



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php

Volume 53, Number 1

September 2007

Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas Steve Glover

We open our 2007-2008 MDAS program year with a presentation by Steve Glover. Steve founded the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas in 1997 and oversaw the fieldwork from 1998 through 2002. He has completed the writing of the Atlas this year and proofreading is underway. Steve is pleased to report that Rusty Scaup, a Geographic Information Specialist for the State of California and a superb birder, is creating the final maps that will be published with the Atlas. The original artwork has been completed by Dana Gardner who is internationally known for his bird illustrations featured in numerous field guides and in the works of Alexander Skutch.

Steve will bring us a sneak preview of the Atlas, update us on the publishing process, and discuss the breeding status of the 164 bird species that have bred in Contra Costa County. We are indebted to Steve for his outstanding work on this important document.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 6**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

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

8:05 PM Speaker: Steve Glover

* Please remember to bring a cup.

October 4:

José Calvo, Birds of Costa Rica



Great Blue Heron

It is always interesting to know how an excellent birder began his or her career. Steve provides some unique details. "I started birding in 1988 when I was 19 (Man, time flies!), just out of curiosity that developed during hiking trips in the East Bay. At the very beginning I took a birding class at D.V.C. It was one of those classes where you listened to lectures and watched slides on your own schedule and only saw the teacher for a couple of field trips. I got a D... But, a trip along Highway 37 got me hooked when I watched a Great Blue Heron lumber into flight. I was pretty much self-taught until I joined MDAS.

"There I had the pleasure of learning from George Finger, Elizabeth Dickey, and, especially, Jean Richmond. I started doing the observations column in the early 1990s, I think maybe 1991. I founded the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas in 1997. I have also been a Regional Editor for North American Birds since the fall of 1999. Again, time flies."

Birding Information

Across southeastern Arkansas sprawls the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, a vast forested wetland that is not only the seasonal home of ducks and geese but possibly one of the last strongholds of the endangered Ivory-billed Woodpecker. The refuge shelters many other bird species, from migrating warblers to resident wading birds. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, money raised from the sale of duck stamps paid for three quarters of this refuge. At Cache River other wildlife protected includes Bald Eagle, Swallow-tailed Kite, Northern Bobwhite, King Rail, and Black Bear.

The sale of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the duck stamp, has raised some \$700 million for the purchase or lease of more than 5 million acres of wetlands and grasslands for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The first duck stamp was issued in 1934 and depicted mallards drawn by cartoonist and NWF founder Ding Darling.

MDAS President Jimm Edgar will discuss the history of, and benefits of, the Duck Stamp Program.



Cache River NWR • USFWS/Garry Tucker

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

President's Corner

Welcome back from a busy summer for all of us I am sure. We start the season on Thursday, September 6 with a presentation by our own Steve Glover. Steve is one of the finest field ornithologists in California. If you ever have a chance to accompany him in the field, grab it. He will bring us up to date on the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas that will be published soon. This is a monumental work with thousands and thousands of man hours involved. It documents all of the birds that breed in our county. You will be surprised at what Steve and others found out.

The MDAS Board met in July and August working on calendar items for the year. A number of folks from our chapter are planning to attend the Audubon California Conference at Asilomar on October 6–8, 2007. All of you are welcome to attend that event also. It will, as always, be a spectacular time. One of the most significant



decisions the Board made in July was to give a \$5000 donation to Audubon California to complete the purchase of the Bobcat Ranch in Yolo County. The 6800 acre ranch has over seven miles of frontage on Putah Creek. The property cost nearly seven million dollars with the bulk of the funding (\$6.35 million) coming from Proposition 40 funds. This Blue Oak/ grassland habitat east of Lake Barryessa will be preserved forever. We are planning to have a field trip there this year and the resident preserve manager will give us the tour of this mag-

nificent property. This may be the largest single gift our chapter has ever given, but we felt strongly about the acquisition of this land. Your generous donations to the chapter helped make this happen

The MDAS Board also voted to help you, our members, support the Federal Duck Stamp Program, which secures wildlife habitat for the National Wildlife Refuges. We are purchasing 40 stamps that we will have for sale at face value, \$15. Most will be in little plastic cases with our logo on the opposite side. We will also have some that are not in the plastic for sale at our September meeting. These stamps give you free access to all NWRs where admission is charged.

