



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

[www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php)

Volume 57, Number 3

November 2011

## Burrowing Owls in California ♦ Jack Barclay

Jack Barclay has devoted twenty years to Burrowing Owl conservation. He comments, "Ecologically, Burrowing Owls are like weeds. They move in and out of disturbed areas depending on the natural habitat. They move into developmental projects and stay for a year or two as long as the vegetation is short, but when the vegetation begins to grow they will leave."

Burrowing Owls are playful, nine-inch-tall birds with bold, lemon-colored eyes. They are the only North American bird of prey that nests exclusively underground. They are called "Burrowing Owls" but the birds prefer to let other animals, such as ground squirrels, do the digging. They often decorate their burrow entrances with dung, animal parts, bottle caps, aluminum foil and other trash. This behavior may benefit the birds by attracting insects or signaling that the burrow is occupied. Burrowing Owls are active during the day, and during breeding season a sun-bleached male stands guard at the burrow entrance. He brings food to the female as she cares for six to eight chicks in the burrow.

Jack Barclay first studied these birds in the close-cropped fields near airport runways that offer good Burrowing Owl



Burrowing Owls. Photo by Scott Hein

habitat. Mr. Barclay is a senior wildlife biologist who specializes in the biology and conservation of Burrowing Owls. As cofounder of Albion Environmental, he devotes his time to inventory and impact assessment of special-status wildlife species as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act and the Endangered Species Act. In addition, his work involves mitigation planning and environmental compliance management for special status projects such as pipelines and airports.

Since 1989, Mr. Barclay has managed the San Jose International Airport's bird monitoring program that includes Burrowing Owl management. He provided a Burrowing Owl management plan for the airport that integrates long-term maintenance of the owl population with airport maintenance and development. He has also developed citywide Burrowing Owl mitigation plans for the cities of Morgan Hill

and San Jose and has created plans for an artificial burrow that is used in many locations. In 2003, he organized and chaired the first California Burrowing Owl Symposium.

Prior to coming to California, Mr. Barclay spent eleven years at the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology as coordinator of the Peregrine Falcon reintroduction program for the eastern United States. He has published many articles and contributed chapters to books on raptor biology, conservation, and management.

### BIRDING INFORMATION

Last spring, Jimm Edgar, Kent Fickett and Bill Chilson flew to Maui to attempt a new record for most species seen in one day of birding on the island. Did they meet their goal? Come and find out as they share their "Big Day in Hawaii" experience. It was quite an adventure.

[Oh, by the way, of course they did!]

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, November 3**, 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,\* raffle

8:05 PM Speaker: **Jack Barclay**

\* Please remember to bring a cup.

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

## President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

I recently bought a small book a friend had recommended called *A California Bestiary*. I have to admit that I had to look up the meaning of the word "bestiary." It means "a collection of descriptions of real or imaginary animals." The book is written by Rebecca Solnit whom many of you probably know from some of her other works. One of our members, Maury Stern, was quite familiar with her work, particularly her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. *A California Bestiary* has 14 chapters each taking a few pages to talk about a particular real animal. Everything from Tule Elk to Monarch Butterflies to Acorn Woodpeckers. The friend who had told me about the book thought I would find interesting the chapter on Acorn Woodpeckers. It says this: "These small black-backed woodpeckers with their red yarmulkes are extraordinary for what they do with acorns: gathering them, one at a time and placing them in holes they have drilled in tree bark, telephone poles, fence poles and most recently, amid much ruckus, *the sides of buildings in an affluent retirement community in the East Bay*." (Emphasis added.) This is reference to the infamous dealings our chapter had with Rossmoor re: their permit to kill 50 Acorn Woodpeckers that were drilling the holes in buildings. So we made it into a book. It is a great little book.

Also of note is the opening in October of the movie "The Big Year." You may have



Acorn Woodpecker

read some of the news surrounding the movie. It is taken from the book of the same name written by Mark Obmascik that chronicled the lives of three men who in 1998 set out to see how many birds each could see in the year and who could see the most birds. Audubon magazine in the September-October issue did an interview with the actors who play the three. Steve Martin is the lead actor. National Audubon is suggesting it might be a way to attract new members to local chapters. The movie is what the studio calls a "buddy comedy." It does take some liberty with the original story, but the original story, if stuck to,

## Welcome New Members

Dayna Beaubien	Pleasant Hill
Edith Black	Orinda
Richard Bogaert	Martinez
Katie Jahns	Pleasant Hill
Christy and Norm Lundberg	Martinez
Mary Elizabeth Sanyal	Walnut Creek

*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 8.**

would not have sold many tickets probably. You can watch a trailer on the movie at [www.thebigyearmovie.com](http://www.thebigyearmovie.com), or for theaters and showtimes, see [www.imdb.com/showtimes](http://www.imdb.com/showtimes). The Audubon logo appears a number of times in the movie. It will be interesting to see what response people have to "The Big Year."

