



# the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

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

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## New Parks for Everybody ✦ Nancy Wenninger

Since July 2010, the East Bay Regional Park District has acquired nearly 6,500 acres, with another 500+ acres in conservation easements, for a total value of more than \$30 million. These new parklands will provide recreational opportunities for park visitors while preserving important viewsheds, wildlife corridors and natural and cultural resources.

The District's recent success is largely due to its ability to tap into multiple funding sources to take advantages of opportunities. In 2008 the District's voters approved Measure WW, a \$500 million bond measure to provide funding for land acquisition and park development for the next 20 years. Thanks to Measure WW and other funding partners, EBRPD has been able to continue to conserve high-priority habitat and create new opportunities for public access to recreational trails and wildlife viewing.

Primary goals for EBRPD land acquisition projects include increasing wildlife corridors for mountain lion, mule deer, gray fox and other migratory animals and preserving habitat for threatened species such as the Alameda whipsnake and the California red-legged frog. A long-range



Mount Diablo viewed from Donlon Point at Dublin Hills, EBRPD's newest Regional Park. EBRPD photo.

goal is to protect the ridgelines overlooking San Ramon, Danville, Alamo, Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga.

Nancy Wenninger, recently appointed EBRPD Assistant General Manager/ Land Division, will share with our members some of the highlights and challenges of the land acquisition program since the passage of Measure WW. During Nancy's tenure at EBRPD—11 years as Land Acquisition Manager—land holdings have increased by 20% to more than 110,000 acres. Prior to coming to EBRPD, Nancy worked for twelve years for the Contra Costa County Public Works Department where she acquired land for public projects. She has a BA in English, received her MBA in 1983 from Armstrong University and has earned her Senior Right

of Way Agent designation. Nancy has served on the MDAS Board of Directors for 15 years. Her area of expertise has been conservation and she is grateful to have known and worked with Al McNabney.

### BIRDING INFORMATION

What is new for Mount Diablo Audubon as we enter a new year?

We will hear from Mike and Annie Eliot, new owners of Wild Birds Unlimited, as they plan to continue the WBU connection with MDAS. Jimm Edgar will provide updates on the habitat conservation committee and coming events for MDAS. Diana Granados, Hugh Harvey and other Board members will discuss special events for the upcoming year. Come on September 1.

### Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek.

- 7:00 PM Birding Information
- 7:25 PM Announcements
- 7:40 PM Refreshments,\* raffle
- 8:05 PM Speaker:

**Nancy Wenninger**

\* Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, October 6: Speaker TBA

DEDICATED TO HABITAT CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

## President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

Welcome to the fall of 2011 and the return of the *Quail* after our summer recess. I hope you are looking forward to this year and that Audubon will be a part of that year. We have some great programs lined up and Hugh Harvey, our field trip chair, has about 45 field trips this year with leaders that will help you see the birds. We are trying some new places on our field trips as well as tried and true former areas. I hope to see you at a meeting or field trip.

I don't know how many of you saw any of the news in the papers or radio about a young man named Tim DeChristopher. 29 year old Tim was sentenced to 2 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine on July 26, 2011. The charges were brought against him for violating the Federal oil and gas reform act and a second charge of false statement. These charges were a result of his act of civil disobedience by him in December, 2008. It is a very interesting story. Audubon, as an organization, takes a lot of stands on environmental issues, but rarely would we probably do an act of civil disobedience.

Here is what Tim did. In the last days of the Bush administration a large number of BLM land parcels (116 parcels) in Utah were going to be put up for bid to oil and gas companies. The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance filed a lawsuit against the BLM saying BLM had not done an adequate job, according to federal law, in evaluating the effects of the drilling that would result

on these lands. The lawsuit was not quick enough to stop the auction from leasing lands that were in the Utah National Parks, so Tim went to the auction and became "Bidder 70." As bidder 70 he drove up the prices on the lands (some of which had sold for \$2 an acre.) Tim won 14 of the bids totaling \$1.8 million. BLM halted the auction after Tim got to the \$1.8 million mark of which he never intended to pay for. Tim was arrested and charged with the two counts. Interior Sec. Salazar later revoked the selling of the parcels keeping them safe from drilling for now, but Tim is headed for prison. Some asked why this trial dragged out for so long. The defense legal team is not sure, but think the government was embarrassed about the trial and hoped if they strung it out people would forget about it. The opposite has happened. Tim has become somewhat of a celebrity in environmental circles and vows to continue the fight when he gets out of prison. As I read about the case, the real fight seems to be the whole issue on climate change and the continuing focus on fossil fuels and what the increased burning of these fuels means to the climate.

