



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

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

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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September 2013

Over Troubled Waters ✦ Restore the Delta

The Pacific Flyway is the migratory path for over 350 species of birds. The Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta is the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas. It is in the heart of the Pacific Flyway and is a major stop-over area where birds can rest and feed. Some stay while others continue on to South America. The health of the Delta has declined in direct correlation with the increased export of water. Plans are in the works to route Sacramento River water through pipes under the Delta depriving the estuary of adequate freshwater flows, jeopardizing the over 750 species of plants and wildlife that depend on a healthy Delta to survive. The documentary *Over Troubled Waters* will illuminate these issues and others facing the Delta. The film features interviews with fishermen, farmers, people who maintain the Delta's levees, and people who recreate in the Delta.



Restore the Delta—a coalition of Delta residents, business leaders, civic organizations, community groups, faith-based communities, union locals, farmers, fishermen, and environmentalists—seeks to strengthen the health of the estuary and the well-being of Delta communities.

Restore the Delta is fighting to protect the primary nursery for California's coastal fisheries, including salmon fisheries that support the food chain for Orca whales. Restore the Delta is also fighting to protect water needed by thousands of small family farmers within the Delta, including some

of California's oldest farming families who helped to build this state.

Restore the Delta seeks the reduction of water exports to restore and sustain the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta's ecosystem, to protect native and desirable species, to protect public health, and to improve water quality to meet federal and state water standards.

Roger Mammon, the President of the Sherman Island Duck Hunters Association and member of Restore the Delta, will introduce the 45-minute film.



BIRDING INFORMATION

For September birding info, our Program Chair Ariana Rickard will share photos from her recent week-long stay on the Farallon Islands with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Ariana will describe some of the unique seabird and marine mammal species found on the islands, as well as discuss living conditions and some of the maintenance work done to control invasive species like New Zealand spinach.

For our October program, Robyn Aston from the River Otter Ecology Project will talk about River Otters in the Bay Area.

Fall Migration in the Delta

By Elizabeth DeCicco



Sandhill Cranes at Cosumnes Preserve. Ellis Myers photo.

Autumn season means the return of the Sandhill Cranes and other majestic migrates to the Delta wetlands

Along the Pacific Flyway, migratory wintering birds fly into the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta, using it as a major feeding and breeding destination. Given the extensive count of Delta birding places, there are several that rise to the must-visit sites.

Either for novice or advanced birders, the Cosumnes River Preserve is a premier hotspot to see Sandhill Cranes and more migrating species, along with Isenberg Crane Reserve and Staten Island. While birding in the Delta is rewarding all year long, the autumn season from August through November becomes the best time

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Meeting Schedule

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, September 5**, 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 **Over Troubled Waters**

Please remember to bring a cup.

Thursday, October 3:

Robyn Aston, River Otters

President's Corner

By Jimm Edgar

Well, we are off to another year of Mount Diablo Audubon meetings and field trips. I know it will be a great year for all of us. This summer has seen the start of our Young Birders Club with evening meetings and field trips. The kids are having a great time as well as their parents and our volunteers. If you know of a young person who might have an interest, be sure to let them know. See Tracy Farrington's article on Page 3. We also have information on our MDAS website.

Sometimes I wonder how birds make it. You may have seen the article in the July issue of *National Geographic* entitled "Last song for migrating songbirds." The subtitle is "Across the Mediterranean millions are killed for food, profit, and just cruel amusement." It was a very sad article about these creatures that we all love so much.

On a brighter note the appearance of a Rufous-necked Wood-Rail in New Mexico was a big deal. A first-ever record for North America. People came from all over the U.S. to see this bird which stayed around for some time. I almost flew down to see if I could see it. Why New Mexico? was the big question. Maybe climate change, some surmised; others pointed to the bird's wings. Who knows? But what a treat for those who saw it!

One of the other fascinating stories to come out of the summer was about how the gull populations—California Gulls in particular—have exploded in the SF Bay area. On one beach in the South Bay there were



A Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, a species never before seen in North America, was discovered by 19-year-old birder Matt Daw on July 7 at Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico. It remained for at least three weeks as birders flocked from all over to see it.

Photo © SeEtta Moss.

a real problem for a lot of reasons. They are a problem for aircraft strikes, for attacking and eating birds hatching (Least Terns for sure) and just making a mess. Here is a link if you want to read the story: http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_23680401.