Our field trip committee has over 50 field trips on the calendar for the year. See the schedule on Page 5. Our program chair has lined up lots of good speakers on a variety of subjects. All we need is for you to jump in and participate. Hope to see you soon.

Jimm Edgar

July/August Observations By Steve Glover

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Steve Glover at countyines@sbcglobal.net or (925) 997-1112.

A count of 28 **Wood Ducks** at Briones Reservoir on 7/3 included many young birds, an indication that the widespread placement of Wood Duck boxes in the watersheds of the Berkeley Hills has been successful (RS).

A pair of apparently territorial **Northern Harriers** was at Wildcat Peak in Tilden Park on 6/25 (BF). Northern Harriers went unconfirmed as breeding birds in west county during the breeding bird atlas.

A **Spotted Sandpiper** on 5/26 at Heather Farm Park was on the late side for a spring migrant (HH). A stunning **Red Phalarope** made a rare Contra Costa appearance at the restoration site north of Point Isabel, Richmond from 5/29 (CB) to 6/5 (DG).

A **Caspian Tern** stopped to forage at Heather Farm Park, Walnut Creek on 7/12 (HH). Breeding Caspians forage quite widely and this bird is likely tied to the colony at Brooks Island.

Rare hummingbirds for central Contra Costa County at a Lafayette feeder included a male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** 6/29-30 and a male **Costa's Hummingbird** on 7/3 through at least 7/10. A young male Costa's was also present from about 7/6-7/9 (M&SS).

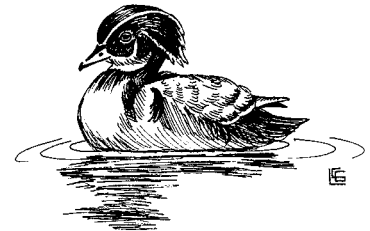
A male **Pileated Woodpecker** around the Tres Sendas Trail in Redwood Regional Park 5/26 was in an area where this species has been detected regularly for several years (RS). The observer also thought he heard a second bird call.

A **Say's Phoebe** at Lime Ridge Open Space 6/3 was in an area where the species has been known to breed (JH). Another on 6/13 at Briones Regional Park, however, was either a very late migrant or a bird attempting to breed far from currently known breeding stations (DW). The species is known to breed in the county only very locally in the Diablo Range, though there is a breeding record from Moraga Valley in the 1930s.

House Wrens are normally scarce as far west as Tilden Park, so a "swarm" of 13 birds around Vollmer Peak on 6/22 (BF) was unusual.

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was out-of-place on the west side of Vollmer Peak in Tilden Park on 6/22 (BF).

A singing **Swainson's Thrush** in Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park on 7/1 was an exceptional sighting as the species is unknown as a breeder east of the Interstate 680 corridor in Contra Costa County and the date for this bird is highly suggestive of just that (DW).



This summer brought presumably breeding **Phainopeplas** to the Mount Diablo area in numbers never previously recorded, even during the breeding bird atlas. A pair was at Shell Ridge Open Space on 5/24 (SH); a pair was near the gate to Castle Rock on 6/2 and another was inside the park later that day (FS); 3 males were in Lime Ridge Open Space on 6/3 (JH); a male was near Mitchell Rock on 6/13 (BF); 2 males and a female were near Mitchell Rock on 7/14 (GL) and at least 2 males and a female were in White Canyon on 7/1 (DW).

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was a welcome visitor to a Lafayette feeder 6/22-23 (PD, MT). At least one male of this species is found virtually every summer in the county, almost always at feeders.

Pairs of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at Pine Pond, Mount Diablo State Park on 6/2 (FS) and Briones Regional Park on 6/13 (DW).

