



# 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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October 2012

## Greater Sage-Grouse ♦ Alan Krakauer

Sage-grouse breeding congregations, or leks, are one of the great marvels of nature. Imagine waiting in a blind with the howls of coyotes and songs of open country birds drifting down the cold pre-dawn air. Suddenly staccato wing beats herald the daily arrival of male sage-grouse. The lek comes alive with all manner of sounds—swishes, coos, whistles, pops, guttural clacking from the males, along with quacks and whines from the females. As the sky lightens, you can finally see the action: males looking like alien ambassadors, inflating their vocal sacs and flashing white breast feathers, confronting other males on territory boundaries and battling with their wings. All the while, the much smaller females wander through the commotion like shoppers at a bazaar, assessing each male in turn in their search for Mr. Right.

For decades, animal behaviorists have been studying the male displays and female mating patterns of sage-grouse, yet many mysteries persist. Females seem to attend to the sounds that males make during courtship; however, sage-grouse are a complicated “instrument”, and we still have a lot to learn about the ways males make sound. Dr. Alan Krakauer from the University of California



Greater Sage-Grouse. Photos by Alan Krakauer.

Davis will introduce us to some of the work he and his collaborators have been undertaking to answer some of these questions. For example, new recording technology has led to the discovery of “two-voiced” vocalizations that previous researchers had assumed were the overlap of multiple males’ calls on a busy lek. Males also make sounds by rubbing feathers together, yet seem to do this in a way unique to birds.

Unfortunately sage-grouse are more often in the news these days due to the many threats to their declining populations. Among the challenges faced by the birds is development in sage-brush habitat. The birds can fare poorly in areas with intensive energy development, but what is less clear is what aspects of the development are responsible for these population declines. Alan will describe an impressive three-year experiment that shows noise from development can cause a range of problems for this species.

Alan is originally from the east coast (North Carolina and Virginia) and received his B.S. from Cornell University. During his studies he was fortunate to work with bird biologists at the famed Cornell Laboratory of

Ornithology. He also worked as a field biologist in Guam and Venezuela before moving to the Bay Area in 1998 to start graduate school at the University of California Berkeley. Although the allure of studying birds in the tropics was strong for him, Alan turned his attention to a fascinating local species, the Wild Turkey. He spent several years at UC Berkeley’s Hastings Natural History Reservation in upper Carmel Valley, observing turkeys and collecting DNA samples to unravel the mysteries of the turkey’s social system. His study of cooperation among males is now featured in several textbooks for ornithology and animal behavior. Alan is now a lecturer and project scientist at UC Davis, and has been working there since receiving his Ph.D. in 2005. He has published close to twenty scientific articles and book chapters.

### BIRDING INFORMATION

Brian Murphy will talk about why it is so difficult to see Wood Ducks in our local wooded creeks and what we are going to do to change that. Saturday, October 6th

*Continued on Page 2 »*

### 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, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,\* raffle

8:05 PM Speaker: **Alan Krakauer**

\* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, November 1:

Jack Barclay: Galapagos

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

## President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

Welcome back to the new fall season for MDAS. Our first meeting on September 6 was well attended and our speaker was extremely interesting. His talk about the complexity of bird song was just fascinating. Also, Dia DeRose, our first recipient of the Jean Richmond scholarship award spoke during birding information. She attended a birding camp near Yuba Pass this summer. She did a great job and had a wonderful week.

I think all of you know how tough it is for all of our birds to get through life and it seems to be getting tougher. I cut an article out of a magazine a couple of years ago entitled "The trouble with cats." Again, I think all of us know



Sketch by Meg Sandri

what an impact cats have on bird populations. It is estimated that in the US and Canada 1 billion birds are killed each year by cats! Now Bettie and I have a wonderful cat, Frida, but she never goes outside. We have three or four cats in our neighborhood that I see often and I know that they have killed birds. The article I read said a New Zealand study determined eight species of birds had become extinct in New Zealand and another 40 species eliminated. Feral cats are probably the most devastating, but our pets do damage also. Some say a bell on a cat or well fed cats do not kill wildlife, but studies confirm they do. The article said that the American Bird Conservancy and the Humane

Society have teamed up in the "Cats Indoors" campaign to protect both birds and cats. (Cats that are outside do not live anywhere as long as indoor cats) I hope they have an impact.

