



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 58, Number 6

March 2013

Fishers of the Sierra Nevada ♦ Reg Barrett

Professor Barrett will discuss the findings his fisher study has published regarding the importance of rodenticides in the ecology of this rare mesocarnivore in the southern Sierra Nevada. The effects of anticoagulant rodenticide on public and community forest lands have recently raised concern for fishers (*Martes pennanti*), a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. Professor Barrett and his colleagues autopsied 58 carcasses of the Pacific fisher from the two isolated California populations and found 79% of the fishers had been exposed to an anticoagulant rodenticide, with 96% of those individuals having been exposed to one or more second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide compounds. Additionally, the study documented the first neonatal or milk transfer of poison from one female to her kit.



Toxicants may not only pose a mortality risk to fishers but could also pose significant indirect risks by depleting rodent prey populations upon which fishers depend. Dr. Barrett will discuss the implications of the findings, as well as those of others, on the conservation of wildlife in general. The rodenticide issue is much larger than most people realize.

Professor Barrett grew up in the East Bay and graduated from Humboldt State College with a bachelor's degree in Game Management. He received his master's degree in Wildlife Management from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan and a Ph.D. in Zoology from UC Berkeley. He is currently the

Goertz Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Management at UC Berkeley.

Illegal or irresponsible use of anticoagulant rodenticides continues despite recent

regulatory changes regarding their use. The distribution of exposure suggests that anticoagulant rodenticide contamination is widespread within the fisher's range in California, which encompasses mostly public forest and park lands. A likely source of anticoagulant rodenticide exposure to fishers is the emerging spread of illegal marijuana cultivation within California public and private lands. In 2011, a three week eradication operation of marijuana cultivation removed over 630,000 plants and 23,316 kg of trash including 68 kg of pesticides within the Mendocino National Forest in the northern California fisher populations range. Anticoagulant rodenticides and pesticides are typically dispersed around young marijuana plants to deter herbivory, but significant amounts of anticoagulant rodenticide compounds are also placed along plastic irrigation lines in order to deter rodent chewing.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Lisa Owens Viani of Raptors are the Solution (RATS) will update us on the progress her group has made in raising awareness of how second generation rodenticides affect raptors and other wildlife and how their efforts have helped to limit the availability and use of these poisons.

Eagle Scout candidate Matt Borglin will also talk about educational displays he made for Lindsay Museum, Native Bird Connections, The Gardens at Heather Farm, and Raptors Are The Solution to use to educate the public on Barn Owls. Three of the boxes were impacted by second generation rodenticides.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, March 7**, 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,* raffle

8:05 PM Speaker: **Dr. Reg Barrett**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, April 4: Brent Plater

Antioch Dunes: Endangered species

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

I hope all of you had a chance to see and read the article in the SF Chronicle written by Mike Lynes, executive director of Golden Gate Audubon. It was in the February 8 issue. The article was about the peer-reviewed study done by the Smithsonian Conservation Biological Institute and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that indicated that as many as 3.7 billion birds were killed each year by outdoor cats. 3.7 billion! This is way more than ever thought before and should serve as a wake-up call to everyone who cares for cats and birds. 70% of those birds were killed by feral cats. The implication is clear; we must begin to do something about outdoor cats. I am well aware of what a huge problem this issue is and the forces that would fight those who want this to happen, but I believe this is a disaster. Our board is going to discuss this issue and see where we might go on it. There have been some programs with limited success and like a lot of issues you can't solve the entire problem, but we must do something. If any of you have ideas or wish to join us, let me know.

What You Can Do

Cats that are allowed to roam outdoors are more likely to catch a disease or to be hit by a car. Cats also are at risk of poisoning from catching small rodents that have ingested anticoagulant rodenticides. Cats are natural hunters.

Keep your cat indoors and encourage others to do the same. If you are unwilling to keep your cat indoors, do not attract birds to your yard by putting out bird feeders, bird houses and bird baths.

Identify your cat. Use a collar and tag or microchip your cat in case it gets lost. Spay or neuter your cat as early as eight weeks of age.

Never abandon cats. This is cruel to the animal and in Contra Costa County is punishable as a misdemeanor under Article 416-4 of the Health and Safety Code. Instead, take the cat to an animal shelter where it has a chance of being adopted.

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By Jimm Edgar

On a brighter note, we once again had over a hundred folks at our general meeting. It is encouraging to see such good attendance. One of the reasons, of course, is the great programs that Ariana Rickard, our program chair, has arranged. The other is our great hospitality. The hospitality crew does a great job, but we need all of you to bring those cookies and snacks, so don't be bashful.

