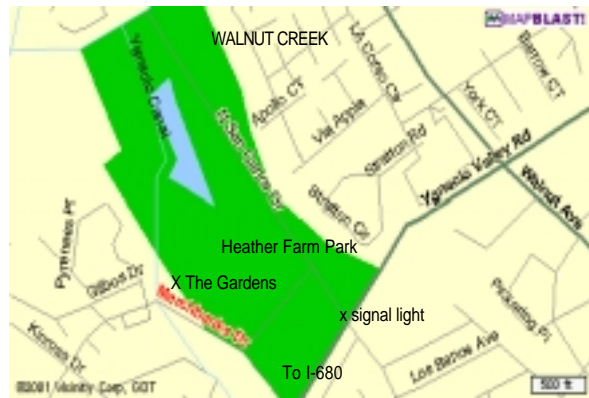


CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, September 4. Meetings for the rest of the 2003-04 year are Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4, Jan. 8 (second Thurs.), Feb. 5, March 4, Apr 1, May 6, and June 3. No meetings in July or August.

If you are a new member or new to the area, let us know. We want to welcome you and tell you about our activities. All new members and visitors receive a free door prize ticket.

The MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.



Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A one-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 95626. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please end exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.

Buy and Wear Your MDAS Cap with Pride! You're a Member of one of the oldest and most respected conservation organizations in northern California!

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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
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September 2003

Vol. 50, No. 1

Next Deadline: September 5

PRESIDENT'S NOTES by Mike Williams

Cecil (my wife) and I just returned from a vacation in southeast Arizona. Ask me about our encounters with local wildlife. While there, we hosted a group from MDAS for a day's birding in the Chiricahua Mountains. MDAS's Steve Glover led a birdwatching group to southeast Arizona not only to see birds but also as a fundraising trip. He has been the leader over the five years of field work for the *Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas*. The funds raised on this trip will be applied to the publishing cost of the Atlas. We will report next month on our day in the Chiricahuas.

Backyard Bird Watching Thoughts

One of the fun aspects of bird watching and feeding is how each year is different than others and yet how cycles repeat. I wrote the comments below four years ago—in September 1999—and they apply again this year!

- "This summer we saw far fewer orioles than in previous summers. In Arizona and southern California, there was record numbers of orioles. (Perhaps our cool weather kept them in the south).
- "We saw larger numbers of House Finches and Mourning Doves this summer, while Jay numbers were down—just the opposite of last year.
- "There were abundant numbers of Lesser Goldfinches at the thistle feeders with some American Goldfinches. That ratio will begin to change as we move into fall. More and more American Goldfinches will begin showing up at the feeders in flocks as they finish nesting.

(See **President's Notes** continued on p. 2)

Stephen Joseph's CoCo Photos to Open MDAS Year

At the September 4 general meeting, Stephen Joseph, well-known local photographer who specializes in Mt. Diablo landscapes, will present a three-dimensional slide show (complete with glasses) of Mt. Diablo landscapes. We will see every "square inch" of our mountain in its many moods and as the four seasons are reflected in its vistas.

Stephen has been photographing since he first picked up a camera at the age of ten. Landscapes have been his focus since the early 1970s, and Mt. Diablo has captivated his interest since 1984. Stephen spends three to five days a week on Mt. Diablo, photographing its moods and special places. He will share with us his experiences and 80-100 of his photographs of our favorite mountain.

Stephen not only specializes in panoramic and 3-D photography but also frequently works with vintage cameras that he has restored. His photographs reflect his concern for the environment as well as his art.

MDAS is fortunate to feature one of Stephen's photographs of Mt. Diablo on its website, thanks to his generosity. He has also very kindly donated this photo of a golden Mt. Diablo for our new 8-ft MDAS banner. We truly appreciate his sharing his wonderful photograph to stimulate interest in the Mt Diablo Audubon Society.

Stephen Joseph earned a master's degree from California College of Arts and Crafts. He is active in Save Mt Diablo.

