

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 50, Number 3

November 2004

Images of Alaska with Scott and Claudia Hein Quail Habitat Restoration at Borges Ranch

Alaska is one of North America's most spectacular birding destinations. From the temperate rain forests of Southeast Alaska to the treeless arctic tundra, Alaska's legendary wilderness provides extensive habitat that attracts both common and rare birds. At the November 4 general meeting, Scott and Claudia Hein will present a photographic tour of Alaska with images of wildlife and landscapes taken during their latest trip this past June.

The program will start, appropriately enough, in Anchorage, where most trips to Alaska begin. Although you are usually just passing through Anchorage on your way to some other destination, the birding there can be surprisingly good. We will then travel to the Yup'ik Eskimo village of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea. Gambell is famous for the "mega" rarities that sometimes blow in from Siberia, 38 miles to the west. The nearby seabird cliffs host incredible numbers of nesting alcids, including a small number of Dovekies. A sea watch at Gambell's northwest point can be equally spectacular (not to mention cold and windy), with what seems to be a continuous stream of seabirds passing by in all directions, day and night. After successfully escaping from Gambell, which is often difficult due to inclement weather, we will return to mainland Alaska and visit some of the outstanding birding locations around Nome. We will end this photographic tour on the Old Denali Highway, a gravel road that runs 135 miles from Cantwell near Denali National Park, to Paxson. Along the way, you are treated to some of the most spectacular scenery that Alaska has to offer. The Denali Highway



The Lapland Longspur is a bird of the arctic tundra. It breeds in Alaska and winters as far south as the northern tier of States. One individual decided to visit the Berkeley waterfront, where it was discovered on September 23 by MDAS member Denise Wight. This photo was taken by Scott Hein at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska.

is also famous for its bird life, including nesting Arctic Warblers and Smith's Longspurs.

The Heins are MDAS members who have previously presented programs on the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica. Scott specializes in photography of the native plants, wildlife, and landscapes of the West. His images are used by local conservation organizations such as Save Mount Diablo to help support their land acquisition and preservation activities. His images have also appeared in many local and regional publications including Bay Nature, Diablo Magazine, Black Diamond Living Magazine, and Outdoor California. You can preview some of Scott's Alaska images on his web site: <http://www.heinphoto.com>.

The Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation sponsors a **Quail Habitat Restoration Project** to provide the shelter and food sources that birds and small

animals need. In the fall of 1996 Bob Wisecarver, one of our members, recruited volunteers and began the project. They selected a gully above Borges Ranch with wet ground at the bottom for much of the year and slopes nearby — a good basis for constructing quail habitat. They fenced off the gully and the pond above to restrict the area from grazing cattle and constructed brush piles to provide a place where birds and animals could seek shelter.

Quail bush (atriplex), coyote bush, elderberry, ceanothus and wild rose, selected for their food value and appropriateness to the area, were planted. Results were noted in the first spring with many sightings of quail and other birds using the brush piles. The volunteers recently added a "Quail Guzzler" where thirsty quail and other birds can get a needed drink during the dry season. A brush pile corridor has been added to connect to a similar area at Twin Ponds.

Bob Wisecarver will talk about his contributions to this project and suggest ideas for improvement of backyard quail habitats.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, November 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on page 7).

6:30 PM Doors open

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements and business

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

8:05 PM—Program

* Please remember to bring a cup.

President's Letter

By Mike Williams

Why We All Belong to MDAS

On Saturday, October 9th, at Wild Birds Unlimited, MDAS held the most successful membership drive in its history. 23 new members joined MDAS (Chapter Only Memberships). We welcome you and hope to see you at our meetings, bird walks, and other activities.

Why do we all belong to MDAS? There are many different reasons, but mostly these reasons relate to birdwatching, education, and environmental concerns. Audubon means birds, wildlife, endangered species, habitat, and people that care about our disappearing natural world.

MDAS has wonderful general meetings with probably the best attendance of any chapters in Northern California. These meetings usually have a slide show or other educational program, social and dessert time, and a birding information presentation. Please join us on the first Thursday of each month! We look forward to seeing you soon.

We lead over 50 bird walks each year. These walks are suitable for any level of birders—from beginning to advanced. There are walks that last just a few hours and ones that last all weekend. Take your choice—you will be welcomed on all of them.

