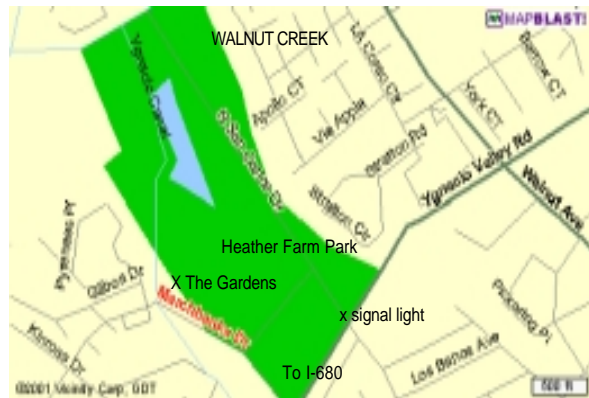


CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, November 6. Meetings for the rest of the 2003-04 year are Dec. 4, Jan.15 (note date change), Feb. 5, March 4, Apr 1, May 6, and June 3. No meetings in July or August.

If you are a new member or new to the area, let us know. We want to welcome you and tell you about our activities. All new members and visitors receive a free door prize ticket.

The MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.



Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A one-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 95626. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please end exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.

The QUAIL

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Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053



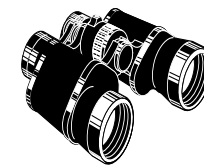
November 2003

Vol. 50, No. 4

Next Deadline: November 4

Observations

by Steve Glover



Modest flocks of **American White Pelicans** were noted north of Carquinez Straits Regional Park on September 19 (40; SG) and over Tilden Park October 5 (7; SG, BB). A single bird was noted on San Pablo Reservoir from September 30 to October 5 (SG).

Richmond's long-lived pair of **Harlequin Ducks** continued near Brooks Island, Richmond, through at least September 9 (SG).

At least one adult **Bald Eagle** had returned to San Pablo Reservoir near Orinda on October 1 (KO). This is the most reliable site in the county for this species. Once thought to be accidental in the county, extended bouts of hawk-watching from the county's ridge tops in recent falls has proven **Broad-winged Hawks** to be very uncommon but annual migrants. This fall three, and possibly four, were recorded flying southeast over Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on October 5 (SG, BB). Less rare in the county but likely rarer at Tilden was a **Swainson's Hawk** flying southeast over Inspiration Point on October 5 (SG). Other migrant raptors on October 5 included four **Northern Harriers**, seven **White-tailed Kites**, three **Red-shouldered Hawks**, 14 **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, 17 **Cooper's Hawks**, 12 unidentified accipiters, and a **Merlin** (SG, BB).

Observations continued on p. 5

Nov. Speaker Is World Expert on Penguins

"The Foraging Behavior of Penguins," with particular emphasis on the Rockhopper Penguin, will be the topic of Yann Tremblay, our speaker at the November 6 general meeting. Tremblay currently works and teaches at the Long Marine Laboratory, University of California, Santa Cruz.

A native of France, Tremblay attended the University of Tours and University Paris 13. He has taught at the Universities of Angers, Lyon, La Rochelle, and Tours in the field of eco-ethology, the study of adaptations to diving in air-breathing vertebrates.

His research has taken him to the Crozet and Kerguelen Archipelagos and Amsterdam Island in the Southern Ocean, where he began his study of the Rockhopper Penguin. On Hornoya Island in northern Norway, he focused on the ecology at sea of the Common Guillemot. He has studied the Laysan and Blackfooted Albatross on Tern Island, Hawaii, and dabbling ducks and brent geese in the coastal marshes of western France.

Tremblay recently returned from studying the foraging ecology and habitat use of the Australian sea lion at Kangaroo Island, Australia, and is currently directing a field test of CT tags on the Northern Elephant Seals in Monterey Bay.