Then, to add more to the problem I read this article in the Wall Street Journal in June, 2012. The title was "Dousing lights to save birds." The lights spoken of are the red lights on communication towers and it is estimated that there are 84,000 towers in North America.

It is estimated that every year 6.8 million birds are killed when they hit these towers. They are drawn to the red lights during night migration and either hit the tower or wires or fly around and around the tower light until they die from exhaustion. 70% of the deaths occur on about 2% of the tallest towers. The good news is that if the red lights are blinking, which are just as visible to pilots, the birds leave almost immediately. Good news on that front.

The article in the WSJ showed these grim figures: deaths of birds per year: cats, 1B; buildings and windows, 1B; power lines, 130M; hunting, 120M; pesticides, 67M; cars, 60M; towers, 6.8M; wind turbines, 400,000; airplanes, 25,000.

Sorry to start our year out with some grim news, but know that Audubon is in the middle of all of this trying to make an impact. Your membership and support make a difference.

## Birding Information

» Continued from Page 1

is Walnut Creek Community Service Day and we have a project to install eight Wood Duck boxes around the pond at Heather Farm Park. Wood Ducks should be returning to the pond to nest in the spring. On the large pond, Wood Ducks are less nervous and people should have the opportunity to enjoy watching them at that location.



Mother and ducklings

## Welcome New Members

Dolores Butkus

Walnut Creek

Jolynn Lacasse

Pittsburg

## Mount Diablo Audubon Joins Watershed Council

Mount Diablo Audubon has joined with Save Mount Diablo, Muir Heritage Land Trust, East Bay Regional Park District and other organizations as a member of the newly formed Walnut Creek Watershed Council, a voluntary, non-regulatory group that supports a healthy and sustainable Walnut Creek watershed. The Council's task is to work to protect and enhance the watershed and to facilitate actions that increase awareness of the watershed, implement watershed projects and serve as a forum for sharing information and activities that affect the watershed.

There are currently more than 25,000 acres in the Walnut Creek watershed that are owned and managed by various entities for open space purposes. This represents more than a quarter of all the space within the watershed. The open space areas protect and preserve habitat value, riparian vegetation, wildlife corridors, aesthetic vistas, stormwater quality and storage, and recreational opportunities. More acreage is added each year and The Watershed Council provides an overview of the open space areas in the watershed.

**Q**

This species is restricted in its range to the State of California, although a few are also reported in Baja.

The juvenile female bird resembles its father—not its mother.

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

ACDEEKLLNOOPRSTTUW

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# 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@yahoo.com](mailto:EBB Sightings@yahoo.com). If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

The major event of the month was at Vollmer Peak about a quarter mile from the staging area near the steam trains when BF found a Green-tailed Towhee. While arriving at the staging area people began seeing up to 20 Red Crossbills feeding on the conifer cones in the parking lot.

There was also a two-day visit in Moraga of an adult male Baltimore Oriole. LS 8/18.

A Wood Duck was seen by a group led by DW on 9/4 at Upper San Leandro Reservoir.

AL saw 4 Blue-winged Teal at the Iron House Sanitary Ponds on 9/9.

On 8/25 SHu saw young Wild Turkey poults that were smaller than a tennis ball near his Alamo home.

Ten American White Pelicans were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir 9/4. DW

The Green Heron youngsters watched by HH at Heather Farm Pond continued 8/20. EL saw one at Martinez Shoreline.

Two Golden Eagles flew by Vollmer Peak on 9/6. BM.

A hatch-year Peregrine Falcon was at

the 51st Street entrance to Meeker Slough in Richmond. SL, 8/25.

On 8/17, HH saw an unusual American Kestrel in the area of Heather Farm.

