



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

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## Barrow to Baja—Wetland Flyways Gary Kramer

Gary Kramer is an award-winning wildlife photographer and author. He has acquired a collection of photographs of 110 waterfowl species from around the world, perhaps the most complete collection by a single photographer.

From 1989 to 1999, he was the manager of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex of six wildlife preserves, largely devoted to providing wintering habitat for waterfowl. His new book *Flyways: A Celebration of Waterfowl and Wetlands* was published in May by Ducks Unlimited. One could not ask for a more qualified person to tell us, at September's meeting, about the wildlife and wetlands from Point Barrow, Alaska, to Baja California.

Flying south in the fall and north in the spring, waterfowl have followed travel routes in the sky for centuries. These migrations are repeated year after year as ducks, geese, and swans pass from one region to another, to breeding or wintering grounds. Wildlife biologists call these migration corridors flyways, and each flyway—Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific—is as varied as the birds that inhabit them.

Gary Kramer will take MDAS members and their guests on a photographic journey along the west coast of North America, from the tundra to the tropics, following the ebb and flow of waterfowl and other wildlife as they travel along these ancestral travel routes. You'll want to attend this meeting for the stunning photographs that will renew your admiration and awe for the beauty and complexity of North America's waterfowl and the wetlands they call home.



*These Northern Pintails, by Gary Kramer, grace the cover of his new book "Flyways: A Celebration of Waterfowl and Wetlands."*

### Birding Information

Mount Diablo Audubon Society enters a new meeting year with a new president, Jimm Edgar. Jimm and the Board of Directors devoted much time this summer to plans for our new year. Jimm will share his broad view of where he would like to take Mount Diablo Audubon as well as specific goals established as priorities by the Board. He and the Board see a number of conservation concerns, from local to national issues, which will become priorities. In addition, Mt. Diablo Audubon will focus on increasing its environmental education outreach. This will be Jimm's third time as president of Mount Diablo Audubon Society. Join us as our enthusiastic new president outlines our pathways for the coming year.

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 7**, 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 Speaker: Gary Kramer

\* Please remember to bring a cup.

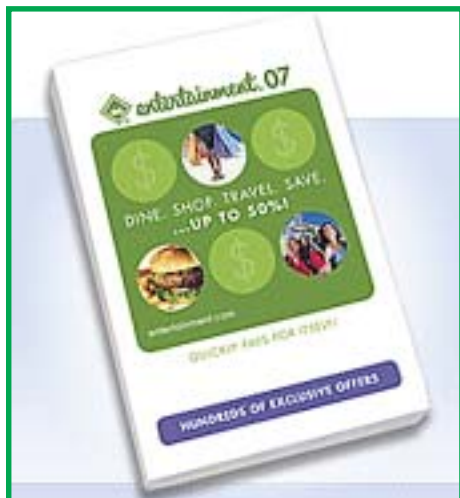
# Did You Know. . . An Interview with President Edgar

. . . that you could make a significant saving in Mount Diablo Audubon's costs, and consequently increase the funds available for our conservation efforts such as helping make children aware of nature? You can do this simply by agreeing to download this newsletter from the Internet and reading it or printing it out with your own computer. We will notify you by e-mail when each new issue has been posted.

. . . that it has taken up to 21 days for the Post Office to deliver the Quail to your mail box? Yes, that was extreme, but you can read the Quail even before we take it to the Post Office, because the printer takes four business days to prepare the issue for mailing. It doesn't take four days for us to upload the files.

. . . that all you have to do is to send an e-mail to [annmcg@pacbell.net](mailto:annmcg@pacbell.net) and write "e-mail Quail."

. . . that on the Internet, the Quail is in color, too!



## 2007 Entertainment Books are here now!

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

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

The *Quail* was able to cajole incoming MDAS President Jimm Edgar into submitting to an interview so newer members could become acquainted with him. Here's what he had to say:

*Quail: First of all, why two m's in Jimm?*

Jimm: I changed the spelling of my name when I was 12. Pretty common for early adolescents to do this. Most change back, but I never did. It is on my driver's license and my passport.

*Tell us a bit about yourself.*

After finishing seminary, we moved to Lafayette in 1969 to work for Young Life, a Christian organization that works with adolescents. I was transferred in 1986 to Oakland and have continued as a member of MDAS. I was born in Spokane, Washington and grew up there.

*When did you first become afflicted with birding fever?*

During the early 70s I started to wonder what the birds were in our yard and then what the birds were on the golf course I played.