Tremblay is an expert in biotelemetry, the use of miniaturized electronic devices to gather data on animal movements, diving depth, temperature changes, heart rate,

and weight. He has created artificial nests for automatic weighing of Yellow-nosed Albatross and Rockhopper Penguins. He has published numerous articles on diving and foraging behavior of fur seals and penguins.

This presentation by one of the world's experts in adaptive behaviors of mammals promises to be informative and entertaining.

Birding Information

Birding Information will have information on a fantastic place for winter birding—Heather Farm Lake.

Brian Murphy will show slides of the trail around the lake, and then slides of the numerous bird species that live and visit there. Brian claims that a four-heron day is almost commonplace at Heather Farm lake.

He will also discuss the habitat improvements that the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation has planned at and around the lake. The Foundation needs volunteers to help with planting and other activities.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, November 6**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open
7 p.m.—Birding Information
7:25 p.m.—Business meeting
7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing
8:05 p.m.—Program

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Connections Hurrah for East Bay Regional Park District!

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) has again proven its dedication to education, conservation, and the residents of the East Bay by making a commitment to build and operate the Delta Science Center. Thanks to EBRPD's stepping forward to operate the Center, the project can now qualify for state bond money. Located in the Big Break area near Oakley in East County, the shoreline property will open for public use in 2005.

Construction of the first phase of the Delta Science Center itself can also begin with an opening date set for 2006. The first phase will provide a viewing pier extending over the water, outdoor displays, and a parking lot to be followed by a classroom and display structure.

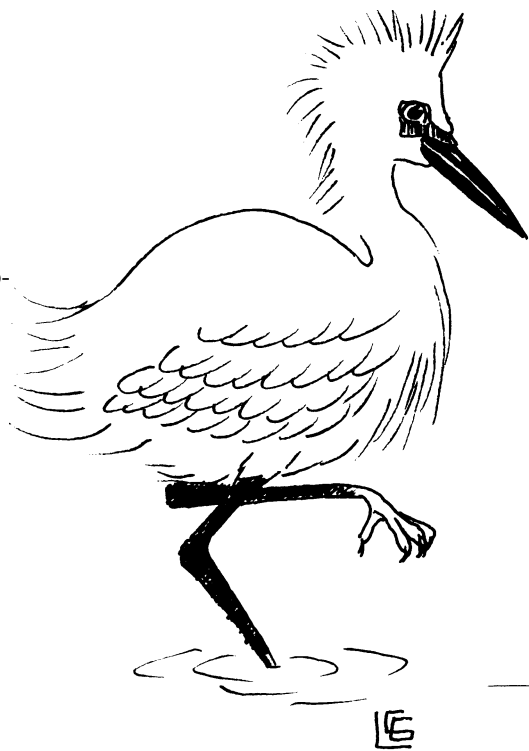
The purpose of the Delta Science Center is to educate the public about the waterways, islands, and marshes making up the unique estuarine area of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The Delta Science Center was a favorite project of MDAS's Al McNabney, who served on its board for many years. MDAS continues to support the development of the Delta Science Center by contributing to the funding for observation facilities, and Joel Summerhill, MDAS board member, serves on the Board of Directors of the Delta Science Center.

What's Happening with Los Vaqueros?

The General Manager, Walter Bishop, of the Contra Costa Water District has been pushing hard to get Contra Costa voters to support expansion of the Los Vaqueros Reservoir. However, given the state's fiscal crisis and the fact that federal tax dollars are in short supply, finding the money to build a larger dam in East County and flood more open space may have hit snag.

A further setback may have come from the California Department of Water Resources' new water plan. The plan gives priority to a multibillion-dollar investment in water conservation and recycling—not dam construction. Although the plan includes investigation of water storage projects, like Los Vaqueros, it states that California can easily gain 5 million acre-feet by recycling, replenishing aquifers, and conservation. Five million acre-feet of



drawing courtesy of Carol Lutz

water would supply the needs of 10 million households. The plan also does not endorse pulling more water out of the Delta and sending it to southern California.