I am not sure what you think about climate change, but this does seem to be overkill on someone who is trying to do what he thinks is right. You can follow this more closely at this site: [peacefuluprising.org/climate-trial](http://peacefuluprising.org/climate-trial)



## Art Exhibit for MDAS Artists

The Art Exhibit for Mount Diablo Audubon Society members at the Lynn House Gallery in downtown Antioch will open on September 10 and will continue on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons from 1-4 PM through September 24. You are invited to submit your work within the broad theme of Nature, in any media. There is no cost to enter the show.

The exhibit will be free and open to the public. The event will also be publicized in the local newspapers, ACFA newsletter and website and cable billboard.

Enter by notifying Diane Gibson-Gray at [Diane@Art4Antioch.org](mailto:Diane@Art4Antioch.org), then bring your art to the Lynn House Gallery at 809 West First Street, across from the AMTRAK

station, on Friday, September 2, or Saturday, September 3, from 4-5 PM both days. Pick-up dates will be Saturday, September 24, and Monday, September 26, from 4-5 PM both days.

The limit has been raised to 4 pieces per artist. Artists should read the information at <http://art4antioch.org/Mt.Diablo-Audubon-Exhibit-Artist-Info2011.asp> before submitting their work.

Awards: \$100 Best of Show, \$75 1st Place, \$50 2nd Place, \$25 3rd Place and two Honorable Mention ribbons

The Arts and Cultural Foundation will provide light refreshments and wine at a free artists reception on September 10 from 2-4 PM.

## Welcome New Members

Albert & Renata Linkowski Concord

## Coastal Cleanup

California Coastal Cleanup Day—on September 17 this year—is the state's largest volunteer event. In 2010, over 82,500 volunteers removed more than 1.2 million pounds of trash and recyclables from our beaches, lakes, and waterways. California's coast and waterways have historically been collecting spots for accumulations of trash and debris. This debris, if not removed, can be harmful and even fatal to all manners of wildlife, and can even become a human health hazard. Show your community support for our shared natural resources by volunteering three hours at one of several locations in Contra Costa County. Join the East Bay Park District staff and volunteers to pick up litter and recyclables from shoreline parks at Martinez, Point Isabel, Carquinez Strait, Point Pinole, Bay Point, or Lone Tree Point Regional Shorelines. Children under 16 are to be accompanied by an adult. Bring your own refillable water bottle and snacks. All volunteers should wear closed-toed shoes, appropriate layered clothing and bring sunscreen. Please bring your own plastic buckets and used plastic bags to pick up trash. For more information, call 510-544-2515.

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This bird is the state bird of Vermont. It eats berries, fruits and seeds which it may pick while it hovers, or it will forage under leaf litter for insects, worms and spiders.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to Page 8 to learn more.

EHHHIMRRSTTU

# Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to [mbstern2@yahoo.com](mailto:mbstern2@yahoo.com) or (925) 284-5980 or send to [EBB Sightings@yahoo.com](mailto:EBB Sightings@yahoo.com).

The local breeding birds have been busy producing young. By late July, the returning shorebirds began to arrive or pass through while some of the breeding migrants were preparing to leave.

HH and FS reported a second nesting for the Heather Pond **Green Herons** 6/30.



Emma Fournier, age 8, photographed this Green Heron at Heather Farm..

There were 3 fledgling **Sharp-shinned Hawks** in Tilden RP on 7/29. PC.

On 8/5 a **Clapper Rail** and young were at Meeker Slough in Richmond. SD.

**Red-necked Phalaropes** were at Meeker Slough on 7/24, RB, and 8/5. SD.

**Elegant** and **Caspian Terns** were nesting on Brooks Island 6/29, ES, and 8/3. SL.

Two **Black Skimmers** were skimming the channel near the Bay Trail in Richmond or resting on Brooks Island 8/2 and 8/3. JR, FD, SL.

On 6/26 and 6/29 a **White-winged Dove** was in MK's backyard in Point Richmond.

The Inspiration Point **MacGillivray's Warbler** continued 6/26, 7/1 and 7/2. DH, MP, RC, PR.

