



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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The Owl and the Woodpecker • Paul Bannick

Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds

Award-winning photographer Paul Bannick will take you on a visual journey through eleven key North American habitats exploring the diversity of specific owl and woodpecker species and the ways in which they define and enrich the ecosystems that they inhabit. We will see how their life histories are intertwined. Woodpeckers change and improve their landscape by carving cavities that other animals then nest in and by drilling wells of sap that others feed upon. Owls are among the creatures that benefit from the activities of woodpeckers and, as a high-order predator, their presence indicates a healthy ecosystem. Paul provides a close look at familiar birds such as the Northern Flicker and the Great Horned Owl as well as more rare species like the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Red-Cockaded Woodpecker and North-American Spotted Owl and the habitat each helps to



◀ Great Gray Owl

▼ Acorn Woodpecker

Both photos: © Paul Bannick



define. This stunning photographic study will be accompanied by stories and rich natural history derived from thousands of hours in the field.

Paul Bannick has coupled his love of the out of doors with his skill as a photographer to create images intended to foster intimacy between the viewer and the subject in order to educate and inspire conservation efforts. After graduation from the University of Washington, Paul worked for 15 years in the computer software industry with Aldus Corporation, Adobe Systems, and Microsoft. Wishing to combine his passion for wilderness conservation with his previous expertise, he focused his attention on nonprofit work and currently serves as the Director of Development for Conservation Northwest (www.conservationnw.org). Conservation Northwest is dedicated to protecting and connecting wild areas from the Pacific Coast to the Canadian Rockies.

Paul's work has appeared in Audubon Magazine, Sunset Magazine, Pacific Northwest Magazine, the National Wildlife Federation Guide to North American Birds,

Smithsonian Guide to North American Birds and many other books, magazines, and refuges in North America and Europe. His first book, "The Owl and the Woodpecker," published by The Mountaineers Books in October of 2008, continues to be one of the best selling bird books in North America.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Mary Scheele is a nature photographer and resident of Contra Costa County. She spends June through September on Lopez Island, one of the San Juan Islands in the State of Washington. Here she devotes her time to photographing the birds and wildlife of the islands. She is very pleased to share her photographs, and love of this magnificent area, with Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, November 5**, 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: Paul Bannick

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, December 3:

John Muir Laws

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner Observations

By Jimm Edgar

By Maury Stern

Our October general meeting took a good part of the evening to honor two of our first and founding members, Harry and Betty Adamson. Diane Inman, who wrote the definitive work on Harry's art, gave a wonderful talk about Harry and Betty's life and Harry's art work. It is such a privilege that our chapter has this world-renowned artist among us. The chapter has given a \$2500 donation to Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, which is in the Central Valley of California, in Harry and Betty's name. Two bird blinds were dedicated to Harry and Betty a few years ago at Gray Lodge. It was a fun evening and Harry is still painting at 93!

August 20, 2009 was the tenth anniversary of the Endangered Species Act delisting the Peregrine Falcon. This is one of the most remarkable conservation stories to ever happen. By 1970 the effects of DDT had nearly made the Falcon extinct. There were no breeding pairs east of the Mississippi River and just two remaining pairs in California. Attempts to breed the birds in captivity had all failed, but a new group of biologists set out to reverse the failure. UC Santa Cruz led the way and to date over 1000 Peregrine Falcons have been released into the wild. One could very likely see them in downtown San Francisco where they have bred successfully on the PG&E building since 2003. It is encouraging to realize that environmental challenges that seem overwhelming can be solved and gives us hope for the next challenge.

I went to hear Lisa Jackson speak recently in San Francisco. She is the newly appointed Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. She was very impressive and I believe we will see a lot of good things happening with environmental issues in our country.

Migration continues through the area and many winter residents arrived.

A raft of about a thousand **Greater Scaup** was at Point Pinole, 10/12. LL

At Briones RP in the evening of 9/28 KU probably saw a **Common Poorwill**.

On 10/4, JD saw **Vaux's Swifts** over Tilden RP.

PS saw a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at Black Diamond Mines RP on 10/6.

