



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php

Volume 53, Number 8

May 2008

Greening Wind Power

Elizabeth Murdock



Golden Eagles soar with the wind at Altamont Pass.

Photo by John Gilardi, National Renewable Energy Laboratory

Balancing Bird Conservation and Wind-Energy Production at Altamont Pass

Elizabeth Murdock is the Executive Director of Golden Gate Audubon Society and has worked in wildlife conservation since 1998. Her conservation initiatives have included efforts to conserve North American cats and build support for the reintroduction of Florida panthers. She played an instrumental role in securing the historic CITES Appendix II listing of the Whale Shark in 2002. She is currently leading nationally significant efforts to reduce illegal avian mortality at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area in California.

Since the 1980s, the wind turbines at Altamont Pass have generated power for the Bay Area at a price that was unpredictable 30 years ago. Thousands of birds have died each year in the turbines' spinning blades. The Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area is one of the oldest wind farms in the United States. It sits in the middle of an important migratory flight corridor immediately adjacent to the densest known Golden Eagle nesting territory in the world. Scientists estimate that the

wind facility annually kills as many as 4,700 birds, among them 1,300 raptors—more raptors than at any other wind facility in North America.

The great majority of the birds killed at Altamont pass are listed as protected by state and federal laws and regulations, such as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and provi-

sions of the California Fish and Game Code, which carry stiff fines for violations. Over 40 species have been documented as killed by the turbines but state and federal agencies have been reluctant to enforce the relevant wildlife laws.

According to expert scientists, bird conservation and wind energy production can be balanced at Altamont Pass. Reports published in 2004 and 2005 indicate that wind companies could reduce avian mortality at Altamont Pass by 50 percent within three years, and perhaps as much as 85 percent within six years, without undue cost to the industry.

Elizabeth Murdock will discuss the impacts of the wind turbine industry on protected birds as well as the 2007 settlement agreement made by Golden Gate Audubon with Alameda County. The settlement agreement balances the need for immediate action with a flexible adaptive management plan that can respond to the best new science as it emerges.



Birding Information

Next year the East Bay Regional Park District will celebrate its 75th anniversary. At nearly 100,000 acres, it is the largest regional park district in the world and has a dual mission to provide recreational opportunities and protect natural resources. Nancy Wenninger, longtime MDAS member, serves as Land Acquisition Manager for the District and has been instrumental, during the last ten years, in the acquisition of 10,000 of those 100,000 acres. She will share some of the goals and strategies for future growth, as well as details of the exciting recent acquisitions which preserve important habitat.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, May 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

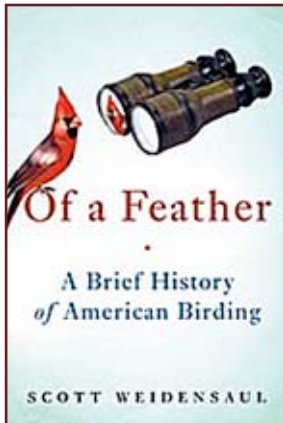
7:00 PM Birding Information
7:25 PM Announcements
7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize
8:05 PM Speaker:
Elizabeth Murdock

** Please remember to bring a cup.*

June 5: Larry Arbanas
Filming Birds of the
North, South, East and West

President's Corner

I mentioned at our March general meeting that I was reading a very interesting book entitled *Of a Feather, A Brief History of American Birding* by Scott Weidensaul. At the time I had only read about five chapters, but have just finished the book. I want to highly recommend this book to all of you and also make a couple of observations from the book. Although I have been a member of Audubon for over 35 years I guess I really never knew how Audubon started. Oh, I heard about trying to save the Egrets from plume hunters, but it sort of ended there. *Of a Feather* really traces the history. George Bird Grinnell actually started Audubon in 1886, but it failed after a few years. He was a young scientist, whom the New York Times said, when he died in 1937, was "the father of American conservation." He had named it Audubon in honor of Lucy Audubon (John James Audubon's wife) because she had first