Cathy Bleier, Pat Doughty, Brian Fitch, Doug Greenberg, Hugh Harvey, Joel Herr, Steve Hutchcraft, Garrett Lau, Fred Safier, Rusty Scalf, Richard Schwartz, Maury and Susan Stern, Marilyn Trabert, Denise Wight

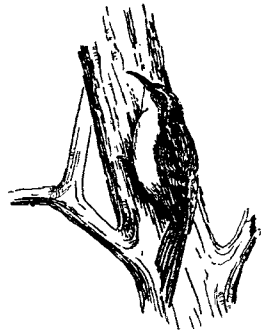
Welcome New Members

Richard Augusta	Antioch
Jane Chinn	Brentwood
Rachel Cullar	Concord
Joel Farr	Pleasant Hill
Sarah Gallagher	Crockett
Don Groom	Moraga
Tony V. Lam	San Francisco
Patricia Partridge	Lafayette

We Need You!

There is a place for you to help further the conservation and education goals for which Mount Diablo Audubon is dedicated. Ann McGregor, our Membership Chair, must step down, and her position must be filled. Although this job does require some computer skills, Ann can lead you through the protocol and get you started.

There's also a spot for you to help with other tasks, such as assisting with our participation at environmental fairs. Call our Volunteer Coordinator, Shirley Ellis, at 938-3703.



Sierra Creeper

Certhia familiaris zelotes

Birds of Golden Gate Park
Joseph Mailliard
1930

Q

This bird, *Aythya collaris*, does not readily show the field mark for which it is named. Males are black and white; their iris strikingly golden. Females are brown and have a white eye ring.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 7 to learn more.

CCDDEEGIKKNNRU

Concord Naval Weapons Station Update

The Concord Community Reuse Plan for the Concord Naval Weapons Station is continuing on an aggressive timeline. In 2006, the Concord City Council, acting as the Local Reuse Authority, launched a multi-year process to prepare a Reuse Plan for the property. The project's Goals and Guiding Principles, compiled from the input received through the public outreach process, were approved by the City Council at an August 2006 meeting. The overarching goals are a world class project, balanced approach, economically viable and sustainable development, and quality of life. In November 2006, the City Council appointed a 21-member Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) to assist in the preparation of the Reuse Plan. The CAC meets monthly and at least one member of MDAS is on the CAC. In addition to the CAC, technical advisory groups of the many service providers for the area (fire, water, sewer, schools, transportation *etc.*), as well as representatives from regional and neighboring jurisdictions, provide technical input to the project as it progresses. Our president, Jimm Edgar, sits on a technical advisory group.

Hundreds of community members attended an Informational Open House and two hands-on workshops this Spring to assist the City in creating a range of concept alternatives for the Concord

Community Reuse Plan. Information gathered from the public in the first two workshops was presented at a meeting with the City Council on August 4 as a range of conceptual alternatives. The key issues involved intensity of uses, arrangement of land use and transit, distribution of open space, and buffers and connections to neighborhoods.

MDAS has also been involved in a coalition of conservation groups including the California Native Plant Society, Friends of Mount Diablo Creek, Greenbelt Alliance, Save Mount Diablo, and the Sierra Club—San Francisco Bay Chapter. This group has been meeting regularly to develop a platform on the CNWS Reuse Plan.

The conceptual alternatives will be further refined by the Project Team and presented to the City Council at a meeting on Tuesday, September 4 for consideration for inclusion in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The City Council will not consider adoption of a single Reuse Plan alternative until the EIR is completed in the Spring of 2008.

Members of Mount Diablo Audubon Society are encouraged to continue to keep informed. The Project Team has put together an informative website at www.concordreuseproject.org/.

Claudia Hein

Audubon California Acquires Bobcat Ranch

Audubon California has acquired the 6,800 acre Bobcat Ranch as part of a conservation initiative in Yolo County, California. The ranch is an anchor property for the coordinated effort to protect rolling blue-oak grasslands foothills and its wide diversity of bird and wildlife from development.

The property is at the heart of some of the best birding in the Central Valley along the Hwy 128 corridor between Winters and Lake Berryessa, along Putah Creek. Audubon chapters will be welcome to hold field trips on the ranch.

In May, Audubon received a \$6.35 million grant from the State of California's Wildlife Conservation Board, a \$610,000 grant from the Great Valley Center, and generous donations from chapters, including MDAS, and others to help acquire the ranch.

