

the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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September 2009

The San Francisco Presidio and Its Birdlife

On September 3, Stephen Phillips will introduce MDAS members to the Presidio of San Francisco, a 1491-acre National Park site that is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The Presidio was in continuous use as a military post from 1776 to 1994, spanning the Spanish, Mexican, and United States periods. On Saturday, October 3, Mount Diablo Audubon will sponsor a birding field trip to this historic site.

Stephen is a Biological Science Technician for the Presidio Trust where he is part of the Natural Resources Department performing habitat restoration in the native plant areas. In addition, he is an avid birder having devoured field guides from the age of 10, studied ornithology in college and, after college, enjoyed two eight-month internships at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. There, he documented a breeding population of Seaside Sparrows in a location 190 km south of the known species breeding location. Stephen has collected data for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas, been a member of the Denver Audubon Society and a board member of the Chicago Ornithological Society and has served as a bird rescuer for the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors. He is married to Jessica Valeri, a musician, and his hobbies are Ultimate Frisbee, mountain biking, rock climbing, photography, birding, home brewing, and travel.

For the past five years, Stephen has worked in the field for a Chicago ecological restoration firm. He continues that work in the Presidio of San Francisco where he is learning the complex interactions of our soil, microclimate, flora, fauna, tides, winds, fog drip and more, working to restore native habitat.

Stephen will provide us with an overview of the Golden Gate National Recre-



ation Area and its diversity. Narrowing the focus, he will discuss the restoration (past, present, and future) of the Tennessee Hollow watershed—including specific sites such as Crissy Marsh, Thompson Reach, and the more recent work at El Polin Springs. He will delve into bird data from historic records to the present, presenting a picture of what we can hope to see on the October 3 field trip. Join Steve, and our own Chick Chickering, for a fascinating day of birding and history.

BIRDING INFORMATION

Mount Diablo Audubon Society is very proud to introduce the newly published Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County created by Steve Glover, with illustrations by Dana Gardner. We are pleased that Dana Gardner will join us for the meeting. Dana's original illustrations will be available for purchase as well as notecard packets of images selected from Dana's illustrations. Proceeds will be applied to our conservation efforts.

Dana Gardner is an internationally known nature illustrator. He collaborated with the renowned Central American ornithologist, Alexander Skutch, for 28 years and has illustrated many books on Central and South American birds as well as those of Malaysia, Thailand and the Neotropics.

Do check his website:

www.gardnerbirds.com

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 3**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

7:00 PM Birding Information

7:25 PM Announcements

7:40 PM Refreshments,* door prize

8:05 PM Speaker: Stephen Phillips

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, October 1:

Diane Inman and Scott Hein

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Welcome New Members

Kathleen O'Melia
Itha Witdoeck

Martinez
Lafayette

Observations

By Maury Stern

One and possibly two **Green Heron** families have been at Heather Farm Pond during July and August (HH).

Three **Eurasian Collared-Doves** flew over Albany Bulb on 6/26 (BF).

Cooper's Hawks were nesting at Contra Loma Regional Park in Antioch and hatched three young, starting 6/23 (P&NS).

A **Swainson's Hawk** with two young was in East County 7/17 (P&NS).

Golden Eagles of various ages were seen at Briones Regional Park and Mitchell Canyon in Mount Diablo State Park on 6/21 (CM) and 6/22 (DW).

A **Prairie Falcon** from Morgan Territory RP with a picture was reported by BH on 6/11.

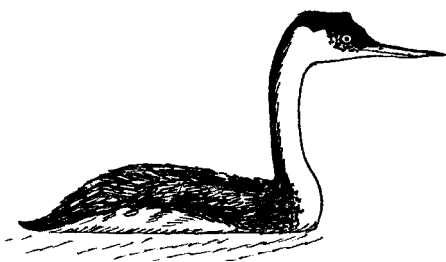
Many **Burrowing Owls** and young were reported from various parts of East Contra Costa County starting 6/14 (P&NS).

On 6/26 **Olive-sided Flycatcher** and **MacGillivray's Warbler** were seen in Tilden RP (BF).

Two adult **Blue Grosbeaks** were on Bethel Island Road with the male feeding two fledglings. **Yellow-Breasted Chat** was nearby on 7/17 (P&NS).

Brian Fitch, Hugh Harvey, Bob Hislop, Claudia Moose, Paul and Nancy Schorr, Denise Wight

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to Maury Stern at mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send sightings to *EBB Sightings*.



Gary Kramer
USF&WS

Rossmoor Acorn Woodpeckers

As Chair for the Acorn Woodpecker Task Group I offer a brief conclusion to the effort made to prevent the killing of Acorn Woodpeckers as a solution to human error.