I hope to see you at a meeting this fall or on one of our great field trips.

## New Rules for Wildlife Watchers

Californians who enjoy visiting the state's wildlife areas and ecological reserves are reminded that day-use and annual passes are no longer sold at on-site checkpoints. As of Monday, October 3, visitors to these areas must make an advance purchase of a \$4.32 daily lands pass or a \$22.68 annual lands pass, either online at [www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing) or at one of the California Department of Fish and Game's 1,500 license agents or license sales offices. (Please note that daily passes purchased online cannot be printed immediately and require mail delivery. If those items are needed immediately, they should be purchased directly from a license agent or at a DFG counter.)

The areas that require day-use or annual passes for non-hunting visitors



Gray Lodge at dusk

include Gray Lodge, Grizzly Island, Los Banos, San Jacinto and Imperial Wildlife Areas, and Elkhorn Slough and Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserves. The only exception is the Elkhorn Slough Ecologi-

cal Reserve, which will continue to sell daily and annual passes at its Visitors Center.

Visitors who have a valid California hunting or fishing license may obtain an entry permit by presenting their license at the area, and are not required to purchase a pre-paid daily or annual pass. However, hunters are reminded that license sales at the checkpoints have also been discontinued, and all licenses and stamps must be purchased ahead of time (also online or from an agent or sales office).

California DFG, October 5, 2011

# Art Show a Grand Success

The Art Exhibit at the Lynn House Gallery in Antioch from September 10-24 presented the work of fourteen MDAS members and received a warm welcome from the community. Paintings and watercolors were shown by Gloria Cannon, Debra Kirshen, H. Dave Kwinter, Meg Sandri, Julia Starr, Maury Stern, and Joel Summerhill. Photographs were displayed by Hugh Harvey, Scott Hein, Jean Matuska, David Merrill, Wendy Murphy, Ellis Myers, and Paul Schorr.

The Best of Show award was given to Julia Starr for her painting "Hunters". First Place belonged to Scott Hein for a photo "Ocean Sunfish". Jean Matuska's "Burrowing Owl, Cesar Chavez Park" took Second Place, and Gloria Cannon's painting "Antioch Breakwater" took Third Prize. Honorable Mention ribbons were awarded to H. Dave Kwinter for his painting "Night Bird" and to Ellis Myers for his photo "Antelope Canyon II".

The show was held in cooperation with the The Arts and Cultural Foundation of Antioch, its Executive Director Diane Gibson-Gray, and was organized for MDAS by Joel Summerhill.

Upper left:  
Best in Show, Hunters, by Julia Starr;

Center left  
Scott Hein's Checker Lily, Mitchell Canyon.  
Scott won First Prize for his photo Ocean Sunfish

Lower left  
\*Jillian, 11 and Christian Cooper, 7, friends  
of Meg Sandri, enjoy the exhibit

Lower right  
Night Bird by H. Dave Kwinter (below),  
American Dipper by Meg Sandri, (above left)  
Coffee Pot by Deborah Kirshen, (above right)

\* Photos by Diane Gibson-Gray.



\*Gloria Cannon and Third Place entry  
Antioch Breakwater;



\*Jean Matuska and Second Place  
Burrowing Owl, Cesar Chavez Park;



**Q**

Audubon wrote: "Not many years have elapsed since it was supposed by some ... [that these birds] buried themselves in the mud at the approach of cold weather, for the purpose of there spending the winter in a state of torpidity."

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

ROSA

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## November

- 5 Saturday . . . . . Solano County Raptors
- 9 Wednesday . . . . . Antioch Dunes and Dow Wetlands
- 12 Saturday . . . . . Charleston Slough/South Bay
- 15 Tuesday . . . . . Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh
- 19 Saturday . . . . . Limantour

## December

- 3-4 Saturday/Sunday . . . . . Sacramento Refuges
- 8 Thursday . . . . . Niles Area
- 17 Saturday . . . . . Christmas Count/Central County
- 20 Tuesday . . . . . Christmas Count/East County

## January

- 8 Sunday . . . . . Christmas Count/Rarity Chase
- 14 Saturday . . . . . Putah Creek
- 20 Friday . . . . . Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh
- 28 Saturday . . . . . Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger

### ② Saturday, November 5

#### Solano County Raptors and More

Leader: Gary Fregien, 916-708-0636.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:15 AM. Meet 8 AM at Suisun City McDonald's, Hwy 12 and Sunset Avenue. Take I-680 north, cross bridge to Benicia (toll) and merge to I-80 east at Cordelia. Then take Hwy. 12 east toward Rio Vista for approximately 4 miles to Sunset Avenue, and make a left turn at the signal light into the shopping center. We will bird east on Hwy. 12 and Creed Road to the vicinity of Hwy 113 and Robinson Road, possibly including Jepson Prairie. We will make several stops, looking for migrating waterfowl, passerines and winter raptors, especially along Flannery and McCormack Roads in search of the elusive Mountain Plover. We may then travel to Bird's Landing, where we should see Tricolored Blackbirds among other passerines, and possibly to Montezuma Slough for waterfowl. Plan for 3-4 hours birding, plus driving time. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for seasonal conditions. Bring hand-held radios, food and water. Car pooling is strongly advised.

### ② Wednesday, November 9

#### Antioch Dunes NWR and Dow Wetlands

Leaders: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979 and Kent Fickett, 254-5156.

Carpool leaves at 8:30 AM from Diablo Creek Golf Course Clubhouse, Port Chicago Highway just north of Hwy. 4. This is where we have held our Christmas Bird Count dinner for several years. Butterfly season is past, but this is a rare opportunity to bird the Antioch Dunes with a private tour, including both the Stamm and the Sardis Units. The Sardis Unit is not normally open to the public and is where the Lang's Metalmark Butterfly has been found the last several years. After lunch, we will visit the Dow Wetlands. Carpooling is important due to limited parking at these facilities. Bring lunch, drinks, appropriate walking shoes and clothing.

### ② Saturday, November 12

#### Charleston Slough/South Bay

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 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, exit Mission Boulevard west. Continue through two traffic lights and take I-880 ramp south. Exit to SR 237, 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, Alviso and Redwood Shores. Shorebirds and waterfowl should be plentiful. Bring lunch and a beverage.



Duck pond, Palo Alto Baylands.

### ② Tuesday, November 15

#### Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

Leader: Steve Taylor, s-Taylor@pacbell.net.

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 Mountain 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.

### ② Saturday, November 19

#### 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 (toll). 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. Bring lunch and a beverage.

# Trip Reports

**Hayward Shoreline, September 14.** A beautiful morning in Hayward was enjoyed by eight birders. One of them, Bob Richmond, is the son of our own Jean Richmond and co-author of the soon-too-be-published Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas. A leisurely walk from Winton Avenue to the bay and Frank's Dump produced over 40 species, including an Orange-crowned Warbler, 2 Common Yellowthroats, 2 Wandering Tattlers and a Snowy Plover. After lunch we walked from the north entrance to the shoreline and found some additional species near the sewage treatment plant. Altogether, we checked 47 species on our lists.

*Hugh Harvey*

**Healdsburg, September 17.** Eight chapter members enjoyed a beautiful evening in Healdsburg. Vaux's Swifts circled the sky above Rio Lindo Academy from the time we arrived about 6:30 PM. They started entering the chimney at 7:20 and continued for about 17 minutes. Based on the Academy's handout information of 360 birds per minute, but taking into account at least one lull, that would be 5000-6000 birds. When they stopped abruptly, the crowd of 150 spectators gave a good round of applause. Also seen were a Turkey Vulture and a Black Phoebe.

*Hugh Harvey*

## Outer Point Reyes,

**October 1.** Although the annual trip to Outer Point Reyes to look for fall migrants took place a little later than some years in the past, we appeared to have been as successful as most in finding our share of notable birds. After picking up coffee at the Bovine Bakery in Point Reyes Station (some of us) and joining other trip participants at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, we headed for Drakes Beach. Here we found a bright male Yellow Warbler in the willows, but the Drake Memorial was uncharacteristically quiet. The beach yielded a good assortment of gulls and then it was on to the Mendoza Ranch for the resident Great Horned Owl. Nunes Ranch had little to offer other than Eurasian Collared Dove and omnipresent Ravens. Hoping for more action elsewhere, we next headed to the Lighthouse where we had heard reports that Blackpoll and Tennessee Warblers had been seen. Highlight of the day, the Blackpoll Warbler was found with good views all round, but for us the Tennessee was a no-show. Excellent views were had of a pair of resting Peregrine Falcons.

