



# 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)

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## Impressions of the Galapagos ♦ Jack Barclay



*Blue-footed Booby, displaying; Blue-footed Booby with chick; Marine Iguana. Jack Barclay photos..*

Jack Barclay will give a slideshow about the Galapagos Islands, based on a trip he made there in January 2009. His presentation is organized as a daily travelogue describing how you get around, where you go, and what you see, to convey what it is like to visit this amazing place. His program includes some basic information about island formation and weather as they affect biological life on the islands.

While showing photos of many of the endemic species he discusses the overwhelming impressions one gets when visit-

ing the islands: the extraordinary tameness of the wildlife and the less conspicuous but prevalent effects of how competition for resources has led to specialization and speciation. For example, the world's only nocturnal gull lives in the Galapagos. Another less comforting impression is related to the all-too-pervasive effects of the introduction of exotic organisms—including humans—on the ecology of the Galapagos.

He includes a discussion about adaptive radiation in Darwin's finches, which were the focus of his ornithological quest while on the islands. We are thrilled to welcome Jack Barclay back to the Mount Diablo Audubon Society for a second talk, following his informative and entertaining presentation on Burrowing Owls last November. After seeing Mr. Barclay's talk at the Ohlone Audubon Society, Hans Peeters said: "This talk was the best presentation about the Galapagos I have ever attended."

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 and research, management and conservation of Burrowing Owls. Mr. Barclay managed the San Jose International Airport's bird monitoring and Burrowing Owl management programs since 1989. He organized the California Burrowing Owl Symposium in 2003 and published the Proceedings of this two-day symposium in 2007. He has published papers about the reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons and Burrowing Owl management and population research. 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, maintenance and development projects.

### BIRDING INFORMATION

Carol Arnold, Executive Director of the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District will present information on the projects and programs of the Contra Costa RCD, and will discuss examples and ideas on how our watershed groups can work more closely with Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, November 1**, 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.*

Thursday, December 6: Bob Lewis  
Madagascar

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

## President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

On Tuesday, October 2, I received a call from friend and Audubon member Kent Fickett. He asked me if I wanted to go down to see the Cuckoo. I said probably not then asked if it was a Black-billed or Yellow-billed. He said no it is a Common Cuckoo. Well that changed everything. It turns out that on September 28 a birding group from the Santa Cruz Bird Club had an outing in Ramsey Park in Watsonville and they found this rare bird. Common is not the right word for sure. There has been only one sighting of the bird in the lower 48, in 1981: at Martha's Vineyard. Two other sightings were in Alaska. It is a bird that breeds in Siberia and winters in central and South Africa. Word got out quickly (although I did not hear about it) and birders came from all over the US to see this rare bird. It was eating a lot of caterpillars and seemed quite content to hang around. It was seen Friday through Tuesday and that is when Kent called me. Another Audubon member, Bill Chilson and Kent drove down early Wednesday, October 3. Alas, it was not seen that day and has not been seen since. The weather changed just a bit that day and probably caused the bird to head south. Sorry we missed seeing it, but you can't win them all. Several of our chapter members did get to see the bird. If you go online and search with the heading "Common Cuckoo Watsonville San Jose Mercury News" you can read the articles that were in the paper.

At our October general meeting a new member introduced herself when we had



Common Cuckoo at Watsonville.

Photo courtesy of Dinuk Magammana.

the introduction time. Jolynn Lacasse recently moved here from Los Angeles and had been a member there. She immediately volunteered to help with the hospitality crew. We are so lucky to have our volunteers. It is at the core of why our chapter is so healthy. We can always use more, so if you have some time let us know.

I wanted to remind folks that our newsletter, the *Quail*, is available online. If you receive it that way it saves us mailing it, less paper and online all the photos are in great color.

## Welcome New Members

Lisa Gorrell

Martinez

Bill Kondrat

Walnut Creek

Kathy Wolf

Orinda

## Project FeederWatch

When thousands of Americans begin tallying birds at their backyard feeders this month for Project FeederWatch, they will launch the 26th season for this popular citizen-science program. The information reported online from across the continent helps scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology track changes in the numbers of birds and the distribution of species. Anyone with an interest in birds and nature is invited to join the project and become a "citizen scientist." The new season of FeederWatch begins November 10.

Many mysteries and surprises have been revealed since the program began in 1987. One example: the Eurasian Collared-Dove has spread from Florida to Alaska in less than a decade and is quickly becoming one of the more familiar birds at feeders across the country.

