

# 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 53, Number 2

October 2007

## Costa Rica Offers a Wealth of Bird and Animal Life

### José Calvo

Costa Rica's diversity of bird and animal life is no accident. Sandwiched between the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, mountains cover more than half of the land area of this country the size of West Virginia. While the country has only about 0.1% of the world's landmass, it supports 5% of the world's biodiversity.

Costa Rica protects approximately 28% of its national territory with the Protected Areas System of national parks and conservancy areas. These diverse habitats are home to more than 800 species of birds, 200 reptiles, 160 amphibians, and a wide variety of mammals.

On October 4 José Calvo, naturalist and tour guide in his native land for 17 years, will show an astonishing array of bird and animal life as he presents



the abundant fauna of Costa Rica. Travel with José to the rain and cloud forests, to the mountains over 11,000 feet high, and to the over 1400 miles of coastline. In these diverse habitats we will see remarkable birds such as the Resplendent Quetzal, eight species of parrot, Howler and Capuchin monkeys,

the three-toed sloth, a variety of reptiles, and the endangered green sea turtle.

Certified by the National Institute of Learning, José Calvo has been guiding tour groups in Central America for 17 years. He is a well-rounded naturalist with major interests in ornithology, rain-forest ecology, climatology, and geology. Nature photography and photo editing are his major hobbies along with adding to his personal life bird list of over 700 species.

José is currently touring Central California sponsored by the Morro Coast Audubon. In addition to speaking to Morro Coast Audubon, he will present his program to Audubon groups in Fresno and Marin.

### Birding Information

Jeanne Bonner, MDAS member and backyard birder since 1995, has been privileged to watch an American Kestrel family nest in her backyard. The Kestrels continue to use her Flicker box which is in a Sycamore tree in a suburban neighborhood. They have successfully fledged four broods over six years. This all occurs very close to her bedroom window,



*Many birders journey to Costa Rica simply to catch sight of the Resplendent Quetzal, perhaps to assure themselves that there is such a bird whose iridescent emerald tail can be two to three feet in length.*

*Unequaled for splendor, this magnificent trogon was sacred to the Mayas, Toltecs and Aztecs as the snake god Quetzalcoatl.*

*National Geographic photo*



so Jeanne has an amazing photographic record of the unfolding of the entire process. She will share the joys and woes of her Kestrel family. As an avid backyard birder Jeanne has focused on planting for birds and wildlife. She also tutors Math and Science and is studying for a Masters Degree in Physics at San Jose State University.

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, October 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

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

8:05 PM Speaker: José Calvo

\* Please remember to bring a cup.

**November 1:**

**Peter Kappes, Common Murres  
and seabird breeding colonies**

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

# President's Corner

## The Future of the Salton Sea

I attended a Commonwealth Club panel discussion a few weeks ago on the future of the Salton Sea. The panel included state representatives, the Pacific Institute that has done a lot of studies on the Sea and a local Salton Sea advocate. I have only been to the Salton Sea a couple of times, but what times they were. It is certainly one of the premiere birding locations in the western USA. Over 350 species have been recorded there and many depend on the Sea for survival.

Formed by a breach in the levees of the Colorado River in 1905 it is now the largest lake in California. Over 35 miles long and 15 miles wide and more than 225 feet below sea level. You can research the

### *The Salton Sea is the largest lake in California*

details online. The Sea is about to change radically. To make a long story short, the water from the Colorado River that has kept the Sea viable is about to be redirected to Arizona and Nevada. The water flowing to the Sea will decrease 40% over the next 20 years. The Salton Sea will slowly become toxic. Four major impacts will occur.

- Human health in the adjacent valleys will be harmed. Imperial County suffers from the highest childhood asthma rate in the state by three times that of the next county. Remember this includes Palm Springs with many retirees.
- Air quality—which already fails the state standards—will get worse.
- Air quality litigation will increase. The state has responsibility for managing lands exposed to dust from water transfer.
- Hundreds of thousands of birds that currently use the Sea will lose their roosting and breeding habitats and the source of food. The birds that remain will suffer disease and reproductive deformities.