Birding Information

Jimm Edgar, one of our favorite storytellers and birders and former chapter president, will share some of his birding experiences and insights during the Birding Information portion of our program.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, September 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).
6:30 p.m.—Doors open
7 p.m.—Birding Information
7:25 p.m.—Business meeting
7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing
8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your cup!

MDAS Caps Sale!

Finally, an MDAS cap!! Yes, MDAS now has an official cap. The khaki cap features our chapter logo, a California Quail, that Harry Adamson designed. The chapter is selling the caps for \$15, tax included.

Don't be caught out in the field without it! You can purchase yours at our September meeting or order online at our website. Participate in this win-win situation. You get attractive headgear that protects you from the sun and announces your pleasure in birding. The chapter gets promoted and raises funds. Half of your purchase price goes directly to MDAS.

The chapter is grateful to Nat Weber of Business Promotions Centers in Moraga for making this enterprise possible.

Connections

World's Largest Woodpecker Believed Extinct

The world's largest woodpecker, once found in Mexico and the United States, may now be extinct, according to researchers with BirdLife International. No trace of the black-and-white Imperial Woodpecker was found during a recent scientific expedition to the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains of northwestern Mexico, the area where the bird was last seen.

The Imperial Woodpecker (*Campephilus imperialis*) is [was?] the world's largest woodpecker, measuring 23.6 in. in length. It is a close relative of the Ivory-Billed, which is also presumed extinct. "Few people can imagine a bird more impressive than the much publicized, and closely related ivory-billed woodpecker," said David Wege with BirdLife International. "But the Imperial Woodpecker was 20 percent bigger."

While the Imperial Woodpecker was hunted for food and for medicine in the early 1900s, it was not historically a rare species within its habitat of high-altitude pine forests. However, the last confirmed report of the species was in 1956 although there have been eight local reports in two remote areas since that date. In 1970, the International Affairs section of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Imperial Woodpecker as endangered in its entire range in the high-altitude Mexican forests.

A joint expedition by BirdLife International and a local Mexican conservation organization, Proxima, spent 16 days in an isolated part of Durango state, where the woodpecker had been sighted in a pristine canyon in 1996. No sign of the bird was detected.

The Imperial Woodpecker's decline has occurred largely through the loss of its habitat, primarily due to deforestation and clearing of the old-growth pine and oak woods, researchers said. Each woodpecker pair required areas as large as 10 sq. mi. of continuous open and untouched



Imperial Woodpecker painting: Norman Arlott

pine forest with dead trees for feeding and nesting. Although large areas of pine forests remain in the Sierra Madre Occidental, they are logged; and dead trees with their insect inhabitants have been removed. Hunting is also thought to have contributed to the bird's extinction.

A report from the Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO) says that the region where the Imperial Woodpecker lived has been contaminated by the abuse of agricultural chemicals and herbicides used in antinarcotic campaigns, and the area has been impacted by alteration of waterways for the generation of electric power and irrigation, logging, and tourism development.

The Imperial Woodpecker will now be listed in the 2004 IUCN Red List of endangered species under the new classification of Critically Endangered Possibly Extinct. For more information, see <http://www.birdlife.net/news/pr/2003/07/imperial_woodpecker.html>—from *Environmental News Service*, July 23, 2003

President's Notes

continued from p. 1

- "California Quail were very plentiful this year. They apparently experienced a good nesting season as we received many reports of the young following their parents everywhere."

Since 1999, we have had years with abundant Jays, few sightings of California Quail, and smaller numbers of House Finch and American Goldfinch. One constant has been the decline in local sightings of both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles (whose numbers continue to be high in southeast Arizona). One interesting phenomenon has been the large increase in Ravens. These very intelligent birds seem to be adapting very well to suburbia.

