



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

Volume 56, Number 1

September 2010

A Parliament of Owls ♦ Diana Granados and Jenny Papka

What a wonderful way to start our MDAS new year! We will be visited by a parliament of owls—the Barred Owl, the Great Horned Owl, the Barn Owl, the Eurasian Eagle Owl and the Snowy Owl. Our WISE friends, Diana Granados and Jenny Papka, of Native Bird Connections, will join them. This is an opportunity to see these amazing birds up close, to experience WHO they are and to understand their behavior.

Native Bird Connections became a reality in the year 2000 in response to a growing need for wholesome and real nature education. This group of professional interpreters and educators partner with live wild birds to share educational messages. Native Bird connections maintains a daily commitment to three goals:

- Respect: we honor and respect animals and people, accepting them for who they are, not who we wish them to be.
- Responsibility: we are obligated to walk our talk and accept personal responsibility as well as responsibility for the lives of our wild partners.
- Reverence: we are thankful for the people and animals that influence our ability to continue providing unparalleled nature experiences.

The birds that Native Bird Connections bring to us are victims of permanent physical or psychological damage, rendering them unable to survive in the wild. They have been asked to accept captivity within a realm of respect and trust. We acknowledge fully their loss of a wild life while



Great Horned Owl • Snowy Owl (Photo by Sharon Wisecarver) • Barn Owl

challenging them to take an active role as ambassadors and teachers.

The birds and people of Native Bird Connections offer programs for schools, tailored to the national standards, as well as programs for seniors, scouts and special interest groups. They strive to provide for the audience, an intimate view of a wild bird's behavior, life choices and needs. Native Bird Connections is a non-profit group that depends on donations to support the lives of the birds and the experiences that they share. They can be reached at 925-947-7044 or www.nativebirds.org or PMB156 6680 Alhambra Ave., Martinez, CA 94553.

BIRDING INFORMATION

In 2005, Marin Audubon, Santa Clara Valley Audubon, Mount Diablo Audubon, and Ohlone Audubon joined Golden Gate Audubon and Californians for Renewable Energy (CARE) in a lawsuit against Alameda County, alleging that the county failed to conduct an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) before renewing permits to several

wind companies that operate wind turbines in the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area. In 2007, the companies agreed to reduce avian mortality by 50% by November 1, 2009. In January 2010, the Alameda County Scientific Review Committee affirmed that the 50% goal had not been met. Mike Lynes, Conservation Director of Golden Gate Audubon Society, will bring us up to date on the events of the past five years and will outline for us the next steps in this legal battle.

Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 2**, 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: **Diana Granados**

Jenny Papka

* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, October 7: **Jay Holcomb**

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

Well it is time for a new year with Mount Diablo Audubon. I hope all of you will attend our first-Thursday-of-the-month meetings at Heather Farms. Alice Holmes has, once again, got some terrific speakers lined up. Also, Hugh Harvey's team has almost 50 field trips scheduled for the year with some new locations to try. Be sure and get in on many of these fun trips.

I accidentally discovered a television program this summer that is really a great station. It is called "Birding Adventures" and is hosted by a very enthusiastic birder named James Currie. I get the station on my Direct TV satellite at channel 354, R & R TV. I'm not sure if cable carries it or not, but I know they are actively trying to get on other outlets. You can also go to their website at BirdingAdventures.com and view many of the shows. They are sponsored by a lot of birding related companies such as Nikon and Wings (the tour company) as well as by National Audubon. It is a 30 minute program that goes all over the world to see birds. The photography is outstanding and is just a fun show to watch. Please check it out. You will not be disappointed.

We continue to be involved in the Altamont Pass wind farm issue and the terrible loss of raptors due to the turbines there. Golden Gate Audubon has taken the lead on this but we are trying to do what we can and help them with attorney fees. Our Birding Information guest speaker in September will bring us up to date on what is happening. Come and learn the story.

One other program note that I want to mention. Many of you listened last March to our guest speaker, John Schaust, speak on the recent possible discovery of Ivory-billed Woodpecker. John is the chief naturalist for Wild Birds Unlimited. It was a fascinating talk. Now a recent documentary has come out entitled "Ghost Bird." We hope to show this documentary in January. I have had a chance to screen the 40-minute film and it is really good. It has some really interesting historical footage and tells the story of how the possible rediscovery took place. It also tells both sides of the possible re-discovery since there are a lot of people who are skeptical. Anyway, it is a very good film. I hope you come and see it.