Managed by Audubon California as an Audubon Sanctuary, the Bobcat Ranch will become a home-base for Audubon's Landowner Stewardship Program; it will remain an active cattle ranch. Since 2003 the stewardship program has been actively restoring habitat on the ranch.

The Landowner Stewardship Program works with private landowners to conserve and restore wildlife habitat on farms and ranches in a manner compatible with existing agricultural operations. Long-term goals are to enhance and restore riparian, oak woodland and grassland habitats, improve forage quality, improve water quality and reduce erosion.

With this acquisition Audubon will conserve an important piece of the inner coast range, while demonstrating that ranching and wildlife conservation can be mutually beneficial.

NEWS 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 "scatter-hoarding," 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! 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!

Our local Chestnut-backed Chickadees 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 scatter-hoarding 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!

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

Delta Science Center Moves Forward



Big Break Regional Shoreline is part of the great 1,680 square mile Delta estuary, the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers which drains half of California and creates the largest estuarine environment on the Pacific Coast.

Located adjacent to the City of Oakley, "Big Break" was created during a heavy storm in 1928 when a levee broke and the San Joaquin River inundated an asparagus farm. The result is a shallow bay (three to seven feet deep) about 2.5 miles long and more than a mile wide. Located in a part of the Delta subject to tidal influence, the mixture of salt and fresh water makes Big Break prime habitat for a wide variety of species, particularly birds and fish. In 1987 East Bay Regional Park District began acquiring land for the park, which now totals more than 1,648 acres.



The Shoreline includes open water, tidal marsh/mudflat, freshwater marsh, alkali grasslands and riparian woodlands. Interesting species include White-tailed Kite, Loggerhead Shrike, and California Black Rail, among others. Because of the abundance of fish, Big Break is popular with anglers and has also historically been used for hunting of waterfowl.

Because of the site's outstanding environment for native species and educa-

tional potential, EBRPD was one of many organizations which supported the creation and development of the Delta Science Center at Big Break. In 1994 EBRPD entered into an agreement with Contra Costa County, the Community College District, Cal State Hayward and the Ironhouse Sanitary District to develop a master plan for the facilities. Al McNabney of Mount Diablo Audubon served in an advisory capacity for this effort, subsequently replaced by Joel Summerhill. Originally conceived by some to be a Delta equivalent to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the project has gradually evolved. Many of the original partners have dropped out, but the Park District remains committed to constructing interpretive facilities on the site.

Since 2001, EBRPD has constructed a fishing/observation pier, entry road, trails, restrooms and the first phase of a parking lot. Future proposals include a campus including kiosks, interactive exhibits, signage and the Delta Learning Center. As a result of concerns about flooding in the project area, the Park District has decided to build the future facilities at an elevation above the 100-year flood zone. In order to do so, approximately 60,000 cubic yards of clean fill will have to be imported to create fill areas at 12 feet elevation. Scheduled to begin this summer, the hauling and earthwork will take up to six months. Construction of the Delta Learning Center will begin early next year, with an estimated completion date of in spring of 2009 when we will all be able to enjoy great opportunities to observe wildlife and learn about this important area of California.

Nancy Wenninger

Come Bird with Us in September

② Thursday, September 6 Jewel Lake

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.

Last year at this location we noted 31 species, including Western Tanager and Western Wood Pewee.

② Thursday, September 20 Hayward Regional Shoreline

Leader: Bingham Gibbs, 838-9257.

Carpool leaves Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot in Danville at 8:00 AM. Meet at 8:45 AM at Winton Avenue entrance. From I-880, exit Winton Avenue, drive west 4.5 miles to parking lot. 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.

② Saturday, September 29 Outer Point Reyes

Leader: Jean Richmond, 837-2843.

Carpool leaves southwest corner Sun Valley parking lot at 7:30 AM. Meet 9:00 AM at Drake's Beach parking lot. From I-80 in Vallejo, follow SR 37 19.1 miles to Atherton Avenue, exit and turn left, cross US 101 to San Marin Drive and continue for 3 miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd, turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to the stop sign. Turn right and drive to SR 1, turn left and pass through Point Reyes Station. At the green bridge turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Continue for about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Road on left. We are hoping for migrants and vagrants. Weather is unpredictable.

