



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 55, Number 8

May 2010

Forty Years on the Farallones • Ron LeValley

Forty years ago when Point Reyes Observatory established the Farallon Island Research Station, Ron LeValley was a young biologist who had volunteered as a bird bander for a number of years. In August of 1968 Ron spent a month on the Islands, a month that was instrumental in focusing his career. During the late 1970s, Ron worked as a full time Farallon Biologist for PRBO. This past summer, twenty-nine years after his last visit, he returned to the beginning of his career and participated in today's research activities.

Ron will share some of his experiences on the Islands—both old experiences and new. His early and recent experiences on the Farallones allow Ron to provide an interesting perspective on the changes on the Islands as well as within their ecosystems.

Ron LeValley has been photographing nature for over 40 years. He is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Photographer Guild and Gallery at 301 North Main Street in Fort Bragg where his work can be seen. As a professional photographer, Ron has compiled a collection of over 70,000 images of wildlife. Ron's photography started back in the 1960s and has evolved with the technology of the time. He will use his own photographs to illustrate his presentation.



Ron is the founder and Senior Biologist of Mad River Biologists, a consulting firm in Eureka. Best known for the identification and distribution of birds along the Pacific Coast, he has extensive understanding of natural history subjects and enthusiastically shares his knowledge. He is Treasurer of the Pacific Seabird Group and an Associate Editor of *Western Birds*, the journal of the Western Field Ornithologists. Ron grew up in Sacramento where he graduated from American River College and Sacramento State College before going on to Humboldt State University for his Master's Degree. He spent almost twenty years conducting an ecotourism business which took him on over 100 excursions to Baja California, and to the Galapagos nineteen times. He also traveled to the Amazon, the far north of the eastern Canadian Arctic, Southeast Alaska, Australia and Africa.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Linus Eukel, Executive Director of the Muir Heritage Land Trust, and Steve Hutchcraft, Member of the Board of Directors of the Trust, will discuss the June 5th opening to the public of the 702-acre Fernandez Ranch. Linus will bring us up to date on the Muir Heritage Land Trust's mission to preserve some of Contra Costa's most precious wild lands and Steve will share his photographs of the flora and fauna of Fernandez Ranch.



Tufted Puffin, Pigeon Guillemots, and Western Gulls.

Photos by Ron LeValley

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, May 6**, 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: **Ron LeValley**

** Please remember to bring a cup.*

Thursday, June 3: **Bob Lewis**

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner Observations

By Jimm Edgar

By Maury Stern

As we head into May we begin the third year of our "No Child Left Inside" program. Paul Schorr, one of our board members, has been heading this up and has done a wonderful job. As a former school principal and teacher Paul has great contacts in the school district in Antioch where he worked. We also have another board member, Diana Granados, our secretary and owner of Native Birds Connection, making available the collection of captive birds for school room visits. Diana and her staff have 15 wild birds, non-releasable because of injury, that kids love to see up close. Our chapter has purchased about 40 pairs of binoculars for field trip use by the kids. We begin by going to the classrooms of two fifth-grade classes and bring live wild birds which may include a Great Horned Owl or a Bald Eagle. Diana talks about the lives of these birds and what it takes for them to survive. We do another day in the classroom to teach how to use the binoculars and then another half day for a field trip. Each student is given a field guide of local birds seen in Northern California. This "No Child Left Inside" program has been wonderfully received by teachers and students. Our hope is that the bird bug will grasp some of these young people for life. As most of you know if you attend our monthly meetings, we are not a group of 20-30 year olds. Plan to hear more about this and, if you can, try to volunteer for one of the half-day field trips either on May 25 or May 27. We will be at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch. Take a look at the Native Bird Connection website to learn more about this great organization.

Speaking of general meetings, we have had such an outstanding year of speakers. Alice Holmes, our program Chair, has just done a great job. Our last meeting on April 1 with naturalist Bob Stewart had over 100 guests to hear Bob speak.

And speaking of volunteers, I hope all of you will make an effort to volunteer for some event. Moses De Los Reyes, our Volunteer Coordinator, has a number of upcoming events that will require help. Moses can be reached at his e-mail at moses_inc@comcast.net

As we move into spring and migration I also hope you will get out to a field trip with our chapter.