got him interested in birds as a child. Ten years later in Boston a group of wealthy women began to meet at the home of Harriet Henenway. She had read the blood curdling accounts of the killing of Egrets in Florida for the millinery trade and she had a road-to-Damascus conversion and became a champion of conservation. She invited women whose names were in the Boston Blue Book to tea and then invited them to join the "Society." They, in turn, invited important male naturalists and civic leaders. (Remember, women could not even vote!) They choose William Brewster to be the first president of what they called the "Massachusetts Audubon Society." Within 2 years they had 11 Massachusetts chapters and although men's names were on the masthead all but a few chapters were headed by women. By 1900 it spread to associations in 20 states; by 1901, 36 states. In 1905 they came together to form the "National Association of Audubon Societies."

This is just one the many fascinating stories in the book. The other comment I would make is that Weidensaul is very critical of those of us who love and enjoy nature, but do very little to support the cause. He asks a rhetorical question, "Can you name a single, concrete action you have done in the past week to better the world of birds? In the last month? In the last year? If you had to think about it more

Welcome New Members

Donna Bailey	Lafayette
Clare Castleberry	Pleasant Hill
Linda Waldroup	Walnut Creek

Officers of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be elected at the May general meeting to serve for the following fiscal year. Nominations for these positions are as follows:

President:	Jimm Edgar
Vice President:	Mike Williams
Treasurer:	Steve Buffi
Secretary:	Open

Please consider joining the Board of Directors as Secretary.

than a moment, then I gently suggest you rededicate yourself to doing more for the creatures on which your hobby is based."

A good lesson for all of us to hear. Our chapter has a lot of ways to "give back." I hope you will take advantage of some of them. A volunteer, a board position, donate money, lots of ways.

Celebrate McNabney Marsh

Join Mountain View Sanitary District on May 17 for a public open house event, rain or shine. There is a lot to celebrate, including American Wetlands Month, the 85th anniversary of MVSD, the enhancement projects in McNabney Marsh, the opening of a new bird observation platform and more.

Enjoy a fun-filled day while learning about wetlands, birds and much more. Events include marsh discovery walks, live animal shows, pond turtle rafts, kids' and family activities, exhibitions, free food, guest speakers, plant tours, and more! Hours are 10 AM to 2 PM, Saturday, May 17. Free admission. Parking will be available at the parking lot of 1635 Pacheco Blvd. with free shuttle services to Mountain View Sanitary District.

The request for an observation platform in McNabney Marsh first came from birders visiting the wetlands over twenty

years ago. They recognized the value and opportunity to view the diverse species of birds in McNabney Marsh.

Examples of the diversity in McNabney Marsh are the American White Pelican, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, and even the occasional Wilson's Phalarope and the Black-bellied Plover.

With the cooperation of East Bay Regional Park District, we are elated that this project has finally come to fruition and Mt. View Sanitary District is happy to announce the official opening of the platform for birding and for public education.



The observation platform will be open to the public 7am – 5pm Monday through Friday and the first Saturday of every month. Other hours should be made by appointment with MVSD staff at (925) 228-5635.

For more information on the May 17th celebration, go to www.mvsd.org or call Cindy Chen at (925) 228-5635.

Observations

By Steve Glover

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

A Greater White-fronted Goose was at the Rosie the Riveter Monument in Richmond on 3/28 (GP), 3/29 (LL) and 4/3 (DL).

A male Black Scoter was found on 3/19 at the Richmond Marina (JH). It was observed almost daily through at least 4/3 (DL). On 4/3 it was joined by two more male Black Scoters, a nice tally for the county. A Long-tailed Duck was at the Richmond Marina on 3/28 (DW).

A Red-necked Grebe was just outside of the Richmond Marina on 3/19 (JH). This species is rare but annual in the Richmond area. It was last noted on 4/3 (DL).

