



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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March 2009

David Wyatt • Bats of the Sutter Buttes

What is the only mammal that flies? Yes, you got it . . . they are our bats. Bats are also one of our most misunderstood creatures with many myths and misconceptions surrounding them. Whether you love them, hate them, or are simply indifferent to them, join us in discovering the fascinating, sometimes bizarre, world of bats. On March 5, biologist David Wyatt will introduce us to many of the bat species we can find here in California and beyond. Learn that most bats eat insects and are extremely important in controlling insect pest numbers. Also discover how bat biologists study these mammals and what that information is revealing about their behavior and life histories.

Dave Wyatt is currently co-chair of the Biology Department of Sacramento City College. He has taught in community colleges since 1993 and has been full time at SCC since 1998 teaching various courses in Field Ecology. His primary research interests have revolved around three areas: Ringtails, bats, and insects (primarily beetles, since 1987). His research has been predominantly in California, but has extended to Baja California, Belize, and Arizona for bats; and Belize, Guatemala, Arizona, and Texas for insects.



Sutter Buttes, the world's smallest mountain range, were known by the Maidu as Esto Yamani—The Middle Mountains—and were regarded as a place for spiritual renewal.

Dave is a parent and is currently owned by four beagles that fill his life with howls of laughter.

In the spring, Dave leads Bat Research Outings to the Dean Ranch in the Sutter Buttes. The Middle Mountain Foundation sponsors these events in association with the Sutter Buttes Land Trust. About a dozen species of bats live in the Sutter Buttes, including the Mexican Free-tailed Bat, as well as the largest and smallest bat species found in North America. The largest is the Mastiff Bat with an 18-20 inch wing span, the only bat that has a call deep enough to be heard by the human ear. On May 17, the hottest day of 2008, Bev Walker and Alice Holmes participated in one of Dave's Bat Research Outings. Their experience was fascinating. They were able to meet seven bat species

up close and personal and found it a great pleasure to see Dave with his students. Dave is a wonderful teacher and his students are clearly enjoying their research with him. Dave is full of amazing information. So, join us for his presentation and come away with a greater appreciation of our nocturnal winged neighbors.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Last fall Cecil Williams, our MDAS Education chair, and several MDAS volunteers, in conjunction with the Moraga Library staff, provided unique bird watching experiences for children. The children had experiences with binoculars, scopes, bird lists, and bird feeding. The evenings were highly successful and great fun for all. Cecil will share pictures and stories, and future plans for expanding the program.

Meeting Schedule

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

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize

8:05 PM Speaker: **David Wyatt**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, April 2:

Bob Stewart, Breeding Strategies of Bay Area Birds

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Welcome New Members

Mary Beth Alban	Moraga
Lisa Anich	Concord
Colleen Cassidy	Lafayette
Mary Lee Dodd	Moraga
Chrislyn Fosenburg	Concord
Nathalie Oram	Alamo
Karol Prinz	Pleasant Hill
Ronald Thompson	Lafayette

President's Corner

Jimm Edgar

Mount Diablo Audubon is off to a busy start for 2009. I hope all of you will attend one of our monthly meetings and go on a field trip. As spring comes and migration begins, it is an exciting time to be out birding. We participated in the Flyway Festival the first weekend of February at Mare Island. It was our new volunteer coordinator, Moses De Los Reyes, first event to staff and lots of folks stepped forward to help. It was a great event and one we have been a part of since it began many years ago. Speaking of new board members, Diane Malucelli has stepped into the sales manager position of the chapter. Barbara Vaughn has stepped back from her long-time role in that job. Barbara has served in many roles for the chapter as well as being president. Thank you Barbara for your service!

Our education committee will once again be involved in our "No child left inside" program at Jack London School in Antioch. Board member, Paul Schorr, will head this up. We will have two classroom sessions with students; one with Native Bird Connections where Diana Granados will bring a number of live birds for students to see and hear about their life cycles and another session to learn how to use binoculars and field guides. In May we will have two field trips for the students to go "birding." This is a great way to expose kids to the outdoors. If you can help, we need volunteers for the field trips. They are on May 26 and May 28 from 9 AM to 1 PM and will be at Contra Loma Regional Park. Contact Paul at pkschorr@comcast.net.