Lastly, just another compliment to our MDAS Board of Directors. They do such a good job. We have added a couple of new positions that I will tell you about soon. We are going to try to have each member do a short bio on themselves so you can get to know them a little better.

Hope to see you at a meeting or field trip.

Welcome New Members

Cathy Castillo	Alamo
Tim Howe	Oakland
Dede Kerr	Moraga
Sandra Moore	Alamo
Jean Nobbe	Walnut Creek
Bert and Nancy Sheldon	Walnut Creek
Dana Slauson	Walnut Creek

Q Based on study of fossils found in Nebraska, this species is thought to be the oldest known bird species still surviving as it has for ten million years. These birds are noted for their elaborate mating rituals.

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

AACDEHILLNRS

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JAVIER GUEVARA PHOTO

Cheers for Volunteers

The sixth annual Beaver Festival on August 3 was easily the largest and most successful festival ever, according to Heidi Perryman of Worth a Dam/Martinez Beavers. Mount Diablo Audubon joined with Walnut Creek Open Space and Wild Birds Unlimited to present a three-way information source about caring for birds and native wildlife. The Beaver Festival was the first opportunity to introduce the newly-formed Young Birders Club to a community-wide audience. Volunteers who attended the MDAS table included Dolores Butkus (center in photo), Kathleen Gonzales, Javier Guevara, Donna Kramer, Jolynn Lacasse (at left in photo) and Cevina Targum. Gabriel Guevara represented the Young Birders.

An untiring volunteer, who has been active for more than a decade in many ways, is Bev Walker; she merits our cheers and our gratitude. She has been temporarily acting as Volunteer Coordinator since early this year. Please call her at 925-952-9925 or contact beewalk@comcast.net to thank her; and PLEASE step up and offer to become the new Volunteer Coordinator.

Observations

By Maury Stern

Submit Contra Costa County sightings to mbstern2@yahoo.com or (925) 284-5980 or send to EBB Sightings@yahoogroups.com. If you report sightings to eBird, please also send to Maury Stern.

The summer season was its usual quiet time with breeding and little migration movement until mid-July and August when shorebirds started their return and then warblers.

From 4-7 **Brant** were seen between the Canal Blvd. viewing platform in Richmond and Brooks Island from 7/17 to 8/10. ES, BD, LK, BM.

A male **Wood Duck** in eclipse was at Lafayette Reservoir 8/10. ER.

KM saw the three baby **Green Herons** at Lafayette Reservoir near the dam on 6/16 and NL saw one in August.

PS had two **Swainson's Hawks** fly over his Antioch house 7/6.

Up to five **Golden Eagles** were at Briones RP 8/8-8/10. JRo, LL, RM, ST; two more were at Sibley RP 7/25, BE, and one at Mount Diablo SP on 8/2. ME.

An early **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at Iron House Sanitary District 6/10. LK and BM.

On 8/3, JH saw a **Surfbird** and a **Red Knot** at Meeker Slough in Richmond.

KF saw 450 **Caspian Terns** nesting at Brooks Island 6/19.

CS saw a **Common Poorwill** at Mitchell Canyon 6/29; and C&TW saw 3 on 7/13.

Three to five **Prairie Falcons** were at Black Diamond Mines RP 6/25. JA.

BH saw an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** near the junction at Mount Diablo SP 7/20.

J&BK had an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in their Lafayette yard 6/29.

Four **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were in a Lafayette yard visited by KM 8/9.

TF saw a **Canyon Wren** on the Shell Ridge Loop Trail in the Diablo Hills RP 8/7.

AK saw a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Point Isabel 8/10.

Returning **Hermit Warblers** were seen as early as 7/17 at Valle Vista Staging Area. WH. Others were at Briones RP, Sibley RP, and Tilden RP. BE, PD, KH, LL.

MR found the continuing **MacGillivray's Warbler** on Inspiration Point Trail in Tilden RP 7/1.

On 6/29, LK and TF found a **Yellow-breasted Chat** at Iron House Sanitary District.

KM saw two **Western Tanagers** in a Lafayette yard 8/9 and ER saw one near the Lafayette BART station 8/11.

Black-throated Gray Warbler.



DANA GARDNER

A **Chipping Sparrow** was at the base of North Gate Road on 7/20. BH.

LK saw a **Sage Sparrow** in the chaparral near Castle Rock RP 6/22.

The **Indigo Bunting** seen in early June at the Valle Vista Staging Area remained until 6/22, JA, LK, BM, HH, JR, JW, HN, CS.