The Quail

is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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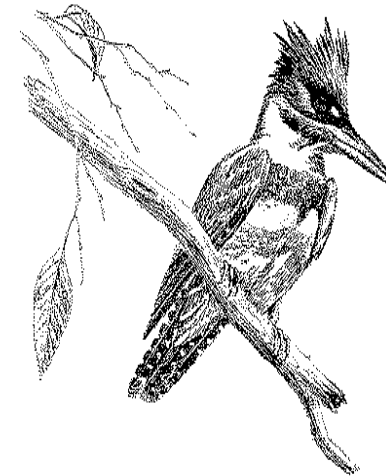
Napa Co. Breeding Bird Atlas Available

Napa-Solano Audubon Society (NSAS) is proud to announce the publication of the *Breeding Birds of Napa County*, the sixth California County to publish the results of a Breeding Bird Atlas.

Written by Murray Berner, Bill Grummer, Robin Leong, and Mike Rippey, and edited by Ann Smith, it covers the breeding species found in Napa County during the years 1989–1993. The 206-page atlas features black and white ORIGINAL art for each Napa breeding species—usually in a breeding pose. There is a complete list of breeding birds of Napa County and which block they nest in. There is also a written profile on each species with special emphasis on what was unusual to Napa County.

The book is \$30 (or \$28 if shipped out of state). Send your check payable to Napa-Solano Audubon Society (NSAS), P.O. Box 5027, Vallejo, CA 94591.

For more information, see <<http://www.napasolanoaudubon.org>>. Please do not forget to include your name, and the address where you want NSAS to send your book.



Pay Your Dues—Keep the Quail Coming

MDAS Membership Drive Continues through September

Annual membership in MDAS provides:

- Subscription to ten issues of the *Quail*, the newsletter of MDAS, which contains information and announcements on field trips, programs, local issues, and bird sightings.
- Ten monthly membership meetings with guest speakers on a variety of topics from Avocets to Zonotrichia and an opportunity to share your interest in birds with others.

- Birding field trips for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- Opportunities to volunteer for a variety of community-based projects.
- A voice that is heard by decisionmakers on local environmental and conservation issues.
- Most of all, the satisfaction of supporting YOUR MDAS Chapter.

Remember all MDAS membership dues fund our local projects and events.

The cost of membership is \$25 a year per household (one person, a couple, or an entire family pays only \$25 annually.) All memberships and donations are tax deductible.

Join now to ensure that you will continue to receive the *Quail* without an interruption in delivery.

VIST US ONLINE:
<http://www.diabloaudubon.com>

MDAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

____ Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 annually.

____ Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

____ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 annually.

____ For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive the *Audubon Magazine* (4 quarterly issues).

____ I'm enclosing a donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

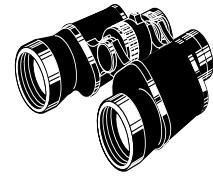
City, State, Zip _____

Phone with area code: _____ Email _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to: MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:
Ann McGregor, Membership Chair
400 Oneida Ct.
Danville, CA 94526-6264

Observations

by Steve Glover



A **Green Heron** was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park on 7/28 and an adult Black-crowned Night-Heron was in the area throughout June. Small herons are unusual at Tilden Park. (BF).

A pair of **Ruddy Ducks** with six ducklings were at Heather Farms Park, Walnut Creek, on 7/18 (HH). This is one of the few spots in the county where they nest. A **Common Murre** was at Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline near Richmond on 7/24 (DG). With a scope and some patience this species can be found on almost any given day from this spot during late summer and fall.

A male **Rufous Hummingbird** was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park on 7/22 (BF).

On 6/10 a singing male **Northern Parula** was found in the Coal Canyon section of Black Diamond Mines Regional Park (ES). Parulas are quite rare in the county but in recent years seem to be found almost annually. A singing **Yellow Warbler** was in Alhambra Valley near Briones Regional Park on 6/8 (RS). Although Yellow Warblers migrate through the region deep into June, this bird was near a pair found breeding during the atlas project. Yellow Warblers are very rare breeders in the county. An immature male **Hermit Warbler** was on Vollmer Peak in Tilden Park on 7/25 (BF). Hermits are unknown as breeders in the East Bay, so this may be an early dispersant. On the other hand, they do breed as close as Marin County, so it may be possible that a few breed here undetected.