On 9/12, RL saw **Western Wood-Pewee** at Upper San Leandro Reservoir.

PS saw **Warbling Vireos** in Antioch on 9/15 and 9/28.

On 10/10 at Lafayette Reservoir, a **Rock Wren** was on the face of the dam.

A FOS **Hermit Thrush** was at MS's house in Lafayette on 9/27.

FOS **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen on 9/19 at Heather Farm by HH, and in Kensington on 9/22 by JDu.

DW and KO saw an **American Redstart** at the Richmond Bay View Trail near 51st Street on 9/13.

Western Tanagers were seen 9/12 by RL at Upper San Leandro Reservoir and TR at Tilden RP.

PS saw a new yard bird, **Savannah Sparrow**, on 9/25 in Antioch.

A **Fox Sparrow** at Tilden RP on 9/23 was FOS for TR.

AK saw **Lincoln's Sparrow** on 9/18 in Wildcat RP near Richmond.

Welcome New Members

Kevin Barrett	Mill Valley
Beth Branthaver	Oakland
Analice Decker	Walnut Creek
Louise Dutton	Orinda
Jane Matthewman	Mill Valley
John Stahler	Antioch
John O. White	Walnut Creek

FOS **White-crowned Sparrows** were seen by JC in Moraga, 9/15, PS in Antioch 9/17, and HH in Walnut Creek on 9/19.

On 10/8, BA saw **Golden-crowned Sparrows** in Moraga.

PS saw a **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Antioch on 9/22.

HH saw a **Western Meadowlark** at Heather Farm on 9/24. This was the first in many years there.

Abbreviations: BA Blaine Anderson, JC Judy Cooper, JD Joseph Dodge, JDu Judith Dunham, HH Hugh (and Rosita) Harvey, AK Alan Krakauer, RL Rob Lewis, LL Laura Look, KO Kitty O'Neil, TR Ted Robertson, JR Jennifer Rycenga, PS Paul (and Nancy) Schorr, MS Maury Stern, KU Ken-ichi Ueda, DW Denise Wight. FOS First of Season, RP Regional Park

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

Trip Reports

Antioch Dunes NWR, September 12. Lightning and thunder woke many early in the morning, but eight members still met to walk the dunes. There are few dunes left, due to their removal for brick making, but this site along the Sacramento River has an interesting history. We learned much of the history, as well as the natural history, as we walked around the 41 acres of the western Stamm Unit. The 26-acre Sardis Unit is not open to the public. The weather was cool, birds and butterflies were sparse, though it was noted that White-crowned Sparrows were busy amongst the Star Thistle and Naked Stem Buckwheat. Of the three endangered species which live in the refuge, we saw some Antioch Dunes Evening Primrose; the Contra Costa Wallflower

was past its season and we saw no Lange's Metalmark Butterflies. *Hugh Harvey*

Healdsburg Vaux's Swifts, September 19. The evening return of Vaux's Swifts to an unused chimney near Healdsburg was every bit as exciting as the more than 165 viewers expected. Nineteen members of our chapter joined this throng as we stood, sat, ate, joked and waited for the estimated 5-6,000 birds to return and begin flying into the chimney. The Rio Lindo Academy welcomes evening viewers to watch this spectacle, which lasts for about a month. We were very lucky to visit on a good night, the numbers of birds varies with the time of the season and the daily weather.

Hugh Harvey

Continued on Page 4 »

Q This bird was given its name by a nephew of Napoleon, in honor of one of his friends and colleagues. An old colloquial name was Blue Darter. Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 4 to learn more.

ACEHKOOPRSW

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

November

- 7 Saturday.....Charleston Slough/South Bay
- 14 Saturday.....Davis Area/Vic Fazio
- 21 Saturday.....Limantour
- 23 Monday.....Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

December

- 5-6 Saturday/Sunday.....Sacramento Refuges
- 10 Thursday.....Niles Area
- 15 Tuesday.....Christmas Count/East Contra Costa
- 19 Saturday.....Christmas Count/Central Contra Costa

January

- 2 Saturday.....Christmas Count/Rarity Chase
- 9 Saturday.....Putah Creek
- 16 Saturday.....Bodega Bay
- 23 Saturday.....Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park
- 29 Friday.....Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh

Come birding with us in November!

