

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php

Volume 52, Number 8-9

May/June 2007

Foraging Ecology of the Albatross • Michelle Kappes



Laysan Albatross nest at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge on the island of Kauai, Hawaii.

In February, MDAS members were given an overview of the lengthy and surprising migrations of a variety of open-ocean animals. At our May 3 meeting, Michelle Kappes, PhD candidate from U.C. Santa Cruz, will present details of her research on the foraging ecology of three species of albatrosses in two

ocean basins. Michelle studies the foraging distribution behavior of the Laysan and Black-footed albatrosses from Tern Island in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, in comparison to the foraging behavior of the Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses of Amsterdam Island, Terres Australes et Antarctiques Francaises. All three of these species use similar oceanographic domains during long-distance foraging trips. They favor pelagic zones of convergence between subtropical and subpolar waters. At Amsterdam Island these habitats are found in close proximity to the breeding colony,

Continued on Page 2 »

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, May 3**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. (Map on page 7).

- 7:00 PM Birding Information
 - 7:25 PM Announcements and Election of Officers
 - 7:40 PM Social time, refreshments,* door prize
 - 8:05 PM Speaker: Michelle Kappes
- * Please remember to bring a cup.

June 7: Annual Potluck Dinner

- 6:30 PM Doors open
- 7:00 PM Dinner is served!
- 8:05 PM Speaker: Larry Arbanas

Larry Arbanas Returns

Larry Arbanas, MDAS member and bird and nature photographer, continues his quest to collect high definition footage of the behavior of all North American bird species for the media collection of the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds and Images in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. His travels take him from Maine to Mexico and from Alaska to Florida. Larry is currently filming in Florida and the Dry Tortugas and will share his latest spectacular footage on June 7.



*Rufous-capped Warbler at Barranca de Yécora, Mexico
Larry Arbanas photo*

A lifelong, passionate naturalist, Larry grew up in a family of professional still photographers for whom nature photography was a primary interest. Throughout his career as a professional video producer and commercial TV cameraman, Larry has provided video footage for clients such as The World Book Encyclopedia, Black Entertainment TV, Kraft Foods, and VH1. His life and career direction changed dramatically in March of 1989. He was profoundly moved by the tragedy of the Exxon-Valdez oil spill as he watched the efforts to rescue otters, seals, and sea birds from Prince William Sound. He redirected his efforts as a commercial video cameraman to telling stories of conservation and restoration of the natural environment. His business, Earthwhile Nature Productions, has provided video footage for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game. For the past four years he has devoted his time to collecting high definition footage

Continued on Page 2 »

Annual Potluck Dinner

The June potluck is held in our regular meeting place before the presentation by Larry Arbanas. Doors open at 6:30 PM. Members bring a main dish, salad, or dessert and their own utensils and coffee cup. Please mark your serving plates. Tea, coffee and punch will be provided; bring your own wine if you wish.

I wish to thank all the members who have contributed the delicious treats that we all shared during our meetings this last year. Some members bring something each meeting they attend! And also a huge thank you to everyone who unselfishly takes time to help me set up and clean up after each meeting—I'm so grateful to all! Thank you so much. *Gerry Argenal*

President's Corner

I always wait until the last minute to see what crosses my desk or my mind before I write this column. A couple of things happened to me in the last few days that seem to fit together as a subject and the subject is what kind of small things can we do that are very practical to help the environment.

Most of you probably know these three things, but it never hurts to mention them again. The first is something that has always bugged me—bottled water. I heard a news report that said one billion—yes, a *billion*—plastic water bottles go into landfills in this country every year un-recycled! Less than 15% of plastic water bottles get recycled. For us with East Bay MUD and Contra Costa water district, our tap water has better standards than bottled water. Please, get a container and fill it from the tap. The second is household hazardous waste. We did some spring cleaning around the house last week. You know, under the sink, in the closets and garage and pulled out over 20 cans, bottles, aerosol cans *etc.* that had not been used maybe in years.

Both Contra Costa and Alameda counties have drop off sites for these kinds of products that will dispose of them safely and it is free. Phone 800-646-1431 to find out where to go. The third item seems strange, but it makes sense. When we wash our cars in our driveway, that soap and grime goes right into the storm drain and then to urban creeks and eventually into the Bay. A professional car wash location recycles the water coming off the cars they wash. Good reason to have your car washed.

With spring migration in full swing, it is time to get out to look for our returning bird friends, so let's get out there.

Election of Officers

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 like to run for any of the positions, please call any of the present Board members, whose contact numbers are given on Page 7.

All current officers are on the ballot for reelection:

President: Jimm Edgar
Vice President: Mike Williams
Treasurer: Steve Buffi
Secretary: Claudia Hein

Continued from Page 1 »

May Meeting: Michelle Kappes

while at Tern Island, albatrosses must commute great distances to reach these highly productive foraging grounds. This may have important behavioral and energetic consequences for these species. Michelle's work is part of the 'Tagging of Pacific Pelagics' project, a multi-disciplinary research program aimed at understanding the migration patterns of large, open-ocean animals in the North Pacific.