A Ferruginous Hawk was at Iron House Sanitary District in Oakley on 3/29 (KJ).

Nine Surfbirds were at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline in Pinole on 3/20. This is a high count for the county and as far east as the species has been found in the county (LL). Four were there on 3/27 (PB).

A Pileated Woodpecker was at the now regular spot along the Westridge Trail in Redwood Regional Park (DB).

Pat Bacchetti, Delores Butkus, Jeff Hoppes, Kathy Jarrett, Don Lewis, Laura Look, Gary Palmer, Denise Wight

Cleanup at Martinez Regional Shoreline

Saturday, May 3, 8:30 AM–12 noon

This winter's tides have deposited lots of flotsam along the shoreline of one of our favorite birding areas. Join other MDAS volunteers as we help to restore this important site.

To get to Martinez Regional Shoreline, cross the tracks in downtown Martinez by the old railroad station on Ferry Street. Staging will be in the first parking lot on the left side of N. Court Street. Meet at 8:30 for a safety briefing before we head out for the cleanup of the beaches and riprap along the Pickleweed Trail. Disposable gloves will be provided.

Call Nancy Wenninger at (925) 938-7987 for more information.

Ornithological Opportunities

14th Annual Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival, April 30–May 6, at Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve in Weldon. The Kern Valley Spring Nature Festival is a celebration of our natural diversity at the height of spring abundance. Spring bird migration creates an exciting time for birders visiting the Kern Valley Spring Nature Festival. The last five festivals have averaged 233 bird species! The region centered on the Kern River Valley hosts 138 butterfly species (68%+ of California's lepidoptera), 2,000+ species of plants (a third of California's flora), and the highest mammal diversity in the United States (115 species)! Field trips are limited to between five and twenty people to insure the highest quality and most enjoyable birding and natural history experience possible. The Festival offers a variety of trips and activities for all interests and age levels. kern.audubon.org/bioregion.htm.

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society's spring pelagic trip, Sunday, May 18. The cost is a reasonable \$95 per person. Departing from Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg aboard the Trek II at 8:00 AM the trip will return about 3:00 PM. For more information, contact K. Havlena - Pelagic Trip, PO Box 40, Fort Bragg, CA 95437-0040, or see www.mcn.org/j/audubon/mcas_pelagic.html.

Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) Annual Meeting, October 9-12, San Mateo. If you are interested in birds, birding and would like a chance to interact with some of North America's most respected experts, this is the meeting for you. WFO is a unique organization that seamlessly blends birding with ornithology. WFO meetings are only occasionally held in Northern California. So, if your interest in birds goes beyond just adding another tick to your list, don't miss this one. There will be field trips visiting most of the San Francisco Bay Area's hotspots. Workshops will cover topics like sketching birds and using GPS in the field. Al Jaramillo will lead an ecological transect of the San Mateo Peninsula. Scientific sessions will give you a glimpse into the most current ornithological research and expert ID panels will educate and amaze. To learn more and to register for the meeting, visit the WFO web site: <http://www.wfo-cbrc.org/>

Least Tern Watch

The US Fish and Wildlife Service Volunteer Predator Watch Program for the protection of the California Least Tern is looking for dedicated volunteers who love birds and want to help protect an endangered species from avian and mammalian predators at Alameda Point (the former Naval Air Station, Alameda—northwest end of Alameda Island). This Navy-owned land is closed to the public. Therefore, this is a rare opportunity to view an endangered species up close and personal.

The California Least Tern, a state and federally listed species, is the smallest American tern. It is identified in spring and summer by a white forehead contrasting with a black crown and nape. Its body is slate gray above and white below, with the pointed wings and forked tail characteristic of most terns. The Least Tern will nest on unfrequented, open sandy or gravelly beaches close to estuaries, coastal embayments, open shoreline areas, upon dredge spoil and more rarely, inland on broad river valley sandbars. Since 1970, nesting sites have been recorded from San Francisco Bay to Bahia de San Quintin, Baja California. The California Least Tern is migratory, usually arriving in its breeding area by the last week of April and departing south again in August with fledglings in tow. Alameda Point is the largest Least Tern colony in Northern California with over 350 pairs.