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. **El Nido Ranch Road**—Exit SR 24 at St. Stephens Drive east of Orinda. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with St. Stephens Drive.

② Saturday, November 7 Charleston Slough/South Bay

Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.

Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride. Meet at Terminal Road in Mountain View at 8:30 AM. Take I-680 south to SR 237, exit Calaveras Boulevard to west. Pass Alviso, connect to US-101 north at Moffett Field. Exit at San Antonio Road, turn right (north) to Terminal Road, turn right and park. Entrance is on left. Other areas of interest in the South Bay are Palo Alto Baylands and Alviso. Shorebirds and waterfowl should be plentiful. Bring lunch and a beverage.

① Saturday, November 14 Davis Area/Vic Fazio

Leader: Terry Colborn, 916-705-8991 or tlcgdc@aol.com
Wintering Raptors and Waterfowl of Solano and Yolo Counties

The open agricultural lands of southern Solano County provide excellent foraging habitat for scores of wintering raptors, while the wetlands of the nearby Yolo Basin Wildlife Area are the winter home for thousands of waterfowl including ducks, geese, swans and many shorebirds. This all-day field trip will visit several local habitats in search of wintering Ferruginous and Rough-legged hawks; Merlin; Prairie Falcon; Burrowing, Barn and Great-horned Owls; Long-billed Curlew as well as the elusive and threatened Mountain Plover. We also expect to see a representative sampling of waterfowl and a variety of shorebirds at the Yolo Basin Wildlife Area, aka the Vic Fazio refuge. Participants meet the leader at 8:00 AM in Dixon in the southwest corner of the Wal-Mart parking lot located on East Dorset Drive at the Hwy 113 exit off I-80. Bring a lunch and liquids; dress in layers.

② Saturday, November 21 Limantour

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Carpool leaves at 7:00 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore. Take SR 24 to Oakland, then I-580 west to Richmond and the San Rafael Bridge. From US 101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left on 3rd Street and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1 at Olema, turn right for 0.25 miles, then turn left on Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. This trip includes forest birds on the ridge and ducks, shorebirds and often loons and grebes on the bay.

② Monday, November 23 Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

Leader: Cheryl Abel, 335-0176.

Meet at 9 AM at the Mountain View Sanitary Visitor Center. 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. Follow the road through the entry gate, alongside the freeway and through the tunnel under I-680. Park and sign-in at the Visitor Center. Trails may be muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and herons. If you wish, bring a lunch and explore Martinez shoreline in the afternoon on your own.

Cooper's Hawk · *Accipiter cooperii*



French naturalist Charles Lucien Bonaparte first described the Cooper's Hawk in 1828. He named it for his friend William Cooper, one of the founders of the New York Lyceum of Natural History (later the New York Academy of Sciences). Both Bonaparte and William Cooper had been friends and colleagues of John J. Audubon, but that friendship dissolved in 1829 when Audubon claimed the name *Falco stanleyi* for the species that Bonaparte had named *Falco cooperi*, Cooper's Hawk. Audubon meant to honor Lord Edward Smith-

Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby, a member of Parliament and a naturalist who had a large collection of living animals: at his death there were 1,272 birds and 345 mammals. Fortunately, the friendships were later repaired.

Cooper's Hawks belong to the family of Accipiters. These hawks prey mostly on other birds. Their long tails act as rudders that allow them to be extremely maneuverable in wooded areas as they hunt birds on the wing. Cooper's Hawk is about the size of a crow. Other accipiters are the smaller Sharp-shinned Hawk and the larger Northern Goshawk. Male Cooper's Hawks are of similar size to female Sharp-shinned Hawks, and distinguishing between the two is particularly difficult. Cooper's Hawks have rounded tails, the outer tail feathers being as much as an inch shorter than the central ones. Sharp-shinned Hawks have square-tipped tails. In flight, Sharp-shinned Hawks tend to fly with their wrists thrust forward and with their heads barely protruding beyond the wrists. A Cooper's Hawk shows a straighter leading edge to its outspread wings, and its head projects well beyond the leading edge so it seems larger than that of a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Trip Reports