After lunch at Chimney Rock we



headed out the road to the Lifeboat Station past the park residence. On the bay we recorded Pigeon Guillemot as well as several Common and Pacific Loons. Returning to the RCA Station, where extensive tree trimming was in evidence, we noted Western Bluebird. All told on tallying our list we encountered 68 species (seen and/or heard). A few of us on the way home stopped at Nicasio Reservoir to look for Pectoral Sandpipers that had been reported, and indeed we found them. *David Hutton*

## Rodeo Lagoon/Hawk Hill, October

**8.** The birding was fairly quiet for most of Mt. Diablo Audubon's return to Rodeo Lagoon after a year's hiatus. There were just a few moments of excitement with a small flock of warblers including Yellow and Wilson's, then a large tame flock of Pygmy Nuthatches close by in a cedar tree which also had a Townsend's Warbler, all well seen by everybody. At Hawk Hill we saw the expected, including both Sharpshinned and Cooper's Hawks, and some of us were lucky enough to watch a Broad-winged Hawk making the crossing before the fog swirled in. Numbers: 10 birders, 35 species.

*Fred Saifer*

## Monterey Bay Pelagic Weekend, October

**1-2.** A crisp fall morning greeted twelve MDAS birders and fourteen members of Yolo Audubon on this two-day trip. Sacramento Audubon's group was also aboard the Sea Wolf II.

Hundreds of California Sea Lions were hauled out on the Coast Guard jetty, while California Sea Otters, including a female with her pup, fed close by. Just outside the harbor we encountered a number of Risso's Dolphins. We were fortunate to see all three species of jaegers—Pomarine, Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaeger. A beautiful Sabine's Gull graced the stern and a curious Black-footed Albatross joined in. Dall's Porpoises playfully rode the bow. The shearwaters were plentiful, with Sooty, Pink-footed and several Buller's Shearwaters. We even had a close view of a Flesh-footed Shearwater. Alcid sightings included Rhinoceros Auklets, Cassin's Auklets and a pair of Xantus's Murrelets. The parade of pelagics continued into the afternoon as a South Polar Skua and a Northern Fulmar came by. We continued to see marine life including the truly fascinating *Mola mola*, or Sunfish. Green Sea Turtle and Swordfish sightings were nice treats. We passed over a school of thousands of Black Sea Nettles, a common species of jellyfish.

Day two began with a cold, foggy morning. On the rocky shoreline we found Black-bellied Plover, Black Turnstone, and several Surfbirds. A pair of Whimbrels strolled along the beach while off-shore both Brant's and Pelagic Cormorants flew by. Several Black Oystercatchers called as they landed nearby. A contingent of over thirty Heermann's Gulls held court at Crespi Pond, and nearby we added Black-

*Continued on Page 6 »*

## Come birding with us.

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit [www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://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 ❶: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ❷: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ❸: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool location: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **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.

Our Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is a conservation organization. As such, we encourage members to consider meeting at the carpool point to pick up or ride with others. It is important that given the cost of gasoline, those who ride with others offer to pay some of this cost. Don't forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees on some of our longer trips.



## Anyone for T?

We now have T-shirts featuring Mount Diablo Audubon, incorporating a California Quail photo. The shirts are short-sleeved Hanes, 100% cotton. There is a white T-shirt for \$16 and a beige T-shirt for \$20, tax included. The sizes are small, medium, large and x-large. (If you need 2x-large, it will cost \$2 extra. We have to ask for payment when you order the shirts. You can order them at our November 3 meeting or you can send your order to me with a check made out to MDAS. Send your name, phone number, T-shirt choice and size to Diane Malucelli, 5102 Coral Court, Concord, CA 94521.

## Trip Reports

» *Continued from Page 5*  
crowned Night-Heron, Cackling Goose and a lone White-fronted Goose.

At Moonglow Dairy a large flock of Tricolored Blackbirds fed amongst the cows. On Elkhorn Slough we spotted a Clark's Grebe among the Western Grebes. Shorebirds included Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Spotted, Western, and Least Sandpipers. On the far side of the slough hundreds of Marbled Godwits and Willets circled about. Six American White Pelicans looked brilliant against the bright blue sky.

At Jetty Road over fifty California Sea Otters cracked crabs while they floated peacefully on their backs. More than 70 Elegant Terns was hanging out on the jetty, a single Common Tern among them. A real treat was a lone Black Tern coursing over the inlet.

We tallied 108 bird species for the weekend, and 7 species of mammals.

