



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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September 2005

Audubon's 100 Years of Conservation • Glenn Olson

We are privileged to have as our speaker on September 1, Glenn Olson, the executive director of Audubon California. Mr. Olson will speak in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Audubon. He remarks that not many things last 100 years, and that that unique accomplishment deserves special recognition. Audubon is celebrating its centennial year of protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitats that supports them. He notes that our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Additionally, Glenn will update for us the Audubon California conservation plan through 2010. He is very excited about a number of programs that are underway and others that will be launched shortly. He will report on conservation projects from restoring San Francisco Bay, to monitoring declining species, to identifying the most critical areas for birds in the state. He will bring us important information on active programs tied to initiatives. California Partners in Flight works to develop and implement Bird Conservation Plans for six major bioregions of the state. These plans serve as a resource for land managers and private owners who are interested in balancing bird conservation and other activities on their properties.

We will also learn about Audubon California's efforts to advocate for enforcement of our environmental laws, as well as their ground-breaking research on a network of preserves and sanctuaries.



Audubon California's Kern River Preserve protects one of California's finest remaining riparian forests and the wildlife it supports. For more about this unique spot, see the May 2005 issue of The Quail.

Also, read about the upcoming Turkey Vulture Festival on Page 4.

Shown is the Visitor Center and the start of a beautiful Nature Trail.

Glenn Olson has served Audubon for many years. Before joining the staff in October of 1976, he served as conservation chair for the Los Angeles Audubon Chapter, and he taught at the Audubon Camp of the West in Dubois, Wyoming. He became director of Audubon's Western Region in the late 1980s. In that position, he spearheaded major wetland restoration and protection projects throughout California. He also served as a founder and chair of the Central Valley Waterfowl Joint Venture, which has restored more than 100,000 acres of wetlands and helped ensure a sustainable supply of good quality water for these wetlands. As executive director of Audubon California, Mr. Olson is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Audubon state program. He oversees offices in Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, an annual budget of five million dollars, a staff of 40, eight Audubon Centers and sanctuaries, 51 local Audubon Chapters, and more than 60,000 members.

Glenn Olson holds a Masters Degree in Public Health from UCLA and a Bach-

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Birding Information

Have you ever wished that you could fly? Listen to Jimm Edgar as he tells us of the unique physiologic adaptations that would be necessary in order to be able to take flight and to maintain efficient flight. The structural and digestive adaptations that have allowed bird flight are fascinating, bizarre, and sometimes very surprising.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek (see map on page 9).

6:30 PM Doors open

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

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

8:05 PM Program

* Please remember to bring a cup.

President's Letter

By Mike Williams

We are all very busy and lead very active lives. How many people have told you that they are busier after they retire than before? I have heard that many times. Sometimes we are so busy we don't have time for the things we enjoy the most, such as birdwatching. My wife and I have been very busy lately and it's been a while since we went birdwatching (except in the backyard).

In a hectic day-to-day life it's easy to forget the enjoyment, education, and therapy that birdwatching provides. I was reminded on this when Cecil and I met a very unusual man in June at a meeting in Minneapolis. He teaches art history and photography at a southern US college. He is also an award-winning photographer. But his real job is "Birder." His life revolves around birding and a specific quest. His name is Bobby Harrison. Since the early 1970s he has been researching and hunting for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. In the summer of 2004 he and Tim Gallagher re-discovered the woodpecker in the bayous of Mississippi.

I was so impressed with him and his vehemence about it really being an Ivory-billed and not a Pileated Woodpecker. He went to many museums and studied the Ivory-billed skins to verify what he saw. He gave many interviews. He had to argue against "nay sayers." But



"Ivory-Billed Woodpecker. The boss carpenter of the bird world—the biggest, handsomest, and rarest of American Woodpeckers." Drawing by R. I. Brasher. From Birds of America, Pearson, Ed. (1917)

he persevered. This truly had become a life-changing experience for him and his family.

It was a real honor to have met him and have heard some of his stories. It was also very encouraging to meet someone with the dedication and zeal of my favorite hobby. I will never see the Ivory-billed, but I can dream of it.

In the meantime, I think I will go to Arizona for some birding.

National Audubon Society

Picture the year of Audubon's founding, 1905; Theodore Roosevelt was President, milk cost about 10 cents a gallon, and Albert Einstein published his Theory of Relativity. In the world of high fashion, ladies donned hats adorned with heron and egret plumes, and many even wore elaborate millinery creations containing entire bird bodies.