The least tern is vulnerable to a long list of predators, some of which are very abundant in urban environments, such as feral and wild mammals (cat, dog, fox, skunk, etc.) and birds (hawks, falcons, owls, crows, gulls, etc.) To protect Least Tern

Continued on Page 6 »

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This bird held special significance to the Plains Indians, who considered

it to be the personification of bravery. They forbid killing one with bow and arrow, but highly valued the bird's feathers, and so they sometimes captured chicks and raised them in cages until they were adults.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 7 to learn more.

ADEEEGLLNO

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

May	
3 Saturday	Mines Road
8 Thursday	Mitchell Canyon
14 Wednesday	Mount Diablo State Park
17 Saturday	East Contra Costa County
22 Thursday	West Briones Regional Park
June	
5 Thursday	Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs
7 Saturday	Outer Point Reyes
21–22 Saturday-Sunday	Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley
July	
26 Saturday	San Mateo Coast
August	
16 Saturday	Bodega Bay

Come birding with us! ... and Bring a Friend

Visitors on our field trips may choose to receive three months of *the Quail*.

① Saturday, May 3 • Mines Road

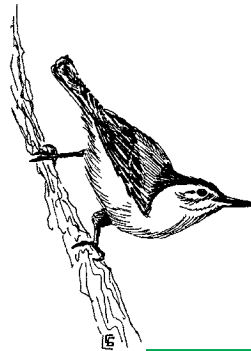
Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979.

Because of limited parking along Mines Road, carpooling is essential. This is an all-day trip and often hot! Bring lunch and liquids. Wild Turkey, Lewis's Woodpecker and Lawrence's Goldfinch and many spring migrants are possible, plus great spring wild flowers. Entry fee required for Del Valle Regional Park. Call the leader for meeting time and location.

③ Thursday, May 8 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.



② Wednesday, May 14 Mount Diablo State Park

Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330.

Mount Diablo State Park 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 LaGonda. 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 point 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, Black-chinned Sparrows and migrant warblers are all possible.

③ Saturday, May 17

East Contra Costa County

Leader: Paul Schorr, 757-5107.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 6:30 AM. Or meet the leader at 7 AM on Cypress Road at the trailhead parking lot just past Kragen's Auto Parts 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, Swainson's Hawk and Yellow-breasted Chat possible. Bring lunch and liquids.

② Thursday, May 22

West Briones Regional Park

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Meet at 8 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 2.25 miles, turn right on Bear Creek Road, continue for 4.5 miles to park entrance. Wildflowers, spring birds; Lazuli Buntings are usually abundant. Poison oak along shaded trails..

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 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. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Take the Acalanes Road/Upper Happy Valley Road exit off 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. **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.

Saturday/Sunday, June 21-22

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

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; Also in Sierra City is Yuba River Inn (530-862-1122), with cabins and kitchenettes (cash or check only). Bassett's Station (530-862-1297) at Highway 49 and Gold Lake Road has some accommodations and meals. Golden West Saloon Restaurant and Motel is 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 16, call Wild Birds Unlimited (925-798-0303) for confirmation of trip information.



Green-backed Goldfinch
Spinus psaltria hesperophilus

Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard • 1930

Trip Reports

Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh, February 28. A group of 27 birders and friends enjoyed a fine sunny day, perfect for birding. The highlights were a pair of White-tailed Kites flying into and around a pine and checking out the real estate and each other. Black-crowned Night Herons were everywhere. Four or more Green Herons flew out and one allowed us good views at the edge of the reeds. Three American White Pelicans flew over us at McNabney Marsh, then landed. We were able to see the knob or keel on the bill of the American White Pelicans as they flew over. A very enjoyable morning for all. 64 species observed. *Lynn Lakso*