Why Birders Support NWRs



Across the country—from Tijuana Slough and Sweetwater Marsh in California, to Petit Manan and Rachel Carson in Maine, Ding Darling and Pelican Sound in Florida, Santa Ana and Laguna Atascosa in Texas, Dungeness and Willapa in Washington and to Hanalei and Kodiak in Hawaii and Alaska—the National Wildlife Refuges, 20 in California and more than 580 in total number—attract birders to the birds. An estimated one-third of Endangered and Threatened species in the U.S. find food or shelter on these refuges. On average, the refuges host 100,000 visitors each day who come to watch birds.

For several years Mount Diablo Audubon has supported these refuges by making it easier for members to buy Federal Duck Stamps; stamps will be available at our September meeting for the price of \$15. You may also buy Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps at Post Offices, and at the Refuges.

Created in 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp program became central to bird conservation by expanding the Refuge System. For every dollar of Federal Duck Stamp sales, ninety-eight cents goes directly to secure vital habitat in the National Wildlife Refuge System. To date, more than 5.3 million acres of wetlands have been purchased using more than \$750 million in Stamp revenue.

Among the birds directly benefiting from stamp revenues are waterbirds (e.g., Western Grebe, Least Bittern, Yellow Rail, and Black Tern), shorebirds (e.g., Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Whimbrel, Red Knot, and Wilson's Phalarope), raptors (e.g., Swallow-tailed Kite, Swainson's Hawk, and Golden Eagle), and wetland-associated songbirds (e.g., Vermilion Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Prothonotary Warbler, LeConte's Sparrow, and Tricolored Blackbird). In addition to waterfowl, numerous fish,

amphibian, reptile, and mammal species dependent on wetland habitats have benefited. So, the term "Duck Stamps" is a misnomer, an informal analogue for Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps.

In mid-June, \$5.3 million in Federal Duck Stamp funds were allotted to add more than 1,850 wetland acres to six units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. These acquisitions include 110 acres of the last remaining riparian habitat along South Stone Lake as well as associated wetlands and uplands at Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge at Elk Grove in Sacramento County. Other Refuges benefiting this year include units in Arkansas, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Tennessee and Texas.

California also has a duck stamp program, the first such state program. The money generated from California stamps can only be spent on waterfowl-related conservation projects. Since it began in 1971, the California duck stamp program has raised nearly \$25 million. The 2008 California Duck Stamp featured a painting of Mallards by Mount Diablo Audubon founder Harry C. Adamson.

Welcome New Members

Connie Anderson	Danville
Denise Betz	Lafayette
Alan Volpe	Danville

Q

One subspecies of this bird is found only on San Clemente Island and the other Channel Islands off

the coast of Southern California. The mainland species, though, is found throughout most of the United States and Mexico. The bill is hooked, distinguishing the bird from a common species that has similar coloring.

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

ADEEEGGHHIKLORRS

Observations

By Maury Stern

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

Summer has been a time of local arrivals, breeding, post-breeding dispersal, departures and recently returning migrants from the mountains and the north.

On 8/2 PB saw 2 Brant on Brooks Island.

At Heather Farm on 6/22, 5 fledgling **Green Herons** were seen by FS, HH, and TR.

An **Osprey** nest with young was at Richmond, near the Red Oak Victory Ship display, on a crane. EG 6/28

Two adult **Bald Eagles** were at San Pablo Reservoir on 6/26 GW, and 7/5 TR.

Many **Swainson's Hawks** were seen in east County on 7/28 JA, 8/1 AM, 8/4 SF.

From 6/28 to 7/8 at the Martinez Regional Shoreline there were 1 to 3 **Black Rails**

seen or heard by many. AJ discovered the first Black Rail on 6/28. PB, DB, JD, TH, LP, DQ, SS, MS, C&TM.

Ten post-breeding **Elegant Terns** were seen at Brooks Island on 8/2 by PB, who also saw a **Black Skimmer** there the same day.

On 7/14, P&NS saw a second brood of **Barn Owls** at Contra Loma RP. He also saw many young and adult **Burrowing Owls** in many sites in Antioch and Brentwood.

MLM heard **Lesser Nighthawks** out her window in Hercules 8/5.

An **American Pipit**, seen by JA, at Briones Crest on 7/28, was a very early migrant.

On 8/3, many migrant **Hermit Warblers** were seen by Bethany Facendini's Tuesday EBRPD group at Sibley Volcanic RP. MS

SL had his first backyard **Western Tanager** in San Ramon on 7/24.

A **Blue Grosbeak** was on Bethel Island 7/28. JA.