As you might remember, three of our members, Kent Fickett, Bill Chilson and I joined Hawaiian native Sonny Gamponia to set a new species one day record for the island of Maui last year. We are going to try the Big Island of Hawai'i this year on February 27. I will let you know how we do.

I think I mentioned last month how pleased we are that Nancy Wenninger has stepped forward to chair the MDAS conservation committee. Three others have agreed to serve with her. They had their first planning meeting a few weeks ago and are well on their way to taking on some issues in our county and further afield.

Don't feed unknown cats without making a commitment to finding them a permanent home. Feeding stray or feral cats will only lead to rapid growth in their numbers and rapid decline in the numbers of California Quail.

Support laws that prevent cats from roaming.

Keep feeders well away from bushes and underbrush where cats can hide. If free-roaming cats remain a problem at your feeders, please discontinue feeding the birds. You are doing more harm by attracting birds into a yard where there are cats.

Q

This bird's discovery in 1741 is a remarkable story. It was found in Alaska by the first non-native to set foot on Alaskan soil during the naturalist's only ten-hour stay on the mainland. The bird is a native of the Pacific Coast, the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Madre Occidental.

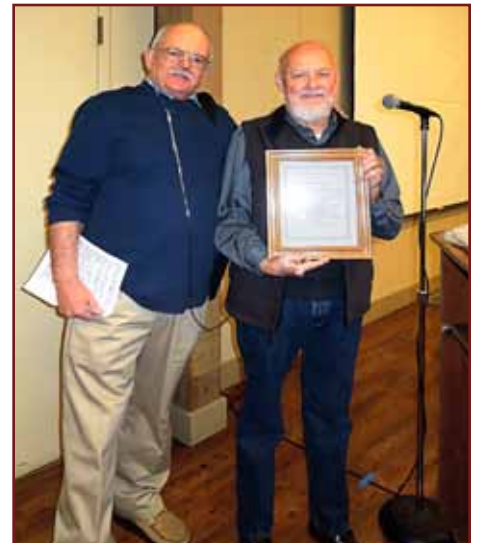
Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 6 to learn more.

AEEJLLRSSTY

Welcome New Members

Charles Bennett	San Ramon
Terry Duff	Walnut Creek
Eda Kung	Walnut Creek
Mary Morgan	Walnut Creek
Marianne Polkowski-Burns	Walnut Creek
David and Linda Shinn	Pittsburg
Linda Wehrmeister	Concord

Gary Bogue Given Al McNabney Award



Brian Murphy photo.

At the February meeting of MDAS, the Al McNabney Environmental Distinction Award was presented to Gary Bogue, "In recognition of his lifetime achievements as everyone's favorite nature columnist and for his resolute efforts in promoting conservation of habitats for wildlife." The certificate also included this statement from Al McNabney, quoted from his final conservation column in the Quail: "As has been said by those with more wisdom than I have, 'extinction is forever.' As I'm wont to say, birds don't vote, they don't lobby, they don't make campaign contributions. Its OUR job to speak and work FOR them."

Former Mount Diablo Audubon President Mike Williams made the presentation, after which Gary delighted the audience with tales of his encounters with mountain lions and other adventures with wildlife.

Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB Sightings@yahoo.com. If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

A Herring run began the second week of February around Ferry Point in Point Richmond bringing in thousands of gulls. Also in February the irruption of Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches continued, joining the nationwide irruption of Red Crossbills moving east, Common Redpolls coming south and Evening Grosbeaks in many areas.

The **Brant** continued in Richmond at Meeker Slough with four seen 1/27, TM.

Wood Ducks were in Walnut Creek near Civic Park 1/16, P&NS.

Up to three **Eurasian Wigeons** were at Miller-Knox Park in Point Richmond 1/21, JC; 1/30, KF; 2/6, SD.

Blue-winged Teal were at Mountain View Sanitary District on 2/7, AL; and 2/8, JA.

A single **Black Scoter** was at the Richmond Marina 1/21, JC; and 1/27, DH.

HH counted 70 **Bufflehead** at Heather Farm Pond 1/25.

JK saw a **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Lone Tree Point in Rodeo 1/24.

Hooded Mergansers were widespread from Walnut Creek Civic Park, Las Trampas Creek behind Trader Joe's in Walnut Creek, Newhall Park in Concord, and Iron Horse Regional Trail in north Concord, P&NS, DR, LL, CF, HH.