*Terry Colborn*

## Keep It Clean!

Your birding binoculars are an investment that you surely want to last for a considerable length of time—at least until you can afford a new Leica Ultravid or Swarovski EL Swarovision. So the most important thing you can do to keep the optics good as new is to know how to clean them correctly, and then, of course, to do it.

First, remove any loose dust with a fine brush. Or use an air duster such as is used for cameras; use short puffs only. Hold the binoculars upside down so the dust falls away. Once the lenses are free of debris, wipe them clean with a lens cloth or lens tissue, or by using a lens pen. Lens cloths are made with a microfiber material and are specially designed to be gentle on the coatings of the binoculars. Microfiber has an affinity for oils, and so is helpful in removing fingerprints. Lens pens combine the brush and the actual cleaning element in one easy-to-use product. Lens tissues work well, but are not reusable, and you must use a separate cleaning solution. If you use lens cleaning fluid, never apply it directly onto the glass—always apply to the cloth. Do not use general household glass cleaning products. Such products could destroy the lens coatings of your binoculars.

Only if the lenses are really dirty, and if you have fully waterproof binoculars, you can clean them with water, then dry them with a lens cloth to prevent spotting.

There are a few common mistakes that must be guarded against. Never use your breath to moisten the lenses before cleaning them. It may leave spots on your lenses or worse, it could degrade the special coatings on the glass. Never use any cloth, such as your shirt or towel, to wipe binocular lenses. No matter how clean it looks, an ordinary fabric has microscopic dust and dirt particles on it that can leave tiny scratches on the lenses that over time can give them a foggy appearance. Do not apply sunscreen or insect spray near binoculars.

Only clean your binoculars when the visual quality is impaired—less frequent cleaning means less risk of accidentally scratching the lenses. The coatings on your lenses are delicate—use the lens and eyepiece caps to protect the optics when not in use.

And another thing! Never lend your binoculars to a non-birder—unless you are willing to risk having greasy fingerprints on your objective lenses!

## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



### Everybody Loves Chickadees

Chickadees may be everyone's favorite backyard bird. Their distinctive black cap and wide white stripe around the neck makes them one of the easiest birds to identify. Here in the West we are visited almost always by the chestnut backed version, whose unusual call sounds like their name, 'chick-a-dee'.



Chickadees are here year round and adapt easily to most forms of backyard feeding. In addition to foraging for foliage, spiders, and insects, they readily come to feeders with nuts, seeds, suet, or fruit. They often will choose a large piece and fly away to eat it, soon to return for more. Their favorite food is black oil sunflower seed, but they go for most types of suet, Bark Butter, peanuts, and various seed blends.

Because they are small, yet very tough and precocious, they will compete with most other birds at your feeders and will let you know when their feeder is empty. They are great at caching food, making them very adaptable to cold winters. They gain as much as 10% of their bodyweight each day, and lose it all overnight. Chickadees will often live 10 years or more and mate for life.

This time of year, our chickadees come around in groups. Some of our customers have reported up to 20 of them at their feeders at once, usually in the early morning after sun-up or just before dark. When feeding, they are the only birds that will hang around while I approach them as close as two feet. Some customers have even reported chickadees landing on their fingers.

We hope you enjoy these great little birds as much as we do.



Mike and Anne Eliot  
**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303  
Visit us at [www.wbupleasanthill.com](http://www.wbupleasanthill.com)

# Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to [mbstern2@yahoo.com](mailto:mbstern2@yahoo.com) or (925) 284-5980 or send to [EBB Sightings@yahoogroups.com](mailto:EBB Sightings@yahoogroups.com).

Most of the local migrant summer breeders are going or gone. Other migrants are moving through and the winter residents have started to arrive.

Three **Wood Ducks** were seen by P&NS for the first time at Contra Loma RP on 9/15.

A **Cattle Egret** was on Delta Road near Holland tract on 9/25. AM.

35 **Swainson's Hawks** were near Byron Highway on 9/25. AM.

Separate juvenile **Golden Eagles** were seen in Alamo along 680 on 9/26, SH, and at Morgan Territory RP on 9/29. MS.

A **Prairie Falcon** was well seen at Morgan Territory on 9/29. MS.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** were at the Richmond Landfill Loop near the Richmond Parkway on 10/2 to 10/5. TB, HW, MP, KL, ES.

Over 600 **Long-billed Curlews** were seen in a field on Delta Road near Holland Tract by AM on 9/25.

There were 3 **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Landfill Loop on 10/2 and 10/3. HW, TB, MP, JH.