Before coming to U.C. Santa Cruz, Michelle worked with NOAA's Antarctic Ecosystem Research Division investigating reproductive ecology, demography, diet, and foraging ecology of Chinstrap and Gentoo Penguins on Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands, Antarctica. This work is part of a larger ecosystem-monitoring project aimed at assessing potential fisheries impacts to Antarctic krill populations and dependant predators in the Southern Ocean.

Michelle's Master's research focused on the breeding and foraging ecology of Caspian Terns in the mid-Columbia River, with specific focus on the effects of their predation impact on ESA-listed juvenile salmonids. This information is now being used by state, federal, and tribal resource managers to help make decisions regarding management of tern predation in the region.

Birding Information

Last Fall the Board of Directors of Mount Diablo Audubon initiated a program to honor private citizens who have made an individual effort to enrich the natural environment of our community.

On May 3, MDAS will honor John Ginochio, a local cattle rancher. John maintains a Barn Owl box on his barn and a Kestrel box on his windmill tower. He maintains habitat for Burrowing Owls and about two acres of brush habitat supporting brush rabbits and California Quail.

He has opened both his ranch property and his marsh property near the Concord Naval Weapons Station to our Christmas Bird Counts. These areas have allowed our count to include some additional species such as Snipe and Prairie Falcon.

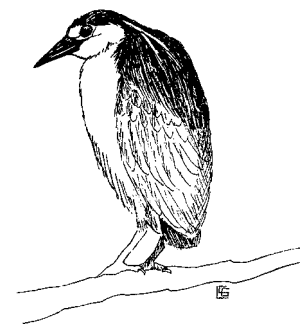
Phil and Pat Gordon, Jimm Edgar and Bob Wisecarver will share their experiences with John and honor him for his environmental awareness.



Can you identify this distinctive duck whose sound has been described as a loud, piercing squeal "ooo-eek, ooo-eek" when it is disturbed and taking flight? Turn to Page 7 to learn more.

Welcome New Members

Sherill Borg	Concord
Bill Kleeman	Walnut Creek
Fred & Donna Locher	Clayton
Harold Newman	Berkeley
Connie Pudlak	Vallejo
Karol Richardson	Pleasant Hill
Idell Weydemeyer	El Sobrante



Continued from Page 1 »

June Meeting: Larry Arbanas

of the behavior of all North American birds, to be included in the collections of the Macaulay Library.

Some of you will remember Larry's last presentation when we were running out of time and Larry offered to cut his films short. The entire group declared in unison, "No!" and all stayed to see the complete footage of his material. All agreed that it was spectacular. Join us June 7 for our annual Potluck Dinner and enjoy Larry's beautiful high definition films accompanied by appropriate and entertaining background music.

Arroyo del Cerro Makes a Comeback By Nancy Wenninger

Arroyo del Cerro Creek meanders through rolling grasslands along North Gate Road at the entrance to Mount Diablo State Park. A 3,500-foot stretch of this riparian corridor is being restored through East Bay Regional Park District’s Resource Enhancement Program.

In November 2000, the Park District purchased a 46-acre parcel of land containing a portion of the creek for \$1.05 million, to be added to Diablo Foothills Regional Park. Lennar Homes provided one third of the purchase price to mitigate the loss of riparian habitat at a residential development in Dougherty Valley; the balance came from EBRPD’s 1988 Measure AA bond funds.

The Arroyo property contains rolling hills of annual grasslands and the native herbs which are abundant on the flanks of Mt. Diablo. Arroyo del Cerro Creek is a tributary of Pine Creek and may provide habitat for the threatened California red-legged frog. Other common wildlife species found on the land include Western meadowlarks and mule deer. Raptors benefit from the abundant ground squirrel population.



Prior to EBRPD’s purchase, the land had been grazed for more than a century. The creek’s banks were severely eroded and little riparian vegetation remained. EBRPD embarked upon an enhancement project to restore the riparian habitat on the Arroyo property. In addition to providing funding for the purchase, Lennar Homes performed the equivalent of \$40,000 in capital improvements. Clusters of native trees and shrubs were planted along the creek. Two in-stream pools were created to provide

additional red-legged frog habitat. Fences were built along the creek corridor to exclude livestock while the plants become established. A star thistle control project was also initiated on the site.

**YOU CAN HELP TO
CONTINUE
THIS IMPORTANT
RESTORATION**

Saturday, May 19 from 9:00 AM to noon: EBRPD’s “Doc Quack” (a.k.a. Dave Riensche) will lead volunteers as they enhance the plant life found along the creek. Participants will earn a “Riparian Re-Leaf” patch. (Parental participation required). Wear long pants, hiking/mud boots, gloves, and hat and bring water, insect repellent and sunscreen.

REGISTER WITH DOC QUACK AT
510-544-2319 or
docquack@ebparks.org.