In response to the plunder and subsequent decimation of plume bird colonies, several local Audubon Societies agreed to take aggressive action and form a united front to protect birds and their habitat throughout the nation. On January 5, 1905 they officially incorporated to form the National Association

of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals, later shortened to the National Audubon Society.

During its first several years, the fledgling Audubon organization racked up an impressive list of accomplishments, including passage of the Audubon Plumage Law (1910), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1913), and establishment of its first two bird sanctuaries (1924): the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary near the president's former home in Oyster Bay, New York, and the Paul J. Rainey Sanctuary in coastal Louisiana.

"Our heritage at Audubon has always been to connect people with nature," continued Flicker. "From our earliest

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Welcome New Members

Michael Butler	Kensington
Yolanda Cronin	Oakley
Jane Dang	Berkeley
Fran Dibble	Lafayette
Raymond Konieczek	Walnut Creek
Marjorie Overland	Walnut Creek

100 Years of Audubon *Cont'd from page 1*

elior of Science Degree from the University of California at Santa Barbara. He studied in the Galapagos Islands on a scholarship from the Charles Darwin Research Institute. He also completed an inventory of the Golden Eagle nesting population in coastal Southern California while a research assistant at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. Mr. Olson received Audubon's 2002 Charles H. Callison Conservation Award in recognition of his lifetime service and achievements in the cause of conservation.

Q Writing in *Birds of America*, Volume VII, John James Audubon says of "one of the most interesting of our American birds" the following:

"When the weather is calm, and a flood of light and heat is poured down upon nature by the genial sun, they are often, especially during the love season, seen rising in broad circles, flock after flock, until they attain a height of perhaps a mile, when they gracefully glide on constantly expanded wings, and course round each other, for an hour or more at a time, after which, in curious zigzags, and with remarkable velocity, they descend towards their beloved element, and settle on the water, on large sandbars or on mangroves. It is interesting beyond description to observe flocks of [these birds] thus going through their aerial evolutions."

Answer on Page 6

July–August Observations

By Steve Glover

The Swainson's Hawk show in the southeastern corner of Contra Costa County (and nearby Alameda County) continued through the summer with flocks numbering in the 50–60 range through early July (many obs.). After a two-week gap in sightings, there was a total of 96 birds found there on 7/25 (MT).

A single Red-necked Phalarope put in a rare west county appearance at Meeker Slough near Point Isabel on 8/9 (BL).

Late summer and early fall is traditionally the best time to find seabirds wandering into the Richmond area from nearby ocean waters, with most sightings (by far) relating to Common Murres. Much rarer was a reported Marbled Murrelet at the Richmond Marina 8/1 (KJ).

A Band-tailed Pigeon at Deer Flat, Mount Diablo State Park on 7/18 provided an unusual summer record for the park, though they have been confirmed breeding there in the past (MB).

Though Northern Saw-whet Owls are tolerably common residents in the moist forests of Contra Costa County, they are very rarely actually seen, so the sighting of one at Sibley Volcanic Preserve west of Orinda on 8/6 was a delightful and noteworthy sighting (TH).

A flock of 100+ White-throated Swifts at Las Trampas Regional Park west of Danville on 7/15 seems like a high tally for the location during mid-summer (DB).

The Grasshopper Sparrows at Bishop Ranch Open Space in San Ramon were particularly well-watched this breeding

season. They apparently began to arrive during the last week of April and were present to at least 7/4 but appeared absent by 7/9. At least five territorial males were present and successful breeding was confirmed (based upon the presence of juveniles) for at least three of the pairs (DB). They were also noted at their traditional Rocky Ridge haunts in Las Trampas Regional Park west of Danville on 7/15 when groups of three and two juveniles were noted (DB).

A male Western Tanager at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 7/25 was most likely a very early post-breeding migrant (MT).

Dennis Braddy, Michelle Brodie, Tim Howe, Kathy Jarrett, Bob Lewis, Marilyn Trabert

Ornithology Opportunities

Wings of the Warners Festival. September 17–18. Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, Alturas. This year's theme features the magnificent Sandhill Cranes. The migratory bird festival is a combined effort of the Modoc NWR and many other entities, and will be held in conjunction with the annual Hot Air Balloon Festival! The Refuge will have a booth at the Veteran's Park on Saturday where food and refreshments will be available and many activities for all ages will be held. On Sunday guided tours will be available both on and off the Refuge. For more information contact the Alturas Chamber of Commerce at 530-233-4434 or the River Center at 530-233-5085. <http://modoc.fws.gov/upcoming.htm>.