Trip Report

San Mateo Coast, July 28. Nineteen MDAS birders spent a great day at the San Mateo Coast. The weather was ideal, with minimal morning fog, high 60-degree temperatures and good birding. We saw 67 species including the common rock shorebirds—Black Oystercatchers, Wandering Tattlers, Black Turnstones, Surf-birds, and a Spotted Sandpiper. Willets, Whimbrels, Black-bellied Plovers and Semipalmated Plovers were seen. There were large flocks of Heermann's Gulls and Caspian Terns. The highlight bird was probably the Marbled Murrelet seen off Pigeon Point Lighthouse near the end of the trip. *Maury Stern*

Ornithological Opportunities

Point Reyes Bird Observatory's 30th Annual Bird-A-Thon. September 1 through October 15. Grab your binoculars, your field guide and get ready for the longest running event of its kind in the US. Each year, PRBO's Bird-A-Thon raises over \$100,000 to help fund critically acclaimed research and education programs. Individuals or teams count the total number of bird species seen or heard in a 24-hour period. Each counter solicits pledges, or one-time gifts from friends, relatives, neighbors, businesses and/or corporations for each bird species identified during their chosen 24-hour period. By participating you will:

- Have fun while raising critical funds to conserve birds, other wildlife and their ecosystems throughout the West, Latin America and Antarctica!
- Have the chance to win great prizes—spotting scopes, binoculars and more!
- Enjoy getting outdoors while you visit your favorite birding area!

You can participate by becoming an individual counter, joining a team, or by sponsoring a counter! For more information, or to register, visit: www.prbo.org/birdathon, call Ann Joly at (707) 781-2555 ext. 320 or email ajoly@prbo.org.

Mendocino Coast Audubon's Fall Pelagic Trip will be Sunday, September 23. Do you need South Polar Skua, Tufted Puffin, Rhinoceros Auklet or Northern Fulmar for your life list? These species were seen on last year's trip. Sail from Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg aboard the

Trek II, departing at 8:00 AM and returning about 3:00 PM. Cost is a very reasonable \$95. For more information e-mail tonyep@mcn.org.

Monterey Bay Birding Festival, Watsonville, September 21-23. Fall is a magical time of year for birding along the Monterey Bay. Over 400 species of shorebirds, ducks, geese, seabirds and songbirds gather along this beautiful coast to overwinter among the wetlands, sloughs, shores and woodlands. With the Monterey Peninsula to the south and Santa Cruz to the north, the Pajaro Valley is at the heart of one of the premier destinations along the Pacific Coast, providing great diversity and abundance to the visiting birder. Contact: www.montereybaybirding.org. (831) 763-5600.

Enjoy expertly led trips to Watsonville Wetlands, Monterey Bay, Elkhorn Slough, Pajaro River and Dunes, Monterey Bay state beaches and the Santa Cruz coast, Pinnacles National Monument, and Carmel River. Experience a special outing to the Big Sur Condor Project.

Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival, September 29-30. The Kern River Valley Turkey Vulture Festival celebrates the height of fall Turkey Vulture migration through California's "Valley Wild", the Kern River Valley. One of the two largest known migration sites in North America (north of Mexico). The magnitude of the migration over this southern Sierra Nevada count site is awe inspiring. Field trips, exhibits, workshops.

Three reasons why you should attend the **Audubon California Assembly 2007, Pacific Grove, October 7-9:** #1 Great workshops on global warming and wildlife! #2: Field trips to see seabirds, condors and the Monterey Bay Aquarium! #3: Networking and socializing with people who share a passion for conservation, science and education! Registration fees include two nights/three days, double occupancy, at Asilomar; six meals; workshops and an exclusive visit to the Monterey Bay Aquarium: \$325.00 per person. For questions and schedule information contact: Claudia Eyzaguirre, ceyzaguirre@audubon.org (510) 601.1866 ext. 3. Or visit www.ca.audubon.org/audubon_assembly.html.