Native Plants for Native Birds

By Pat Bacchetti

Elderberry *Sambucus spp.*

An overlooked plant of our region that is not often considered for gardens is in the genus *Sambucus*—both Western, or Blue, and Red Elderberry. Other species include *S. nigra*, from Europe and Asia, and *S. canadensis*, the eastern American elderberry. Elders are truly bird favorites. Flickers, flycatchers, grosbeaks, nuthatches, tanagers, and orioles flock to the berries in summer. And because Anna’s Hummingbirds consume more insects than other hummers, both on the fly and off the tops of flowers, elderberry supplies them with an abundance of bugs. If you can beat the birds, the blue berries can be collected for jams and wine.

Our local elderberry, *S. mexicana*, or Western Elderberry, grows widely in our hills. It grows in many plant communities, and it can be multi-trunked and spreading, or single-trunked like a small tree. They typically prefer sunny areas, but can be grown in moderate shade. Rangier and less fruity in shade, the shrub is still an insect and bird magnet in the summer. Elderberry was just beginning to flower in the hills in April—look for large white umbels of flowers at the top of shrubs with compound leaves.



Elderberry along the San Francisco Bay Trail

Elderberry is probably not going to be a showcase plant in your garden, but it is a wonderful addition along the edges of woodland gardens and hedges. The fragrant umbels are a swirl of insects pollinating the nectar-rich flowers, and butterflies love them. As the more tree-like plants age, the trunk develops a beautiful ochre-brown color with brown streaking.

On my hill, Western Elderberry was one of the few natives flourishing among the Black Acacia dominating the site. They still don’t receive much sun, even after the acacia has been removed, but they are hardy plants that bloom and berry every year. I prune mine hard in the fall, and they respond with more luxuriant growth in the spring. The stems are hollow, and can be tied into bundles for native bee

Continued on Page 7 »

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

April

28 Saturday Fernandez Ranch

May

2 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park

10* Thursday Mitchell Canyon

* Note change of date from May 9.

19 Saturday East Contra Costa County

24 Thursday West Briones Regional Park

June

7 Thursday Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

9 Saturday Carquinez Strait

See Page 8

16–17 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

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 join us during our midday break.

Category ❶: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ❷: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ❸: 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. **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Take the Acalanes Road/Upper Happy Valley Road exit of SR 24, west of Lafayette. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with Acalanes Road and on the north side of El Nido Ranch Road.

Customary carpool expense is \$3-5 for short trips, \$5-10 for longer trips, plus tolls and entry fees shared among driver and riders.

❸ Saturday, April 28 Muir Heritage Land Trust

Leader: Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987.

Meet at 8:30 AM. Take Highway 4 west towards Richmond to Franklin Canyon exit, turn left at stop sign and left again at next stop sign to get back on 4 eastbound. Immediately after passing Franklin Canyon golf course (on right), turn right onto Christie Road one mile past PG&E plant to gate on right side of road. We will hike the Trust's new 700+ acre Fernandez Ranch property which contains a mixture of oak woodland, grassland and riparian habitat.

❸ Thursday, May 10 Mitchell Canyon

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Meet at 8 AM in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$3.00 parking fee. From I-680 in Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to Clayton Road. Turn right on Clayton Road and right on Mitchell Canyon Road to the end. Gnatcatchers, spring migrants and residents, lots of wildflowers. Usually hot! Bring liquids and lunch.

❷ Thursday, May 24 West Briones Regional Park

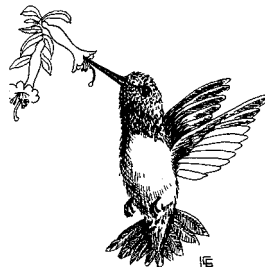
Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Meet at 8:00 AM in parking lot on the right-hand side of the west entrance road, off Bear Creek Road. From SR 24 in Orinda, drive north on Camino Pablo about 2¼ miles, turn right on Bear Creek Road, continue for 4½ miles to park entrance. Wildflowers, spring birds; Lazuli Buntings are abundant. Poison oak along shaded trails.

❷ Wednesday, May 2 Mount Diablo State Park

Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330.

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. Note: Carpool leaves at 8 AM from La Gonda. From I-680 southbound, exit at El Pintado, turn right and right again; park along open space on left. From I-680 northbound, exit El Cerro, turn left, then right at second light onto La Gonda; carpool site is about one-half mile north. Meet at 8:45 AM at the South Gate entrance after birding South Gate Road. Usually hot! Entry fee required. Sage, Rufous-crowned, and Black-chinned Sparrows and migrant warblers all possible.



❷ Saturday, May 19 East Contra Costa County

Leader: Paul Schorr, 757-5107.

Carpool leaves at 6:30 AM from Sun Valley. Or meet the leader at 7:00 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, Swainson's Hawk and Yellow-breasted Chat possible. Bring lunch and liquids.

❷ Thursday, June 7 Sycamore Grove Shadow Cliffs Regional Park

Leaders: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257

Judi Cooper.

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 7:30 AM. Meet at Sycamore Grove at 8 AM. From I-680 south, take I-580 east toward Livermore. Turn right on 1st Street, turn left onto South L Street, which becomes Arroyo Road. Continue 3.8 miles to Veterans Park, just beyond Sycamore Grove. The two are adjacent and this end usually has more birds. After birding one of the largest sycamore groves in the state, we will drive to Shadow Cliffs for lunch. Entry fee required.

