



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 56, Number 2

October 2010

Video Records of the Birds of Texas ♦ Larry Arbanas

Join Larry Arbanas as he shares his enthusiasm for the many diverse bird species and the friendly people he met as he filmed Texas birds for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. From Big Thicket National Preserve, 'out east', to the southernmost point near Brownsville, up the Rio Grande to Big Bend National Park, Texas birds are spectacular. We will see video footage of Least Grebes, Green Jays, Harris's Hawks, Crested Caracaras, Plain Chachalacas, Groove-billed Anis, Green Kingfishers, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Great Kiskadees, Red-cockaded and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, the rare and fabulous Black-capped Vireos, Tamaulipas Crows, Brown Thrashers, Golden-cheeked and Colima Warblers, Painted Buntings, Bachman's and Botteri's Sparrows, Scott's Orioles, and even the Mexican Free-tailed Bats! See these winged specialties on the silver screen this October 7.

Larry, MDAS member and bird and nature photographer, continues his quest to collect high-definition video footage of the behavior of all North American bird species for the media collection of the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds and Images in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. His career, creating nature and environmental documentaries, began in 1989 when the Exxon Valdez crashed into the rocks of Prince William Sound. He was deeply moved by this event and discovered his real love, nature video photography. Today, he produces films for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, PBS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service and, hopefully, for the Audubon California. In the Fall of 2009, Larry was sent to Veracruz, Mexico by Maya Lin, creator of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC, to film the amazing migration called



▲ *Eastern Meadowlark* *Mexican Jay* ▶
Photos by Larry Arbanas

the 'River of Raptors'. Most recently, for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, he spent 6½ weeks on barrier islands in Louisiana filming the effects of the British Petroleum oil spill on the birds inhabiting those island colonies.

Join us on October 7. No matter where Larry lands, his films are spectacular. There will be many species, so bringing a field guide is not a bad idea.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Do you wonder why the birds' names keep changing? Why isn't a Spotted Towhee a Rufous-sided Towhee anymore, or a Northern Harrier a Marsh Hawk? Maury Stern will talk about the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union, which makes the decisions about names. He will also update us of name changes of the last few years.



Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, October 7**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize

8:05 PM Speaker: **Larry Arbanas**

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, November 4: **Jay Holcomb**

President's Corner Observations

By Maury Stern

By Jimm Edgar

At our August board meeting the MDAS board voted to send Golden Gate Audubon a check for \$5000. They had sent us a letter requesting help with deferring the legal fees they have incurred trying to get the Altamont Pass wind farm companies to comply with the lawsuit filed against them for the killing of birds—mostly raptors—by the turbines. A quick background: Altamont Pass wind farms are the oldest in the nation. When they were put in during the early 1980s no one knew what damage they would cause to birds. No EIR was required and in 2005 a number of Audubon chapters in the East Bay, including our chapter, sued Alameda County to require an EIR be done.



Nancy Wenninger photo.

We won the case and it stipulated that by November 2009 a majority of the older turbines must be removed and a 50% reduction in bird mortality must happen. Mind you it is estimated that 5000-10,000 birds are being killed each year. They did not meet any of these goals. Golden Gate has had legal expenses of nearly \$30,000 this year. We felt we had to help. This is too big a deal to just let slide by. Fortunately because of our generous contributions, we had funds to do this donation. We may need to sue again, but we just felt the stakes were too high and we must help. We will keep you posted.

Not too early to think about our two Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Counts. I hope you can help on one or both. They are a lot of fun. Eastern CCC is on Tuesday, December 14. And the Central CCC is on Saturday, December 18. Mark your calendars.

Lastly, just to say how lucky we are to have Native Bird Connections as a part of our chapter. Diana Granados and her team have 17 different species of birds under their care; quite a huge job in itself. They brought five owl species to our September meeting and did the program. Many of you came up to me after the program and said it was one of the best programs we have ever had. And what they do with children is amazing! We are very lucky indeed.

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

August and early September marked the return and passing through of many migrants. A **Solitary Sandpiper** at Tilden RP Jewel Lake on 9/6 was seen by many JDa, BL, HN, DQ, RS. There was a very early juvenile **Ferruginous Hawk** in East County on 8/27 JD.

The most unusual bird of all though was a **Greater Roadrunner** in the back yard of JC on 8/30. There had been no documented sightings since 1986, when Seth Adams of Save Mount Diablo photographed one in Brentwood this Spring.

