

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 2010

Join us for a special evening on March 4. Following a short business meeting at 7:00 pm and a refreshment break, our main speaker, John Schaust, Chief Naturalist for Wild Birds Unlimited, will discuss his experiences—

Searching for a Ghost Bird

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker • John Schaust

On February 27, 2004, more than 60 years after the last confirmed sighting in the United States, an Ivory-billed Woodpecker sighting was proclaimed from the bayous of eastern Arkansas. However, search efforts during the intervening six years have yet to produce conclusive evidence that the Ivory-billed still survives. But a flicker of hope still exists as dozens of intriguing sightings and sound recordings have been made in both Arkansas and Florida.

Join John Schaust, Chief Naturalist for Wild Birds Unlimited, Inc., for a look at the life and history of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and a review of the many attempts that have been made, including his own, in the effort to confirm its continued existence.

Come listen, watch and maybe be intrigued, too!

As Chief Naturalist, John supports over 270 WBU stores in encouraging their customers to be active backyard bird watchers and to be knowledgeable stewards of the environment. His duties include conducting and reviewing scientific research on birds and birdfeeding, along with the development of nature and hobby education materials for franchise stores located throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Prior to joining Wild Birds Unlimited in 2004, John spent over 25 years as a professional naturalist with federal, state and local agencies, specializing in interpretive and environmental education, nature center operations and natural resources management. An avid birder, John has been a federally licensed bird bander for almost 30 years and has served for the past three years as a member of the USF&WS Refuge System.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, March 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Announcements

7:10 PM Refreshments,* door prize

7:30 PM Speaker: **John Schaust**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, April 1: **Bob Stewart**
The Birds of Costa Rica

Englishman Mark Catesby came to the United States in 1712 to study the natural history of the plants and animals of the North American colonies. His volume "The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands" was published in London in 1754.

When Catesby came across the Ivory-bill he named the bird the "largest White-bill Wood-pecker" and was apparently the first person to describe the species.

In Catesby's book he writes: "The bills of these Birds are much valued by the Cannola



Indians, who made Coronets of 'em for their Princes and great warriors, by fixing them round a Wreath, with their points outward. The Northern Indians having none of these birds in their cold country, purchase them off the Southern People at the price of two, and sometimes three, Buckskins a bill."

German edition print "Der grosse Specht mit dem weissen Schnabel." Cecil and Mike Williams collection.

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

As all of us know, the State Park system in California has been under siege these last few years. There were some anxious moments during this last Christmas Bird Count season as to whether we would be able to get into some of the parks because of closures. Audubon has a long history of supporting our State Parks. The budget cuts have been sad to watch. That is why Audubon is supporting a ballot initiative that will provide dependable funding for our parks.

If approved by the voters, the State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act of 2010 will increase the vehicle license fee by \$18 and in exchange give all Californians free access to all State Parks. It will also generate \$500 million in annual funding for State parks and wildlife areas. It should be noted that 50 state parks include Audubon Important Bird Areas.

Audubon is part of a growing coalition of dozens of initiative supporters including The California State Parks Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Save the Redwoods, Defenders of Wildlife, and many more.

Before this can go to the voters, it has to gain enough signatures to get on the ballot. Audubon California has set a goal of 475,000 signatures by April 15. We will have voter sign-up sheets at our meetings.

Our chapter had a booth at the San Francisco Flyway Festival in early February. It is held at Mare Island and had thousands of visitors. I hope you can volunteer for one of our outings. They are lots of fun and give the chapter good publicity.

The chapter continues to be very involved in local issues such as the reuse plan at the Concord Naval Weapons Station and the Altamont wind farms. There will be more info on the wind farms this spring.

Lastly, our chapter lost two of our longtime members in the last month. Betty Adamson passed away in early February after a long illness. She and husband Harry were founding members of Mount Diablo Audubon in 1953. Bev Hawley, an MDAS board member, died unexpectedly. She was a faithful member at nearly all of our meetings, greeting people as they arrived. They both will be missed by all of us.



IN MEMORIAM: BETTY ADAMSON 1918 – 2010



Betty Adamson, beloved wife of Harry Adamson, California's premier painter of wildfowl, passed away peacefully on February 8, 2010 at the couple's home "La Casita de los Pajaros" in Lafayette, California.