A **Pigeon Guillemot** was at the shoreline near Vincent Park and the Richmond Marina from 9/8 to 9/10. DW, LL, RB.

**Willow Flycatcher** was seen by P&NS at Contra Loma RP on 9/16 and at Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline in Point Richmond by KF and BL on 9/26 and 9/28.

A late **Western Wood-Pewee** was at Morgan Territory RP on 9/29. MS.

**Say's Phoebes** were seen in MW's Concord yard 9/13 and at Briones Crest trail by LL on 9/15.

**Brown Creeper** was a new yard bird for DH in Walnut Creek on 9/5.

P&NS saw the first of the season **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Contra Loma RP on 9/23.

An unusual **Townsend's Solitaire** came to Morgan Territory RP on 9/29. MS.

A very unusual **Sage Thrasher** was at Landfill Loop in Richmond on 10/10. JH.

Returning **Yellow-Rumped Warbler** was first seen by KF at Miller-Knox on 9/29.

An accidental migrant **Blackpoll Warbler** was at Miller-Knox on 9/28. BL.

The **Northern Waterthrush** at Contra Loma RP was last seen 9/5 by JL.

A **McGillivray's Warbler** visited JR's Alamo yard on 9/21.

Two **Western Tanagers** were at EM's Moraga yard at least until 9/25. DW saw one at Mitchell Canyon on 9/29.

**Clay-colored Sparrows** were at Miller-Knox RS on 9/25. JH, EL and 9/29. KF. (There was a flurry of reports during that time throughout the Bay Area of Clay-colored Sparrow being here.)

**Sage Sparrows** were seen by DW on Red Road near Mitchell Canyon on 9/26.

First of the season **Fox Sparrow** was seen at his Richmond home near Wildcat Canyon park by AK on 10/7.

**Lincoln's Sparrows** were near the Amtrak Station in Martinez 9/28. AK; and Tilden Regional Park 9/30. ES, PR.

The first returning **White-crowned Sparrows** were seen 9/22 by MW at her Concord home and P&NS in their Antioch yard. Many more followed in the next week. KF, L-MH, PR.

First **Golden-crowned Sparrow** reports came from MW in Concod and KF in Point Richmond. Many more were seen soon thereafter. L-MH, IW, PR, LLa, BYW.

**Black-headed Grosbeaks** stayed in small numbers. DH in Walnut Creek on 9/5, DW 9/13 along Inspiration Point trail, and 10/5 at the Richmond Landfill Loop. KL, ES.

**Tri-colored Blackbirds** were with a large blackbird flock on Delta Road in East County 9/25. AM.

P&NS had their last **Hooded Oriole** 9/7 in their Antioch yard.

3 **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were in Mitchell Canyon 9/26. DW.

TB Tony Brake, RB Richard Broadwell, KF Kathy Francone, L-MH Liede-Marie Haitsma, JH Jeff Hoppes, SH Steve Hutchcraft, DH David Hutton, AK Alan Krakauer, LLa Lynn Lakso, BL Bob Lewis, JL Jim Lomax, LL Laura Look, KL Kay Loughman, AM Amy McDonald, EM Ellis My-

ers, JR Jean Richmond, PR Phila Rogers, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, MS Maury Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, BYW Betty Young Weber, IW Idell Weydemeyer, DW Denise Wight, HW Harv Wilson, MW Marilyn Wojcik.



## Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas



Bob Richmond, Helen Green, and David C. Rice  
Illustrations by Hans Peeters

The Alameda County Breeding Bird Atlas is almost ready for publication. It includes species accounts for all 173 species that nest in the county, and 30 illustrations by Hans Peeters. Many Mount Diablo Audubon members participated in gathering the data for this project. This book, an able companion to our own *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County*, is coordinated by Ohlone Audubon Society and Golden Gate Audubon Society.

You can help! Become an atlas sponsor! For a cost of only \$35, you can add your name as a supporter of this publication. Mount Diablo Audubon has pledged donations for California Quail, Golden Eagle, and Western Bluebird. Hurry, many of the species names have been reserved already! The deadline for this great opportunity is November 1, 2011.

Sponsor a bird by e-mailing your name and species request to [rusty@sonic.net](mailto:rusty@sonic.net). Then send your \$35 to Stephanie Strait, Office Manager, Golden Gate Audubon, 2530 San Pablo Ave., Suite G., Berkeley, CA 94702.

You can pre-order a copy of the atlas by contacting Pat Gordon, [pagepeg@aol.com](mailto:pagepeg@aol.com), or call 510-538-3550.

