



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 56, Number 3

November 2010

Experiences During the Louisiana Gulf Oil Spill

◆ Jay Holcomb

In February 1971, two tankers collided beneath the Golden Gate Bridge spilling 900,000 gallons of crude oil into San Francisco Bay. Little was known about oiled-bird care but volunteers from all over the bay showed up to try. Out of 7,000 oiled birds, 300 birds survived.

Within months, the International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) was formed. The primary goals of the IBRRC were to develop oiled wildlife cleaning and rehabilitation techniques, provide ongoing research, and provide oiled wildlife response management capabilities during oil spills. In 2001 the IBRRC moved from Aquatic Park in Berkeley to its 12,000 square foot rehabilitation facility in Fairfield shared with the California Department of Fish and Game.

Jay Holcomb, Executive Director, joined the IBRRC in 1986. He has either led or been on staff for virtually all IBRRC spill responses since 1986, including the M/V Treasure oil spill in Cape Town, South Africa in 2000 and most recently, the April 20 Gulf oil spill. Jay will share with us his four-month experience in the Louisiana Gulf.



Dr. Sharon K. Taylor, a veterinarian with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dan Alonso, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge manager, and others release a crate of brown pelicans into the wild, June 27, 2010. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Robert Brazzell.

Jay's assistant, Laurie Pyne, gives us a glimpse into their adventures. "The Gulf oil spill was unprecedented in its scope and size. At the end of April, the first team members were mobilized to Buras, Louisiana. An old warehouse at Fort Jackson next to the Mississippi river, it took weeks to get pumps to fill the outdoor pools with water from the river. The sweltering heat overcame many of the workers and we had to snake-proof the recovery pens. As we were far from civilization, supplies were difficult to find. The oil was tough and birds initially came in completely coated with it. Methyl soyate was unavailable so we had to resort to canola oil and straight Dawn™ marinades to get the oil off of the birds."

BIRDING INFORMATION

Jimm Edgar, President of Mount Diablo Audubon, will take a lead from his good friend, Maury Stern, who spoke last month about classification changes and the American Ornithological Union. Jimm will talk about the scientific names of seven unique birds and share with us the pleasure of knowing the meanings of these Latin names. The binomial genus-species name defines the bird, sometimes by color, sometimes by honoring an original describer, sometimes by geographic location, sometimes by a habit of the bird. The acceptance of a single worldwide term for each species makes it possible for scientists, regardless of the language they use, to know the identity of any bird with which they are concerned. It also provides a simple way to revise names and to allow for future inclusion of new knowledge.

Continued on Page 2 »

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, November 4**, 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: **Jay Holcomb**

** Please remember to bring a cup.*

Thursday, December 9:

Note that this is the second—not the first—Thursday in December!

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I am encouraging everyone to strongly consider a yes vote on Proposition 21, the measure that would add an \$18 fee to our car registration fee and in so doing make all of our State Parks free admission. It would also put \$500 million into the State Park system each year to be used for maintenance and other deferred issues. About \$150 million would be freed up from the state budget to be used for other needed items such as education.

Our long-time Conservation Chair, Nancy Wenninger, has had to step down due to increased job responsibilities. We are trying to form a conservation committee to serve in this vital role for the chapter. Two people have stepped forward and we would like to have at least two more. This group would probably meet 3-5 times a year and consider particularly local conservation issues and how the chapter should respond. Please let me know if you might want to help on this very important committee.

We had another great program on October 7 at Heather Farm. Larry Arbanas showed us excellent videos done for Cornell Lab of Ornithology showing birds of southern Texas. Quite spectacular! Our birding information time was done by member Maury Stern on the many changes taking place in the AOU (American Ornithological Union) checklist.

Our program chair, Alice Holmes, arranges for both main programs and birding information each month. She has had some difficulty in getting birding information presenters. These times are usually done by our members and can be about anything having to do with birding. Our chapter has an extensive slide collection that we are about to convert to DVD, which means you, as a presenter, would have access to great bird photos. Please consider doing one of the talks this coming year. Usually 10-15 minutes is all that is needed.