A **Harlequin Duck** and three **Brant** were at Brooks Island 9/11 and 9/12 BP, PB.

Large flocks of **American White Pelicans** were flying over San Pablo Reservoir 8/13 BF; Miller Knox RP in Point Richmond PB, JD, AM; Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga 9/6 S&ST.

PB saw 60-70 **Swainson's Hawks** over an open field in East Contra Costa County on 8/31.

A **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Heather Farm Park on 9/6 HH, and 9/12 TR.

Sanderlings were at the Big Break area in Oakley on 9/6 BP.

HH and PS saw thirty **Red-necked Phalaropes** along a trail near the Iron House Sanitary District in Oakley 8/13.

On 9/6 there were **Caspian Terns** at Upper San Leandro Reservoir S&ST, and the Big Break area in Oakley BP.

A male **Allen's Hummingbird** was well seen at Tilden RP on 9/2 HH, FS, M&SS.

Two **Selasphorus Hummingbirds** were seen 8/9 in Tilden BF.

CM and KW saw and photographed an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** in Kennedy Grove RP on 8/30, during an EBRPD hike led by Bethany Facendini.

PR found a **Western Wood-Pewee** 9/3 in Tilden RP.

Willow Flycatchers were seen in two areas: 9/1 Heather Farm HH, DW; 9/6 by ES along the Bay View Trail in Richmond; and 9/12 by PB near the Bay View Trail.

Hundreds of **Tree Swallows** were at Bethel Island on 8/31 PB. There are usually large flocks of wintering **Tree Swallows** in the Delta, but these could have been migrating south.

On 9/6, BP saw a male **Phainopepla** at Round Valley RP.

HH saw two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** in Redwood Trees near his home near Heather Farm on 9/3. These are unusual birds this far east in the county.

Yellow Warblers were wide-spread in groups of 1-13 HH, TR, FS, DW from 8/16 to 9/12.

PR saw a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** in Tilden RP on 9/3.

Townsend's Warblers returned in good numbers JD, BF, BP, PR.

Hermit Warblers continued in unusually large numbers BF, BP, FS.

Two **Western Tanagers** were at Knox-Miller RP on 9/5. PB, JD, AM. BP found one at Mitchell Canyon 9/6.

BP also saw a **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** along Marsh Creek Road near a rock pile on 9/6.

Four **Lark Sparrows** were at Heather Farm 8/23 HH.

PB, JD, and AM saw two **Black-headed Grosbeaks** at Miller-Knox RP on 9/5.

PB Pat Bacchetti, JC Jane Chinn, JDa Jane Dang, JD Judith Dunham, BF Bob Fitch and crew, HH Hugh Harvey, BL Bob Lewis, CM Cindy Margulies, AM Amy McDonald, HN Harold Newman, BP Bob Power, DQ Dave Quady, TR Ted Robertson, PR Phila Rogers, FS Fred Safier, PS Paul Schorr, HS Harjeet Singh, M&SS Maury and Susan Stern, ES Emilie Strauss, S&ST Susan and Steve Taylor, JT Jerry Ting, KW Ken Walters, DW Denise Wight.

Q

This species was brought to the point of near extinction because of the agricultural use of DDT, but it has now recovered and three years ago was removed from the endangered species list. These birds breed in forested areas near large bodies of water and prey mostly on fish.

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

AABDEEGLL

A Legacy for California State Parks



Did you know that 52 Audubon California Important Bird Areas are at least partially owned by California State Parks, totaling 156,000 acres?

Audubon California, The Nature Conservancy, Save the Redwoods League and California State Parks Foundation are sponsors of The State Parks & Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act (“State Parks Initiative”) appearing on the November 2, 2010 statewide ballot as Proposition 21.

Proposition 21 works like this—

- Vehicles registered in California will get free, year-round day-use admission to all California State Parks in exchange for a new annual \$18 vehicle license fee, a considerable savings if you go to more than two State Parks in a year.

- The funding will provide a stable, reliable and adequate source of funding for the state park system, for wildlife conserva-

tion and for increased and equitable access to those resources for all Californians.

- The parks budget will no longer be subject to cuts by the legislature or the Governor, the Trust Fund

cannot be borrowed from or raided, and our State Parks can begin work on acquisitions and deferred maintenance once the funds become available.

The passage of this proposition is a conservation legacy that all of us Audubon members in California can leave to future generations!