*You recently accompanied John Robinson on a birding trek to Africa. Have you traveled to other remote birding locations?*

Yes, I had a great time with John in South Africa. 332 species on that trip! I have traveled a fair amount. I have an article that was published in the recent American Birding Association's "Winging It" on birding in Armenia. My wife, Bettie, is a flight attendant for United Airlines so I have the great privilege of flying almost anywhere for free. I have birded in Costa Rica, Trinidad, Mexico, Russia, Armenia, England, Australia, and other places. I do not keep a world list, but probably should. It would be over 2000, I think. My ABA North America list is 630 species.

*Given just a weekend for birding, where would you choose to go?*

My favorite time of year to bird is the winter months. I usually do 8-10 Christ-



Bettie and Jimm Edgar at the Marriott Hotel in Moscow.

mas Bird Counts, so I love to scout out an area that I am going to cover on the count to try and find an unusual species. Mount Diablo would be high on the list. Close, local, great diversity, a great place to go.

*You've been MDAS President before. When was that, and why on Earth would you want to do it again?*

Yes, I have been president a couple of other

times over the last 30 years. What prompted me this time was that Mike Williams was stepping down, and he had put together such a good Board of Directors, I thought the chapter was poised to really do some good things.

*What do you consider to be the most urgent conservation problem that MDAS should tackle?*

There are a number of important conservation issues before us. I am most concerned about those in our back yard, although state, national and world issues are also critical. There are a number of huge developments in the county that just seem unreasonable. This summer we saw some of the hottest days we have ever had in the county. I just read an article about how much housing development is taking place in the hottest areas of the state (Tracy, Stockton, Modesto, etc.) and how much that drains power sources because of the necessity of air conditioning. Maybe we should be looking at cooler areas for development. We will take a hard look at them. The Concord Naval Weapons Station land is a big one on our plate also. There is not a shortage of concerns, that is for sure.

*MDAS is dedicated to environmental education. Are we doing enough in this regard?*

As far as environmental education, we probably could always do more. We have tried to address that issue in our planning for this year. This year we hope to really step up in this area and do a lot more with schools and partnering with Native Bird Connections.

## Welcome New Members

Lynne Armstrong	Concord
Bettee Bowlby	Discovery Bay
Michael & Jane Larkin	Moraga
Clifford Miller	Danville
Phila Rogers	Berkeley
Betty Weber	Concord

## Free!!!

A pedestal to stand upon and take a bow as a volunteer.

You are concerned about the sustainable balance of our community with respect to people, birds, wildlife and habitat, because you are a Member of Mount Diablo Audubon. And because you are a Member (that's with a capital "M"), you want to be involved beyond making a donation once a year. Here's how:

- Call me—Shirley Ellis—at (925) 938-3703, and let me add your name to the list of generous and conscientious people who can be called upon when needed for simple chores, such as spending an hour or two representing MDAS at an environmental fair.
- Help our Hospitality Chair, Gerry Argenal, with the refreshment table, setting up before, or cleaning up after, one of our monthly meetings. Volunteers also donate the goodies—sign up with Gerry at (925) 768-6325.
- Donations are always welcome, of course. You can donate prizes for the raffle. Call Barbara Vaughn at (925) 376-8732 if you have suitable items. Especially welcome are donations earmarked to place *Audubon Adventures* materials into the hands of elementary-school teachers. Call Cecil Williams at (925) 376-1631.
- The displays we use at conservation events need help. If design of educational materials is your expertise, please talk to Alice Holmes, (925) 938-1581, to see how you can use your talents.
- And if you want to get involved in any other way, I know you will find the time you spend for Mount Diablo Audubon Society to be truly rewarding. My telephone is working—(925) 938-3703.

## July Observations By Steve Glover

Submit observations to Steve Glover at [countyline@sbcglobal.net](mailto:countyline@sbcglobal.net) or 925-828-7793.

Fifteen American White Pelicans flew south over the Albany Crescent on 7/25 (BF).

An Osprey carrying a fish flew south over the Tilden Nature Area on 7/11; it is unclear exactly where that bird would be headed (BF).

The clear highlight of the season was the first nesting confirmation of Bald Eagle for Contra Costa County. On June 6, an adult was seen carrying nest material at an inaccessible portion of San Pablo Reservoir (WC). On 6/21 a large nest and a chick just out of the nest were observed (RH). On 6/22 a second chick was noted (RH *et al.*). This wasn't totally unexpected, as two birds were noted there on 6/13/2004.

Summer flocks of Swainson's Hawks are no longer a surprise in east county but are always noteworthy. On 7/2, an estimated 59 Swainson's were in a field just south of Clifton Court Forebay near Byron (BP).

A Cooper's Hawk was rebuilding a nest in Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park on 7/15, an unusually late date for this species (DW).

Ten Black-bellied and 15 Semipalmated Plovers at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline on 6/20 were likely summering in the area (LL).