BF and crew saw a singing, breeding **Western Tanager** in Tilden Nature Area 6/25.

A **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** family was at Kennedy Grove on 7/17. LL.

Many **Grasshopper Sparrows** were nesting along the Mezue Trail in Wildcat Canyon RP on 7/3. JD.

DHu had a second nesting of **Black-headed Grosbeaks** in his Walnut Creek yard 8/7.

**Hooded Orioles** and their young were widespread during the summer. JC in Moraga, P&NS in Antioch, LMH in Walnut Creek, MLM in Hercules.

Three **Red Crossbills** were in the Inspiration Point pines in Tilden RP, 7/1. RC.

RB Richard Broadwell, PC Phil Capitolo, RC Richard Cimino, JC Judi Cooper, SD Sheila Dickie, JD Judith Dunham, FD Frances Dupont, BF Brian Fitch, HH Hugh Harvey, DH Derek Heins, LMH Leide-Marie Haitsma, DHu David Hutton, MK Melani King, SL Stephen Long, LL Laura Look, MLM MaryLou Mull, MP Michael Park, PR Phila Rogers, JR Joyce Rybant, FS Fred Safier, P&NS Paul and Nancy Schorr, ES Emilie Strauss,

## No More Moorhens

The July/August issue of *The Quail* stated that no English names were changed with the American Ornithologists' Union's revisions to the taxonomy of North American birds. However, one species will revert to a previous English name with the split of *Gallinula chloropus*, Common Moorhen, returning the American populations to Common Gallinule, *Gallinula galeata*.

Another change missed in the previous *Quail* is the scientific name change of Snowy Plover to *Charadrius nivosus*; this results from its split from Old World Kentish Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*.

The Mexican Jay of southeast Arizona also receives a new scientific name, *Aphelocoma wollweberi*, while its old scientific name, *A. ultramarina*, is given to the Transvolcanic Jay.

## NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



### Relief for Birds on Hot Days

✦ Now that summer is here, we have to be extra vigilant about keeping our birds hydrated and cool. Bird baths are very effective in attracting birds and can be the most important thing we can provide in hot weather.

✦ Bird baths should be very shallow, usually 2-3 inches in depth at most. We keep small boulders in our baths that are just a bit higher than the water surface. Some birds will completely immerse in water while others just preen from the edges of these rocks.

✦ Change the water at least every other day, even daily on hot days. Watch for build-up of algae or leaves and clean with a brush. Avoid bleach or strong household cleaners that do not completely wash away.

✦ Baths should be placed in open areas, away from shrubs and trees where cats can hide and pounce. They should also be high enough to help deter rats and squirrels.



✦ Birds are not easily attracted to still water. Drippers and pumped water devices that bubble water make the water source easier to spot both by sound and sight. They also refresh your birdbaths, keeping the water fresher. Water wigglers cause wave motion in the water helping birds find baths.

✦ Ponds with vegetation around the edges will attract large birds, such as ducks, egrets, and herons. Waterfalls and fountains also provide flowing water that helps attract birds and keeps parasites from building up.

✦ Supply water misters on hot days for hummingbirds, who love to wet their wings in mid-air. You can also stand in your yard with a hose that has a fine spray and hold it skyward. Hummers in our yard have swooped down very close and enjoyed the cool wet spray while we enjoyed the show.



Mike and Anne Eliot  
**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
692 Contra Costa Blvd.

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523, 925-798-0303  
Visit us at [www.wbupleasanthill.com](http://www.wbupleasanthill.com)

# Come Birding with us in September!

## ② Thursday, September 1 Jewel Lake, Tilden Park

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.

## ① Saturday, September 10 Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979

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 docent-guided tour will introduce us to the history of the only place on earth where we can see Lange's Metalmark Butterfly. Though the butterfly requires naked-stem buckwheat, star thistle is the predominate plant. 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. Bring lunch, liquids and sunscreen.

