbupleasanthill.com](http://www.wbupleasanthill.com)

## Ornithology Opportunities

The 2012 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 Chautauqua, you will find cultural events, such as musical performances and presentations on various subjects of nature. Keith Hansen, Bob Power, Steven Shunk, Rich Stallcup and David Wimpfheimer are among the 47 presenters and program leaders. Friday, June 15, through Sunday, June 17. [www.birdchautauqua.org](http://www.birdchautauqua.org).

The 37th Annual Conference of Western Field Ornithologists will take place in Petaluma from September 26 to 30.

Late September in northern California is the peak of pelagic birding, ideal for finding rare songbirds, and a great time to see an excellent variety of shorebirds. The conference will have field trips focusing on all these and including four pelagic trips at discounted rates for conference registrants. The conference offers a rich combination of science sessions, field trips, and workshops including: Shorebirds with Al Jaramillo, Pelagic birds with Jim Danzenbaker and Scott Terrill, and Raptors with Homer Hansen and Allen Fish. Peter Pyle will show how understanding molt can enhance your time in the field, Keith Hansen will teach new ways of looking at birds as you learn to make field sketches, and Richard Vacha will help you identify tracks of birds and other wildlife. For full conference info and registration materials, go to the WFO website at: [www.westernfieldornithologists.org](http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org)

"Turkeys, quails, and small birds, are here to be seen; they draw near to the habitations of men, as I have constantly observed in all my travels." *William Bartram*

### 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

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330  
 Vice President: Paul Schorr, 757-5107  
 pkschorr@comcast.net  
 Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929  
 Board Secretary: Diana Granados  
 theothrwl@aol.com  
 Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581  
 greenheron@sbcglobal.net  
 Field Trips: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979  
 Corresponding Secretary: Barbara Vaughn  
 376-8732  
 Sales Manager: Diane Malucelli, 674-0920  
 Membership: Beverley Walker, 952-9925  
 beewalk@comcast.net  
 Volunteer Coordinator: Moses de los Reyes, 755-3734  
 Hospitality: Gerry Argenal, 768-6325  
 Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631  
 tzudiw@yahoo.com  
 Webmaster: Betts Sanderson  
 bettss@pacbell.net  
 Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330  
 Breeding Bird Atlas Marketing: Ann McGregor, 968-1677  
 Member-at-Large: Brian Murphy, 937-8835  
 Jean Richmond, 837-2843  
 Mike Williams, 376-1631  
 mike@mikeandcecil.com  
 Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103  
 ellis.myers@earthlink.net  
 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA 94556-1603

### MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

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

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

Please send The Quail by:  US mail  E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to:

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:

Membership Chair 1932 Golden Rain Road #4 Walnut Creek, CA 94595

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

*Return Service Requested*



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



*Wilson's Warbler, Photo by Glen Tepke*

## Alexander Wilson The Father of American Ornithology

Paisley, Scotland, is a town near Glasgow, and in the 18th century, as it is today, it was a textile town, with several mills along the White Cart River. It's the place made famous by the paisley weaving pattern of teardrop shapes. In Paisley on July 6, 1766, Alexander Wilson was born. His family was poor, and after his mother died when he was just ten years of age, he was apprenticed to his brother-in-law as a weaver.

His interests were not in weaving, though, for his pleasures were walking in the countryside and writing poetry. He began to use his literary skills to write poetry concerning the plight of weavers and their unfair treatment by their employers. This did not fare him well, and, after a stint in jail for libel, and with poor finances, he opted to look for a better life in America. In 1794, along with his 16-year-old nephew, he sailed, able only to pay for deck space aboard the ship.

Wilson found success as a schoolteacher at Milestown, twenty miles from Philadelphia, and later he became schoolmaster at Gray's Ferry on the Schuylkill River, about two miles from Philadelphia's center. Across the river, John Bartram, known as the first American-born naturalist, had built the nation's first botanic gardens in 1728. Wilson and John Bartram's son William became good friends, and Wilson became inspired by William Bartram's knowledge of birds. He decided to become an apprentice to his older mentor, and to devote his energies to learning all he could about birds by traveling across his new country. He had become an American citizen in 1804.

With his nephew, William Duncan, and a friend, Isaac Leech, Wilson set out on foot, making a 1200-mile journey through the wilderness to Niagara Falls and return, in order to study the native birds. He documented this trek with his epic poem—2210 lines long—*The Foresters*.



*Alexander Wilson*

*Portrait by Thomas Sully, c. 1813.*

When Wilson returned from his trip, he received a job offer as assistant editor at a publishing firm, and he announced plans to write and illustrate *American Ornithology*, a nine volume series on the birds of America. The first volume was printed in 1808, others following at intervals. A custom of the

*Continued on Page 8 »*