Continued on Page 5 »

Saturday/Sunday, June 16-17

Yuba Pass

Leaders:

Rosita and Hugh Harvey, 935-2979.

This is always a productive and well-favored weekend trip to the northern Sierra which requires driving and walking, some of it over rough terrain. Saturday we will bird in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Sunday we will be birding in the Yuba Pass area for mountain birds. Meet at the top of the pass at 7:00 AM Saturday morning. Make motel reservations *now!* Closest motels are in Sierra City, 18 miles down Highway 49. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151) is one of the best; Buckhorn Lodge (800-991-1170) has new cabins; Golden West Saloon Restaurant and Motel in Loyalton (530-993-4467). There are campgrounds at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Other accommodations, including some campgrounds, are listed at www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html. San Francisco State University maintains its Sierra Nevada campus six miles above Sierra City on Highway 49. They have a useful web link to accommodations in the area at www.sfsu/~sierra/accom.htm. In the middle of the Sierra Valley near Loyalton, the T Lazy R Ranch is a working cattle ranch with a guest house for rent. Owner Tim Rees can be reached for reservations at 530-993-1560.

After June 10, call Wild Birds Unlimited (925-798-0303) for confirmation of trip information.

Trip Reports

Upper San Leandro Reservoir, March 15.

Nineteen birders enjoyed a beautiful spring morning at Valle Vista/Upper San Leandro Reservoir in Moraga. Only a few spring migrants had arrived but we still saw or heard 60 species. First, the Riche Loop trail produced a lot of birds and then the pine grove and corral road kept our interest up. The lake was very low, significantly limiting the number of waterbirds present but still we saw a group of 21 Wood Ducks. Other good birds included a California Thrasher, five kinds of woodpecker, a Common Merganser, and a fly-over Varied Thrush.

Don Lewis

April Observations By Steve Glover

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

Single pairs of **Hooded Mergansers** were Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 2/25 (DE) and along Refugio Creek in Hercules on 3/5 and 3/7 (MM).

An **Osprey** was noted flying north over the western edge of Redwood Regional Park, Alameda and Contra Costa counties, on 3/31 (RB).

Single adult **Bald Eagles** were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 2/25 and at San Pablo Reservoir on 3/3 (DE).

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was seen by many at Briones Regional Park from 3/10-29 (AH et al.).

Fifty **Sandhill Cranes** were at Holland Tract east of Knightsen on 3/3 (SH).

Three **Ruddy Turnstones**, a nice tally for this species in the county, were on Brooks Island near Richmond on 3/31 (PR).

A **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was found in a Moraga yard on 3/2, furnishing the third record for the county (JC).

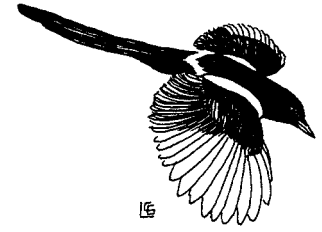
As many as 7 **Short-eared Owls** continued at Byron Hot Springs through at least 2/20 (SH).

A pair of **Yellow-billed Magpies** were confirmed nesting along Taylor Road on Bethel Island on 3/14 (BC). There are few nest records for the county and this may be the first for the island.

A **Winter Wren** put in a surprise first-time appearance in a Lafayette yard along Las

Black Diamond Mines Regional Park, March 31. Seven birders enjoyed a warm spring day hiking in Black Diamond Mines Regional Park in Antioch. The best birds were a perched and singing California Thrasher, a pair of Phainopepla in the oaks just west of the picnic area, a spectacular adult Lark Sparrow in crisp breeding plumage and a beautiful male Hooded Oriole which perched momentarily for us following lunch. Oak Titmice, Wrentits, and Orange-crowned Warblers were singing everywhere. Surprisingly, no wrens were seen. Due to the dry conditions, few flowers were blooming, though Sticky Monkey Flowers, Indian Paint Brush and Indian Warriors put on a nice show. 43 species were seen and heard.

Eugenia Larson



Trampas Creek on 3/7 (MS). One other Winter Wren, this one singing for at least the previous week, was reported on 3/7 (PK). Winter Wrens are unknown as breeders this far east in the county.

A female **Phainopepla** provided a rare record for the Berkeley Hills when it was found on 3/24 near the Bear Creek entrance to Briones Regional Park (GG).

The **Lark Bunting** at Byron Hot Springs in east county continued through at least 3/9 (DN).

A **White-throated Sparrow** continued in a Moraga yard to at least 3/13 (SP); another visited a Hercules feeder from mid-February to at least 3/7 (MM).

A **Lapland Longspur** was reported without details from Byron Hot Springs on 3/9 (DN). It has been decades since the last county record.

A **Hooded Oriole** returned to a Concord feeder for a 3rd consecutive winter on 1/2 (PB).

Ron Barklow, Polly Boissevain, Bethi Carver, Judi Cooper, Daniel Edelstein, George Griffeth, Anne Hoff, Steve Hutchcraft, Patrick King, Marylou Mull, Dick Norton, Susan Parr, Phila Rogers, Maury Stern.