Lawrence's Goldfinches were at Castle Rock Park 6/22, LK; Rossmoor golf course 7/15, MM; and Sibley RP 7/25, BE.

JA Jeff Acuff, PD Pat Doughty, BD Bob Dunn, ME Mark Eaton, TF Tracy Farrington, BF Brian Fitch, KF Kathy Franccone, HH Hugh Harvey, KH Kurt Hess, BH Bob Hislop, JH Jeff Hoppes, WH Wen Hsu, LK Logan Kahle, AK Alan Krakauer, J&BK Judy and Bruce Kronmiller, LL Laura Look, NL Norm Lustig, MM Mike Marchiano, BM Bruce Mast, RM Raleigh McElmore, KM Kai Mills, HN Harold Newman, MR Mark Rauzon, ER Ellen Reintjes, JR Jean Richmond, JRo Jim Roethe, PS Paul Schorr, CS Catherine Spaulding, ES Emilie Strauss, ST Stephen Taylor, JW Jim Weidel and Son, C&TW Chris and Teri Wills.

Young Birders Club Field Trip

By Tracy Farrington

The Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club conducted their second organized field trip on Sunday afternoon, July 21, visiting first McNabney Marsh, and then making the short trip over to Moorhen Marsh at the Mountain View Sanitary District. Attendance at this outing eclipsed that of our first to Castle Rock Regional Park and Diablo Foothills. Participants included Jimm Edgar, Ariana Rickard and I, from MDAS; six Young Birders members, four parents and four guests, possibly prospective new members.

Weather conditions were mild and clear, a most pleasant time to be outdoors. While we were hoping for a few migrant arrivals, it just seemed too early, especially so, for any numbers. Nevertheless, according to my checklist, thirty nine species were identified for both locations. None of those seen were unexpected, but for the

novice birders in the group several were first-time discoveries. This was added an air of enthusiasm and accomplishment to a relatively quiet day. This interest level was additionally enhanced by the fact that most, if not all, of the members began to relate with one another in a cooperative manner while sharing and discussing their respective sightings. I think that for some of these kids the experience of the "hunt" was something new and possibly exciting. I was pleased, as well, to see that a couple of members brought their cameras with the specific intent of photographing birds.

One of the birds of interest for the day was the Great-tailed Grackle which we observed quite clearly two or three times. It was about this bird that Jimm Edgar pointed out an interesting fact: as little as twenty year ago, his field guide did not describe this bird's range as reaching into California, but

now, according to contemporary guides, it can be casual as far north as southern British Columbia. The first record for Contra Costa County was on January 10-11, 1985, at the Martinez Regional Shoreline. The first confirmed nesting was discovered at McNabney Marsh during the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas project and continues to this day.

The Mount Diablo Audubon Young Birders Club will have conducted its third meeting, the last Friday of August. Included among other things to be discussed will be dates and locations for future field trips. We're going to attempt to get into the field as often as we can. I'll keep everyone posted. Those interested in information regarding the Young Birders Club are invited to contact Tracy Farrington at tracy_farrington@yahoo.com.

② Wednesday, September 4 Jewel Lake, Tilden Regional Park

Leader: Maury Stern, (925) 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.

② Saturday, September 14 Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979.

10:00-11:00 AM. The leader will not be attending this trip, but will organize only. 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. A 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 predominant 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 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.

① Saturday, September 21 Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg

Leader: Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979

We hope to see thousands of Vaux's 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 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 (Exit 502). 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. Please call leader if you want to carpool.

② Saturday-Sunday, September 14-15 Monterey Bay Pelagic Weekend

Leader: Terry Colborn, tlcgdc@aol.com, (530) 758-0689.

This trip was first announced last March for Mount Diablo and Marin Audubon chapters. Contact the leader for further details and to check whether there may still be space available. 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. The cost is \$95 for the boat trip. .

② Saturday, September 28 Outer Point Reyes

Leader: David Hutton, (925) 938-4485.

Carpool leaves southwest corner Sun Valley parking lot at 7:00 AM. Meet 8:30 AM at Bear Valley Visitor Center in Olema. 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 about 3 miles. Turn right on Novato Blvd for 6 miles to stop sign, then turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to another stop sign. Turn right across the bridge, go 3 miles to SR 1. Turn left into Point Reyes Station. After a stop at the Bovine Bakery for coffee and pastries, continue out of town towards Olema, then turn right onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We are hoping for migrants and vagrants. Weather is unpredictable. Bring lunch and liquids.