Los Vaqueros was built by the Contra Costa Water District using bond money approved by the district's customers. To win support for the project, CCWD promised to preserve 20,000 acres of open space, much of which will be flooded if the reservoir is expanded.

The Quail

is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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Veracruz Birding—the Hawk Migration & More

by Martha H. Breed

If you get the chance to see the "River of Raptors" Hawk Migration in Veracruz, Mexico, you will be amazed and thrilled by it.

I spent ten days, September 22-October 2, on a trip led by David McCauley. He met us at the airport and took care of our meals, lodging, and travels in Mexico.

This trip was more than just the Hawk Migration: we stayed in Tlacotalpan, located 55 miles south of Veracruz, and McCauley's homebase, and birded by canoe in the Alvarado Wetlands, which were featured in the August 2003 *Birding* magazine. Among the birds we saw by canoe were Laughing Falcon, Roadside Hawk, Grey-Necked Wood-Rail, numerous Northern Jacanas, Black, Turkey, and Lesser Yellow-Headed Vultures, various herons and egrets, Ringed Kingfisher, Green-Breasted Mango, and various flycatchers.

On the second day in Tlacotalpan, we spent in the wet Savanna, which we traversed in rubber knee boots. There we saw the magnificent Fork-Tailed Flycatcher, many Vermilion Flycatchers, Least Grebe, Anhinga, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Common Tody-Flycatcher, Limpkin, and Rufous-Breasted Spinetail.

Later, birding in drier countryside, we saw a pair of Aplomado Falcons in aerial displays, Snail Kite perched eating a snail, and Common and Great Black-Hawk.

Leaving Tlacotalpan, we traveled to Montepio and the coastal rainforest of the Tuxtla Mountains where we saw Masked Tityra, Black-Crowned Tityra, Band-Backed Wren, Bat Falcon, Groove Billed Ani, Common Pauraque, Violet Sabrewing, Amazon Kingfisher, Violaceous and Slaty-Tailed Trogons, Golden-Olive Woodpecker, Streak-Headed Woodcreeper, Great, Boat-Billed and Social Flycatchers, Crimson-Collared, Yellow-Winged and Blue-Gray Tanagers, and Red-Lored Parrot. There were many Ruddy Ground-Doves, Inca Doves, Rock Pigeons, Red-Billed Pigeons everywhere. American Redstart and Yellow Warbler were just two of many warbler species we saw. Altamira and Baltimore Orioles were frequently sighted. While we stood under a tree in the forest, a White Hawk perched overhead. Awesome!

Our time in Paso de Ovejas and nearby Cardel gave us spectacular, breath-taking views of thousands of Broad-Winged Hawks circling in kettles overhead, a vortex lifting into the thermal until breaking out and streaming forward: the River of Raptors in the sky! We were also lucky to be there when thousands of Wood Storks flew in formation overhead as they migrated.

David McCauley led our group to some great birding sites. He was attentive to our comfort and saw to it that we had plenty of bottled water at all times—it was very hot and humid; we were drenched in sweat before noon. It was worth it! His trips are geared to small groups and the budget-minded birder. He can be reached at birdingveracruz@hotmail.com or <http://birdingveracruz.20m.com> or <http://geocities.com/birdingveracruz>.

Bush Derails Wilderness, Opens Land to Development

Since the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964, 106 million acres have been given the wild lands designation, with more than half of that total in Alaska.

The Bush Administration recently declared that it would end reviews of western public lands for new wilderness protection. As long as the lands had been under consideration for the American wilderness system, they had temporary protection from development.

With a single order, the Bush administration removed more than 200 million acres from further wilderness study, including caribou stamping ground in Alaska, the red rock canyons and mesas of southern Utah, Case Mountain with its sequoia forests in California, and a wall of rainbow-colored rock known as Vermillion Basin in Colorado.