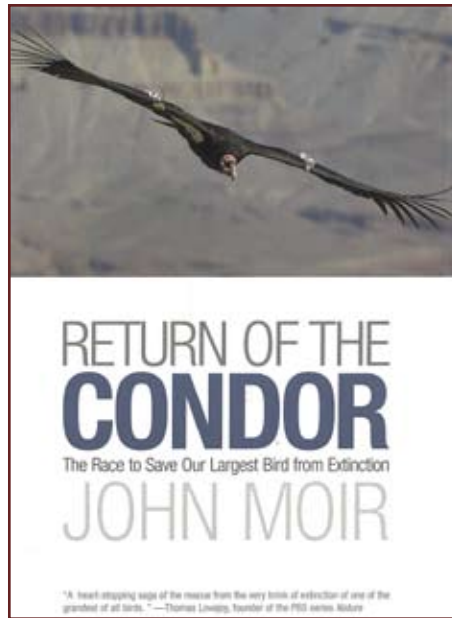
Garin Regional Park, April 7. Not for the first time, the leader had no followers. But he was not lacking in birds, for the cool green hills and bushes of Garin Park had Bullock's Orioles aplenty, Black-headed Grosbeak, House Wren, Wilson's Warbler, all singing prominently. A Warbling Vireo was gathering large pieces of bark for her nest. Two very common birds were also worth noting; far more Steller's Jays than I've ever seen at Garin, and a flock of Cedar Waxwings, which we haven't seen on our chapter trips there previously. In all there were 46 species, counting the impressive large falcon that sailed overhead, for which the light (and my skill) was too poor to decide whether Prairie or Peregrine.

Fred Safier

Return of the Condor

If you are among those who have admired the majesty of our largest bird, the California Condor, you would most likely enjoy reading *Return of the Condor: The Race to Save Our Largest Bird from Extinction*, a new book by naturalist and award-winning science writer John Moir.

The author begins his narrative with the capture, in 1987, of AC9 (Adult Condor 9), the last free-flying bird of his kind. At that time there was heated controversy about the wisdom of mounting a costly and uncertain captive-breeding program for this species against those who opposed confining Condors for any reason. The story of this dilemma, its cast of characters, its development over the last two decades, and the gladdening outcome is presented in great detail.



The book also includes references about the locations throughout California, Arizona and Utah where you might be able to see Condors in the wild. More than 125 California Condors now patrol the skies. Yet the birds are still at great risk from lead poisoning caused by their ingesting deer and other game killed with lead bullets. Another major problem is that of power lines.

On March 24 an egg, laid by Condor 217, was found in an abandoned eagle nest on a cliff in the Sierra San Pedro de Martir National Park, in the interior of Baja California more than 100 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border. That's good news, and indeed affirms the Return of the Condor.

An autographed copy of this book will be raffled at the May 3 meeting of MDAS.



This Red Phalarope was photographed during a Mount Diablo Audubon field trip to the Hayward Regional Shoreline in September, 2006.

» Continued from Page 8

Birding the San Francisco Bay Trail

Park and Lake, birding is excellent at any time of year.

The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is not only a good place to study shorebirds and gulls, but a wide variety of raptors, including Burrowing Owls and Barn Owls, are here as well.

Coyote Hills Regional Park is a place with a great diversity of habitat, from woodland and marsh areas to the mudflats on the bayside. The diversity of birds is equally impressive, from wrens to raptors.

The Hayward Regional Shoreline is a popular birding spot. It seems to be popular with such species as American Pipit in the fall, as well as occasional longspurs. Black Skimmers might be expected; and Red Knots are reliable in winter.

At the Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline, Arrowhead Marsh reportedly hosts more than one in twenty of all California Clapper Rails. Avocets and Black-necked Stilts breed here.

In downtown Oakland, Lake Merritt was the first National Wildlife Refuge in the country, dedicated in 1869. Tufted Ducks and Barrow's Goldeneyes are two species that often show up during the winter.

An off-the-beaten-track site well worth a visit is the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline. This park looks down over the waters and offers a vista of waterfowl below, Western Bluebirds and Western Meadowlarks in the fields, and raptors overhead.



Western Bluebirds and Western Meadowlarks gambol in the grasses of Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline. Downtown Martinez and Mount Diablo frame the view.

Another lesser-known location, good for waterfowl, gulls, and other species, is White Slough in Vallejo. Black Rail are known to breed here, as do Saltmarsh Common Yellowthroat and Least Terns. The Bay Trail turns north, away from the

bay, to find a suitable crossing of the Napa River. The John F. Kennedy Park in Napa includes marshland and riparian areas, and is also a place where you might take to a kayak or canoe to bird from the river.

To the west from Napa, at Petaluma, Shollenberger Park adjoins the Petaluma River and provides a series of ponds that host many species of waterfowl. The Point Reyes Bird Observatory headquarters and research complex is located alongside one of the trails at Shollenberger Park.

Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds in Marin County are part of a water treatment plant; levee trails encircle the ponds and allow you to view many ducks and geese, Osprey, kites and other raptors, perhaps Virginia Rails. And at the trailhead, the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District claims to maintain "one of the most beautiful public toilets in the bay area."