Come birding with us!

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and advanced birders, but please do leave your dogs at home. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php. Phone area codes are 925 unless specified otherwise. 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 +, possibly rough terrain

Category ③: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

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. It is important that given the cost of gasoline, those who ride with others offer to pay some of this cost. Don't forget about any bridge tolls or park entry fees on some of our longer trips. Carpool locations: **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. **Sun Valley**—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley Mall parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord.

2013-2014 Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

September

4	Wednesday	Jewel Lake	MS
14	Saturday	Antioch Dunes	HH
14-15	Saturday/Sunday	Monterey Pelagic and Land Birds	TC
21	Saturday	Rio Lindo Academy, Healdsburg	HH
28	Saturday	Outer Point Reyes	DH

October

2	Wednesday	Hayward Shoreline/Winton Avenue	TBD
5	Saturday	Hawk Hill	FS
16	Wednesday	Berkeley-Emeryville Shoreline	EL
26	Saturday	Abbott's Lagoon	DH

November

12	Tuesday	McNabney Marsh/Mountain View Sanitary	ST
16	Saturday	Charleston Slough/South Bay	EL
30	Saturday	Limantour	MS

December

7-8	Saturday/Sunday	Sacramento Refuges	TC
12	Thursday	Niles Area	JE
14	Saturday	Solano County Raptors	GF
17	Tuesday	Christmas Count/East Contra Costa	JE/MS
21	Saturday	Christmas Count/Central Contra Costa	JE/MS

January

11	Saturday	Putah Creek	FS
25	Saturday	Las Gallinas/Rush Creek/Shollenberger Park	EL
30	Thursday	Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh—High Tide	SR

February

1	Saturday	Thornton Area/Cosumnes Preserve	EC
13	Thursday	Grizzly Island	MS
15-16	Saturday/Sunday	Los Banos/Panoche Valley	DH
26	Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park	EL

State Parks Along the Flyway

Millions of birds—more than 350 species—follow the Pacific Flyway. They travel this great avian highway each year from the Bering Strait to South America, flying over, and wintering in many California State Parks along the way. Birds migrate south as early as August and migrate north as early as March.

State Parks providing habitats along the flyway, include Mono Lake Tufa State Reserve, Millerton Lake State Recreation Area, Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, Salton Sea State Recreation Area, Picacho State Recreation Area, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Standish-Hickey State Recreation Area, Benbow Lake State Recreation Area, Richardson Grove State Park, and many others. Birds use these areas as food stops, resting areas, or for wintering in warmer climates. Visitors can follow the birds from park to park.

Visitors can find fascinating species of birds at parks during specific times of the year, such as Bald Eagles in winter at Millerton Lake, Folsom Lake, Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area, Humboldt Redwoods, and Benbow Lake. Also in winter, visitors can find herons and egrets on the Eel River and night herons and Canada Geese at the Salton Sea State Recreation Area.

From Tolowa Dunes in the northeast to Anza-Borrego Desert in the southeast, California State Parks are great for birds and great for birders..

March

5	Wednesday	Walnut Creek Parks	HH
12	Wednesday	Contra Loma Reservoir	PS
15	Saturday	Tomales Bay State Park	MS
18	Tuesday	Mountain View Sanitary/McNabney Marsh	ST
20	Thursday	Valle Vista	DL
26	Wednesday	Lake Lagunitas	HH

April

5	Saturday	Garin Regional Park	FS
9	Wednesday	Orinda Connector Trail	DL
12	Saturday	Pine Canyon	NW
17	Thursday	North Briones	MS
19	Saturday	Mines Road	HH
24	Thursday	Black Diamond Mines	PS
29	Tuesday	Del Puerto Canyon	DH

May

1	Thursday	Mitchell Canyon	MS
8	Thursday	Mount Diablo State Park	JE
15	Thursday	West Briones Regional Park	MS
17	Saturday	East Contra Costa County	PS
20	Tuesday	No Child Left Inside	PS
22	Thursday	No Child Left Inside	PS
TBD	Saturday/Sunday	Big Sur	KF/BC

June

7	Saturday	Outer Point Reyes	DH
TBD	Sat/Sun	Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley	HH

July

12-13	Sat/Sun	Mount Lassen	EL
19	Saturday	San Mateo Coast	MS

August

16	Saturday	Bodega Bay	FS
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Field Trip Leaders

(Area code 925 unless specified)

