

# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

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

Volume 50, Number 8

May 2005



## A Tern for the Better • Rachel Hurt

As the end of April approaches, a familiar sound fills the air at the former Alameda Naval Air Station. It's not the sound of airplanes taking off or helicopters landing, though with close proximity to Oakland airport, you might wonder. No, it's the high-pitched *kip* notes and harsh *chir-ee-eeeps* of the California Least Tern that fill the air. A small handful of prospectors fly high above the fenced sandy



area below for a few weeks. They leave at night to sites unknown, but faithfully return the next day. They start to land in the colony towards the end of their two-week prospecting mission, just as the rest of the colony arrives. The sky is aflutter with "fish flights" and aerial glides. Soon courting begins and males, clutching fish in their beaks, are seen strutting around females in hopes of consummating their love. Not all fish offerings are accepted but when they are, copulation occurs and the beginning of the breeding season is officially started.

The endangered California Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*) was first documented nesting at the Naval Air Station, Alameda, in 1976. The Naval Air Station was closed in April 1997. Since its closure, the City of Alameda has leased a portion of the property from the U.S. Navy and renamed it Alameda Point. The farthest most west portion of Alameda Point has been designated as the proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge and is anxiously awaiting transfer from the U.S. Navy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The tern

colony has grown in size over the years and is the largest California Least Tern colony in northern California.

Rachel Hurt, Wildlife Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will present information at our May 5 meeting about the natural history of the Least Tern. She will also report on the reproductive success and population trends of Least Terns at Alameda Point and statewide. Late summer bird-watching locations, when adults and fledglings start staging around the South Bay, will be identified. The natural wonders of Alameda Point will also be discussed. Rachel has been a Wildlife Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the past four years and has monitored the Least Terns for the past three. She has experience working with a wide variety of threatened and endangered species throughout the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex. She holds a B.S. in Wildlife Management from Virginia Tech and has experience with herps and small mammals in Virginia and Missouri. Rachel is a member of Golden Gate Audubon and the Wildlife Society.

## Birding Information

Trivia buffs, sharpen your skills! What is the more common name for the Man-o'-war bird? Name four North American birds whose names derive from the sound that they make. What bird was named for its unusual gait? What shorebird is also called Daddy-long-legs? Name four of the six North American bird species to become extinct in the last 205 years. Join us May 5 for the Birding Information North American Bird Trivia Contest. If you would like to be part of a bird trivia team, please e-mail Mike Williams at [wbuphca@infionline.net](mailto:wbuphca@infionline.net).

*Answers: Magnificent Frigatebird; Loon, Willet, Pewee, Chickadee, Killdeer, Kittiwake, many others; Limpkin; Black-necked Stilt; Carolina Parakeet, Great Auk, Heath Hen, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Labrador Duck, Passenger Pigeon.*

## Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, May 5**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on page 7).

6:30 PM Doors open

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements and business

7:40 PM Social time, refreshments\*, door prize

8:05 PM Program

\* Please remember to bring a cup.

### CONSERVATION ALERT

Please see

## Farallons Under Fire

On Page 6

## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



### Orioles will soon be appearing at our feeders!

- Watch for both Hooded Orioles and Bullock's Orioles.
- These are nectar feeding birds, but they are too large to sip from most hummingbird feeders. They will appreciate a feeder just for themselves. (But hummers will use them too.)
- Orioles are the most colorful and spectacular birds we can attract to our back yards during the summer.
- Orioles sometimes prefer grape jelly; and people provide this delicacy in addition to the same 1:4 sugar solution as for hummingbirds.
- Please report all oriole sightings to WBU. We maintain a map at the store to show the distribution about the area.



Hooded Oriole • *Icterus cucullatus*

### Join us on May 7 for WBU's Saturday for Moms

- Native Bird Connections with live birds.
- WBU's Yvonne Breukers with plants for birds and butterflies.
- Danny K tapestry bags, Artist Runi ceramics, Fresh Wave for a natural smelling environment, Kiss My Face organic skin products, jewelry trunk show.