First I would like to thank community people, many Rossmoor residents, Audubon members, Wild Birds Unlimited, Wild Care, Humane Society, Worth a Dam, Native Bird Connections, Congresswoman Tauscher, and Audubon California for being such a strong voice of disapproval that we managed not to have 50 Acorn Woodpeckers shot in 2008/2009. We were not successful in preventing any death and we were certainly caught off guard by the manipulation of the Rossmoor permit to allow trapping and removal for "research purposes". Effectively Rossmoor killed or removed a total of 27 Acorn Woodpeckers, a little more than half the number allowed by their permit. Considering we were up against the CA Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA/APHIS, the many voices were able to prevent worse. Our task group formed good contacts to allow us to be the watchdog at preventing Rossmoor from ever renewing either a depredation or collecting permit again to rectify a building maintenance problem.

Rossmoor has put up granaries at excessive cost to the residents and are trying a new coating on the soft synthetic

Continued on Page 8 »

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

Welcome back to the *Quail* after our short summer recess. This issue has a lot of information in it so I hope you will read it closely. Our field trip chair, Hugh Harvey, and his team met in July and have put a fine list of field trips together for the year with some brand new destinations. Almost all of the year's programs are set up thanks to Alice Holmes. We have some great speakers.

Most exciting is the publishing of the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County*. It came out the second week of July and is spectacular. I hope all of you will get a copy. Steve Glover, the author, did a lot of great work as did a number of other folks. Lots of information is in this *Quail* about the Atlas. Our former membership chair, Ann McGregor, has agreed to be the marketing agent for the book.

I had a chance to travel to Kyrgyzstan the first two weeks in July to do a work project there for the organization I work for, Young Life. I arranged ahead of time with a tour company to take a birding trip with a field ornithologist and translator. We spent about half a day in a national park about an hour outside the capital Bishkek. We were at about 6-7000 ft. high most of the time. I don't keep a world list of birds, but the Isabelline Shrike we saw is fairly rare I was told. I saw a number of Hoopoes, which if you have not seen, look them up. Strange looking bird. The guide said the Common Redstart was a good bird to see, as well as Hume's Leaf Warbler. It was a good day.

One of our newer members sent me an e-mail this summer and said as new birders they were unsure what field guides were good and why, so we have added some thoughts on that in this issue. I appreciated their input. If you have questions or ideas, please let us know about them.

Q

This bird is the state bird of Connecticut, Michigan and Wisconsin. It was also featured on the \$2 bill of Canada issued between 1986 and 1996.

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

AABCEIIMNNORR

Choosing a Field Guide

The ideal field guide is easy to use, easy to carry, and aids in accurate identification of a species. Fortunately, there are many excellent field guides from which to choose. We asked members of the MDAS Board for their favorite field guide and their reasons for their preference.

Diana Granados likes *Sibley Western Birds* for its small size and low-key colors which do not let you get hooked on color as an identifier. For beginners, she suggests the *Stokes Western Region* guide. It often shows several photos of each species. There are symbols to indicate those varieties that will come to backyard feeders and those who will occupy nest boxes.

President Jimm Edgar says, "I like the *National Geographic Birds of North America*. It is now in its fifth edition having come out well over 20 years ago, so if you go to it be sure and get the latest edition. The text is good as are the drawings and I like to be able to see the range maps for the birds' yearly travels. Jon Dunn, one of the chief consultants for the book, is probably one the finest field ornithologists I have ever been around. Incredible skills."

Vice-President Mike Williams has three favorite guides. "For nationwide birding and for reference I like the *National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America* 5th Ed. This is a real improvement over the 3rd and 4th editions. For Western Birding I really like both the Sibley and the National Geographic Guides. The *Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America* came out in 2001 and was an instant success. His beautiful drawings, great range maps, and good descriptions made it the book to use. The *National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of Western North America* is a partial improvement to Sibley's because it is newer, has the up-to-date names and classifications and somewhat better descriptions. However, it is larger and thus not as convenient in the field. Also, I still prefer Sibley's drawings. Our solution: my wife carries one and I carry the other."

Membership Chair Bev Walker likes *Kaufman's Field Guide to Birds of North America*. It is small and lightweight for pocket or pack use. The colored indexing tabs for species groups make finding a bird quick—without turning to the index at back of the book. She also likes *Birds of Northern California* by

David Fix and Andy Bezener. "It is an ideal book to accompany birdwalks where showing a picture and describing details to others is important."