I hope you take advantage of the service our chapter provides to the East Bay in particular, but also to the entire birding world. East Bay Birders Sightings is a Yahoo groups page and you can subscribe for free. You will receive e-mails usually every day about what has been seen in the East Bay. You can also report what you may have seen. As the fall migration unfolds you never know what will turn up. It is fun to read every day.

Jay Holcomb

» Continued from Page 1

"Because of hurricane warnings, on July 23rd, we were moved to a fully functional facility in Hammond, Louisiana, offering plenty of outdoor pens with clean pools. Washing and rehabbing the birds became easier. Most of the birds that came to us in the beginning were Brown Pelicans, including babies, which were the cutest things in the world. The 'show stealers' had to be the Roseate Spoonbills. Other species of birds that were washed and rehabbed were Laughing Gulls, Tricolored Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Sandwich Terns, Royal Terns, Black Skimmers, Clapper Rails, and the Great Egrets, to name a few. Each species had its own requirements for housing and feeding. The team members were very creative in designing as natural a habitat as possible for each species as they awaited release."

Jay managed the entire 6-month rehabilitation program caring for over 1,600 birds.

Jay Holcomb began his career in animal rehabilitation at the Marin Humane Society, helping to found the wildlife rehabilitation program at the Marin Wildlife Center in San Rafael. He responded to California oil spills during the 1970s and early 1980s as a volunteer before joining the staff of IBRRC during the ARCO Anchorage Spill in 1986. During the Exxon Valdez Spill (1989), Jay pioneered the search and rescue program in Prince William Sound, the largest of its kind ever attempted. In addition, Jay managed the entire six-month rehabilitation program caring for over 1,600 birds. Jay has served on the Board of Directors for the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, an association of wildlife rehabilitators and centers. Jay was president of that organization for eight terms. In 1996 he was awarded the NWRALifetime Achievement Award, the highest award given in the field of wildlife rehabilitation, recognizing his pioneering efforts and dedication to wildlife conservation.



Two brown pelicans take flight after being released at Sanibel Island, Florida. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Welcome New Members

- | | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Lecia Gwen Atil | Lafayette |
| Bob Christensen | Oakley |
| Burton Nicodemus | Richmond |



These birds primarily breed throughout central Canada and the United States although some are resident in Contra Costa County. They then disperse to almost every part of the continent, and yet they are seldom seen in flight, as they migrate at night. During the breeding season, this bird has a dark ring around its chicken-like bill.

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

BBDDEEEEGIILLPR

The Quail is published monthly except January and August by Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. *The Quail* is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **The deadline for the December-January issue is November 16.**

Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB_Sightings@yahoo.com.

The past month has seen the last of migrants passing south and the return of many winter residents.

Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** were out of place at Meeker Slough in Richmond on 9/29. JD.

HH saw about 400 **Canada Geese** at Heather Farm on 10/4.

Three **Brant** continued at Brooks Island. BP, 9/18.

The **Harlequin Duck** was at Brooks Island 9/18. BP.

An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen over San Pablo Reservoir on 9/20 by JR.

Swainson's Hawks were seen in east county on 9/19 by BP.

A juvenile **Ferruginous Hawk** was near Byron Hot Springs on 9/19. BP. An adult was seen a week later by DW near the Byron Airport.

BP saw a **Prairie Falcon** at Contra Loma Reservoir in Antioch on 9/19.

Clapper Rails were at Meeker Slough on 9/19, 9/26, and 9/29. BP, JD, DW.

There was a photographed **Virginia Rail** at Heather Farm on 10/8. DN This is rare for that area.

Lesser Yellowlegs were at Iron House Trail in Oakley and MacNabney Marsh on 9/21 and 9/26. DW, KP.

Red-necked Phalaropes were at Iron House 9/19 and 9/21. BP, KP.

Up to 20 **Elegant Terns** were at the Brooks Island-Meeker Slough area 9/27 and 9/29. ES, CP, JD.