» Continued from Page 2

Hayward Shoreline/San Leandro Marina, September 17. Fourteen birders were very lucky to have gorgeous weather, an abundance of birds, and Bob Richmond to tell us not only what they were but many other interesting facts about their habits here in the fall. There were two first of the season—Merlin and Say's Phoebe—and one quite rare bird, a male Downy Woodpecker. A nice Wandering Tattler, close and personal as we were leaving was a nice addition to the list of 65 birds. Many Yellow Warblers mixed in with a few Orange-crowned's and several Common Yellowthroats made us work. Bob Dunn had a couple of Lincoln Sparrows to add to Song and Savannah Sparrows. Many Red Knots, Red-necked Phalaropes, Sanderlings, and all the normal shorebirds were in abundance. *Bingham Gibbs*

Berkeley Shoreline, October 8. Thirteen birders welcomed in winter this gray, cold, windy morning. No sun shone until 12:30,

*In every walk with nature
one receives far more than
he seeks.*

John Muir

but we still managed to find 65 species with the best being a Black-throated Gray adult male at the Berkeley Marina. Other birds of note were the Burrowing Owl at Cesar Chavez, five species of grebes, many Black Oystercatchers and Black Turnstones. New birders were made to feel especially welcome by many of the participants. Thanks to all of you. *Bingham Gibbs*

Hawk Hill, October 10. It was chilly and overcast at Rodeo Lagoon and up on Hawk Hill, though we three birders had good views of blue water, boats and ships, and sunshine where we weren't. Among the 44 species seen, the highlights were the Fox Sparrow posing at eye level happily munching on seeds along our morning trail, and a Peregrine Falcon putting on a display to rival the Blue Angels close to our hilltop. *Fred Safier*

Looking Forward

Endeavoring to fulfill the objectives of Mount Diablo Audubon Society—namely habitat conservation and environmental education—the chapter maintains an active outreach program that includes a presence at environmental events and presentations at local schools and libraries. These events provide an opportunity for all members to help forward our goals.

Here is a summary of upcoming events. Consider how you can help.

February: San Francisco Flyway Festival on Mare Island, Vallejo. We have a table where children can study birds' nests, and where we provide information about our activities.

March: Outreach Event at Moraga Library. This program is hands-on, where kids learn to use binoculars and actually identify birds. Emphasis is on care of the environment while learning and having fun. Adults join, too, at an evening session.

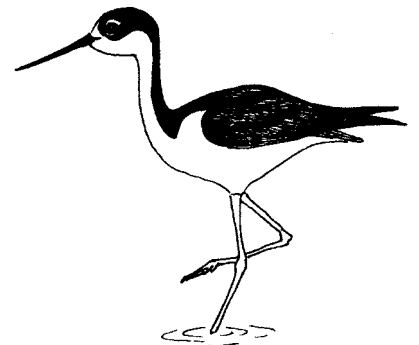
April: Earth Day Festival at John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez. We join many other organizations at a fun-filled day of entertainment and information.

May: Outreach Event at Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Pleasant Hill. This is a combination membership drive and exhibit of our activities.

June: Heritage Day at Borges Ranch in Walnut Creek. Like the event at John Muir NHS, this event is great for augmenting childrens' interest in nature.

August: Martinez Beaver Festival. Not just for beavers, this festival is about all wildlife and the wildlands and parks they live in. Come have fun.

September: California Coastal Cleanup. In cooperation with East Bay Regional Park District, Mount Diablo Audubon takes part in removing old tires and other debris from Martinez Shoreline Regional Park.