We continue to be deeply involved in the Acorn Woodpecker situation at Rossmoor. I don't at this writing have a lot of new information, but we will keep you informed as developments take place.

Observations

By Steve Glover

A flock of 125 **Cackling Geese** flew over McNabney Marsh on 12/28 (BB).

Seven male **Wood Ducks** at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 1/17 (BL) was outshone by 29 there on 1/19 (RS).

Contra Costa County's 3rd **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** continued at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 12/28 (BB).

Male **Eurasians Wigeons** were at McNabney Marsh 1/24 (MS) and Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline, Richmond on 1/26 (PB).

The male **Harlequin Duck** continued to be seen by many observers at the Richmond Marina 1/7-9.

The male **Long-tailed Duck** continued at the Richmond Marina 1/15-19 (BB).

Seven female **Hooded Mergansers** were at Oak Hill Park, Danville on 1/11 (SH). A male Hooded was at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 1/17 (BL). Two pair of Hoodeds were at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez on 1/19 (MB) and another pair was in downtown Walnut Creek on 1/23 (WK).

An **American Bittern** was at Contra Loma Regional Park, Antioch 1/20-27 (P&NS).

Praise for Barbara; Welcome, Diane!

Barbara Vaughn is the one who, for nearly two decades, has greeted you as you arrive at a meeting. She's the one who encouraged you to buy raffle tickets, Entertainment books, Mount Diablo Audubon hats, birding checklists; and she's the person who has arranged the raffle prizes, which add an extra bit of fun each month.

But Barbara has turned the job over to another volunteer, Diane Malucelli. Diane is the one whom you could always count on to be there at the SF Bay Flyway Festival, the John Muir Open House, and any other of the environmental exhibits in which Mount Diablo Audubon Society takes part.

Diane will be an active and important new member of the Board of Directors. So let's all welcome Diane, and at the March meeting, let's each of us buy one Mount Diablo hat, two birding checklists, and three raffle tickets. You'll be glad you did; she'll be glad you did!

Welcome, Diane! Thanks, Barbara!

A **Bald Eagle** was at Lafayette Reservoir on 12/26 (MM). Falcons at Upper San Leandro Reservoir included a **Merlin** on 1/17 (BL) and a **Peregrine** on 1/18 (RS).

A female **Phainopepla** was at the parking lot at Black Diamond Mines Regional Park, Antioch on 12/27 (P&NS). This is been a very reliable winter spot over the years.

Single **White-throated Sparrows** were at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline in Richmond on 1/7 (LL) and residential Orinda 1/25 (LE).

Fourteen **Great-tailed Grackles** were at McNabney Marsh on 12/28 (BB). This colony now seems to have leveled off at about this size.

Bob Battagin, Martha Breed, Paul Brenner, Lynne Ehlers, Steve Hutchcraft, Wyn Krida, Bob Lewis, Laura Look, Mary Malec, Rusty Scaff, Paul and Nancy Schorr, Maury Stern

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



Red-shafted Flicker
Colaptes cafer collaris
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard • 1930

Q

This smartly patterned bird is frequently seen as it hovers—its long, pointed wings serving as

helicopter rotors—above where it hopes to find its prey. More often, these birds are patiently perched on telephone wires ready to swoop down for a meal.

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

AACEEIIKLMNRRST

Cheers for Our Volunteers

By Moses de los Reyes



A young lady accepts a prize from Carol Matthews while her mother and sisters look on, during the SF Bay Flyway Festival.

The Mount Diablo Audubon Society volunteers actively participated in the 13th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival held February 7th and 8th, at Mare Island. The volunteers enthusiastically shared information on the MDAS and gave out information on birding and conservation. One of the exciting highlights of the event that featured certain birds and their nests was the “Guess Whose Nest Contest.” Children were shown nests of various birds such as American Robin, Barn Swallow, Anna’s Hummingbird, and were asked to guess which nest belonged to which bird. Those who gave the correct answers (even if helped by parents or volunteers) were readily rewarded with nice-looking pins, small toys, and other interesting prizes. The following people participated in the very successful two-day community outreach event: Moses and Ella de los Reyes, Cheryl Abel, Maury Stern, Barbara Minneman, Jody Sherard, Diane Malucelli, Carol Matthews, Susan and Jack Cooper, Gloria Cannon, Joel Summerhill, Evelyn Ivey, Ethan “Chick” and Ruth Chickering. Ron Kline is to be given special thanks for setting up the display at the start, and the Chickering’s are to be thanked for taking it down.