A foremost consideration in selecting your field guide is that you have one that is appropriate for the

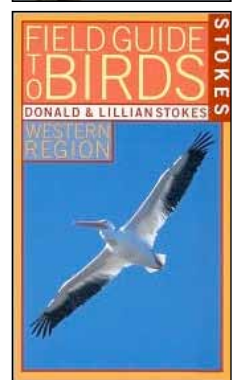
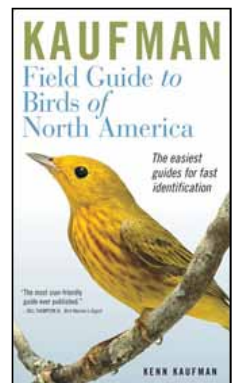
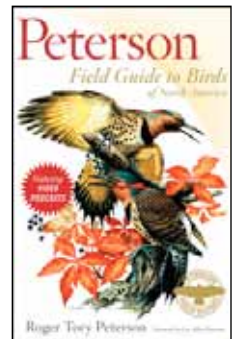
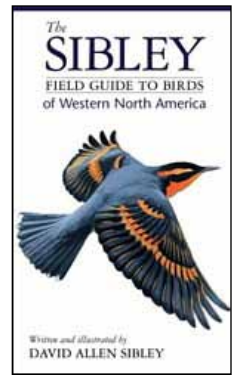
region in which you live and watch birds. Minimizing the number of species found in a field guide is especially helpful for a beginning birder. It is important that it is easy for you to use. If this is your first field guide, it may be best to select one with illustrations instead of photographs. Illustrations allow unique field marks, typical of a species, to be emphasized. Such field marks often cannot be clearly seen in photographs.

A most important thing about using your field guide is being familiar with its content and layout. When you have time, get to know where the shorebirds are, where the owls are, where the warblers are—so you can find them quickly when you need to look up a bird.

Field guides are typically organized taxonomically. Related birds are grouped together in an order established by ornithologists going from the least-evolved birds (geese, swans, ducks) to the most highly evolved birds (blackbirds, orioles, finches). But be aware that this order has changed in 2004 and, for beginners especially, it might be best to use a guide that reflects that change. If the first birds shown are Loons, the book is out of order. Even so, Field Trip Chair Hugh Harvey prefers the *National Geographic* 2nd or 3rd Edition. "I started with them when they first came out because they cover the entire nation—no eastern/western editions. Because I am familiar with the order in the earlier field guides, I will probably stick with them a long time."

But most importantly, remember when using your guide in the field to look at the bird, not at the book. We often make the mistake, in our excitement at seeing an unfamiliar bird, of taking a quick glance at the bird and then dropping our binoculars to find it in the field guide. Frequently we don't have enough visual information to make a positive identification, so we grab the binoculars for another look and the bird is gone. So study the thing with wings, because the book will stick around, and besides, the thing with wings is definitely a better example than any photo or drawing.

Up from the Egg: The Confessions of a Nuthatch Avider, by Ogden Nash
Bird watchers top my honors list.
I aimed to be one, but I missed.
Since I'm both myopic and astigmatic,
My aim turned out to be erratic,
And I, bespectacled and binocular,
Exposed myself to comment jocular.
We don't need too much birdlore, do we,
To tell a flamingo from a towhee;
Yet I cannot, and never will,
Unless the silly birds stand still.
And there's no enlightenment so obscure
As ornithological literature.
Is yon strange creature a common chickadee,
Or a migrant alouette from Picardy?
You rush to consult your Nature guide
And inspect the gallery inside,
But a bird in the open never looks
Like its picture in the birdie books—
Or if it once did, it has changed its plumage,
And plunges you back into ignorant gloomage.
That is why I sit here growing old by inches,
Watching the clock instead of finches,
But I sometimes visualize in my gin
The Audubon that I audubin.



2009-2010 Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

September

- 3 Thursday Jewel Lake
- 17 Thursday Hayward Regional Shoreline
- 19 Saturday Healdsburg/Vaux's Swifts
- 26 Saturday Outer Point Reyes

October

- 3 Saturday San Francisco Presidio
- 8 Thursday Berkeley Shoreline
- 10 Saturday Hawk Hill
- 17 Saturday Abbott's Lagoon

November

- 7 Saturday Charleston Slough/South Bay
- 14 Saturday Davis Area/Vic Fazio
- 21 Saturday Limantour
- 23 Monday Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh

December

- 5-6 Saturday/Sunday Sacramento Refuges
- 10 Thursday Niles Area
- 15 Tuesday Christmas Count/East Contra Costa
- 19 Saturday Christmas Count/Central Contra Costa

January

- 2 Saturday Christmas Count/Rarity Chase
- 9 Saturday Putah Creek
- 16 Saturday Bodega Bay
- 23 Saturday Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park
- 29 Friday Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh

February

- 6 Saturday Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
- 10 Wednesday Grizzly Island
- 18 Thursday Sunol Regional Park
- 25 Thursday Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh
- 27 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park

March

- 3 Wednesday Walnut Creek Parks
- 18 Thursday San Leandro Reservoir
- 24 Wednesday Lake Lagunitas
- 27 Saturday Black Diamond Mines

April

- 3 Saturday Garin Regional Park
- 7 Wednesday Orinda Connector Trail
- 10 Saturday Pine Canyon
- 14 Wednesday Mount Diablo State Park
- 19 Monday North Briones
- 22 Thursday Del Puerto Canyon
- 24 Saturday Mines Road
- 29 Thursday Mitchell Canyon

The schedule of field trips this year follows the pattern we have used for a number of years. By participating in all of our trips, one would have a reasonable chance of finding most of the birds which could be expected to be found in Northern California.