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



The winter migrants are leaving, but the spring migrants are arriving. First of season warblers, vireos, flycatchers, swallows, grosbeaks and orioles have arrived within the last 1 to 3 weeks. Breeding has already occurred for Anna's Hummingbirds, White-tailed Kites and others.

A **Red-throated Loon** was seen at Richmond Marina on 4/5. JCh.

A pair of **White-tailed Kites** have been nesting and just hatched young in Concord 4/12. RP.

Jay saw 3 **Killdeer** young in a Kaiser parking lot in Pinole on 3/20.

JCh saw a **Common Murre** north of the Richmond Marina 4/5.

A **Western Screech Owl** was heard in Tilden RP on 4/9. PC.

Rufous Hummingbirds were widespread 4/3 to 4/10. LP, SR, P&NS.

LL saw a **Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker** in Miller-Knox Park on 4/3.

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was at Los Vaqueros Reservoir 3/20. JD.

Western Kingbirds were seen as early as 3/20 near Byron. JD.

DW saw many **Warbling Vireos** at Morgan Territory on 3/20.

Horned Larks were in Briones RP near Briones Crest Road. TR.

Cedar Waxwings were in abundance. RW saw 650 near his house on 4/11 and flocks of 25 to 100 were common in the area. LL, MOS.

P&NS saw FOS **Chipping Sparrows** at Contra Loma Park in Antioch on 4/13.

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was at Black Diamond Mines on 4/1. HH.

White-throated Sparrows continued to be widespread. KB, HH, FS, JS.

ST had a **Slate-colored Junco** in his San Ramon yard.

FOS **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were seen in Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve on 3/24 by LL and in Concord on 4/11 by SR.

Hooded Orioles were seen by JR in Alamo 3/24; HA in Lafayette 3/27; and SR in Concord 4/11. »

Welcome New Members

Gail Byrnes	Livermore
Janice Cattolica	Walnut Creek
Bette Cooper	Moraga
Karma Dewitt	Walnut Creek
Craig Fleming	Concord
Kenneth Heilshorn	Hercules
Sharon Horsfall	Walnut Creek
Karen Lively	Brentwood
Marilyn & Bob Miller	Clayton
David Miner	Walnut Creek
Rosemary Murray	Walnut Creek
Ron Skilton	Walnut Creek

Do you know your annual MDAS membership renewal date?

If you receive your *Quail* newsletter by USPS mail, the date printed right after your name is the expiration date of your membership. For example, 201102 means that your membership runs through February 2011—and payment before end of the month will assure continuity of your membership. Meanwhile renewal notice reminders are mailed to all members prior to expiration.

If you receive your *Quail* by email, please feel free to ask for your anniversary date by contacting me at beewalk@comcast.net.

Bev Walker, Membership Chair

Bullock's Orioles were found at Los Vaqueros Reservoir 3/20 by JD, and Castle Rock RP by MS on 4/2.

A **Great-tailed Grackle** was seen at Heather Farm. HH

HA Harry Adamson, KB Kristen Baker, JCh Jim Chiropolis, PC Phil Capitolo, JD Judith Dunham, HH Hugh Harvey, LL Laura Look LP, Lory Polson, RP Richard Pousson, JR Jean Richmond, SR Sandy Ritchie, TR Ted Robertson, FS Fred Safier, JS Jane Sedley, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, MS Maury Stern, ST Steve Taylor, DW Denise Wight, RW Russ Wilson. RP Regional Park, FOS First of Season.

Conserve Energy

Based on an article in the Autumn 2009 issue of BirdScope, published by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, here are some things birders can do to minimize their impact on energy.

1. Carpool on field trips, and travel in a smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicle—not in an SUV, unless you are heading to rugged terrain that requires one.

2. Be informed of ways you can conserve fuel. See the Environmental Protection Agency's recommendations for driving habits for better economy at www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/driveHabits.shtml.

3. Reduce the miles you drive, when possible, by using public transportation, or bird by bicycle. Attend birding festivals, an excellent way to maximize the number of birds you see per birder-mile driven. When heading to distant birding hot-spots, remember that air travel uses more fuel than driving, and driving uses more fuel than the train.