We extend our best kudos to our great team of volunteers! We look forward to the continued active participation of our enthusiastic volunteers to future community outreach events supported by MDAS. We invite all our chapter members to participate and we guarantee that they will have lots of fun and have a great feeling of community accomplishment.

the Quail

Coyote Hills Regional Park

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Along with the neighboring Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge to the south, and the State’s Eden Landing Ecological Preserve to the north, Coyote Hills’ wetlands are a major migratory bird use area along the Pacific Flyway. These wetlands and others on the Peninsula side of the bay constitute the “San Francisco Bay–South” Important Bird Area of California. The IBA hosts more than one percent each of the worldwide populations of California Clapper Rail, Long-billed Curlew, and Saltmarsh Common Yellowthroat. Additionally, it has more than ten percent of the coastal-breeding Western Snowy Plover. Many other sensitive bird species use the IBA, including Burrowing Owl, Short-eared Owl, Least Tern, and Black Rail. There has even been an occasional winter sighting of Yellow Rail.

The open water ponds of the marsh provide an important winter refuge for migratory waterfowl including the Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, and Northern Shoveler. Once here, these ducks recharge their energy reserves by feeding along the surface on rushes, pondweed seeds and aquatic insects. During the months of November through mid-January, a large flock of Tri-colored Blackbirds, a California Species of Concern, takes up roost in the emergent wetland vegetation of the Main Marsh.

The abundant supply of insects provides a food base for nearly 100 species of wintering, migratory and breeding birds that use the riparian areas of the park. During the winter season



Northern Pintail.

EBRPD photo by Joe DiDonato

birds of every shape and size inhabit the willows. This area is important to such wintering species as the Black-crowned Night-heron, Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and is one of the few known sites in Alameda County for wintering Long-eared Owls. During the spring migration the willows support an amazing array of songbirds including: Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Swainson’s Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Yellowbreasted Chat, and Willow Flycatcher. You can almost always count on seeing a White-tailed Kite hovering over the fields.

The Visitor Center is a resource for your understanding of the history of the park, its Ohlone Indian heritage, its Spanish period, its geology, and its involvement in World War II. The Visitor Center is closed on Mondays, Thanksgiving and Christmas; the butterfly garden is also closed on Tuesdays.

Your Quail by E-mail

A number of members responded to our appeal in the February *Quail* to change from US Postal Service delivery to direct e-mail. We want to encourage you to become one of these members who recognize the benefits of making this move.

Just send an e-mail to the *Quail* Editor at ellis.myers@earthlink.net with a copy to the Membership Chair at beewalk@comcast.net. This will assure that we have a valid e-mail address for you. You must also be sure that incoming mail from the Editor is not blocked by your spam filter.



Acorn Woodpecker at work in Arizona

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

March

- 4 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks
- 19 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
- 25 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas
- 28 Saturday Black Diamond Mines

April

- 4 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 8 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 11 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 14 Tuesday North Briones
- 18 Saturday Mines Road
- 21 Tuesday Del Puerto Canyon
- 30 Thursday Mitchell Canyon

May

- 6 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park
- 9 Saturday East Contra Costa County
- 14 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 27 Wednesday Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

① Wednesday, March 4 Walnut Creek City Parks

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979

Meet 8:30 AM at wooden railing at the natural pond, just past the Community Center in Heather Farm Park. This is down the hill from where our monthly meetings are held. We will tour the park, view wintering birds, then drive to Howe-Homestead Park south of Ygnacio Valley Road. Time permitting, we will visit two other park areas off Rudgear Road.

② Thursday, March 19 San Leandro Reservoir

Leader: Don Lewis, 284-5480

Meet at 8:00 AM at Valle Vista staging area off Canyon Road. From SR 24 in Orinda, take Moraga Way to Moraga. From Mount Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, take Moraga Road south to Rheem and then Moraga. At the Chevron station, go south on Canyon Road to Valle Vista.