Mike & Cecil Williams  
**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
692 Contra Costa Blvd.  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523  
925-798-0303

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

## President's Letter

By Mike Williams

At each May meeting of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, in accordance with the bylaws, we elect officers for the following fiscal year. If you would be willing to be of service to our group and wish to run for any of the positions, please call me at (925) 798-0303.

Currently on the ballot are:

President: Mike Williams  
Vice President: Joe Frank  
Treasurer: Patrick King  
Secretary: Pam Leggett

As the weather warms and the days are conducive to outdoor activities, many will turn their attention to gardening and landscaping. Let me urge you to keep in mind some guidelines that are helpful to the environment, rather than harmful.

Want to have rats in your neighborhood? Plant large expanses of ivy. Rats are not only a threat to public health but eat bird eggs and nestlings. There are lots of

varieties of native plants that are good ground covers or shrubs that don't attract rats and take less care.

Point Reyes Bird Observatory has a list of California natives and more information on "Landscaping for Birds" at [www.prbo.org/cms/print.php?mid=183](http://www.prbo.org/cms/print.php?mid=183)

Chemical fertilizers and pesticides on lawns are a major cause of urban water pollution. Again, California native plants may be a good answer in planning your landscape. Low shrubs provide cover for birds; lawns don't. And, the time you save by not mowing a lawn is time you can spend attending one of the MDAS birding field trips.

And speaking of Audubon field trips, please consider volunteering as a trip leader. You really don't have to be an expert birder. Call Elizabeth Dickey at (925) 254-0486, or Shirley Ellis, our Volunteer Coordinator, at (925) 938-3703.

## Field Trip Reports

**March 5, Bolinas Lagoon-Five Brooks.** Seven sun-starved birders enjoyed idyllic weather and spectacular scenery in Point Reyes and environs. Thanks largely to Denise Wight's ESB (Extra Sensory Birding), 85 species were seen or heard. Highlights of the day were a Merlin, numerous other raptor species and lots of ducks and shorebirds in beautiful Bolinas Lagoon. Many *Selasphorus* hummers were also observed.

Nancy Wenninger

**March 16, Upper San Leandro Reservoir/Valle Vista.** Twelve birders enjoyed a cool morning in the green meadows, woods, and lake shore easily reached from the Valle Vista staging area in Moraga. Sixty-one species were seen plus two more heard clearly, with the most interesting perhaps being a California Thrasher spotted perched atop a bush after being located by ear. Three pairs of Wood Ducks were nice, as was seeing three Red-breasted Sapsuckers within ten inches of each other on a tree trunk.

Don Lewis

**March 2, Walnut Creek City Parks.** Under gray skies 6 members met the leader in Heather Farm Park. Before we finished shortly before 2 PM, we had vis-

ited four areas and found 40 species of birds. After walking around the large lake, finding some Northern Rough-winged Swallows and visiting the edge of Seven Hills Ranch, we moved to Howe-Homestead Park. Here we found a nest hole of a feeding pair of Oak Titmouse. At Sugarloaf Open Space we found Western Bluebirds and a departing American Kestrel. Finally, we checked a section of the Sugarloaf-Shell Ridge Trail near the intersection of Rudgear Road and Stewart Avenue. Not only was it the birdiest area of the day, but we found member George Finger who showed us some backyard feeders which attracted up to 20 Band-tailed Pigeons. We also found another active Titmouse nest, Cedar Waxwings and a Hermit Thrush.