Field Ornithology, City College of San Francisco. Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon Society will start September 13, 14 and 15. All classes meet at Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street. Free parking.

Field Ornithology I meets on Tuesdays. An introduction to birds and birding, it combines basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution and behavior. Part A starts September 13 and ends October 25; Part B is a continuation of Part A. It begins November 1 and ends December 13. Field Ornithology II

meets on Wednesdays. It is a continuing study of the identification and status of North American water birds, including grebes, tubenoses, and pelicans. Part A starts September 14 and ends October 26; Part B starts November 2 and ends December 14. Field Ornithology III meets on Thursdays. It is a continuing study of North American land birds including pigeon, parrots, cuckoos, owls, and nightjars. Part A starts September 15 and ends October 26; Part B starts November 3 and ends December 15. Optional field trips on weekends. Pre-registration is strongly advised. For further information call 415-561-1860.

<http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan/>

12th Annual Kern River Valley Turkey Vulture Festival. September 24–25. Weldon, California. At the height of fall Turkey Vulture migration through California's "Valley Wild", the Kern River Valley, come celebrate one of the two largest known migration sites in North America (north of Mexico). 7664 Turkey Vultures were counted during the 4-day festival in 2004. The Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival is sponsored by: National Audubon Society–California, Sequoia National Forest, Friends of the Kern River Preserve, among others.

Late September also corresponds with what is historically one of the finest

times for observing fall land bird migration in California. Field trips as well as booths, exhibits, and children's activities at the Kern River Preserve.

<http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>

2006 Entertainment Books



are here, as big as ever and now only \$25! And they can be used immediately!

A wonderful gift—and one that pays for itself in two or three purchases.

Save 50% on travel, restaurants, entertainment, retail and much more at the same time you support your chapter. One example is two-for-one admission to the Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek.

Pick up your great savings book at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill, or at MDAS monthly meetings.

Not only will your budget benefit from your purchase of this coupon book, but Mount Diablo Audubon will also profit.

MDAS Year of the Oak

By Nancy Wenninger



Oak woodlands, the quintessential California landscape, support a rich abundance of wildlife—some 331 different species. Scientists warn that this important habitat is imperiled by forces which also threaten the future health and welfare of birds and other wildlife.

The Oak Woodland Bird Conservation Plan: A Strategy for Protecting and Managing Oak Woodland Habitats and Associated Birds in California (2002) was a project of the California Partners in Flight and the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Their plan recommends a number of steps to protect and restore oak woodlands to benefit healthy bird populations.

“Oak woodlands” are those diverse plant communities where oaks are common or predominate. They include a number of forest types, chaparral, woodland and savanna. Coast live oak, interior live oak, blue oak and valley oak are species which were all present in California more than 24 million years ago. Currently, approximately 21.3% of the Bay/Delta bioregion is covered by oak woodland, most in private ownership.

All oaks produce acorns, perhaps the most important food product for wildlife produced in California, and large trees produce larger acorn crops. Acorn production also varies in time and space among oak species, so the most valuable oak woodlands contain a diversity of oak species. Some thirty types of bird consume acorns, six of which have diets that are more than 25% acorns. The relationship is reciprocal; oaks depend upon birds to disperse seedlings across the landscape. The Western Scrub-jay, Steller’s Jay and Yellow-billed Magpie cache individual acorns in the ground,

many of which remain unretrieved and germinate. Oaks also host mistletoe, an important food for Western Bluebirds, Phainopepla and others.

Old large oaks are mosaics of living and dead branches, with ample sites for Acorn Woodpeckers to excavate cavities for nesting and acorn storage. Nest cavities are often used for many years by many species. A number of birds, including the Lark Sparrow, Bewick’s Wren and California Quail, also utilize the understory of grasses and shrubs for nesting and foraging.