Note that minor date and leadership changes may be made throughout the year. The leaders often have unforeseen circumstances which require accommodation on our part. We will make every effort to publish the most up-to-date information in the Quail, please read it closely.

Above all, remember that these are your trips. Should any member have additional thoughts on when and where we go, or desire other input, let your leadership know. We serve on *your* behalf, not ours.

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 drink and join us during our midday break.

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**—Exit SR 24 at St. Stephens Drive east of Orinda. El Nido Ranch Road is parallel to and north of the freeway. Park just east of the intersection with St. Stephens Drive.

May

- 4 Tuesday Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline
- 8 Saturday East Contra Costa County
- 13 Thursday West Briones Regional Park
- 20 Thursday Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs

June

- 5 Saturday Outer Point Reyes
- 19-20 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

July

- 24 Saturday San Mateo Coast

August

- 14 Saturday Bodega Bay

Come birding with us in September!

② Thursday, September 3 Jewel Lake

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Meet at 7:30 AM in Nature Center parking lot at north end of Tilden Regional Park. Short morning walk to look for migrants. Among the birds we might see at this lovely area in September are Allen's Hummingbird, Hutton's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Bewick's Wren, Swainson's Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Western Wood-Pewee, and Western Tanager.

② Thursday, September 17

Hayward Regional Shoreline Winton Avenue Entrance

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.

**In every walk with nature one receives
far more than he seeks.**

John Muir

① Saturday, September 19 Healdsburg Vaux's Swifts

Leaders: Hugh and Rosita Harvey, 935-2979.

This is a new trip for us. We hope to see thousands of swifts enter a chimney on the grounds of the Rio Lindo Academy. This has been an annual occurrence since 1989. Be advised that we will be returning home after dark. Carpool leaves Sun Valley at 4:30 PM. Take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge (toll). Go west on I-780 to I-80 towards Sacramento, exit to SR 37. Follow SR 37 to Lakeville Road, turn right. In Petaluma take Hwy 101 north to Healdsburg, exit at Old Redwood Highway/Healdsburg Avenue. Go north to Bailhache Avenue, turn right on Bailhache, which becomes Rio Lindo Avenue. Follow it about 3 miles into the Academy's main entrance. Turn left at the first stop sign and another left just before the dormitory. In half a block turn right toward the rear of the campus, park on the right past the chimney. Bring folding chairs, a picnic supper and join many others as we enjoy the evening show. Watch for a hunting Merlin amongst the many swifts.

② Saturday, September 26 Outer Point Reyes

Leader: David Hutton, 938-4485.

Carpool leaves southwest corner Sun Valley parking lot at 7:00 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 Reports

Outer Point Reyes, June 6. Ten birders gathered at Drake's Beach to find a cloudless blue sky and flat calm ocean. We visited the usual haunts, Drakes Beach, Mendoza Ranch, Nunes Ranch, the Fish Docks and Lighthouse, but then included one additional site, the RCA Station. Earlier in the week there were reports that a number of unusual vagrants had turned up in outer Pt Reyes (Rose-breasted Grosbeak, American Redstart, Indigo Bunting and Northern Parula), so the group was hoping the birds were still around and we would be able to add a few uncommon entries for the chapter's records. We were not disappointed and found a female American Redstart at the radio towers above the parking lot at the lighthouse. Perhaps even more notable was our discovering a mystery bird in the trees outside the ranger's residence at the lighthouse. While we were attempting to identify it, some more experienced birders happened by and helped pinpoint it as a White-eyed Vireo, only the fifth record in Marin. Other memorable sightings included a Great-horned Owl at Mendoza Ranch and a Pine Siskin at the RCA Station. All in all we found 63 species.

David Hutton

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, June 13-14. We started visiting Sierra Valley on Saturday instead of Sunday in 2005, due to snow and cold conditions. Not only did we escape the severe conditions, but the list of birds seen has been consistently higher. The 2009 trip was no exception; even without our own Jean Richmond, the list totaled 119 species. We were joined Saturday by Bob Battigan, a director of the Feather River Land Trust, who explained to us some of their goals. MDAS is one of their supporters, and he took us to their property at the north end of Sierra Valley. We were also met at lunch by Denise Wight, who joined with us for the remainder of the day. These two brought the number of participants to 18.