Many **Grasshopper Sparrows** were in several grassy areas around the county. 6/12 at Las Trampas RP, SL. 6/28 Nimitz Way in Wildcat Canyon RP JC and AG, 7/28 LL at Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline.

Hooded Orioles were in his Walnut Creek yard 6/24. DH. Several late **Hooded Oriole** fledglings were in MS's Lafayette yard the last week of July.

JA Jeff Acuff, PB Pat Bacchetti, DB David Bowden, JC Jim Chiropoulos, JD Judith Dunham, SF Stephanie Floyd, EG Ellen Gierson, AG Ann Griffith, TH Travis Hails, HH Hugh Harvey, DH David Hutton, AJ Alvaro Jaramillo, SL Steve Lombardi, LL Laura Look, AM Amy McDonald, C&TM Chris and Teri Mills, MLM Mary Lou Mull, LP Lory Paulson, DQ Dave Quady, TR Ted Robertson, FS Fred Safier, SS Susan Schneider, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, MS Maury Stern, GW Glen Wilson.

Chapter and Eagle Scouts Work to Connect People with Nature

Mount Diablo Audubon Society's (MDAS) "Connecting People with Nature" program provides Eagle Scouts with conservation projects that benefit communities in Contra Costa County, California. Chapter leaders provide the Scouts with education on native bees, bluebirds, wood ducks, barn owls and more, and train them in construction and installation of structures to house all of the above. The nesting structures are constructed using repurposed materials donated from various sources—so the Scouts also learn to be creative and resourceful and to collaborate with a variety of people. Upon completion of a project, the Scouts are invited to give slide presentations on their projects at Chapter meetings, and they earn an Eagle Scout Badge.

Just for Ducks enhances Wood Duck populations along urban creeks so people can enjoy watching them. Using a tested nest box design provided by the California Waterfowl Association, Scouts have constructed 33 boxes to date, with 5 boxes slated for installation this year.

The Scouts have installed 14 barn owl boxes, one of which resides at a pesticide-free, public garden where the owls will help to control gopher, mice and rat populations. The garden box doubles as a teaching tool for the garden's Integrated Pest Management class that teaches local residents how to effectively manage rodent pests. One pair of owls with chicks may consume as many as 1000 rodents by the time the chicks leave the nest.

Learning that bees are responsible for every 3rd bite of food, the Scouts embarked on native bee block construction. The block design comes from Audubon California and consists of a piece of untreated wood drilled with different-sized holes that provide nest sites for various species of cavity nesting native bees. The Scouts have installed 8 so far this year. Scouts are also responsible for providing recipients of bee blocks with a native bee educational



Inside a wood duck nest box.

Photo by Brian Murphy

program. There are 1,600 species of native bees in California responsible for pollinating flowering plants. The educational program is important because most people have only noticed two or three species of native bees in their garden with 1,597 species of native bees remaining undetected.

MDAS and the Scouts have also collaborated on bat house construction and installation. The latest house will be installed under a bridge near an outdoor concert venue where people will be eager to enjoy concerts without being pestered by mosquitoes.

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2010–11 Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

September

- 2 Thursday..... Jewel Lake MS
- 11 Saturday Antioch Dunes HH
- 15 Wednesday.. Hayward Reg. Shoreline/Winton Avenue BG
- 18 Saturday . Vaux's Swifts, Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg HH
- 25-26 Saturday/Sunday Monterey Pelagic Trip TC

October

- 2 Saturday Outer Point Reyes DH
- 9 Saturday Tennessee Valley FS
- 16 Saturday Abbott's Lagoon DH

November

- 11 Thursday..... Berkeley Shoreline BG
- 13 Saturday Charleston Slough/South Bay EL
- 20 Saturday Limantour MS
- 22 Monday..... Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh CA

December

- 4-5 Saturday/Sunday Sacramento Refuges TC
- 9 Thursday..... Niles Area JE
- 14 Tuesday Christmas Count/East County JE, MS
- 18 Saturday..... Christmas Count/Central County JE, MS

January

- 2 Sunday Christmas Count Rarity Chase BG, DW
- 8 Saturday Putah Creek FS
- 15 Saturday Raptors, Davis Area TC
- 19 Wednesday..... Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh CC
- 22 Saturday . Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Schollenberger Park

February

- 5 Saturday Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve
- 4 or 5-21 or 22..... Costa Rica Trip MS
- 10 Thursday..... Grizzly Island
- 17 Thursday..... Sunol Regional Park EL
- 24 Thursday..... Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh
- 26-27 Saturday-Sunday Los Banos/Panoche Valley DH