An unusual **Black Tern** was seen by BP at the Iron House Sanitary District Ponds. 9/19.

A **Greater Roadrunner** was photographed on 8/18 in Brentwood. GP. This was presumably the same bird seen on 8/30. JC.

Barn Owl, Western Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Northern Saw-whet Owl were in the area near the EBMUD staging area near SanPablo Dam Road and Bear Creek in Orinda. 9/19, 9/21. BP, KP.

KP saw **Vaux's Swifts** over Mitchell Canyon in Mount Diablo State Park on 9/21.

S&CL had a very late **Rufous Hummingbird** at their feeder in San Ramon on 9/21.

Lewis's Woodpeckers were at Round Valley RP 9/21. DW.

Western Wood-Pewees were in Mitchell Canyon and Heather Farm 9/15. WK, HH, FS.

A late **Willow Flycatcher** was at Bay-view Trailhead, Point Isabel on 9/28. CP, ES.

Say's Phoebe was at Inspiration Point Trail on 9/29. JDo.

BP saw **Horned Larks** on Byron Hot Springs Road on 9/19.

A much more eastern than normal **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was in Mitchell Canyon 9/21. KP.

Ruby-crowned Kinglets were first seen 9/21 by KP in Mitchell Canyon and LL in SanPablo.

Varied Thrush returned to the Bay Area the first week of October. SS at Huckleberry Preserve.

WK, HH, and FS on 9/15 saw **Cedar Waxwing** flocks at Mitchell Canyon and Heather Farm.

A **Phainopepla** was at Mitchell Canyon 9/15. WK.

Yellow Warblers were wide-spread into the last week of September. MOS.

Yellow-rumped Warblers returned the last week of September. MOS.

Black-throated Gray Warblers were seen as late as 10/4. MOS.

Townsend's Warblers were in good numbers. DV on 10/8 at Huckleberry Preserve and MOS.

Western Tanagers were seen 9/15 at Heather Farm, HH, FS, and Mitchell Canyon, WK, and 9/21, KP.

A **Chipping Sparrow** was seen in Vincent Park at the end of Marina Bay Parkway by BP on 9/18.

A **Fox Sparrow** appeared on 9/15 at their San Ramon home. S&CL.

S&CL had a **Lincoln's Sparrow** on 9/25 and ES and CP saw one at Meeker Slough 9/28.

KB saw **White-throated Sparrow** in Point Richmond on 10/5. Her records since 1995 show their return from 9/27 to 10/6.

White-crowned Sparrows returned about 9/18 to our area. MOS.

Golden-crowned Sparrows appeared 9/21 at San Pablo Bay RS, LL, and 9/25 in San Ramon. S&CL.

An **Evening Grosbeak** was heard over the Tilden Carousel on 10/5 by PC. A number had been in Marin, Sonoma and the Farallones that week.

Beep! Beep!

It's Monday morning, August 30, 11:30 AM, Brentwood, near the Deer Ridge Country Club. Jane Chinn and three friends look out from their window and are astounded to see a Greater Roadrunner! It walked along the backyard fence, ran a few feet, then stood on a rock as Meredith Madsen grabbed a camera and—through the double-paned glass—clicked off a snapshot of a bird seen in Contra Costa County only three times since May 1986—April 2007 on Mount Diablo, and March 2010 in Brentwood (likely this same bird).

Jane says, "I think enough can be seen to clearly identify the long tail and sturdy, ever so slightly curved bill. The fence rail obscures the crest, which was a bit ruffled and indicative of the male. I thought I saw a hint of red behind the eye, but I can't swear to it!"



[Note: If you are reading the printed edition of the Quail, you will probably want to see this photo in color on our web edition at diablaudubon.com/newsletter.php.]