## Trip Reports

**San Mateo Coast, July 31.** Seventeen members and guests spent an overcast, but pleasant day from Pescadero to Phipps Ranch and Pigeon Point. We saw 65 species overall with a male Harlequin Duck off the Pescadero beach bluffs and a full male breeding plumaged Golden-crowned Sparrow at Phipps Ranch being the highlights of the day. Other notable birds included Wood Ducks in Pescadero Marsh, Common Mergansers in Pescadero Creek, Red-throated Loon off shore, Wandering Tattler, Whimbrel, Black Turnstone, Surfbird, Black Oystercatcher in large numbers, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, and Cassin's Auklet. *Maury Stern*

## ② Wednesday, September 14

### Hayward Regional Shoreline/Winton Avenue

Hugh Harvey, 935-2979 and David Hutton, 938-4485

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. Shorebirds and possible early ducks. Time permitting, we will finish at the San Leandro Marina. Bring drinks and lunch.

## ① Saturday, September 17

### Vaux's Swifts at Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg

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, when use of the chimney was ceased. 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 US 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.

## ① Saturday, December 3-4

### Wildlife Refuges of the Sacramento Valley

Leader: Terry Colborn, 916-705-8991

This weekend field trip will include visits to several wildlife refuges in the Sacramento Valley. Collectively these sanctuaries are home to tens of thousands of wintering ducks, geese and swans. For centuries the vast wetlands of the greater Sacramento Valley have hosted millions of wintering waterfowl. On Saturday we'll tour Sacramento NWR, a 10,800 acre complex with over 7,600 acres of seasonally managed ponds and wetlands. Sacramento NWR is one of the premier waterfowl refuges in California. From late October to early March there are typically over 600,000 ducks and 200,000 geese on the seasonal ponds and adjoining open fields; numbers peak in December and January. Twenty-five percent of the world's Aleutian Canada Goose population winters at Sacramento NWR. Other species of significant importance include Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. We'll also visit other nearby units of the Sacramento NWR complex in search of Sandhill Cranes, Tri-colored Blackbirds, raptors, herons, egrets and shorebirds. At day's end, we'll enjoy a group dinner; overnight in Williams.

*Continued on Page 9 »*

# 2011-2012 Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

## September

1 Thursday ..... Jewel Lake  
 10 Saturday ..... Antioch Dunes  
 14 Wednesday ..... Hayward Regional Shoreline  
 17 Saturday ..... Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg

## October

1-2 Sat./Sun. (Waiting list only) ..... Monterey  
 1 Saturday ..... Outer Point Reyes  
 8 Saturday ..... Hawk Hill  
 29 Saturday ..... Abbott's Lagoon

## November

12 Saturday ..... Charleston Slough/South Bay  
 15 Tuesday .. Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh  
 19 Saturday ..... Limantour

## December

3-4 Sat./Sun. .... Sacramento Refuges  
 8 Thursday ..... Niles Area  
 17 Saturday ..... Christmas Count/Central County  
 20 Tuesday ..... Christmas Count/East County

## January

8 Sunday ..... Christmas Count/Rarity Chase  
 14 Saturday ..... Putah Creek  
 20 Friday ..... Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh  
 28 Saturday Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger

## February

4 Saturday. . . Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve  
 9 Thursday ..... Grizzly Island  
 15 Wednesday ..... Sunol Regional Park  
 25-26 Sat./Sun. .... Los Banos/Panoche Valley

## March

3 Saturday. .... Tomales Bay State Park  
 7 Wednesday ..... Walnut Creek Parks  
 13 Tuesday .. Mt. View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh  
 22 Thursday ..... Valle Vista  
 28 Wednesday ..... Lagunitas

## April

4 Wednesday ..... Orinda Connector Trail  
 7 Saturday. .... Garin Regional Park  
 14 Saturday. .... Pine Canyon  
 17 Tuesday ..... North Briones  
 21 Saturday. .... Mines Road  
 25 Wednesday ..... Del Puerto Canyon

## May

1 Tuesday ..... Black Diamond  
 10 Thursday ..... Mount Diablo State Park  
 15 Tuesday ..... Mitchell Canyon  
 17 Thursday ..... West Briones Regional Park  
 19 Saturday. .... East Contra Costa County

## June

2 Saturday. .... Outer Point Reyes DH  
 23-24 Sat./Sun. .... Yuba Pasa/Sierra Valley HH/RH

## July

21 Saturday. .... San Mateo Coast MS

## August

18 Saturday. .... Bodega Bay FS

## Field Trip Leaders

Hugh B. Harvey, Chair	935-2979
Ethan (Chick) Chickering	686-9231
Terry Colborn	916-705-8991
Jimm Edgar	510-658-2330
Bingham Gibbs	838-9257
David Hutton	938-4485
Don Lewis	284-5480
Eugenia Larson	806-0644
Jean Richmond	837-2843
Sandy Ritchie	685-8048
Fred Safier	937-2906
Paul Schorr	757-5107
Maury Stern	284-5980
Steve Taylor	s-Taylor@pacbell.net
Nancy Wenninger	938-7987
Denise Wight	330-3893

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at [www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php](http://www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php). 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.