A Black-necked Stilt was at the base of the Lafayette Dam on 9/1. MS.

Fifty-two Greater Yellowlegs were at the Iron House area in Oakley 9/9. AL.

Red Knot was at Meeker Slough 8/24, SL, and 8/31 at Ferry Point in Pt. Richmond, TB.

AL saw 44 Long-billed Dowitchers at Iron House 9/9.

Red-necked Phalarope was at Iron House 9/8, JR, and 9/9, AL.

A first Eurasian Collared-Dove was along the Contra Costa Canal near Heather Farm on 9/4. FS.

Several Rufous Hummingbirds were in KF's yard in Brickyard Landing in Point Richmond on 9/3.

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## Duck Stamps and Audubon Action

Mount Diablo Audubon Society advocates purchase of Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps as a responsible way of contributing to conservation of habitat for birds. Commonly called Duck Stamps, this national program funds the acquisition of additional lands for National Wildlife Refuges.

At our September meeting, 16 members bought stamps. Stamps will also be available at the October meeting. As an incentive for your support of wetlands, MDAS includes an optional plastic key chain to display your stamp and to use as an identification tag for your binoculars. There may not be a better or easier way for everyone to make a difference for wildlife conservation.

So here's the dilemma: The National Wildlife Refuge System, a cornerstone of bird conservation in America, is facing an unprecedented attack. Since 1903, National Wildlife Refuges have been created both by the President and by Congress, but a new bill would change all that. HR 3009 would make it impossible for the President to establish new refuges. That's a huge problem, because the Executive branch—including every President since Theodore Roosevelt—has established 90 percent of all refuges.

National Audubon has asked that you write to your U.S. Representative today and voice your support for our National Wildlife Refuges. Your letters right now are critical, and Audubon makes it easy for you at



The first Duck Stamp was issued in 1934, showing a drawing of Mallards by Jay N. "Ding" Darling, whose idea it was to sell stamps for the purchase of wetlands. Sales of Federal Duck Stamps have generated more than \$750 million to purchase or lease over 6 million acres of wetlands habitat in the United States.

<http://www.audubonaction.org> and click on Congress Attacks National Wildlife Refuges

HR 3009 is a blatant attempt to halt any growth of the Refuge System and is retroactive from September 30, 2011: under this law the newly established Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge would cease to be a refuge.

Please urge your U.S. Representative to vote NO on HR 3009. Your member of Congress needs to hear your opposition to this ill-conceived plan that would undermine the entire National Wildlife Refuge System and its many benefits to birds, wildlife, and American communities.

Buy Duck Stamps!

### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. R. 3009

To amend the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 to require that any new national wildlife refuge may not be established except as expressly authorized by statute.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'National Wildlife Refuge Review Act of 2011'.

#### SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES.

(a) In General— Section 4(a) of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

'(6) The Secretary may not establish any national wildlife refuge except as expressly authorized by a law enacted after September 30, 2011.'

(b) Existing Refuges Not Affected—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall not apply with respect to any national wildlife refuge established on or before September 30, 2011.

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## October

- 6-7 Saturday-Sunday . . . Monterey Bay Pelagic Birding Weekend
- 10 Wednesday . . . . . Berkeley–Emeryville Shoreline
- 13 Saturday . . . . . Hawk Hill
- 27 Saturday . . . . . Abbott's Lagoon

## 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

### ② Saturday-Sunday, October 6–7 Monterey Bay Pelagic Weekend

Leader: Terry Colborn, [tlcgdc@aol.com](mailto:tlcgdc@aol.com), 530-758-0689.

This trip was first announced last April for Mount Diablo, Ohlone and Yolo Audubon chapters. The weekend will feature a Saturday pelagic trip. Sunday will consist of land birding at a variety of possible locales including Carmel River State Beach, Moss Landing, Moonglow Dairy, Elkhorn Slough and others. The cost is \$95 for the boat trip. All 25 spaces have been booked well in advance. There is a waiting list.

## 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.

### ① Wednesday, October 10

#### Berkeley–Emeryville Shoreline

Leader: Eugenia Larson, 806-0644.