There were 33 **American White Pelicans** at Lafayette Reservoir 1/19, M&SS.

Bald Eagles were seen at Borges Ranch-Shell Ridge Area 1/17, AL; Seaview Trail Tilden RP 1/20, DB; Richmond Bay 1/20, AF, RS, LOV; 1/29 a pair at Lafayette Reservoir, LLa; 2/2 at San Pablo Reservoir, AL; 2/2 at Big Break Regional Park, CS; and one harassing an **Osprey** 2/6 at Lafayette Reservoir by NW and RW.

C&TW saw a **Ferruginous Hawk** at the north side of Los Vaqueros Reservoir 2/10.

Golden Eagles ranged from Los Vaqueros to San Pablo Reservoir, Waterbird Preserve in Martinez to Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga. PD, VR, JK, AL, JA, TH, C&TW.

In conjunction with the Herring Run at Ferry Point two rare gulls were seen and photographed: **Slaty-backed Gull** and **Kumlien's Iceland Gull** 2/8, NA, TE, MP.

DS saw **Barn Owl** on Waterfront Road in Martinez 1/27 and 2/2.

Up to three **Short-eared Owls** were at Pacheco Marsh off Waterfront Road. First seen 1/8 by AL, many observers saw them after that. JA, TE, TR, SC, DW.

There was a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** in Point Richmond 1/18, LC; and another in the Douglas firs at Lake Anza in Tilden RP 2/3. JC, AG.

The first Contra Costa County report this year for **Allen's Hummingbird** was on 2/3 by JC and AG at Wildcat Canyon RP and RB near the Richmond Marina. Some had arrived along the coast a week earlier. SD on 2/6 and CS on 2/20 also saw their first of the season Allen's Hummingbirds.

A single **Lewis's Woodpecker** was at the north entrance to Los Vaqueros Reservoir 2/10. C&TW.

Numerous **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued in abnormal places.

C&TW saw 15 **Mountain Bluebirds** at Los Vaqueros 2/10.

On 2/2, BM saw and heard **Townsend's Solitaire** on the trail to North Peak at Mount Diablo State Park.

California Thrashers are singing in the chaparral throughout the area. It's Spring for them.

Cedar Waxwings are now frequent as the berry crop has become abundant.

DW saw an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at her peanut feeder 1/27.

The Lafayette Reservoir **Swamp Sparrow** continued attracting birders. P&NS, MP, NW, RW, and MR on his sixth try.

P&NS saw a **White-throated Sparrow** at Contra Loma RP in Antioch 2/12.

Pine Siskins continued their irruption. BH, DHu, LG.

JA Jeff Acuff, NA Noah Arthur, DB David Bowman, RB Richard Broadwell, JC Jim Chiopolos, LC Lynn Clifford, SC Sherrill Cook, SD Sheila Dickie, PD Pat Doughty, TE Todd Easterla, TF Tracy Farrington, AF Alan Fish, CF Carol Fowler, KF Kathy Francone, LG Lisa Gorrell, AG Ann Griffith, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, BH Bob Hislop, TH Tim Howe, DHu David Hutton, JK John Kenny, LLa Lynn Lasko, AL Albert Linkowski, LL Laura Look, BM Bruce Mast, TM Tara McIntire, MP Michael Park, MR Mark Rauzon, DR Dee Rich, TR Ted Robertson, VR Vicki Robinson, DS Don Sandri, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, CS Catherine Spaulding, M&SS Maury and Susan Stern, RS Ron Sullivan, LOV Lisa Owens Viani, NW Nat Weber, DW Denise Wight, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills, RW Ray Witbeck.



A family visits the Mount Diablo Audubon Society table at the SF Bay Flyway Festival, on Mare Island and the youngsters try their luck at identifying bird nests. At far right, Ariana Rickard, MDAS Program Chair, (right) talks to Sandra Scoggin of the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture. The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, established under the Migratory Species Act, works to protect, restore, increase and enhance all types of wetlands, riparian habitat and associated uplands throughout the San Francisco Bay region to benefit birds, fish and other wildlife.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

March

- 6 Wednesday Walnut Creek City Parks
- 12 Tuesday McNabney Marsh/ Mountain View Sanitary
- 21 Thursday Valle Vista
- 27 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas

April

- 6 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 10 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 13 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 16 Tuesday North Briones Regional Park
- 20 Saturday Mines Road
- 24 Wednesday Del Puerto Canyon
- 30 Tuesday Black Diamond Mines

May

- 2 Thursday Mitchell Canyon
- 9 Thursday Mount Diablo State Park
- 16 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 18 Saturday East Contra Costa County

① Wednesday, March 6 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 Tuesday, March 12

McNabney Marsh/ Mountain View Sanitary

Leader: Steve Taylor, 828-8810.