American Birding Association 2008 Convention, June 23-29 at Snowbird Village, in beautiful Little Cottonwood Canyon outside Salt Lake City, Utah.

Yuba Pass *Continued from Page 8*
another conifer. The bird flitted around, always staying fairly near the ground, and it provided enough quiet moments that everyone was able to see the bird through the scopes. For some beginners the flycatcher was the third lifer of the day—not a bad start by 9 AM.

Back into the cars, the caravan proceeded to “sparrow corner” at the intersection of Westside and Calpine Roads. Here the quarry was a group of sparrows that frequent this high desert clime including Brewer’s Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Sage Sparrow. We dipped on the Sage but picked up the other two sparrows before we ventured for wetter territory.

We traveled to Dyson Lane/Marble Hot Springs Road for the opportunity to view many water- and wet-pasture-loving birds. Sticking their heads and necks above the tall grass were two American Bitterns. Flying overhead was the first of two Ospreys for the day. In the far distance on a perch was spotted the first of the day’s two Bald Eagles. Yellow-headed Blackbirds flew in and out of the cattails. The males were particularly impressive with their brilliant yellow heads contrasting against their otherwise all black body. The secretive Virginia Rail was persuaded to display conspicuously not far from the road. Several American Coots with their red-headed young were seen paddling around the ponds. Two huge bright green frogs were spotted sedentary in the water basking under the bright sun. The wind was moderate at this stop but at the next birding site, the “iron bridge,” the wind was so brisk that it destabilized the scopes while making the hot air more comfortable. From the bridge we looked down on a hundred or so Cliff Swallows as they negotiated the wind while feeding on flying insects.

Later we stopped at a known Swainson’s Hawk nest in a tall lone tree in the front yard of a valley home. A hawk parent was seen facing away from the road and tending the nest. A short time later we viewed another individual soaring at a Loyalton park where the group had broken for a picnic lunch.

Refueled and rested, we departed for a stop at the Rotary Club picnic area on Smithneck Road near a small stream with cottonwoods and other deciduous trees. Some nice warblers were located including the Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned,

Hermit, and Yellow. A beautiful Bullock’s Oriole remained easily visible for many minutes midway up a leafy tree. Flycatchers abounded. We found the Hammond’s, Dusky, and Ash-throated Flycatchers to add to the Gray seen earlier in the day.

The last excursion of the day was along an old burn on Antelope Valley Road. Viewed was a Lewis’s Woodpecker at its nest in a charred tree and a Western Bluebird or two. We traveled back to Yuba Pass, relaxed, and ate dinner before we experienced the day’s wonderful finale with the Poorwill.



We awoke on Sunday morning to another glorious day in the mountains. On Sunday we stayed close to Yuba Pass. We were welcomed by a swarm of Cassin’s Finches intermixed with Pine Siskins and a few Evening Grosbeaks which flocked on the side of the highway. The grosbeaks were particularly beautiful birds with bright white wing patches and lime-green beaks (much more vibrant than the beak color shown in field guides). In the same area was a most brilliant sky-blue Lazuli Bunting. Again, the field guide depictions did not do justice to the vividness of the blue hues on this bird.

Soon we scoured the Yuba Pass campground area for woodpeckers. Three woodpecker nests were quickly found, those of the Black-backed Woodpecker, and Williamson’s and Red-breasted Sapsuckers. The Red-breasted Sapsuckers located their nest in an aspen tree near the pass parking lot. The Williamson’s Sapsuckers nested high in a dead tree near one of the campsites. It was special to observe the dimorphic color patterns of the male and female birds as they clung to the tree trunk. The Black-backeds holed up in a snag only two feet from the ground in

the meadow adjacent to the campground. The parents frequently flew to the hole with food, the male displaying bright yellow on its forehead.

After an hour or so of woodpecker viewing, we hiked along the dirt road to the north of the campground. Several birding highlights are worth noting. A known White-headed Woodpecker nest was relocated in a snag making the fourth woodpecker species seen by mid-morning. At one time both the male, with its red on the back of its head, and its female partner gripped the snag at the same time. Later a Western Tanager, always a highly desired bird due to its beautiful multi-colored plumage, was seen.