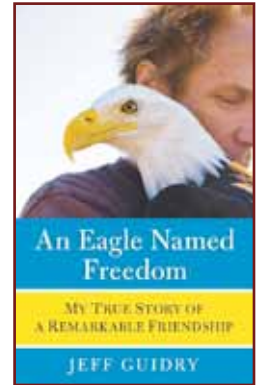
The opposition calls this a “return of the car tax” and avers “We should rely on the free market as the most efficient and the most just system for funding . . . We must stop pouring funds into black holes that don’t benefit any of us. We can’t force poor Californians to fund projects they will never see.”* But shouldn’t every Californian be responsible in a small way to maintain our state’s natural heritage?

Our State Parks are shining stars, not black holes, and they benefit all of us.

* *Michelle Steele, Pasadena Star-News.*

An Eagle Named Freedom

Have you ever walked through a book store and seen all the books on the sale table? Have you ever asked yourself who wrote them and why? There is probably a book out there waiting for you to read, maybe *An Eagle Named Freedom* by Jeff Guidry is it.



One of my jobs for the chapter is to collect our mail, which I do twice a week. A little over a month ago, we received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher, William Morrow.

This is the story of a man who volunteers at a wildlife rehabilitation center in Washington and his relationship with a female Bald Eagle that cannot be released to the wild. Throughout my reading, I had a question in the back of my mind—is this the way it is done by Diana Granados at Native Bird Connections? Or maybe, do they do this at the Lindsay Museum?

One of the many ways we connect with the animal world is through anthropomorphism, to attribute human traits to something not human. We all watch parent birds feed their chicks and think in our human parent-child terms. We all watch raccoon babies, or bear cubs or fawns, and look at them as we look at our children.

Jeff Guidry describes an even closer relationship with a Bald Eagle named Freedom. Jeff uses this bird to help him overcome his personal difficulties with cancer. It was hard for me to read this story and I am not sure why. It could be my own experience with heart disease and Rosita’s fight with breast cancer. Or it could be the stretch my imagination had to make to see this man’s relationship with an eagle from a perspective of reality.

Still, I am sure that many readers will enjoy this book. It is available for \$21.99, wherever books are sold. ISBN 978-0-06-182674-0.

By Hugh Harvey

Welcome New Members

Richard and Nina Devoe

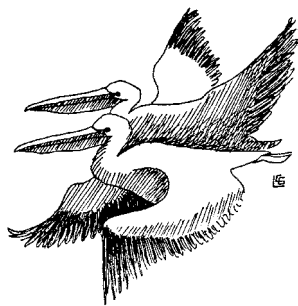
Walnut Creek

Barbara Hakala

Walnut Creek

George Istvan

Concord



In its continuing efforts to support California State Parks, Audubon California recently issued grants to two local Audubon chapters to work with State Parks on park land. Funded by an endowment set up by Audubon California, the grants provide long-term financial assistance for important conservation, restoration and public outreach projects.

Redwood Region Audubon received \$7,500 to create three acres of restored habitat for the Western Snowy Plover at Humboldt Lagoons State Park, and to conduct outreach to park visitors on the need to protect this endangered species. Morro Coast Audubon received \$2,500 to monitor bird populations at Morro Bay State Park and educate the public about birds and habitat in the area.

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 November issue is October 12.**



Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

October

- 2 Saturday..... Outer Point Reyes
- 9 Saturday..... Tennessee Valley
- 16 Saturday..... Abbott's Lagoon

November

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

December

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

**Come Birding with Us
in October!**

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php.

The full schedule through August 2011 was published in the September *Quail*, http://www.diabloaudubon.com/newsletter/Quail_Sep_10.pdf

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

Category ①: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths
 Category ②: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain
 Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool locations: **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.



**② Saturday, October 2
Outer Point Reyes**

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:00 AM. Meet 8:30 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center in Olema. 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. for 6 miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to another 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. We are hoping for migrants and vagrants. Weather is unpredictable.

*View north from
near Point Reyes
Light Station.*

A photograph showing a view of the ocean from a rocky cliffside. The water is blue with white waves crashing against the shore. In the foreground, there are yellow flowers.

**③ Saturday, October 9
Tennessee Valley**

Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Carpool leaves El Nido Ranch Road at 7:30 AM. Meet 8:30 AM at Tennessee Valley Road parking lot. We have not done this trip for many years and are offering it in lieu of Hawk Hill, which is closed to the public this fall. This is an easy 2-mile walk to Tennessee Beach through meadow, along creeks, a lagoon, and some chaparral, with a variety of birds of several habitats, possibly a vagrant or two. From US-101 north of Sausalito take the Stinson Beach exit (SR-1) west ½ mile, turn left on Tennessee Valley Road, drive to the parking lot at the end of the road. Carry lunch, wear layered clothing.