March

- 2 Wednesday..... Walnut Creek Parks HH
- 5 Saturday Tomales Bay State Park MS
- 17 Thursday..... San Leandro Reservoir DL
- 23 Wednesday..... Lake Lagunitas HH
- 26 Saturday Black Diamond Mines EL

April

- 2 Saturday Garin Regional Park FS
- 6 Wednesday..... Orinda Connector Trail DL
- 9 Saturday Pine Canyon NW
- 13 Wednesday..... Mt. Diablo State Park JE
- 18 Monday..... North Briones CA
- 21 Thursday..... Del Puerto Canyon DH
- 23 Saturday Mines Road HH
- 28 Thursday..... Mitchell Canyon MS

May

- 3 Tuesday..... Fernandez Ranch CA
- 12 Thursday..... West Briones Regional Park MS
- 14 Saturday East Contra Costa County PS
- 19 Thursday..... Sycamore Grove/Shadow Cliffs BG

June

- 4 Saturday Outer Point Reyes DH
- 18-19 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley HH

July

- 23 Saturday San Mateo Coast MS

August

- 20 Saturday Bodega Bay FS

Field Trip Leaders

- Cheryl Abel 335-0176
- Chick Chickering 686-9231
- Terry Colborn 916-705-8991
- Jimm Edgar 510-658-2330
- Bingham Gibbs 838-9257
- Hugh Harvey 935-2979
- David Hutton..... 938-4485
- Eugenia Larson 806-0644
- Don Lewis 284-5480
- Fred Safier 937-2906
- Paul Schorr..... 757-5107
- Maury Stern..... 284-5980
- Nancy Wenninger..... 938-7987
- Denise Wight..... 330-3893

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 in Northern California. This last year we found 262 species. There are several new trips this year and some have been moved to new dates to accommodate our leaders or to fit nature's calendar.

Owing to road repairs, we are unable to go to Hawk Hill this year. Instead, we are going to Tennessee Valley, a trip we haven't done since the mid-80s. Another trip we haven't done for a long time is the Los Banos-Panoche Valley trip. Finally, we have a spring trip to the newly opened Fernandez Ranch, a property of the Muir Heritage Land Trust. Practically in our own back yard, this is an exciting new birding location.

Note that additional 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.

We are looking for new trip leaders. The published schedule shows the need for leaders on four of our trips. If you are interested, please contact the Field Trip Chair.

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.

Hugh Harvey

② Thursday, September 2
Jewel Lake

Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980.

Meet 7:30 AM in Nature Center parking lot at north end of park. From Hwy 24 in Orinda, go north on Camino Pablo. Turn left on Wildcat Canyon Road. Stay right at the Brazil Building. At the next main intersection, turn right and pass Lake Anza and the Carousel. Or take Fish Ranch Road from the Caldecott Tunnel. Turn right at the top onto Grizzly Peak Road. Turn right and downhill onto South Park Drive and turn left at the bottom onto Wildcat Canyon Road. Short morning walk to look for migrants.

Saturday, September 11
Antioch Dunes

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-3979

Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge. 10:00-11:00 AM. Carpool from Sun Valley at 9:15 AM. This is your chance to visit the only unit of the National Wildlife Refuge system in Contra Costa County. This 1-hour guided tour will introduce us to the history of the only place on earth where we can see the Lang's Metalmark Butterfly. Star Thistle is the predominate plant, though the butterfly requires Naked-stem Buckwheat. Don't be disappointed if you don't see this butterfly. Don't expect to see flowing sand dunes. After hearing the history, you will understand. May be hot, there is no shade, may be dusty walking along graded fire trails. Bring sun protection and water. From Hwy 4 in Antioch, exit north on A Street. After about 1 mile, bend right onto Wilbur Avenue. Turn left onto Fulton Shipyard Road and cross the railroad tracks. The entry gate is on the right. We will be guided by a refuge volunteer.



San Joaquin River viewed from Antioch Dunes.

② Wednesday, September 15

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.

Come Birding with Us In September!

① Saturday, September 18
Healdsburg Vaux's Swifts

Leaders: Hugh and Rosita Harvey, 935-2979.

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.

Saturday-Sunday, September 25-26
Monterey Bay Pelagic Birding Weekend

Leader: Terry Colborn, 916-705-8991 or tlcgdc@aol.com.

This trip was offered last January for Mount Diablo, Ohlone and Yolo Audubon chapters and is now filled with a waiting list only. The weekend will feature a Saturday pelagic trip. Sunday will consist of land birding at a variety of possible locales including Carmel River State Beach, Moss Landing, Moonglow Dairy, Elkhorn Slough and others.