### **Help make carpools work!**

Our Mount Diablo Audubon Chapter is a conservation organization. As such, we encourage members to consider meeting at the carpool point to pick up or ride with others. When you do, remember that gasoline costs nearly \$4 per gallon today. It is important that those who ride with others help pay some of this cost. Don't forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees on some of our longer trips.

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. **La Gonda**—From I-680 southbound, exit at El Pintado, turn right and right again; park along open space on left. From I-680 northbound, exit El Cerro, turn left, then right at second light onto La Gonda; carpool point is about one-half mile north.

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## Migratory Bird Conservation Stamps



Did you know that one of every five Americans watches birds? There are more than 48 million people in the United States who identify themselves as birdwatchers.

From Pelican Island in Florida—established in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt—to Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area in the Central Valley—established in 2007—and to nearby Antioch Dunes, 551 National Wildlife Refuges offer opportunities to view hundreds of species of birds. Refuges were created to protect, manage and restore habitat for migratory birds—often waterfowl or shorebirds. Many are actively managed to provide food or shelter for birds at specific times of the year.

The depression years of the early 1930s saw a drastic loss of waterfowl owing, among other causes, to a degradation of prairie grasslands and overdraining of wetlands as mono-crop agriculture displaced small farms. In 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp Program was instituted to address this crisis. A rebound in waterfowl populations followed as the Refuge System was able to expand and to improve wildlife management techniques.

Each year Federal Migratory Hunting and Conservation Stamp dollars go directly to secure important wetland and grassland habitat to the Refuge System, safe places for waterfowl, shorebirds, rails, egrets, herons, songbirds, and other wildlife.

Again, Mount Diablo Audubon has purchased 2011–2012 “Duck Stamps” for the convenience of members, who can buy them at the September meeting. The price this year remains at \$15. The stamps are also available on line from the US Postal Service. Go to USPS.com, then click on Shop > Buy Stamps > For Collecting > Duck Stamps. The stamp is also your free entry to any National Wildlife Refuge that charges admission, and is good through June 2012.

## Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Continued from Page 10

Yellow Warblers, Wilson’s Warblers, Bullcock’s Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Yellow-breasted Chats, Sage Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Shorebirds on the refuge are most numerous in fall, when mudflats created by receding water levels attract thousands of Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets, as well as Long-billed Curlews, Long-billed Dowitchers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and the occasional Baird’s or Solitary Sandpiper.

You will find that many species flock to the grove of cottonwood trees at refuge headquarters. These include Yellow Warblers, Western Tanagers, orioles, woodpeckers, thrushes, sparrows, owls, and finches. This is also a hot spot for rare birds during migration. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Summer Tanagers, and other unusual birds have been spotted here.

Also at headquarters, check out the daily sightings board to see what other birders have discovered. The headquarters staff can direct you towards the best birding spots.

Franklin’ Gull is a summer resident at Malheur Lake, where it nests as do White-faced Ibis, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Snowy Egrets and Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and Double-crested Cormorants.



*A trio of Great Horned Owlets on their crater-side ledge at Malheur NWR.*

About ten miles south of refuge headquarters in the Blitzen Valley is Diamond Craters, an area of much geologic relevance. Here are a number of lava craters, cinder cones, lava flows and lava tubes. Within the craters orange and chartreuse lichens decorate the walls, while owls and raptors find nesting domains.

Our National Wildlife Refuges, and Malheur in particular, are great places where you can indulge in your passion for birding. Come often.

## Thank You, Volunteers

Mount Diablo Audubon Society is grateful for the work and support of its volunteers. It is the volunteers who bring refreshments to the meetings; it is the volunteers who help with the No Child Left Inside program; it is the volunteers who attend environmental fairs and represent the Society; it is the volunteers who do a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work. We owe them all our thanks.