MDAS is involved in many other activities. We have extensive outreach programs to many schools, often in partnership with Native Bird Connections. We are working on a number of different environmental habitats, including McNabney Marsh and a Breeding Birds Atlas of Contra Costa County. For more information on chapter activities go to www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php and look at our great website.

Project FeederWatch

Most likely many of you are aware of the citizen-science study called Project FeederWatch. More than 15,000 households across the United States and Canada participate by counting the numbers and kinds of bird species that visit their winter bird feeders around their homes. The observational data are relayed to researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. These observations are combined so that scientists can determine the population status and distribution of the nation's birds over time and across their North American winter range. The cumulative FeederWatch database will top one million checklists during the project's 18th season, which starts in November.

With more bird enthusiasts sharing their observations with scientists, much more can be learned about bird populations. People of all ages and skill levels are invited to learn more about Project FeederWatch at www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or by calling the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800-843-2473. The \$15 enrollment fee (\$12 for Lab members) helps defray the cost of materials, which include a full-color identification poster of common feeder birds, a calendar, the FeederWatcher's handbook, instructions, access to the online data entry system, and a one-year subscription to BirdScope, the newsletter of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



Audubon Field Volunteers

By Joe Frank

The Bay Area Audubon Council chapters, including MDAS, may have a wonderful opportunity to help advance our understanding of waterfowl movements in the San Francisco Bay by getting volunteers to assist with surveys of rafting ducks.

The Water Transit Authority is putting together an Environmental Impact Report as part of their plan for increasing water ferries on San Francisco Bay.

The Water Transit Authority (WTA) was created in 1999 to relieve the Bay Area's traffic congestion. It hopes to accomplish this by creating a viable plan that will enhance the region's public transit system by delivering a cost-effective, convenient and environmentally responsible ferry transit system. It is a Regional Agency with jurisdiction over the nine Bay Area counties surrounding San Francisco Bay.

In 2000, the California Legislature appropriated \$12 million to fund the environmental impact reports and design functions. Future funding depends upon a variety of new regional, federal, local and state transportation-specific allocations, including a portion of the proposed dollar toll increase on all state-owned bridges. Part of the funding depends on there being no major disruptions to bird rafting and behavior patterns.

If you are interested in volunteering to ride ferries on SF Bay, and identify birds and their behavior patterns, please contact Joe Frank for information or call Arthur Feinstein of Golden Gate Audubon Society at 510-843-2222 and leave your name and phone number and the message that you are interested in the WTA volunteer program.

Welcome New Members

Bruce Ahern	Concord	Deneen Fabsits	Concord	Marilyn Schmidt	Clayton
Anne Waters/Steve Buffi	Walnut Creek	Rita Freeman	Clayton	Jen Simonson	Napa
Louise Bevilaqua	Benicia	Jerry Kent	Lafayette	Wendy St. John	San Ramon
Marion & William Boyd	Moraga	Kerry Kilmer	Martinez	Arleen & Greg Thomas	Richmond
Henrietta Buescher	El Sobrante	Bruce & Judy Kronwiller	Lafayette	T. Ting	Concord
Joseph Davis	Benicia	E. D. Nienow	Lafayette	Dean Williams	Crockett
Cathy Ellison	Martinez	L. Nourse	Walnut Creek	Barbara Wilson	Berkeley
Sue Ericsson	Pittsburg	Joann O'Keefe	Moraga		

Fall Migration Woes

Many Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, warblers, tanagers and other species winter in the warmer climates of Central and South America, crossing the Gulf of Mexico on a 16-hour nonstop flight. These birds come from various parts of the eastern United States, and normally stop for a pre-flight check along the Gulf Coast, where they rest and fatten up before their arduous journey.

That's what they were doing in mid-September before Hurricane Ivan snarled the birds' plans. The migratory birds, and others, fought against a brutal attack, and thousands did not survive, or were injured by the storm. As the weather cleared, a number of pelicans and gulls with broken wings gathered in several places along the Alabama coast, and Great Blue Herons were seen attacking the injured birds, jabbing at them with their sharp bills, designed for spearing fish.

By October 10, however, resident shorebirds were abundant along the beaches, migrating warblers were being sighted in the areas hardest hit by the storm, one observer ticking off Black and White Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler, all within a two-minute period. Hummingbirds were out in force.