A somewhat controversial bunting was found in western Briones Park on 6/5 (The Bakers) and seen by many observers through at least 6/22. The bird overall looked much like an adult male **Indigo Bunting** but featured a white belly. The bird seems most likely to have been an Indigo, rather than a Lazuli, but it still remains possible that there are some Lazuli genes lurking in there somewhere. Similar buntings have shown up in the East Bay in recent years.

Two **Pine Siskins**, reportedly either females or immatures, were noted near the north end of Wildcat Canyon in Tilden Park on 7/28 (BF). Pine Siskins are extremely rare in the county during the summer months.

Observers: the Bakers, Brian Fitch, Doug Greenberg, Hugh Harvey, Rusty Scalf, Emilie Strauss

Class on Natural History of California Birds

Phil Gordon, one of the Bay Area's best birders, frequent MDAS speaker, and well-known naturalist, is offering a class in the "Natural History of California Birds." The class will feature slide lectures, specimens, microscope labs, literature reviews, birding techniques for the yard and field, habits of birds, landscaping for wildlife, travel tips, and field trips. This semester emphasis is on Bird Introduction and Fall Migration, especially Raptors and Shorebirds. Level: Beginners-Advanced

Class is on ten Wednesday evenings, Sept. 10-Nov. 12, 7:30-9:30 p.m., plus a weekend field trip day. The classes are held in Room B5, Del Valle campus, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek. (From Hwy 680 take Olympic Blvd. near Rossmoor.) Register by calling the Acalanes Adult School, 1-925-935-0170. Cost is \$80. Pre-register or register at first class.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your phone number with your observation. Northern CA Bird Box: (415) 681-7422

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA
798-0303

Visit Our Website at
<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

Birdfeeding tips:

Suet and peanuts are very attractive to many backyard birds, including jays, chickadees, titmice, woodpeckers, and, during colder months, sparrows, towhees, and kinglets. Occasionally grosbeaks and orioles will also partake. Both suet and peanuts are very high in protein and calories.

Suet is beef fat, from which all impurities have been removed. Many different items can be added to suet such as birdseed, peanuts, other nuts, bugs, fruit, etc. Suet with these ingredients are available at WBU.

During the summer we feed suet dough which has all the moisture removed and will not melt. During the colder months regular suet can be provided.

Peanut feeding can be very gratifying both for the birds and for the observers. It's great fun to watch the birds hang upside down, taking bites of this very rich food source. Our favorite way to provide peanuts is with a mesh feeder. The birds take bites of the peanuts through the mesh. The peanuts last a long time, and there is very little mess on the ground.

Preseason Sale

- 15% off all birdseed feeders, birdbaths and fountains (Sale Dates 9/12-9/28)
- Summer/Fall Clearance. 25-50% off selected items throughout the store (ends 9/28).

For interesting information about your backyard birds, bird feeding ideas, supplies, and equipment, visit our web site at <www.wbupleasanthill.com>.

Shore Birds Featured in September Field Trips

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

Field trips are open to MDAS members and nonmembers alike. You do not have to be a birding expert; only one who enjoys nature. Bring binoculars, field guides, and lunch. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, September 10, Jewel Lake, Tilden Park. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the nature area (north end of Tilden Park) for a morning walk around the lake. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2.

Saturday, September 13, Moss Landing—Monterey. Carpool leaves LaGonda Way in Danville at 6:30 a.m. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. in Moss Landing at the parking area opposite Dolan Rd just south of the PG&E plant on SR 1. Leader: Joel Summerhill, 925-753-0862 Category 1.

Thursday, September 18, Pt. Pinole. Carpool leaves 7:15 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet at parking lot at the entrance from Richmond Parkway. Take San Pablo Dam Rd to El Sobrante. Going north on I-580/80, Richmond Parkway. Exit on Giant Rd from the parkway; follow signs to the park. Bay shore and marsh areas. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2.

