



# The QUAIL

Mt Diablo Audubon Society  
Walnut Creek, CA  
94597-0053  
www.diabloaudubon.com

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Next Deadline: February 7

## Images of the Antarctic Peninsula and Southern Oceans

At the February 6 general meeting, Scott and Claudia Hein will present a program on their recent trip to the Antarctic Peninsula and the Southern Oceans aboard the Russian research ship *Grigoriy Mikheev*. The Heins are MDAS members who presented a program last year on the Galapagos Islands. A preview of their presentation can be found on their web site at <http://www.heinphoto.com/antarctica>.

Although Antarctica is most often associated with ice and penguins, it is arguably one of the most beautiful places on earth. In addition to the spectacular scenery, Antarctica and the surrounding Southern Oceans are home to outrageous seabird colonies, wonderful marine mammals, and a number of historic sites. Scott and Claudia will present a photographic tour of a voyage they took during November and December 2002. This voyage started and ended in the beautiful port city of Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego (the southern-most city in the world). They visited the Falkland Islands, rugged and historic South Georgia Island, and Elephant Island where Ernest Shackleton's men were marooned. They also spent several days exploring the spectacular Antarctic Peninsula. The emphasis of the program will be to present images of the birds and mammals that they encountered.

### Birding Information

Denise Wight will share interesting facts and useful identification clues about birds we see in the Bay Area.

## Beauty, History and Animals of Antarctica Make Trip Memorable

by Scott Hein

Although Claudia and I went as birders to the Southern Oceans, it would be impossible for us to ignore either the scenery or the history of this wonderful part of the Southern Hemisphere.

Penguins were certainly one of the treats of our trip, whether they were porpoising along the surface of the sea, resting on floating icebergs, or standing shoulder to shoulder (flipper to flipper) in enormous breeding colonies. Ranging from a lone Emperor Penguin on the pack ice to a small colony of Adelies on our last landing on Petermann Island, penguins were always welcome companions.

Birding and photography upon the Southern Oceans can be quite challenging due to the strong winds and rough seas. However, the rewards were great for those who persevered and kept watch

### Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, February 6**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).  
6:30 p.m.—Doors open  
7 p.m.—Birding Information  
7:25 p.m.—Business meeting  
7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing  
8:05 p.m.—Program

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from either the bridge or the open decks. Many of the 26 species of "tubenose" seabirds that we observed and photographed on this trip were found on the open sea. Albatrosses, including the "heavy" Wandering Albatross and the beautiful Light-mantled Sooty Albatross would wheel around the ship in the company of Pintado and White-chinned Petrels, while diminutive storm petrels and prions would criss-cross the bow.

However, everything changed once we entered the pack ice. Not only did the seas flatten (mercifully), but the wildlife also changed. Gone were the albatrosses of the open ocean—replaced by seabirds like the amazing Snow Petrel, which is only found in close proximity to ice. Snake-like Leopard Seals basked on small icebergs (bergie bits!) when they were not lurking around nearby penguin colonies waiting for a meal. Natural ice sculptures reflected on the glass-like surface of the Lemaire Channel providing a calm respite before the chaos of our two-day crossing of the infamous Drake's Passage (often referred to simply as "The Drake") past Cape Horn and back to Ushuaia.

From the subtle graduations of gray, blue, and white in the landscape to the sometimes-overwhelming sights, sounds, and smells of the penguin colonies, Antarctica has much to offer anyone with an interest in the natural world.

## President's Notes

by Mike Williams

Welcome to 2003! This is the first chance we have had to welcome you to the New Year. Before discussing the goals for this year, it's worthwhile looking back at 2002.

Last year was a very successful year for MDAS. We amended the By Laws, successfully introduced the Chapter Only Membership Plan, greatly improved our web site, played a significant role in the development of McNabney Marsh, operated a very successful fund raising campaign, had many fun birdwalks, organized 2 Christmas Bird Counts, brought outreach programs to dozens of classrooms, and were involved in many other projects.