More than a third of all oak woodlands have been lost since the settlement of California by Europeans, mostly due to urban and suburban growth. Most of the woodlands which remain have been modified or degraded. A new challenge to their survival is expanding vineyards. In addition to habitat loss, the oaks are not regenerating in sufficient numbers. Young seedlings are unable to survive because of fire suppression, cattle grazing and the invasion of European annual grasses. Existing trees will grow old and die and not be replaced without active management for a different outcome. Finally, Sudden Oak Death affects tanoaks, coast live oaks and black oaks. Valley and blue oaks have not been affected, which make them even more critical to the long-term viability of oak woodland-dependent wildlife.

MDAS will sponsor a number of educational, outreach and conservation activities during the next year which focus on oak woodlands. If you are interested in helping with this project, please call me at 938-7987 or e-mail me at nwenninger@aol.com.

FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Chickadees: Remember or Die!

Would you stake your life on your memory? How would you deal with a situation where your ability to remember where you put something might actually mean life or death? Well, if you could imitate a chickadee, you would simply grow more memory cells when you needed them!

As autumn approaches, chickadees begin caching seeds by the hundreds for the winter. In a behavior called “scatterhoarding,” each seed is individually hidden in a unique location. Common storage sites include under tree bark, dead leaves, knotholes, and even house siding and shingles.

The amazing thing is that they can accurately remember the location of each seed they hoard! Not only that, they also remember the quality of items they initially stored, making more of an effort to retrieve quality seeds than inferior ones.

How do they do it? Scientists have found that the hippocampus region of the brain—the area associated with this type of spatial memory—is proportionately larger in chickadees than in other birds that do not cache food. Not only is it generally larger, it actually increases in size in the autumn and shrinks back to its original size each spring! It’s as if the chickadee adds more hard drive space to its brain’s computer as needed and then wipes it clean when it’s not.

They love sunflower seeds, suet, and peanut butter. Be sure and use “chunky” peanut butter and push seeds into the peanut butter. Look for the chickadee’s scatterhoarding behavior at your feeders this fall . . . and, just maybe you’ll learn a few tips from them on how to remember where you put the car keys!

Beginning Birding Class:

Taught by Denise Wight

Cost \$60 for 6 classes and 2 birdwalks
At Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop
7–9 pm Wednesdays, starting Sept. 14
Call for information and reservations.

Mike & Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Field Trip Schedule

By Elizabeth Dickey

September

7 Wednesday Jewel Lake
10 Saturday Hawk Hill
14 Wednesday Frank's Dump
22 Thursday Point Pinole
24 Saturday Moss Landing
29 Thursday Hayward Shoreline

October

1 Saturday Bodega Bay
5 Wednesday Oakley
13 Thursday Richmond Crescent
19 Wednesday Arrowhead Marsh
22 Saturday Abbott's Lagoon
27 Thursday Vic Fazio Refuge

November

2 Wednesday S. F. Bay Refuge
5 Saturday Palo Alto
10 Thursday Heather Farms
16 Wednesday Mt. View Sanitary
19 Saturday Limintour
30 Wednesday Lake Merritt

December

3 Saturday Benica State Park
8 Thursday Twin Lakes
14 Wednesday Alameda Creek

January

4 Wednesday San Pablo Creek
7 Saturday Putah Creek
12 Thursday Markham Arboretum
18 Wednesday Sunol
21 Saturday Santa Cruz
26 Thursday Thornton

February

1 Wednesday Clifton Court
4-5 Saturday/Sunday Los Banos/
Panoche Valley
8 Wednesday Grizzley Island
16 Thursday East Briones
18 Saturday Bolinas
23 Thursday Davis Sewer Ponds

March

1 Wednesday Emeryville/Berkeley
Waterfront
4 Saturday Capay Valley
9 Thursday Lafayette Reservoir
15 Wednesday Borges Ranch
18 Saturday Black Diamond
23 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
29 Wednesday Lagunites Lake

April

1 Saturday Garin Regional Park
5 Wednesday Skyline Parks
13 Thursday Laurel Canyon
15 Saturday Pine Canyon
19 Wednesday Ida Clayton Road
27 Thursday Del Puerto Canyon

May

3 Wednesday Mitchell Canyon
6 Saturday Mines Road
11 Thursday Redwood Regional Park
17 Wednesday South side of
Mount Diablo
20 Saturday East Contra Costa County
25 Thursday West Briones
31 Wednesday Napa Valley

June

5 Saturday Outer Point Reyes
7 Wednesday Annadel State Park
17/18 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass

July

29 Saturday San Mateo Coast

August

12 Saturday Bodega Bay

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php, or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Customary carpool expense is 37½ cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. 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.