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. 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.

③ Wednesday, March 25

Lake Lagunitas

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980

This very popular birding trip to Marin passes through varied terrain in the beautiful area of the northern slopes of Mount Tamalpais. Carpool leaves from Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Cross the San Rafael Bridge to US-101 N. Take the first San Rafael exit, go left on 3rd Street. In San Anselmo turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd., continue to Fairfax. Go left on Fairfax Road, follow to left turn on Sky Oaks Road and continue to kiosk. Entry fee required (\$7 last year). Drive to parking lot near foot of Lagunitas Dam. Approximate meeting time is 9:00 AM. After birding the nearby area, we will hike around Lake Lagunitas. We have often found Pileated Woodpeckers here.

④ Saturday, March 28

Black Diamond Mines

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644

Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot at the end of Somersville Road. Go east on Ygnacio Valley/Kirker Pass Roads, in Pittsburg, turn right on Buchanan Road. Go east on Buchanan to Somersville Road (Antioch) and turn right. Alternate route, exit Highway 4 at Somersville Road (south). Follow Somersville to the entry gate, entry fee required, proceed to the last parking lot. Woodland, chaparral and some grassland birds. Bring lunch and a beverage.

Trip Reports

Bodega Bay, January 17-18. Twenty-five enthusiastic birders joined Terry Colborn and Ted Robertson for a full weekend of birding beautiful Bodega Bay on the Sonoma Coast. Roger Marlowe, one of the top birders in Sonoma County, joined the group for the first day. Thanks to Ted, we were able to stay at the UC Davis Bodega Marine Lab, (BML) affording the group in-depth visits to a number of birding hot spots, including having full access to the BML property, which is restricted to the general public. There we were treated to good scope views of Common Murre, Ancient Murrelet and a single Rhinoceros Auklet, the latter two species being a life-bird for several people; Red-throated and Common Loons were plentiful, while a distant Pacific Loon was seen by only a few. A beautiful male American Kestrel remained teed up for everyone to get great scope views. A pair of Wild Turkeys ignored our presence as we departed the BML grounds. Taking advantage of the tides, we were able to study the winter plumages of many wintering birds, adding ten species of shorebirds to our list including Whimbrel, Surf-bird, and both Ruddy and Black Turnstones. The "rail ponds" produced three Virginia Rails, while a Sharp-shinned Hawk passed overhead.

That evening we went on an "owl prowling." Roger Marlowe's expertise at calling owls is remarkable. Everyone was silent as we

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Trip Reports

» *Continued from Page 4*

walked a back road through an old-growth Redwood forest. Roger first imitated a Spotted Owl. A distant bird responded immediately! The two began a duet when the Spotted Owl flew silently and landed in a tall tree above us. We trained our spotlights up in the tree, but were unable to locate it as the owl continued to call. Next we heard a Great-horned Owl calling in the dark night. A second bird responded to its call. Moving on to our next location, Roger called for a Northern Saw-whet Owl. Within minutes, a bird responded; however, it remained hidden in the thick branches above us. Satisfied with hearing and learning the calls of three owls, we returned to the dining hall at the BML for some hot chocolate and snacks.

On Sunday, we again worked the tidal marshes and open waters of Bodega Bay. We were able to see all six North American grebes, including great looks of one Red-necked Grebe already showing signs of its alternate plumage. We spent time working on the distinct field marks that separate Western and Clark's Grebe, as well as those of the Horned and Eared Grebe. Working our way up the coast, we stopped at Goat Rock State Beach, which provides direct access to the mouth of the Russian River, just below Jenner. There we scoped the massive gull flock, and studied the nuances of first, second and third cycle gulls. Although quite challenging, with patience the field marks separate one species from another. We found six species; among the flock were Heermann's, Mew, California and Glaucous-winged Gull. A distant Peregrine Falcon was perched atop a rocky outcropping.

We tallied 108 species for the weekend, under unseasonably warm temperatures in the mid 70s!