Burrowing Owls Struggle with Habitat Lost and Found

By Scott Artis

For time immemorial an eastern rising sun has illuminated a giant standing within the confines of San Francisco's East Bay. I can see its shadow falling on an ever dynamic landscape as swaying grasses are increasingly adorned with the byproducts of a 19th century notion that has been carried into the modern day. From the future site of 127 or so Antioch homes, I can clearly see Mount Diablo and a fresh adaptation of Manifest Destiny specifically designed to spread expansionism from city line to city line. But just because development finds itself in purgatory does not mean wildlife stalls with their quest to discover suitable habitat.

In a story best described as habitat lost and habitat found, a group of Burrowing Owls have capitalized on our housing bubble collapse. Not long after the earth-movers ceased, asphalt was laid, cement was poured, and blocks were stacked, a Burrowing Owl population began to re-establish a slightly less familiar habitat. Sidewalks served as impenetrable burrow roofs, sparsely vegetated lots provided perfect hunting grounds, roads, fire hydrants, and streetlights were nothing less than avian observatories, and their territory was completely protected by chain link fencing. And for about two years this unlikely urban owl refuge flourished.

But with occasional economic sparks of life and developers trying to cut their losses, this particular plot of land found itself in the throes of a transfer of ownership. And as the previous owner faded so too did that very important layer of protection. Little did I realize that the chain link fence I once criticized for contributing to habitat fragmentation was vital to Burrowing Owl success and our neighborhood's integrity.

The once quiet, semi-developed land had suddenly been exposed to all the activities one typically finds filling a police blotter. Drug deals, substance abuse, illegal dumping, graffiti, alcohol, sex, fireworks, street racing, and off-roading infiltrated my world; infiltrated the world of these Burrowing Owls. And as the calendar continued to shed its months, the traffic increased, the piles of garbage grew, and the Burrowing Owls found themselves in a breeding season with active burrows surrounded by tire tread marks and trash covering burrow entrances.



Yet throughout the broken glass, abandoned water heaters, beer cans, refrigerators, loud music, and questionable traffic, the breeding owls managed to find success with some of the pairs rearing as many as eight owlets each. But as the breeding season came to an end and the owlets ventured out on their own, this striking population of resident Burrowing Owls was thinning. Perhaps an urge for migration, perhaps continued disturbance, and most definitely a combination of both, the emigration was driven by instinct and who could blame them for leaving. However, as fall crept up on a quickly passing year the population found itself numbering around 10.

It was five months to the day after the first of many conversations with the City of Antioch, the Police Department, and the developer that I was able to breathe an initial sigh of relief. The graffiti was painted over, the unwanted piles of debris were hauled away, and the clanking of posts being driven into the ground reverberated throughout the neighborhood as an owl stood watch on a distant street sign. Within a week and a half the newly installed gates were officially locked and the first measure of protection for the owls had been put in place. And with the discovery of the remains of a Burrowing Owl and numerous blocked den entrances, the timing could not be more appropriate.

But ensuring their ultimate protection is going to require more than a mere chain link fence. As time continues to

pass and springtime development draws near, an official biological survey is yet to commence. According to a contact in the City Planning Department, the property's initial Environmental Impact Statement completed years back indicated owls had not been observed on site and hence zero mitigation is currently in place for this California Species of Special Concern.

And as the sun moves towards a western setting there is no doubt that these Burrowing Owls are on the cusp of habitat lost, but the question is whether or not they will have another opportunity for habitat found.

Scott Artis is a resident of Antioch and describes himself as a Wildlife Advocate. He maintains a wildlife commentary at www.journowl.com. His campaign to save the Burrowing Owls and stop the blight at the Kiper Homes property near Brentwood is admirable. Mount Diablo Audubon has officially registered our concern in a letter to the Antioch City Council.



Burrowing Owl

Speotyto cunicularia hypogaea
Birds of the Pacific States
Ralph Hoffmann • 1927

Cibola NWR

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tion deck is designed to allow the wildlife to feed and loaf without being disturbed. There is a photography hide nearby.

The population of Sandhill Cranes that you will see here nest in northeastern Nevada, and the birds begin arriving in Arizona in October, staying until late February. Flying from roosting areas to feeding areas just before dawn, they feed for about three hours, then assemble at loafing areas. They usually feed again for an hour or two before sunset, before heading off to their roost.