As the sea level drops it will expose an estimated 130 square miles of former sea bed that will quickly become air-borne dust with regular high-wind storms of the valleys. This is what will increase the poor air quality. As the sea level drops, the water will be unable to maintain the life in the lake; namely the fish and brine shrimp that



*Two popular and productive birding sites at the Salton Sea are the Red Hill Marina area (across the water, above) and Obsidian Butte. One of the most sought-after specialties of the Salton Sea is the Yellow-footed Gull, seen here at Obsidian Butte with terns and shore-birds also foraging; and Double-crested Cormorants can be seen on the snags beyond.*

are food resources for many birds. This loss could be catastrophic for many species.

This is a complex subject and deserves more time. I am hoping to have someone who can give us a detailed update come to one of our future meetings. The State of California Resources agency and the Salton Sea Authority have put forward a restoration plan that may save the Salton Sea. It will require a huge amount of money and a lot of time, but the alternatives are a disaster. You can find out more at: [www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov](http://www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov).

I look forward to seeing you at a meeting this fall. *Jimm Edgar*

Q

The breeding plumage of this bird was prized by many hunters, which led, in the late nineteenth century, to the birds' near extinction—their plumes were worth twice their weight in gold.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 4 to learn more.

EEGNORSTWY



# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## October

6 Saturday	Hawk Hill
11 Thursday	Berkeley Shoreline
20 Saturday	Abbott's Lagoon

## November

3 Saturday	Davis Area/Vic Fazio
10 Saturday	Limantour
17 Saturday	Charleston Slough/South Bay
19 Monday	Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

## December

8-9 Saturday-Sunday	Gray Lodge
12 Wednesday	Niles Area
15 Saturday	Christmas Count/Central
19 Wednesday	Christmas Count/East County

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

Because most trips do not return until late afternoon, bring a lunch and join us during our midday break.

Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ②: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool locations: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. **Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

Customary carpool expense is \$3-5 for short trips, \$5-10 for longer trips, plus tolls and entry fees shared among driver and riders.

## Come birding with us in October!

### ② Saturday, October 6 Hawk Hill

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves El Nido Ranch Road at 8:00 AM. Meet in parking lot upper Rodeo Lagoon at 9:15 AM. From Hwy. 101 exit Alexander Ave. On west side of freeway turn right and go up the hill, at the intersection go right and down hill. Turn left at the stop sign and continue to the parking lot. We will bird the lagoons before going up to the hawk-watch site. At noon the staff gives a talk on their work and usually demonstrates the actual banding. Carry lunch and liquids. The walk up the hill is only a few hundred yards, but it is steep.

### ① Thursday, October 11 Berkeley Shoreline

Leader: Lynn Lakso, 932-6367.

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-880 west, turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. 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.

### ③ Saturday, October 20 Abbott's Lagoon

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:30 AM. Meet at 9:00 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center, Point Reyes National Seashore. From I-80 in Vallejo, follow SR 37 19.1 miles to Atherton Avenue, exit and turn left, cross US 101 to San Marin Drive and continue for 3 miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd, turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to the stop sign. Go straight on Platform Bridge Road to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Turn right to Olema. Turn right at stop sign and take SR 1 north for 0.25 miles, then turn left on Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Lots of walking in sand.

Abbott's Lagoon is one of the best fall and winter birding spots within Point Reyes National Seashore. Shorebirds, waterfowl, hawks and Osprey are commonly sighted.

Last year's MDAS trip was favored with an unexpected appearance of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher as well as sightings of numerous Townsend's Warblers. You may be fortunate to watch a Golden Eagle or a Peregrine Falcon watching the shorebirds.