This activity is useful, fun and satisfying. Consider taking part. To sign up, visit [www.FeederWatch.org](http://www.FeederWatch.org) or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 989-2473.

## Kestrel Project

The American Kestrel is North America's smallest and most colorful falcon. Most of us are accustomed to seeing kestrels hunting from power lines or fence posts, or "hover hunting" in the air. Unfortunately, researchers believe the kestrel's population status is changing from "common" to "of concern". Data from the Breeding Bird Survey since 1966 suggest that populations of breeding kestrels have declined 47% across North America. The time to study and conserve the American Kestrel is before it reaches threatened or endangered status, and now you can help.

The Peregrine Fund's new American Kestrel Partnership is a research and conservation initiative supported by Audubon chapters, families, students, scouts, birders, researchers, teachers, and anyone else interested in kestrels. Mount Diablo Audu-



American Kestrel

bon Society in partnership with Native Bird Connections will assist the Kestrel Partnership and contribute by erecting and monitoring nestboxes. Learn more at: <http://kestrel.peregrinefund.org>. Further information on local activities will be given in future issues of *The Quail*.

Q

This raptor is found year-round from Alaska and Canada throughout the United States and Mexico, and in much of South America. It is the provincial bird of Alberta. It is the only animal that regularly eats skunks. This bird can carry prey larger than itself.

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

ADEEGHLNOORRTW

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# Thank You to Our Donors

The Board of Directors of Mount Diablo Audubon Society wishes to thank all those who have contributed during Fiscal Year 2011-2012 (July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012). These donations permit the on-going programs dedicated to preservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife, and promote an awareness of our natural wonders among young people.

## California Towhee (To \$24)

F. Norah Bain, Althea Bates, Joseph Beck, Lewis Bielanowski, Floy and Jerry Blair, Gayle and Richard Buxton, Joe and Shirley DeLeon, Nancy Delu, Herman P. Escosa, Norval Fairman, Diane B. Kauffman, Mona Lange, Edith A. Mitchell, David J. Morris, Mary and Sandro Sandri, Dr. and Ms. Howard Sturtz, Linda M. and Milford J. Waldroup, Betty Ann Williams

## California Quail (\$25-\$99)

Phillip Araki, Lin and Dennis Ashlock, Robert Beach, Carole Beeton, Ruth Beeve, Dorothy Bell, Lesley Benn, Barbara Beno, Elizabeth Bettis, RFlores Bogaert, Joanne Bourland, Daniel Campos, Britta E. Cascio, Ethan and Ruth Chickering, Margaret Clark, Arthur Clarke III, Mona Clee, Martha and Roger Conant, Don and Susan Couch, William E. Davis, Jr., Louise Dibble, Connie Diernisse, Linda Dugan, Jimm Edgar, Shirley Ellis, Clayton Englar, William T. Espey, James Fincke, Nell Fraser, James A. Fuller, William Galvin, Valeria Glass, Thomas Goedewaagen, Janet M. Goodman, Kathy Groover, C. Richard Gruner, Carol Haglund, Marilyn Halberg, Alfred S. Harvey, Susan Harvey, Dora Henel, Ann and Donald Hughes, Jane W. Hunninghaus, Mark Janlois, Susan Dee and Edwin F. Katibah, Hilary Sacks Kennedy, Donna and Scott Kramer, Dave Kwinter, Mike Loper, Pamela Lorenz, Sally Lowery, Mrs Suzanne Lutz, Renette MacIntyre, Diane and Bob Malucelli, Laura and Michael McDowell, Rachel Meek, Nancy and Paul Meyerhofer, Dolores Morrison, Richard Morrison, Elizabeth H Nelson, Darryl Ott, Margaret and Christopher Panton, Mr. and Mrs. J. Douglas Philips, Emma and John Popek, Austin L & Marjorie Prindle, Sharon and Dennis Randall, Donald and Daisy Ray, Moreland and Jean Richmond, Marilyn Riegelhuth, Richard Rockwell, Fay and Edwin Schoenberger, Carolyn Scottt, Susan Shampanier, Frances L. Singer, Robert G. Slyker, Sydney Jo Spencer, Julia M. Starr, Donald and Beverly Steffen, Ann-Charlott Stenberg, F. and B. Strehlitz, Patricia Sullivan, Cervina Targum, Gary Thompson, Claire and William J. Toasperm, Z. Rose Towery, Paul Veilleux, Beverley Walker,