Perhaps the most vital accomplishment last year was the development and implementation of the Chapter Only Membership Plan. MDAS was facing a very large financial shortfall as a result of National Audubon's forthcoming elimination of most of their dues sharing with the chapters. We have had hundreds of our members sign up for Chapter Only Membership. The Chapter Only dues, along with the resultant reduction in Quail printing costs (the Quail is mailed just to Chapter Only members), and our fund raising have given MDAS vital new sources of funding. Consequently, we are optimistic about our financial future.

This year we look forward to continued participation in the development of McNabney Marsh. We will be planting more native plants and grasses. We also

hope to be offering family oriented bird walks there on a monthly basis. This is a great local birding area and we hope you all have checked it out. We need someone to oversee this program and we need some volunteers to lead a few walks there each year. Please call me if you are interested in helping this worthwhile new program. Our participation in the enhancement of McNabney Marsh is a good example of MDAS' commitment to helping preserve or restoring our local creeks, wet lands and open space for wildlife and people. We will continue to be active in this commitment on many different projects.

Other 2003 goals include further development of the MDAS website  
(continued on p. 7)

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## In Memorium Florence Bennett



It is easy to overlook some of the active members of Mount Diablo Audubon because they do not always come to the meetings. We have many field trip leaders, and many others have served as elected officers in the past. One of those members was Florence Bennett.

Florence Bennett served this Chapter faithfully for many years since joining in April of 1973, five of them as Treasurer. For a long time she collected the Chapter mail from the box at the Post Office and distributed it to the appropriate recipient. As a field trip leader, for many years she led our first big trip of the year to Putah Creek. She was famous for leading our trips to the Capay Valley and Del Puerto Canyon, and was an area leader for the annual Christmas Bird Count.

After a brief bout with a very fast growing cancer this fall, Florence passed away December 4 while being attended by her two sisters, Donna and Janice. Arrangements were made by her sisters, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month Florence was laid to rest in Spokane.

For many years she birded just about every Tuesday, covering most of Northern California. She had the absolutely best eyes and keenest hearing a birder could hope to have, and she was able to teach others to be better birders.

Her passing has hit many of us very hard, but the memory of her will always be with us. Thanksgiving morning, the day before undergoing surgery, she said, "Remember me when you are in Bodega Bay, I have always loved that place. And remember me every time you go to Bodega Bay."

We shall never forget her love of spring wildflowers, her joy at seeing thousands of birds take flight at once in a wildlife refuge, her compliments so freely passed, or the smile and laugh she so generously shared with all of us.—Hugh Harvey

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### The Quail

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# Huge Storm Blows Birds Away; Low Count on 48th Annual Central County CBC

## Central CoCo Count

by Maury Stern

*Mt Diablo Audubon Society designated the 2002 Christmas Bird Count as "The 2002 Florence Bennett Memorial Christmas Bird Count" in honor of our longtime member, friend, and birder.*

Sixty-one people braved the 40-50 mph gusts of wind and afternoon rains to join the MDAS' 50th Christmas Bird Count. It was the worst weather that I have experienced on our count in the 20 years since I started doing the counts.

Although our total number (50,600) of birds was higher than 2001, at least 20,000 of that was made up of large flocks of blackbirds. The 140 species seen was about 15 lower than our usual. The participants are to be commended for even showing up on a day of horrible weather.

Highlight birds included Chipping Sparrow at Hidden Lakes Park in Martinez, Swamp Sparrow on Waterfront Road, and Long-eared Owl at the Concord Weapon Station. These have only been seen twice before on our count.

Alice Holmes did her usual outstanding job of organizing the potluck dinner at the Grace Presbyterian Church. As usual, there were just the right amounts of salads, entrees, and desserts although we never have menu assignments. Some year we may have only desserts; but so far, so good.

## East County Count

by Jimm Edgar

The East Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 21, 2002.

Now in its third year, we are beginning to get a better sense of what to expect in this part of the county.

There were about nine groups of birders in the field this year, and a total of about 35 participants counting during the day.