We did the most common areas of Sierra Valley including Mt. Quail Road, Calpine Road, Marble Hot Springs Road across the marsh and both Harriet and Heriot Lanes before stopping for lunch in Loyaltan. Highlights included Green-tailed Towhees, Chipping Sparrows, two Gray Flycatchers, Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Sage Thrashers, a daytime Common Nighthawk, Wilson's Phalaropes and Burrowing Owls. We then visited the Rotary Picnic Area south of the town and drove through the 1994 fire area along Antelope Valley Road. The

Continued on Page 7 »

Point Loma

» *Continued from Page 10*

billed and California in winter, possibly Glaucous-winged Gull as well. Off-shore, Brown Pelicans fly by in single file. Also off-shore, especially in fall, you might spot Red-necked Phalaropes, Black-vented Shearwaters, and Parasitic Jaegers. Royal Terns feed year-round, joined by Elegant and Least Terns in summer. In winter look for Brant, Surf Scoters, loons, and large rafts of Western Grebes. See if you can identify three species of Cormorant on the rocks.

Point Loma juts out in the ocean and concentrates migrant land birds in the fall like Cape May in New Jersey or Point Pelee in Ontario. Experience shows that you can expect the unexpected—semi-rarities like American Redstarts and Black-and-white Warblers that have wandered from the East Coast to the West—any time from the first of September to mid-November. A good place to look for them is Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, which, like most large cemeteries, has lots of mature trees where migrating land birds find rest and food. Birding etiquette is important here, as anywhere; remember to maintain the solemnity of this beautiful area.

The residential area of Point Loma, near Point Loma Nazarene University, is



home to a flock of Red-crowned Parrots. If you think you can't bird by ear, these birds will change your tune.

Two other popular birding sites on Point Loma are Sunset Cliffs on the ocean side south of Ocean Beach, where the habitat is like that at the Cabrillo Tidepools, and Famosa Slough.

The Famosa Slough is a 37-acre wetland east of Ocean Beach at the northern edge of Point Loma. The slough is flushed with salt water from the San Diego River channel, and also collects rainwater from the surrounding neighborhood. A rare Yellow-crowned Night Heron was seen in May. Other birds to be seen at the Slough might include American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Hooded Merganser, Forster's Tern, Little Blue Heron, Reddish Egret and other egrets, Belted Kingfisher, and Osprey.

Point Loma is not to be missed when you are birding in San Diego County. San Diego is birdier than ever, the county having just recorded its 500th bird species, a Snow Bunting. In addition, the San Diego Bird Festival—now in its 14th year—set a new record during the 2009 festival for the number of species counted during the annual event, 250.

So why not come and see for yourself one of America's birdiest counties? The 2010 festival is set for Thursday through Sunday, March 4–7, 2010. Registration for the four-day festival is \$20. Field trips fill up fast, so, for the latest information and to register, visit www.sandiegoaudubon.org and click on the Bird Festival tab. For a brochure, call 619-682-7200.

In other San Diego County good news of note, the Chula Vista Nature Center has found new life and will remain open (see the May-June *Quail*).



American Robin · *Turdus migratorius*



One of our most admired songbirds, the American Robin is our largest thrush. Many of the robins of literature, such as Cock Robin of the nursery rhyme, are not

thrushes but are classified as Old World Flycatchers. The European Robin is the national bird of the U.K. Our Robin was misnamed by early colonists for the common red breast of the two species.

American Robins are social birds, especially during the winter when they assemble in large flocks at night to roost in the trees. These aggregations break up during the day to feed in smaller flocks on fruits and berries. Earthworms are a favorite food, and it has been calculated that a single bird may eat as much as 14 linear feet of earthworms in a single day. American Robins defend breeding territories dur-

ing the summer and are less social during that time. Young American Robins show spotted breasts; they remain in the area of their nest for their first four months of life.

Of the American Robin, John J. Audubon wrote "Their appearance in Louisiana seldom takes place before the middle of November. In all the Southern States, about that period, their presence is productive of a sort of jubilee among the gunners, and the havoc made among them with bows and arrows, blowpipes, guns, and traps of different sorts, is wonderful. Every gunner brings them home by bagsful, and the markets are supplied with them at a very cheap rate. Several persons may at this season stand round the foot of a tree loaded with berries, and shoot the greater part of the day, so fast do the flocks of Robins succeed each other. They are then fat and juicy, and afford excellent eating." Don't try this at home!

Breeding Bird Atlas At Last!