Hugh Harvey

**March 30, Lagunitas-Bon Tempe.** Six birders had a lovely morning for the walk around Lake Lagunitas under clear blue skies with cool temperature and light wind. The walk at nearby Bon Tempe Lake after lunch unfortunately produced no Pileated Woodpeckers. Among the 41 species, 8 heard only, were several Ring-necked Ducks, Common Mergansers close to the Lagunitas dam, a Winter Wren flitting briefly beside the trail, a Varied

Continued on page 3

# Field Trip Schedule

By Elizabeth Dickey

## May

5 Thursday Mitchell Canyon  
 7 Saturday Mines Road  
 11 Wednesday South Side Mount Diablo  
 19 Thursday Napa River  
 21 Saturday East Contra Costa Co.  
 25 Wednesday West Briones

## June–August

1 Wednesday Annadel State Park  
 4 Saturday Outer Point Reyes  
 18–19 or 25–26 Saturday–Sunday Yuba Pass  
 30 July, Saturday San Mateo Coast  
 13 or 20 August, Saturday Bodega Bay

For the full list of field trips through Summer 2005, see the October 2004 *Quail*.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php), or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Trip directions and meeting times will be published in the *Quail*. Customary carpool expense is 37½ cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. 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.

## May Field Trips

Thursday, May 5, **Mitchell Canyon**. Meet at 8 AM in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$5 parking fee. From I-680 in Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to Clayton Road. Turn right on Clayton and right on Mitchell Canyon Road to the end. Morning emphasis on wildflowers; bird in afternoon for gnatcatchers, summer sparrows, etc. Usually hot! Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 3.

Saturday, May 7, **Mines Road**. Because of limited parking along Mines Road, carpooling is essential. This is an all-day trip and usually hot! Bring lunch and liquids. For carpools meet at LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Wild Turkey, Greater Roadrunner, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Lawrence's Goldfinch all possible. Leader: Hugh Harvey, 932-4715. Call the leader for meeting time. Category 1.

Wednesday, May 11, **South Side Mount Diablo**. MDSP is a treasure trove for birders. Although every season in the park has its special qualities, May on the mountain is especially beautiful because wildflowers add brilliant color to the vistas. Carpool leaves at 8 AM from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680

southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Meet at 8:30 AM in first parking lot on left after entering South Gate. Usually hot! \$5.00 entrance fee. Sage, Rufous-crowned, and maybe Black-chinned Sparrows. Leader: Jimm Edgar, (510) 658-2330. Category 2.

Saturday, May 21, **East Contra Costa County**. Carpool leaves at 6:30 AM from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 7 AM on Cypress Road just beyond the Shortstop Market in Oakley. Go north on I-680, east on SR 4 through Oakley, left onto Cypress Road. Usually hot! Blue Grosbeak, Burrowing Owl, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Yellow-breasted Chat all possible. Bring lunch and liquids. Leader: Joel Summerhill, 753-0862. Category 2.

Thursday, May 19, **Napa River**. Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. A car birding trip with no meeting place due to limited parking on some roads. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2

Wednesday, May 25, **West Briones**. Meet at 8 AM in parking lot on the right hand side of the west entrance road, off Bear Creek Road. Wildflowers, spring birds; Lazuli Buntings are usually abundant. Poison oak along shaded trails. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2.

## Welcome New Members

Karalee Brune	Livermore
DeBose Forrest	Lafayette
Janice Loo	Walnut Creek
Merwyn Powell	Clayton
Latha Rajagopalan	Concord
William Schaefer	San Ramon
William Walsh	Pleasant Hill



California Linnet  
*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*  
Birds of Golden Gate Park  
Joseph Mailliard  
1930

### Trip Reports *Continued from page 2*

Thrush, three vireo species and three warbler species. *Jean Richmond*

**April 2, Garin Regional Park.** It was a gray morning and the birding started slow, but we three hikers were indefatigable and we saw 48 species. Highlights included Bullock's Oriole, Wilson's Warbler, Warbling Vireo, five species of swallows, Lark Sparrow, a pair of Kestrels mating, and, rather unexpected, a Hairy Woodpecker. *Fred Safier*

**Q** Among this bird's favorite foods is pumpkin, although about half of its diet is of animal origin. Some birds will stay in our area all year, but many will migrate to Central and South America, leaving with the Fall Equinox and returning with the Spring Equinox, often on the exact day each year to roost in the same trees.