Carpool leaves at 8:00 AM from El Nido Ranch Road. Meet at 8:30 AM in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to I-580 west, turn north onto I-80. Take Powell Street exit, turn left on Powell, go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy, dress in layers. Loons, grebes, bay ducks and shorebirds..

### ② Saturday, October 13

#### 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 southbound US 101 take last Sausalito exit, Alexander Avenue, just before the Golden Gate Bridge. From San Francisco, pass the Vista Point and take the Alexander Avenue exit. On west side of freeway, turn left toward the Marin Headlands and go up the hill (Conzelman Road); at the intersection go right and down hill (McCullough Road). Turn left at the stop sign onto Bunker Road and continue to the parking lot on the right just before the bridge. 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.



River Otters at  
Rodeo Lagoon

### ③ Saturday, October 27

#### Abbott's Lagoon

Leader: Gary Fregien, 916-708-0636.

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. Turn right across the bridge, go 3 miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at the Bovine Bakery for coffee and pastries, continue out of town towards Olema, then turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Lots of walking in sand.

## Trip Reports

**Bodega Bay, August 18.** Warm sun, fog and wind, just what one might expect at Bodega Bay at any time. Many birds were seen across the harbor from The Tides, our starting point, so our group of 11 birders drove around the harbor to find them. Along the way we stopped to hear a Virginia Rail at the Rail Pond, but by then fog appeared over the Head, so we took some time to check Gaffney Point and Owl Canyon. By the time we arrived at Bodega Head, it was clear again, but windy. Even so, we found Common Murres, Red-necked Phalaropes, a Pigeon Guillemot, Black Turnstones and Black Oystercatchers. After a lunch break, we checked Gaffney Point again, as well as Porto Bodega and Smith Brothers Road. We compiled our checklist at the latter spot, then we checked the entrance to Doran County Park and the bushes below Diekmann's parking lot, where we added three more species for a total of 57 seen or heard. *Hugh Harvey*



*Lange's Metalmark butterfly, USF&WS.*

**Antioch Dunes Wildlife Refuge, September 8.** The only unit of the National Wildlife Refuge system in Contra Costa County is the Antioch Dunes. Five members made the short trip to see and learn about the Dunes. One of those members had attended her first meeting just two days previous. Michael Krieg, a veteran docent for ten years, walked us around a portion of the property for more than an hour. During that time we learned some of the life histories of Antioch Dunes Evening Primrose, Contra Costa Wallflower and Lange's Metalmark Butterfly, all three of which are endangered species. Intimately connected was the story of Naked Stem Buckwheat, the host plant for the butterfly. We also learned the checkered history of the property, from the formation of the original dunes to the somewhat degraded state of the property today. None of the endangered butterflies was seen, but we did see 8 species of birds. The best of the bunch was a Say's Phoebe which sat atop some weedy stalks and a fence post for extended views *Hugh Harvey*

the Quail

## Fund-raiser for Native Bird Connections

Native Bird Connections (NBC) is vital to the on-going success of Mount Diablo Audubon's *No Child Left Inside* program, which reaches hundreds of school children each year with a positive influence on their knowledge of our natural environment. NBC also takes their birds and classroom lessons to schools and other venues throughout the Bay Area and even farther.

Native Bird Connections is an organization in dire need of funds owing to new federal regulations and fees which add unnecessarily to the complexity of wildlife rescue and care. In cooperation with Mount Diablo Audubon, Mike and Annie Eliot decided to hold an event at Wild Birds Unlimited on November 10 to help raise the funds they need.



*Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) in the care of Native Bird Connections.*

All of the proceeds from this first-ever rummage sale and feeder cleaning will go to NBC. You are invited to participate by:

1. Donating salable items that may be of value to people who visit the store.
2. Bringing in your bird feeder in need of care to be cleaned by volunteers on that day for a \$10 charge.
3. Purchasing items that have been donated to the sale.
4. Telling your friends and family about the event.