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.

Trip Reports

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, July 19-20. Birding is often a matter of timing and good luck. The desired bird might have been seen just before one's arrival or moments after one finally gave up and left the area. Sometimes an unusual bird or event is revealed to us after everyone else has gone or just before they arrive. So it was this year at Yuba Pass and the Sierra Valley, the matter of timing being very important. In this case spring had just barely started when we visited, even though the calendar said it was the right time. Snow prevented use of the campground, flowers were mostly non-existent and even Snow Plants had just barely started to push their way up through the ground. As a consequence, the twelve members found or heard only 90 species over the two-day period of the trip.

We gathered at the summit parking lot at 7 AM Saturday morning, just in time to see the first Evening

The entrance gate from the corral to the Wildlife Trail at Maddalena Ranch, a property of the Feather River Land Trust in Plumas County.

Note the logo of Mount Diablo Audubon Society, along with those of Plumas, Golden Gate and Ohlone Audubon Societies, sponsors of the trail and its observation platform.



Grosbeak of the entire week. The temperatures were in the high 30s, but we were already planning to drop some 1700 feet to the floor of the Sierra Valley. Walking into Mountain Quail Road, we quickly had excellent views of both Green-tailed Towhee and Gray Flycatcher. The Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows at the corner beyond Calpine were less cooperative but still seen.

The marsh at Dyson Lane/Marble Hot Springs Road had probably some of the most stunning colors we have ever seen on this trip. Carpets of yellow and purple surrounded us, water was deep and reeds had not yet grown. The birds were in fewer numbers, except for Yellow-headed Blackbirds. No Marsh Wrens were present, but we did see the red and yellow heads of American Coot chicks following their parents.

After leaving the marsh, Bob Battagin hosted us at the Maddalena Ranch, a property of the Feather River Land Trust. MDAS has contributed funds to the Land Trust and we saw our logo at the entrance sign and at their portable viewing platform. Visiting at midday is not the best for birding, but the location is spectacular here at the northwest corner of the Sierra Valley. Water from here flows into the middle fork of the Feather River. Due to our Chapter support, we were given the opportunity to receive a free one-year membership to the Land Trust.

Before turning onto Harriet Lane, we viewed an apparently occupied Swainson's Hawk nest and after turning the corner we viewed the presumed partner on a power pole. Grass was very tall on either side of the road here, but one Wilson's Phalarope was seen by some. A few ducks and geese were mostly distant. Just inside Sierra County and now on Heriot Lane, we found two Burrowing Owls in a large field.

After lunch at the Loyalton Museum, we visited the Rotary Picnic Area southeast of town and then drove up through the burned area of the 1994 Loyalton fire. Lewis's Woodpeckers, Green-tailed Towhees, a Lazuli Bunting, California Quail and Western Bluebirds were the highlights here.

The day finished with a dusk visit to the scenic overlook downhill from the pass. We found a Common Poorwill, but failed to find a Common Nighthawk. The temperature was a relatively mild 52 degrees.

Bright and early Sunday morning we met at the top of Yuba Pass again. We were again greeted by the Cassin's Finches, Oregon Juncos, Pine Siskins and the Evening Grosbeak. As we started our walk, we heard the distant sound of the Pileated Woodpecker which haunted the area all week. We had good views of many of the expected species, including Dusky Flycatcher, Fox Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Hermit Warbler, Western Tanager, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Mountain Quails were heard, as was an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Williamson's Sapsuckers and Black-backed Woodpeckers were not found.



Standing: (l-r) Craig Hixson, Chriss Wills, Judy Kronmiller, Steve Buffi, Ann Waters, Bruce Kronmiller and Mike Tischler. Kneeling: (l-r) Hugh Harvey, Terri Wills. The picture was taken by David Hutton after we saw the dipper under the bridge to Sardine Lake. Ann and Randy McGregor left before the group photo.

We spent some time waiting to see the American Dipper at the waterfall below Basset's, but it did not cooperate. We then waited above Basset's at the bridge to Sardine Lake and saw that Dipper pause briefly on a rock before continuing upstream.

While we completed our checklists at Basset's, we saw numerous Calliope Hummingbirds and at least one male Anna's Hummingbird.