Roger Wilcox, Teri and Chris Wills, Christy Wilson, Nina and Leary Wong, Flavia Zaro

## California Thrasher (\$100-\$249)

Hanako and Paul R. Andrews, Gus and Gerry Argenal, Kristen Beckus-Baker, Jerry Britten, Karin Grillo, Don and Melinda Groom, Jean Halford, Carol and John Harkin, Claudia and Scott Hein, Elizabeth Krieg, Bruce and Judy Kronmiller, Richard Kurovsky, David Leslie, Ellis and Mimi Myers, Margaret L. O'Connell, Sandra S. Ritchie, Elizabeth Sanderson, Paul and Nancy Schorr, Maury and Susan Stern, Robert Tecco, Michael and Rita Tischler, Carter S. Wells

## California Gnatcatcher (\$250-\$999)

Gloria Cannon and Joel Summerhill, Galaxy Press, Denise Pare-Muirhead, Martin and Sandra Stuart, Anne Waters and Steve Buffi, Nancy Wenninger

## California Condor (\$1000+)

William D. and Linda L. Chilson, Hugh B. and Rosita O. Harvey, Wild Birds Unlimited



# A Note about Dues

This is a reminder to make certain that Mount Diablo membership renewal checks are mailed directly to our Membership Chair whose address appears in the *Quail* and on reminder postcards. Preferably the postcard should accompany payments so that there is no question of whose membership the payment covers. It is fine to enclose an extra donation when paying membership dues because the donation will be forwarded to our Treasurer along with the membership renewal.

During November and December many MDAS members will send annual donations in care of our Treasurer. These are assumed to be additional gifts and do not cover dues. The Treasurer does not have membership records against which to update the member records.

Of course, members can purchase a Lifetime Membership with Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter which also provides a *Quail* newsletter free for the rest of your life! One payment of \$500 or two annual payments of \$250 will do the trick.

Your membership expiration date is indicated on your Quail address label, by year and month. Or for confirmation of your dues status, you may call the Membership Chair at 925-952-9925.

*Bev Walker, Membership Chair*

# MDAS Annual Treasurer's Report - 2012

*By Steve Buffi, Treasurer*

Mount Diablo Audubon Society remains in an excellent position to serve our community. We had another successful year. The annual year-end fundraising drive continues to be strong and our total chapter membership is strong, too.

The financial health of MDAS, due to the generosity of our members, allows us to actively pursue our mission. During the year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and continued our community education outreach efforts for young people such as the "No Child Left Inside Program" and the Jean Richmond Scholarship. Your generosity supports our monthly presentation program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, the EBB Bird Sightings list, and much more. You have read about these important community efforts in this and prior issues of the *Quail*. Each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community.

The General Fund balance covers operations and reserves, the Conservation and Education balance is used towards these efforts, and the Breeding Bird Atlas reflects the books held for sale and the results of book sales.

Funds	July 2011 – June 2012			Fund Balance 7/1/2012
	Revenue	Expenses	Net	
General	\$25926.50	\$16,823.30	\$9102.20	\$103,066.08
Conservation & Education	\$95.41	\$523.00	-\$427.59	\$16,493.10
Breeding Bird Atlas	-\$315.89	\$108.90	-\$424.79	\$20,095.20
<b>Total All Funds</b>	<b>\$25,706.02</b>	<b>\$17,455.20</b>	<b>-\$8249.82</b>	<b>\$139,654.38</b>

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## November

- 10 Saturday . . . . . Southeast Solano Raptors and More
- 13 Tuesday . . . . . McNabney Marsh/Mountain View Sanitary
- 17 Saturday . . . . . Limantour

## December

- 1 Saturday . . . . . Charleston Slough/South Bay
- 8-9 Saturday-Sunday . . . . . Sacramento Refuges
- 13 Thursday . . . . . Niles Area
- 18 Tuesday . . . . . East County Christmas Count
- 22 Saturday . . . . . Central County Christmas Count

## January

- 11 Friday . . . . . Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh
- 12 Saturday . . . . . Putah Creek
- 26 Saturday . . . . . Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger

### ① Saturday, November 10 Southeast Solano Raptors and More

Leader: Gary Fregien, 916-708-0636.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:15 AM. Meet the leader at 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, where you will make a left turn at the signal light into the shopping center. The McDonald's is on the right. We will bird east on Hwy. 12 and Creed Rd. 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. From there, given time, we may travel to the Bird's Landing area, where we should see Tricolored Blackbirds among other passerines and possibly to Montezuma Slough for waterfowl. Plan to spend 3-4 hours birding, plus driving time getting there and back. There will be minimal hiking, but dress for seasonal conditions. Bring along hand-held radios, food and water. Car pooling is strongly advised, due to limited access at stops and the distance traveled. Please call the leader if you plan to carpool from Sun Valley; he is driving from Sacramento to meet us in Suisun City.