Diana and Jenny of NBC support this event and will be on

hand with live birds for your education and enjoyment. Wild Birds Unlimited will also have prize drawings and other fun stuff happening on that day for you and your family.

Learn more on the WBU website: [www.pleasanthill.wbu.com](http://www.pleasanthill.wbu.com)

## MDAS Art Show

Best of Show honors were awarded to Gloria Cannon at the Art4Antioch exhibit which featured artists from Mount Diablo Audubon and the Delta Science Center. Her painting *The Birdwatchers* is a scene reminiscing a trip to Panama. Julia Starr, last year's Best-of-Show winner, garnered the First Place prize for her painting *Catena*, and Paul Schorr also placed in the winner's circle, receiving Honorable Mention for his photograph *Autumn at a New Hampshire pond*.

The exhibit was shown at the Lynn House Gallery in Antioch from September 8-29. Entries from Delta Science Center were also to be considered for calendar illustrations for the Center.

**Jewel Lake/Tilden Regional Park, September 6.** Six members spent several hours birding the area around the Tilden Nature Center and Jewel Lake. The weather was comfortable after the morning fog burn-off. We saw 39 species including a couple of flocks of gleaners, including Yellow, Wilson's, Black-throated Gray,



*Gloria Cannon and The Birdwatchers*

and Townsend's Warblers, Hutton's and Warbling Vireos, Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. We also heard many Swainson's Thrushes and Wrentits. We saw 2 immature Western Tanagers also.

*Maury Stern*

## J. K. Townsend

» Continued from Page 8

from where Portland, Oregon is now, in September, he and Nuttall explored the surrounding area for birds and plants. He depended on Native Americans to help locate and capture the most elusive birds. They called Townsend kalak'alah tie, bird chief.

For six months in 1835 Townsend acted as Fort Vancouver's surgeon. Then, "anxious to escape the wet and disagreeable winter of this region", he and Nuttall embarked for the Sandwich Islands, the Kingdom of Hawai'i. After six weeks on O'ahu, they spent another six weeks on Kaua'i. While there, Townsend learned, according to his journal, that "The native boys here have adopted a singular mode of catching the honey sucking birds. They lay themselves flat upon their backs on the ground, and cover their whole bodies with bushes, and the campanulate flowers of which the birds are in search. One of these flowers is then held by the lower portion of the tube between the finger and thumb; the little bird inserts his long, curved bill to the base of the flower, when it is immediately seized by the fingers of the boy, and the little flut-

terer disappears beneath the mass of bushes. In this way, dozens of beautiful birds are taken, and they are brought to us living and uninjured."

Perhaps one of those honeycreepers is the specimen now in the collections of the Smithsonian, the 'Anianiau, endemic to the higher elevations on Kaua'i. Although Thompson found this bird in 1835, the next specimen of 'Anianiau was not described until 1888.

In December 1836 Townsend left Oregon. He spent three months in Hawai'i on this second trip, then traveled via Tahiti, Valparaiso, Chili and around Cape Horn back to Philadelphia. After arriving in October, 1837, he sold ninety-three birds to Audubon who described them in his *Birds of America*. He was hired as curator of the collections of both the Academy of Natural Sciences and the National Institute for the Promotion of Science in Washington, D.C.

Townsend published his travel journals in 1839 as *Narrative of a journey across the Rocky Mountains, to the Columbia River,*



Honeycreeper specimen collected by J. K. Townsend

and a visit to the Sandwich Islands, Chili, &c. They are a delight to read.

Among the discoveries credited to Townsend are Western Bluebird, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Hermit Warbler, Common Poorwill, Audubon's Warbler, Black Oystercatcher, Mountain Plover, Vaux's Swift, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Sage Thrasher, Lark Bunting, and Oregon Junco.

John Kirk Townsend died in 1851 at age 41 from exposure to the arsenic in the powder he used for preservations of his specimens.