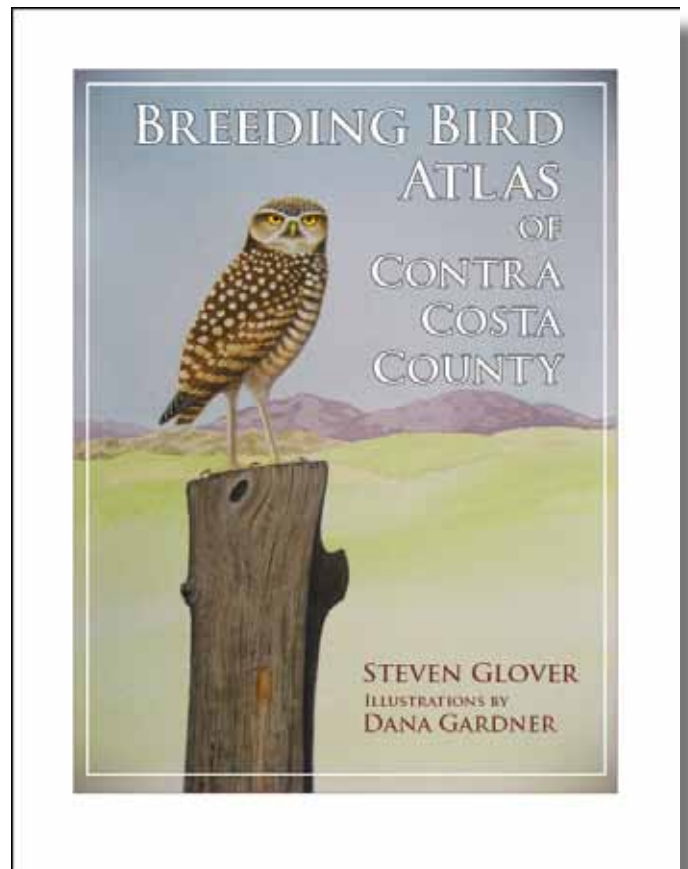
Breeding Bird Atlas projects are essentially a snapshot of a five-year-period of time designed to provide a tool useful in conserving our native birdlife by providing valuable information to scientists, regional planners and governments concerning the demographics of local species. This goal is met by enlisting the skills and enthusiasm of large numbers of volunteers to record changes in breeding bird populations throughout the area and over several nesting seasons. The Contra Costa County project was founded in 1997 by Steven Glover, and a five-year field study was undertaken by more than 70 volunteers beginning in the Spring of 1998 and extending through the nesting season of 2002. Compiling the results of these individual studies, preparing the maps to display the records, writing the species accounts for 161 bird species, and preparing the book for publication demanded as much time as was available during the ensuing years.

Steven Glover sums up: "It seems most fitting to say that at its core the project is designed to speak for the birds and for the habitats, some deeply imperiled, upon which they depend." The *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County* is here now.

As well as maps and full species accounts for 161 species that nest in Contra Costa County, including current and historical status, life history information and conservation concerns, there are chapters on topography, climate and plant communities as they affect bird distribution. There is a colorful map of the vegetation types within the County.



Steven Glover, when not working on the atlas has been actively birding each of California's 58 counties with the Countybirders. He was the Subregional Editor for Contra Costa County for *North American Birds*, for about 15 years and was a Regional Editor for 10 years before



his recent retirement. For two decades Steve has contributed the Observations column to *The Quail* each month. He recently moved to Keller, Texas.

Fifty-six beautiful drawings by the internationally renowned bird artist Dana Gardner are a delightful complement to this book. Dana Gardner has illustrated numerous field guides and books about birds of the United States, Tropical America, and Southeast Asia, including many books written by the eminent Alexander F. Skutch. Dana lives in Berkeley.

Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County will be available at the September meeting of MDAS for \$22, including tax. It can also be purchased by mail for \$26.80 by check or Visa/MasterCard to Breeding Bird Atlas, 400 Onieda Ct., Danville, CA 94526.

Trip Reports

» *Continued from Page 5*

birds here included Lewis's Woodpeckers, a Lazuli Bunting, and Pygmy Nuthatches. The day ended with a 38-degree attempt to find Common Poorwills and Common Nighthawks. The birds did not like the cold either, calling out to let us know their displeasure.

After sleeping in, we started birding around the Yuba Pass area at 8 Sunday morning. A ten-minute walk north of the highway turned into several hours. Along the way we found White-headed Woodpeckers at their nest, Mountain Quail (heard only), Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Hammond's Flycatchers and Mountain Chickadees. We then drove south of the campground as far as the cattle guard, where we found several more nesting species, including the ever popular Williamson's Sapsuckers feeding their babies and a fleeting glimpse of a Townsend's Solitaire. We headed

downhill to Bassett's Station for refreshment and Calliope Hummingbirds. After working on our checklist, we visited the bridge to Sardine Lake, where we saw adult Dippers feeding five hungry mouths. What a finish.

Rosita and Hugh Harvey

San Mateo County Coast, July 25. Fourteen MDAS birders spent a pleasant day at Pescadero State Beach, Pescadero Marsh, Phipps Ranch, Gazos Creek Road and Pigeon Point. The weather was overcast in the morning, clearing to a sunny 65-degree afternoon. The highlight bird was a juvenile MacGillivray's Warbler, unfortunately not seen by everyone, along Gazos Creek Road. Other birds were California Quail with the smallest chicks any of us had ever seen; Peregrine Falcon; Black Oystercatcher; Wandering Tattler; a large flock of Caspian Terns standing on the beach, with one Elegant Tern in their midst; Pigeon Guillemot and two Marbled Murrelets; and Eurasian Collared Dove.