Thanks to all who participated. It can be difficult to lead a trip under good conditions, but we all seemed to understand the special trials encountered this year. *Hugh Harvey*

Trip Reports

San Mateo County Coast, July 24. Twenty-one members and guests saw 69 species of birds on our field trip. Weather was foggy to sunny with temperatures ranging from 55 to 65. We ranged from the rocky coast at Pescadero and Pigeon Point to the mouth of Pescadero Creek inland about two miles to Phipps Ranch and Gazos Creek Road. Highlights included: four Brant, White-winged Scoter, Wandering Tattler, Black Turnstone, Red Knot, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, and MacGillivray's Warbler seen in about the same place as last year along Gazos Creek Road.
Maury Stern

ART BY DANA AND AMANDA



This Western Scrub-Jay is one of Dana Gardner's original scratchboard drawings that illustrate the pages of "Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County." The drawing, signed by the artist and matted for framing, is available for \$65. Other original drawings range in price from \$40 to \$75.



Amanda is one of the 27 students from Mrs. Jones's 4th/5th-grade class who wrote and illustrated thank-you letters to Paul Schorr and Mount Diablo Audubon following their field trip to Contra Loma Regional Park. The entire folder of letters will be on display at the September 2 meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*



Shrikes are colloquially known as butcher birds, because of their penchant for impaling their prey—lizards, beetles, grasshoppers—on barbed wire or thorns. That practice also determined the scientific name *Lanius*, Latin for butcher.

It is presumed that this is a means of storing food, but it is also a means of holding the prey while it is being eaten, because shrikes lack the strong talons of other raptors. The birds hang monarch butterflies, and sometimes small toads, for several days to allow the poisons to break down.

These are handsome birds that are sometimes confused with Northern Mockingbirds, but they are not so slender, and their heads are discernibly heavier. Nor do they sing such melodious songs. In fact, the name "shrike" comes from "shriek". The Loggerhead Shrike calls with a series of harsh screeching notes, although it sometimes sings a song of short trills or clear notes repeated several times.

It may be maligned because it occasionally takes small birds, but the Loggerhead Shrike is a beneficial and interesting bird. It consumes large numbers of grasshoppers, field mice, and meadow voles, all major pests of agricultural crops. Its extraordinary eyesight can focus on a grasshopper in a field 50 to 70 yards away.

Shrikes require open land, with lookout perches for hunting, where there are areas with short vegetation such as pastures and freshly-plowed fields. They are fairly common in the grasslands and agricultural fields of Contra Costa County, but with the loss of these lands to development the species is at some risk, and it is listed as a California Species of Special Concern.



NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Backyard Birdfeeding

This is the third consecutive summer that there have been low numbers of Lesser Goldfinches at our thistle feeders. Many were driven away a few years ago by a large influx of Pine Siskins in an irruption year. Many of the Lesser Goldfinches went to central and southern California and stayed there!

With nesting finished this season for most birds, the numbers of birds at the feeders is increasing dramatically. Chickadees, titmice & woodpeckers are coming to the suet and peanut feeders. Large numbers of finches are at the sunflower and thistle feeders. Jays are everywhere, trying to dominate the feeders.

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. We have received many reports of multiple broods being produced.

Hooded and Bullock's Orioles will be leaving soon on their southward migration. Oriole reports were quite low this season, probably due to the abundance of natural food.

The importance of providing water for the birds cannot be overstated. In the hot weather it is often necessary to fill the bird-baths twice each day. We have seen birds take a 30-minute bath on hot days, with 5-6 more waiting their turn! Many birds that don't come to bird feeders will also use bird-baths. We have seen a Cooper's Hawk take a 20-minute bath..



Mike and Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303
Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Blue Ridge Parkway

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Brown-headed Nuthatch at Beaver Lake.

Photo by Alan Orr

to locate a Northern Saw-whet Owl at the summit, using flashlights to guide us back down the trail, we returned to the parking area. There, we were delightfully surprised to hear the brief call of a Northern Saw-whet, responding to the recording.

For the next two days we used the Pisgah Inn as our base, as we birded various locations along the parkway, including Looking Glass Overlook and the Graveyard Fields. During that time we added the following species: Field Sparrow, Louisiana Waterthrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Northern Parula, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Pileated Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Acadian Flycatcher and Barred Owl.

The next leg of the tour took us into Asheville where our first birding location was Beaver Lake, which is rated the best place in the city of Asheville for birding and is just a few miles north of downtown. There we saw our first life bird of the trip—a *Brown-headed Nuthatch*. We saw a pair of these birds at their nest site in a dead tree which was also being used by a pair of Great-crested Flycatchers. In addition to the nuthatches and flycatchers, we added Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted), Yellow Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Purple Martin, Chimney Swift and Green Heron. After lunch at Beaver Lake we continued on to Fletcher Park in the city of Fletcher, a short distance from Asheville. After finding a Willow Flycatcher and Red-bellied Woodpecker there, we headed to Black Mountain to check in at The Inn On Mill Creek, which was to be our lodging for the next three nights. On our way to the inn along the parkway we were able to locate

a *Cerulean Warbler* and a Blackburnian Warbler, and had excellent views of both species.