Birds that rely on fruiting shrubs and trees will have a harder time finding food, but insectivores, and surviving shorebirds that eat crustaceans and marine worms should have little problem in the aftermath of the storm.

Research related to migration suggests that the birds may have turned to go back inland to find food before making a renewed attempt at migration. At the gulf's edge, the birds would have found that the flooding and high winds had washed or

blown away the insects, berries and nuts needed to fortify their fat and protein resources. The proteins and fats, of course, fuel the high metabolic cost during an extended flight. The birds will still follow their usual migration patterns.

Two prime staging points for migration are Fort Morgan and Dauphin Island south of Mobile, Alabama. These locations, heavily hit by the hurricane, have native live oaks, which provide both food and shelter for the birds. Many trees were knocked down by Ivan, and storm-driven salt spray badly burned the foliage of many other plants. If these trees have been damaged to the extent that they cannot show regrowth next spring and summer, the hurricane's devastation will have lingering effects.

Dauphin Island has been named one of the top four locations in North America for viewing spring migrations. It has also been cited as one of the ten most globally important sites for bird migrations. Audubon's 164-acre Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary is here, and the entire island has been designated as a bird refuge.

Blue and Gold Is Green

The University of California Board of Regents recently adopted a system-wide clean-energy and green-building policy, following a year-long campaign by U.C. students and faculty. The new University policy mandates:

- Ten megawatts of renewable energy be installed across the ten campuses. For comparison, only 52 MW total are currently in place in the United States.
- 10 percent of the university's energy come from clean sources increasing to 20 percent by 2017.
- A systemwide reduction of energy use to 10 percent below 2000 levels by 2014.
- All new campus buildings across the state are to be built to green-building standards.

The university's solar-energy commitment—along with the Los Angeles Community College District's pledge to generate 10 percent of its new buildings' energy use with renewable energy—can increase the total grid-connected solar power in the U.S. by nearly 30 percent.

MDAS Annual Treasurer's Report

By Patrick King

Mount Diablo Audubon Society remains in an excellent position to serve our community. During the last fiscal year, we set records for fund-raising dollars from donors and also revenues from chapter meetings. The annual year-end fund-raising drive was particularly strong and our total chapter memberships set another record high. During the fiscal year we collected about half of the funds needed to publish the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas, spearheaded by Steve Glover. And we continued to manage the finances for the California Bluebird Recovery Program.

The financial health of MDAS, due to the generosity of our members, allows us to actively pursue our mission. During the year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and accelerated our community outreach efforts for young people. Your generosity supports our monthly presentation program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, the EBB Bird Sightings list, and much more. You have read about these important community efforts in prior issues of the Quail. We hope that each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community.



This bird collects mammal dung and puts it in and around its nest. The dung attracts dung beetles, which the bird then captures and eats. Although considered a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Game, these birds can fairly easily be found in Contra Costa County.

Answer on Page 6

MDAS Managed Funds	July 2003 – June 2004			
	Revenues	Expenses	Net	Fund Balance 7/1/04
General Fund	\$26,154	\$19,313	\$ 6,841	\$51,415
Conservation & Education	440	456	(16)	15,294
California Bluebird Recovery	2,705	1,577	1,128	15,250
Breeding Bird Atlas	7,220	0	7,220	7,243
McNabney Marsh	7	0	7	7,720
Total All Funds	\$36,526	\$21,346	\$15,180	\$96,922

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED

In the Backyard:

The Golden-crowned Sparrows have arrived. Their plaintive, whistled three-note song ("oh-dear-me") can be heard all day long, but especially early in the morning. White-crowned Sparrows have also migrated in for the winter. They often flock with the Golden-crowned Sparrows. Both are ground- or tray-feeding birds and love white millet seed. They also will eat suet.

The Dark-eyed Juncos are also arriving. Mainly we see the "Oregon" subspecies with their dark hood. Sometimes it's possible to find a "Slate-colored" Junco with their dark bodies and white bellies. Look for the white outer tail feathers on both of these when in flight.

American Goldfinches should begin appearing in larger numbers, often accompanied by Lesser Goldfinches. Their numbers will continue increasing all through the winter. By January or February many people see flocks of up to 100. They can also be seen eating wild thistle seeds and on liquidamber and birch trees. Both will readily come to thistle seed feeders. If you stand outside and hold your feeder at arm's length, the goldfinches will come and land on the feeder because they are so anxious to feed.