A Black Skimmer flew south over the Albany Crescent on 7/11 for a rare county record (BF), though they likely occur regularly when anyone is looking for them.

A Common Murre was seen near Pt. Isabel, Richmond on 7/10 (DG).

Though Hermit Warblers have never been found breeding, their presence in recent Julys around Vollmer Peak in Tilden Regional Park is suspicious. This summer a bird was detected as early as 7/19 (BF).

A dapper male Rose-breasted Grosbeak made a brief appearance at a feeder in Richmond near Wildcat Canyon on 6/21 (AK). There have been quite a few records of males visiting feeders during the summer in recent years, though this one may have been a migrant rather than a summering bird.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak



Approximately 600 pairs of Tricolored Blackbirds nested this season at Los Vaqueros Reservoir west of Byron (*vide* BC).

A Pine Siskin visited a feeder in Richmond near Wildcat Canyon on 7/9 and 7/16, an unusual summer date. Remember,

however, that a pair was confirmed nesting at San Pablo Reservoir during the atlas project (AK).

Two adult male Lawrence's Goldfinches were a nice find in Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park on 7/15 but they were overshadowed by a third adult male that was accompanied by two juveniles (DW).

Wade Chambers, Bill Chilson, Brian Fitch, Doug Greenberg, Roger Hartwell, Alan Krakauer, Laura Look, Bob Power, Denise Wight

**Q** In some localities this bird is called a Mouse Hawk. It will hunt in the same open fields as a Marsh Hawk (Northern Harrier) and the two may engage in a scuffle over one or the other's catch. The scientific name is derived from the Latin word that means "flaming" or "the color of fire."

In California, this bird is now listed as a Species of Special Concern.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to page 6 for the answer to this bird's identity.

ACDEEHLOORSTW

# Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## September

7 Thursday Jewel Lake  
13 Wednesday Hayward Regional Shoreline  
30 Saturday Outer Point Reyes

## October

7 Saturday Hawk Hill  
11 Wednesday Berkeley Shoreline  
21 Saturday Abbott's Lagoon  
28 Saturday Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area

## November

4 Saturday Limantour  
18 Saturday Charleston Slough/South Bay  
20 Monday Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

## December

9-10 Saturday/Sunday Gray Lodge/Sacramento NWR  
12 Tuesday Niles Area  
16 Saturday Central Contra Costa Christmas Count  
20 Wednesday East Contra Costa Christmas Count

## January

3 Wednesday Arrowhead Marsh/Lake Merritt  
6 Saturday Putah Creek  
TBA Sunol Regional Park  
27 Saturday Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park

## February

3 Saturday Thornton/Consumnes Preserve  
15 Thursday Grizzly Island  
16-19 Friday-Monday Klamath Basin  
21 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks  
28 Wednesday Concord Parks

## March

3 Saturday Capay Valley  
14 Wednesday San Leandro Reservoir  
31 Saturday Black Diamond Mines

## April

7 Saturday Garin Regional Park  
14 Saturday Pine Canyon  
26 Thursday Del Puerto Canyon  
28 Saturday Mines Road

## May

2 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park  
9 Wednesday Mitchell Canyon  
19 Saturday East Contra Costa County  
24 Thursday West Briones Regional Park

## June

6 Wednesday Sycamore Grove/ShadowCliffs  
16-17 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

## July

28 Saturday San Mateo Coast

## August

18 Saturday Bodega Bay

This is a tentative schedule of MDAS field trips in 2006-2007. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Some weekday trips are now on Monday or Tuesday, but most are Wednesday or Thursday. They may be switched to take advantage of tides or other opportunities. Two-day or three-day trips may be done either day or any day alone. Trip directions and meeting times will be published in the *Quail*.

### ② Thursday, September 7 Jewel Lake • Tilden Park

Leader: **Maury Stern**, 284-5980. Meet at 7:30 AM in the Nature Center parking lot (north end of Central Park Drive in Tilden Park) for a morning walk to look for migrants. One never knows what beautiful birds you may see at this choice location.

### ② Wednesday, September 13 Hayward Regional Shoreline North Entrance

Leader: **Bingham Gibbs**, 838-9257. Carpool leaves from Sycamore Valley at 8 AM. Meet at 8:45 AM at Winton Avenue entrance. From I-880, exit Winton Avenue, drive west, continue to end. Because traffic is so unpredictable, if no one is there, wait a while. This trip will include a walk past Mt. Trashmore to Frank's Dump West. Shorebirds and possible early ducks.

Sightings in early August included a Pacific Golden Plover, Red Knot, Wilson's Phalaropes, and a Surfbird.