In Peru, these birds are considered a nuisance, because they will steal eggs on the coastal islands. In North America, however, they are considered to perform a valuable service. *Answer on Page 4*



# Ornithology Opportunities

**The Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation's Annual Birdwalk** will be held on Sunday, April 17, on Lime Ridge. Led by Maury Stern, the hike will start at 8:00 AM and end about noon. The route will go from the east end of Valley Vista Road (park across from the Boundary Oak Golf Course Clubhouse) and ascend to the transmission tower atop the ridge. Total elevation gain is approximately 700 feet. Total length approximately 5 miles. Bring water, sunglasses, binoculars and sunblock. Questions: Contact Harvey Ceaser, (925) 937-1406.

**11th Annual Kern Valley Bioregions Festival.** April 30–May 1. Kern River Preserve, Weldon/Kernville. <http://kern.audubon.org/bioregion.htm>. Owlwing with Bob Barnes. Digital photography for nature photographers. Global positioning systems in everyday life. Native American culture and uses of native plants. Field trips for birding, wildflowers and butterflies.

**Spring Wings Bird Festival.** May 13–15. Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, Fallon, NV. [www.springwings.org](http://www.springwings.org). 775-428-6452. Spring Wings is a celebration of the migration through Northern Nevada's Lahontan Valley. These internationally renowned wetlands offer spectacles of large flocks of shorebirds and waterfowl as they travel the Pacific Flyway. The festival boasts tours; seminars; nature-related arts and crafts, vendors, and activities for kids of all ages.

**International Migratory Bird Day Festival.** May 14, 11:00 AM–4:00 PM. Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Environmental Education Center, Alviso. It's time to celebrate long distance frequent flyers! Come take a nature walk, make a keepsake photo and frame, visit environmental organizations at the street fair, watch a live bird presentation, and be amazed by the Magic of Water show. Great family fun, all ages welcome. Food vendor on site so you can grab lunch or a snack. Everything (except the food) is free.

**Walk on the Wildside! Festival.** May 14, 10 AM–4:30 PM. Stone Lakes National

## Turkey Vulture

*Cathartes aura*

The Cherokee people call this magnificent flyer the "Peace Eagle," because it does not kill its prey. This indispensable bird is valued for its penchant for cleaning up road kills and other dead animals. Consider how interesting the smells of our highways and open space would be without the services of this scavenger.

In some way, this is a most clean species, and recent research shows that the vulture's digestive system has the ability to kill bacteria or virus in infected meat. This work could be of great significance to human medical research. Regurgitated pellets of undigested material are odor-free and do not carry any disease. Vultures bathe frequently, and each bird spends hours each day preening its feathers.

Turkey Vultures have been called the most graceful soaring bird in the world. They find and follow the thermals and updrafts with an instinct admired by experienced glider pilots. They're easy to identify because when soaring they hold their wings in a dihedral or V shape and

Wildlife Refuge, Freeport. (916) 875-9453. [www.fws.gov/pacific/stonelakes/wow.htm](http://www.fws.gov/pacific/stonelakes/wow.htm). This fun outdoor celebration of International Migratory Bird Day highlighting local efforts in protecting native Central Valley habitats and wildlife offers a great opportunity to access normally closed wildlife areas. Enjoy the special guided tours of restored wetlands and check out active heron rookeries on the *Bufferlands*. California Native Plant Society - Sacramento Chapter's native plant sale showcases many local native species that are hard to find. Live wild animal presentations. Conservation exhibitors and hands-on activities. Children's activity center, games and prizes. Live music and great food. Event and parking are free.

**Santa Cruz Island for the Island Scrub-Jay.** June 5. Los Angeles Audubon Society. (323) 876-0202 (Tues.–Sat.); [www.LAAudubon.org](http://www.LAAudubon.org). Cost: \$85. Leaves Island Packers dock in Oxnard



*Turkey Vulture in Marin County. Photo by Carter Roberts.*

they seldom flap. Most other large birds hold their wings straight out and flap frequently.