4. Prepare lunches and snacks at home and skip the bottled water. Bottle your own tap water, which does not need the transportation costs nor the petroleum products used in manufacture. Corporate Accountability International reports that the petroleum used in the manufacture of plastic water bottles would fuel one million cars. When you do eat away from home, choose local restaurants that use locally grown ingredients, not fast food.

5. Also opt for locally-produced merchandise. Much of the goods sold in American stores, including birding clothing and equipment, was shipped here in container ships burning highly polluting bunker oil.

Q

This is a bird of the Pacific Coast and the Southwest, from British Columbia to Baja California and into Arizona and New Mexico. The male executes a distinctive courtship or display dive from a height of perhaps 40 meters, terminating within half a meter of his intended.

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

AABDGHIIMMNNRSU

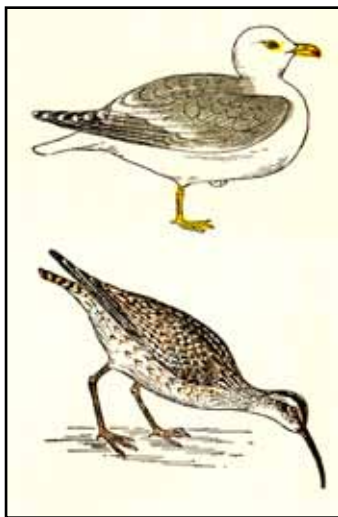
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California Gulls and Whimbrels

Point Reyes Bird Observatory biologists and the Mono Lake Committee have been monitoring the populations of California Gulls for 27 years. Long-term studies such as this are important in understanding how species respond to environmental changes.

Spring weather at Mono Lake is variable, and brine shrimp numbers affect gull migration. In turn, gull migration affects the birds' presence in the San Francisco Bay Area, where gulls are a significant predator on shorebird chicks.

This year, about 3 percent of the Mono Lake population has been banded with a pale blue band over a metal USF&WS band on the left leg. If you observe such an individual California Gull, you would be supporting this research by reporting it to the Mono Lake Committee at (760) 647-6595.



Color Key to North American Birds
Frank M. Chapman, 1912

California Gull
Hudsonian Curlew (Whimbrel)

Whimbrels have been banded by researchers in Alaska and Chile, and these birds may be seen as they migrate along the coast this month. Whimbrels are also seen inland at places like the Salton Sea and Antelope Valley. If you recognize a Whimbrel with a black leg flag from Alaska or one with a red leg flag from Chile, your sighting would be of value. Report to the Alaska Science Center at (907) 786-7000.

The Mono Lake Newsletter and the San Diego Field Ornithologists provided this information.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Birding Optics Workshop

Saturday, May 1. 10:00 AM

Trying to select the right optics for local birdwatching or that next birding trip? Join us at for a 45-minute workshop on "How to buy Birding Optics." There will be many brands of binoculars and scopes on display. Bring you optics to compare.

Celebrate Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 8.

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
Native Bird Connection
Worth A Dam (Martinez Beavers)
Plants to attract Hummers & Butterflies
Bamboo Jewelry

PRIZES AND GIFTS!

Birdfeeding Tips

It's time to put out your oriole feeders. Both Hooded and Bullocks Orioles are now arriving. They are nectar feeding birds, but are too large to feed from most hummingbird feeders. They will readily come to an oriole feeder. These are the most spectacular birds that we can attract to our backyards during the summer. Please report all oriole sightings to WBU. We have already had many reports. We are keeping track and mapping all sightings.

Jewels of Nature

Hummingbirds differ from other birds in a variety of ways. They have weak feet and legs that are used more for perching than walking. They are most comfortable in the air, and they are capable of hovering as well as flying up, down, forward and backward.

According to research, hummingbirds hold the record for possessing the fastest metabolism of any animal on the planet. Unbelievably, they burn one to three times their body weight in food every day.

Hummingbird nests are made of plant down, glued together with spider webs and tree sap. These nests are usually located on pencil-sized limbs and are camouflaged with bits of lichen. Female hummingbirds raise their young alone. Due to the males' extremely aggressive territorial behavior, females will establish a nesting area outside of the male's feeding territory.