### ② Saturday, September 30 Outer Point Reyes

Leader: **Jean Richmond**, 837-2843. Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Sun Valley. Meet at Drake's Beach parking lot at 9:00 AM. From Vallejo, take SR 37 west, turn right on Atherton Avenue, which becomes San Marin Drive after crossing US 101; turn right on Novato Boulevard, then left on Red Hill Road to SR 1; turn left and then right on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Continue through Inverness Park and Inverness for about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Road on left. Be prepared for variable weather.

Last year's trip to Point Reyes logged a number of interesting varieties. A Chestnut-sided Warbler was observed, as were Wilson's and Orange-crowned Warblers. Barn Owl and Great-horned Owl, Virginia Rail, and Common Murres were among the 64 species tallied.

Point Reyes is known as one of the premier birding spots in the entire nation. Come along!

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php). Customary carpool expense is \$3-5 for short trips, \$5-10 for longer trips, 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.

Carpool locations: **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.

**Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride Lot**—Just south of Danville, exit I-680 at Sycamore Valley Road to the east; the Park and Ride lot is on the left.

**El Nido Ranch Road**—Take the Acalanes Road/Upper Happy Valley Road exit of SR 24, west of Lafayette. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with Acalanes Road and on the north side of El Nido Ranch Road.

# Songbird America

By Rex Burress

Two interesting books on birds have appeared recently. One, *Songbird Journeys*, by Miyoko Chu, gives a detailed account in the lives of migratory birds and their challenges. The chapter on "Flight Across the Gulf" illustrates the particularly perilous 600-mile journey that millions of migrants make across the Gulf of Mexico rather than following the equally perilous land route. Even hummingbirds are known to make that crossing!

Although Pacific Flyway migrants aren't faced with the gulf dilemma, the strenuous effort does take its toll. The author, who made her mark in integrative biology with a study on 'the enigmatic migratory behavior of the Phainopepla,' states that many songbirds live for less than two years, with more than 85% of annual mortality occurring during migration. Several million succumb to radio towers, windmills, and other high structures.

Most migrants fly at night, sometimes as high as 12,000 feet, directed by those mysterious senses we have only recently begun to understand better. During the day they try to feed and renew their inner capacities. Every fall I notice the arrival of warblers that suddenly appear in the morning along the Feather River, evidently having flown at night, and they seem ravished for food. On the same note, I have seen masses of swallows gather on an autumnal evening to possibly prepare for flying all night. Cliff Swallows travel from the Yukon to South America and back each year, a journey of 12,000 miles, and some, like Arctic Terns, fly even farther. They must like to fly with wings! Or do they have any choice?

Stated is "Of 10,000 species of birds on earth, 4,600 are songbirds." I wonder if that number is a generalization? My *Birds of America*, Golden Guide, 1966, says 8,600 species in the world. *Wildlife Fact Finder* says 9,000. Have I missed something in new discoveries? Experts say there's about one million insect species on earth, but perhaps 10 million undiscovered. The same with fungi; an estimated 60,000 species have been described but maybe 1.5 million undiscovered. Do we really know any absolute facts about earth?

The other book, *Return to Wild America*, largely involves a retracing by author Scott Weidensauyl of Roger Tory Peterson and James Fischer's 30,000-mile bird and wildlife survey around the margins of North America they made in 1953. Environmental revelation was just beginning that year when the Supreme

*"The battle for conservation . . . is part of the universal warfare between right and wrong."*

Court denied construction of a highway along the historic Chesapeake Canal that was a major bird habitat refuge.

Peterson had added to the zeal of birders in America with the publication of his first field guide in 1934, an effort that was rejected by three publishing houses until Houghton Mifflin printed just 2000 copies. The book sold out in a week, and over the past 70 years has sold over seven million copies . . . and still going strong in spite of Sibley!

Rachael Carson added to the bird consciousness of the nation with her book, *Silent Spring*, in 1962, and Earth Day started in 1970 followed by the Environmental Protection Agency and Endangered Species Acts, legislation the industrial age promoters have continued to condemn. Overuse of natural resources is a continual threat to the wildlife integrity of the country, as the author noted in his early 2000 follow-up journey. John Muir said "The battle for conservation will go on endlessly. It is part of the universal warfare between right and wrong." Watch!

Artist, writer, and naturalist Rex Burress was born in Missouri in 1933. After moving to California in 1957, he worked with the Oakland Parks and Recreation Department for 32 years as refuge naturalist at the Lake Merritt Wildlife Refuge and Rotary Nature Center. He retired in 1993 and now resides along the Feather River in Oroville, CA, where he finds ever more subjects for writing, painting, and photographing.

More vignettes by Rex Burress may be found on the MDAS website at [http://www.diabloaudubon.com/birds/bird\\_prose.php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/birds/bird_prose.php).

## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



### 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.

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.

### New Eagle Ranger SRT Binoculars

The new Eagle Optics Ranger SRT binoculars are now available. They provide amazingly bright, crisp images as close as 5 feet. The prisms are **phase corrected** for enhanced resolution, contrast, and overall sharpness. **Fully multi-coated optics** provide maximum brightness and true colors. They are waterproof, fogproof, and have an unconditional lifetime warranty. If broken or damaged, Eagle will fix or replace them at no charge. They are available in 8×32, 8×42, 10×42, and 10×50.

### West Nile Virus & Birdfeeding

There is no evidence to suggest that feeding the birds increases your chance of getting WNV. There is evidence that decreasing mosquito breeding places decreases mosquitoes. You may continue to provide food and fresh water for your birds just as you always have, but you should change the water in your birdbath at least twice per week...simple as that! The mosquito's (carrier of WNV) breeding cycle is a minimum of 5 days, so by cleaning your bath twice per week, or more frequently if necessary, you can wash away all mosquito eggs and larvae without worry. Put a **Water Wiggler** in your birdbath. The battery-powered Wiggler keeps the water constantly moving. Mosquitoes cannot lay eggs on moving water.

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

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



## Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Short-eared Owls occur throughout the world, on all continents except Australia, but including such islands as Hawaii, the Galapagos, and Iceland. They inhabit areas of grasslands, marshes and tundra—wherever there is an abundance of the small mammals they prefer on their diet, particularly meadow voles. They will search in low glide paths over the fields, and hover, swoop and pounce on their prey. Another tactic is to perch motionless on a fence post and await their entree.

Migratory, they travel to breed in Alaska, Canada, and the northern third of the United States. Some, however, will remain in California throughout the winter or arrive here from farther south. In a 1987 study, 39 Short-eared Owl nests were found at Grizzly Island Wildlife Area. In recent decades numbers have declined over most of the range throughout the nation because of the loss of grasslands and riparian habitats.

This owl is about crow-sized, 13 to 17 inches in length, and is often seen during the day. Its flight is typically irregular and moth-like as it flaps and glides. The underwing shows a characteristic black wrist patch. You will not notice the short ear tufts, and the birds will seem to be round headed. Their yellow eyes peer out from a dark facial disk. ▶

## And the Winner Is . . .

National Audubon Society has announced the winners in their Biennial Newsletter Contest for 2006. In the category of Chapters with 1000–1500 members, the winner is *Wingbeats*, the Wake Audubon Society of Raleigh, North Carolina. Second place was won by the *Pilchuck Audubon Profile*, Everett, Washington. *The Quail* is pleased to have been awarded third place.

First place for larger Chapters went to our neighbor Golden Gate Audubon's *Gull*, followed by *Travis Signal Smoke*, of Travis Audubon Society, Austin, Texas, and the *NYC Urban Audubon*, of New York City Audubon Society.

There were 77 entries in seven size classifications.

We were quite pleased by some of the judges' remarks. One commented: "I would love to be a member of your chapter and receive this newsletter!" Another said "I found the Quail to be very friendly and inviting. . . I loved the detail to every little piece that went into this newsletter."

Other comments were mixed: "Quickies—Great idea!" Another: "A couple of your headlines didn't resonate with me. "Quickies" weren't super-short articles, nor were they describing super short trips."

And, some comments were negative [the most helpful kind]. "You may want to check with your members regarding their comfort with the body font size. It



was too small for my enjoyment." "I found the layout to be a bit confusing. For example, when an article jumps to another page, it was hard for me to relocate that article on the new page."

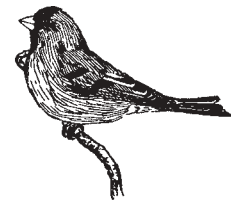
The judges and contest coordinators also offered a number of general thoughts about what makes an effective newsletter. You will notice some changes in the *Quail* over the next few issues that will stem from these tips.

Meanwhile, we'd like to have feedback about what

changes you think advisable. Are you comfortable with the body text readability? Should we spend about \$750 per year to use 100% post-consumer recycled paper? Are our regular features, such as *Quickies*, *Native Plants for Native Birds*, and the *Q and a quiz*, appropriate? How can this newsletter better further the goals of Mount Diablo Audubon?

It was gratifying to read that the judges recognized that "The newsletter team does a fabulous job assembling very inviting, reader-friendly, attractive issues." The team that worked to put together the issues that were submitted in this contest included Chick Chickering, Shirley Ellis, Joe Frank, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Alice Holmes, Jean Richmond, Fred Safier, Nancy Wenninger, and Mike Williams.