The Turkey Vulture's closest relative is the Black Vulture, a bird not found in California but common in the South. Black Vultures locate carrion by sight, while Turkey Vultures use their keen vision, but also they are renowned for their exceptional sense of smell. Their heightened ability to detect odors allows them to find dead animals below a forest canopy. Utility companies have learned that they can find pipeline leaks by pressurizing the line with ethyl mercaptan and watching where Turkey Vultures congregate.

at 8 AM on the *M/V Vanguard*. Land at Prisoner's Cove where the endemic Santa Cruz Island Scrub-Jay is easily seen. Then cruise out to sea from Santa Cruz Island for pelagic species, returning by Anacapa Island. On previous trips there have been Northern Fulmar, Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Pigeon Guillemot, Xantus's Murrelet, Tufted Puffin.

**Summer Birding in Tuolumne Meadows.** July 3. Tuolumne Meadows. Yosemite Outdoor Adventures. [www.yosemite.org/seminars](http://www.yosemite.org/seminars). Early summer is a birder's paradise in the high meadows and forests of the Tuolumne region. During this nesting time there are many opportunities to listen to songs of the breeding season, such as the haunting tune of the Hermit Warbler. You'll also see some of Tuolumne's other summer birds: Mountain Bluebird, Red Crossbill, and Clark's Nutcracker. \$80.



Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve

**Kern River Preserve** *Cont'd from page 8*

If you have time, there are two other birding areas nearby that merit your visit. West of the preserve at the tip of Lake Isabella is the South Fork Wildlife Area of the Sequoia National Forest. To the east, five miles past the town of Onyx, a new public access trail has been developed by the California Department of Fish and Game. Access is through a hard-to-find gate along Highway 178. (The latch may require two persons to open or close.) Here, amid Joshua trees, you might discover a Cactus Wren or a Bullock's Oriole. Tricolored Blackbirds and Grasshopper Sparrows may also be found.

A thorough overview of birding opportunities in this area is an article in the April, 2003 issue of *Birding* magazine. The South Fork Kern River Valley is one of the Important Bird Areas of California. You'll find this a delightful place to spend a weekend or longer during any season of the year.

**Audubon Canyon Ranch** is now open Saturdays, Sundays and holidays through July 17, from 10 AM to 4 PM. View the treetop nesting behavior of egrets and herons.

Nearby Bolinas Lagoon brings more than 60 species of water and shore birds into view — from sandpipers to osprey to pelicans — as well as some of the resident harbor seals. Belted Kingfishers dine in the shallow waters.

The Bolinas Lagoon Preserve is 3½ miles north of Stinson Beach on Highway 1.

## Observations

By Steve Glover

The fledgling Pied-billed Grebes reported last month continued at Briones Dam on 3/10 when a full-grown juvenile was being fed by an adult and two two-thirds grown young were being fed by a pair of adults (DL).

The albino Black-crowned Night-Heron continued at Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek through at least 3/16 (HH).

A "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal reported 3/26-27 at the Albany Mudflats may have been only the second ever reported from Contra Costa County (KA).

Sibley Regional Park's resident pair of Golden Eagles was noted on the nest by 25 March (AH). An apparent pair of Peregrine Falcons, said to be vocally interacting, was at the radio towers on Pt. Isabel near Richmond on 3/1 (DG).

Not a month seems to pass without a report of a new location for Wild Turkeys. Up to five birds were found in Canyon Lakes Country Club in San Ramon 3/9-12 (EL), despite the fact that there are no woodlands in the vicinity.

An unusually large group of Black Oystercatchers, at least by Contra Costa standards, was at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline near Richmond on 2/26 (DG).

Migrant Rufous Hummingbirds visited feeders in Antioch on 3/1 (PS) and San Ramon on 3/19 (D&PB).