After breakfast on our first morning at The Inn On Mill Creek, we walked along a dirt road a short distance from the inn and Wezil put us onto a *Swainson's Warbler*. Although the bird moved rapidly from one side of the road to the other, we finally did get some really good views. Using the inn as our base, we travelled to Craggy Gardens and Mt. Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi River. In those locations we were able to find Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, Indigo Bunting and Hooded Warbler along with other expected species. After lunch at Mt. Mitchell, we returned to Swannanoa and birded around Warren Wilson College, and there we found both White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Grosbeak and Orchard Oriole. After dinner we returned to the inn and later that evening Whip-poor-wills were actively calling near our room, and although we searched for them we did not see them.

—*~*—
**The Parkway is one of the
most ecologically diverse
areas in the world.** *NPS*
—*~*—

The next morning following an early, light breakfast, we headed to Carolina Sandhills NWR in South Carolina, about a four-hour drive from the inn. There we successfully found the *Red-cockaded Woodpecker*. Interestingly, these birds drill nest cavities in live old-growth long-leaf pine trees, and the exuding sap that collects around the entrance hole deters predaceous snakes. In addition to the woodpecker, we also had Great-crested Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Prairie Warbler and Pine Warbler. At one point while driving along the dirt road through the refuge, a large eastern coachwhip snake, with its head held high like a cobra, raced back and forth across the road chasing a lizard. On our return trip, we encountered a flock of about a dozen Mississippi Kites, and we had the opportunity to watch the birds catch and eat insects on the wing. In a field near where we watched the kites, we heard the faint call of a *Northern Bobwhite*.

After checking out of The Inn On Mill Creek, we visited the Folk Art Center, located along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Asheville. This center is the home of the



Rhododendrons along the Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina. Photo by Paul Schorr.

Southern Highland Craft Guild with exhibits of traditional and contemporary crafts of the Appalachian region. From there we continued on to the Biltmore House, America's largest home, where we did a tour of the home. Completed in 1895, George Vanderbilt's 250-room French chateau and the surrounding 8,000 acre estate and winery are incredible. Following the tour, wine-tasting and lunch, we birded the area of the estate near Antler Hill Village and added Eastern Meadowlark.

Although the trip ended after dinner that evening, we added two more days on our own. During that time we returned to the Biltmore House and did an audio tour to more fully appreciate this magnificent estate. After lunch at Antler Hill Village we birded along the French Broad River, which flows through the estate, and we added a Yellow-billed Cuckoo to our trip list. On the last day we travelled to Chimney Rock SP, located 25 miles southeast of Asheville. Chimney Rock is a 535-million-year-old, 315-foot towering monolith, and from its summit there are sweeping, panoramic views of the Western North Carolina mountains, including Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure. Chimney Rock Park is a haven for birds and during our walk to 404-foot Hickory Nut Falls, notable species we observed included Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers, as well as Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Interestingly, Chimney Rock State Park served as the backdrop for the blockbuster film *The Last of the Mohicans*, as well as *A Breed Apart* and *Firestarter*.

This was our fourth trip with High Lonesome Tours and each one has been thoroughly enjoyable, educational and met all of our expectations. Wezil Walraven is an outstanding and entertaining bird guide, and he made our trip to North Carolina one of our most memorable ever. We look forward to a return trip, perhaps an autumn excursion next time.

Ornithology Opportunities

Point Reyes Bird Observatory Birdathon, September 1–October 15. PRBO is providing sound conservation biological data, working collaboratively with the East Bay Regional Park, studying the Least Terns on Alameda, and shorebirds and their long-distance migration patterns. You're invited to participate in the Birdathon with your own birdathon (minimum \$25 contribution to PRBO for participation), take part in a mini-birdathon walk with a PRBO-sponsored birding walk, or support one of the teams participating in the birdathon. There will be a fun-filled celebration at PRBO headquarters in January, 2011, with music, birding art-for-sale, food & wine, and awards! Please contact PRBO for more information: www.prbo.org; 707-781-2555 or contact Susanne Methvin, a committee member of the PRBO Birdathon, godwit2@comcast.net, 925-631-0339.