## Trip Report

**Bodega Bay, August 18.** Very thick fog at Bodega Head prevented us from seeing the target ocean birds. However, just a few yards inland all was sunny at Bodega Bay, and we saw Elegant Terns, Ospreys, and many, many Red-necked Phalaropes. The trip ended with a dramatic flourish as a thousand shorebirds took the air and we remembered Jean Richmond's instruction; we looked up — and were rewarded with very close views of a Peregrine Falcon. Totals: 16 birders, 56 species. *Fred Safier*



**Point Pinos Junco**

*Junco oreganus pinosus*

**Birds of Golden Gate Park  
Joseph Mailliard  
1930**



## Observations

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at [countylinelines@sbcglobal.net](mailto:countylinelines@sbcglobal.net) or (925) 997-1112.

A flock of 30+ American White Pelicans was on the bay near Point Isabel on 7/29 (LL). Another or possibly the same flock of 20–30 pelicans was noted in the area on 7/30 (KL, JR).

A Green Heron was at Jewel Lake in Tilden Park on 7/23 (BF).

A Clapper Rail was at Meeker Slough north of Point Isabel, Richmond, on 7/27 (SD) and 7/29 (LL). Though this species is often found at this spot, it remains the only publicly accessible spot for this species in the county and they deserve monitoring. A young Common Moorhen continued at Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek through at least 7/16 (HH), though the parents have been long absent.

A Ruddy Turnstone was near Meeker Slough north of Point Isabel, Richmond on 7/31 (KP). Once considered rare in the county, there have been numerous records in recent years despite sporadic coverage. Four Red-necked Phalaropes were near Meeker Slough on 8/3 (BB). A Red-necked Phalarope at Heather Farm Park on 8/28 was one of few ever found away from the periphery of the county and probably a first for the park (FS, HH).

Steve Glover



Five Least Terns were at Meeker Slough on 8/3 (BB). A report of three Black Skimmers at Meeker Slough, just north of Point Isabel in Richmond, on 7/22 (SD, IC) induced a daily pilgrimage of birders that continued through at least 8/9 when at least one bird was present (AK). We have subsequently learned second-hand that a pair of Black Skimmers nested this season amongst the Caspian Terns on Brooks Island, providing a first nest record for Contra Costa County but one which might have been anticipated. Additionally, we heard second-hand that as many as 2000 pairs of California Gulls nested on Brooks Island this year! A single nest provided a first county nest record at the same site as recently as 2002.

A Hermit Warbler was at Vollmer Peak in Tilden Regional Park on 7/25 (BF). This species appears here each year in late July, apparently as a post-breeding dispersant from elsewhere in the Bay region.

Bob Battagin, Inger Coble, Sheila Dickie, Brian Fitch, Hugh Harvey, Laura Look, Kay Loughman, Kathy Parker, Jean Richmond, Fred Safier.

## Get the Lead Out!

California Condor recovery is a story of great successes and remaining challenges. One of the world's rarest and most imperiled birds, the California Condor was rescued from the brink of extinction by captive breeding and release. Today just 279 condors exist including 70 wild birds in California. Yet despite millions of dollars spent and the herculean efforts of many people, the condor remains imperiled. A leading threat to condor recovery is lead poisoning from ingestion of ammunition. Since 1992, at least 10 California Condors are known to have died from lead poisoning with more suspected. And since 1997, 30 birds have required expensive medical treatment to remove lead from the blood.

The CA Fish & Game Commission has proposed an amendment to hunting regulations to ban lead ammunition in Condor Country in an effort to aid condor recovery. Encourage the commissioners to vote in favor of the ban!

1. Learn more at [http://ca.audubon.org/california\\_condor.html](http://ca.audubon.org/california_condor.html).

2. Ask your state legislators to support the Ridley-Tree Condor Preservation Act, AB821, which is currently under review in the State Senate.

Get the lead out, and do it now!