A Belted Kingfisher was apparently attempting to excavate a nest hole in a barren hillside far from any water in Moraga on 3/19 (DW). Any nesting of Belted Kingfishers in Contra Costa County is noteworthy.



Another in a long line of Pileated Woodpecker sightings added to the mythical lore of this mysterious bird in Contra Costa County. As with recent sightings, this 3/12 sighting was along the West Ridge Trail in Redwood Regional Park (SS).

A Wilson's Warbler at Briones Reservoir 3/14 was on the early side (JP).

A male Western Tanager along the Lafayette-Moraga Trail 3/12 was a surprising find. Though potentially a very early migrant, the date is suggestive of a wintering bird (DW).

Ken Archibald, Dennis and Patricia Braddy, Doug Greenberg, Hugh Harvey, Alan Howe, Eugenia Larson, Don Lewis, John Poole, Paul Schorr, Sylvia Sykora, Denise Wight.

## A Big Thank You!

When MDAS took over the EBB Sightings List Serve, Mary McCanta graciously volunteered to expand the MDAS website calendar to include non-MDAS birding events. If you have ever visited the MDAS calendar, you will quickly realize the tremendous amount of birding event information that Mary has made available for all of us to use. After Mary started posting this information, the number of visitors to the MDAS website increased to over 500% from before this information was available. Through Mary's efforts, the Mount Diablo Audubon Society's website has become a valuable resource for the greater Bay Area.

Regrettably, Mary can no longer fill this volunteer position due to an increase in

her own work responsibilities. We do owe Mary a huge thank you for expanding the calendar and Mount Diablo Audubon Society's service to the Bay Area birders. Mary, your contribution will certainly be missed and MDAS really needs more volunteers like you.

If anyone is interested in helping with the MDAS calendar, please contact Mike Williams or Ann McGregor.

**Hugh Harvey will offer bird and flower books for sale at the May meeting. They are from the collections of his mother, Marian, and from Mary Jane Culver, a long-time chapter member. All proceeds will be donated to the MDAS.**



## Farallons Under Fire

On January 25, 2005, House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-Tracy) and Nick Rahall (D-WVa), the top Democrat on the committee, introduced a bill which would direct the Secretary of the Interior to provide public access to the Farallon Islands during at least one period each year for "recreational opportunities." Ostensibly a response to requests from amateur radio operators who enjoy broadcasting from remote islands, the measure does not restrict visits to that purpose.

After Bay Area lawmaker Tom Lantos and wildlife biologists warned that the proposal could harm sensitive species in the largest seabird breeding colony in the continental United States, Mr. Rahall withdrew his support for the bill. However, Mr. Pombo plans to continue his efforts to open the refuge. A spokesman for Pombo said he believes permits should be approved for visitors "whether they are ham radio operators, birdwatchers or anyone else who just wants a closer look at the islands."

Located 28 miles west of San Francisco, the Farallon Islands' critical importance to marine life was recognized in 1909 when President Theodore Roosevelt established the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge. FNWR sits on the edge of the continental shelf amid an unusually rich marine food web. Seabirds, whales, sea turtles, marine mammals and large fish exploit the abundant and diverse food resources. The islands serve as nesting habitat for more than 250,000 birds of 12 species: Common Murre, Tufted Puffin, Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin's Auklet, Pigeon Guillemot, Brandt, Double-crested and Pelagic Cormorant, Black Oystercatcher, Western Gull, Leach's Storm-petrel and Ashy Storm-petrel. Thirty per cent of California's breeding seabirds are found within FNWR. Fifty percent of the seabirds that nest there produce only one egg per year, of which roughly 50% survive, making them very vulnerable to human disturbance.

PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO), founded as Point Reyes Bird Observatory in 1965, has been conducting year-round, continuous wildlife research,



Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Photo

monitoring and stewardship at FNWR since 1968 in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These scientists say that increased human activity would have negative impacts on several endangered species of birds, as well as the five species of pinnipeds that rely on the Farallon Islands: northern elephant seals, California sea lions, northern fur seals, Pacific harbor seals and Steller sea lions.