Betty was born in Minnesota and grew up during tough times. Surviving cold winters and childhood poverty made her strong and independent. After high school she moved with her sister to California and went to work for the University of California. An avid lover of the outdoors, she joined the Sierra Club and the Berkeley hiking club where she met Harry Adamson in 1941. Their union, ever strong, allowed Harry to pursue a career as an artist while Betty took care of the business end of things. Betty had no children, but she has many nieces and nephews in the area.

Betty and Harry moved to Lafayette in 1953 and became founding members of the Mount Diablo Chapter of the Audubon Society. Over the years, both Harry and Betty led expeditions and joined many trips to observe birds all over the world. On several trips to England, they were impressed with the "hides" built at Slimbridge, which allowed birders to view ponds without disturbing the birds. It was primarily Betty's persistence that

A peaceful view of the Sutter Buttes from the Betty Adamson Observation Hide, Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, Butte County.

kept their dream alive to one day see such facilities at their beloved Gray Lodge. In 2005 a coalition of friends from California Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Audubon Society raised enough money to build two such hides at Gray Lodge—one named for Harry and one for Betty. Birders will now forever enjoy the fulfillment of her dream.

Betty Adamson was a great friend of wildfowl and of the environment. In her own quiet way, the strength behind her husband, she was instrumental in raising funds and awareness of conservation needs in California and indeed the world through contributions to the World Wildlife Fund and Msuri International. She was a friend to all she met.

We cherish her memory.

Diane Inman



Harry and Betty Adamson on the occasion of the unveiling of Harry's painting for the 2008–2009 California State Duck Stamp. Sacramento, July 2008.



Observations

By Maury Stern



Greater White-fronted Geese were at Martinez Shoreline Park and East Contra Costa Holland tract during the month. DM, TR, AK, JCS.

Snow Geese were in Meeker Slough near Richmond and East County on 1/4 and 1/16. JCh, DH, DM.

At Miller-Knox Park in Point Richmond a **Ross's Goose** was present on 1/16. DH, JCh.

Cackling Geese were at Heather Farm and Martinez Shoreline on 1/9 and 1/11. TR, HH.

Big flocks of **Tundra Swans** were seen in East County by TR, JCS, DM, and JR, on 1/4, 1/5, and 1/25.

On 1/25 and 2/1, NJ and JD saw a **Eurasian Wigeon** at Miller-Knox Park.

PG saw a Eurasian Race of **Green-winged Teal** at McNabney Marsh on 1/16.

A male **Tufted Duck** remained at Clifton Court Forebay in the Byron area through the month. TR, JCS, DM, JR, PB, TK.

Two **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were there also on 1/15 and 1/17. TK, SH.

Hooded Mergansers were at Clifton Court Forebay and Heather Farm Pond on 1/4 and 1/5. DM, BH.

PS saw an **American Bittern** at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch on 1/12.

Two **White-tailed Kites** flew over ST's house in San Ramon 2/2.

Ferruginous Hawks were in East County through January. DM, JB, JR JCS.

JB saw a **Golden Eagle** at Lime Ridge 2/1. There was a **Merlin** near Clifton Court 1/6. PB.

A **Peregrine Falcon** was near the Richmond Costco on 1/16. DH, JC.

Hundreds of **Sandhill Cranes** were in the Holland Tract area of East County on 1/4 and 1/25. DM, TR, JCS.

DM saw numbers of **Eurasian Collared Doves** in Byron on 1/4. These birds are exploding in population in the County.

MS heard a calling **Western Screech Owl** outside his Lafayette house on 2/1 and 2/7.

Many **Burrowing Owls** were seen in East County during January. DM, PB, TR, JCS. An **Allen's Hummingbird** was seen at Miller-Knox Park by JD on 2/1.

Lewis's Woodpeckers were at Briones Regional Park and Los Vaqueros Reservoir in late January and early February. ES, AM, MSh. This is an invasion year for these birds in the upper Sacramento Valley.

SS saw a **Brown Creeper** on a tree about 4 feet away, outside of a room, on 2/5.

On 1/13, a **Phainopepla** was at Black Diamond Mines. PS.

There has been a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** along the Iron Horse Bike Trail near Cherry Lane in Walnut Creek all during January. FS, HH, JC.

DW spotted a **White-throated Sparrow** at the Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga on 2/2.

On 1/25, there were large flocks of **Tri-colored Blackbirds** in Holland Tract. TR, JCS. There were many **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** there as well on 1/25. DM, JR.

Great-tailed Grackles are at McNabney Marsh. MS, AZ.