By declaring an end to wild land surveys, the administration ruled out protection of these areas as formal wilderness—which, by law, are supposed to be places people can visit but not stay. Now, these areas, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, can be opened to mining, drilling, logging, or road-building.

The move follows a consistent pattern in the president's environmental policy: to change the way the land is managed, without changing the law.

Whether the issue is allowing snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park or logging in the Pacific Northwest, the course has been to settle lawsuits by opponents of wild land protection, opening up the areas to wide use, without going to Congress to rewrite the rules. —from "Bah, Wilderness! Reopening a Frontier to Development," by Timothy Eagan, *New York Times*, May 4, 2003

Observations

Continued from p. 1

This season may go down as the season of the woodpeckers in Contra Costa County: On September 19 six **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were watched flying east over Carquinez Straits Regional Park (SG). The one seen at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on September 1 (BP) was overshadowed by a total of 17 there on September 10 (all going south; SG), one there on October 3 (going north; SG), and 14 there on October 5 (SG, BB). The number on October 5 included a flock of 11 birds. Numbers such as these have not been recorded in Contra Costa County since the early 1980s, and those flocks were wintering birds. Also of note were **Acorn Woodpeckers** seen where they normally aren't. Between September 30 and October 5, there were at least 15 birds present north of Inspiration Point, Tilden Park (SG). These birds were constantly flying about in different directions, and it is unclear if the same birds were present constantly or if there was daily turnover so there may have been far more birds than just 15. Both of these species, particularly the Lewis's, have been noted from unusual locations throughout northern California this fall, suggesting a massive movement.

Western Scrub-Jays are generally considered to be among our more sedentary birds, but in recent years many birders have begun to notice fall flocks of this species. Adding to these records were flocks of six, eight, ten, and 24 birds—all silently heading west at Carquinez Straits Regional Park on September 19 (SG). Even common backyard birds can be interesting if you pay enough attention!

Vagrant "eastern" warblers are hard to come by in Contra Costa County; and through early October, only two such birds have been found in the county this fall: a **Palm Warbler** at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on October 4 (BB) and a **Northern Waterthrush** at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on September 12 (ES). Palm Warblers are the most commonly recorded "eastern" vagrant in California, but this may have been only the fourth ever recorded in Contra Costa!

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez, September 20-21

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your phone number with your observation.
Northern CA Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422

was at a location that has now hosted quite a few of these normally rare sparrows (DW; JC). A **White-crowned Sparrow** was feeding a fledgling near Marina Bay Parkway, Richmond, on the late date of September 9 (SG)! Perhaps such late nesting is the only reason this population has managed to survive in the East Bay as a huge percentage of early nestings result in baby cowbirds.

Observers: Bob Battagin, Judi Cooper, Steve Glover, Kitty O'Neill, Bob Power, Emilie Strauss, Denise Wight

MDAS Christmas Bird Count Dates

Mark your calendars now for the two MDAS Christmas Bird Counts! The Bird Count for Central County will be Saturday, December 14. The East County Count will be held Saturday, December 20. Sign-up forms and more information will be in the next issue of the *Quail*.

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Pick up your great savings book at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill, or at MDAS monthly meetings. Shop on the web at entertainment.com for additional savings and an easy way to order out-of-town editions—a marvelous Christmas gift. Be sure to include the MDAS code of 175587 when ordering.

Burrowing Owl Focus of Concern

A two-day symposium on the Burrowing Owl will be held November 11 and 12 at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento. Sponsored by the Western Section of the Wildlife Society and Albion Environmental, Inc., the symposium will feature presentations and panel discussions on California Burrowing Owl research management, status, regulation and Policy. Reservation information is available at www.tws-west.org or by contacting Barbara Rocco, Executive Director of the Western Section of the Wildlife Society at lobolday23@aol.com.