Maury Stern

Volunteers Past and Future

Beaver Festival

Volunteers from the Mount Diablo Audubon Society represented our chapter at the Beaver Festival held on August 1 at Alhambra Park in Martinez. They included: Beverly Hawley and Moses de los Reyes, Jimm Edgar and Diane Malucelli, and Ethan "Chick" and Ruth Chickering. The volunteers enthusiastically relayed information on MDAS activities, and issued invitations to attend meetings. Young children especially were very impressed with the MDAS exhibits. Particular interest was focused on the various birds' nests: if the children could guess which birds made the nests, they received some neat prizes.



Beverly Hawley and Moses de los Reyes (seated) greet visitors at the Beaver Festival. The Martinez Amtrak station is in the background.

Coastal Cleanup Day

Saturday, September 19, is the annual Coastal Cleanup Day throughout California, and MDAS will take part by again picking up the tab for disposal of the truckload of discarded tires which will have been pulled out of the water off the Martinez shoreline. This local event is un-

der the direction of the East Bay Regional Park District, and if you wish to join in and help clean up Martinez Regional Shoreline, please register at <http://www.ebparks.org/getinvolved/volunteer/coastcleanup>. More information at (510) 544-2515.

Woodpeckers

» *Continued from Page 2*

stucco; hopefully they used the company we recommended that actually guarantees the product against woodpecker damage, unheard of with wildlife issues. Which, of course, led me to the thought so why trap the birds and at the end of the "research" kill these "keystone species of biodiversity" when there is a product available that carries a guarantee?

We are hopeful that in this coming year we will have the opportunity to be of service to Rossmoor with any further Acorn Woodpeckers issues in the true definition of community spirit with a better understanding and respect for our wild animal neighbors. *Diana Granados*



Editor's note: On August 12, USDA Wildlife Services acknowledged that seven of the 20 live-captured birds died of unknown cause before or shortly after they were transported to Colorado. Thirteen birds have adapted to captivity, and they receive scare sounds whenever they peck at telephone poles. No response was received from Rossmoor to a request concerning any perceived changes owing to the removal of 27 Acorn Woodpeckers.

Bring Money

There will be lots of opportunity for you to spend money at the meeting September 3. First of all, you'll want to buy raffle tickets; \$2 gets a chance for a prize and helps defray the cost of our meeting space. \$5 for three tickets!

We will have the original art from the Breeding Bird Atlas on sale. You'll likely fight over these beautiful scratch-board renderings of local birds. We expect the artist, Dana Gardner, to attend the meeting. We will also offer note cards featuring these drawings.

Also, we have arranged to provide the 2009-2010 Federal Duck Stamps at cost. This is not a fund-raiser, but is just to make it easier for you to support this national program for acquiring and sustaining wetlands.

And we will have the 2010 Entertainment books, for \$30, which start off with \$20 coupons at Safeway and half-off coupons at many local merchants. These books have been very popular in previous years.

As indicated elsewhere in this issue, we will be introducing the just-released Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County. At \$22, this book is worth its weight in gold, silver, bronze.

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Birdfeeding Thoughts:

☞ One of the fun aspects of bird watching and feeding is how each year is different than others. This summer we saw far fewer orioles than in previous summers. In Arizona and Southern California there were almost record numbers of orioles. (Perhaps our cool weather kept them in the south?)

☞ We saw larger numbers of House Finch and Mourning Doves this summer. Many days we had eight or more Western Scrub-Jays at the feeders.

There were abundant numbers of Lesser Goldfinches at the thistle feeders, with some American Goldfinches. That ratio will begin to change as we move into fall. More and more American Goldfinches will begin showing up at the feeders in flocks as they finish nesting.

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

☞ Chestnut-backed Chickadees were the most plentiful we have seen in many years. It is a lot of fun to see them bring the young to the feeders and teach them how to eat sunflower seeds and suet.

☞ 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, knot-holes, and even house siding and shingles.

☞ The amazing thing is that they can accurately remember the location of each seed they hoard! 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!



Mike and Cecil Williams
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Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Ornithology Opportunities

Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) and the Idaho Bird Observatory invite you to the **34th Annual WFO Meeting** in Boise, Idaho from September 10–13. Help celebrate WFO's 40th anniversary! In addition to the usual great field trips, skills workshops, and scientific paper presentations, featured this year will be a keynote talk and special field trip on what may well be the next new North American species, the South Hills Crossbill. Dr. Craig Benkman will discuss his work on this distinctive crossbill and its co-evolution with its 'prey', lodgepole pine cones. A Sunday field trip will visit the South Hills area to look for this bird. This is an outstanding example of what WFO is all about, fostering the link between ornithology and birding. For details and to register, go to the www.westernfieldornithologists.org and click on the "2009 Annual Conference" button.