Suet feeding is also entertaining at this time of year. In addition to the regular cast of visitors (chickadees, titmice, jays, woodpeckers, etc.), Bewick's Wrens and Ruby-crowned Kinglets also love suet. These winter visitors will consistently visit your feeders.

Looking for binoculars? Wild Birds Unlimited offers a wide variety of the highly rated **Eagle Optics** binoculars at competitive prices. These optics all have an amazingly close focus of 3–6 feet. The image is bright and sharp, from near to far distances. Ergonomically designed, they are very comfortable to use. And, all binoculars are guaranteed against defects in workmanship and materials for as long as you own them.

Mike & 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 Elizabeth Dickey

November

4 Thursday Lower Wildcat Creek
10 Wednesday Arrowhead Marsh
(high tide)
13 Saturday Limantour
18 Thursday Mountain View Sanitary

December

1 Wednesday Hidden Lakes
4–5 Saturday–Sunday Sacramento Refuges
8 Wednesday Niles Canyon
11 Saturday Palo Alto (high tide)

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

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php, or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Trip directions and meeting times will be published in the *Quail*. Customary carpool expense is 20 cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths; Category 2: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain; Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

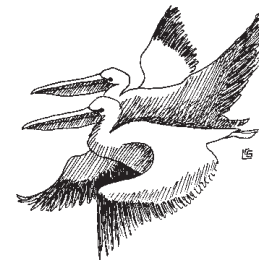
November Field Trips

Thursday, November 4, **Lower Wildcat Creek**. Carpool leaves Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Road in Lafayette at 8 AM. Meet 8:45 in Alvarado Park in Richmond. From SR24 take San Pablo Dam Road north to the end. Turn left onto San Pablo Ave., go south and turn left onto McBride and follow it to the end at the park. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2.

Wednesday, November 10, **Arrowhead Marsh**. Carpool leaves at 8 AM from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Road just north of SR 24. Meet in parking lot at end of park road at 8:45. From I-880, take Hegenberger, go right to Doolittle Drive, then right and right again on Swan Way. Left into shore line area and follow road to end. Hopefully the rising tide may flush out rails. Area is good for shorebirds and often loons on the Bay. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 1.

Saturday, November 13, **Limantour**. Carpool leaves at 7:00 AM from southwest corner Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 8:30 AM at the Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore on Bear Valley Road off SR1 in Olema. This trip includes forest birds on the ridge and ducks, shorebirds and often loons and grebes on the bay. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 for further information. Category 2

Thursday, November 18, **Mountain View Sanitary Plant**. Meet at 9 AM at the plant's parking lot. Take Pacheco



Bldv. exit from I-680, turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway. Arthur Road turns left, then right; at the second turn, turn sharp left onto a non-county-maintained road. Park at the Administration Building and sign in. 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: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732.

2005 Entertainment Books As big as ever and now only \$20!

These popular coupon books pay for themselves in two or three purchases and make a wonderful gift.

Save up to 50% on restaurants, travel, entertainment, retail and much more at the same time you support your chapter. Pick up your great savings book at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill, or at MDAS monthly meetings.

Shop on the web at entertainment.com for an easy way to order out-of-town editions — a marvelous Christmas gift. Be sure to include the MDAS code, 175587, when ordering.

Field Trip Reports

August 21, Saturday, Bodega Bay

Seven birders enjoyed a rather gray day on the coast. First—Rails at the Rail Pond. For the second year, after a long break, we saw these elusive birds again. One Virginia Rail walked in and out among the cattails and another rail called from deep in the reeds. Then at the Head, a Wandering Tattler was feeding with Black Oystercatchers and Black Turnstones on the rocks. Pelagic Cormorants still had fledglings on rock ledges and Pigeon Guillemots were off shore. At Doran we had a good look at a Common Murre in the channel. On the mud flats one Ruddy Turnstone, still in breeding plumage, was among the resting shorebirds, and a Brant was at the far side of the marsh. A total of 55 species was seen or heard. *Elizabeth Dickey*