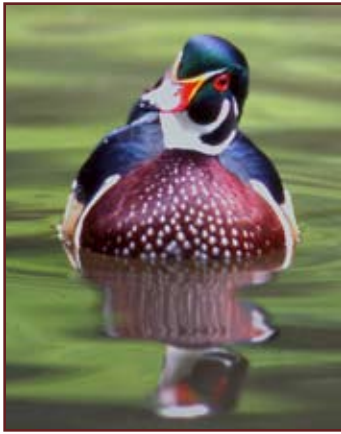
China Camp State Park has one of the largest remnants of the natural mosaic of wetland and upland natural communities of any stretch of shoreline around the San Francisco estuary. The park has excellent tidal wetlands bordered by interpretive trails. Surrounding the marsh are a mix of grasslands and oak woodlands that together constitute a relatively intact ecological watershed.

You can spend many weekends visiting these stops on the Birding the San Francisco Bay Trail, each a place to enjoy your avocation of choice.



Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Although male Wood Ducks are beautifully colored with a bright green crest, speckled chestnut chest, red



bill, and bold white markings on the face, the female does not share these characteristics. She has a special beauty of her own. The teardrop shaped white coloring around the eye is distinctive, and the speculum on her wing is quite pretty.

Wood Ducks are cavity nesters, but because natural tree cavities are scarce, they will readily use nest boxes. However, if the boxes are too close together, females may lay eggs in the nest boxes of other females. Unable to fly, newly hatched ducklings need to jump from their tree cavity or nest box and make their way to water. They've been known to survive this "solo flight" from heights of 200 feet.

Heritage Day at Borges Ranch

Walnut Creek's Heritage Day at Borges Ranch will be on Saturday, June 9, from 10 AM to 5 PM. There will be a wide range of activities for the entire family, including food, live entertainment, a children's art show, demonstrations of early ranching skills, and more. Mount Diablo Audubon will have an environmental booth at this event, with the aim of helping children learn about birds and nature. We need two more volunteers to take part for an hour or two. Please be one of those two!

Volunteers are also needed to assist with a membership recruitment drive which will be on Mothers' Day, Sunday, May 13 at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.

If you can help at either of these events, please telephone Shirley Ellis at 938-3703. She will give you more details about these or other opportunities.

Continued from Page 3 »
Elderberry



nesting sites, or blowguns if you have young boys in your life.

Red elderberry, *S. racemosa*, is more prevalent in Northern California in moist canyons. It will grow here provided that you give it regular water in the summer. The berries are a deep red color that birds love. *S. nigra* and *S. canadensis* are not native, but are used more in the horticultural and culinary world for their more varied flower color and fruit. Both require summer water to look their best.

A short word on toxicity in all elders. Many believe that the plant is highly toxic and choose not to plant it. In truth, the berries and leaves contain a chemical that can cause nausea in people. The compound can be inactivated by cooking. Red elderberry is considered the most toxic, so it is not used for cooking or wine. Native Americans used the crushed leaves as a poultice for relieving the sting of bees, and the fruit as food. The flowers can also be used in batter and fried as fritters.

There is another way that planting elderberry can indirectly benefit birds. Bay Flora, a local Berkeley company, will contribute 15% of your purchase price of plants, seeds, wreaths, and tableware to the non-profit of your choice. Though they only offer the non-native species of elders, our birds will still enjoy them. You can designate Mount Diablo Audubon as

your non-profit of choice when you order on-line, and you will be helping the chapter in its work for conserving and enriching our local environment. They can be found at www.bayflora.com.

Bringing Back the Natives

A free self-guided tour of 60 Contra Costa and Alameda County gardens will let you delve more deeply into the advantages of using California natives to attract birds, bees and butterflies to your garden, to lower your water bill, and reduce your need for pesticides. Dates are April 28 and May 5 and 6. Registration is required at www.BringingBackTheNatives.net. Call (510) 236-9558 (9 AM to 9 PM) for questions. Major sponsors include the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, Contra Costa Clean Water Program, EBMUD, and the cities of Walnut Creek, El Cerrito, Richmond and Antioch.

On Saturday and Sunday, May 5-6, a Native Plant Sale Extravaganza will take place. During the Extravaganza a number of nurseries specializing in California natives will be open from 10:00 to 5:00. These nurseries, many not normally open to the public, carry large quantities of hard-to-find California natives.

About West Nile

The following letter was received by Mount Diablo Audubon recently; it was sent by the California Department of Health Services.

Thank you very much for your continued support in our efforts to monitor the spread of West Nile virus (WNV). In 2006, there were 4,219 human cases of WNV reported nationally, of which 276 were from California. Of those infected, 161 people in the United States have died from WNV; 7 fatalities were from California. As WNV continues to be very active in California, surveillance of wild bird populations remains very important.