Susanville/Honey Lake/Eagle Lake, March 13-16. [Fifteen birders joined leader Terry Colborn for four days of late winter/early spring birding on a loop from Yolo to Lassen County and back. The following is excerpted from Terry's trip report. For a copy of the full report, please e-mail the Editor at ellis.myers@earthlink.net.] On Day 1 a drive into the Yolo Basin Wildlife Area brought a pair of Ruffs; then into Sierra Valley where Townsend's Solitaire and Juniper Titmouse were notable finds. The tally for the day was 73 species. Day 2 recorded 77 species at Honey Lake Wildlife Area and en route to Susanville. A pair of dancing Sandhill Cranes was a special treat. Day 3 was the time for Greater Sage-Grouse on their lek, one of the unique rewards of springtime birding in sagebrush country. Driving into the Shaffer lek off of US 395 in the mud and snow was accomplished by putting everyone into four-wheel drive vehicles. Also outstanding was a Northern Shrike, a life bird for some. We observed 62 species. Day 4 included birding around Lake Almanor with Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Western Grebes among a variety of waterfowl. As we were homeward bound, an American Dipper at Deer Creek and an Osprey near Chico brought the total to 123 species for the four-day trek.

San Leandro Reservoir, March 20. Eighteen energetic birders welcomed Spring with 51 species seen at Valle Vista, Moraga, in gorgeous weather. Although there weren't as many birds as in the past with the water levels still very low for that area, everyone did enjoy very good looks at California Thrasher,

Red-breasted Nuthatch, many Wood Ducks and Ring-necked Ducks, Brown Creeper, and Orange-crowned Warbler. *Bingham Gibbs and Lynn Lakso*

Lake Lagunitas, March 26. The seven members who visited Lake Lagunitas were forced to suffer through a wonderfully sunny day as they walked around the northern slopes of Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County. Because the birds were somewhat sparse, we started looking at flowers, with excellent help from Paul Schorr. The Douglas Iris were plentiful, as were Milkmaids, Hound's-Tongue, and finally Fremont's Camas, Indian Warrior and Shooting Stars. We even found some Trilliums and one Checker-lily. We did see a total of 48 species of birds, including a wonderful Osprey, two White-throated Sparrows, Brown Creeper, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, a singing Bewick's Wren, vocalizing Common Mergansers and two elusive Orange-crowned Warblers.

Hugh B. Harvey

Black Diamond Mines, March 29. Twelve enthusiastic birders led the leader up the steep slopes on a cool clear day with at most three drops of rain. We had great views of Western Bluebirds and White-throated Swifts, singing Western Meadowlarks and Bewick's Wrens, glimpses of Bullock's Orioles and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, as well as Lark and Chipping Sparrows, for a total of 43 species. A few of us stayed a bit longer and found a much more cooperative pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. *Fred Saftier*

Garin Regional Park, April 5. It was cold in the morning and stayed cool all day. Eight members walked past Jordan Pond and took the Dry Creek Trail to the end and returned on the High Ridge Loop Trail. In the first picnic areas and even the parking lot, we saw and heard Bullock's Orioles. On the heavily wooded creekside trail we heard numerous Wilson's Warblers, saw several Pacific-slope Flycatchers, found an elusive Orange-crowned Warbler, and heard a Black-headed Grosbeak. Red-tailed Hawks, a pair of Golden Eagles, a White-tailed Kite, a Red-shouldered Hawk nest, Cooper's Hawks and Kestrels filled in the raptor column. Just as we re-crossed the creek back to the picnic area, a small flock was seen high in the trees. It consisted of both Audubon's and Myrtle Warblers, a Warbling Vireo and a Black-and-white Warbler. Altogether we heard or saw 57 species.