September 11, Saturday, Outer Point Reyes

Five birders spent a quiet foggy morning in the Outer Point area. The fog lifted by noon but the birds were very quiet. One Yellow Warbler at Nunez Ranch was the only noteworthy passerine. By far the best birds were the three active Barn Owls in the cypress trees at Drake's Beach, and a fourth Barn Owl was sleeping in the trees at Nunez. A total of 42 species was seen or heard. *Elizabeth Dickey*

September 15, Wednesday, Pack Rat Trail, Tilden

A very quiet morning and three birders saw very few birds. "Highlights" were a Great Blue Heron on a floating plank at Jewel Lake and a Pacific Slope Flycatcher along the trail. *Elizabeth Dickey*

September 23, Thursday, Richmond Shoreline

Weather warm and clear. Five birders found the expected birds along the shoreline. Several Red-necked Phalaropes were busy on a small pond. An early Say's Phoebe was among the 33 species seen. *Elizabeth Dickey*

September 25, Saturday, Hawk Hill

Twelve hopeful birders found 29 species at Rodeo Lagoon, including a Western Tanager and an early Hermit Thrush. Unfortunately, after a week of glorious warm sunshine, the fog decided to stay for Saturday, so there were no raptors



visibly migrating over Hawk Mountain.

Fred Safier

September 29, Wednesday, Hayward Shoreline

Three birders met for an overcast, breezy morning on the bay. Thousands of shorebirds on the mud flats. Hundreds of Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail on the ponds and near the bayshore. American White Pelicans in small groups, perhaps a hundred in total, circling and landing, then taking off again. We watched a group of Long-billed Curlews catching and eating small crabs in the salt pickerel not 20 yards from our feet. A Marsh Wren and a Common Yellowthroat had a territorial dispute out in the open for all to view.

Lots of restless movement with flocks taking off and landing, only to take off again a few minutes later. Most of the ducks and many of the shore birds did leave as the tide came in, half the number were gone by 11 AM. A total of 43 species was seen. *Lynn Lakso*

October 7, Thursday, Lafayette Reservoir

Five birders enjoyed a warm and sunny fall day at the reservoir. While the group was assembling on the dam, we watched a swimming flock of 20–25 Double-crested Cormorants fishing in a V followed by 6 Pied-billed Grebes. Gadwalls are increasing in number at this site and seen in numbers the length of the lake. Along the trail, 4 Swainson's Thrush, numerous White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were actively foraging along with the resident birds. Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks both made close fly-overs of our group.

A large number of ducks had assembled at the far end of the lake, including Ruddy Ducks, one male still in breeding plumage, and a number of Ring-necked Ducks and several more Gadwalls.

We ended the morning in the pines of the picnic area at the west side of the dam with a flock of Western Bluebirds and good views of Acorn Woodpeckers carefully fitting acorns into holes of their granary tree. A total of 47 species was seen or heard. *Lynn Lakso*

Christmas Count

Each year since 1900 birders have counted birds at the Christmas season, sustaining an invaluable ornithological database of resident and migratory bird populations. You are invited to take part in this event as MDAS will conduct two separate counts, on Saturday, December 18, and Wednesday, December 22. Rain will not stay our dedicated birders from their appointed rounds.

Every pair of eyes is helpful in this endeavor—you do not need to be an expert bird watcher. Just bring your binoculars and a sense of camaraderie and fun. You may opt for either or both days. Feeder-watchers are encouraged, as well, especially if you anticipate having an unusual species in your yard.

Sign up by completing the form below, or you may call Jimm Edgar at (510) 658-2330. A charge of \$5 helps to pay for publication of the CBC edition of *American Birds*.

Do you have your MDAS logo cap to wear on the Christmas Count? They'll be available at the November meeting.

Details of the wrap-up dinners following the counts will be included in the next issue of the *Quail*.

MDAS Christmas Count —2004

I volunteer for the Central County Christmas Bird Count on December 18.

I volunteer for the East County Christmas Bird Count on December 22.

I volunteer for BOTH Christmas Bird Counts, December 18 and 22.

Put me wherever you need the help.

I would prefer a hiking area.

I would prefer a less strenuous area.

I will monitor a feeder or garden.