Terry Colborn

Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park, January 24. It was a 4-heron, 4-teal, 15-waterfowl kind of day, always threatening and cold, but never quite raining. Seven members walked around Las Gallinas Sewer Ponds. Though we never found the reported Northern Shrike, we did have four heron species, Green-winged, Cinnamon, Blue-winged and Eurasian (Common) Teal, as well as wonderful views of a brilliant male Eurasian Wigeon. The day started with a Merlin in the trees on the

hill. At Rush Creek Marsh we had three teal species in one binocular view. A large number of shorebirds were south of the lake at Shollenberger Park, as well as a large contingent of Mute Swans. Turkey Vultures fed on bird carcasses on the exposed mudflats and a Peregrine Falcon was seen by some. We had 70 species seen or heard for the trip.

Hugh Harvey

Woodbridge/Cosumnes, January 3. On a spectacularly beautiful day, some 20+ intrepid birders traveled to the Central Valley to view the Sand Hill Cranes. After meeting up at Westgate Landing Park, where we birded on the levee, we carpoled up to the Eisenberg Sand Hill Crane Refuge on Woodbridge Road. Initially, we did not see many cranes, but waterfowl were aplenty including a rare Eurasian Wigeon and some Mute Swans. Towards the end of the road the Cranes became much more numerous. We then proceeded to the Cosumnes Wildlife Refuge and walked the wildlife viewing trail where we again saw quite a few cranes. The highlight was the spotting of a Wilson's Snipe barely visible in the brush. A few of the group stayed on after lunch. We saw a total of 60 species! All in all it was a great trip and thanks to all who participated.

Ethan "Chick" Chickering

Lake Merritt and Arrowhead Marsh, January 31. On a cold drizzly day, some 15+ intrepid birders traveled to Lake Merritt to find the rare Tufted Duck. We were joined by two fine birders from the Golden Gate Audubon Society. One of them lived in one of the apartments at the Lake so he was an expert on the wildlife there. We saw many Scaups, both Greater and Lesser and had a rare opportunity to compare them close up. We finally spotted the Tufted Duck at the east end of the Lake. Also spotted were a Mute Swan and many Clark's Grebes. We then traveled to Arrowhead Marsh where there was a flood tide of about 8 feet. Many California Clapper Rails were seen on the thatch islands along with quite a few Soras. The boardwalk was absolutely packed with Godwits, Willets and a few Black Turnstones. We also got superb views of Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroats. We were even able to scope the wrens, something that is very hard to do under normal circumstances. Around noon, Chick and Ruth left for the Flyway Festival to staff the MDAS table while the rest stayed on to bird other parts of the

area. I'd like to thank all participants for a successful trip. *Ethan "Chick" Chickering*
Grizzly Island, February 11. 57 bird species were seen by 13 members in a morning of threatening rain, which did come just as we finished our lunch at Rush Ranch. The predominant bird was Red-tailed Hawk on many poles and trees. We saw no uncommon birds but had good looks at Tundra Swans, 11 duck species, Golden Eagle, Marsh Wren, and Common Yellowthroat.

Maury Stern

Rossmoor vs. *Melanerpes formicivorus*

The fight to save the Acorn Woodpeckers in Walnut Creek at Rossmoor has not yet been won or lost. As of this writing, it was reported that US Fish and Wildlife Service had dictated a temporary hold on the shooting to conduct a survey of the area and determine the number of woodpeckers actually present. The Rossmoor Mutuals, in their request for a depredation permit, had claimed there were 500 birds. As indicated in the report of Dr. Eric Walters printed in the February *Quail*, this is more than 30 times the highest density of this species ever recorded. Audubon California is confident that this census will convince USF&WS to withdraw the permit, but nothing is yet assured.

It is vital that we act quickly to stop this totally unnecessary and ineffectual killing. It has not been widely publicized that a year ago the Rossmoor Mutuals obtained a depredation permit to kill 15 Acorn Woodpeckers, and they did shoot the birds. Does this mean that next year they will want to kill all 500?

Please sign the petition at http://audubonaction.org/campaign/woodpeckers_revoke_permit.

Please contact the following and ask that Permit M 164975-1 (Killing Acorn Woodpeckers) be revoked: Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, www.tauscher.house.gov. Click on "Contact Me" in the upper right portion of the page. Marie Strassberger, US Fish and Wildlife Service, marie_strassburger@fws.gov. Ask Walnut Creek Police Dept. at (925) 943-5844 how shooting can occur within city limits. Contact Senator Diane Feinstein at (415) 393-0707 or email from her website, <http://feinstein.senate.gov>.