## Summary of MDAS Christmas Bird Count, 1988–2002

<u>Date Held</u>	<u>Total No. of Individuals Seen</u>	<u>No. of Species Observed</u>	<u>Weather Conditions</u>
1/2/88	53,742	153	cold, rainy
12/31/88	36,385	152	cold, foggy
12/30/89	33,703	158	pleasant
12/15/90	34,500	156	cold, 25 degrees
12/14/91	44,747	157	cloudy but nice
12/19/92	89,000	159	good weather
12/18/93	51,785	156	good weather
12/17/94	33,471	158	foggy
12/16/95	31,686	159	sunny, beautiful
12/21/96	30,083	144	very rainy
12/20/97	32,228	160	overcast
12/19/98	58,108	152	sunny, bright
12/18/99	70,000	157	sunny, springlike
12/16/00	58,125	151	sunny, beautiful
12/15/01	45,068	151	sunny, beautiful
12/12/02	50,600	140	high winds, heavy rain

The day itself was a beautiful day weather-wise, unlike the previous Saturday when the Central County CBC was held.

We saw 135 species, which is about midway between the first two counts that we held in East County. In 2000, we saw 141 species; and last year we saw 128.

We had a boat out for half a day on Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and that group found the adult Bald Eagle that had been seen at the reservoir off and on for several weeks. In terms of highlights of the count, certainly the Red Phalaropes found at Clifton Court Forebay were the most unusual. This ocean species is rarely seen inland. Recent storms pushed them on shore, and other counts around the Bay recorded them also. A Brown Pelican, also at Clifton Court, is another bird rarely seen inland.

The winter edition of *California Wild*, the magazine of the California Academy of Sciences, said that "No place in California is converting open space into houses faster than this region of Contra Costa." Our Christmas Bird Count will help document the rapidly changing landscape of this part of the county.

## More CBC Details

To read the list of the birds observed by MDAS counters as well as the nationwide results, go to <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>, which has all the CBCs of all the chapters since 1900. Click on "Current Year's Results." Then to see MDAS results, enter CACC for the Contra Costa Count Circle. Worldwide, Christmas Bird Counts counted over 37,000,000 birds.

## Field Trip Reports

Richmond Shoreline, Wed., October 2—Four birders enjoyed a walk along the Bay on a clear fall day. Yellow-rumped Warblers and Golden-Crowned Sparrows had arrived for the winter. A young Black-crowned Night Heron sat very close to the trail, providing an excellent look. A total of 34 species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Lafayette Reservoir, Wed., October 16—The busy trail around the lake provided three birders with a good mixture of land and water birds. An early Red-breasted Sapsucker was the most interesting of the 46 species seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

# Peregrine Survey Group Needs Expert Volunteers

## Return of the Peregrine

UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG) has worked for years to return Peregrine Falcon to the California sky and at historic nest sites. Next spring, SCPBRG will establish a coordinated system for tracking the nesting Peregrine Falcon population annually.

SCPBRG is reaching out to Audubon members who know of nest sites for help with this monitoring effort. In an effort to quantify the level of recovery of the Peregrine Falcon population in California and renew baseline studies on an annual, statewide basis, SCPBRG plans a survey for spring 2003. It needs the help of people who know of peregrine nest sites and who are willing to make at least two visits to the sites this spring.

The recovery of the Peregrine Falcon population in North America has been called the most successful wildlife conservation project in history. In a collaborative effort, non-profit organizations teamed with agencies and volunteers to accelerate recovery of peregrines after use of DDT was curtailed. On the West Coast, SCPBRG released captive-reared young hatched from both thin-shelled wild eggs and eggs produced by its captive flock to the wild by hacking, fostering, and cross-fostering. In 1964, no peregrines were known to remain east of the Mississippi River. A 1970 survey of peregrines in California revealed just two pairs nesting successfully. After more than two decades of recovery and management work, peregrines were removed from the federal endangered species list on August 20, 1999. They remain listed as state endangered and are fully protected in California.