Hugh B. Harvey, Chair	935-2979
Ethan (Chick) Chickering	686-9231
Bill Chilson	415-531-9350
Terry Colborn	916-705-8991
Jimm Edgar	510-658-2330
Kent Fickett	415-269-4277
Gary Fregien	916-708-0636
David Hutton	938-4485
Don Lewis	284-5480
Eugenia Larson	806-0644
Sandy Ritchie	685-8048
Fred Safer	937-2906
Paul Schorr	757-5107
Maury Stern	284-5980
Steve Taylor	828-8810
Nancy Wenninger	938-7987

Trip Reports

LORI STONEMAN PHOTO



Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, June 22-23. Winter is different every year; when it is exceptionally strong and late, we still have snow for this trip. If winter is light, spring happens a bit earlier, as it did this year. Still, for the first time in many years, we had nesting White-headed Woodpeckers at Yuba Pass. Other great sightings included our expected Brewer's and Vesper's Sparrows, Green-tailed Towhee, nesting Mountain Chickadees, White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, Sage Thrasher, both American Coots and Pied-billed Grebes with chicks, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. All these birds were found in the Sierra Valley on Saturday. By far, though, the greatest sighting was an American Bittern feeding in the open below the Iron Bridge in the marshes on Marble Hot Springs Road. This bird entertained us for at least 20 minutes, totally contradictory to its normal behavior. After lunch in Loyalton, we found Lewis's Woodpeckers, a Lazuli Bunting, a Black-headed Grosbeak, and Black-billed Magpies. We tried for Common Nighthawks in the Sierra Valley after dinner, but it did not work. While waiting, though, we had a Golden Eagle, American Kestrel and Northern Harrier. Then, while we were driving to Yuba Pass to try for Com-

mon Poorwills, a Great Horned Owl was seen on a power pole. The Poorwill did call, and eventually flew past us in the closing darkness.

Sunday brought us many more mountain species, including the Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches and Pine Siskins by the roadside. We also had 6 warbler species, Orange-crowned (heard), Yellow (heard), Wilson's, Hermit, MacGillivray's and Yellow-rumped, as well as Fox Sparrow, Western Tanager, nesting Hairy Woodpeckers, Hammond's, Dusky and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Western Wood-pewee, and Calliope Hummingbirds at Bassetts' Station.

The flowers were the best they have been in many years. We were joined by a plant expert, Terry Sullivan, who explained many of their secrets to us. The most interesting secret was that of the Slime Mold, a single-celled organism which moves around the forest floor, ingesting bacteria and ejecting spores—at least ours was. Fred Safier commented that he thought he had seen that movie.

Rain started just as we were finishing our checklist at Bassetts', which was perfect timing. Altogether, the group of 19 had 101 species seen or heard for the weekend, along with many other adventures.

Hugh B. Harvey

San Mateo Coast, July 20. It is always best to be at the San Mateo Coast early when going on Saturdays. The heat in the Bay Area sent record numbers of people to the beaches in the afternoon, when most of our birding was already finished. Notable among the 54 species seen by the 19 participants were a molting Harlequin Duck on the rocks at Pescadero Beach, along with Surf Birds, Black Oystercatchers, Caspian Terns and Heerman's Gulls. At Pigeon Point we had Pigeon Guillemots, Common Murres and Black Turnstones. Gazos Creek Road was mostly quiet, but we did find Band-tailed Pigeons, a wonderfully serenading Pacific Wren, and a heard-only Wrentit. Phipps Ranch produced a Swainson's Thrush, Western Tanager and Pacific-slope Flycatcher. Our last stop at Princeton Harbor added Brants, a Belted Kingfisher, and a breeding-plumaged Common Loon.

Hugh B. Harvey

Support Our Refuges

The 2013-2014 Duck Stamp is now on sale. The stamp is officially known as the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. Funds raised by stamp sales are used to purchase or lease land for national wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas. The new stamp carries an image of a Common Goldeneye painted by artist Robert Steiner of San Francisco.

The \$15 cost of the stamp is an individually small but collectively important element in wildlife and habitat protection. Waterfowl hunters must buy a stamp to hunt legally. Everyone who enjoys wildlife, however, should buy a stamp, maybe two. Far more non-game bird species use refuges than do game species. Birders and other non-hunters benefit far more than hunters, yet hunters have historically carried the weight in this preservation effort. For these reasons, Mount Diablo Audubon has traditionally purchased a number of these stamps for resale to you. This will save you a trip to a sporting goods store, a post office, or a refuge visitor center. Not only are the stamps available at cost, but as an incentive MDAS adds a plastic key-chain holder so you can attach it to your scope or binoculars as an identification tag. Or stick the stamp to your field guide. The stamp is good for admission to any of the federal refuges that may charge admission.