Meet at 9 AM at the Mountain View Sanitary Visitor Center. Exit from I-680 southbound at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. Exit I-680 northbound at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will turn left. At 0.4 miles turn sharp left onto Mountain View Sanitary's private road. Follow the road through the entry gate, alongside the freeway and through the tunnel under I-680. Park and sign-in at the Visitor Center. Trails may be muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and herons. If you wish, bring a lunch and explore Martinez shoreline in the afternoon on your own.



White-tailed Kite at McNabney Marsh. Brian Murphy photo.

② Thursday, March 21 Valle Vista

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 1 mile on Canyon Road to Valle Vista. Expect 55-60 species; we should be finished by noon.



Kings Canyon Loop Trail. Upper San Leandro Reservoir.

③ Wednesday, March 27 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 north. 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 (\$8). 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.

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

Trip Reports

Wildlife Refuges of the Sacramento Valley, December 8–9. On a frosty morning, 25 birders met at Sacramento NWR and were immediately treated to skeins of Greater White-fronted, Snow and Ross's Geese flying overhead. We watched a pair of Northern Harriers hunt over the marsh. Our presence flushed a roosting Great-horned Owl. We found an Orange-crowned Warbler associating with several Yellow-rumped Warblers, all busy trying to make a living on this chilly morning. At the start of the auto tour loop we had our first Bald Eagle, its approach causing thousands of ducks and geese to take flight. A second Bald Eagle, a juvenile feeding on a kill, gave us close-up views of this magnificent bird. We picked out several pairs of Ring-necked Ducks, a pair of Red-heads, and a pair of Eared Grebe. Stops along back roads as we headed north to Llano Seco Preserve produced Lesser Yellowlegs, Belted Kingfisher, Wilson's Snipe and Wood Duck. A real treat was finding nearly 2,000 Tundra Swans. Day 2: We set out on another very cold morning. Stops along the farm roads gave us great looks of a pair of Peregrine Falcons. Other birds included a White-tailed Kite hunting over an open field, Red-shouldered Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Pipit. At Colusa NWR, we quickly located the Falcated Duck, a life bird for several folks. At the Sutter Buttes we spotted a beautiful Ferruginous Hawk. As we watched Sandhill Cranes feeding in an open field, several of them "danced" about. A Rough-legged Hawk perched atop a telephone pole, and a Prairie Falcon zipped in and perched nearby, giving us nice looks of this uncommon raptor. A Golden Eagle, a Red-tailed Hawk and pair of White-tailed Kites rounded out the raptor show. While we ate lunch at Gray Lodge WMA, an observant birder found a drake Blue-winged Teal. At sunset, tens of thousands of Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail and Snow Geese dazzled everyone as they filled the sky before us. Cameras clicked away as the sunset reflected the Sutter Buttes in the water.

We tallied 108 species for the weekend, including 14 species of raptors, and 22 species of waterfowl.

Terry Colborn

Las Gallinas, Rush Creek/Shollenberger, January 26. Sixteen members and one guest enjoyed a clear, cool and slightly windy day at Las Gallinas Water Treatment Plant followed by stops at Rush Creek Marsh, Novato, and Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek in Petaluma. Highlights included the large flock of Cackling Geese and the male Blue-winged Teal and male Eurasian Wigeon all in the large impoundment with early Tree Swallows overhead and singing Marsh Wrens in the reeds. At Ellis Creek there were two Dunlin in with many Long-billed Dowitchers and a few Least Sandpipers near the trail for close viewing. A total of 73 species were seen.

Eugenia Larson



Thornton Area, Cosumnes Preserve, February 2. On Saturday the 2nd of February, 14 birders traveled to the Central Valley to view the Sandhill Cranes at the Eisenberg Wildlife Refuge near Lodi. Afterwards we went to the Cosumnes River Preserve to bird some more and have lunch. [See photo.] All-in-all we saw 64 species. They included the Sandhill Cranes, of course, and the numbers seemed to be down from last year. Also we saw several Loggerhead Shrikes, huge flocks of Greater White-fronted Geese, Snow Geese in flight, lots of raptors including Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks and an American Kestrel. Spotting a Black Phoebe made the trip official. The ducks included, Mallards, Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers and Northern Pintails. Among the waders we saw Black-necked Stilts, a Long-billed Dowitcher and several Wilson's Snipes along with the usual large number of American Coots. The weather was cloudy with intermittent sun and comfortable temperatures.