PB Pat Bacchetti, JB Jane Barnes, JBr Jerry Britten, JCh Jim Chiropolis, JC Judy Cooper, JD Judith Dunham, PG Phil Gordon, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, BH Bob Hislop, SH Steve Huckabone, NJ Nancy Johnstone, AK Alan Krakauer, TK Tony Kurz, AM Amy McDonald, TR Ted Robertson, JR Jennifer Rycenga, FS Fred Safier, PS Paul Schorr, ES Emily Serkin, MSh Mary Shea, JCS Juan-Carlos Solis, MS Maury Stern, SS Susan Stern, ST Steve Taylor, DW Denise Wight, AZ Andy Zdon.

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Maury Stern at mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to *EBB Sightings*.

Q

According to Project FeederWatch, this species is seen at more feeding areas than any other bird in North America. Eighty percent of the people responding reported seeing them at their feeders.

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

ACDDEEJKNORUY

Welcome New Members

Gail Byrnes	Livermore
Evelyn Centeno	Martinez
Wendy Parfrey	Oakland
M. Joan Stewart	Walnut Creek

Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival

The first Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival will be held in western Marin and Sonoma Counties April 23–26. It will feature more than 50 walks, presentations, and classes on birding, butterflies, wildflowers, and other nature subjects.

On-line registration takes place at www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org. Such well known naturalists and birders as Rich Stallcup, Jules Evens, Lisa Hug, David Wimpfheimer, Steve Howell, Sarah Allen, Keith Hansen, Allen Fish, Ron LeValley, and David Herlocker will lead the walks and presentations. An affordable boat trip to Cordell Bank to see pelagic birds and marine mammals will take place April 26.

An on-line auction will feature such exciting items as birding trips to Peru, Ecuador, and South Africa; bed and breakfasts stays in West Marin; high quality binoculars, and many other birding-related items.

The Point Reyes area has one of the highest bird species counts in North America, and the Festival is timed to take advantage of spring migration (when birds are in their brightest plumage), as well as local breeding and nesting. There will be a four-part series of walks emphasizing learning bird songs. A special CD "Birding by Ear at Point Reyes" is available for purchase as part of the Festival.

The Festival benefits the habitat conservation work of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

Those interested in attending the Festival should register soon, since many of the walks and presentations will fill up quickly. Each person who registers before March 30 will receive in the mail a free 2010 engagement calendar from Wild Nature, illustrated by John Muir Laws of the California Academy of Sciences.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

March

- 3 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks
- 18 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
- 24 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas
- 27 Saturday Black Diamond Mines

April

- 3 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 7 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 10 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 14 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park
- 19 Monday North Briones
- 22 Thursday Del Puerto Canyon
- 24 Saturday Mines Road
- 29 Thursday Mitchell Canyon

① Wednesday, March 3 Walnut Creek Parks

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979.

Meet at 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 18 Upper San Leandro Reservoir

Leader: Don Lewis, 284-5480.

Meet at 8 AM at Valle Vista staging area off Canyon Road in Moraga. From SR 24 in Orinda, take Moraga Way to Moraga. From Mount Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, take Moraga Road south to Moraga. At the Chevron station, go south one mile on Canyon Road to Valle Vista. Expect 55-60 species.

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.

Come birding with us in March!

③ Wednesday, March 24 Lake Lagunitas

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979.

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.



Somersville Townsite, Black Diamond Mines

③ Saturday, March 27 Black Diamond Mines

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644.

Meet at 8 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. Alternative 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 16. Birding Bodega Bay at any season is a treat; mid-winter can be exceptionally productive. Despite a threatening forecast, fifteen enthusiastic birders made the early morning trek in hopes of viewing the wide variety of species known to winter there. We were rewarded handsomely for our efforts. Meeting at the Tides Restaurant parking lot, we began the day with Common and Pacific Loon; Ruddy Turnstone; Surf Scoter; dozens of Brant; Bufflehead; Willet, Marbled Godwit; Least Sandpiper; Western and California Gull; Anna's Hummingbird; a young Red-shouldered Hawk, and we hadn't even left the parking lot yet!

Moving on Porto Bodega Marina, we were able to study first- and second-cycle Mew Gull, as well as Western Gull. Among a small raft of Greater Scaup were several Lesser Scaup and a single drake Common Goldeneye. Both Western and Clark's Grebe were present, as were several Eared Grebe.

Although the Rail Ponds were quiet, we were able to scope the bay from there and found Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, and Surf Scoter, Horned Grebe and Ruddy Duck.