California has 36 national wildlife refuges from Castle Rock NWR off our extreme northern coast to Tijuana Slough at the Mexican border. Less well known but equally important when it comes to conservation are the federal waterfowl management areas. California has four of these tracts totaling about 135,000 acres. All belong to you. Most are open for birding, hiking, photography, and most non-motorized

outdoor activities. They too are home to hundreds of species of animals and plants. Learn more at <http://www.fws.gov/cno>.

In May, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved the use of Migratory Bird Conservation Funds—generated by the sale of federal duck stamps—to acquire 367 acres in perpetual conservation easements at the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge in Stanislaus County. The land will provide habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, landbirds, marsh birds, and other wetland-dependent species. The San Joaquin Refuge protects the wintering grounds for most of the world's population of Aleutian Cackling Geese.

Fifteen dollars, 98 percent of which is used for land purchase or lease. No kidding! This is probably the most fiscally efficient government program ever. Buy a stamp for yourself. Buy one for a birding friend or relative. Come to the meeting on September 5. Buy a Duck Stamp!

Fall Migration in the Delta

» Continued from Page 1

of the year to capture avian beauty. A leading beauty that emerges is the legendary Sandhill Crane. Flaunting a red forehead and a 7-foot wingspan, cranes can be found at numerous but little known parts of the Delta's marshes, grasslands and flooded fields. Celebrated for their statuesque bearing, unique vocal calls and entertaining mating dance, their presence is seen in several corners of the Delta.

The "season of the Sandhill Cranes" continues from September through February, birders' favorite time of the year. During that time, the Cosumnes River Preserve becomes the primary hotspot for the cranes and their observers, along with the nearby Isenberg Crane Reserve and Staten Island.

Terry Colborn, Davis resident and birding enthusiast, described the birding site Cosumnes River Preserve as a "magnet" to the migrating winter bird populations. Colborn uses his bird and wildlife knowledge to enlighten beginner through advanced birders, arranging birding field trips and tours locally and globally.

Wetlands manager at Cosumnes River Preserve Mariah Garr said populations of Tundra Swans, as well as Pintail ducks, begin to appear in late August, the peak of the birding season being November.

In addition to the cranes, birders can find Snowy Egrets on the one-road Staten Island, a wildlife friendly farm and haven for a vast species of birds. The island remains part of Cosumnes River Preserve and has been nationally considered a significant birding place. There birders will likely find a majority of geese—Greater White-fronted Geese, Ross's Geese and Snow Geese—plus Sandhill Cranes and Tundra Swans.

Rob Floerke, retired game warden and devoted birder, said in the wintertime at Staten Island, coming minutes before sunset to watch the wading birds fly in always creates a pleasant panorama. Floerke also engages in his birding passion as a nature and travel photographer, capturing wintering birds in the California Central Valley.

The graceful Tundra Swans, another attraction of the wintering bird season, come to the flooded fields of the Delta. The Cosumnes River Preserve remains the ideal location for observing their abundant flock.

Other sites to see Sandhill Cranes include Lodi's Isenberg Crane Reserve that provides both guided tours and self-guided visits to witness the cranes' beauty. South of the reserve is the best start to the tour. Sunrise and sunset times offer the most rewarding moments to see the cranes in their natural habitat. Lodi is also the home of the Sandhill Crane Festival held the first weekend of November. The free event features a variety of nature tours, wine tasting, animal shows, children's activities and art exhibits. Explore the festival's website [www.cranefestival.com] for the latest information.

Another excellent site for enjoying the cranes is Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Hood. Its designated wetlands off of Hood-Franklin Road attract the cranes each year.

Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley is home for Snowy Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Green Herons and White-faced Ibis.

At the Delta Loop on Brannan Island, 76 species of birds co-habitate with other wildlife. Swainson's Hawks, Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons stop at this area and present an impressive capture. The loop runs 10 miles consisting of harbors, restaurants and resorts. Birds can also be spotted at Little Frank's Tract, a wetland marsh only accessible by boat from the loop.