MOS Many observers, KB Katherine Branstetter, PC Phil Capitolo, JC Jane Chinn, JDo Jay Dodge, JD Judith Dunham, HH Hugh Harvey, RH Rosita Harvey, WK Win Kryda, S&CL Steve and Carol Lombardi, LL Laura Look, DN Diane Niemi, CP Corinne Paff, KP Kathy Parker, GP George Phillips, BP Bob Power, JR Jim Roethe, FS Fred Safer, ES Emilie Strauss, SS Sylvia Sykora, DV Debbie Viess, DW Denise Wight.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

November

- 11 Thursday Berkeley Shoreline
- 13 Saturday Charleston Slough/South Bay
- 20 Saturday Limantour
- 22 Monday Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

December

- 4-5 Saturday/Sunday Sacramento Refuges
- 9 Thursday Niles Area
- 14 Tuesday Christmas Count/East County
- 18 Saturday Christmas Count/Central County

January

- 2 Sunday Christmas Count Rarity Chase
- 8 Saturday Putah Creek
- 15 Saturday Raptors, Davis Area
- 19 Wednesday Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh
- 22 Saturday Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Schollenberger Park

Come Birding with Us in November!

**① Thursday, November 11
Berkeley Shoreline**
Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.
Carpool leaves at 8 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to I-580 west, turn north onto I-80. Take Powell Street exit, turn left on Powell, go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy. Loons, grebes, bay ducks and shorebirds.

**② Saturday, November 13
Charleston Slough/South Bay**
Leader: Eugenia Larsen, 806-0644.
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.

**② Saturday, November 20
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 22
Mountain View Sanitary/ McNabney Marsh**
Leader: Cheryl Abel, 335-0176.
Meet at 9 AM at the Mt. 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.

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.
The full schedule through August 2011 was published in the September *Quail*, http://www.diabloaudubon.com/newsletter/Quail_Sep_10.pdf
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: **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. **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

Trip Reports

Hayward Regional Shoreline, September 15. Where have all the birdies gone? They were not at Winton Avenue, at least on this day. Twelve birders searched high and low finally totalling 40 species. Several of the expected species were conspicuously absent, like the Red Knots. We were happy to run into Bob Richmond who said the numbers this year have been down about 60 percent over what he has had in the past. Perhaps they are late; we shall see. The best bird we saw, in my mind, was a Peregrine Falcon who swooped down over Frank's Dump. Bob called it a Tundra Peregrine, and when I got home and looked it up in my raptor book, it fit the field marks perfectly. Probably the first one for most of us there, or at least the first we have had ID'd for us. Thanks Bob.

Bingham Gibbs

Outer Point Reyes, October 2. Sixteen birding enthusiasts gathered on an overcast day at the Point Reyes Visitor Center for the annual Fall Outer Point Reyes migrant field trip. Thick fog greeted us at our first site out at the Lighthouse and it was not until midday that it lifted and we were able to start and view birds on the ocean with any clarity. Only three species were found at the Lighthouse, most notable being a Fox Sparrow. Traveling on to Chimney Rock/Fish Docks our luck began to turn as we found a pair of Harlequin Ducks at the Lifeboat Station as well as Red-throated, Pacific and Common Loons and a mixed flock of Eared and Horned Grebes. Nunes Ranch proved very quiet; however, at Mendoza Ranch we encountered the resident Great Horned Owl as well as a Pectoral Sandpiper. Moving on to Drakes Beach and, with the weather continuing to improve, we found Barn Owls, together with an Orange-crowned Warbler, two putative Sora, and a Common Yellowthroat. Arguably most exciting were views of a jaeger chasing an Elegant Tern for a regurgitated lunch. A few participants decided to take a quick look at the Northern District Operations Center (RCA Station) on the way out and were rewarded by sighting a Black-and-white Warbler, a Townsend's Warbler, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and another Great Horned Owl. All told after a very slow start we managed to accumulate 79 species.

David Hutton

Rio Lindo Academy, September 18. The Vaux's Swift migration is becoming one of the more popular events in the wider »

A Legacy for California State Parks



Would the Western Snowy Plover vote for Prop. 21? You bet it would!