**③ Saturday, October 16
Abbott's Lagoon**

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 7:00 AM. Meet at 8:30 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 for 6 miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to another 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.

Annual Treasurer's Report – 2010

By Steve Buffi

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.” 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. The Board voted to merge the McNabney Marsh Fund with the Conservation and Education Fund during the fiscal year after consulting the membership.

July 2009 — June 2010

Funds	Revenue	Expenses	Net	Fund Balance 7/1/2010
General	\$27,409.72	\$27,542.79	-\$133.07	\$94,767.71
Conservation & Education	\$232.07	\$0.00	\$232.07	\$16,724.51
Breeding Bird Atlas	\$75.19	\$223.48	-\$148.29	\$20,549.15
Total All Funds	\$27,716.98	\$27,766.27	-\$49.29	\$132,041.37

Trip Reports

Bodega Bay, August 21. A day that was gray, but not too windy, brought out 12 birders. We were disappointed to miss Wandering Tattler, Virginia Rail, and Elegant Tern, which we often see on this trip. We were pleased to see Black Oystercatcher, Black and Ruddy Turnstones, and Osprey. We were particularly pleased with good views of Marbled Murrelet, one swimming peacefully next to a Common Murre to offer us a comparison. The final total was 57 species.

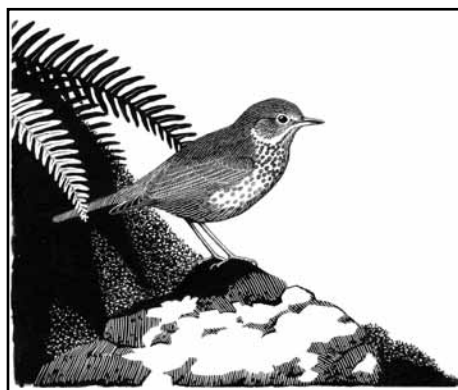
Fred Safier

Jewel Lake, September 2. Four members and guests beat the day's heat with an early morning bird walk around Jewel Lake, on the boardwalk and the lower Packrat Trail. The expected birds were there including many small songbirds, and Mallards on the pond. We had excellent looks at a male Allen's Hummingbird and a Pacific-slope Flycatcher. Many Swainson's Thrushes were calling from the brush and going after berries. We also saw Wrentits very close, some feeding on the trail.

Maury Stern

Antioch Dunes, September 11. The docents of Antioch Dunes NWR gave us a wonderful 1½ hour walk around the Stamm Unit of the refuge. We heard much of the checkered history of the property as well as about

the plants and butterflies. We did not see any Lange's metalmark butterflies, but we did see plenty of naked-stem buckwheat, Antioch Dunes evening primrose and some buckeye butterflies. The Contra Costa wallflower is a spring bloomer and has long since gone to seed. The eight chapter members and others from the public also came up with about 18 bird species. Highlights were a White-tailed Kite, a Loggerhead Shrike and a distant empid species. Thanks to Michael Klein, Ron Dawson and Carol Coan. *Hugh Harvey*



Notecards featuring the art of Dana Gardner, drawn specifically for Mount Diablo Audubon Society, are on sale at the general meetings for \$3 each, all proceeds going to the education and conservation programs.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Suet and Seed Sale October 6–October 24

Stock up and get ready for fall and winter birdfeeding! Check out the *Stackables*—the great way to combine seed and suet into one type of birdfood. And they are not messy!

Saturday, October 9 19th Anniversary Party

Please come and help us celebrate!

- Many FREE gifts and prize drawings.
- See a Bald Eagle.
- Discounts on every transaction.
- Plants for attracting birds and butterflies to your garden.



September is always a lull time for backyard feeding. The grosbeaks and orioles have left. Year-round residents no longer have young to feed and may have dispersed. In October, White and Golden-crowned Sparrows will begin to return along with Juncos and Northern Flickers. Also, chickadees and titmice will begin flocking together looking for food and they are often joined by Bushtits and kinglets. As fall gets into full swing, we should see feeder activity increase. There will be less natural food available. Some species will be eating more seeds, suet, or peanuts, and fewer insects.

Try our exclusive Bark Butter. It is composed of peanut butter and other highly nutritious ingredients. Apply it to special feeders or just spread it on a tree trunk! We have been using it in our yard and have found all the suet-eating birds like it often better than suet. Warblers, wrens, sparrows, towhees, kinglets and other birds are also readily attracted to it.

Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303
Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Tolowa Dunes

» Continued from Page 8



Tolowa Dunes State Park.

Photo courtesy of Fran Gatti
www.FransBlog.com

Audubon California has defined the coastline of California from Point St. George north to the mouth of the Smith River—essentially Tolowa Dunes State Park—as an “Important Bird Area” (IBA). It is “one of the most ornithologically significant coastal areas in the state.” The Del Norte Coast IBA is host to 18 sensitive bird species, some present in few if any other locations in California.

The IBA does have conservation issues. There is a problem with OHV riders; and there are conflicts between dairy ranchers and other farmers concerning the vast numbers of geese in the area. Audubon California reported in 2004 that the entire global population of Aleutian Cackling Geese stops here to rest and refuel on their annual migration. People would gather before dawn on the shore near Castle Rock to watch them take off, thousands and thousands heading for the feeding grounds. Ranchers often did not want them grazing on their pastures and used many methods to disturb them. Now it can no longer be said in truth that they all come here. Many go further south to Humboldt County, but it is still a very impressive show.

Currently a critical situation has arisen when some factions are advocating the reclassification of 500 acres of Tolowa State Park lands (about 10%) to the status of a State Recreation Area in order to allow waterfowl hunting. This plot is immediately next to the Yontocket Indian Village site and the cemetery, places on the National Register of Historic Places. California Fish and Game’s Lake Earl Wildlife Area has 6000 acres available to hunters; is there any credible reason to diminish protection of the bird species who use Tolowa Dunes

State Park, or to decrease the desirability of the State Park as a destination for nature viewers and for wildlife?

There are at most 70,000 waterfowl hunters in the state—that’s the average number of California Duck Stamps sold annually—while the US Fish and Wildlife Service states that 6,000,000 Californians are birders or birdwatchers.

The village site at Yontocket and the cemetery, which holds the remains of all who perished in the massacre, are sacred to the Tolowa people. For them, Yontocket is the “Center of the Universe.” In their history, it is the source of all creation, the place where the first redwood grew. For State Parks to even consider allowing hunting and gunfire near Yontocket disrespects the Tolowa and their history.

On September 10, a letter was sent to California State Parks Commissioners signed by 28 groups including Mount Diablo Audubon Society and four other Audubon chapters, Sierra Club California, the California Native



This is the area of Tolowa Dunes State Park proposed for waterfowl hunting, specifically the forested ponds in the dunes and some of the sloughs down below. Photo in late March 2003, an exceptionally wet spring, by F. L. Hiser Jr.

Plant Society, and others in strong opposition. Another letter was sent by the Smith River Rancheria of the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Indians. You may wish to state your opinion with letters to the following: North Coast District Acting Superintendent Michelle Gardner, mgard@parks.ca.gov; California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman, ruth@parks.ca.gov; and Chair Caryl Hart and Commissioners, California State Park & Recreation Commission, LNastro@parks.ca.gov. Please do so before October 4, as the reclassification action is scheduled for October 8.

Bald Eagle ♦ *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*



Bald Eagle photographed near the Indian cemetery at Tolowa Dunes State Park.

Photo courtesy of Alan Justice.

The Bald Eagle is not without feathers, rather, its name comes from the Celtic word *bal* or *ballede*, meaning ‘shining white’. And when an adult bird is wheeling high over the mouth of a river in search of lunch the

white head and neck and the shining yellow bill can be seen from far off. An immature bird, though, has a plumage entirely dark brown and cannot be distinguished from a Golden Eagle.

In Contra Costa County, Bald Eagles are frequently seen around large bodies of water, such as Los Vaqueros Reservoir. They had never been known to nest here, however. Then in June of 2006 an adult Bald Eagle was seen carrying nesting material over San Pablo Reservoir. Later that month a nest and a young bird were found, the first confirmation of Bald Eagles nesting in the county.

The figure of this noble bird is well known throughout the civilized world, emblazoned as it is on our national standard, which waves in the breeze of every clime, bearing to distant lands the remembrance of a great people living in a state of peaceful freedom. May that peaceful freedom last for ever!

— John J. Audubon

Ornithology Opportunities

Birding classes at Albany Adult School. **Bay Area Birds**, with Rusty Scalf and Bob Lewis, is a six-session Wednesday night class, from October 6 through November 14, with seven field trips on Saturday or Sunday. The cost is \$100. A course in **Beginning Birding**, with Anne Hoff, will begin October 27 for four Wednesdays and four Saturday field trips; \$75. Further information and registration is at www.albanyadultschool.org/birding.html.