### ② Tuesday, November 13 McNabney Marsh/Mountain View Sanitary

Leader: Steve Taylor, 828-8810.

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 .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.

### ② Saturday, November 17 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.



Bobcat at Point Reyes NPS Photo

## Come birding with us!

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders, but not dogs. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php). Phone area codes are 925 unless specified otherwise. 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 +, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

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

## Trip Reports



Vaux's Swift. Sketch by Meg Sandri.

**Vaux's Swifts at Rio Lindo Academy, September 26.** Four members of Mount Diablo Audubon Society joined more than 150 other observers at the school in Healdsburg for the evening fly-in of the Vaux's Swifts. By my calculation, they flew in for about 22 minutes, but there was a 3-4 minute hiatus while a falcon zoomed around, scattering the flock. Eventually the flock returned to mob the falcon, which finally left. As the swifts started coming back to enter the chimney, there was a very strange phenomenon spotted high in the sky: at least two groups of Swifts were flying in a cloud-like formation, not unlike the abstract patterns seen by large flocks of blackbirds and starlings. One of the formations had the shape of a doughnut. It was very cool to see this. Using the numbers on the information sheet supplied by the school, it works out to well over 6000 birds which entered the chimney during the 18 minutes or so when they were not bothered by the falcon. A great, great spectacle by any measure.

*Hugh B. Harvey*

**Hayward Regional Shoreline, September 26.** Only 3 people showed up to find a total of 61 species. The best bird was probably a Belted Kingfisher along the shoreline. A Merlin was early for one in fall. A Townsend's Warbler (unusual here) was seen in the trees. After the field trip, a late Ash-throated Flycatcher and a Hooded Warbler were seen. *Bob Richmond*

**Outer Point Reyes, September 29.** Heavy fog greeted participants for the MDAS annual Fall field trip to Outer Point Reyes. With several reports of a Connecticut Warbler having been sighted the day before, we first headed to Mendoza Ranch

to see if we could find it; indeed we did, a life bird for many, and all managed great views and photos. Also found here was a secretive Ovenbird, and a Greater Yellowlegs on the pond close by. At Nunes Ranch with fog still hanging around, little was stirring; we missed a Blackburnian Warbler observed earlier and settled for a migrating Pacific-slope Flycatcher. Next stop was the Lighthouse where the fog started to show signs of lifting. Here we encountered amazing views of a kettle of five Broad-winged Hawks; also seen were two Peregrine Falcons, a Chipping Sparrow, a Lincoln's Sparrow, and a Say's Phoebe, but no additional warbler migrants. Lunch was had in welcome sunlight at the parking area above the Fish Docks. Following reports of an Orchard Oriole in the New Willows seen from the elephant seal overlook, we too were able to observe it along with a number of other birders. The walk by the park ranger's residence revealed little of note; a Blackpoll Warbler, previously seen by others, we could not locate. A brief stop was made at Mendoza Ranch again to see the Connecticut Warbler and Ovenbird,



*Connecticut Warbler. Photo by Beth Branthaver.*

and to search for a previously observed Palm Warbler, which unfortunately was not found. Meanwhile a sleepy Great Horned Owl peered down at us in full view from its perch in the tall cypresses. Finally we stopped by at the Spaletta Ranch slop ponds and were rewarded in finding two Pectoral Sandpipers. Striking throughout the day was the number of Red-breasted Nuthatches encountered. After tallying the day's observations at the RCA Station we found we had seen 57 species.

*David Hutton*



## Feed 'Em or Defeat 'Em

By Mike Eliot



They may have a reputation for making bird feeding less enjoyable; however, squirrels aren't going away any time soon. Perhaps by looking at them from a different perspective, you can begin to appreciate, if not enjoy, squirrels and their behaviors.

Squirrels are one of the most curious and adaptable animals to be found anywhere and they are unmatched in their problem-solving ability to defeat many so-called "squirrel proof" feeders!

Squirrels can jump up to five feet vertically and ten feet between trees or structures. They have the ability to cling from objects with their back foot toes (with support from their tail) which allows them to hang upside-down and eat.