## Nuttall's Woodpecker ♦ *Picoides nuttalli*

**a** If you provide food, you have a good chance of attracting a Nuttall's Woodpecker to your garden. They eat adult and larval beetles, insects and spiders, and they are fond of peanut butter and suet. Their favorite snacks also include poison-oak berries and some fruits. While their habitat is the oak woodlands, they do not eat acorns. They probe beneath the flaking bark of the trees for larva.

Nuttall's Woodpeckers are primary cavity nesters, so they drill holes in the dead wood of cottonwood, alder, willow or sycamore trees, or telephone poles. A number of other birds will take advantage of the woodpecker's carpentry skills, such as House Wren, Western Bluebird and White-breasted Nuthatch. The Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County reported Nuttall's Woodpeckers to breed throughout much of the county, and because they do not migrate, you are likely to be able to find them any time of year. It is not likely that you will mistake this bird for any other. It's only look-alike is the Ladder-backed Woodpecker, whose range is in the drier



Nuttall's Woodpecker, male.

Photo by Albert Linkowski

portions of Southern California and the Southwest to Texas. It was once called the Cactus Woodpecker. Our other small woodpecker is the Downy, which has a broad white stripe down its back. The rattling call of the Nuttall's Woodpecker as it comes swiftly with undulating flight to your feeder is always a delight

## Ornithology Opportunities

**16th Annual Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival, Lodi, CA.** November 2-4. <http://www.cranefestival.com/>. 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. General admission to the Sandhill Crane Festival is free. There is no charge for most of the events including the Reception, Art Show, workshops and presentations, and Exhibit Hall, although there are charges for the tours. For information, cost, and times, please see the tour schedule on the web site.

The Central Valley Bird Club will host the **Central Valley Bird Symposium, Stockton, CA** November 15-18. To look over the line-up of speakers, workshops, and field trips check visit the website at: [www.cvbs.org](http://www.cvbs.org)

# Observations

» *Continued from Page 3*

Several newly hatched Nuttall's Woodpeckers were in MS's Lafayette backyard on 8/30.

Two Olive-Sided Flycatchers were at Vollmer Peak 9/5. BF.

Western Wood-Peepees were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 9/4, DW; Vollmer Peak 9/5. BF.

Willow Flycatchers were in the willows at Jewel Lake in Tilden RP on 8/29. BB.

FS saw a Cassin's Vireo near Heather Farm 9/4.

Warbling Vireos were part of many gleaning flocks of migrating songbirds. 8/29 PR, 9/5 BF, in Tilden RP.

BMc and JR saw a Bank Swallow at the Iron House Sanitary Ponds 9/8 and AL saw 3 the next day.

Flocks with all three local Nuthatches were seen by DW at Valle Vista Staging area; Wildcat Canyon, JC; and BM along Skyline Trail.

A House Wren was seen by DW and group at Upper San Leandro Reservoir 9/4.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were at Wildcat Canyon Belugum Trail, JC, and Upper San Leandro Reservoir 9/4, DW.

Swainson's Thrushes were still present at Jewel Lake calling quietly on 8/29. PR.

Warblers were abundant in migration in mixed flocks throughout the area. Orange-crowned, Yellow, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, Hermit, MacGillivray's, and Wilson's were seen. BF, SH, KE, DW, FS, HH, BB, MP, DD, HN, C&TK, LL, BM.

Three Black-and-white Warblers were along the trail from Inspiration Point to Jewel Lake in late August. LLa.

Young Western Tanagers were also wide-spread. DW, BB, BF, BM, LLa, FS, HH.

The Green-tailed Towhee generated the most excitement when first seen on 9/5 by BF. After that it was seen by ES, BB, MP, HN, PR, AL, KP, AH, and DW.

A possible Brewer's Sparrow was at Valle Vista Staging Area 8/23. DW.

A Lincoln's Sparrow was at Vollmer Peak 9/10. HN.

HH had baby Dark-eyed Juncos in his Walnut Creek yard 8/25.

Eight Lazuli Buntings were at Vollmer Peak 9/5. BF

KF saw two Hooded Orioles in her Point Richmond yard 9/3.

A Baltimore Oriole was in a Moraga yard for two days around 8/18. LS.