## New Survey Planned

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will coordinate required, post de-listing surveys of Peregrine Falcons nationwide beginning in 2003. Territory occupancy and nesting success data will be collected by the Service at three-year intervals through 2015. Survey personnel in each state will visit a randomly

selected sample of nest sites to fulfill the requirements of the USFWS survey. In California, the SCPBRG will coordinate survey efforts for the USFWS. In addition, SCPBRG intends to gather information from as many nest sites as possible and to repeat the survey annually. SCPBRG has maintained the most comprehensive peregrine falcon database in California since 1975, but there are currently many additional unknown territories.

Given known increases, it is estimated that more than 250 breeding pairs of Peregrine Falcons are in California today, but no comprehensive survey has happened since 1992. Since the breeding season comprising intense courtship through fledging is approximately 100 days long, and peregrines often nest in very remote areas, SCPBRG is asking for help from those who know of, or suspect, peregrine breeding activity in their area. If you wish to report a site known to you, or even better, wish to commit to observing the site, please contact SCPBRG. It goes without saying that Peregrine Falcon nest sites are sensitive so all nest territory locations remain confidential.

## How to Participate

Contact SCPBRG at <falconet@cats.ucsc.edu / falconet@cats.ucsc.edu> to express an interest in participating and describe the site you wish to observe.

Go to <<http://www.scpbrg.org> www.scpbrg.org> and click on the "Peregrine Survey" button to learn more about survey protocol and guidelines, detailed descriptions of peregrine behavior and vocalizations, and print a survey form to complete and return.

The SCPBRG is a non-profit organization supported by contracts, grants and gifts.

## Calendar of Birding Events and Classes

### Sandhill Crane Tours

The California Department of Fish and Game is offering Sandhill Crane tours. The two-hour evening tours focus on the dramatic flight of the cranes to their resting areas. The tours occur the second and third Saturdays, each Sunday, and on the second Thursday until the end of

February. Call Crane Tours, Dept of Fish & Game, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA at 95670916-358-2353 for how to sign up.



### Birdwatching Class

Alice Hoch is continuing her birding field classes through the Fremont Adult School. In these classes you will observe and learn about the field identification, life styles, and ecology of local birds. Each Tuesday morning the class will visit a different birding spot. The class is designed for both beginning and experienced birders.

Alice Hoch has been teaching birdwatching for the adult school since 1975. She has been a birder for 41 yrs. and is a longtime member of Ohlone Audubon Society. The class will meet on six Tuesdays from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The next session began January 14 and ends February 18. Be prepared to birdwatch the first time you go. For more information and to check availability, call the adult school at 791-5841 or Alice at 657-0475.

### California Duck Days Cancelled

One of California's premier wildlife viewing festivals, California Duck Days, has been cancelled for 2003. The Festival will return on Feb. 13, 14, and 15, 2004, with an even bigger event to celebrate its tenth anniversary.

# For the Birds' Sake, Great Backyard Bird Count Needs YOU

## What Is the GBBC

Many bird species are showing population declines due to habitat loss or other human impacts. Now,

people of all ages and backgrounds can help monitor bird populations, including several that are showing declines, by participating in the 5th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15–18.

A project of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the

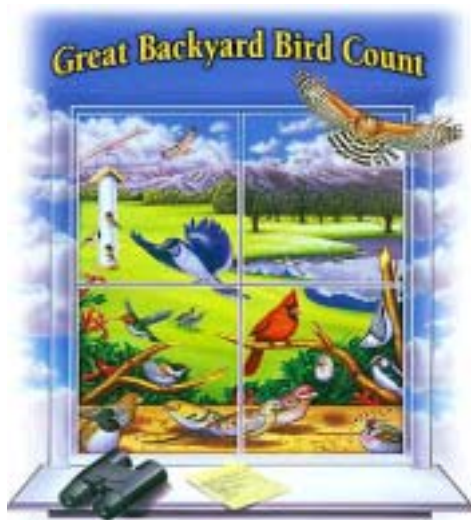
National Audubon Society with funding provided in part by Wild Birds Unlimited and Ford Motor Company, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) combines high-tech web tools with "citizen-science" observation of birds.