For a birding day trip, Ryer Island, north of Isleton, is another spot where communities of waterfowl and shorebirds can be found. Species spotted on Ryer Island include Greater White-fronted Geese, Snow Geese, Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, Pied-billed Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants. Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons have also been seen.



Tundra Swans at Yolo Basin Wildlife Area. Photo by David Feliz.

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is another flyway stopover where Tundra Swans, Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes come to dwell. Located off of Interstate 80, this asset to state wildlife sites hosts a diversity of birds.

Sherman Island, Suisun Marsh and Discovery Bay round out some of the great spots in the Delta that birds consider a home sanctuary.

Elizabeth DeCicco is a volunteer and intern at the Delta Conservancy.

2013 AOU Check-List Changes

The July issue of *The Auk* has been published by the American Ornithologists' Union, and as in every year, it contains a supplement to the AOU Check-List.

The biggest news for birders this year is that Sage Sparrow has been split into Sagebrush Sparrow (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) and Bell's Sparrow (*Artemisiospiza belli*). The latter species includes the intermediate-looking, interior-California-breeding subspecies called *canescens*. It is hinted that this population may yet be split from Bell's Sparrow and become a species of its own. Most if not all vagrant records of "Sage Sparrow" in the central and eastern parts of North America pertain to Sagebrush Sparrow.

The Little Shearwater, which occurs off eastern North America, is now called Barolo Shearwater (*Puffinus baroli*).

Additionally, there have been some scientific name and sequence changes.

John Lawrence LeConte

LeContes. Other specimens were destined for the Academy of Sciences in Philadelphia. As an aside, the two cousins, who had grown up in Georgia, published what was probably the first list of all bird species in the state of Georgia. Their catalog, in 1850, included 273 species.

With the onset of the Civil War, LeConte drew on his medical training, serving as the surgeon for the Philadelphia Volunteers with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. At war's end he joined a railroad survey in Kansas and New Mexico as geologist and zoologist, giving him an opportunity for adding to his increasing collection of beetles, his principal passion.

In 1869, John Lawrence took his wife and son to Europe, where he spent about three years examining the major entomological collections. On returning to his home in Philadelphia, he turned his attention more to desk work than to field work. In all, he wrote over 180 publications spanning the fields of ornithology, herpetology, geology, fossil mammals, and of course, coleoptera—the beetles. His 600-page taxonomy of the *Coleoptera of North America* classified about 11,000 dif-



LeConte's Sharp-tailed Bunting

"I have named this interesting species after my young friend Doctor LE CONTE, son of Major LE CONTE, so well known among naturalists, and who is, like his father, much attached to the study of natural history."

John J. Audubon.

» Continued from Page 10

ferent beetles. Among his respected work was editing the two-volume *The Complete Writings of Thomas Say on the Entomology of North America*.

LeConte named more than 5000 species of beetles, but no birds. The two birds named for LeConte were the LeConte's Thrasher, for his discovery, and LeConte's Sparrow, originally called LeConte's Sharp-tailed Bunting by Audubon. The LeConte family name, honoring John Lawrence, his father and his cousins, has also been given to a number of insects, a snake; three turtles; a mountain in Yosemite and one in Great Smoky Mountains National Park; a lake; a waterfall; a divide; a dome; a glacier in Alaska; two species of plants; three fossils; a pear tree; and a mouse.

John Lawrence LeConte had been a founder, in 1859, of the American Entomological Society. He was later elected President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Curiously, in 1878 President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed him as Assistant Director of the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia. For the last few years of his life, LeConte suffered from ill health and died on November 15, 1883.

Sandhill Crane ♦ *Grus canadensis*

a

Wintering Sandhill Cranes in California are of three of the six subspecies of North American cranes. Most are Lesser Sandhill

Cranes, once known as Little Brown Crane, (*G. c. canadensis*) and are visitors from their breeding grounds in Alaska. About twenty percent are Greater Sandhill Cranes (*G. c. tabida*), some of which breed within the state, notably in Modoc, Siskiyou, Lassen and Shasta Counties. Also from the extreme north are some Canadian Sandhill Cranes (*G. c. rowani*).

Three other populations of cranes are non-migratory and are found in Florida and perhaps Georgia (*G. c. pratensis*), Cuba (*G. c. nesioites*), and a very few *G. c. pulla* in just one county in Mississippi.

Sandhill Crane migration is complex, with the greatest numbers moving down the Central Flyway, with numbers in excess of half a million birds pausing along the Platte River in Nebraska. They find agricultural



ELLIS MYERS PHOTOS

Above, a distant view of two Sandhill Cranes in contrast with a white Whooping Crane at Necedah NWR in Wisconsin.