September Trips

Wednesday, September 7. **Jewel Lake, Tilden Park.** Meet at 7:30 AM 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 10. **Point Diablo (Hawk Hill).** Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot at 7:30 AM. Meet at upper lagoon parking area in Rodeo Valley at 9:00 AM. From SR101 southbound take second Sausalito exit (Alexander Avenue); at stop sign go up the hill. At first intersection turn right. At bottom of the hill turn left and continue down the valley to the upper lagoon parking area. We are doing this trip earlier in the season in hopes of seeing Broad-winged Hawks. There is a talk and demonstration at noon by Raptor Center staff. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906.

Wednesday, September 14. **Frank's Dump.** Meet at 8:15 AM at the parking lot at the end of Winton Avenue in Hayward. There have been recent reports of very good shorebirds at this location.

Thursday, September 22. **Point Pinole.** Carpool leaves Acalanes Avenue off Pleasant Hill Road just north of SR 24 at 7:30 AM. Meet in parking lot at park entrance at 8:15 AM. From San Pablo Dam Road turn right on El Portal and enter I-80 eastbound; exit to Richmond Parkway and continue to Giant Road, go right to the park entrance which is on the left. Marsh and Bayshore habitat. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2.

Saturday, September 24. **Moss Landing.** Carpool leaves at 6:30 AM from LaGonda Way in Danville. 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 ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:30 AM in Moss Landing at the parking area opposite Dolan Road just south of the power plant on SR 1. Call Elizabeth Dickey for information, 254-0486. Category 1.

Thursday, September 29. **Hayward Regional Shoreline.** Carpool leaves from LaGonda Way in Danville at 8 AM. 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 ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:45 AM 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. Many species of land, water and shore birds as well as raptors. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2.

a



Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis

Brown Pelicans are making a comeback from near extinction in the 1970s. Pelicans are totipalmate which means that their feet are webbed between all four toes. They use their highly vascularized feet to incubate the eggs by standing on them. For a 9-pound bird to stand on eggs with shells thinned by high DDT levels, it is an obvious risk. Despite the banning of DDT, some birds still show relatively high levels of pesticides in their tissues.

Unlike American White Pelicans, this species feeds by plunge diving from heights of ten to thirty feet above the water, or even higher. Their preferred food is anchovy, which they find by scanning the ocean for the reflections from the silvery scales of schooling fish. The huge gular pouch holds two or three times more than the bird's stomach—about 3 gallons of water and fish. [Remember Dixon Lanier Merritt's verse "It's beak can hold more than its belican!"] Pelicans hold their catch and let the water drain from the pouch before they swallow. With fish still in the dip net, young pelicans may feed from the larder. But gulls may also seize the opportunity for a quick and easy snack.

Most song birds migrate at night, when it is cooler, winds are less strong, and the risk of predation is less. But pelicans (and hawks, cranes and other soaring birds) migrate by day, when the sun's heat creates thermals on which they can

Arcata Marsh

the island a Western Gull was feeding its chicks.

This is a prominent feeding area for fish-eating birds, such as egrets, herons, grebes and osprey. Belted Kingfishers look down from their tree-branch balconies. Bitterns and rails lurk in the marsh vegetation.

It is claimed that this is one of the best places in the state to find Peregrine Falcons. Especially from September to March, when high tide marshes Dunlins and Godwits away from the mudflats, predators have a wide choice of menu.

Every Saturday, Redwood Region Audubon Society volunteers lead a bird walk, starting from the Klopp Lake parking lot at the end of South I Street. Other guided tours are hosted by Friends of the Arcata Marsh, and may include specifics of the wastewater treatment procedures.

get uplift. California Brown Pelicans breed on off-shore islands from Anacapa and farther south. They then disperse all along the coastline of California, Oregon, Washington, and southern British Columbia, following the food supply. As they travel, pelicans, like many other large birds, fly in squadron formation, flapping their wings in time with their leader.

An eastern subspecies of Brown Pelican inhabits the East Coast of the United States south of Maryland and along the shores of the Gulf. The Pelican shown here was photographed on Dauphin Island, south of Mobile, Alabama.

Brown Pelicans remain on California's Endangered Species List, as they are dependent on northern anchovy and Pacific sardines, whose numbers have waned by over-fishing. Pelicans are also threatened by entanglement with hooks and fishing line, oil spills, disturbance at post-breeding roosts on the central California coast, and other hazards. Breeding success varies dramatically from year to year depending on El Niño events and other climatic changes.