Up to 20 Red Crossbills were found 9/6 through 9/11 at the Vollmer Peak Staging Area in Tilden Park. KP, BM, TF, AL, HN, C&TK, LT, RD.

HN saw Pine Siskin 9/7 at Vollmer Peak.

RD saw Lawrence's Goldfinches 9/8 also at Vollmer Peak.

LA Lee Aurich, TB Tony Brake, BB Bob and Barbara Brandriff, JC Jim Chiropoulos, RD Robert Dailey, DD Davor Desancic, SH Sylvia Haley, HH Hugh Harvey, AH Allen Hirsch, AHo Alan Howe, SHu Steve Hutchcraft, LLa Lynn Lakso, EL Elizabeth Leite, AL Albert Linkowski, SL Stephen Long, LL Laura Look, BM Bruce Mast, BMc Brooke McDonald, HN Harold Newman, MP Michael Park, KP Kathy Parker, MR Mark Rauzon, PR Phila Rogers, JR Jennifer Rycenga, FS Fred Safier, JS Judi Sierra, MS Maury Stern, LS Lou Stoddard, ES Emilie Strauss, LT Larry Thompson, DW Denise Wight.

**"A bird in the bush is worth two in the hand."**

**—Frank Chapman  
(1864–1962)**

**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 Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.



### MDAS Board of Directors

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### MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

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

For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society.

Please send The Quail by:  US mail  E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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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

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Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) at Dimond Park, Oakland.. Photo by Glen Tepke.

## John Kirk Townsend Kalak'alah tie ♦ Bird Chief

John Kirk Townsend had the good fortune to be born in Philadelphia in 1809. This was the year after Thomas Nuttall arrived there from England. Just three years after the return of the Lewis and Clark Voyage of Discovery, it was an era of America's awakening to the beauty and natural wonders of the lands beyond the Mississippi.

Of Quaker parentage, when he was 10 Townsend entered the Friends' Boarding School at Westtown, 25 miles east of Philadelphia, a school with a reputation for emphasizing science.

He early became interested in ornithology, and while he was still in school he began collecting the birds of West Chester County. He became adept at taxidermy. In 1833, he dis-



Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) at Black Diamond Mines RP.

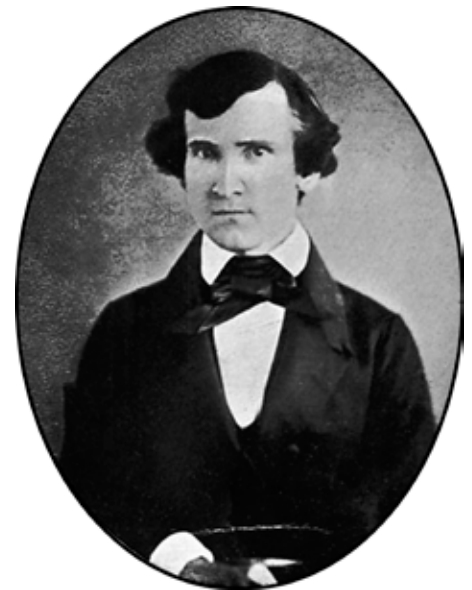
Photo by Beth Branthaver

covered a new species. He showed the bird to John Audubon and wrote a description, naming it Audubon's Bunting. But the description was somehow not published, and in 1834, Audubon renamed it Townsend's

Bunting. No other specimen of this bird has ever been found

Townsend joined the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the American Philosophical Society in 1833. The following year, botanist Thomas Nuttall invited Townsend to join Nathaniel Wyeth's expedition to Oregon as an ornithologist.

The two left Philadelphia in March 1834, joining Wyeth's party in St. Louis. During the overland trip Townsend collected numerous new species. On one occasion,



Townsend returned from a hunting sortie to find Nuttall and Wyeth relishing one of his specimens, an owl, for lunch. Another time, his traveling companions were so desperate for a drink that, while the naturalist was away, they dipped into the alcohol he used to embalm reptiles.

When Townsend arrived at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River just across

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