In April, a coalition of six conservation organizations asked the state of California to list the Western Burrowing Owl as a state endangered or threatened species under the California Endangered Species Act. The groups involved with the petition are Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society, the California State Park Rangers Association, Defenders of Wildlife, and Tri-County Conservation League.

The once-common owl has been steadily declining over the past two decades because of sustained habitat destruction. Breeding owls have been eliminated from at least 8 to 10 percent of their former range in the state and are trending toward extinction in another 25 percent.

"Despite their adaptability, burrowing owls have been continuously shoved aside and their habitat destroyed by development," said Jeff Miller, spokesperson for the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the groups that filed the petition with the California Fish and Game Commission. The groups estimate that 91 percent of all Western Burrowing Owls left in California live on private lands, much of which is threatened by future development.

The species is listed as endangered in Canada and by the states of Minnesota and Iowa, threatened in Mexico and Colorado, and as a state species of special concern in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Washington, Oregon, and California.

November Field Trips

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

Field trips are open to MDAS members and nonmembers alike. You do not have to be a birding expert; only one who enjoys nature. Bring binoculars, field guides, and lunch. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, November 5, San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Meet at 9 a.m. at parking lot at refuge entrance. Take I-680 to I-580 west, south on I-880, to Thornton Ave. exit. Go right on Thornton and turn left at refuge entrance. We will bird the marshes east of the entrance road first. Mostly levee walking. Bring lunch. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

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

Saturday, November 8, Limantour. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. at the Bear Valley Visitor's Center, Pt. Reyes National Park. Take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From I-101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go two blocks, turn left on 3rd St. and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1 in Olema, turn right 0.25 miles, then left on Bear Valley Rd. Turn left into Visitor's Center off Bear Valley. We expect shorebirds, waterfowl, and land birds on the ridge. Trails may be muddy. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 2

Thursday, November 13, Corte Madera Marsh—New Trip! We will carpool at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. There is no meeting place in Marin. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1.

Wednesday, November 19, Mountain View Sanitary Plant/McNabney Marsh. Meet at 9 a.m. at the plant's parking lot. Take Pacheco Blvd. exit from I-680, turn right onto Arthur Rd., and go under the freeway. Arthur Rd. turns left, then right; at the second turn, turn sharp left onto a non-county-maintained road. Follow the road into the sanitary plant. Trails may be muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and heron. If you wish, bring a lunch and explore Martinez shoreline in the afternoon. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486

Saturday, November 22, Palo Alto Baylands. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in parking lot by marsh at Baylands. Take Dumbarton Bridge and drive south on US 101 to Embarcadero exit. Go east. Continue toward the Yacht Harbor and park in lot near the Environmental Center. With a high tide, we hope for Clapper Rails, possibly Black Rails. Trails may be muddy. Bring lunch. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 1



Birds Most Likely to Be at a California Feeder

The top 25 most frequently reported feeder birds, in California during the winter 2001-2002 were:

- 1 House Finch
- 2 Mourning Dove
- 3 Western Scrub-Jay
- 4 Anna's Hummingbird
- 5 Dark-eyed Junco
- 6 White-crowned Sparrow
- 7 California Towhee
- 8 American Robin
- 9 Lesser Goldfinch
- 10 American Goldfinch
- 11 House Sparrow
- 12 Golden-crowned Sparrow
- 13 Rufous-sided Towhee
- 14 Northern Mockingbird
- 15 American Crow
- 16 Yellow-rumped Warbler
- 17 Pine Siskin
- 18 Northern Flicker
- 19 Bushtit
- 20 Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- 21 Steller's Jay
- 22 Oak Titmouse
- 23 Hermit Thrush
- 24 Purple Finch
- 25 Ruby-crowned Kinglet

2003–2004 Field Trip Schedule

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

This is a **tentative** schedule of MDAS field trips in 2003–2004. Trips are open to members and non-members alike. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Read the *Quail* for details or call the Audubon tape at (925) 283-8266. Weekday trips are often switched between Wednesday and Thursday to take advantage of tides or other opportunities. Two-day or three-day trips may be done either day or any day alone. Trip directions and meeting times will be published in the *Quail*.