Drive about twelve miles to the southern end of the refuge and visit the Cibola Lake overlook to view grebes, ducks, pelicans, geese, cormorants, terns, and more from an elevated cliff overlooking the southern end of the lake. Cibola Lake is closed from Labor Day to March 15 in order to provide the wintering waterfowl a safe and undisturbed place to roost, but you can enjoy watching the birds from a distance from the overlook.

Many of the aquatic birds nest in the backwaters of the river. In the spring at Cibola Lake look for Western and Clark's Grebes with the young riding on their parents' back.

From Blythe, California, drive approximately 3 miles west on I-10 to Neighbours Boulevard/SR 78 exit. Travel south on Neighbours for 12 miles to the Cibola Bridge. After crossing the bridge over the Colorado River into Arizona, continue south for 3.5 miles to headquarters.

The Visitor Center at Cibola NWR is open year round. Hours vary. The Center is staffed by friendly and knowledgeable docents, and there are interesting displays to acquaint you with the refuge and what it has to offer.

Buy a Duck Stamp!

It has been Mount Diablo Audubon's custom to purchase a number of Federal Duck Stamps (Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps) so that members could have the convenience of buying them at our general meetings. There are still several remaining, and you are encouraged to contribute \$15 in support of wetlands and wildlife.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission is authorized to oversee the expenditure of Federal Duck Stamp funds for the purchase and lease of migratory bird habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In early September the Commission approved the expenditure of nearly \$8 million in stamp funds to add more than 4,000 acres to seven units of the Refuge System. Six of the seven were part of, or adjacent to, recognized Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The largest of these acquisitions was at Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area, Kern and Tulare Counties, where 1,042 acres of easements will protect wetlands and uplands in order to stop the gradual erosion of habitat that supports migrating waterfowl. Earlier this year, also with Duck Stamp funds, Grass-



lands Wildlife Management Area, Merced County, acquired a permanent easement of 1,077 acres protecting that major wintering area for migratory waterfowl. The other IBA-related acquisitions were at Blackwater NWR, Maryland; Bombay Hook NWR, Delaware; Silvio O. Conte NWR, New Hampshire; Bear River NWR, Utah, and Lake Umbagog NWR, New Hampshire and Maine.

The MBCC, which has been in operation since the late 1920s, is a model of thoughtful and bipartisan bird conservation that operates virtually under the radar, and is largely underappreciated or simply misunderstood. The Federal Duck Stamp program has raised over \$700 million over the years for acquisition of land for the National Wildlife Refuges. That's why we should be buying duck stamps. Many birders never spend a dollar supporting the refuge system that has protected the birds and other wildlife we enjoy watching.

For news of the National Wildlife Refuges, you may want to visit The Birding Community E-bulletin at www.refugeassociation.org/birding/NewestSBC.html.

Help Project FeederWatch Track Backyard Birds

What happens in the backyard should not stay in the backyard—at least when it comes to bird feeders. By sharing information about which birds visit their feeders between November and April, backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes in bird numbers and movements from year to year, through Project FeederWatch, a citizen-science program from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

Project FeederWatch begins on November 14 and runs through early April. Taking part is easy. Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website. Participants submitted nearly 117,000 checklists last season. Since 1987, more than 40,000 people from the United States and Canada have taken part in the project.

“To get the most complete picture of bird movements, we always need new sets of eyes to tell us what species are showing up at backyard feeders,” says David Bonter, leader of Project FeederWatch. “Participants always tell us how much fun it is and how good it feels to contribute to our understanding of birds by submitting their sightings.”

Project FeederWatch is for people of all ages and skill levels. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at 866-982-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, and an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Ornithology Opportunities

Sandhill Crane Festival, Lodi, November 7-8. General admission to the Sandhill Crane Festival is free. Nature tours costs vary. For information, cost, and times, please visit www.cranefestival.com. Photographer Paul Bannick, our MDAS November meeting speaker, will be the Festival's Featured Speaker on Saturday, and he will lead a Sunday field trip as part of a Bird Photography Workshop. You must register for the field trip to participate in the classroom portion of the workshop. Limited to 15 participants.