At left, Sandhill Cranes in the grain fields at Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona.

lands for foraging, and crop damage is a problem. To re-establish a positive relationship between cranes and farmers who provide habitat, the International Crane Foundation is helping to develop a new technique to treat corn seeds with a deterrent before the seeds are planted. In response, Sandhills avoid treated seed but remain in the field to feed non-destructively on other foods.

Audubon California is working closely with farmers and ranchers to create and manage habitats that will protect cranes both on their breeding and wintering grounds. Working with Migratory Bird Conservation Partnership, Audubon is helping to increase the amount of farmland in the Central Valley that is managed specifically for Sandhill Cranes.

Backyard Birds

By Mike Eliot

Who's Coming and Who's Not

Customers report low numbers of American and Lesser Goldfinches this summer. They may have been driven away by a large irruption of Pine Siskins early this year. Or our weird weather may have driven them inland. In any case, nyjer (thistle) feeders have been idle, meaning the seeds may be drying out and getting old. Stored nyjer should also be thrown out if it's more than three months old. It not only dries out, but the oil in the seed can go rancid. Goldfinches will not eat old nyjer, so when they return this fall, as we expect, they'll need fresh seed to attract them back to feeders.

With nesting finished this season for most birds, the numbers of birds at feeders is increasing dramatically. Chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers are coming to the suet and peanut feeders. Large numbers of House Finches are eating sunflower seed and chopped nuts. Western Scrub-Jays and American Crows are everywhere, trying to dominate the feeders, especially those with peanuts.

Hooded and Bullock's Orioles have been seen in large numbers this season eating nectar, fruit, and jelly. However, they will be leaving soon on their southward migration

There has also been an unexpected influx of Mourning Doves and Eurasian Collared-Doves. These ground feeders are especially attracted to the millet and safflower that the perch feeding birds drop.



EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES

Anna's Hummingbirds are also plentiful, but in pockets, mostly in more rural areas. However we should be seeing large numbers of Rufous and Allen's hummers migrating south very soon, so hummingbird feeders should be filled and fresh. In warm weather these feeders should be cleaned at least every three days to prevent mold.

All birds still need extra water in summer and current drought conditions have reduced natural sources. Bird baths and ponds help attract birds to backyards and should be kept full for the rest of the summer and early fall.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

Mount Diablo Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon, is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.

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Quail Editor



Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Everyone is invited.

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LeConte's Thrasher. Glen Tepke photo.

John Lawrence LeConte Entomologist • Artist • Ornithologist

The LeConte name is familiar for distinct reasons. John LeConte was the first faculty member of the University of California, and the University's third President. John's brother Joseph, the first Professor of Natural History and Geology at the University of California, is remembered as one of the founders, with John Muir, of the Sierra Club, and for whom the LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite was named; Joseph's son, John Nisbet LeConte, followed John Muir as the second President of the Sierra Club. John's and Joseph's father Louis was a botanist, and Louis's brother John Eatton a naturalist.

John Eatton's son, John Lawrence LeConte became recognized as the foremost entomologist of his time, taking the place of Thomas Say in that honor.

John Lawrence LeConte was born in 1825 in New York City. His father was a Major in the Army serving as a topographical engineer, with an personal in-

terest in insects and reptiles. His mother died a short time after his birth, and John Lawrence grew up close to his father and learned the skills of a naturalist, including identifying and drawing specimens.

He was sent to Mount St. Mary's College in Maryland, where he excelled in all his subjects and graduated in 1842. He then enrolled at New York's College of Physicians and Surgeons, receiving his medical degree in 1846. Even during these graduate years, John Lawrence began making study and collecting trips to areas such as the shores of Lake Superior, the Rocky Mountains and the southwest. It was near Yuma, in 1843, that John Lawrence collected the thrasher that was named for him by George Lawrence, friend of Audubon for whom Lawrence's Goldfinch is named.

He traveled extensively, spending considerable time in California. A reptile he found near San Diego is the Western Long-nosed Snake (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*).



John Lawrence LeConte

Another he discovered near San Jose was the Sharp-tailed Snake (*Contia tenuis*). Both of these species are to be found in Contra Costa County.

He sent specimens to the Smithsonian, as did his cousins John and Joseph. The Secretary of the Smithsonian, Spencer Baird, was a distant relative of the

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