December

4, Thursday—Hidden Lakes
10, Wednesday—Niles Canyon
14, Sunday—Mt Diablo count
20, Saturday—East Contra Costa Count

January

3, Saturday—Putah Creek
7, Wednesday—San Pablo Creek Trail
15, Thursday—Holland Tract and East County
21, Wednesday—Sunol
24, Saturday—Santa Cruz
29, Thursday—Thornton

February

4, Wednesday—Grizzly Island
7 & 8, Saturday & Sunday—Merced Refuges and Panoche Valley
11, Wednesday—Davis Sanitary Ponds
19, Thursday—East Briones
21, Saturday—Tomaes Bay
26, Thursday—Berkeley-Emeryville Waterfront

March

3, Wednesday—San Leandro Reservoir
7, Saturday—Capay Valley
10, Wednesday—Rockville Park
18, Thursday—Sycamore Grove-Livermore
20, Saturday—Black Diamond
24, Wednesday—Huckleberry Preserve
31, Thursday—Sugarloaf Park, Napa

April

3, Saturday—Garin
8, Thursday—Laurel Canyon
14, Wednesday—Lagunitas Lake
17, Saturday—Pine Canyon
22, Thursday—Ida Clayton Road
28, Wednesday—Del Puerto Canyon

May

1, Saturday—Mines Road
6, Thursday—Mitchell Canyon
12, Wednesday—South side-Mt Diablo
15, Saturday—East Contra Costa County
20, Thursday—Napa Valley
26, Wednesday—West Briones
29, Saturday—Outer Point Reyes

June

2, Wednesday—Annadell
12, Saturday—Bobelaine Preserve, Feather River
19 & 20, Saturday & Sunday—Yuba Pass

July

10-12, Saturday to Monday—Mono Lake and eastern Sierras

August

7, Saturday—San Mateo Coast
21, Saturday—Bodega Bay

CV Birding Symposium

The seventh annual Central Valley Birding Symposium will be held November 20–23 at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton. Hosted by the Central Valley Bird Club, the symposium has earned a reputation for excellent speakers and exciting field trips. As in past years, the symposium will also feature a birding nature fair and art show with over 25 vendors selling field gear and nature-related merchandise. Jon Dunn will give a Sparrow Identification work, Steve Howell a Hummingbird Identification workshop, and Kimball Garrett will discuss the importance of bird subspecies. The keynote speakers are Ed Harper (“A Passion for Birds”), Keith Hansen (“The Farallons”) and John Hendrickson (“California Raptors”). Registration and general symposium information are available online at <http://cvbs.or> or by calling Frances Oliver at 209-369-2010.

MDAS CAPS ARE ON SALE NOW!

Our new Chapter caps were snatched up at the September General Meeting. MDAS members loved these handsome khaki caps with our distinctive Quail logo embroidered on them. It was fun to see so many members sporting these caps at the meeting, and they will add a unifying note to our field trips. We still have a supply, so get your MDAS cap while they are still available. Only \$15 at the General Meetings or from our website with S&H fee added.

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 16-19, 2004

The 8th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival will be held January 16-19, 2004. Morro Bay, an important stop on the Pacific Flyway, is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds with over 200 species identified during past festivals.