American Kestrel • *Falco sparverius*



The American Kestrel is a handsome bird of prey, the smallest of the falcons and most colorful of all raptors. Formerly known as a Sparrow Hawk, the Kestrel is still called by that name in some localities, but it is not at all the Sparrowhawk of Europe, which is an accipiter. And, although small birds may be on their menu, Kestrels feed mostly on small rodents, large insects, reptiles and amphibians. In agricultural areas, the Kestrel has a beneficial role in keeping insect and small rodent populations in check.

American Kestrels are cavity nesting birds, but they do not excavate their own

nesting cavities. They rely heavily on abandoned nesting cavities of woodpeckers, squirrels, and magpies. In the Southwest, they often find hollow Saguaros. They will also nest in holes in cliffs, crevices in barns and building roofs, walls, and ledges. They will also readily accept nesting boxes for their use.

In winter, female and male American Kestrels may use different habitats. The female migrates first and establishes a territory in the preferred more open habitat; the male then uses areas with more trees.

The American Kestrel is almost always seen as a single individual, as it is not a social bird. During the mating season, males and females pair up and have joint territories. With the female on the nest, the male will defend the nest and will bring food whole to his mate, who will tear it apart to feed the chicks. The male does not have the instinct to prepare the food. When the chicks are three weeks old, though, they will beg from their father.

Kestrels are known for their keen vision, which enables them to be successful hunters. There are cones in their eyes that detect ultraviolet light, allowing them to see the iridescent trails left by voles.

Connecting People to Nature

By Brian Murphy



The Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation received a Civic Pride Grant from the City of Walnut Creek to include removal of trailers and 'junk' from Quail Gully at Borges Ranch in addition to restoring a pond and building enclosures to complete a wildlife corridor. The old trailers were headed for a metal recycling center; some old beams were headed for the dump. Our nectar-feeding birds depend on bees to

pollinate their flowers. European honey bees are having problems, so native bees are a good investment in the event honey bees continue to decline.

We cut the beams into 46 large native-bee nesting blocks. We are in the process of having groups drill various size holes in the blocks to provide nests for native bees. The blocks will be installed in various habitat areas, the Gardens at Heather Farm, and other locations to help increase the native bee population. We will have scout groups clean and redrill the holes (remove remains of old nests) every three years.

The Civic Pride project was to excavate silt to restore a pond, enhance a wildlife corridor with enclosures to grow plants, and remove debris. The native-bee blocks are a nice addition to the project.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



American and Lesser Goldfinches are present at the feeders in more abundant numbers than we have seen in recent years. Pine Siskins are almost non-existent in local backyards. We only had two reported sightings all winter. This irruptive species is very nomadic and is not always seen in Northern California.

Dark-eyed Juncos have been quite abundant. We have also received many reports of Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Oak Titmice, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees visiting peanut and suet feeders.

It's such a delight to hear the titmice calling—a sure sign of spring. Chickadees and titmice are already starting to nest. It's not too late to put out birdhouses. Both of these species, along with woodpeckers, nuthatches, bluebirds, wrens, and others will readily use nesting boxes. Birdhouses should have drainage, ventilation, and cleanouts. These elements provide a safe, secure home for the birds. Also, depending upon the species you are trying to attract, specific hole sizes and floor dimensions are required.

Workshops at Wild Birds Unlimited

Saturday, March 7 • 10 AM Rise and Shine Workshop! Your Garden is Awakening!

Our trees are already beginning to bloom. It is time to start planning for a bird and butterfly friendly garden this year. WBU's own Plant Lady, Yvonne Breukers, has been busy on your behalf all winter. On March 7, her famous plant cart returns to the store for 2009. Find some early treasures to enhance your habitat. Join Yvonne's first workshop this year on wildlife and native gardening.

Saturday, March 14 • 10 AM Pelican Rescue and the International Bird Rescue Research Center

This organization is located in Fairfield and is in the forefront of the battle to save the pelicans. Over 100 pelicans have been found with mysterious maladies. Come learn about this interesting and valuable organization.