## Snowy Egret • *Egretta thula*



Photographed at the Salton Sea

Like its larger cousin, the Great Egret, the graceful Snowy Egret is widespread across North America, particularly in the southern climes. It is a common resident at the Salton Sea where more than 300 pairs nest. There, the birds are more numerous in winter, when more northerly breeding birds join the local breeders and their new offspring.

The Snowy measures 24 inches in length compared to 39 inches for the Great Egret. It has a wing span of 41 inches, compared to 51 inches. The two species are readily separated in identification by the Snowy's more agile habits—they chase after prey, while the Great Egret, more patient, stands tall and motionless. In addition to their size difference, Snowys also differ in the color of their bills and feet. Both have dark legs; the Snowy has yellow feet. Great Egrets have yellow bills; Snowy's are dark. Cattle Egrets, a little smaller than Snowys, have yellow bills.

Snowy Egrets forage along riverbanks and lakeshores, in shallow freshwater pools. They feed mostly on small fish and shrimp, but grasshoppers, other insects, and small amphibians are also in their diet.

Regrettably, these beautiful birds face another plight threatening a decline in population, as they did in the late 1800s to ladies' fashions. This time their nesting habitat at the Salton Sea is under siege to such forces as competition from Cattle Egrets and from the decline of the Sea itself.



# Concord Naval Weapons Station Update

In the September 2007 Quail, we had updated the timeline for the Concord Community Reuse Plan for the CNWS.

At the August 4 workshop, the Concord City Council members were to comment on the range of conceptual alternatives. The untimely death of Michael Chavez, Concord City Council member and open space advocate, at that meeting has forced the timeline to be rearranged. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Michael Chavez.

At the deadline of this publication, the remaining city council members have interviewed 17 candidates to replace Michael Chavez's seat on the council. On September 4, the city council members will vote on the replacement.

Scheduled at press time is a city council meeting on September 11 to continue the discussion of the city council comments on the range of alternatives. The

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting will be on September 18 to introduce the range of alternative concepts that will be included in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Another CAC meeting is scheduled on October 2 and the city Council meeting on October 9 will include a presentation of the alternative concepts and approval to be sent forward for the EIR.

The regular meeting of the CAC on October 16 will include a presentation of the interest received for homeless services and public benefit conveyance, which will also be presented to the city council on November 6.

Stay tuned to [www.concordreuseproject.org](http://www.concordreuseproject.org) where agendas are posted 72 hours before the meetings. These decisions will determine the reuse plan for over 5000 acres in the city of Concord.

*Claudia Hein*



*American Avocets at Antelope Island, Utah. Photo courtesy © Tim Avery, [www.timaverybirding.com](http://www.timaverybirding.com)*

## Birding Utah *Continued from Page 8*

island, scan the scrub and shoreline for Lark, Brewer's, White-crowned and Vesper Sparrows, Chukar, Black-billed Magpie, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and Long-billed Curlews. A beautiful male Lark Bunting, west of its usual range, posed for me on a shrub and sang. At the southern end of the island, the Fielding Garr Ranch serves as a shady place to eat lunch and look for migrant songbirds. The ranch was established in 1848, and it's the oldest Anglo-built structure standing on its original foundation in Utah. Still used as a working cattle ranch, the area is fed by springs and supports stands of cottonwood and other large mature trees. These trees hold Cordilleran Flycatchers, Plumbeous Vireo, War-

bling Vireo, Orange-crowned and Yellow Warblers, Bullock's Oriole, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Bluebird, Western and Eastern Kingbirds, and several species of woodpeckers.

Though not on the usual list of places that birders dream of, Utah provides a varied and beautiful birding destination. From the stark West Desert region to the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains in the east, it's easy to access and well worth birding. Next month, I'll describe the 200,000 acre private Deseret Ranch and the 109 species we had in a one day trip.

*Note:* The 2008 ABA Convention will be in Snowbird, Utah, east of Salt Lake City in the Wasatch Mountains.

## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



### Seed & Suet Sale

October 2-28, 2007

Stock up and get ready for fall and winter birdfeeding!

On Saturday, October 6 we are celebrating our 16th anniversary. Please come and help us celebrate!

- Many FREE gifts.
- See a Bald Eagle.
- Discounts on every transaction • Almost everything in the store will be on sale!
- Plants for attracting birds and butterflies to your garden.
- FREE prize drawings.

### Optics Weekend

Saturday 10/20-Sunday 10/21

Sales Tax FREE

Eagle Optics will be here to present their entire line of birding optics. We will also have other high-end optics for you to compare: Leica, Zeiss, Swarovski, and Stokes.

### Feeding Tips:

We are in a lull now in backyard bird-feeding. Orioles, grosbeaks, warblers, Allens Hummingbirds, and others have migrated south or dispersed. White-crowned, Golden-crowned, and other sparrows have started to arrive. Their favorite foods are millet seeds and suet. Juncos are not far behind. Numbers of American and Lesser Goldfinches should begin to increase in October. Their favorite food is thistle seeds.

As fall gets into full swing, we'll see feeder activity increase. There will be less natural food available. Some species will be eating more seeds, suet, or peanuts, and fewer insects. These include woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees and titmice. Something else that you can provide is Woodpecker Treat. The same size as other suet cakes, it readily fits into your suet feeder. It is composed of pecans, peanuts, and sunflower seeds. Chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, and jays will love it, too.

Mike and Cecil Williams

**Wild Birds Unlimited**

692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

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Visit us at [www.wbupleasanthill.com](http://www.wbupleasanthill.com)

## Jenny Wren *By Rex Burress*

If you are down by the riverside, and see a small thin-beaked brownish bird poking around in low bushes, bark crevices, or under rocks, chances are it is Jenny Wren looking for insects and spiders.

"Jenny" may be a house wren, Bewick's wren, or around the rocks of Fish Barrier Dam, a rock wren. Jenny is the fond name story-writer Thornton Burgess gave to the wren in his "Peter Rabbit Bedtime Stories," and most generally he applied it to the house wren, a summer resident to all of America, and some stay the year around along the Feather River. All told, there are ten species of wrens in North America, six in Butte County, and 49 in South America! They are birds of the Western Hemisphere, with only one, the winter wren, being found in Europe.

A pair of Jenny house wrens nested in a tree-hole near the Feather River Nature Center this spring, a secretive, hidden home except for the frequent trips when feeding the babes. I only got an occasional glimpse of their homelife and never did see the fledglings leave the nest. They were pleasantly vocal in the spring and become rather solitary after the nesting gathering, each relentlessly gleaning the thickets for insects.

In my Missouri homeland, house wrens would migrate south in the winter and return to the backyard bird house in the spring, the male arriving first to build a new nest, singing constantly while waiting for the lady to finally arrive and either accept or reject his handiwork! No wonder Burgess chose Jenny as a feature of his animal tales. Wrens are loveable in the Midwest because of their reappearance in the springtime and their song.

In his dialogue between Peter and Jenny, Burgess stressed the importance of a bird going to find food wherever it may be. "If you were so fond of the Old Orchard, why did you leave it and go south?" Peter asked. Jenny snapped, "What would you eat if there was nothing to eat? In the winter there is no food here that we can eat. Do give us birds credit for a little common sense, Peter." Thus those stories are interwoven with a nature fact spoken by the anthropomorphic animal actors, a way to create a favorable impression of compassion for the wild denizens. Bewick's wren is more common in the brushy

hillsides than along the river, but once in a while you will see this handsome bird, somewhat larger than a house wren, and with a noticeable white stripe over the eye. It was the bird discovered by John James Audubon and given the Bewick name to honor the famous wood block artist of England.