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

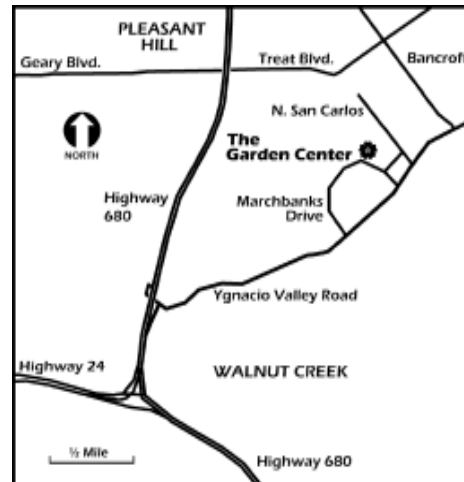
The **14th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium** is to be held at the Hilton in Stockton, November 18-21. Dynamic photographer and author Paul Bannick, who was our MDAS speaker last November, will give a program based on his research on "Owls and Woodpeckers of the West". Author of dozens of books and articles and award-winning photographer Moose Petersen will give a presentation on "California's Threatened and Endangered Birds". Workshops include Jon Dunn on sparrows and Joe Morlan's shorebird identification workshop focusing on loons and grebes. There are many others, ranging from Central Valley Raptors to Beginning Birding and digiscoping to bird sketching. For more information or registration go to www.cvbs.org or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net.



"Who will deny that birds are a conspicuous manifestation of beauty in nature."

Ralph Hoffmann, 1927

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

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*Tolowa Dunes State Park, Del Norte County.
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Tolowa Dunes State Park

By Ellis Myers

One of the California coast's finest wetlands is located just south of the Oregon border. Together with ancient sand dunes, a dramatic, driftwood-strewn beach, wooded ridges and a Native American heritage, this is Tolowa Dunes State Park. In 2001 it was named for the Tolowa, Native Americans who lived in the Del Norte County area for thousands of years. The Tolowa probably numbered between 1,000 and 2,400 with villages located in coastal areas near the mouth of the Smith River. They hunted seals and sea-lions using redwood dugouts, going out as far as Seal Rocks, about 6 miles offshore. They caught salmon and eel in nets in the Smith River. From the beach the Tolowa fished for perch and cod and gathered shellfish. They also hunted deer and elk but relied primarily on the supply of food that the rivers and sea provided. Their first contact with Euro-American settlers occurred in 1828 with the overland

explorations of Jedediah Smith. In 1853, as retaliation for the deaths of several early prospectors, the settlers ambushed the members of the Yontocket village during a religious ceremony and celebration. The village was set on fire and people were shot and stabbed as they fled the burning houses.

Adjacent to the east, Lake Tolowa and Lake Earl comprise the largest coastal lagoon complex on the Pacific Coast south of Alaska. This area is managed by the California Department of Fish and Game as the Lake Earl Wildlife Area, where hunting of waterfowl is allowed from mid-October through January.

The lakes host as many as 315 species of birds and are a crucial stopover for birds traveling the Pacific Flyway. Sometimes as many as 100,000 birds can be sighted here. Surrounding the lakes are saltwater marshland and freshwater wetlands, as well as far-reaching sand dunes.

Just to the south of the State Park, a half mile off the Pacific shore, is Castle Rock, a National Wildlife Refuge. Castle Rock's cliffs provide nesting habitat for 100,000

Common Murres and for three species of cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets, Leach's and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, and Tufted Puffins.

The State Park has a good trail system that visits the lakes and dunes. Spring, when the ponds are full and the wildflowers are in bloom, and autumn, with crisp, clear days, are good seasons for hiking the trails. In summer, look for the Federally threatened Oregon silverspot butterfly and for mosquitoes!

Look for Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons in winter. Wading birds, ducks, and marine mammals are present year-round. Over 80 species of songbirds sing from the groves of Sitka spruce and red alder. Harbor seals and sea lions are visible offshore. Endangered California gray whales pass by from October through June.

The wetlands, riparian corridors, and forests of Lake Earl Wildlife Area attract many species: Aleutian Cackling Geese and Canvasbacks, Tundra Swans, Black-bellied Plovers, and Peregrine Falcons. Lakes and creeks sustain river otters, muskrats, beavers, salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout.

Continued on Page 6 »