Wednesday, September 24, Hayward Regional Shoreline. Carpool leaves LaGonda Way in Danville at 8 a.m. See Moss Landing field trip for direction to carpool site. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. in front of HRS Visitor's Center. Take I-880 to SR 92 west. From the Clawiter exit, turn on Breakwater to the Visitor's Center. Water and shore birds. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information Category 2

Saturday, September 27, Outer Point Reyes. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at Drake's Beach, 9 a.m. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2

miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From I-101 north, take San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1, turn right 1/2 mile, left onto Bear Valley Rd. about 3 miles, and left onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. again. Continue about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Rd. on left. Fall vagrants. Be prepared for variable weather. Call Elizabeth Dickey for more information, 254-0486 Category 2



Field Trip Report

The San Mateo County coastline is as pretty as any in California. For the eight members who visited the area August 2, it was almost like another world, which is why so many others also drive there on the weekends. Though the bright lights and big cities get left behind, we still bring our cars; and the city of Half Moon Bay begins to take on the appearance of the San Francisco freeways.

An early start provided us with cool weather as we birded above Pescadero Beach and around parts of the adjoining marsh. Views of Whimbrels, Surfbirds, Oystercatchers, Brown Pelicans, Brandt's Cormorants, Black Turnstones, and others caused even tourists from Minnesota to look through our scopes with amazement. A short walk to Pescadero Marsh allowed us to watch young Caspian Terns begging, and the adults feeding them.

A short detour from the coast took us slightly inland and then to Bean Hollow. Then, while continuing south, we stopped briefly at the lighthouse at Pigeon Point. While most of us were looking toward the ocean and observing Pigeon Guillemots, Maury Stern found a flock of Band-tailed Pigeons on some electric wires. Following lunch on Gazos Creek Road, some of us stopped again at the lighthouse and walked out to the point. From here we had even better views of the Guillemots and a wonderful time observing a Wandering Tattler.

Continuing north, we drove to Princeton and walked to the breakwater at the base of Pillar Point. A scope enabled us to decide that a diving duck in the harbor was a female White-winged Scoter. Also seen were a female Red-breasted Merganser and a Common Loon. Looking out on the nearly flat ocean, we pondered the forces of winter storms, which bring the 50-foot surf to the famous Mavericks just beyond the rocks.

It was a leisurely day. The afternoon sun warmed us, and the ocean was a magnificent cobalt blue. Though we never really saw flocks and flocks of birds, we did tally 70 species for the day.

—Hugh Harvey

MDAS Birders Enjoy Yuba Pass Trip by Hugh Harvey

The skies above Yuba Pass and the Sierra seemed endless on the weekend of June 21 and 22; the mountains went on forever. But was there space enough at the parking lot at the pass for 38 birders and their cars? Don't forget that, in addition to the MDAS birders, there was the group of 30+ from Marin Audubon Society, which birded the same area the same weekend. What appeared to be a huge confusion was actually an example of well-thought planning by both groups. We went separate ways, rarely crossing paths directly; and yet we still saw most of the same 110 species spread out over the weekend; each group trading advice and birds as we went.

This particular mountain area has so many different birding areas that it is almost wrong to limit the trip to just two days. The leaders, and sometimes others from the chapter, spend two full days birding the area trying to find the best places so that the participants will benefit from the best birding in a short time. This year we found many birds at the pass itself. Madora Lake to the north was mostly dry, Dippers could not be found in the river downstream from Bassetts, and hummingbirds were scarce at the Bassetts feeders.

We gathered shortly after 7 a.m. at the Yuba Pass parking lot and proceeded across the highway. We walked slowly along a logging road which skirts a meadow, taking time to enter the forest proper occasionally. We watched White-headed Woodpeckers go to a nest hole, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Williamson's Sapsuckers coming to their hole high in a fir tree, and a Hammond's Flycatcher flying around a grove of trees calling as he defended his territory.