After leisurely walking the old logging road for much of the remaining morning, the group drove westward and downhill toward Bassetts. We stopped just short of the tiny village to watch an American Dipper at its nest behind a small cascade at a highway pullout.

The last stop for birding on Sunday was at the general store in Bassetts from which were hung four hummingbird feeders. It only took a few minutes for a Black-chinned Hummingbird to be attracted to the sugary solution and this was quickly followed by a beautiful Calliope Hummingbird with its stunning purple gorget. For some beginning birders these mountain hummers were additional life species. The birding party congregated at picnic tables to count the number of species seen over the weekend. While gathered around the tables and reviewing the Sierra bird lists, a Northern Goshawk flew almost directly overhead taking credit for the final species seen on the trip.

A total of 113 species were seen or heard on the trip by at least one member of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society group. The camaraderie of the group was excellent and the birding was heavenly. Two of the beginning birders added fifteen new birds to their life list. Gratitude is offered again to Rosita and Hugh Harvey for serving as the official leaders of the trip. The same gratitude is offered to the other excellent birders, including Jean Richmond, who unfailingly tutored the less experienced birders. The joy of birding the alpine area around Yuba Pass will likely be an annual venture for many of the birders who attended this year’s marvelous trip.

By Craig Hixson

the Quail

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a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •

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The Quail is printed on 30% post-consumer waste recycled paper. **Deadline for the October issue is August 31.**



The Garden Center

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



MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society 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 tax-deductible donation of \$_____.

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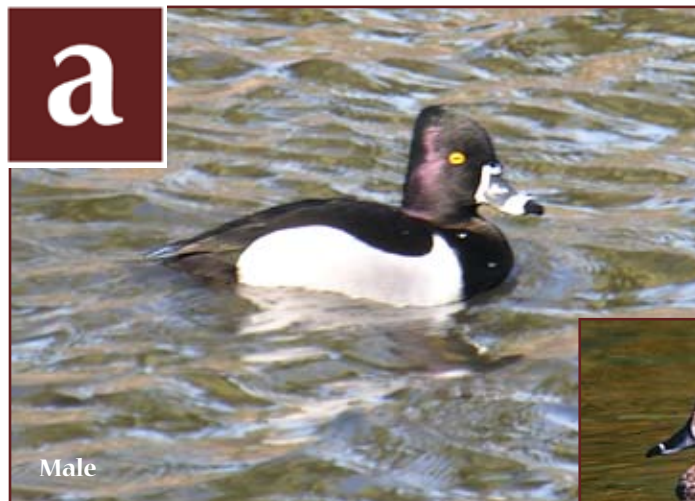
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MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:
Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Court, Danville, CA 94526

Ring-necked Duck • *Aythya collaris*



Male



Female

Brian Murphy photo

The chestnut collar that gives this diving duck its name is inconspicuous, and the ring at the base of the bill is so distinctive that some prefer to call this the Ring-billed Duck. Its nearest look-alike is the Lesser Scaup, but note the “peaked” or knobby shape of the head, unlike the rounded head of the Scaup. In appearance, it also resembles the Tufted Duck, which is a rare visitor from Europe. According to John Audubon, it was not until 1824 that the two species were determined to be separate.

Ring-necked Ducks dive to feed on tubers, leaves and seeds of underwater vegetation, but also eat mollusks and insects. Although they prefer smaller, quieter

lakes and ponds than do Scaup, they can forage at depths of as much as 40 feet. The drake pictured here was at Lake Murray in San Diego County. Brian Murphy photographed the Ring-necked Duck hen at McNabney Marsh.

The breeding range for Ring-necked Ducks extends across Canada and the northern United States. Breeding also occurs in California's northeastern counties. Migration brings them to all of the state; they're fairly common from late September through mid-April.