The GBBC asks families, individuals, classrooms, and community groups to count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards, and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Participants enter their observations at BirdSource <<http://www.birdsource.com/gbbc>>, a user-friendly, state-of-the-art website.

"We're asking everyone, everywhere in North America to take a few minutes to tell us what birds they see on any or all of the count days," says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "By tracking changes in bird distribution and abundance over time, such a vast database can serve as the S.O.S signal for species that may be in trouble."

This is especially important for species already showing population declines such as quail, familiar in California and other parts of North America. "While most people recognize quail when they see them, few people are aware that some

species are experiencing severe population declines," says Frank Gill, NAS's senior vice president for science.



One of the BirdSource's ultimate goals is hemisphere-wide monitoring of birds. Because the GBBC charts findings in real time, scientists have already made connections between weather patterns and bird movements. For the last few years, American Robins have appeared farther north than typically

expected, in areas where snow cover was scant or nonexistent. Such a correlation may be suggestive of global warming or other broadscale weather changes.

## How to Participate

To participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, count the highest number of each bird species seen at one time (to ensure the birds are not counted more than once) and keep track of the amount of time spent counting. Log on to BirdSource and click on California for a checklist of the most frequently reported birds in our state. Instructions for participating can be found at the website. There's no registration fee.

The BirdSource/GBBC website also includes useful information to make participation easy and enjoyable. There's a vocabulary section, bird watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and more. Educators will find the bibliography and geography sections as well as suggestions for conducting the count with groups of kids. Those who would like to participate, but are not online, can submit their reports through the Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., in Pleasant Hill.

## News from Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.  
Pleasant Hill, CA  
798-0303

Visit Our Website at  
<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

**BIRDSEED SALE**  
15% off all 20 lb. to 50 lb. bags  
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Activities at Wild Birds Unlimited  
Feb.1 - 11:00-3:00—Native Bird Connections will present on-going programs with a Red-tailed Hawk.

Feb. 12 - Denise Wight's Continuing Birding Classes resume. Slides will be shown and many different birding topics will be covered. There will be six consecutive Wednesday night classes, starting on Feb. 12, and 2 birdwalks. Cost is \$60. Call Wild Birds Unlimited for details.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is Friday–Monday, Feb. 14–17. Wild Birds Unlimited and National Audubon Society are major sponsors of this event. You count birds in your backyard and report the results online or bring them to WBU. It's a great web site to investigate at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). It's fascinating to watch the maps explode with bird reportings.

Bird feeding tip: suet feeding is a great way to attract birds to your backyard. Suet is rendered (cleaned) beef fat to which various ingredients are added such as nuts, peanut butter, insects, or fruit. These additions make suet very attractive to birds, especially in cold and wet weather. It is then formed into easy to handle cakes. Birds readily attracted to suet include woodpeckers, jays, chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches.

Results are updated hourly in the form of animated maps and colorful graphs for all to view. Participants will be able to see almost immediately how their observations fit into the continent-wide perspective.

# Santa Cruz, Honey Lake Highlight Jan-Feb Field Trips

*Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair*

*Field trips are open to MDAS members and nonmembers alike. You do not have to be a birding expert; only one who enjoys nature. Bring binoculars, field guides, and lunch. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.*

## Late January

**January 22, Wednesday—Lake Merritt.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at parking lot between the Boat House and the abandoned aviary at Lake Merritt. Go west on Hwy 24 which becomes I-980. Take 29th St. exit; go straight through light at 27th St. and continue on Northgate Ave. to end at Grand Ave. Go left on Grand to park entrance by Children's Fairyland. Ducks, grebes, herons. Lake Merritt is most reliable place for Barrow's Goldeneye. Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

**January 25, Saturday—Santa Cruz.** Carpool leaves at 7:45 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 mi north to El Pintado. Meet in Santa Cruz at Neary's Lagoon at 9:15 a.m. Take I-680 south to SR 237; west to I-880 and south on Hwy 17. In Santa Cruz, turn north on SR 1 to Laurel St. Turn left on Laurel and right on Blackburn to the parking lot. Trip will visit the Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges SP. Bring lunch. If you plan to go, call the leader. If no advance sign-ups are received or in heavy rain, the trip may be canceled. Leader: Joel Summerhill, \*862-925-753-086, or gcannon4@excite.com Category 1.