Chick Chickering

Monterey Birding Trip

Terry Colborn is leading a weekend birding trip to the Monterey Bay area, September 14–15, for Marin and Mount Diablo Audubon Societies. This annual two-day trip will feature a pelagic trip on Saturday with Monterey Seabirding and land birding on Sunday. Monterey Seabirding uses a local skipper with over 30 years' experience. Leaders and spotters include Roger Wolfe, Dan Singer, Blake Matheson and Todd Easterla. This trip is planned to coincide with the start of fall seabird migration. Possible areas to be visited on Sunday include Point Pinos, Salinas River State WMA, Moss Landing, Moonglow Dairy and Elkhorn Slough. Specific locations will be determined based upon up-to-date information on any rare bird sightings, weather conditions, tides, etc.

This very popular weekend pelagic trip is limited to a maximum of 25 participants. The cost is only \$95 per person. Sign-ups will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis beginning March 1. 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 e-mail. 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 trip. For questions, contact Terry at tlcgdc@aol.com, or by phone: 530-758-0689.

Spencer F. Baird —» *Continued from Page 8*

Henry's vision for the Smithsonian was primarily for research, while Baird's dream was for an unparalleled natural history museum. He developed a network of collectors around the continent. Among the specimens sent back to be examined by Baird and his staff were examples from the Great Slave Lake in Canada's Northwest Territory. Elliott Coues, a young protégé of Baird's named this bird in his honor—Baird's Sandpiper.

There are now more than twelve species of fish, over twenty-five species of mammals, mollusks and other organisms named for Baird. Birds include the sandpiper and the sparrow, and also Baird's Trogon, and Baird's Creeper which is also known as Kauai Creeper and the Hawai'ian name 'Akikiki. There is also the Cozumel Vireo (*Vireo baird*) and Peg-billed Finch (*Acanthidops bairdi*).

In 1878 Spencer Baird succeeded Henry as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. At the Smithsonian, in addition to the collections on display and in drawers, a number of live animals were kept in a shed outside for reference for the taxidermists and artists. These animals proved to be popular with the public and they formed the nucleus of the National Zoo, established by Baird and William Hornaday in 1886.

In addition to this post, Baird also served as Secretary of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences. With his particular interest and expertise in ichthyology, Baird was appointed the first U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries by President



Smithsonian Institution Building, also known as the Castle, ca. 1858.

Ulysses S. Grant in 1871. This position led Baird to spend a great deal of time in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where he was responsible for overseeing the founding of the Marine Biology Laboratory. Spencer Fullerton Baird died at Woods Hole in 1887.

Baird's dream of building a magnificent National Museum had been accomplished, but the dream did not stop at his death. He had hand-picked his successor in Samuel Langley, who created the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in 1890, taking the Institution's research to a even higher level, with studies on the sun and its effects on the planet earth.

Steller's Jay ♦ *Cyanocitta stelleri*

a

When the ill-fated Russian expedition to the Aleutian Islands headed by Vitus Bering landed on Kayak Island to collect fresh water for the ship's return journey. Georg Wilhelm Steller, the German naturalist, begged the Captain for time to explore.

Although Bering was anxious to head back to Kamchatkae, he reluctantly allowed Steller just ten hours ashore. Steller was welcomed by the raucous greeting of the bird that was later named for him.

If you should find a feather of this imperial bird, hold it to the light. When light is transmitted through the feather it will look brown. The blues are lost because the light is no longer being reflected back and the brown shows up because of the melanin in the feathers. If you were to grind up a feather you would find the powder to be brown, not blue. The blue we see in birds is structural color, not a pigment. In reality, a Steller's Jay is not blue, so don't let anyone say it's a Blue Jay!

Feather colors are determined either by pigments, called pigmented colors, or by light refraction called structural colors. When light strikes a pigment, selective wavelengths of the color spectrum are absorbed and the rest are reflected back to our eyes. Black is produced when all color wavelengths are absorbed and no color is reflected. Structural colors are formed in several ways, such as in the iridescence of hummingbirds.