Another bird that would probably vote for Proposition 21 if it could would be the Western Snowy Plover. This sparrow-sized Pacific Coast shorebird was listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act 1993 because of dramatic population declines. California beaches provide essential breeding and wintering habitat for the Western Snowy Plover, and this places a premium on beaches that are publicly protected and managed. Since the list, California State Parks has played a key role in Western Snowy Plover conservation, so much so that it is difficult to imagine the bird's survival without the agency's contribution. A fully funded California State Parks ensures that this important work will continue, and that the Western Snowy Plover will remain a part of California's natural landscape well into the future.

So what does California State Parks do for the Western Snowy Plover? For starters, at beaches where the birds breed—such as

» community, as well as with birders. The swifts gather in large communal roosts as they migrate to Central America. One of the more notable roosts in the Bay Area is at Rio Lindo Academy in Healdsburg. This year six chapter members traveled late in the day to view the dusk return to an unused chimney. We were not disappointed. Along with about 120 other viewers, some were birders and some local residents, we sat on lawn chairs, blankets or the curb and enjoyed a picnic dinner. Swifts were seen flying around as soon as we arrived, but about ten minutes to seven, the first birds started to enter the chimney. Studies have shown that about 360 birds a minute fly in at peak times. The last birds of the evening entered some 45 minutes later. Though not flying in constantly, it was estimated that some 8–10,000 birds flew into the chimney that night. A number of spectators applauded the birds when the curtain was drawn at the end of the performance. Also seen were some American Crows and Turkey Vultures.

Hugh Harvey



Mike Baird Photo

Morro Bay State Beach and Silver Strand State Beach (San Diego)—park staff fences off the sites and educates the public about the bird's plight. Staff also conducts important habitat restoration and maintenance, monitors the nests, and collects vital breeding data. Park staff also maintains habitat at wintering sites and collects data. This is important work, not only to helping the species survive, but to assessing its progress.

Many experts agree that without the contribution from California State Parks, the state's populations of the Western Snowy Plover would plummet. One way to ensure that this effort continues is to make sure that the agency remains fully funded through the California State Parks Initiative.

This article, by Garrison Frost, first appeared in Audubon California's Audublog: Conservation News and Notes.

Tennessee Valley, October 9. The first chapter trip to Tennessee Valley in many years brought out 10 birders for a fairly substantial hike on a perfect fall day. No vagrants were found, but the highlight birds included Pygmy Nuthatch (a flock, well-seen, up close), Great Horned Owl (particularly enjoyed by our youngest participant, Tristan, age 6), two Soras, Tricolored Blackbird, and a White-tailed Kite being harassed by a Northern Harrier. The total species count was 48.

Fred Safier



Pygmy Nuthatch
Birds of the Pacific States
Ralph Hoffman, 1927

Julia Pfeiffer Burns

» Continued from Page 8

October and migrate north in January. Early in the morning you will find them roosting in the eucalyptus trees—in dense clusters—in Cooper Grove along the Big Sur River. During the day they will be flying around.

The scenic mile-long trail to the mouth of the Big Sur River leads through coast live oaks, alder, bay and willows, and is where you can often find Acorn, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers; and perhaps Wrentit or Hutton's Vireo. At streamside, be alert for Belted Kingfisher and for American Dipper. At the ocean, there'll be Western Gulls and Brandt's Cormorants on the rocks offshore, and Black Turnstones and other shorebirds on the sandy beach.

Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park lies inland along the Big Sur River, and features redwoods, conifers, oaks, sycamores, cottonwoods, maples, alders and willows—plus open meadows. Woodland birds, such as Brown Creeper and Winter Wren, will be found here, and American Dipper is a possibility. The scenic Pfeiffer Falls-Valley View trail leads to a 40-foot waterfall, best viewed after a rain. Some campsites are along the Big Sur River. Big Sur Lodge is



Limekiln Falls. Photo by Ron Bigelow/ located in the park, with guest rooms, cafe, and a grocery store.