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303
Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

May

- 4 Tuesday Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline
- 8 Saturday East Contra Costa County
- 13 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 20 Thursday Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

June

- 5 Saturday Outer Point Reyes
- 19–20 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

July

- 24 Saturday San Mateo Coast

August

- 21 Saturday Bodega Bay

③ Tuesday, May 4
Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline
Leader: Cheryl Abel, 335-0176.

Meet at 8 am at the Nejedly Staging Area west of downtown Martinez. Take Alhambra Avenue to downtown. Turn left (west) on Escobar Street, go up the hill and turn right on Talbart Street. Follow Talbart around to the left and you are now on Carquinez Scenic Drive. Go past the cemetery, then turn left into the staging area. We will walk uphill to the Franklin Ridge Loop Trail looking at birds and flowers. Probably warm, bring insect repellent, liquids and lunch. This is a strenuous walk!

② Saturday, May 8
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 east of Kragen's Auto Parts in Oakley. Go north on I-680, east on SR 4 through Oakley, left onto Cypress Road. May be hot! Bring lunch and liquids. Target birds include: Blue Grosbeak, Great-tailed Grackle, Burrowing Owl, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Swainson's Hawk, Yellow-billed Magpie and Yellow-breasted Chat.

② Thursday, May 13
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. Bring lunch and liquids.

**Come birding with us
in May!**

When you have seen one ant, one bird,
one tree, you have not seen them all.
E. O. Wilson



View looking southeast from Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline to Martinez, with Mount Diablo beyond.

② Thursday, May 20
Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs
Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride at 7:30 AM. Meet at Sycamore Grove at 8:00 AM. From I-680 south, take I-580 east toward Livermore. Exit at N Livermore Avenue toward Central Livermore. Turn right on 1st Street, then left onto S 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 visit other spots in the Livermore area for more birding and lunch. Entry fee required.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php. Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, bring a lunch and drink and join us during our midday break.

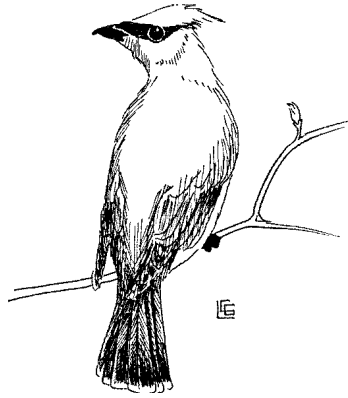
Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths
Category ②: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain
Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool 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.

Trip Reports

San Leandro Reservoir, March 18.

Nineteen birders had a nice morning at Valle Vista/Upper San Leandro Reservoir in Moraga. The weather was clear and warm and the birds cooperated after a slow start. The lake was filling up but still not at early summer level and there were fewer ducks than we usually see there. Two good looks at California Thrashers and a quick view of a pair of late-staying Varied Thrushes were perhaps the most interesting sightings. Spring migrants were few, with only a couple Allen's Hummingbirds, a few Tree Swallows, one Rough-winged Swallow, one Orange-crowned Warbler seen by one person, and a heard-only House Wren. An over-wintering White-throated Sparrow was an excellent find but only one person spotted it. 63 species were counted, including two heard-only birds. *Don Lewis*



Lake Lagunitas, March 24. Cool in the morning and warming toward mid-day, despite it being a beautiful day, Lake Lagunitas was not exactly swarming with birds. The flowers were nice, we saw plenty of Hound's Tongue and some nice Checker Lilies and Trilliums. Though we counted 51 species seen or heard, the eleven birders saw but one Orange-crowned Warbler, one Bewick's Wren and had fleeting glimpses of some very active Wilson's Warblers. The biggest disappointment of the day was not hearing or seeing our target bird, the Pileated Woodpecker. *Hugh B. Harvey*

Garin Regional Park, April 3. It was an unusually cold day for early April, which may have contributed to our missing Bullock's Orioles and Wilson's Warblers, usually highlights of this early spring trip. However, we enjoyed those highlight birds that were on duty: singing House Wrens, Warbling Vireos, and Black-headed Grosbeaks, and a Grasshopper Sparrow, as well as several Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Western Bluebirds, five species of swallow, and three species of hummingbird, including a Rufus Hummingbird. Total numbers: 7 birders, 54 species. *Fred Saftier*

Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, March 27. Eight members of MDAS enjoyed a sunny, cool to warm day at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve on Saturday, March 27. We hiked the Chaparral Trail and saw or heard 35 species of birds, mostly wintering and resident species. Included were White-throated Swifts, a Rock Wren, a singing male Purple Finch, a pair of Western Bluebirds building a nest in a tree cavity, Barn Swallows and a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes along the park entrance road. Heard birds included several Wrentits and a Grasshopper Sparrow. Among the blooming wildflowers were Blue Lupine, Mule's Ears, Shooting Stars, Blue Dicks, Indian Warriors, Miner's Lettuce, Bush Poppies, Sticky Monkey Flowers, Indian Paintbrush, Delphinium, and Checker Lily. *Eugenia Larson*

Orinda Connector Trail, April 7. Seven happy birders spent a gorgeous morning walking the spring-lovely Orinda Connector Trail to the base of Briones dam and back. The birds were also happy and busy and we saw 55 and heard an additional two species, counting one while checking out the heron rookery trees afterward at the EBMUD Briones headquarters. Perhaps the most interesting birds were a pair of Virginia Rails (one seen) in

the reed bed at the base of the dam spillway. None were noted in this area in the Breeding Bird Atlas. Also nice was seeing all three Nuthatches, including a pair of Pygmy Nuthatches going in and out of three holes in the top of a snag. *Don Lewis*

Pine Canyon, April 10. Eighteen birders braved threatening skies and unseasonably cool temperatures to hike into Pine Canyon and were amply rewarded by some unusual sightings. Diablo Foothills Regional Park rangers treated the group to up-close views of an unhappy baby rattlesnake which had been removed from the men's restroom. The rangers also shared the location of a nearby Red-tailed Hawk nest, and we enjoyed good long views of an adult devouring the results of a successful hunt. 59 species were located by the group, although the unfavorable weather conditions limited many of those identified to "heard only." The highlight for many was the chance to observe prolonged flights of the pair of Peregrine Falcons which are nesting in the canyon. According to volunteers who are monitoring them, last year human disturbance resulted in a nest failure. This year the falcons have moved further up the canyon and are now occupying a more remote nest site, which bodes well for their success. Unwelcome rain showers and the threat of worsening conditions chased the trip leader and some participants back to the parking lot, perhaps prematurely, as the storm never really materialized. Late arrival Hugh Harvey accompanied hardier souls who lingered a while longer in the canyon to enjoy more good birding and early wildflowers. *Nancy Wenninger*

Mount Diablo, April 14. Seven members and guests joined us for our annual field trip up Mount Diablo. It was a rather cool morning with some light wind. It probably did not get much above 55 degrees all day which probably was why birds were not moving much. We saw or heard 42 species. Highlights were a good long look at Ash-throated Flycatcher. We must have seen a dozen Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. We only had three species of warbler, but got good looks at Black-throated Gray Warbler. A Hutton's Vireo was cooperative early in the day. Few raptors were up, but we did see a Golden Eagle and Northern Harrier. Wild flowers are very good this year with all the rain. *Jimm Edgar*

Saturday/Sunday, June 19-20 Sierra Valley and Yuba Pass

Leaders: Rosita and Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979.

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 parking lot at the top of the pass at 7:00 AM Saturday morning. Make motel reservations now! Closest motels are in Sierra City, 11 miles down Highway 49 to the west. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151 or 800-682-9848) is one of the most popular; or try 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. Also, in Calpine is Sierra Valley Lodge (530-994-3367 or 800-858-0322). More listings are at www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html. Campgrounds are located at Yuba Pass and Chapman Creek downhill to the west. Sites are available first-come/first-served for only three days at a time. Longer term reservations can be made at 877-444-6777, for an additional \$10 charge.



November, the bridge's 156-foot span was finally lowered into place by crane, allowing safe access to the property.