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

Years of birding experience: _____

Make \$5 check payable to MDAS.
Mail to: Jimm Edgar
4614 Jacobus Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

Birding Festivals

Lodi Crane Festival and SRWTP Constructed Wetlands Tour. November 6–7, Lodi, CA. The Sacramento Constructed Wetlands Demonstration Project is a five-year project of the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District that was conducted from January 1994 to December 1998. The project was designed to describe how treatment wetlands remove trace metals. Besides proving very efficient at increasing water quality, the small wetland also created habitat for a variety of birds and mammals. A total of 98 bird species, including nine California Species of Concern and 18 confirmed nesting species, were observed at the constructed wetlands and the immediately surrounding environs. When compared to a nearby natural wetland, the emergent marsh habitat at the treatment wetland contained higher densities for six of fifteen wetland-dependent bird species.

Tour participants can expect to see Sora and Virginia Rails, Common Moorhens, waterfowl, and other wetland birds. If lucky, you may even see a Least Bittern, as this site has the only documented population of this secretive species in Sacramento County.

For more information contact Roger Jones at (916) 875-9174 or email jonesro@saccounty.net. You can enroll in the field trip by contacting the Lodi Crane Festival at (916) 358-2353.



Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival November 10–14, 2004, Harlingen, TX. Join birders and nature lovers from around the world at the Rio Grande Valley's premier birding festival. Enjoy guided field trips to dozens of top birding locations, plus afternoon seminars, all-day workshops, and evening keynote lectures. Shop at the nature fair, add to your lifelist, and meet world-famous birders willing to share their experiences with you. A fun, affordable way to catch glimpses of Red-crowned Parrots, Ringed Kingfishers,



Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia*

Beyond suburbia where there are open areas and cattle ranges you may see atop a mound, or alongside a hole in the ground, an owl standing on stilts. Or so it seems, because the Burrowing Owl's legs are not feathered, and he stands tall to survey his realm. Although primarily crepuscular, this bird forages at all hours, consuming beetles and grasshoppers, mice, rats and gophers, reptiles, sparrows and horned larks, even young cottontail rabbits. It will hover like an American Kestrel while hunting, and once it catches a prey it will return to a perch, perhaps on a fence post.

Burrowing Owls commandeer burrows vacated by ground squirrels or other animals. They prefer sagebrush stands, open fields, and road cut banks surrounded by bare ground or short grass. In Imperial County they are commonly seen as you drive past irrigation ditches. The birds may enlarge the burrow to

form a nest cavity at the end of a 5- to 10-foot tunnel that usually has at least one turn. The owls line the tunnel with cow or horse dung.

The female owl lays seven to nine white eggs, which hatch in about four weeks. Young owlets sit near the burrow entrance, but hop back into their hole when frightened. If they are disturbed in the burrow, the young owls may mimic the rasping rattle of a rattlesnake.

A number of public agencies, such as the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District, have implemented programs to build artificial owl nesting mounds. The more than 20 such mounds built by SRCSD have been used each year by Burrowing Owls. If you have access to a property that might be suitable for Burrowing Owl nesting, a description of how you can make an artificial nest can be found at <http://www.srcsd.com/nestsite.html.stm>.

Great Kiskadees, Green Jays, and many other birds found only in this region! Contact: Harlingen Area Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 3162, Harlingen, TX 78551-3162. 800-531-7346.

Eighth Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium. November 18–21, Stockton, CA. The Central Valley Bird Club will offer 28 field trips as well as speakers, including Graham Chisholm, Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan, among others.

Subjects will cover digiscoping, bird sketching, wildlife gardening, and bird identification.

There will be multiple workshops, as well as more than 25 artists and vendors. There are programs designed for beginning birders as well as those for the serious birder. Contact: Central Valley Birding Symposium, 2351 E. Anita St, Stockton, CA 95205, 209-462-5490. www.cvbs.org.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

____ Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for the year 2004-2005.

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

____ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 for the year 2004-2005.

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

____ I'm enclosing an additional donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Card Number: _____

____ Visa ____ MasterCard _____ Expiration Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to:

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

the Quail

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P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
(925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