Hugh B. Harvey



Headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. Photograph by Bud F. Turner

a mile-long interpretive birding trail. This non-motorized trail will pass alongside the wetland area created by the Middle Fork of the Feather River, through sagebrush habitat, and near Burrowing Owl nest boxes. The trail will have a trail-head kiosk, four interpretive signs, and directional signs. The project is also the first phase of a larger project; the trail will lead to the site of a bird-viewing platform, near the edge of the wetlands, which will be constructed by the end of 2008 or Spring 2009.

Partial funding for the interpretive trail came from California Audubon. The Maddalena Property is used by visiting Audubon groups, and the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society endorses this project. Plumas Audubon is taking the lead in implement-

ing the trail component of the project. The creation of an interpretive trail will educate the public about unique bird-viewing opportunities in the Sierra Valley and the importance of habitat protection.

Saturday, May 10, is International Migratory Bird Day. Feather River Land Trust, in cooperation with Plumas Audubon Society, will host a groundbreaking celebration for the viewing platform mentioned in this article and introduce the soon-to-be-completed trail at the Maddalena Property. Everyone is invited. For details, please call the Feather River Land Trust at 530-283-5758.

Least Tern Watch

» *Continued from Page 6*

nest sites from disturbance, ground access is typically controlled by fences. However, predators coming by air are a big problem at Alameda and we need your help to curb and report the predators. Volunteer presence appears to deter many daytime predators from visiting the tern colony!

Each volunteer must participate in one of three 2½ hour training sessions. Then each volunteer, using his/her personal vehicle, binoculars and our scope, observes the tern colony for 3-hour periods from a safe distance to see any incoming predators and to prevent any disturbance to the tern

colony. However, you are close enough to see and enjoy the tern behaviors seen by few people anywhere: courtship, aerial displays, mating, nesting, raising chicks to fledglings, feeding chicks and mates, and so much more. Each volunteer is asked to record predator and Least Tern activities on our forms. It's fun, easy, and you'll learn a lot about the Least Terns and predators.

All volunteer information and training sessions will start promptly at 6:00 PM and go to 8:30 PM. Only *one* training session is required per volunteer prior to monitoring. Please contact Susan Euing at (510) 521-9624 or susan_euing@yahoo.com.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Orioles will soon be appearing at our feeders!



- Watch for both Bullock's Orioles and Hooded 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 backyards during the summer.
- Orioles sometimes prefer grape jelly; and people provide this delicacy in small open bowls or jars. You can also put out halves of oranges.
- Please report all oriole sightings to WBU. We maintain a map at the store to show the distribution about the area.

Activities at Wild Birds Unlimited:

Saturday, May 3, 10:00 AM. **Birding Optics Workshop.** Trying to select the right optics for local birdwatching or that next birding trip? Join us for a workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics." There will be many brands of binoculars and scopes on display. Check out the Vortex Viper (from Eagle Optics) binoculars: water and fog proof, close focus under 6 feet, crystal clear image and lifetime warranty. Call for reservations, as seating is limited.

Saturday, May 10 - Celebrate **International Migratory Bird Day** with WBU:

- Native Bird Connections will have educational programs with a Woodpecker and Magpie.
- Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Assn. will have a demonstration beehive.
- WBU's Yvonne Breukers with plants for birds and butterflies, Wild Bryde Jewelry, and more.

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

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Bluebird News

In 2007, more than 14,000 successful fledges of secondary cavity nesters including the Western Bluebird were reported by 128 monitors in 22 counties! While the number of monitors reporting was the lowest in twelve years, the actual numbers of fledglings are consistent with previous years. According to the last *Bluebirds Fly* newsletter, and Dick Blaine, the new Program Director, "due to the care trail monitors provide, a chick that makes it out of the egg has an 89% chance of fledging."

Thanks to Rita and Mike Tischler for building the most beautiful nest boxes I have ever seen! They donated their time to make over 40 nest boxes for CBRP.