Monterey Bay Birding Festival, September 23–26, Watsonville. "The California coast: from Condors to Snowy Plovers" is the theme of this event. The Monterey Bay region has long been regarded as one of the greatest birding areas in the world. A wide variety of habitats—including mountains, shoreline, chaparral, sloughs, grasslands, and pelagic waters—a moderate climate, and the scenic geographic location guarantee a long and interesting bird list. www.montereybaybirding.org.

Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek. "Still-Life Birdwatching" is an art show featuring Aimee Baldwin's crepe paper replicas of Bay Area birds. Exhibit hours: Wed.–Sun. 10 AM–5 PM, through September 6. Art show available for viewing with regular museum: Adults \$7, Seniors 65+ \$6, Children 2-17 \$5, Members & Children under 2 free. Info: <http://vegantaxidermy.com/>. 925-935-1978.

16th Annual Kern River Valley Autumn Nature & Vulture Festival, September 25. Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve, Weldon. 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.

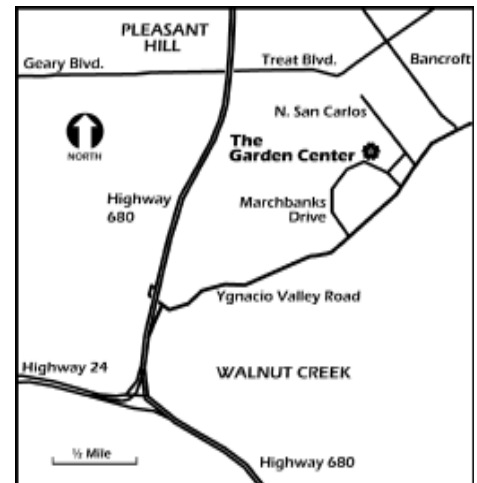
The Turkey Vulture Festival celebrates the height of fall Turkey Vulture migration through California's "Valley Wild", the Kern River Valley. The 2004 count period from September 14th through October 14th tallied 23,898 vultures. The magnitude of the migration over this southern Sierra Nevada count site is awe inspiring.

The late September festival date corresponds with what is historically one of the finest weekends for observing bird migration in California. In addition to the presence of many western migrants, there are excellent chances for observing eastern rarities at nearby desert oases. Exhibits/Workshops/Nature Walks/Children's Activities. <http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>.

"The song of the bird is the song of hope, a fervent prayer that man will learn to live in harmony with all inhabitants of the earth."

Laura C. Martin

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.



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Pisgah National Forest at Pisgah Inn. Photo by Alan Orr.

Birds of the Blue Ridge Parkway

By Nancy and Paul Schorr

On May 30, we flew to Asheville, North Carolina, and on the following day we met our guide, Wezil Walraven. Wezil is an expert birding guide who lives near Asheville, and he guides for High Lonesome Bird Tours as well as independently. He is originally from the south and is extremely knowledgeable of the birds and their locations which was clearly evident during the ensuing days. After we met the other couple, who were from Iowa, the five of us loaded into the van and travelled in a heavy rainstorm to the lovely Pisgah Inn which is located on the Blue Ridge Parkway. There we would spend the next three days. From the deck of our room spectacular views of the Blue Ridge Mountains unfolded before us, and we could look directly below the deck into the lush hillside landscape where flowering rhododendrons and flame azaleas highlighted the dense shrub cover. This was our first trip to this area of the Ap-

palachia and we were absolutely delighted. Although our target birds were Swainson's Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Northern Bobwhite and Red-cockaded Woodpecker, we were eager to see the special birds of the southeast once again.

After breakfast the next day, we birded on the property of the inn and then walked across the parkway and into a beautiful campground. In those two locations we saw Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Canada Warbler, a very cooperative red morph Eastern Screech Owl, Veery, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher and Blue Jay. Then we travelled along the parkway toward Devil's Courthouse to observe a Peregrine Falcon at its nest site. As he drove, Wezil continued to amaze us with his incredibly keen sense of hearing. At speeds of 20-25 mph, he would call out birds he was hearing, stop the van and locate the birds for us, making certain that we all had seen each bird. During this time we repeatedly saw some of the same species of birds that we had seen earlier in the morning, but added Black-throated Green Warbler,



*Scarlet Tanager.
Photo by Alan Orr.*

Black-and-white Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Carolina Chickadee, Indigo Bunting, Ovenbird, Alder Flycatcher, Northern Cardinal and Scarlet Tanager. After dinner we returned to Devil's Courthouse to do some owling and hopefully find a Northern Saw-whet Owl. In the early evening light, we hiked the short, but strenuous trail one-half mile to the summit where we enjoyed panoramic views of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. The overlook at the summit was directly above the location of the Peregrine Falcon nest that we had seen earlier in the day. After failing

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