We scoped Campbell Cove from Westside Road. Everyone was able to get views of a first-winter Red-necked Grebe.

From Bodega Head we were treated to nice views of Black Turnstone among a group of 27 Surfbirds resting directly below us, while two pair of Black Oystercatcher worked the rocks in search of food. A mixed roost of cormorants afforded us the opportunity to study the field marks of both Brant's and Pelagic Cormorant.

At Smith Brother Road after lunch, we identified Least and Western Sandpiper, Dunlin, Willet, and Marbled Godwit. In the nearby Monterey pines a beautiful male Townsend's Warbler was observed gleaning insects. Suddenly Kristen Baker called out, "What's this big bird flying at us?" Our collective eyes quickly fixed on an incoming adult Bald Eagle! As it coursed the shoreline, the assembled throng of over 1,000 shorebirds scattered in all directions.

At Doran County Park we added Sanderling and Black-bellied Plover, as well as Forster's Tern, as a small flock of Greater White-fronted Geese flew overhead. Sharp eyes picked out a Peregrine Falcon on a post at the edge of the saltwater marsh. With increasing rain and winds, we called it a day, forgoing our planned evening "Owl Prowl." We tallied 75 species for our efforts. *Terry Colborn*

Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park, January 23. Ten intrepid birders defied threatening skies and had a great day with 75 species. We had some sprinkles and a couple of short periods of light rain, but all had come prepared so no one got wet.

At Las Gallinas we had a cooperative Green Heron, four Common Mergansers, a pair of White-tailed Kites, four Say's Phoebes, and many Tree Swallows were overhead. Many ducks and shorebirds were in the marsh to the south but in the glare of the sun. We made only a passing stop at Rush Creek as the water was high, with only Mute Swans in view, but several ducks were along the far shore, too far away to identify. At Shollenberger Pond we had many waterfowl including a male Ring-necked Duck. Among many shorebirds were several Blacked-bellied Plovers, but no Pacific Golden Plovers. Most shorebirds were way down at the south end of the mudflats. We went to adjacent Ellis Creek where we saw several birds including the elusive Swamp Sparrow, which everyone

BEVERLY HAWLEY · MEMBER OF THE BOARD

Beverly Hawley passed away the week of January 18. You'll remember her as the one who—for many years—greeted us at the door with a smile and sold us raffle tickets. She was one of our most active volunteers who could be depended upon to cover those last unfilled shifts at our educational events and environmental fairs. She is also remembered for encouraging the Chapter to facilitate better techniques to aid the hard of hearing attendees at our meetings.

Bev spent her life giving to others. She was a lifetime member of both National Audubon and Mount Diablo Audubon Society. She was born in Wisconsin and raised in Southern California. She earned her bachelor's degree at UCLA, her teaching credential at UC Berkeley and her master's degree at Cal State Hayward. She taught school in the Mount Diablo Unified School District and was an active volunteer with the Oakland Museum of California where she received an award for 40 years of docent service in natural sciences, art and history. Beverly was active in SHHH, taught AARP classes to mature drivers in Rossmoor where she lived, and she was involved with the Rossmoor Japanese Club, as well as her neighborhood Emergency Response Team.

Bev Walker

eventually saw. A brief stop at the north end of Shollenberger Pond produced the hoped-for nine Blue-winged Teal. *Jean Richmond*

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh, January 29. The trip to Lake Merritt and Arrowhead Marsh was quite successful. We met at the lake before the high tide and had a "6 Grebe Day," though the Red-necked Grebe was not cooperative, keeping its head tucked the whole time. We had the female Redhead, the male Ring-necked Duck, the Green Heron; and a Cooper's Hawk sat atop the aviary. But even with ten pairs of eyes, we could not find the Tufted Duck. We knew we had a good tide at the marsh when we saw water covering the low spot at the last parking lot entrance. Many Clapper Rails were seen and we had some tremendous close-up Sora views. In the mitigation area we also saw one Burrowing Owl, on the back side of mound #1, viewed from the paved trail leading out of the handicapped parking lot. From the same spot we also had two Phoebes, one Black and one Say's. Those of us who ate our lunch at Garretson Point also saw a Greater Yellowlegs, two male Blue-winged Teals and a Spotted Sandpiper, bringing to 73 our species total for the day. *Hugh Harvey*

Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve, February 6. Despite the gloomy forecast, five intrepid birders, Marty and Sandy Stewart, David and Valerie Hutton and trip leader Ethan Chickering assembled at the Sun Valley Mall parking lot. After meeting up with Marti and Jay Edeal at the Westgate Landing County Park in Lodi, they proceeded to Woodbridge Road and the Eisenberg Sandhill Crane Refuge and the Cosumnes River Wildlife Preserve. A total of 61 species were observed including many Sandhill Cranes plus hundreds of Pintails, Shovelers and Greater White-fronted Geese. Also we spotted many Tundra Swans and Green-Winged Teal. Probably the best birds of the day were a pair of Swainson's Hawks. Notable among the species not spotted were Western Scrub-Jays, Steller's Jays and American Avocets. Interestingly enough, not a drop of rain fell on the group while we were in the field although we drove through a few showers on the way back home. All in all, a very successful trip. *Ethan Chickering*

Dark-eyed Junco · *Junco hyemalis*



In Contra Costa County, Dark-eyed Juncos are found throughout the year, often at feeders. Most are resident, but these birds are joined in winter by birds migrating from more northerly breeding territories. Those that migrate over long distances have slightly longer wings, better suited for their flights.

In the US there are two Junco species. Yellow-eyed Juncos are only seen in the mountains of southeast Arizona and neighboring New Mexico. It is the Dark-eyed Junco that is ubiquitous in the rest of the country. There are, however, twelve subspecies, of which the Oregon Junco is most familiar. Slate-colored Junco, occasional in Contra Costa County but widespread in the east, is known as the Snowbird, for its appearance at winter's onset and for its snowy white underparts and dull-gray back like the leaden skies of winter. Pink-sided and White-winged forms are in the Rockies and western Great Plains.

David Sibley, in *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*, reports a curious observation: A Dark-eyed Junco may fly to the top of a seed-bearing grass stem and ride down as the stalk bends to the ground, where the bird's weight holds the seed cluster steady during dinner.

The scientific name is derived from the Latin words for "rush" and "wintry"—although the birds do not prefer marshy habitat—and the word meaning "wintry".

Contra Loma

» Continued from Page 8



Paul Schorr photo.

park locations to encourage the owls which help control a large resident population of northern pocket gophers. Grassland bird species may be observed in many locations throughout the park, including both sides of the entrance road. In the past, a reliable area for Burrowing Owls has been at the large park sign which is located at the end of Frederickson Lane. Adult Burrowing Owls have often been observed perched atop the sign and adjacent fence posts, and last year at least six young birds fledged.

Among the mammals to be seen are coyotes, gray foxes, jackrabbits, California ground squirrels, mule deer, raccoons and skunks.

To reach Contra Loma Regional Park from Highway 4 in Antioch, exit on Lone Tree Way and proceed south to Golf Course Road. Turn right on Golf Course Road and right again on Frederickson Lane. Proceed to the park entrance.

Kudos to SF Bay Flyway Festival Volunteers

Sincere appreciation is expressed to volunteers who actively participated in the 14th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, February 6-7. The outstanding volunteers were Dave Kwinter, Carol Pachl, Diane Malucelli, Mary Scheely, Cheryl Abel, Carol Matthews, Carol Haglund, Ann McGregor, Donna Kramer, Beverly Walker, Rosita and Hugh Harvey, Gloria Cannon, Mike Robertson, Michelle de los Reyes, and Moses de los Reyes. The volunteers greeted the many visitors to the event, shared valuable information about birds and their habitats, gave introduction about MDAS, and hosted a guessing game on the types of birds that nested in various nests. There was much excitement among the audience when they learned about MDAS's important outreach activities to different communities, especially to local schools.

MDAS has been an active participant in the SF Bay Flyway Festival for many years. Indoor activities were on Mare Island and many of the Festival tours allowed the guests to experience the interesting features on Mare Island that are not usually accessible to the general public.



The Blue Goose mascot of the National Wildlife Refuges gives a "thumbs-up" to the Mount Diablo Audubon exhibit at the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival. Diane Malucelli is on duty in the background.

MDAS members are strongly encouraged to participate in future events that highlight our chapter's presence and promote conservation awareness and community



A happy surprise awaited those volunteers who visited the Art Show and learned that Paul K. Schorr's photo of Mount Diablo in last December's snow had won a first-place ribbon.

education. MDAS is fully dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education.