Safflower is a small, white seed that is high in protein and fat. Many of your favorite birds, including jays, cardinals, chickadees, House Finches, doves, titmice and nuthatches, readily eat safflower, but squirrels typically do not.

Place your bird feeding setup at least 10 feet away from any tree or building. This keeps squirrels from jumping on top of, or on to, your feeders.

Try a pole baffle on your bird feeding setup to prevent squirrels from reaching your feeders from below. Mount the baffle 5 feet from the ground. You can also use a hanging baffle with your feeder tucked below it to deter squirrels from reaching your feeders from above.

# William Gambel

» Continued from Page 10

In early September, he joined an expedition headed for California. Their trail took them northwest to about 100 miles south of present day Salt Lake City. They made their way southwest to the Virgin River in the extreme southwest corner of Utah. They crossed the Mojave Desert and Cajon

*In honor of Dr. William Gambel, a naturalist who has explored Upper California and particularly elucidated the ornithology of that country.*

*Thomas Nuttall*

Pass and arrived in Alta California in late November 1841.

Gambel collected bird and plant specimens in California in 1841-42. In a thicket of willows near Pueblo de Los Angeles he collected a woodpecker he later named for Thomas Nuttall, his friend and mentor. During 1842, needful of funds, he hired on as a secretary on the United States Navy ship *Cyane*. For the next three years, Gambel continued his naval service on several ships, allowing him to collect along the western coasts of both North and South America and also in the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands. He was the first naturalist to explore Santa Catalina Island. He returned to Philadelphia in July 1845 via Cape Horn.

Gambel entered medical school at the University of Pennsylvania in 1845 and received his M.D. in 1848. He became

Recording Secretary at the Academy of Natural Sciences and married Catherine Towson, a childhood friend. Establishing a medical practice in Philadelphia, however, was difficult, and he was unhappy with his status under John Cassin, Director of the Academy. So, in light of the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill, he decided to try his hand at a medical practice in California. He resigned his position at the Academy, shipped his medical library and equipment to San Francisco, and in April, 1849 left for the west, journeying with a group of companions. They planned to take the Oregon Trail. The group experienced the ills of cholera, smallpox, and pneumonia. Gambel became a practicing physician sooner than he had imagined. Hoping for a more leisurely and comfortable trek, he left the group and joined a party that was to take a somewhat more southerly course in order to cross the Sierra near the upper end of the Sacramento Valley. The company continued along the Oregon Trail until it entered the Snake River Valley, then turned southwest across Nevada. Sand, drought, and lack of grass turned the expedition into a disaster. Many animals died; wagons were abandoned. So much time was lost that the ragged band got caught in snows in the Sierra. Few survived.

Gambel was one of the survivors who arrived in poor condition near present-day Quincy. Placer miners were actively seeking gold in the Yuba and Feather Rivers in the vicinity. Gambel found that typhoid fever



Near Monterey William Gambel discovered a new species of bird "flitting about among the evergreen oaks in company with large flocks of several kindred species." Oak Titmouse photo by Ethan Winning.

was rampant in the mining camps, and he began treating the desperately ill miners. Unfortunately, he too contracted the disease and died December 13, 1849, just 26 years of age.

Three birds carry the Gambel name: Gambel's Quail, *Callipepla gambellii*, which is common in arid southeastern California; Mountain Chickadee, *Poecile gambeli*; and the Gambel's race of White-crowned Sparrow. Other species credited to Gambel for discovery include Nuttall's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Wrentit, and Elegant Tern. The long-nosed leopard lizard, *Gambelia wislizenii*, and the names of a number of plants also honor this pioneer naturalist.

## Great Horned Owl ♦ *Bubo virginianus*

**a** The Great Horned Owl is a magnificent raptor, one of the most powerful of North American Owls. Both Snowy Owls and Great Gray Owls are larger in size but only the Snowy is larger by average weight. The larger size and bulky shape help to differentiate it from the similarly colored Long-eared Owl. The sexes are alike although the females have a slightly higher, shorter sequence of notes in their call.

Great Horned Owls are the only large owl with prominent ear tufts. These are not horns, of course, but tufts of feathers. As in Screech Owls and some other owls, ear tufts have a specific purpose. However, no one knows what this purpose is. Does it contribute to camouflage or to communica-

tion skills? The tufts have no relation to the bird's ears or to their hearing.