Returning to the highway and entering the campground area, we watched a male Williamson's Sapsucker poke his head out of his hole and spit out sawdust as he cleaned up that problem area in the bedroom corner; we saw the female Western Wood-Pewee on her nest; and we waited patiently for 45 minutes to see the Black-backed Woodpecker trade places with its mate as they apparently sat on eggs in their hole. This was the first nesting of

the Black-backed Woodpecker at the pass in several years, but the most we saw was the male looking out of the hole briefly and then disappearing back inside.

After lunch, we visited the San Francisco State field station hoping to see a Dipper, but we did not. We did not find one in the river across from Bassetts or downstream at our most reliable spot, either. After giving up on a Dipper, we visited Goose Lake where we saw Common Merganser and Bufflehead, and then the group separated for the remainder of the afternoon. Some found a Dipper at the base of Frazier Falls; some finally found one at the field station; others went back to the campground to look for the woodpeckers; and some tried the ice cream and the hummingbird feeders at the store at Bassetts. After much waiting at Bassetts, we finally saw a female Calliope Hummingbird.

Meeting again after dinner, ten hardy souls drove to Chapman Saddle Road to see and hear Common Nighthawks and Common Poorwills. Unfortunately, this was the worst showing that we have ever had for these birds. The Nighthawk gave a distant vocal response only once, and the Poorwill was spotted in the growing dark by only two of the group. Additional searching from the highway vista point proved equally fruitless, though the Poorwill did finally give a brief vocal response.

However, the Sunday morning tour of the Sierra Valley was quite successful, both from the birds we saw, and from the mildness of the temperature. During our first stop at Mountain Quail Road, we had excellent views of Green-tailed Towhees. The Marin group had already found the Gray Flycatcher; so when they left, we took our turn. All who wanted were able to see this mountain valley inhabitant through one of several scopes—probably our most successful effort ever for this bird.

The marsh area near the north end of this large valley is always a highlight of the trip. It is hard to not spend an excessive amount of time watching the Yellow-headed Blackbirds, White-faced Ibis,

Sandhill Cranes, Marsh Wrens, Virginia Rails, Wilson's Phalaropes, and a variety of ducks [with babies—editor] Something new appears whenever we turn around. Those who missed seeing the rail cross the road were able to see its tracks in the dust.

Through the efforts of Nancy Wenninger, we were steered toward a new area in the valley a little north of the marsh. This property, owned by the Feather River Land Trust, was alive with Sage Thrashers, Brewer's Sparrows, and Vesper Sparrows. We shall not overlook this property in the future. [MDAS can help preserve it. See story on p. 5] We also stopped to see the Swainson's Hawk chicks on their nest just north of Loyalton before eating lunch on the grounds of the local museum.

Two additional areas were visited after lunch and after our initial checklist was made. We stopped at our former lunch site, which is now rebuilt after the 1994 Loyalton fire; and we drove Antelope Valley Road which goes right through the burned area south of the town. There we saw many Lewis' Woodpeckers, a Bullock's Oriole, Black-headed Grosbeak, and both the Western Bluebird and a female Mountain Bluebird.

One of the remarks that MDAS leaders hear is how much those who attend our field trips appreciate our efforts. Though it is not written anywhere, one of our goals is to have every participant see every bird. All of the MDAS leaders attempt this; and though we probably did not achieve it on this trip, we came very close. It is with the help of the participants themselves, that the leaders are able to lead such successful trips. Rosita and I would especially like to thank Eugenia Larson and Jean Richmond for their pre-trip scouting help; and we would also like to thank a visitor from Santa Cruz, Dr. Norman Kikuchi, for his expertise throughout the weekend. This year we also had visitors from Cleveland, Ohio, and Woodstock, Georgia; but it is neither the leaders nor the chapter which attracts such wide attention, it is the clear mountain air, the forest scents, the meadows, flowers, and birds of our Sierra Nevada which are the attraction.