In Steller's Jays and other "blue" birds, color is produced when light impinges on feather barbs that consist of three layers: a colorless, transparent outer layer; "box cells"—irregu-

Steller's Jay photographed at Mount Rainier by Ethan Winning.

larly shaped air-filled cavities that scatter light; and a dark layer of melanin-containing cells. When sunlight strikes a feather, the beam passes through the barb's transparent outer layer to the air-filled cavities that absorb the longer red wavelengths and scatter the blue light. Any transmitted light that remains after passing through the box cells is completely absorbed by the melanin.

The feather structures of many species also reflect light in the ultraviolet range. Some birds can see into the ultraviolet range so they may appear quite different to each other than they do to us.



Warm Winter Brings Lots of Birds

By Mike Eliot

Continuous warm and dry weather throughout this winter has resulted in increased bird numbers in our yards, especially finches. Customers have also reported an irruption of Pine Siskins in January, some of which are still around. Many berries are ripe, so customers are beginning to see flocks of Cedar Waxwings and American Robins. Consumption at feeders has grown substantially as well.



In winter birds in your yard can be helped in several ways:

1. Provide a source of water for drinking and bathing. Even when it's cold, birds need to keep their feathers clean to help hold in the heat they generate.
2. Keep your feeders clean and filled with fresh seed. Seed left out on cold damp nights or during rain can mold quickly. Wet seed can be dried in a warm oven for a few minutes or in a sunny window.
3. Provide a variety of foods, including suet, mealworms, Bark Butter and seed blends. These provide both needed nutrients and fats that help birds maintain energy and heat on cold nights.
4. Provide protection for food, such as feeder cages, from large, unwanted birds such as jays and crows, as well as squirrels. These intruders will often scare off the smaller birds.
5. Clean and replenish nectar in your hummingbird feeders at least weekly. Because of the high sugar content, mold and bacteria grow quickly in these feeders.
6. Clean out your bird houses and nesting boxes right away—many species will be nesting soon. Wash them thoroughly to rid them of mites, and then allow drying indoors or in the sun before rehanging.

For more information, drop into Wild Birds Unlimited or give us a call. And remember to mention that you are an MDAS member when you come in so that your purchase will count towards our donations to MDAS and Native Bird Connections.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.

MDAS Board of Directors

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Quail Editor



Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society thanks our Business Partners for their generous support:

Wild Birds Unlimited
Steven Joseph Photography
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MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

MOUNT DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:

Membership Chair, 282 Firestone Court, Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Mount Diablo Audubon Society,
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Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

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Baird's Sandpiper. Beth Branthaver Photo.

Spencer Baird Ornithologist, Ichthyologist, Dreamer

Spencer Fullerton Baird, the third of seven children, was born in Reading, Pennsylvania on February 3, 1823. The family moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania following the death of Baird's father in 1833. Baird entered Dickinson College in Carlisle as a freshman at the age of thirteen, and graduated with an A.B. degree at seventeen.

Spencer, with his elder brother William, collected local birds, and published a paper titled "Descriptions of two species, supposed to be new, of the Genus *Tyrannula Swainson*, found in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania." Still a student at Dickinson, Baird wrote to John James Audubon, inquiring about these strange flycatchers he had collected. When the birds proved to be new species, the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Least Flycatcher, Audubon, then 60, was impressed by the ability of his new acquaintance and a friendship developed. In 1843, Audubon named a bird he had discovered in the short grass prairie of eastern Montana after Baird—Baird's Sparrow.



*Spencer Fullerton Baird
Photo by William Bell, 1867
Smithsonian Archives (siarchives.si.edu)*

An interesting bit of trivia about Baird's relationship with Audubon is that Baird named his daughter Lucy, after Audubon's wife, and James Cooper named Lucy's Warbler after Lucy Baird.

After graduation from Dickinson, Baird attended the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York for one year, but found his greater interest in natural history compelling, and he returned to Pennsylvania.

Spencer Baird was offered a teaching position at Dickinson College in 1845 as Professor of Natural History. He innovated the practice of supplementing classroom lectures by taking the young men into the field to study the natural world. Baird continued to collect specimens and to publish papers on subjects of natural history and quickly became a respected ornithologist, zoologist, and naturalist.

In 1850, Baird was summoned by the newly established Smithsonian Institution to serve as Assistant Secretary under Joseph Henry. He took with him two freight cars of his own collection of birds, eggs, reptiles, fish, skins, and insects, from Carlisle to Washington. Many of these specimens can still be found in the Smithsonian Museums.

Continued on Page 6 »