The marvelous thing about birds is that each species is fitted to feed and occupy a certain niche in the environment. You can tell many of their modes by their beak. The wrens have that long slender beak to slip into shady nooks for small insects. Woodpeckers, of course, have stout beaks for pounding, just as the jays have coarse bills for feeding on a variety of foods. Sparrows have seed crackers, herons are fish stabbers, hawks are meat tearers, and *etc.* You know them by their feet, too. Perching songbirds, scratching towhees, paddles for ducks, meat-clutching talons for birds of prey. Know them by their tools!

"Be very slow to say you know.  
Say merely that you think it's so."

•*Old Mother Nature in Peter Rabbit Tales*



### 2008 Entertainment Books are here now!

Save almost twice the \$25 price of the book by using the Safeway and Long's Drugs coupons

- Buy at MDAS general meetings.
- Pick up at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill, or
- Order on line at [www.entertainment.com](http://www.entertainment.com) and enter the MDAS ID #: 175587.

## Ornithological Opportunities

**Audubon California Assembly 2007, October 7, 8, and 9, Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove. Theme: Global warming and wildlife.** The Audubon California Assembly brings together over 300 chapter leaders, birders, scientists, volunteers, grassroots activists and staff for three days on the Monterey Bay. For over 100 years, Audubon has conserved and restored natural ecosystems. Now, we must examine global warming from a wildlife and ecosystem perspective and help us understand how global warming should affect our land management decisions. The Assembly will spotlight climate solutions from conserving energy with simple changes around the home, to reaching an 80 percent national reduction of greenhouse gases.

Registration Fees: \$325.00 per person. Includes two nights/three days, double occupancy; six meals; workshops. For questions and schedule information contact: Claudia Eyzaguirre [ceyzaguirre@audubon.org](mailto:ceyzaguirre@audubon.org) 510.601.1866 ext.3. Or visit [www.ca.audubon.org/audubon\\_assembly.html](http://www.ca.audubon.org/audubon_assembly.html)

**Orinda Parks and Recreation** will present two fall courses of interest to nature enthusiasts. Each will be led by Jenny Papka of Native Bird Connections. *The Mystique of Owls* is an evening class on October 30; *The Secret Life of Raptors* will consist of three sessions during November. [www.ci.orinda.ca.us/parksandrec](http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us/parksandrec) or phone (925) 254-2445.

The eleventh annual **Sandhill Crane Festival** will be November 2-4 in Lodi. Information at [www.lodichamber.com/scfestival/](http://www.lodichamber.com/scfestival/)

**American Birding Association 2008 Convention, June 23-29** at Snowbird Village, in beautiful Little Cottonwood Canyon outside Salt Lake City. Come breathe the fresh mountain air, listen to hummingbirds buzz by, take in the beauty of hillsides of wildflowers. Target birds: Black Rosy-Finch, Franklin's Gull, White-throated Swift, Pinyon Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Plumbeous Vireo, American Dipper, Virginia's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Tanager, Cordilleran Flycatcher, plus the spectacle of flocks of phalaropes, avocets, grebes, and gulls!



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### Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •

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### The Garden Center

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



### MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

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

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

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

## California eBird Links Birders and Scientists

A premier online bird observation program has been developed for birders and citizens in California! Audubon California, PRBO Conservation Science, and Cornell Lab of Ornithology have partnered to create California eBird, [www.ebird.org/California](http://www.ebird.org/California), a real-time online bird observation checklist program tailored for use by Californians. eBird has revolutionized the way that people can report and access information about birds. California eBird provides a quick and easy way for birders, citizens, and scientists to enter their bird observations into a common database accessible to those working to protect and restore habitats for birds in California.

Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the eBird program provides scientists with rich data sources for basic information on the number and distribution of birds across large geographic scales and throughout time. For citizens and birders, eBird provides on-line birding checklists to keep track of your observations at multiple sites, accessible at any time from your home computer. Bird sightings are safely stored in Cornell Lab of Ornithology's database.