Owlets start roaming from the nest onto nearby branches at 6 to 7 weeks, when they are called "branchers", but cannot fly well until 9 to 10 weeks old. In contrast with the adults, the juvenile Great Horned Owl may not show ear tufts.

The scientific name, *Bubo virginianus*, was given to reflect that the first of this species was collected in the Virginia Colony in the 1700s.



▲ Great Horned Owl.  
◀ Young birds "branching" before fledging.



Brian Murphy photo.

## Community Service Day at Walnut Creek

By Brian Murphy

Saturday, October 6th was Community Service Day in Walnut Creek and our project was installing Wood Duck boxes around Heather Farm Pond. We will start spring with seven Wood Duck nest boxes around the 2½ acre pond to recover the Wood Duck population. Volunteers who helped install boxes have signed up to monitor boxes to make sure they are available for nesting Wood Ducks. The City of Walnut Creek cooperated with installation of nest boxes.

The only element that has been missing for Wood Ducks at Heather Farm has been nesting and that has now been provided by this volunteer activity.

This area of Heather Farm is well used by walkers who enjoy the great variety of bird life on and around the pond on their walks. Wood Ducks are comfortable on large bodies of water so they will be available for bird watchers to enjoy this spring.

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## Mission Possible

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to rid the county of anticoagulant pesticides, such as D-Con rat poison.

Obviously, the first step is to find any that may be on your shelves and take them to the Contra Costa Household Hazardous Waste Facility at 4797 Imhoff Place in Martinez.

Next, on the Internet, go to [www.change.org](http://www.change.org), search for "Poisons", find the petition sponsored by Raptors are the Solution, and also one sponsored by American Bird Conservancy, and sign them. These petitions ask the EPA and the makers of D-Con to stop making anticoagulant rodenticides available. Now, still at change.

org, search under "Good Housekeeping" to find a petition, also posed by Raptors are the Solution, that asks Good Housekeeping magazine to withdraw their Seal of Approval from D-Con. Sign that one, too.

Now, consider what might be done to reduce the need for rodenticides in the first place. If you have a ground cover of English ivy, rip it out! English ivy is the Ritz-Carlton for rats. Do not leave pet food outside overnight. Check all about your house to assure that there's not even the tiniest hole where rats or mice can gain entrance. Consider erecting a Barn Owl nesting box, which might take care of a gopher problem, as well. But please do this only if your neighbors are aware of the dangers of their using poisons.

Support such organizations as Raptors Are The Solution (R.A.T.S.). Their web site offers a great wealth of information about this problem and ways of fighting the status quo.

The problem with anticoagulants is that death of a rat is not immediate, and the rodent may die outside where a raptor can find it and devour the poison with the animal. It is not only Barn Owls, Kestrels and hawks that are at risk, but your pets and your children as well. There is really no credible need for this type of poison when other solutions are available, such as the time-proven spring trap.

This message will self-destruct only when there is no further need for it.

# 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). If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

September and early October were busy months for breeding bird migration out of the area and wintering bird migration in, as well as a few unusual birds or unusual locations.

RB found a **Green-winged Teal** at Meeker Slough in Richmond 10/4.

An early female **Ring-necked Duck** was at Heather Farm Pond 10/1. HH, FS.

A **Common Goldeneye** at Big Break in East County was another early duck on 9/25. AL.

HH saw an **Osprey** at Heather Farm Pond on 10/2 and another with DD in Pleasant Hill 10/7.

Five **Sandhill Cranes** were at Holland Tract on 9/25 and 23 were there 9/28, DE. JA saw 13 there on 10/1.

DW saw 2 **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Iron House Sanitary District Ponds on 10/6.

A **Wandering Tattler** was at Ferry Point in Point Richmond on 9/13, ES, and 9/15, JH.

AL saw a **Red Knot** at Sandpiper Spit in Richmond 9/14.

**Pectoral Sandpipers** were at the West County Wastewater District ponds on 10/5 and 10/8. AL.

A likely **Parasitic Jaeger** was harassing terns at Ferry Point in Point Richmond on 9/17. AL

A **Common Tern** was seen by AL at Sandpiper Spit on 9/14.

AL saw a **Common Murre** at the Richmond Marina on 10/2.

AK saw his first **Eurasian Collared-Dove** on 9/25 near Wildcat Canyon. Their spread continues.

BH had a **Great Horned Owl** in his backyard in Concord 10/1.

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was near the Moraga Country Club 9/29. BC.