The 13th Annual **Central Valley Birding Symposium** will be held November 19-22 in Stockton. Attend workshops with raptor expert Bill Clark, birding pros Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan, as well as other informative folks. Evening programs include Murrelet Halterman on Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Stephen Shunk on "The Magic of Birding". There will be drawing and digiscoping workshops, the always popular and informative ID Panel with guest experts, programs for beginning birders, and more. The many field trips frequently turn up chasable goodies. The Birder's Market is full of artists and vendors with a wonderful selection of bird and nature related items. For more info, check the website at www.cvbs.org, or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net or (209) 369-2010.

Come Celebrate the 14th Annual **Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival**, January 15-18. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific

Flyway and one of the country's preeminent birding spots. At last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified! Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. To register and for more information about the Festival, see www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call toll free 866-464-5105. The registration deadline is December 31, but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

San Diego Audubon Society's Bird Festival, March 4-7. Among the 56 field trips and workshops are three trips into Baja California (passports required); an 8-hour pelagic trip to the Islas Coronados and a 6½-hour pelagic trip for whales as well as birds; two trips for birds of the Anza-Borrego Desert. Other special venues are Marine Corps Camp Pendleton, and behind-the-scenes tours at San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park and the avian collection at the San Diego Natural History Museum. Plan your trip now as reservations for activities fill quickly. A brochure and registration form can be ordered at 619-682-7200 or contact sandiegoaudubon.org.

Point Reyes Birding Festival. Plan now to attend the first annual Point Reyes Birding Festival, April 23-25. The event is sponsored by the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. Go to <http://www.eacmarin.org> to learn more about this exciting event. Make a reservation to stay at one of the dozens of charming bed and breakfast or other lodging establishments in West Marin from Friday at noon to late Sunday afternoon, since accommodations fill up early for weekends.

the Quail

is published by the

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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The Garden Center

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



MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year.

I'm enclosing an additional tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society.

Please send The Quail by: E-mail US mail

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

Please make your check payable to:

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:

Membership Chair, 1932 Golden Rain Road #4, Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Mount Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53
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Canada Geese fly over Danner Lake at Cibola NWR

Cibola NWR

Cibola—one of the fabled seven cities of gold? No. It's one of the hidden National Wildlife Refuges that you have likely never heard of. And it's not too far away. But you wouldn't want to plan on a summer vacation there.

Located in the Sonoran Desert along the lower stretches of the Colorado River, south of Blythe, this is an oasis that may reach 120 degrees at times and gathers hardly more than two inches of rain in a year. The best time to visit is from December through February when cranes, geese and ducks cover the skies, the water, and the fields. This can make a worth-while stop as you drive to the winter birding bonanza of southeast Arizona.

When they come in to the shores of Danner Lake or elsewhere, Sandhill Cranes, Canada and Snow Geese, as well as Ross's and Greater White-fronted Geese, can remind you that you should have brought along your ear plugs. You'll also

see thousands of ducks of many species, American Bitterns, Yellowlegs, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilts, sandpipers, Cattle, Snowy and Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons. Common Snipe, White-faced Ibis and Black Terns are possible.

Among 240 species of birds that come to Cibola NWR during a normal year, species that are uncommon in Northern California include Gambel's Quail, Greater Roadrunner, White-winged Dove, and Vermilion Flycatcher. Harris's Hawk, the Yuma Clapper Rail, and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher are endangered birds that use Cibola NWR.

You will want to drive the three-mile auto loop to view the Sandhill Cranes as they forage in the fields or among the rows of corn. This drive is open from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

About a half-mile along on the tour is the parking lot and trailhead for the Cornfield Nature Trail. The Nature Trail is a one-mile loop passing through three different native habitats; cottonwood, mesquite, and willow. Halfway around the trail, there is a 40-acre pond which in winter draws thousands of Canada Geese, Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes. An elevated observa-

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Coyote and Gambel's Quail in Visitor Center diorama. Sandhill Cranes in alfalfa.