The editor greatly appreciates the contributions of these and other authors. Thanks, all!



Lawrence Goldfinch  
*Spinus lawrencei* Cassin  
Birds of Golden Gate Park  
Joseph Mailliard  
1930

# Native Plants for Native Birds

By Pat Bacchetti

## The Oak Understory

### Toyon and Coffeeberry

Two weeks ago, I attended the weeklong “Birds of the Sierra” class at the CSUSF Sierra Nevada Field Station at Yuba Pass. One day we were at 8700 feet elevation, climbing to the NFS Fire Lookout Station on Babbitt Peak. All around us were Lazuli Buntings, Brewer’s Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, and Mountain Bluebirds, with Mountain Quail calling in the distance. I was surprised that so many birds went to that altitude to breed. Then I took a closer look at the mountainside. The butterflies and bugs were thick, feasting on the abundant wildflowers and blooming shrubs. If you feed them, they will come. That was only one of the many wonderful experiences that we had that week, but the abundance of food in all of the habitat zones that we birded was evident.

The same principle applies to gardening for birds—feed them and they will come. Now that you have an oak or two, what can you plant with them to provide more food and shelter for the birds that will come to your backyard? I will discuss two shrubs that do well around oaks: toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) and coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*). Both are evergreens that tolerate low water use, provide abundant berries in the fall, and adapt well to sun or partial shade.

Toyon, or California holly, is one of the best-recognized of the oak understory shrubs. Its abundance in the hills of Southern California led to the name

“Hollywood”. It slowly but readily grows in the garden, but can get to 8-15 feet as it matures. About this time of the year, large terminal bunches of small white flowers appear. As a nectar source, toyon is hard to beat. I found ten different kinds of insects feeding on the nectar of one of my toyon blossoms last year. As the summer progresses, those flowers mature into deep red berries that are mature by October and November. Cedar Waxwings, jays, thrushes, Western Bluebirds, and Northern Mockingbirds will feast on these berries at a time of the year that food becomes scarcer.

Because toyon is a member of the rose family, it is susceptible to fungal disease that can disfigure the leaves. This occasionally will kill them, but usually they grow healthier as they mature. The shrubs can be used as large hedges or screens, or as small trees. They serve as a nice backdrop to oaks in the garden. “Davis Gold” is a beautiful yellow-berried cultivar that can be found at larger nurseries.

Coffeeberry is another beautiful and versatile woodland shrub. Though not as showy as toyon, it adapts well to transitional areas of full sun to shade, and is a dependable foundation plant. The leaves are a dark rich green, and the stems are a

ruby-red color. In the spring, it forms dense clumps of small nectar-rich yellow flowers.

Hermit Thrushes and Western Tanagers are particularly drawn to the dark burgundy-black berries in the fall. ‘Eve Case’ is the best-known of the cultivars, and can grow to 8-10 feet. It can be kept to the desirable size by pruning.

Toyon and coffeeberry, mixed with native bunchgrasses and wildflowers, can provide a natural and attractive oak woodland look that will attract birds to your yard year-round.

See *California Native Plants for the Garden*, by Bornstein, Fross, and O’Brien for descriptions of the plants and pictures of their use in gardens.

## What’s in a Name?

The American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) has done it again!

Changes to the official taxonomy of North American birds have been published in the July issue of *The Auk*. In summary, there are four new species, only one of



Blue Grouse

which impacts the birds of Northern California. That results from a split of the Blue Grouse into Dusky Grouse and Sooty Grouse. Dusky Grouse retains the scientific name *Dendrapagus obscurus*. Sooty Grouse is *D. fuliginosus*, and is the species whose habitat is the Cascade Mountains and the Sierra. The other additions are the Cape Verde Shearwater, *Colonectris edwardsii*, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, *Fregetta Bonaparte*, and the Barbados Bullfinch, *Loxigilla barbadensis*.

Other noticeable changes are in the ordering of several families and species of birds. Curiously, while Lesser Yellowlegs formerly came right after Greater Yellowlegs, the Willet now comes in between. The new arrangement of sandpipers is this: Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Wandering Tattler, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, and Lesser Yellowlegs, before returning to the previous list at Whimbrel.

Skuas and Terns also get shuffled. After Black-legged Kittiwake, now comes Least Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Forster’s Tern, Royal Tern, Elegant Tern, Black Skimmer; then South Polar Skua, Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, and Long-tailed Jaeger, followed by the alcids.

Another curious interchange now places Yellow-billed Cuckoo before Black-billed Cuckoo, instead of the reverse.

Most of these changes stem from advanced DNA studies. For example, the skuas and jaegers have been found to be closer to the alcids than to the larids, so they now get their own family, Stercorariidae.