The islands have a legacy of human disturbance. Wildlife populations were decimated in the 19th century by hunting. Heavy disturbance continued until 1968, when USFWS began active stewardship.

The Farallon Islands have been called "California's Galapagos." Increased human visitation would be destructive to the natural values of the FNWR and therefore should not be allowed. Its stewards need our help. Please take a few minutes to write Mr. Pombo to voice your opposition to HR 298 and any future efforts to open the Farallons to public access. You may copy or follow the style of the following:

---

Honorable Richard Pombo  
U. S. House of Representatives  
2411 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: H.R. 298

Dear Mr. Pombo:

As a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society and a concerned Bay Area

voter, I oppose opening the Farallon Islands to the public.

The Farallon National Wildlife Refuge is critically important to marine life. Seabirds, whales, sea turtles, marine mammals and large fish benefit from the abundant and diverse food resources. The islands serve as nesting habitat for more than 250,000 birds of 12 species. Thirty per cent of California's breeding seabirds are found within FNWR. Fifty percent of the seabirds which nest there produce only one egg per year, of which roughly 50% survive, making them very vulnerable to human disturbance.

Wildlife biologists who provide stewardship for the refuge say that increased human activity would have negative impacts on endangered species of birds, as well as the five species of pinnipeds that rely on the Farallon Islands. The wildlife on these islands was nearly wiped out during the 19th century by hunting. Today, thanks largely to restricted access, the Farallons once again support a thriving ecosystem.

Please abandon your efforts to open "California's Galapagos." The benefit to even a few additional visitors does not outweigh the potential damage to a fragile environment.

This special place deserves your continued protection.

Sincerely,

---

Please send your letter without delay.

*By Nancy Wenninger*

## MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

\_\_\_\_ Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

\_\_\_\_ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 for one year.

\_\_\_\_ For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive four quarterly issues of the *Audubon Magazine*.

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone ( \_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to:

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:  
Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Court, Danville, CA 94526

## the Quail

is published 10 times a year by the  
**Mount Diablo Audubon Society**  
• a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •  
P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053  
(925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

Mount Diablo Audubon Society general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Garden Center at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Board of Directors meets at 7 PM on the second Thursday of every month in the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

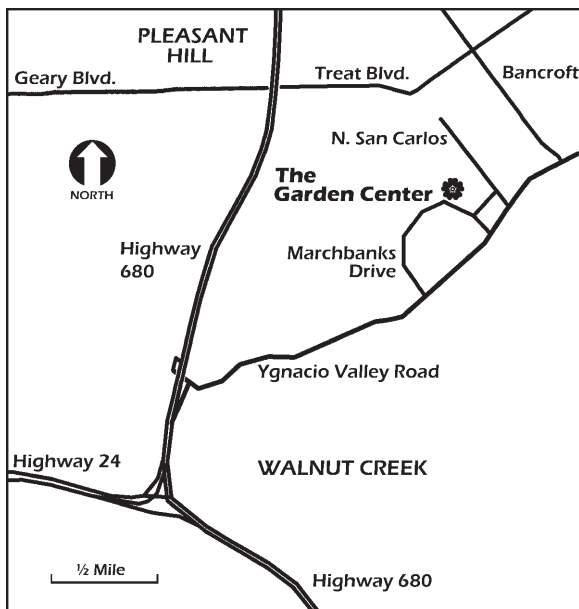
*Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 94526. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA 94556.*