A late **Willow Flycatcher** was at Big Break on 9/25. AL.

A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** stayed late at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch. PS, 9/21.

An out of place **Yellow-billed Magpie** was in Lafayette 9/22. RJ.

AL saw 5 **Horned Larks** on Bethel Island 9/12.

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widespread and made first-time appearances in San Ramon and other parts of the county. Apparently, their cone crops failed in the north this year, so they have come south for food.

The first **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** of the season was at Lake Anza on 9/18. AB.

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was at Brickyard Cove in Point Richmond for a first for KF on 9/14.

An unusual **Townsend's Solitaire** was near the Environmental Ed Center in Tilden Park 9/25. AF.

The first **Hermit Thrushes** appeared the last week of September in many places.

ER saw an early **Varied Thrush** in her garden in Lafayette on 9/30.

A **Phainopepla** was at Castle Rock Road on 10/4. JB.

A **Nashville Warbler** was at Ferry Point 9/16. KF.

**Yellow Warblers** were in flocks of 20 and 12 at Miller-Knox Park on 9/13. ES, KF; and a late one was at Heather Farm on 10/1. HH.

FS discovered a rare **Chestnut-sided Warbler** in Walnut Creek 9/30. HH also saw it on 10/2.

The earliest reports of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were at Inspiration Point 9/20. DW; and PS on 9/21 at Contra Loma Park.

A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was at her Point Richmond home on 9/13. KF

A number of **Western Tanagers** were seen until late September.

**Chipping Sparrows** were seen by DW in Moraga on 9/17; 9/18 by AL at Point Pinole; and 9/24 by BK at Point Pinole.

The first reported **Fox Sparrow** of the season was at Vollmer Peak in Tilden RP by P&RC on 9/15.

**Lincoln Sparrows** were at Miller-Knox RP on 9/13, KF, and 9/23, JH.

The first reported **White-crowned Sparrow** was at Miller-Knox Park on 9/13. KF.

DW saw the first reported **Golden-crowned Sparrow** on 9/20 at Inspiration Point in Tilden Park.

A young **Lazuli Bunting** was a first yard bird for AK in Richmond on 9/16.

**Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Bethel Island on 9/12, AL, and Big Break on 10/6, DW.

A few **Red Crossbills** continued feeding on fir cones at Vollmer Peak Staging Area until 9/15. BS, MR, DC, GC.

There were scattered reports of **Pine Siskins** in singles or pairs. We will see if this is an irruptive year.

JA Jeff Acuff, AB Andy Beiderman, JB John Blakelock, RB Richard Blakelock, GC Graham Chisholm, P&RC Pamela and Robert Clark, BC Brody Cooper, DC David Couch, DD Dia DeRosa, AF Anthony Fisher, KF Kathy Francone, DF Dorothy Furseth, HH Hugh Harvey, BH Bob Hislop, JH Jeff Hoppes, RJ Roxanna Jackman, BK Bill Kondrat, AK Alan Krakauer, AL Albert Linkowski, MR Mark Rauzon, ER Ellen Reintjes, FS Fred Safier, PS Paul Schorr, BS Bob Stokstad, ES Emilie Strauss, DW Denise Wight.

## Philippine Eagle

An exhibition of mixed-media works by artist David Tomb celebrating the Grand Birds of the Philippines. continues through November 10 at Electric Works, a contemporary art gallery at 1360 Mission Street in San Francisco. The exhibition features the iconic and critically endangered Great Philippine Eagle and other endemic birds of the Philippines, including the Rufous Hornbill. Tomb's latest artworks are luminous and colorful paper assemblages with subtle low relief elements that help convey spatial depth as well as the ambiguous and mysterious jungle terrain of Mindanao.

Tomb is co-founder of Jeepney Projects Worldwide: Art for Conservation, an organization that is partnering with regional conservation groups to inspire, support, and restore lost habitat of critically endangered birds. In May, 2012 David Tomb and Ian Austin spoke to Mount Diablo Audubon about *The Plight of the Philippine Eagle*.

Gallery hours for this commendable show are Tuesday-Saturday, 11 AM to 5 PM.



# Donations Needed

By Mike Eliot

The first ever rummage sale on behalf of Native Bird Connections is scheduled for November 10 at the Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Pleasant Hill.



Jenny Papka, of Native Bird Connections, brought along a Rough-legged Hawk for her presentation at the 21st Anniversary celebration at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill. The event also included a membership drive for Mount Diablo Audubon.