**January 30, Thursday—Sunol Regional Park.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. See Santa Cruz trip for directions to LaGonda. Meet at 8:15 a.m. in the parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Rd. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 mi south on Calaveras Rd.; turn left on Geary Rd. and go 2 mi to park. Watch for Turkey along Geary Rd. Raptors, Rufous-

crowned Sparrow, and Canyon and Rock Wrens possible. Leader: Hugh Harvey, 932-4715 Category 3

### Difficulty of field trip:

**Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths.**

**Category 2: Moderate, 1 mile or more, possibly rough terrain.**

**Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.**

## February

**February 1, Saturday—Thornton.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet 8:45 a.m. in park at end of Glascock Rd. Take SR 4 to Antioch Bridge (toll), go north on SR 160 along river to Rio Vista bridge. Turn right on SR 12 for 11.5 mi, then turn left onto Glascock Rd. Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, hawks and grassland birds. Trip will go in light rain. If questions, call the leader. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 1

**February 6, Thursday—Grizzley Island.** Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at Refuge headquarters. Take I-680 north, then I-80 east to SR12. Follow SR12 through Fairfield; watch for sign to Grizzley Island Refuge on right and follow road to headquarters. Entry fee for refuge. Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along road; this is an outstanding area for raptors. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 1

**February 12, Wednesday—City Parks.** Meet at Howe-Homestead Park on Walnut Blvd., Walnut Creek, at 8 a.m. We will explore several Walnut Creek and Concord parks for birding possibilities. Bring lunch if desired. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey-254-0486 Category 1.

**Saturday-Monday, February 15-17—Honey Lake (Sage Grouse) weekend trip.** Those going should call the leader for details of meeting times and places. We will bird Honey Lake NWR, Eagle Lake, and possibly other areas. Possibilities include waterfowl, raptors, and Northern Shrike as well as Sage Grouse. It is about a mile walk to the lake up a muddy dirt road before daylight. Bring a flashlight and lots of warm, layered clothing and hot liquids. Expect cold. Fast route (but higher pass) is I-80 to Reno and US 395 north. A slower but lower elevation route is SR 32 out of Chico to SR 36 and east to Susanville. This is also a birdier route. The trip could conceivably be cancelled in the event of a forecasted large storm. Hotel possibilities in Susanville include Best Western (530-257-4123), High Country Inn (530-257-3450), and Super 8 (530-257-2782). Leader: Steve Glover, 925-828-7793, email sgloverccc@aol.com Category 3 due to the walk to the lake.

**February 20, Thursday—Davis Wetlands and Vic Fazio Refuge.** Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot at 8 a.m. Take I-80 north to Childs Road exit in Davis. Turn left on Childs and continue about 3 mi to Refuge. Meet at 9 a.m. at headquarters. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1.

**February 28, Friday—Berkeley-Richmond Shoreline.** Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to 880 West; turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. exit, turn left on Powell; go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy. Loons, grebes, and bay ducks. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey 254-0486 Category 1

## How to Purchase Natural Origins' Tea and Help MDAS

Natural Origins' provides 20% of its sales to MDAS when customers designate MDAS as their donation recipient. How do you find the tea and make the designation?

- Direct from Natural Origins'. Call toll free 1-877-448-3832 and request that MDAS receive donation benefits when you order.
- Order online at <www.naturalorigins.com>. At checkout, indicate MDAS as the donation recipient.
- Purchase Natural Origins' tea at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill (925-798-0303). MDAS receives an automatic credit of 20% of all tea sales. Note: WBU is the only retail outlet whose sales benefit MDAS!
- At MDAS general meetings, The Gardens at Heather Farm. Purchase at the meeting or pick up an order form.