Once a decadent lumber mill site and abandoned landfill, Arcata Marsh is now a hot spot for wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts in California's Redwood Region.



Santa Cruz Chickadee
Penthestes rufescens barlowi
Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard
1930

Heather Farm Park

Bob Wisecarver and Rosita and Hugh Harvey represent MDAS on the Heather Farm Park Restoration Task Force. A portion of the park is being planted with native Purple Needle Grass. Volunteers are needed to help with this project. Contact William Hunt (wjhunt@astound.net) or Hugh and Rosita Harvey at the next MDAS meeting in September if you are interested.

The Gardens at Heather Farm will present its annual fall plant sale on Saturday, September 17, 9 AM–1 PM.

Rewriting the ESA

By Joe Frank

Representative Richard Pombo recently initiated a draft revision to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the House that could potentially weaken that important Act in a number of important ways.

Representative Pombo represents the Eleventh District of California, which includes San Joaquin County and portions of Alameda, Contra Costa and Santa Clara Counties. Pombo is also chairman of the House Resources Committee and Co-founder of the San Joaquin County Citizens Land Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of farmers and others who advocate private property rights, and fight attempts by government to strip these rights away from citizens. Mr. Pombo is very active in a variety of business interests, including dairy, farming, trucking, real estate and beef cattle operations. (www.house.gov/pombo/)

Pombo's bill dramatically alters the criteria a species must meet to qualify as endangered. The current ESA requires that species be listed if their survival is threatened "in a significant portion of [their] range." Pombo's bill only considers a species endangered if its survival is threatened in its current *remaining* occupied habitat. In other words if a healthy population of an endangered species exists in an isolated region, but is threatened elsewhere, it would not be considered endangered. Kieran Suckling, policy director of the Center for Biological Diversity, recently stated that this change in the Act's language "would wipe most currently endangered species off the list and prevent most others from ever getting there, making endangered species recovery impossible."

Pombo's bill also limits which species can be considered endangered by allowing only species imperiled by "human activities or by invasive species, competition from other species, drought, fire or other catastrophic natural causes," whereas the current ESA requires the listing of any endangered species, regardless of what threatens its survival.* This is a major reduction in the scope of covered species.

Defying the ESA's goal of assisting endangered species recovery, Pombo's bill proposes to protect only enough habi-

The California Clapper Rail, seen here at Palo Alto Baylands, is one of many birds on both the Federal and State lists of endangered species. Among the birds on the list are Brown Pelicans, Least Terns, Bald Eagles, as well as many plants, mammals, reptiles and insects.



tat for an endangered species to survive on the brink of extinction, not enough to grow. The ESA currently designates "critical habitat" as areas "essential to the conservation of the species." Critics charge that by limiting critical habitat to a bare minimum, Pombo's legislation contradicts the overarching goal of the ESA, which is to prevent endangered species from going extinct. "Loss of habitat is widely recognized by scientists to be the primary cause of species endangerment and extinction."

Further inhibiting endangered species from restoring their population to healthy levels, Pombo's bill gets rid of the current ESA requirement to assist endangered species recovery using "all methods and procedures necessary to bring any endangered species or threatened species" back to levels where it is no longer considered endangered. Pombo's bill makes the recovery requirement optional.

The current ESA mandates protection of critical habitat for both threatened and endangered species, Pombo's bill flat-out disallows federal protection for threatened species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has a nationwide policy to protect threatened species from hunting, harming, or harassing. The Pombo bill would prohibit such protection; instead it would require the agency to issue separate regulations for each species, creating a bureaucratic nightmare for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The mind-numbing bureaucracy created by the Pombo bill is not the only way it affects sound science. Another provision

contributes to the growing concern over the politicization of science. The Endangered Species Act currently requires that all decisions be based on the "best available scientific and commercial information." Given the ever-improving nature of science and technology, the term "best" is deliberately left ambiguous [Pombo draft] in order to leave the decision up to the biologists who assess the health of species populations. The Pombo bill ignores scientific advances. Instead it leaves the interpretation of "best" science to the discretion of the Secretary of Interior, Gale Norton.