Mike and Cecil Williams

Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Ornithological Opportunities

Wings & Wildlife Festival of Southern Nevada, Laughlin, NV, March 12-15. Where Nevada, California and Arizona come together. Field trips: Colorado River, Havasu NWR, Lake Mead NRA, Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Topock Gorge, many others. Birds: Yuma Clapper Rail, Gilded Flicker, Juniper Titmouse, Bendire's Thrasher, Crissal Thrasher, Gambel's Quail, Least Bittern, Abert's Towhee, Verdin, lots more. www.snbwtp.org. Southern Nevada Birding and Wildlife Partnership.

Olympic BirdFest 2009, Sequim, Washington, April 3-5. Join the celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, where you'll find a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, and Pygmy Owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage. Enjoy birding trips, boat tours, and a traditional salmon bake at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center. Check at www.olympicbirdfest.org or call 360-681-4076. Follow your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two-night birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 5-7. e-mail info@olympicbirdfest.org.

Godwit Days, Arcata, April 16-22. Extraordinary birding opportunities await you at the 14th annual Godwit Days

Did you know that our web site, <http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php> has a calendar of birding field trips and other events not just for MDAS but for other Bay Area venues as well?.

spring migration bird festival. California's North Coast offers towering redwoods, rocky ocean coasts, wild river valleys, expansive mudflats of Humboldt Bay, and the world-renowned Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary, where 271 species of birds have been sighted. This Festival has it all: 111 field trips and other events include birding by kayak, river raft, harbor tour, pelagic trip.

Heron Festival and Wildflower Brunch, Clear Lake State Park, Kelseyville, April 25-26. This annual event combines a wide range of activities for everyone who loves nature and wants to learn more about it. All activities are free, except the pontoon boat tours to the Heron rookeries and the Wildflower Brunch. The State Park entrance fee is waived that weekend for Heron Festival attendees. www.heronfestival.org.

Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival, April 29-May 5. Field trips to Butterbredt Spring, Canebrake Ecological Reserve, Kern NWR, Kelso Creek Sanctuary, Kern River Preserve, Owens Lake. <http://kern.audubon.org/KRVSNF.htm>.

the Quail

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Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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MDAS Board of Directors

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The Garden Center

Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.,



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These are a few of the American White Pelicans that visited the North Marsh at Coyote Hills Regional Park last September.

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Coyote Hills is one of the most productive of the East Bay Regional Parks for birders. At press time, the EBRP District was reporting large groups of American Avocets, sandpipers, and Snowy Plovers seen from the trails. Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and Snowy Egrets can be seen throughout the day as they move from the salt ponds by the bay, across the hill sides, and down to the freshwater ponds. Common Goldeneyes, Mallards, Canvasbacks, and Green-winged Teals can be seen in the North Marsh. American White Pelicans are moving back and forth from the bay side of the park to the marshes. A Golden Eagle has been reported hunting along Red Hill for rabbits, as White-tailed Kites hover for voles on the hillsides and marsh edges. Along Tuibun Trail a pair of American Kestrels has been seen hunting American



The Coyote Hills Butterfly Garden, adjacent to the Visitor Center, contains host plants for the caterpillars that hatch into butterflies, seemingly by magic.

Goldfinch, White-crowned Sparrows, and Marsh Wrens. Western Meadowlarks are on the open grasslands of Red Hill, and this spring their melodic trills will be heard once again. In other seasons the diversity of species depends on the amount of water in the marshes and ponds, and factors such as migration; but birding is equally impressive in any month of the year.

Coyote Hills Regional Park is remarkable for its abundance of natural, cultural and scenic resources. The range of hills, extending for a length of more than two miles, at the edge of the San Francisco Bay is a striking landmark along the shoreline. Trails along the undulating ridgeline provide sweeping 360-degree views of the region. The geology of these hills is also important for the natural history that the rocks reveal.

The park is composed of a mosaic of wetland and upland plant communities that support many native, migrating and state and federally listed wildlife species (such as the salt marsh harvest mouse). There are about 500 acres of grassland primarily on the hills; a willow woodland which has the greatest diversity of bird species within the park; and an almost 500-acre fresh water wetland system. The plant communities and their seasonal changes help to create much of the park's visual quality and landscape character.

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