California eBird takes the standard eBird site and brings the user information



specific to California. This site hopes to encourage more birders, students, citizens, and scientists to contribute bird sightings through eBird. This will help provide more data about bird distribution and abundance throughout the state. If you are looking for a place to make bird observations, you are encouraged to select one of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in California, learn more about the site, keep track of your sightings, and enter your records (for a list of IBAs go to [www.ca.audubon.org/iba](http://www.ca.audubon.org/iba)). Or, you can choose your own favorite birding site or "hot spot" using the interactive Google maps provided. California habitat types are given so that you can provide information on the kinds of habitats you are birding in. You can also select any IBA site and learn about the birds others have seen at the site, times of year, abundances, and more. With your help, a more complete picture of how birds are distributed across the diverse California landscape will emerge.

Visit the California eBird website ([www.ebird.org/California](http://www.ebird.org/California)) to read timely information on birds and birding news in California and try entering some bird data!

*Audubon California Notes*

Mount Diablo Audubon Society  
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## **TIME VALUE MAIL**



*Red-necked Phalaropes at Antelope Island, Utah*  
Photo courtesy © Tim Avery, <http://www.timaverybirding.com>

## **Birding Beyond the Border**

**Birding in Utah** *Patricia Bacchetti*

Due to a family commitment, this summer has provided me with an opportunity to go to Utah several times over the past two months. In between family duties, I have taken the opportunity to explore the varied bird life of this beautiful state in two major locations: the Great Salt Lake and Antelope Island, near Salt Lake City, and Deseret Ranch in the northeast corner of the state. Both places have provided an abundance of species that winter in California and breed in the Great Basin, as well as several species that call the Great Basin home. And I haven't even birded the most famous of Utah's well-known birding areas yet, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge on the Great Salt Lake's north shore. That will be saved for next trip.

The Great Salt Lake is just west of Salt Lake City, and the flight into the easily

negotiated Salt Lake International Airport provides a good view from the air. The Great Salt Lake is the largest natural lake west of the Mississippi River, and the wetlands surrounding its shores provide one of the most important nesting and staging areas for birds passing through the Pacific Flyway. Over 250 species of birds occur in this highly saline lake of brine shrimp and brine flies, the primary food source for millions of migrating birds. Similar in nature to Mono Lake, the Great Salt Lake has no natural outlet; water leaves through evaporation only. Salinity levels range from 4–28%, compared to 3% for oceans. Known mainly for its association with breeding colonies of California Gulls, the Great Salt Lake provides much more for the birder to see.

Antelope Island State Park is accessed from Syracuse, about half an hour north of Salt Lake City on Interstate 15. After you pay a \$9 day use fee, a long causeway built across the shallows takes you to the island. The causeway itself is worth a good hour or more of birding. Wide shoulders provide places to stop to view the thousands of

California Gulls that breed there, as well as Ring-billed Gulls, post-breeding migratory Franklin's Gulls, and hundreds of thousands of Wilson's Phalaropes and Eared Grebes. One evening in July, I headed out about two hours before sunset. California Gulls were running along the shoreline with their bills open, catching brine flies; Franklin's Gulls were standing in large groups bobbing their heads up and down fly-catching; and masses of Wilson's Phalaropes were resting on the lake's surface. Eighty percent of the world's Wilson's Phalaropes, the most terrestrial of the three species, stage at the Great Salt Lake for a pre-migration molt after breeding in shallow wetlands in the interior west. They depart for their wintering areas in Argentina and Bolivia in early fall. As the sun set over the lake, I marveled at the rich and unique habitat that Utah provided for birds and birders alike.

Antelope Island was first explored by John Fremont and Kit Carson in 1845, who named it after the resident Pronghorn Antelope. The island is also home to introduced bison, coyote, and deer, and a wealth of bird life. As you drive the length of the

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