You can read the entire article at [www.aou.org/checklist/Suppl47.pdf](http://www.aou.org/checklist/Suppl47.pdf).

Birds of Yosemite National Park, Stebbins and Stebbins, 1954



Toyon



Coffeeberry

# Trip Report

## San Mateo Coast, July 29

Fourteen members and guests spent a pleasant day at the San Mateo Coast and saw 58 species of birds. The weather was ideal, with most people in shirtsleeves by 10 AM. We spent time at Pescadero Beach and Marsh, with a visit to Phipps Ranch, Cloverdale Road, and Gazos Creek Road. Highlights were many shorebirds, including both Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Ruddy and Black Turnstones, Surfbird, Sanderling, Black-bellied Plover in breeding plumage, and Semi-palmated Plover. Large flocks of Heermann's gulls were present and one Elegant Tern.

Maury Stern

# Coastal Cleanup

Take part on Saturday, September 16, from 9 AM to noon for the 22nd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day.

Join others in working at the Martinez Regional Shoreline from 8:30 AM to noon. Wear sturdy shoes, work clothes, and gloves. Sign in when you arrive. Bring snacks; beverages and water will be available throughout the morning. The cleanup will continue until noon, followed by a BBQ.

In Concord, volunteers will clean Galindo Creek beginning in Newhall Park at the end of Boxer Boulevard. Boxer Boulevard runs parallel to Clayton Road between Indian Lane and Newhall Parkway. The park is at the end of Boxer Boulevard, one block south of Clayton Road.

Other locations in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties will also be spruced up. For more information, you can contact <http://www.ebparks.org/volunter/coastcleanup/coast1.htm>.

California Coastal Cleanup Day is the premier volunteer event focused on the marine environment in the country. Each year, more than 40,000 volunteers turn out to over 400 cleanup sites statewide to conduct what has been hailed by the Guinness Book of Records as "the largest garbage collection."

Coastal Cleanup Day is a great way for everyone to join together, protect our fragile marine environment, show community support, learn about the impacts of marine debris, and have fun!

## MONO LAKE *Continued from page 10*

Plovers have returned to the coasts of California and Mexico.

Many other species can be found along Mono Lake's shores, such as Marbled Godwit, Western and Spotted Sandpipers, Willet and Black-necked Stilt. In the fall, many waterfowl, sometimes including Tundra Swans, visit the lake. At South Tufa you may see an Osprey on the nest, or you may hear the call of a Sage Thrasher from the top of a tufa tower. Mono Lake County Park features a boardwalk to a viewing platform for close views of Virginia Rail and Sora.

The Mono Basin has a diversity of habitats. In the riparian areas, look for Wilson's Snipe, Green-backed Herons, and Common Yellowthroat. There are sagebrush scrub areas where Loggerhead Shrike, Black-billed Magpies, and Sage Sparrows forage, accompanied by several sorts of raptors. The forested pine and aspen habitat of higher elevations is where to search for Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Western Wood Peewee, and Juniper Titmouse. High up on the road to Tioga Pass there are numerous pullouts where you can stop and look for Gray-crowned Rosy Finches.

A pleasurable advantage to birding the Mono Basin in the fall is the glorious golden groves of aspen that give the landscape a special beauty.

In 1901, Walter K. Fisher, then a student at Stanford, journeyed to Mono Lake and wrote of his trip in an article titled "A Trip to Mono Lake, Ornithological and Otherwise" and published in an early edition of *Condor*, the journal of the Cooper Ornithological Club. Fisher was the son of Albert K. Fisher (a founder of the American Ornithological Union), and he later was the first Director of Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station, serving from 1917 to 1943. This is a charming story, and a copy has been placed on the Mount Diablo Audubon web site for your pleasure, at [www.diabloaudubon.com/birds/bird\\_prose.php#list](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/birds/bird_prose.php#list)

The Mono Lake Committee publishes an Eastern Sierra Birding Trail Map that identifies 37 sites along the Highway 395 corridor, from Bridgeport Reservoir and Bodie north of Mono Lake, south to capriciously named Dirty Socks, an alkali flat and wetland where fall migration brings a great many American Avocets. Contact 760-647-6595 or [www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org).

# Treasurer's Report By Steve Buffi

Mount Diablo Audubon Society remains in an excellent position to serve our community. We had another successful year. The annual year-end fundraising drive continues to be strong and our total chapter memberships set another record high. During the fiscal year, we collected additional funds needed to publish the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas, spearheaded by Steve Glover.

The financial health of MDAS, due to the generosity of our members, allows us to actively pursue our mission. During the year, we funded important habitat preservation projects and continued our community outreach efforts for young people. Your generosity supports our monthly presentation program, this newsletter, the annual Christmas Count, the EBB Bird Sightings list, and much more. You have read about these important community efforts in prior issues of the Quail. Each dollar you give is put to good use for the benefit of our community.