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*Yuba Pass—A great spot for birds and birders
Photo by Denise Wight*

Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley

This year we had several new birders join us for the Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley trip. Rosita and I asked one of the new birders to write a report of the trip for publication in the Quail. Craig Hixson has submitted this report to us and we are pleased to share it with the membership. Hugh Harvey

Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley, June 16-17. With impending darkness descending on a dirt road overlooking the shadowed Sierra Valley, a group of a dozen birders shined their flashlights into a shallow roadside ditch about 75 feet from where they were congregated. After having searched the eastern sky in waning light for a half hour, the birding troop excitedly observed three Common Poorwills that had flown into the ditch. The front-lit eyes of the ground-roosting birds reflected brilliant red points of light from what could have been mistaken as nefarious creatures from outer space or some giant insect glowing

with unearthly bioluminescence. The cryptic coloring of the birds against the dark ground and sky prevented seeing any feature other than the radiant eyes. This event was possibly the most exhilarating of many encounters with mountain avifauna on this year's annual pilgrimage to the Yuba Pass area of the northern Sierra Nevada range. The beginning birders in the group, myself included, were especially enthralled with this encounter as it was foreign to their previous diurnal experiences. The poorwills accommodated the group with their energetic insect catching antics until the birders departed up slope in search of a Common Nighthawk (which was heard but not seen). Supplementing this early nocturnal show was the viewing from the same location of a Great Horned Owl in a tree silhouetted against the dim sky.

In contrast to the annual trip two years ago with cold and snow, this year's journey by the Mount Diablo Audubon Society to the Yuba Pass area in search of mountain

breeders commenced with comfortable temperatures and cloudless skies. Birders met at the 6,700-foot pass at 7 AM on Saturday and soon toured down to the warmth of Sierra Valley where they spent the day crisscrossing the valley in search of both abundant and uncommon birds. The first

The camaraderie of the group was excellent and the birding was heavenly.

stop was at Mountain Quail Road, where the group sought out and found several Green-Tailed Towhees. The first towhee mimicked a tree-topping Christmas ornament as it posed with an unobstructed view and sang for many minutes in a conifer next to the walking trail. Soon thereafter a Brewer's Sparrow was audibly identified and then visually surveyed for several minutes.

The group then sought one of the most difficult to find target birds, the Gray Flycatcher. A tape of its singing was played along a stretch of the trail as everyone watched the forest anticipating finding this small nondescript bird. The flycatcher eventually responded to its call and was found lurking in the branches of

Continued on Page 6 »

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

September 2007

6 Thursday	Jewel Lake
20 Thursday	Hayward Regional Shoreline
29 Saturday	Outer Point Reyes

October

6 Saturday	Hawk Hill
11 Thursday	Berkeley Shoreline
20 Saturday	Abbott's Lagoon

November

3 Saturday	Davis Area/Vic Fazio
10 Saturday	Limantour
17 Saturday	Charleston Slough/South Bay
19 Monday	Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

December

8-9 Saturday-Sunday	Gray Lodge
12 Wednesday	Niles Area
15 Saturday	Christmas Count/Central
19 Wednesday	Christmas Count/East County

January 2008

5 Saturday	Putah Creek
21 Monday	Arrowhead Marsh/Lake Merritt
26 Saturday	Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger
30 Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park

February

2 Saturday	Thornton/Cosumnes Preserve
8 Friday	Grizzly Island
23 Saturday	Tomales Bay State Park
28 Thursday	Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

March

5 Wednesday	Walnut Creek Parks
13-16 Thursday-Sunday	Susanville/Honey Lake
20 Thursday	San Leandro Reservoir
26 Wednesday	Lake Lagunitas
29 Saturday	Black Diamond Mines

April

5 Saturday	Garin Regional Park
12 Saturday	Pine Canyon
15 Tuesday	North Briones Regional Park
29 Tuesday	Del Puerto Canyon

May

3 Saturday	Mines Road
8 Thursday	Mitchell Canyon
14 Wednesday	Mount Diablo State Park
17 Saturday	East Contra Costa County
22 Thursday	West Briones Regional Park

June

5 Thursday	Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs
7 Saturday	Outer Point Reyes
21-22 Saturday-Sunday	Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

July

26 Saturday	San Mateo Coast
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August

16 Saturday	Bodega Bay
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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.

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

Category ❶: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths

Category ❷: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain

Category ❸: 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.

Customary carpool expense is \$3-5 for short trips, \$5-10 for longer trips, plus tolls and entry fees shared among driver and riders.



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