The volunteers who were at Walnut Creek’s Borges Ranch Heritage Days in June were Chick Chickering, Michelle de los Reyes, Moses de los Reyes, Sandra Ritchie, and Cevina Targum. In August at the Beaver Festival in Martinez, Mount Diablo



*A strolling bagpiper entertains the fairgoers at the Beaver Festival. Beverly Walker and Jane Sedley talk to youngsters at the Mount Diablo Audubon table.*

Audubon was represented by volunteers Michelle, Moses, Cevina, Jimm Edgar, Jane Sedley, and Beverly Walker.

# Burrowing Owl Habitat Enhanced

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network has been awarded a \$3,300 grant from the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund for the manufacture of four interpretive signs to be installed at the 24-acre Prewett Family Park Burrowing Owl Habitat Preserve in Antioch. This newly created wildlife and habitat preserve has a number of designated pedestrian access trails that allow and encourage visitors to observe from a distance Burrowing Owls, other raptors and wildlife that inhabit this suburban grassland ecosystem year-round.

“As Burrowing Owls are a California Species of Special Concern and have witnessed steep declines in the San Francisco Bay Area and California, we believe community education and outreach is a vital part of their survival and protection of their habitat. We have found many people are unaware of the existence of Burrowing Owls, have never seen them in the wild, or are simply unaware that Contra Costa County is fortunate to have them as year-round residents,” said Scott Artis, Executive Director of Burrowing Owl Conservation Network.

“As such, these signs will provide species and habitat information and will be used to inform visitors and complement a



Burrowing Owl. Photo by Scott Artis.

museum-quality Burrowing Owl diorama and educational program that we are currently raising much needed funds for.”

The interpretive signs will serve as a means by which the value of protecting, conserving, and preserving wildlife and habitat can be passed on to county residents and visitors. Because Burrowing Owls rely on fossorial mammals (e.g. ground squirrels) for the construction of their burrows, the four interpretive signs will also highlight the interdependency between species and demonstrate the value of protecting functioning ecosystems.

Burrowing Owl Conservation Network is a non-profit charitable organization that

advocates for the protection and restoration of the Western Burrowing Owl and promotes the preservation and careful management of habitat to prevent loss, foster healthy populations, and maintain intact natural communities for an ecologically sound future.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society has contributed to this project. If you would like to learn more about other activities dedicated to the survival of Burrowing Owls in Contra Costa County please visit <http://burrowingowlconservation.org>.



Olive-sided Flycatcher,

This original scratchboard drawing by Dana Gardner for the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County*, is available for \$40 at the meeting. Others to \$75.

## **a** Hermit Thrush ♦ *Catharus guttatus*

The breeding song of the Hermit Thrush, vibrant and flute-like, is distinctive and enchanting. Yet it is seldom heard in our locale, for there are few records of nesting birds here. Only a single nest—in Redwood Regional Park—is reported in the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County*. Hermit Thrushes generally begin appearing in October and are seen throughout the winter and into April. They do not visit backyard feeders, but you are more likely to have them visit if you have plants with fruits or berries, such as toyon or holly leaf cherry, and if you have a source of water for them.

They forage for bugs, beetles, ants and caterpillars, either on the ground or gleaned from plants. They also eat elderberry, mistletoe, raspberries, and the occasional salamander.

Only one other thrush in our area is similar in appearance, Swainson's Thrush. The Hermit Thrush is identified by its

complete white eye ring and reddish rump and tail. Its behavior makes it easy to identify. When it lands, it slightly lowers and raises its tail and gives a soft chuck note. It also habitually flips or flutters its wings. Swainson's Thrush is here in summer, not in winter. Another bird sometimes confused with Hermit Thrush is Fox Sparrow. The thrush's bill is slender, and its legs are tall and slender, while the sparrow has a thick bill and the bird seems low to the ground. Also, the thrush does not scratch for food as does the sparrow, but forages in leaf litter with its bill.

This Hermit Thrush was photographed at the famous “Drip” at Cabrillo National Monument in San Diego.





# Ornithology Opportunities

**Monterey Bay Birding Festival.** September 22–25, Watsonville. The Monterey Bay Birding Festival is designed for birders of all levels and offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn and appreciate world-class habitats such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Learn more at [www.montereybaybirding.org](http://www.montereybaybirding.org)

**Kern River Valley Autumn Nature and Vulture Festival.** Kern River Preserve, Weldon, September 24. Visit the Southern Sierra's Kern River Valley to experience 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. <http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>.