Moses de los Reyes, Volunteer Coordinator

Ornithology Opportunities

San Diego Audubon Society's Bird Festival, March 4-7. Among the 56 field trips and workshops are three trips into Baja California (passports required); an 8-hour pelagic trip to the Islas Coronados and a 6½-hour pelagic trip for whales as well as birds; two trips for birds of the Anza-Borrego Desert. Other special venues are Marine Corps Camp Pendleton, and behind-the-scenes tours at San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park and the avian collection at the San Diego Natural History Museum. A brochure and registration form can be ordered at 619-682-7200 or contact sandiegoaudubon.org.

Olympic Birdfest 2010, April 9-11, Sequim, WA. A bird watching vacation for beginners to experts, from leisurely strolls to active hikes. Enjoy the show from guided birding trips, boat tours, silent auction, salmon banquet, and more. Stay on for a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands. Register at www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org. Bird-Fest program information and registration can be found at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

Monterey Bay Pelagic Birding Weekend, September 25-26. Terry Colborn is organizing a weekend birding trip to the Monterey Bay area for Mount Diablo, Ohlone and Yolo Audubon chapters. The weekend will feature a pelagic trip on Saturday with Monterey Seabirding (www.montereyseabirding.com), and land birding on Sunday. Monterey Seabirding uses a local skipper with over 30 years experience.

Leaders include Roger Wolfe, Don Roberston, Dan Singer and Steve Bailey. All four are seasoned, life-long birders, and have exceptional knowledge of the status and distribution of California birds.

This two-day trip is planned to coincide with the peak of fall migration. Over the years, the Monterey Bay/Carmel area has produced some excellent vagrants and a nice array of migrants in late September. Areas to be visited on Sunday may include Carmel River State Beach, Point Pinos, Salinas River State WMA, Moss Landing, Moonglow Dairy and Elkhorn Slough. Specific locations will be determined prior to the weekend, and will be based upon up-to-date information on rare bird sightings, weather conditions, tides, etc.

The pelagic trip is limited to a maximum of 25 participants. The cost is only \$75 per person. Sign-ups will be taken on a first-come, first-served-basis. Make your check payable to Terry Colborn and mail to: 1714 Magnolia Place, Davis, CA 95618. Include each participant's full name, address, cell phone number and email. Your payment in full is your reservation. Your space will be confirmed upon receipt of your check. In the event the boat trip is cancelled by Monterey Seabirding, due to weather conditions, etc., participants will receive a full refund. Meeting details and accommodations information will be sent to all participants well in advance of the weekend.

For more information, contact Terry at tlcgdc@aol.com, or by phone: 530-758-0689.

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
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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.



MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year.
- 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: E-mail US 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



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Great Egret, Contra Loma Regional Park. Paul Schorr photo.

Contra Loma Regional Park

By Paul and Nancy Schorr

Contra Loma Regional Park, located in south Antioch, is a 776-acre park that includes an 80-acre reservoir which is maintained by the Contra Costa Water District. The surrounding lands are owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and managed by the East Bay Regional Park District.

The discovery of coal in the 1860s occurred just two miles south, near what is now Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. Contra Loma and Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve share a common park boundary, and connecting hiking and riding trails facilitate exploring the adjoining parks.

Ecological habitats within Contra Loma Regional Park are varied and include the open water of the reservoir, the marshy shoreline, riparian woodlands, and the surrounding grassland, savanna and oak



A Burrowing Owl is eager to greet you at Contra Loma Regional Park. Brian Murphy photo.

woodlands along the tops of the ridges. These diverse habitats provide wonderful opportunities for birding, and we have personally accounted for 107 species there. Target birds include American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, Golden Eagle, Burrowing Owl, Barn Owl, Merlin and Red-shouldered

Hawk. The reservoir is the wintering habitat for many migratory waterfowl, and spring and fall migrations can bring notable species. Some of the best birding may be attained at the south end of the reservoir around Loma Island which is accessible by a foot bridge. Here, there is a marshy area with cattails and rushes which provide excellent habitats for American Bittern, Sora and Virginia Rail, and other expected species. The reservoir is a very popular place to fish; and, after the fish plantings occur, American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants and Osprey may be frequently observed. After birding the south area of the reservoir, we like to bird the hillsides further south, located on the south side of the unpaved parking lots. This is a good location for raptors which may include Golden Eagle, Merlin, Red-tailed Hawk, White-tailed Kite and American Kestrel. In this same area a very successful Western Bluebird Recovery Project is clearly evident. The nest boxes are also used by Tree Swallows. In addition, vegetation plantings and habitats have been installed to attract and protect California Quail. Nest boxes for Barn Owls have been sited in many

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