The Fernandez Ranch property is rich with history and beauty. A century-old windmill provides a glimpse into the ranch's past, while the variety of habitats—including riparian, annual grassland, oak and oak/bay woodland, seasonal wetlands and scrub—showcase the flora and fauna typical of our area. Yet visitors may find a few surprises.

Fields of California poppies and lupine decorate the hillsides in the spring. Flower enthusiasts can search for the rare and protected Diablo helianthella and robust monardella that bloom here, as well as Bolander's woodland star. In the woods, five species of native oaks are present, including some of the southern-most examples of Oregon white oaks.

The skies above the ridgelines are crowded with raptors, especially during spring and fall migrations. Golden Eagles soaring above provide a rare treat. Nesting White-tailed Kites have staked out territories, as have numerous nesting Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks. A little closer to the ground, Lazuli Buntings, Western Tanagers, Western Bluebirds, and Grasshopper Sparrows are always a pleasure to see.

The San Francisco dusky-footed wood rat, a species of special concern, makes its home on the ranch. Bobcats, coyotes and mountain lions have also been seen on the property, though the latter very rarely. The real shocker was a recent sighting of an American badger, once thought extirpated from the Bay Area, strolling along a creek bed.

Fernandez Ranch is also prime habitat for the endangered Alameda whipsnake (also known as the Alameda striped racer). Endan-

gered California red-legged frogs and western pond turtles also make the ranch their home.

For those that watched the bridge being placed in November, it was like a puzzle piece completing the fulfillment of a long-held vision. Fernandez Ranch's 702 acres would soon be open to the public.

The Ranch now includes three and a half miles of multi-use trails, including a half a mile portion that is ADA accessible. A section of the trails will be part of the 550-mile Bay Area Ridge Trail that encircles the San Francisco Bay. The newly constructed staging area provides two ADA-accessible

spaces and parking for nine cars and two horse trailers.

The Muir Heritage Land Trust's formal dedication of Fernandez Ranch will be held on June 5th, beginning at 10 AM. Please join us in celebration of the preservation of such an important property and its opening to the public.

Now in its 20th year, Muir Heritage Land Trust has preserved more than 2,000 acres of natural area in Contra Costa County. To learn more and to help support this important work, please visit www.muirheritagelandtrust.org.

Anna's Hummingbird • *Calypte anna*

Victor Masséna, Duke of Rivoli, was an amateur ornithologist who collected 12,500 specimens, later acquired by the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. The French naturalist, zoologist, and naval surgeon René Lesson was enamored by Anna, his Duchess, and the story is that the Duke sent Lesson to the Americas for hummingbirds and other birds to add to his collection. Lesson named one species for Anna, another for his own wife Clemence (the Blue-throated Hummingbird, *Lampornis clemenciae*). The Duke, annoyed, demanded that other birds be named for him, and so there became the Rivoli's Hummingbird and the Masséna Quail. The poor Victor is now forgotten, however, as the Rivoli's is now known as the



These two babies are being raised in a nest on a cooling-water return line at the Mirant Generating Plant in Pittsburg. The nestlings were approximately ten days old when this photo was taken March 21 by Jon Ridler, an employee at the plant.

Magnificent Hummingbird, and we have the magnificent Montezuma Quail.

Magnificent Hummingbird, and we have the magnificent Montezuma Quail.

Anna's Hummingbird is one of the most amazing of all birds a birdwatcher can watch.

AMERICAN WETLANDS MONTH BIRDING FIELD TRIP



Join Mountain View Sanitary District and Mount Diablo Audubon for an informative hike around the McNabney and Moorhen Marsh systems as we look for our favorite avian residents and migrants. We'll learn a little local history along the way, and we might even find something unusual such as Blue-winged Teal or Ring-necked Duck in the wetlands!

- Exit from I-680 southbound at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. Exit I-680 northbound at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will turn left. At 0.4 miles turn sharp left onto Mt. View Sanitary's private road. Meet at the observation platform just below the tunnel.
- Dress in layers and wear comfortable close-toed shoes.
- Bring binoculars if you have them; we have a few pairs to loan.
- Beginners are always welcome.