Join the **Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society** October 3–5 for a three-day **Wildlife Cruise** through the spectacular San Juan Archipelago. Cruise to Roche Harbor Resort and San Juan Island, whale-watching along the way. Picnic on Sucia Island State Park, and cruise home via dramatic Deception Pass. Contact 360-681-4076, or email [rcoffice@olympus.net](mailto:rcoffice@olympus.net). Details at: [www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org](http://www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org)

The Central Valley Bird Club will host the Fifteenth Annual **Central Valley Birding Symposium** November 17–20 in Stockton. The schedule, brochure, and registration form are on the website at <http://cvbs.org>.

# Sacramento Refuges

*Continued from Page 4*

On Sunday we'll explore the rural farm roads looking for wintering raptors. On past trips we've found Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagle. We'll visit Colusa NWR, a 4,600 acre refuge, and another important haven to wildlife. Here we'll search for Barn and Great Horned Owls, Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser, as well as Eurasian Wigeon.

We'll also bird the Sutter Buttes area, remnants of an ancient volcano and the world's smallest mountain range. Target species include Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike and Golden Eagle. Late afternoon will find us at Gray Lodge WMA, where we expect to see large flocks of Snow and Ross's Geese. We'll look and listen for Sora, Virginia Rail and American Bittern, and check out the hides named for Harry and Betty Adamson, founding members of MDAS. We'll stay at the refuge until dusk when thousands of White-faced Ibis, ducks and geese take to wing and fly off to nearby fields to feed during the night—truly a spectacle to behold.

This is a very popular trip, and space is limited; carpooling is essential. This is a great trip for beginners and seasoned birders alike. There are several motels in Williams; early reservations are recommended. Participants may opt to arrive on Friday night for the 7:00 AM start time on Saturday. For further details and/or to sign-up, contact Terry Colborn, field trip leader at: 916-705-8991, or at [www.tlcbirding.com](http://www.tlcbirding.com).

... John Muir cared little for birds or bird songs, and knew little about them. The Hermit Thrushes meant nothing to him, the trees and the flowers and the cliffs everything.

*Theodore Roosevelt, 1920*

## 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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### MDAS MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

- Please enroll my family and me as a member of Mount Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 for one year. Your membership dues are tax deductible.
- 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:  US mail  E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make your check payable to:

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Membership Chair 1932 Golden Rain Road #4 Walnut Creek, CA 94595

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*Great Horned Owl, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge*

## Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

It has been said that a single visit to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge is like watching the first five minutes of a movie—you just can't get the whole picture without sticking around for a while. As spring enters in March, so comes the peak concentration of Lesser Sandhill Cranes. Whistling Swans, Cinnamon Teal and other waterfowl are there, too. Great Horned Owls and Golden Eagles are nesting. By mid-May the spring migration of songbirds is at a peak, but soon birding becomes more difficult as the trees leaf out. By summer, the broods of ducks and geese are ever present on the refuge ponds, and by August and September shorebirds concentrate on the exposed mud flats. The fall songbird migration usually prevails in August, and Northern Pintails and Northern Shovelers return on their way back to California and Mexico for the winter. September is the best month for finding vagrant warblers. As the trees begin to adopt their fall colors

in October, Rough-legged Hawks arrive to stay through the winter, feeding on meadow voles. Winter is the time to watch Bald Eagles and Trumpeter Swans. Although Malheur is especially known for its cranes and their graceful mating rituals, Malheur has something for every nature enthusiast at any time of the year.

The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge was designated in 1908 by order of President Theodore Roosevelt to protect egrets and other water birds from slaughter by plume hunters. Since then, birders have flocked to the 185,000-acre refuge to catch glimpses of the 300-plus species that have been recorded here. One of the largest wetland complexes in North America, the refuge comprises an intricate network of lakes, ponds, sloughs, wetlands and marshy meadows, surrounded by sagebrush- and juniper-covered hills. Into these wetlands the Donner und Blitzen River flows through the Blitzen Valley, bringing water from



*Western Tanager at Malheur NWR.*

Steens Mountain, famous for its incredible displays of colorful wildflowers

The most productive time to visit Malheur is during migration, in the spring or fall, when as many as 100 species can be seen in a day. Spring waterfowl migration begins in February and peaks in March, bringing Lesser Sandhill Cranes, Snow and Ross's Geese, Northern Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Pintails, and Buffleheads. Songbird migration peaks in mid-May, filling the air with the songs of

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