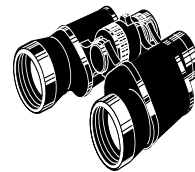
## President's Notes (continued from p. 2)

(www.diabloaudubon.com), continued expansion of our school-based educational programs and outreach, to lead about fifty "bird filled" field trips, to present ten entertaining and educational monthly meetings and to provide you with teninformative issues of The Quail, conduct two Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Counts and continue the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas compilation and pre-publication planning.

A belated Happy New Year - may it be full of many Life Birds!

# Observations

by Steve Glover



A **Brown Pelican** on 12/16 along the river north of the Concord NWS was recorded as a "count week" bird for the Christmas Bird Count (SG, JE). Even more exciting was a Brown Pelican at Clifton Court Forebay during the Eastern Contra Costa CBC on 12/21 (KR). This may well be the same bird recorded on last year's count at Los Vaqueros Reservoir and may even be the same bird present for the past couple of years at various locations in East County and San Joaquin County.

A **Snowy Egret** was an unusual visitor to Lake Anza at Tilden Park on 12/24 (JP).

A flock of 22 **Mute Swans** on the Concord NWS 12/16 was a disturbing sight as this is a substantial increase over past winters (SG, JE). A flock of 65 "**Aleutian**" **Canada Geese** over Holland Tract, Eastern Contra Costa County, was the first flock ever recorded in the county though the vast majority of the world's population winters around Stanislaus and Merced Counties (SG, JA, JB, CM, ES).

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 11/30 but was unfortunately a no-show on count day (DW). The resident male **Harlequin Duck** was present at Brooks Island, Richmond, on 11/20 (BB) and 11/22 (DQ).

Interesting ducks at Clifton Court Forebay on 11/30 included one female/immature **Surf Scoter**, a pair of **White-winged Scoters** (probably only the second record for East County), and a nice count of 70 **Common Mergansers**. An even larger flock of 110 Commons was present there on 12/21 (KR et al.).

A female/immature **Surf Scoter** at Mallard Reservoir on 12/14 during the Christmas Bird Count was the first ever recorded there while a female Barrow's Goldeneye was only the second (SG).

An adult **Bald Eagle** at Lafayette Reservoir on 11/25 was likely the same one noted here off and on for the past several winters (MS). A single dark-phase **Swainson's Hawk** was at Holland Tract east of Knightsen on 12/21 (SG et al.).

At least 250 **Sandhill Cranes** were at Holland Tract east of Knightsen during the East Contra Costa CBC on 12/21 (SG, JA).

A **House Wren** at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline 11/16 may have been attempting to winter (SG).

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Lafayette Reservoir on 11/17 was lingering later than most (JH).

Six **Varied Thrushes** at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline on 11/16 was a nice count for West County although this may prove to be the norm at this location (SG).

A **Swamp Sparrow** was found on 12/14 along Waterfront Rd. (JRo, SG). This is the third consecutive year that one has been found on the CBC.

A large flock of 375 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** at Holland Tract east of Knightsen was found on 12/21 during the Eastern Contra Costa CBC (SG, JA, JB, CM, ES).

Observers: John Ascher, Bob Battigin, Joelle Buffa, Jimm Edgar, Steve Glover, Joel Herr, Clyde Morris, John Poole, Dave Quady, Kathy Robertson, John Robinson, Maury Stern, Emilie Strauss, Denise Wight

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your phone number with your observation.  
Northern CA Bird Box:  
(415) 681-7422

# CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, February 5. Meetings for the rest of the 2002-03 year are March 6, April 3, May 1, and June 5. There are no meetings in July or August.

If you are a new member or new to the area, let us know. We want to welcome you and tell you about our activities. All new members and visitors receive a free door prize ticket.

The MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

**Visit our website for the latest birding information:**  
<[www.diabloaudubon.com](http://www.diabloaudubon.com)>



*Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.*

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*Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 95626. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please end exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.*

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