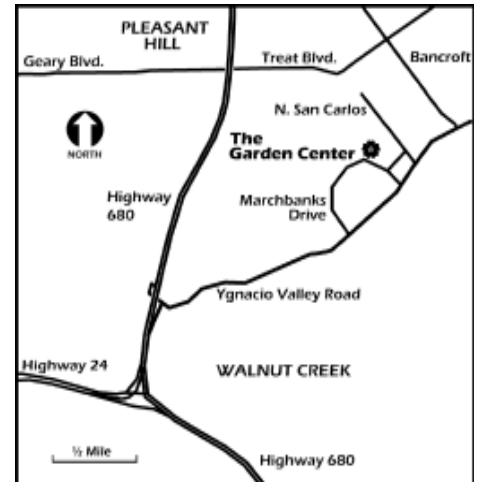
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

Saturday, May 1
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

**"I hope you love birds too.
It is economical.
It saves going to heaven."**

*Emily Dickenson
(1830-1886)*

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.



Ornithology Opportunities

The annual **Sound Recording Workshop** offered by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology takes place June 12-19 at San Francisco State University's Sierra Nevada Field Campus. The Sound Recording Workshop is taught by skilled recordists on the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library staff. The Sound Recording Workshop fee of \$945 covers tuition, class materials, local transportation, food, lodging, and the loan of a recording system for the course to the first six registrants who request it. A deposit is requested to reserve a space in the workshop, which

is limited to 20 students. Registration and a \$100 down-payment are due by May 10. Registration contact: Nancy Schrempf, Macaulay Library, (607) 254-2153, ns29@cornell.edu.

Ninth Annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, June 18-20, Lee Vining. A weekend festival of workshops, field trips, auditorium presentations, art, music, food, and great birding. Not your ordinary bird festival! www.birdchautauqua.org. Presenters and leaders include Jack Laws, Stephen Shunk, Rich Stallcup, and David Wimpfheimer among many others.

MDAS Board of Directors

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
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*Grasshopper Sparrow at Fernandez Ranch
All photos by Steve Hutchcraft, MHLT*

Fernandez Ranch

New preserve open in rural Martinez

By Sherida Bush and Steve Hutchcraft

The rumble of heavy machinery filled the air, drowning out the faraway cries of a Red-shouldered Hawk circling nearby. For six months, the tranquil, pastoral Fernandez Ranch was a construction zone, with huge machines lumbering like noisy dinosaurs over the landscape.

The mechanical beasts were there to fulfill a years-long objective. After purchasing the 702-acre property in 2005, the Muir Heritage Land Trust developed plans for restoration, public access, education and management. The land has been explored, pored over and pondered by expert upon expert—engineers, landscape architects, surveyors, biologists, general contractors, hydrologists, geologists, and experts in irrigation and creek restoration. Years of design, decision and modifications went into the plans painstakingly pieced together.

The plans included a multi-part approach to stabilize and enhance severely

eroded riparian areas, provide a bridge across the creek chasm, create trails and provide a new staging area. After the Land Trust gathered funds for the \$3.04 million project from many public and private sources, the project was on its way.

Well before construction began, native trees and shrubs were germinated from seeds collected at Fernandez Ranch. The 9,521 container plants cultivated from those seeds were planted on creek banks this spring. The new vegetation will improve the quality of the riparian habitat and enhance the entire watershed, both on the property and downstream.

The groundbreaking for the restoration was on June 6, 2009 when MHLT teamed up with Volunteers for Outdoor California. More than 150 volunteers took up hand tools and built one mile of trail in two days. The section of trail they completed lies on some of the property's steepest, most challenging terrain. In October, contractors finished off the volunteers' efforts by building retaining walls and boardwalks.

Heavy construction soon followed, but before the construction workers fired up

even one of their machines, they had to go to class. Workers were instructed on how to identify special-status species they might encounter on the property. They were required to inspect their machinery every morning to make sure a sleepy reptile, such as an Alameda whip-snake, hadn't curled up on it somewhere during the night.

Completion of the bridge across Rodeo Creek was the last major part of project. Specifically designed to allow the creek to flow naturally, the structure's four supporting pillars were anchored on the creek banks instead of the creek's channel. In



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