*The Quail*, September 1992

By Al McNabney

Shell Marsh is Safe!!!!

After over eight years of attention, argument, letter writing, a major oil spill, and a lot of sweat and tears (no blood, though), Shell Marsh has been **SAVED**. The Shell Oil Spill Litigation Settlement Trustee Committee (SOSLSTC) has purchased the entire property, including the uplands, from the developer. The title is in the hands of the East Bay Park Service. A major commitment is being made to restoring and enhancing the wetland. SOSLSTC established a committee (MDAS is represented) to work out details for an extensive study of the hydrology, land elevations, and tidal action, so the marsh can be properly managed. Acquisition of this wetland, said by many to be **THE** most important in Contra Costa County, constitutes a major environmental win. When the studies and restoration have been completed, Shell Marsh will be the jewel of all California wetlands.

*The Quail*, September 1998

The Mountain View Sanitary District and East Bay Regional Park District announced that Shell Marsh will be renamed McNabney Marsh in honor of Al McNabney, long-time environmental leader in Contra Costa. Al served as Vice President and Conservation Chair of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for over 20 years until his death on May 1. The ceremony to rename the marsh will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 19.

Al's friends and colleagues supported naming the marsh for him as a way to recognize his extraordinary dedication to the environment. He loved the marsh and worked hard to restore and protect it. MDAS President Carol Frischmann said, "Al would be so proud to be remembered this way. To him, saving Shell Marsh was one of his most important contributions."

Both the Sanitary District's Board and the Park Board strongly endorsed the name of McNabney Marsh as a memorial to Al. Michael Rugg of the California Fish and Game and member of the marsh management committee will present the resolution to Helen McNabney.

levels are lowered to expose prime nesting habitat for shore birds and ducks. In the summer, mixing freshwater with incoming saltwater flows creates brackish conditions intended to inhibit cattail growth and increase vegetation diversity. During the fall higher water levels create habitat for many migratory species.

Each year, Mount Diablo Audubon leads field trips to Moorhen Marsh and McNabney Marsh in February and in November. This year's date is November 15. On last year's November trip, a pair of Peregrine Falcons flying over McNabney Marsh was the highlight. Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal and American Wigeon were also counted among the 46 species



Black-necked Stilts in flight over McNabney Marsh. Ethan Winning photo.

recorded on that field trip. At Moorhen Marsh Green Heron is the target bird, and it is usually seen.

The Sanitary District welcomes birders weekdays and on the first Saturday of each month from 8 AM until 5 PM. Along the entrance road, a bird observation platform overlooks the western edge of McNabney Marsh.



## Sora ♦ *Porzana carolina*

Soras are small, secretive birds of freshwater marshes throughout the United States. In winter they may also be found in saltwater marshes. The Sora is the most common and widely distributed rail in North America, but hearing its distinctive descending whinny call is much more likely than seeing the bird. Soras will generally remain within the dense vegetation but will venture out at dawn or dusk to feed along the edges of the marsh. They forage for seeds, but they will also eat snails and aquatic invertebrates.

Audubon suggests an explanation of why the tale of hibernation may have come about: "One day, you may see or hear the Soras in their favourite marshes, you may be aware of their presence in the dusk of evening; but when you return to the place early next morning, they are all gone. Yesterday the weather was mild, to-day it is cold and raw; and no doubt the Soras were aware that a change was at hand and secured



Photographed at Lafayette Reservoir.

themselves from its influence by a prompt movement under night. It is probable that these sudden removals gave rise to the idea of their diving into the mud."

Soras migrate south to Mexico and northern parts of South America, but are resident in coastal California throughout the year. It is somewhat surprising, then, that there are no nesting records in Contra Costa County. They do nest at Coyote Hills Regional Park and at Hayward Marsh in Alameda County.



# Ornithology Opportunities

15th annual **Sandhill Crane Festival**, November 4-6. Lodi. Sandhill Cranes descend into the rich delta wetlands at the end of a long migratory journey, some from nesting grounds as far away as Siberia. An intriguing list of field trips includes a boat tour on Pardee Lake for Golden and Bald Eagles, a Delta birding cruise, and kayaking on the Mokelumne River. Tour spaces are limited and reservations by October 25th are strongly encouraged. For information [www.cranefestival.com](http://www.cranefestival.com).