Help! Help! My trail is at the Lafayette Reservoir and I have 32 nest boxes that really keep me busy during the nesting season. A year ago I undertook the job of monitoring four EBMUD trails for Warren Engstrom who retired. All the nest boxes on these trails are now new and some are already claimed by happy pairs! Two trails are at San Pablo Dam near Orinda and the other two are in Moraga. If anyone is interested in adopting a trail or two, please, contact me. I intend to keep monitoring these trails with the help of Tom Garry, but they really need permanent Foster Parents. (925) 686-4372 or email me at Georgette@Birdscape.net. By *Georgette Howington, Contra Costa Coordinator, California Bluebird Recovery Program.*

Golden Eagle • *Aquila chrysaetos*



This chick was photographed at Shell Ridge by Brian Murphy and was radio collared by Predatory Bird Research Group at UC Santa Cruz. A year and a half later the immature Golden Eagle was found under a windmill in Altamont. Many young eagles forage in the Altamont area where the grasslands are the age-old habitat of ground squirrels. As many as a hundred or more Golden Eagles are killed each year by the windmills at Altamont. Most are young birds, their average age less than four years. Golden Eagles face other risks:

electrocution, lead pellets in carrion, unauthorized rodenticides for ground-squirrel control. Since Eagles live for 25-30 years, it will take a while to notice there are fewer gracing our skies.

Some golden eagles migrate, but others do not. Alaskan and Canadian eagles typically fly south in the fall while birds that live in the western continental U.S. tend to remain in their ranges year-round.

The largest concentration of Golden Eagles in North America is said to be in the Diablo Range—where the windmills are!

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

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Chapter Development: Paul Schorr, 757-5107
Hands-On Conservation:

Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987
Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
Member-at-Large: Brian Murphy, 937-8835
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

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The Garden Center

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



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

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Yellow-headed Blackbird at Sierra Valley

Your Front Row Seat on the Sierra Valley Flyway

By Susan Kelley and Paul Hardy, Reprinted from Feather River Land Trust Annual Report

The 100,000-acre Sierra Valley is the largest mountain valley in California and supports the largest wetland complex (ca. 20,000 acres) in the Sierra Nevada. The Sierra Valley wetlands are a key stopover for migratory birds along the Pacific Flyway and support the highest breeding bird diversity in the Sierra. Indeed, some 265 bird species have been observed in the Sierra Valley, 160 of which are known to breed in the Valley. Endangered, threatened, and other special status species include Bald Eagle, Black Tern, Burrowing Owl, Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, Short-eared Owl, Willow Flycatcher, and White-faced Ibis. The National Audubon Society has classified Sierra Valley as a Nationally-Signifi-

cant Important Bird Area and The Nature Conservancy considers Sierra Valley to be a top conservation priority in California.

The Sierra Valley floor is almost entirely privately owned, mostly by cattle ranchers, and although the Valley is increasingly well-known for its birding opportunities, there is little public access, and little land that is managed specifically for wildlife. The major threats that the Sierra Valley



Wilson's Phalaropes, Sketch by Harry Reeves, Feather River Land Trust

faces are loss of habitat due to second-home construction, water quality and quantity issues due to irrigated agriculture, and ranchland to residential conversion.

In 2003, the Feather River Land Trust purchased the 575-acre Maddalena Ranch from Tony Maddalena, a local rancher. The property is on the valley floor and contains extensive seasonal and permanent wetlands, sagebrush scrub, and some grassland. The variety of habitats host a tremendous diversity of birds. The property is open for appropriate public use and is leased for sustainable cattle grazing. It is frequently used by local and visiting birders, and for canoeing, school field trips, and Audubon and Feather River Land Trust events. Plumas Audubon and FRLT worked together to install Burrowing Owl nest structures. Cattle grazing is excluded from the 50-acre permanent wetland area with solar electric fencing.

In addition to restoring the riparian habitat where the Feather River flows through the property by fencing cattle out of the area and reducing sagebrush where it has taken over native plants and grasses, we are working to enhance this beautiful property for the community. Plans are underway to create, install, and celebrate

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