Dead bird surveillance is a key component of an early warning system to detect WNV activity. Last year, dead birds were the first indicator of WNV in 38 of the 54 WNV positive counties. Of 6,535 birds tested last year, 1,446 were found positive for WNV. Approximately 47% of these WNV positive birds were American Crows. The species that most often test positive for WNV are: American Crow, Western Scrub-Jay, Yellow-billed Magpie, House Finch, American Robin, House Sparrow, Steller's Jay, Northern Mockingbird, Barn Owl, Common Raven, Cooper's Hawk, European Starling, Mourning Dove, and Red-shouldered Hawk. To date, WNV has been detected in 285 bird species in the United States since 1999. Avian symptoms of WNV infection may include ataxia, recumbency, unusual posture, convulsions, circling behavior, and emaciation. These symptoms are not exclusive to WNV; therefore, diagnostic tests must be performed to confirm WNV infection.

This year, the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) and local vector control agencies will collect and test all bird species but will emphasize the most susceptible birds, including corvids (*i.e.* crows, ravens, magpies, and jays), sparrows, finches, and raptors. To be acceptable for testing, a bird must be dead for no longer than 24 hours at the time of report. Signs that a bird has been dead for too long include the appearance of being dried out, rotting, or having sunken/missing eyes. Birds from unsecured locations (streets, parks, parking lots) or that have been run over are generally not accepted for testing. Dead birds can be refrigerated; *do not* put the carcass in a refrigerator used to hold food.

The public can report dead birds either by calling the toll-free WNV hotline, 1-877-968-BIRD (2473), or by submitting an online report at www.westnile.ca.gov. The hotline is staffed seven days a week from 8 AM to 5 PM. Calls received after hours and on weekends are recorded, reviewed and logged. Additionally, we have Spanish speaking hotline staff and recorded messages in Spanish.

The CDHS relies primarily on vector control and environmental health agencies to collect and ship dead birds for WNV testing. Over 46,000 dead birds were reported and 6,535 were submitted for WNV testing in 2006. Many birds are not submitted for testing because the carcass is unsuitable for testing or because the local vector agency may lack adequate resources to respond. All dead bird reports, whether the bird is tested or not, are input to the Dynamic Continuous-Area Space-Time (DYCAST) system to identify increased activity of WNV. Therefore a bird that is acceptable for testing should still be reported to the hotline or via the website.

For information on WNV surveillance in California, please call the WNV hotline (1-877-968-BIRD) or visit the CDHS West Nile virus website (www.westnile.ca.gov).

Ornithological Opportunities

Alcatraz Island—International Migratory Bird Day, June 2–3. Join the National Park Service in celebrating migratory birds on Alcatraz Island. Come see the wild side of the island prison and enjoy seeing the nesting migratory seabirds. What better way to learn about birds than to see them in action? Alcatraz offers its visitors an opportunity to see first hand the nesting behaviors and chicks of all the nesting birds that inhabit the island. There will be hands-on activities for kids and adults. Volunteer docents will be on site interpreting some of the bird species on Alcatraz for the visitors. Enjoy shade grown coffee and chocolate on site while you learn amazing facts about our feathered friends. Make this International Migratory Bird Day a memorable one by celebrating on Alcatraz Island! For more information: Fort Mason, Bldg 201, San Francisco, CA 94123. Phone: (415) 561-4908. E-mail: christian_hellwig@nps.gov.

IMBD—Sequoia Audubon Society & California State Parks, May 12–13. Join the nation in celebrating and learning about migratory birds. A day of fun and learning for the whole family. Learn about how climate changes affect the migration of birds from North America to Central and South America. Activities include exhibits, arts and crafts; learn about bird houses, guided bird walks at 1 PM each day, activities for children. Admission to the State Park is \$6 per car. Directions: Hwy 92 to Hwy 1. Go south to the first intersection of Kelly Ave., turn right and go west to the Half Moon Bay State Beach entrance. Dress in layers for warm to cool weather; bring a picnic lunch and fluids. Be ready for a fun day. For more information: 95 Kelly Ave, Half Moon Bay, California 94019. Phone: (650) 726-8819. Web Site: www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=531. E-mail: office@sequoia-audubon.org.

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, June 15–17, Lee Vining. This is a birding festival like no other. You simply must look over the program to believe it. See it at <http://www.birdchautauqua.org/>. Look for Gray and Willow Flycatchers or Juniper Titmouse.

Chautauqua is an institution that began in the late 19th century to provide higher education opportunities through the combination of lectures, concerts, and public events. The institution grew from the early-American thirst for self-improvement and education and later evolved into a traveling movement or circuit that became most popular in the rural Midwest.

The Chautauqua circuit flourished in the early 1900s before a gradual decline in the 1920s and 1930s. These traveling

Chautauqua is the most American thing in America!

Teddy Roosevelt

Chautauquas featured oratory, drama, and music. Famous personalities or politicians would sometimes speak, and admission was cheap. The Chautauqua varied in content, approach, and quality. Typically they were held in an outdoor setting under tents where the public could attend a lecture or performance.

Chautauqua is an Iroquois word meaning either "two moccasins tied together" or "jumping fish". Chautauqua is also a lake, a county, and a town in southwestern New York—home of the Chautauqua Institution.