### MDAS Board of Directors

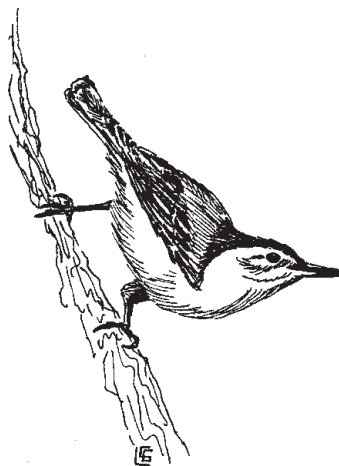
President: Mike Williams, 376-1631  
Vice President: Joe Frank, 674-1219  
Treasurer: Patrick King, 510-642-6522  
Board Secretary: Mike Tischler, 689-5552  
Sales Manager: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732  
Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581  
Field Trips: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486  
Membership: Ann McGregor, 968-1677  
Volunteer Coordinator:  
Shirley Ellis, 938-3703  
Hospitality: Gerry Argenal  
Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631  
Access: Beverly Hawley, 947-0479  
Chapter Development:  
Joel Summerhill, 753-0862  
Hands-On Conservation:  
Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987  
Christmas Count:  
Jimm Edgar, (510) 658-2330  
Member-at-Large: Jean Richmond

Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103  
215 Calle La Mesa  
Moraga, CA 94556-1603  
ellis.myers@earthlink.net

**Deadline for the June issue is May 5.**



*Driving directions: From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into parking lot. From Highway 680 south, take Treat Blvd. to Bancroft. Go right to Ygnacio Valley Road, turn right and go one block past signal at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). At Marchbanks Drive turn right. The Garden Center is located on the right in the second block.*



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

TIME VALUE MAIL



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



*Fremont Cottonwood  
Nature trail at Audubon Kern River Preserve*

## Quickies

Weekend birding in California

### **Audubon Kern River Preserve**

It's as if a rainbow were to descend and alight on the hillside. Red owl clover and Indian paintbrush lead the palette, followed by California poppy, yellow Bigelow's tickweed and cream cups. The brilliant green grasses are sprinkled with blues, lavenders and violets of lupines, thistle sages and phacelias. Indeed, the Kern River Valley has the highest plant diversity in California. The colorful lichens on the massive granite boulders add to the splendor.

That's a description of springtime on the Migrant Corner trail at the Kern River Preserve, located 57 miles northeast of Bakersfield, near Lake Isabella. This trail is found on Sierra Way a mile north of Highway 178, immediately over the bridge across the South Fork Kern River.

The preserve, a mile east of Sierra Way on Highway 178, encompasses 1127

acres of riparian Great Valley Cottonwood Forest habitat. The Kern River Preserve is owned and managed by Audubon-California.

Wildlife is abundant and varied. More than 240 species of birds have been listed, including the elusive Yellow-billed Cuckoo, which is endangered in California. Cuckoos arrive by the end of June and nest on the preserve. Other nesting species include Wood Duck, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, and Summer Tanager. Butterflies abound. An occasional mountain lion joins the list of mammals along with beaver, bobcat, long-tailed weasel and black bear.

The Kern River Valley is a major flyway on the fall migration of Turkey Vultures. The region celebrates this happening with an annual Turkey Vulture Festival, this year to take place on the weekend of September 24–25. This also corresponds with what is historically one of the finest weekends for observing fall land bird migration in California. In ad-

dition to the presence of many western migrants, there are excellent chances for observing eastern rarities at nearby desert oases. See [kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm](http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm).

At the preserve headquarters you will find a small visitor center where recent bird sightings may be reviewed. Around the building are feeders where Lesser and Lawrence's Goldfinches enjoy thistle; other feeders lure Red-winged Blackbirds or Lark Sparrows. Have a picnic lunch at one of the tables and watch the hummingbirds outmaneuver each other. In August, Anna's, Costa's, Rufous, Calliope and Black-chinned Hummingbirds make the Kern River Valley the "Hummingbird Viewing Capital of California." The Preserve will host a Hummingbird Celebration on July 30–31 this year.

A lengthy nature trail leads from the visitor center through the preserve past the magnificent Fremont cottonwoods and willows. A trail guide is available at the beginning of the trail.

*Continued on page 5*