The fifth annual **Monterey Bay Birding Festival**, September 24–27, is home of one of the most spectacular birding and wildlife venues in North America. From soaring Golden Eagles to effortlessly gliding California Condors, cheeky Bushtits to gorgeous Townsend's Warblers, scampering Snowy Plovers to wheeling flocks of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters, few places can match the diversity of habitats of Monterey Bay.

Designed for both seasoned and beginning birders, the festival offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn and appreciate world class habitats such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Elkhorn Slough National Marine Estuary, and

Pinnacles National Monument. Specially designed field trips will take participants to Big Sur and the Ventana Wildlife Society to witness the return of the California Condors. Join a pelagic trip to one of the world's most productive regions for albatrosses, shearwaters, storm-petrels and more. Jump into a kayak and get closer to nature.

The innovative festival theme, *Bridging the Americas Through Birds and Birding*, will feature bilingual speakers from North, Central and South America. Learn more about the birds that we share between the Americas, as they migrant from one area to another. Bilingual, Spanish/English, pelagic trips are a "first" for the west coast! Evening speakers will bring to life the birds of Chile and Panama.

Online registration is now available at: www.montereybaybirding.org. Registration is \$40 for the weekend. Activities costs range from \$5 to \$130.

The 13th Annual **Central Valley Birding Symposium** will be held November 19–22 in Stockton. Attend workshops with raptor expert Bill Clark, birding pros Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan, as well as other informative folks. Our evening programs include Murrelet Halterman on Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Stephen Shunk on "The Magic of Birding". There will be drawing and digiscoping workshops, the always popular and informative ID Panel with guest experts, programs for beginning birders, and more. The many field trips frequently turn up chasable goodies. The Birder's Market is full of artists and vendors with a wonderful selection of bird and nature related items. For more info, check the website at www.cvbs.org, or contact Frances Oliver at hummer52@sbcglobal.net or (209) 369-2010.

the Quail

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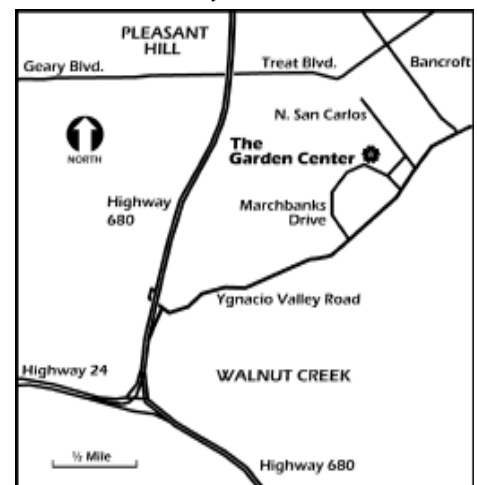
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The Garden Center

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.

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

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

Please send The Quail by: E-mail US mail

Name _____

Address _____

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Brown Pelicans and three Cormorant species at Point Loma

Point Loma

Nearly everyone who has birded in San Diego has heard about “The Drip.” This was the leaky faucet at Cabrillo National Monument that attracted all sorts of birds and had been a reliable place to find resident species such as Wrentit and California Thrasher; and because Point Loma is a renowned migrant trap, The Drip enticed many rarities as well. An incoming National Parks superintendent had The Drip removed in 2008, citing that it was wasteful of water. Birders rebelled!

Now at last the birds and the water source are back, although on a six-month trial basis, as a solar-powered system has been installed which circulates water from an underground container. The device was constructed by Mel Hinton, former president of San Diego Audubon Society. Birders volunteer to maintain it.

Tom Blackman, Program Chair for San Diego Field Ornithologists and a bird photographer with few peers, has

documented that The New Drip is popular. Some interesting birds recorded at The New Drip include Northern Red Bishop (escapee), Costa’s Hummingbird, Swainson’s Thrush, Ovenbird, and Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Now that you’ve decided to visit Cabrillo National Monument, what else is there to see on Point Loma?

The Bayside Trail near the lighthouse runs through coastal sage scrub and offers fantastic views of San Diego Bay and the city skyline. Coastal sage scrub forests, once common in southern California, now are largely gone to development. Hiking

the mile-long Bayside Trail (it’s also one mile back *up!*) takes you through one of the last remaining sections of this unique and beautiful habitat.

Drive down to the tidepool area and stop at each of the three parking areas along the road. From the first parking lot you can walk a trail that goes to the tidepools. Look for Wandering Tattler, Surf-bird, Ruddy and Black Turnstones, Whimbrel, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Willet, and Spotted and Least Sandpipers. Western and Heermann’s Gulls are here year-round, joined by Ring-

Continued on Page 6 »



*Birds at The Drip: Wrentit • Northern Red Bishop • Young California Thrasher
Photos courtesy Tom Blackman*