Update on Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas

by Steve Glover

I wanted all of you to know what is happening behind the scenes on the *Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas* now that we've completed the first phase.

Data Entry

All of the data from the five years of field work has been entered, resulting in nearly 16,000 nesting records! A quick count reveals over 350 records of Bushtit alone!

Data Review

We will soon be reviewing all of the data as well as the Detail Report Forms that you so diligently filled out. With 16,000 records, this might take a little while! Although with the amazing job all of you did, I don't anticipate deleting many records.

Fundraising Trip to Arizona

The fundraising trip to Arizona took place August 2–10. Each participant donated \$300 to the fund to publish the atlas, raising \$3,600. It was a wonderful trip with approximately 195 species seen and lifers for everyone. Among the many highlights were no less than 13 species of hummingbird! A full trip narrative will appear soon.

Future Fundraising Trips

I'm planning another fundraising trip, perhaps a spring trip to Texas during the last week of April. I will be requesting a similar donation from participants. Spring birding on the coast of Texas and in the Rio Grande Valley is a wonderful experience with at least 250 species likely. An official call for sign-ups will come soon. We may also schedule some weekend trips to other places, such as Yosemite/Mono Lake and Tule Lake.

Species Accounts

I have rough drafts of profiles for over 40 species. Samples will be published in the next few issues of the *Quail*. I welcome your comments on them.

Your Help Needed

MDAS Acts to Help Save Beloved Sierra Birding Destination

by Nancy Wenninger

"There's one perched on the corral post! And another on the sagebrush behind! And another below, and another to the right!" Calls of sightings burst from many throats as MDAS birders experienced a bonanza of Sage Thrashers—a normally elusive species much sought after during our chapter's annual weekend trip to the Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley.



Sage Thrasher photo: Alan Winer

For many of us, the highlight of this year's trip [see Hugh Harvey's trip report on p. 4] was our visit to a site recently purchased by the Feather River Land Trust (FRLT). The 575-acre Maddalena property is located in the heart of the Sierra Valley wetlands, south of Highway 70 and west of County Road A-24. In addition to pristine sage habitat, the property contains two tributaries of the Feather River and supports more than 100 bird species, including Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, White-faced Ibis, and a variety of waterfowl and raptors.

The 130,000-acre Sierra Valley is the largest mountain valley in the Sierra Nevada. Breathtakingly beautiful, this valley is also vital to California wildlife and plant species. More than 260 bird species have been observed in the valley. The Sierra Valley wetlands teem with birds and are an internationally renowned birding destination.

Unfortunately, the Sierra Valley is also the focus of intense development pressure from the Tahoe area, just 25 miles to the south, and the City of Reno, only 30 miles to the southeast. Already several ranch properties have gone on the market with multimillion-dollar price tags.

The Feather River Land Trust is part of a coalition of land trusts working to protect the wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and working ranches of the Sierra Valley. Their partners include the California Rangeland Trust, the Sierra Business Council, and the Nature Conservancy. In addition to the purchase of the Maddalena property, the FRLT secured a conservation easement on the 13,000-acre Bar One Ranch, the largest in the valley. Purchased with \$2.5 million in funding from the Packard Foundation and California's Wildlife Conservation Board, the Bar One easement was the first completed in Plumas County. Under its terms, the owners surrender the right to develop the property and agree to manage the ranch to protect important natural resources, scenic open space, and the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Feather River, but it will stay a working ranch.

At its August meeting, the MDAS Board of Directors voted unanimously to support FRLT's vital work in this area with a \$500 donation from the MDAS Conservation Fund. In addition, the Board voted to match member donations up to an additional \$500. Generous Board members got out their checkbooks and donated several hundred dollars on the spot.

PLEASE HELP US SUPPORT THIS IMPORTANT WORK. Send checks in any amount, made payable to "Feather River Land Trust," c/o Nancy Wenninger, 1091 Walker Avenue, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. I will collect and forward them to FRLT, along with MDAS's matching funds.