Needed are donations of usable items in good condition that you believe would be attractive to people like yourself who cherish nature and education. Each item should be easily carried and handled by one person. Please clean them if needed. You may drop them off at the store anytime during business hours until November 9.

Native Bird Connections is supported by Mount Diablo Audubon as an educational organization that works regularly in public schools to educate children about nature, wild birds, and the environment. They also rescue injured birds and house those that are too injured to be re-released into the wild.

Native Bird Connections is in dire need of extra funding due to increased government regulation of bird rescue and protection groups that has resulted in fees and inspection charges, as well as new requirements that increase the costs of maintaining the habitats for injured birds.

We appreciate anything you can do to help. Cash donations are also accepted. Also remind your friends and family about the rummage sale.

It will take place from 11 AM to 4 PM on Saturday, November 10 at:  
Wild Birds Unlimited  
692 Contra Costa Blvd.  
Pleasant Hill, 94523

Please call 925-798-0303 with any questions or if you need directions.

# Mount Diablo Audubon Society

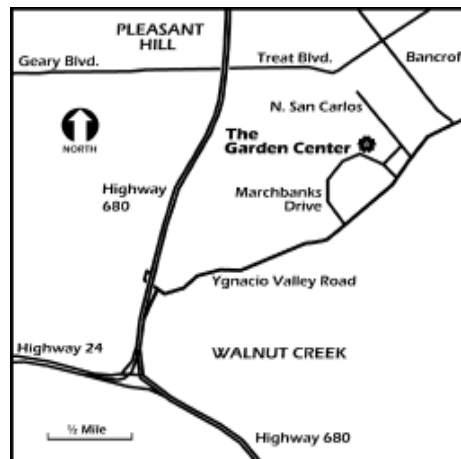
Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.

## MDAS Board of Directors

(Area code 925 unless specified)

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Quail Editor



Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society thanks our Business Partners for their generous support:

**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
**Steven Joseph Photography**  
**Galaxy Press**  
**Native Bird Connections**

## 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

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*Gambel's Quail (Callipepla gambelii) at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve.. Photo by Glen Tepke.*

## William Gambel Explorer of Upper California

William Gamble Sr., an emigré from Northern Ireland who had served in the War of 1812, moved from Lancaster County to Philadelphia after the death of his wife. He remarried; and William Jr. was born in June 1823. Although William Sr. died of pneumonia in 1832, Elizabeth Gamble provided for the family by teaching.

Young William displayed a talent for his studies. He also began spelling his last name as Gambel. When he was 15 years of age, William was introduced to Thomas Nuttall, perhaps the greatest field naturalist in the United States at that time. Gambel became a friend and assistant to Nuttall, 37 years his senior. Late in 1838, Gambel accompanied Nuttall on a collect-

ing trip to the southeastern states. Nuttall's interests were diverse, including botany, mineralogy and ornithology, sciences that quickly captivated Gambel. Other collecting trips followed, such as to the pre-Cambrian limestone in Northern New Jersey.



*Gambel's Quail postage stamp issued in 1999 as part of the 4-panel Sonoran Desert pane.*

At the 1839 meeting of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, Gambel presented a specimen of gold from North Carolina. In the spring of 1840, Nuttall was asked to present a set of lectures on botany at the Lowell Institute in Boston. John Amory Lowell was the son of an old friend of Nuttall's from his time as curator of the Harvard University Botanic Garden and Professor of Botany. Nuttall invited Gambel to accompany him. They

stayed in Cambridge for four months as Nuttall delivered the lectures and renewed acquaintances. Gambel served as his apprentice. Nuttall did considerable work in ornithology during this period and actually named a subspecies of White-crowned Sparrow for his young protégé, Gambel's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*). During this time, the two had the opportunity to go on mineralizing trips in Maine.

Gambel next embarked on a trip to California via the Santa Fe Trail to collect specimens for Nuttall. He left Philadelphia in March 1841 at the age of 18. In Independence, Missouri, he joined a group of traders bound for Santa Fe. From Independence they traveled westward for about four hundred miles to the vicinity of Dodge City, Kansas. From this point, they likely followed the route that Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* now takes, through La Junta Colorado and over the Raton Pass. Gambel spent July and August of 1841 collecting plants in the Santa Fe area and along the "Rio del Norte", as the Rio Grande was commonly called in the 1840s. One of these specimens was named Gambel oak by Thomas Nuttall.

*Continued on Page 6 »*