The General Fund balance covers operations and reserves, the Conservation and Education balance is used towards these efforts, the Breeding Bird Atlas monies will be depleted as we progress towards publication, and the McNabney Marsh funds support the marsh and other conservation activities.

MDAS Managed Funds	Revenues	Expenses	Net	Fund Balance
July 2005 – June 2006				7/1/06
General Fund	\$26,659.66	\$18,471.68	\$8,187.98	\$68,706.00
Conservation & Education	435.42	2,102.15	(1,666.73)	13,063.78
Breeding Bird Atlas	3,065.63	0	3,065.63	18,951.03
McNabney Marsh	193.58	0	193.58	7,591.90
Total All Funds	\$30,354.29	\$20573.83	\$9780.46	\$108,312.71



# Ornithological Opportunities

**Lindsay Museum** is starting a new training class for Docents on September 11 from 9–12. Please call Patti Harris, Director of Education, 935-1978, Ext. 414.

**Monterey Bay Birding Festival**, September 22-24, Watsonville. Guided outings to: Watsonville Wetlands, Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, Pajaro Dunes, Pajaro River, Moss Landing State Beach, Ventana Wildlife Society, Big Sur Ornithology Lab, Sunset Beach, Santa Cruz Coast.

www.montereybaybirding.org.

**Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival**, September 30-October 1, Weldon. Visit the Southern Sierra's Kern River Valley to experience one of the U.S. and Canada's largest known Turkey Vulture migrations and the height of fall landbird migration at desert oases. You will enjoy birds, vultures, geology, botany, natural history, native American studies, moths, reptiles, and children's activities. Contact: Audubon California

Kern River Preserve, Kern Valley Nature Festivals, PO Box 833, Weldon, CA 93283. 760-378-2029.

**Preserve Lamorinda Open Space** will present an art show to benefit open space and wildlife. Sunday, October 1, 9 AM - 5 PM, at St. Mary's College, 1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga—outdoors next to the Hearst Gallery; for directions call (925) 878-9682. Admission is free. Support the arts, protect endangered species, and have fun, all in one day!

## the Quail

is published 10 times a year by the

### Mount Diablo Audubon Society

• a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •

P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053  
(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. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Call for location.

### MDAS Board of Directors

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330  
Vice President: Mike Williams, 376-1631  
Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929  
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Deadline for the October issue is September 13.

## 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 \$ \_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

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



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

*Driving directions:*

*From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to the signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center, opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into the 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.*

Mount Diablo Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 53  
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

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*Phalaropes at South Tufa • Mono Lake*  
Photo courtesy The Mono Lake Committee

## Quickies

### Weekend Birding in California

#### **Mono Lake**

The importance of Mono Lake to a number of bird species is fairly well known. It's a stop on the Pacific Flyway, and it hosts many breeding birds as well, notably California Gull and Snowy Plover. Without an outlet stream, the lake is salty and fish cannot survive. But algae, brine shrimp and brine fly larvae are more than plentiful, making the lake a paradise without competition from fish for the abundant food. Over 300 species of birds live here or drop by along their migration route.

Wilson's Phalaropes stop over in mid-summer, having nested some several hundred miles to the north. Females arrive first, for they have left their mates to incubate the eggs and raise the young. Nearly 100,000 birds have been counted at one time at Mono Lake. Another

50,000 birds come in late July; these are the Red-necked Phalaropes, who have nested farther north, near the Arctic Circle. The phalaropes molt and take advantage of the flies to increase their body weight in preparation for their extended journey to wintering sites in South America.



*Eared Grebe • Podiceps nigricollis*

Then, in late summer, there is an influx of Eared Grebes, perhaps a million of them by mid-October. These birds are on their way to the Salton Sea or the Sea of Cortez to spend the winter.

The best-known large population of Mono Lake birds is the California Gull, with 50,000 adult birds flying in to find nest sites on the islands in the lake. If you visit in the spring, you will see the birds in their familiar black, white and gray plumage. By late July, the gray-brown fledglings will be seen crossing to the shore to feed, and to bathe and drink in the fresh-water streams entering the lake. You will not see intermediate plumages, for only four-year olds will return from the coast.

The Snowy Plover is a California Species of Special Concern and is on the federal list as threatened. These little birds depend heavily on the unique habitat of Mono Lake. On the northeast shore are alkali flats where the birds make a depression in the mud and lay their eggs. Within three hours after hatching, the chicks leave the nests and have little trouble feeding on insects along the shore. By August, the Snowy

*Continued on page 8*