The Festival also offers small-group field trips and workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

For more information about the Festival, check out www.morro-bay.net/birds. Registration deadline is December 31, 2003, and early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.



drawing courtesy of Carol Lutz

Field Trip Reports

September 10, Jewel Lake—On this pleasant day with early fog clearing about 9 a.m., only the leader showed up. This was a Wren-tit day—three pairs were seen and several others heard. Most interesting was a big muskrat eating willow twigs in Jewel Lake. Eighteen species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 15, Point Pinole—A rather hot day with no wind. Six birders walked out to the fishing pier and took the wrong way back. We saw Black Oystercatchers in the algae along the shore again this year and 10–12 Elegant Terns were on the old pilings at the pier. A total of 33 species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 24, Hayward Regional Shoreline—Four birders braved traffic for a sunny morning of birding. There were good views of the usual shorebirds and a number of duck species which were mostly in eclipse plumage. The highlight was a flight of more than 15 White Pelicans. We saw 35 species.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 27, Outer Point Reyes—Four MDAS members joined the crowd of birders at Nunez Ranch and the Fish Docks. This was one of the hot days at the Point. Some or all of our group saw Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-rumps, Townsend's Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, and American Redstart—and we all missed several other goodies. We enjoyed an adult Great Horned Owl and a full-sized young bird still with very fluffy plumage sitting in the Fish Docks cypress. We also saw early Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow. We saw a total of 49 species.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

A general comment from Elizabeth Dickey: “We saw very few raptors and sea birds during the month. There were only Redtails at Jewel Lake and Point Reyes, and a Red-shouldered Hawk at Jewel Lake and Pinole, one Harrier at Pinole—and that was it. There was one Loon, one scruffy Surf Scoter, a small flock of Western Grebes and some Cormorants at Point Reyes, and on the Bay—nothing. Is this the general experience?”

October 11, Rodeo Lagoon/Hawk Mountain—Five birders enjoyed perfect weather and saw 40 species. The hawk flight included many accipiters, but no unusual species, so the bird of the trip was definitely the brilliant fresh-fall-plumage Chestnut-sided Warbler that posed for us for several minutes at the Lagoon.—*Fred Safier*

Profile of a Hummingbird

by Steve Glover

MDAS has just completed five years of observations in the initial phase of the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas. Steve is now writing the profiles of the breeding species observed in Contra Costa. This is the first in a series of sample profiles that will ultimately appear in the Atlas. Steve welcomes your comments at <Sglover@aol.com>.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)

Truly one of the marvels of our local birds, Anna's Hummingbirds are models of toughness and resourcefulness. At only 4 inches in length, Anna's are only 1 inch larger than Allen's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, our two smallest breeding birds. Observers can only be astonished the first time they see a territorial male Anna's zip up into the sky to harass passing Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles.

Anna's Hummingbirds are common and widespread nesters in Contra Costa County although, like many species, they are rare or absent in East County. The Atlas project, unfortunately, did little to illuminate the status of Anna's in East County; and, as of 2002, all we can state with certainty is that they are uncommon and usually found around introduced stands of eucalyptus. Black-chinned Hummingbirds in East County are usually found in riparian situations. In fact, most of East County seems to be unoccupied by any types of hummingbird.

However, Anna's were confirmed in 60 blocks—nearly every block in which they were detected. In the Richmond area, in Central County, and in the Diablo Range, they are far and away the most common hummingbird and, except in rare

instances, the only species present in winter.

They are found commonly in oak and riparian woodlands, evergreen woodlands (especially around the edges), chaparral, eucalyptus groves, and, most notably, in urban and suburban settings with their attendant exotic flowering plants and hummingbird feeders. They are less common in the moister, forested areas of the Berkeley Hills where Allen's Hummingbirds are widespread and in arid East County where Black-chinned Hummingbirds are more common.

Anna's Hummingbirds, amazingly, can begin nesting in December, just as the rainy season begins to kick in here in the East Bay. The Atlas, however, failed to prove this for the obvious reason that nobody was out counting breeding birds in December.

Anna's Hummingbirds have undoubtedly become more common in the last century. The primary reasons for this increase are the presence of exotic urban plants and the increasing fragmentation of woodlands. Non-native (“exotic”) plants, unlike our native species, may bloom throughout the winter months, allowing large numbers of hummingbirds to subsist through winters in areas where hummingbirds would find little food.