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

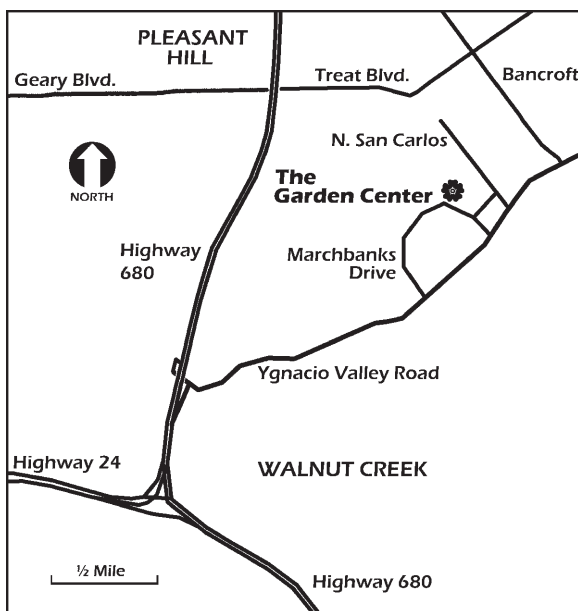
Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership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

MDAS Board of Directors

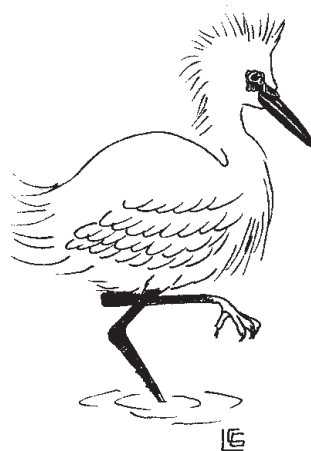
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Deadline for the Dec.-Jan. issue is November 9.



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



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Red-tailed Hawk, Mojave National Preserve

Quickies

Weekend birding in California

Mojave National Preserve

From Interstate 15 south to Highway 40, from Baker east to the Nevada State line lies the Mojave National Preserve, a singular province of stark sand dunes, volcanic cinder cones, dry lakes, mile-high mountains, pinyon pines, and juniper. Here, enjoying a solitude seldom found elsewhere in California, desert tortoises burrow in the flats, bighorn sheep patrol the mountain crags, and Scott's Orioles build nests in Joshua trees.

Miles of lonely road separate points of special interest. There are two developed campsites, at Mid Hills and at Hole-in-the-Wall, that make excellent choices for a base from which you can visit the diverse areas of the park. There are also more primitive camping areas such as at Caruthers Canyon (look for Poorwill and Green-tailed Towhee in the spring). Roadside camping is also permitted in certain areas.

Along the western edge of the preserve, off Interstate 15, the intriguing Zzyzx Road leads to Soda Lake. After a wet winter, spring visitors to this playa may include Red-breasted Merganser, Least Sandpiper, and American Pipit.

At Mitchell Caverns is the Mary S. Beal native-plant nature trail. This affords a wonderful show of wildflowers in the springtime. Look for Crissal Thrasher and Black-throated Sparrow.

Kelso Dunes, third tallest in North America, are a photographer's playground, especially at dawn or dusk as shadows on the dunes make fascinating foregrounds to purple mountains.

Look for Juniper Titmouse and the interior race of Bushtit at the higher elevation of Mid Hills. You may also see Violet-green Swallows, Rock and Canyon Wrens.

The largest Joshua Tree woodland anywhere covers the rounded granite Cima Dome. The Joshuas here are a larger subspecies of Yucca (*Yucca brevifolia jaegariana*) than those growing at Joshua Tree National Park. This area contains all of California's Gilded Flickers, as well as plentiful numbers of LeConte's,

Bendire's and Crissal Thrashers. The vast areas of undisturbed scrubland are beneficial for these birds, listed as sensitive species. Scott's Orioles abound.

Remnants of an old Army outpost at Fort Piute tell of historic days. Nearby, the willows of the riparian area are host during spring migration to Bell's Vireo and Yellow-breasted Chat. The elf owl, a state endangered species, was reintroduced into Piute Creek Canyon to reestablish the species in this region. Look for Warbling Vireo, Wilson's and Lucy's Warblers here, too. Unfortunately, a fire burned through 12 acres of the Piute Creek riparian area in September, and the area is closed temporarily.

Hepatic Tanager and Whip-poor-will are regular nesters in the sky island of Clark Mountain, which is capped by a white fir forest.

About 20 miles west of the preserve is Afton Canyon, the "Grand Canyon of the Mojave," where the Mojave River flows year round. This area has a check list of more than 180 species of birds, including Vermilion Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, and White-faced Ibis.