The Pombo bill opens virtually every stage of the endangered species listing process to litigation from industry, while essentially barring lawsuits from environmental groups. While it establishes an appeals process, which can be invoked by "any person that would be injured," it allows the Secretary of Interior to define who qualifies as an injured party. "The expectation is that the Secretary will only allow economic harm to qualify as an injury, which means that only corporations and landowners who have financial stakes can appeal, but scientists and environmentalists cannot," said Kieran Suckling.

If this change to the critically important Endangered Species Act concerns you please write to your Representative at their web site at www.house.gov/. If you don't know the name of your representative it is easily located at this site.

A copy of the draft bill can be seen at www.eswr.com/605/pombodraftbill.pdf

* Center for Biological Diversity

Field Trip Reports



July 30, San Mateo Coast. On the morning of July 31, 2005, 7 birders from MDAS set out from the La Gonda Way meeting place in Danville for a day of birding along the San Mateo Coastline.

As we descended into Half Moon Bay, the fog thickened and by the time we got to the coast the fog obscured the ocean. However, there were breaks and the day promised to be bright and sunny. Arriving at Pescadero State Beach we met up with three more MDAS folks and proceeded to set up the scopes for some serious bird watching. Long lines of Brant's Cormorants flew right off the shore heading north. On the beach we saw a Whimbrel, a Wandering Tattler and a Heermann's Gull in close proximity to each other. Right off the shore were several Pigeon Guillemots, along with many Pelagic Cormorants. Black Oystercatchers and Turnstones dotted the rocks just offshore.

We then proceeded to several tidal ponds just inland from the beach. After stepping over the abundant driftwood we set up scopes and saw many Caspian Terns squawking loudly at each other. Across another pond, we saw an immature Red-tail, thanks to a great spot by Maury, along with several Killdeer, and many Great Egrets along with a lone Semi-palmated Plover.

Our next stop was at the Phipps Ranch where, after a short bird walk that yielded a Wilson's Warbler, we stopped for a picnic lunch.

Afterwards, we proceeded along Gazos Creek Road to Highway 1 and the Pigeon Point light station. Setting up our scopes for one last time, we noticed a school of porpoises about ½ mile offshore. Then much to our surprise a Gray

National Audubon *Continued from page 2*
days our chapters, staff, and grassroots volunteers have worked to help people make the connection between the health of bird populations, and the health of human populations. Declines in bird populations are often early warning signals of threats to other species, including people."

Audubon continues to take up the torch for avian conservation, monitoring bird populations and sounding alarm bells about hazards like DDT, fighting for clean air and water, and providing environmental education to Americans through *Audubon* magazine, Audubon chapters, and our network of nature centers.

Audubon is celebrating its centennial year of protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences. *National Audubon Society*

Whale breached! We forgot about the birding and for the next hour we watched a school of these giants swim among the porpoises. The whales put on quite a show and several passersby looked through our scopes in amazement at the show of nature's giants. This was a spectacular end to a great day of birding!

Thanks to Maury Stern for another great field trip!! Watch the *Quail* or our website for the Fall schedule.

Ethan "Chick" Chickering

RECYCLE USED INK JET CARTRIDGES and EARN \$\$ FOR MDAS!

We are embarking on a program whereby turning in used HP and Lexmark printer cartridges (virgin — not refilled) will earn MDAS \$2.50 each. We will also accept cell phones, pagers & PDAs. Bring them in a sealed plastic bag to general meetings or drop them off at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.

Fate of Golden Eagles at Altamont Pass

From Golden Gate Audubon Society

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to adopt conditions for permits that govern wind turbine operations at Altamont Pass on Thursday, September 22. The proposed conditions, though an improvement over current operations, fall short of what Golden Gate Audubon, other environmental groups, and even California's Attorney General Bill Lockyer have requested to reduce as many as 4,700 annual bird deaths (116 Golden Eagles among them) from the wind turbines.

The county has proposed that industry be required to shut down the most dangerous 2 percent of turbines (roughly 100 turbines), combined with shutting down all turbines for two winter months in the immediate term. Environmental groups, including Golden Gate Audubon, have requested that industry permanently shut down roughly 350 turbines and stop all turbines during the three-and-a-half-month winter migration—a time that promises the greatest benefit to birds and the least impact on wind industry profits. These measures could immediately reduce bird kills by a projected 50 percent.

Please write the Alameda Board of Supervisors, 1221 Oak Street, Suite 536, Oakland, CA 94612, before September 22 and urge them to require stronger measures to protect birds at Altamont Pass. Check our [Golden Gate Audubon] website, www.goldengateaudubon.org for updates in the weeks before this crucial hearing.

MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

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

____ 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 for one year.

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

____ I'm enclosing an additional donation of \$_____.

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Please make your tax-deductible check payable to:

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

the Quail

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(925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

Mount Diablo Audubon Society general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Garden Center at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Board of Directors meets at 7 PM on the second Thursday of every month in the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-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, 94526. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 215 Calle La Mesa, Moraga, CA 94556.

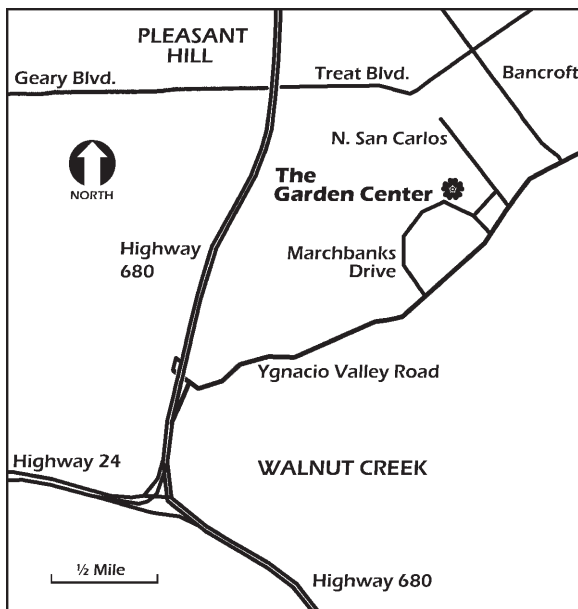
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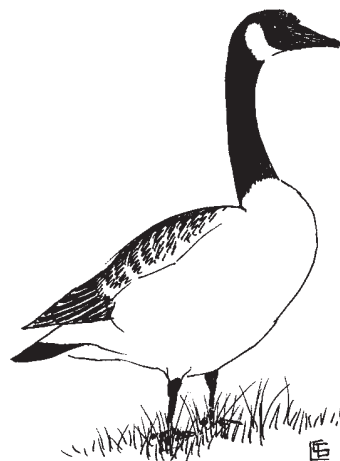
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Deadline for the October issue is September 15.



Driving directions: From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into parking lot. From Highway 680 south, take Treat Blvd. to Bancroft. Go right to Ygnacio Valley Road, turn right and go one block past signal at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). At Marchbanks Drive turn right. The Garden Center is located on the right in the second block.



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*Double-crested Cormorants, Klopp Lake
Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary*

Quickies

Weekend Birding in California

Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary

Whatever the season, a visit to the singular Arcata Marsh will reward you with a satisfying birding excursion. More, there is a lesson in conservation of our water resources, as this facility is a prime example of how a community can best integrate its sewage and wastewater handling responsibilities with an enhancement of its surroundings.

The marsh project is a network of fresh and saltwater wetlands, ponds, and lakes, linked by more than four miles of hiking trails. An aquaculture unit, where salmon, trout, and other fish are raised, is also part of the picture.

An Interpretive Center, on South G Street off Samoa Boulevard in Arcata, gives historical and technical information about the operations, as well as information about the birds, fish, river otters and other wildlife that might be found here.

Near the Center, the Butcher's Slough self-guided trail circles a fresh-water marsh, once a log pond for a lumber and plywood mill, until its closure in 1969. By 1985, willow and alder had filled the log pond to an advanced stage of succession. The managed marsh is supplied with fresh water from wells, and the open water and lush vegetation attract a wide variety of birds, such as dabbling ducks, Marsh Wrens, swallows, and many others.

There is a bird list of 252 species recorded for the 222 acres of the refuge, which includes a number of rarities attracted to the diverse habitats. The largest variety and

numbers of birds can be seen during fall migration, with thousands of shorebirds foraging on the tidal mud flats of the sloughs. The Wildlife Sanctuary is a wintering area for Canada Geese and for Brant. By spring, a quarter of the Pacific Flyway population of Brant congregates to feed on eel grass in Humboldt Bay. In the spring, Wood Ducks, Cinnamon Teal, and other waterfowl breed. Summer is a slow time, but still can be productive. On the islet in brackish Franklin Klopp Lake pictured (above) in early July, to the left of the cormorants a Mallard hen shepherds her young, while at the far end of

Continued on page 6