The natural wonder of Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park makes it an absolute must stop along the coast. The short walk to the overlook for McWay Falls also offers, from late December and January, a good spot for watching gray whales as they pass on their southward migration, then in March and April as they return northward. Along the trail is habitat for Wrentit and poison oak. Another easy trail in McWay Canyon leads through fine redwood groves to Canyon Falls, a pretty 30-foot cascade.

Limekiln State Park, 56 miles south of Carmel, in addition to lovely redwood groves, spectacular coastal views, and waterfalls, adds an historical element of interest. The park is home to more than

200 bird species that live in the forest, near the streams or at the shore. California Condors and Peregrine Falcons glide above the canyons.

With some of America's most magnificent scenery, the State Parks of Big Sur are also fine places for viewing wildlife.



FeederWatch. It's Fun!

One back yard at a time, participants in Project FeederWatch are doing their part to unravel nature's mysteries—simply by sharing information about the birds that visit their feeders. The 24th season of Project FeederWatch begins November 13, although new participants can join at any time.

Participants count the numbers and different species of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website at www.FeederWatch.org. By collecting information from all these feeders in all these back yards, scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are able to track patterns in bird populations and movement from year to year, all across North America.

Here are a few key findings based on nearly a quarter-century of FeederWatch data:

Populations of Evening Grosbeaks, once one of our most common backyard birds, continue to decline.

Many species are expanding their ranges to the north, including Northern Cardinals and Anna's Hummingbirds.

The non-native Eurasian Collared-Dove (pictured) is invading North America at an unprecedented rate—it is now found in backyards from Florida to Alaska.

To learn more about joining Project FeederWatch and to sign up, visit www.FeederWatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 989-2473.

Pied-billed Grebe ♦ *Podilymbus podiceps*



Pied-billed Grebe photographed at Point Reyes National Seashore by Scott Hein.

The Pied-billed Grebe has the largest range of any grebe in the Americas. It is found year-round throughout much of the United States and Mexico. Grebes are observed to nest at places like Heather Farm and McNabney Marsh. Pied-billed Grebes are most commonly seen on freshwater

ponds, but also can be found on bays, estuaries, and lagoons.

In the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County* Steve Glover writes that "While in open water the species habitually acts like a feathered periscope, ready to dive at a moment's notice." They are divers, but may abruptly just sink down below the surface when alarmed. They do this by squeezing the air from their feathers and from an internal air sac. Watch this amazing action at www.naturefootage.com/video_clips/WW04_009. Chicks climb upon their parent's back for safety, and may stay aboard even as their ship makes its dive out of harm's way.

This small grebe has a short and thick bill, which develops a black ring in the summer. It has a brownish body; and a tuft of white can be seen under what little tail the bird has. The Pied-billed Grebe feeds on whatever prey it finds available, mostly aquatic invertebrates but also a variety of fish, insects, and frogs.

Ornithology Opportunities

Sandhill Crane Festival, Lodi, November 5-7. Long before Lodi existed, Sandhill cranes descended into the rich delta wetlands at the end of a long migratory journey, some from nesting grounds as far away as Siberia. As they greeted California's earliest explorers, these magnificent birds, darkened the skies over winter marshes. In awe-inspiring numbers, and with a prehistoric call, stately gait, and elegant choreography, the Sandhill Crane continues to attract and inspire visitors. Each year thousands of visitors make their way to Lodi area wildlife refuges and farmlands to experience first-hand one of nature's spectacles. For 13 years, Lodi's Sandhill Crane Festival has celebrated the return of the cranes. Workshops include bird carving, and bird photography with Paul Bannick; tours by boat for Bald Eagles on Pardee Reservoir and a Tule Wilderness trip with Delta Ecotours. www.cranefestival.com.

The **14th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium** is to be held at the Hilton in Stockton, November 18-21. Dynamic photographer and author Paul Bannick, who was our MDAS speaker last November, will give a program based on his research on "Owls and Woodpeckers of the West". Author of dozens of books and articles and award-winning photographer Moose Petersen will give a presentation on "California's Threatened and Endangered Birds". Workshops include Jon Dunn on

sparrows and Joe Morlan's shorebird identification workshop focusing on loons and grebes. There are many others, ranging from Central Valley Raptors to Beginning Birding and digiscoping to bird sketching. For more information or registration go to www.cvbs.org or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net.

East Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Count. December 14. **Central Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Count**. December 18. Compilers: Jimm Edgar & Maury Stern, Phone: (510) 658-2330.

The **2011 Audubon Assembly** will be held in San Diego in conjunction with the **San Diego Bird Festival** on March 3-6, 2011.

It's the first Assembly in Southern California and includes trips, events and workshops for the entire family. Bring the family!

Buy an **ASSEMBLY PASS** (\$125) and get free admission to all Assembly events and workshops including:

- Banquet with seabird expert Peter Harrison
- Saturday night private party to meet new Audubon President David Yarnold

Register before November 15th for an **ASSEMBLY PASS** and be entered in a drawing to receive a free San Diego Bird Festival birding trip to an Audubon California Important Bird Area of your choice! (value \$90)!

For online brochure: www.sandiegoaudubon.org/2011%20Brochure.pdf

"It has been said that the only cure for the affliction of birding is to arise at dawn and sit in a bog."

Arnold Small

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 Board of Directors

- President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
 Vice President: Mike Williams, 798-0303
wbuphca@sbcglobal.net
 Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929
 Board Secretary: Diana Granados
theothrowlf@aol.com
 Corresponding Secretary: Barbara Vaughn
 376-8732
 Sales Manager: Diane Malucelli, 674-0920
 Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581
greenheron@sbcglobal.net
 Field Trips: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979
 Membership: Beverley Walker, 952-9925
 Volunteer Coordinator: Moses de los Reyes, 755-3734
 Hospitality: Gerry Argenal, 768-6325
 Education: Cecil Williams, 796-0303
tzudiw@yahoo.com
 Webmaster: Betts Sanderson
betts@pacbell.net
 Chapter Development: Paul Schorr, 757-5107
pkschorr@comcast.net
 Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
 Breeding Bird Atlas Marketing: Ann McGregor, 968-1677
 Member-at-Large: Brian Murphy, 937-8835
 Jean Richmond, 837-2843
 Quail Editor: Ellis Myers, 284-4103
ellis.myers@earthlink.net
MDASQuail@earthlink.net
 215 Calle La Mesa
 Moraga, CA 94556-1603

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Your membership dues are tax deductible.

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: US mail E-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
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

Return Service Requested



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 66
Concord, CA



Condor #64 flying over Big Sur. Photo by Joel Summerhill

The State Parks of Big Sur

South of Carmel along California's scenic Highway One are several State Parks, each worthy of note for their individual distinction. All of them should be added to a birder's fund of experiences. From north to south there is Garrapata State Park, Andrew Molera State Park, Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, and Limekiln State Park. Also, of a different character, is Point Sur State Historic Park, which preserves the Point Sur Light Station. It is open to the public only for guided tours.

Garrapata is perhaps the least known of these beautiful sites, for as you drive the highway you will see only road-side pull-offs at trailheads, leading to the rocky shore or inland through oak woodlands and redwood groves to ridgetop views of the coast. At Soberanes Point, harbor seals and sea otters frequent the coastal waters and gray whales pass close by during their yearly migration. Offshore sea stacks offer resting spots for sea lions and Brown Pelicans.



McWay Falls drops the waters of McWay Creek 80 feet onto the beach or, at the highest tides, directly into the Pacific Ocean at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park.

Andrew Molera State Park is a popular site for people and for birds. The Ventana Wildlife Society's Discovery Center is located here and is open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year. Their Bird-banding Lab is here, too; one of their research projects concerns population studies on Spotted Owls of the Central

California Coast. Ventana Wildlife Society is a key participant in recovery programs for California Condors, Bald Eagles, and Peregrine and Prairie Falcons.

Andrew Molera State Park is one of the better places for observing Monarch Butterflies, which return to Big Sur in

Continued on Page 6 »