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

MDAS Board of Directors

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330

Vice President: Mike Williams, 376-1631

Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929

Board Secretary: Claudia Hein, 671-0401

Sales Manager: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732

Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581

Field Trips: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979

Membership: Ann McGregor, 968-1677

Volunteer Coordinator:

Shirley Ellis, 938-3703

Hospitality: Gerry Argenal, 768-6325

Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631

Access: Beverly Hawley, 947-0479

Webmaster: Patrick King, 510-642-6522

Chapter Development:

Paul Schorr, 757-5107

Hands-On Conservation:

Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987

Christmas Count:

Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330

Member-at-Large:

Jean Richmond, 837-2843

Don Yoder, 937-5974

Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103

215 Calle La Mesa

Moraga, CA 94556-1603

ellis.myers@earthlink.net

The Quail is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **Deadline for the July-August issue is June 10.**

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.

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 tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Card Number: _____

____ Visa ____ MasterCard _____ Expiration Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Please make your check payable to:

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

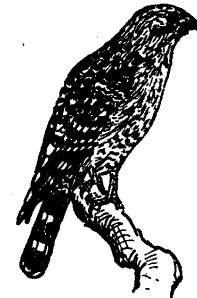
Is the grass greener on the other side?

Not if you use ecological lawn care methods. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, over 54 million American homeowners use gas powered lawn mowers, which cause as much as five percent of the nation's air pollution, as well as contribute to global warming. Lawn mowers are not currently equipped with catalytic converters, as are cars, and therefore contribute a disproportionately high amount of pollution to the environment. A 2001 Swedish study concluded that air pollution from an hour of grass cutting with a gasoline powered lawn mower is about the same as that from a 100-mile automobile ride. Roger Westerholm, Ph.D., of Stockholm University states that these emissions can be reduced by more than 80 percent using a catalytic converter like those used in automobiles.

Stricter emissions standards for lawn mowers will be a future reality. As of this year, California is requiring newly manufactured lawn mowers and other small engine devices to have catalytic converters. In addition, many concerned homeowners are switching to electric lawn mowers, which can be either corded or cordless. Electric mowers are quieter and need less routine maintenance than gas mowers. For corded mowers it is important to use an electricity supplier that minimizes environmental pollution. Vendors in some

states such as California, Washington, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Maryland are offering rebate programs, where a gasoline powered mower can be turned in for a rebate on an electric one. Alternative fuel lawn mowers are in the works. The Toro Co. has developed a mower which can utilize 20 percent vegetable oil and 80 percent petroleum (B-20) and expect models that run on pure biodiesel fuel to be available by 2009.

See www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Healthy_Yard.html for more advice on creating a healthy backyard. By following these tips, the grass will truly be greener in your yard. *Audubon Newswire*



Red-bellied Hawk
Buteo lineatus elegans
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard
1930

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

Return Service Requested



TIME VALUE MAIL



Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds, Marin County

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

Quickies Weekend Birding in California

Birding the San Francisco Bay Trail

The San Francisco Bay Trail is a project of the Associated Bay Area Governments that is destined to become a recreational corridor encircling San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a continuous 400-mile network of bicycling and hiking trails. It will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities, and cross the major toll bridges. At present more than half—240 miles—of the Bay Trail's ultimate length has been completed.

A birding guide to this trail has been published in cooperation with the Coastal Conservancy and the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. This guide claims only to be an introduction to the many areas to find watchable birdlife, and outlines 16 locations of particular interest.

The first stop is the San Francisco Presidio, where the Crissy Field restored wetlands offer habitat for marshland

birds. Pelagic birds can be seen offshore from Fort Mason, and raptors are often seen from Battery West under the Golden Gate Bridge.

The Colma Creek Public Shore north of the San Francisco Airport is an area

Saturday, June 9. Birding the Bay Trail at Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline.

In conjunction with San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, this is a new trip for MDAS. Carquinez Regional Shoreline provides unique views of this inland waterway. Annual grasslands slope down to the water with pockets of oak woodland and coastal scrub dotting the hill-sides, offering lots of edge habitat for birds. Free to members of MDAS or SFBBO, \$10 donation requested for nonmembers. Meet 8 AM at the Carquinez Strait east staging area located on Carquinez Scenic Drive west of Martinez. Leader: Cheryl Abel. RSVP to Juliana Chow, Outreach Specialist SFBBO at outreach@sfbbo.org or 408-946-6548. Category 3.

where Clapper Rails share the marsh with shorebirds and sometimes with rarities such as Sedge Wren and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Farther south is Coyote Point, site of an old Ohlone fishing village, and now home to the Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education. Coyote Point Museum features a 4000-square foot walk-through aviary for nonreleasable, native California birds. A pond and waterfall give a natural setting and let visitors view the birds up close. Along the bayshore, Black Oystercatchers and Black Turnstones are regular visitors. Harlequin Ducks and Least Terns are possible.

Red Knot, Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Dowitchers, Willet, and other shorebirds find the mudflats productive at low tide, or they roost at high tide, and they can be seen from the Bay Trail near the San Mateo Bridge. Long-tailed Duck has shown up on numerous occasions.

Palo Alto Baylands is perhaps best known for Black Rail, but, together with nearby Charleston Slough and Shoreline

Continued on Page 6 »