The Central Valley Bird Club will host the Fifteenth Annual **Central Valley Birding Symposium** November 17-20 in Stockton. Thursday night Keynote speakers are: Ed Harper and John Sterling presenting a program on "Appreciating the Birds of the Central Valley". Come sit back and watch as Ed and John take us on a photographic journey to catch a glimpse of the avian world of the Central Valley. Friday night's keynote program is presented by Ron LeValley on "The Writings of William Leon Dawson—a California Bird Pioneer". Dawson's writings are humorous, sad, spiritual, satirical, and inspirational. Ron's presentation and photography captures much of this feeling. Saturday night's keynote program is by Jeff Gordon on "10 Birds that Changed Birding".

Other events include workshops on swallow identification by Joe Morlan and warbler identification by Jon Dunn. Field trips always turn up exciting birds. Add in the always entertaining and educational

Bird ID Panel, the wonderful display of art and gifts for yourself or others at the Birder's Market and the camaraderie of hundreds of like-minded folks, and you know you'll have a good time! There's something for everyone interested in birds. Come and join us to bird, learn, and just have fun! The schedule, brochure, and registration form are on the website at <http://cvbs.org>.

The 16th Annual Celebration of the **Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival** will be held January 13-16. The Saturday evening keynote speaker will be Jon Dunn, who is considered one of the primary experts on field identification in North America. Every Martin Luther King weekend over 450 birders visit Morro Bay, California, a Globally Important Bird Area, to see, photograph, and learn more about birds. Morro Bay is located halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco on the Pacific Flyway. The area offers pristine beaches, beautiful state parks, an excellent natural history museum, panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean and, best of all, thousands of birds. Over 200 species are usually sighted during the Festival weekend. <http://morrobaybirdfestival.org/index.htm>.

**13th Annual Snow Goose Festival.** January 26-29, Chico. [www.snowgoosefestival.org](http://www.snowgoosefestival.org).

**San Diego Bird Festival**, March 1-4. Keynote Speaker Kenn Kaufman. In 2008, Kenn Kaufman was presented with the highest honor of the American Birding Association, the Roger Tory Peterson Award "for a lifetime of achievements in promoting the cause of birding"

**"The natural history of the Rail, or, as it is called in Virginia, the Sora, and in South Carolina, the Coot, is, to the most of our sportsmen, involved in profound and inexplicable mystery"**

Alexander Wilson  
American Ornithology, 1826

**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.



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## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make your check payable to:

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

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American White Pelicans over McNabney Marsh  
*Ethan Winning photo.*

## Waterbird Regional Preserve

Waterbird Preserve is a small unit of the East Bay Regional Park District. It is adjacent to Interstate 680 in Martinez and consists of McNabney Marsh and the uplands to the east. The wetlands have a unique history. In 1974 the Mountain View Sanitary District created Moorhen Marsh and became the first wastewater treatment agency on the West Coast to utilize constructed wetlands to turn treated wastewater into critical habitat for fish and wildlife. Moorhen Marsh—will they rename it Gallinule Marsh?—occupies 21 acres west of the freeway. Following its refinery oil spill into Carquinez Strait in 1988, Shell Oil was ordered to "restore, rehabilitate, and acquire the equivalent of the resources damaged in the spill." This mitigation property was then acquired by the Sanitary District and the Park District to constitute Waterbird Preserve. The entire wetland complex is also jointly managed by California Department of Fish and Game and by the County Mosquito Control District.

McNabney Marsh is a breeding area for Canada Geese, Mallard, Ruddy Duck, Cin-

namon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, American Coot, Common Gallinule, Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, Marsh Wren and even American Bittern. It is the northernmost regular breeding ground on the West Coast for American Avocet and Black-necked Stilt. During fall migration, the number and diversity of waterfowl increase, with American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye coming in at this time. Just about any time of year you may see American White Pelicans on the water or overhead. Watch the edge of the marsh for migrating shorebirds. Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater Yellowlegs, Least and Western sandpipers, and Dunlin are common. Recently, Great-tailed Grackles have arrived to breed in the marsh alongside Red-winged Blackbirds. Look for Common Yellowthroat, too.

In the open grassland of the Meadowlark Ridge Loop, you may find American Kestrel, Western Kingbird, Loggerhead



Black-necked Stilt, McNabney Marsh  
*Ethan Winning photo.*

Shrike, and Western Meadowlark. Northern Harriers and perhaps Merlin, Peregrine Falcon or Golden Eagle may be spotted.

The amount of tidal marsh vegetation varies greatly from year to year, which in turn affects the number and types of bird species. Mountain View Sanitary District regulates water regimes to match the needs of wildlife. During the spring, water

*Continued on Page 8*