



Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

The Quail

Volume 66, Number 7

APRIL 2021

Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, April 1

Please mark your calendar for our next virtual monthly program meeting.
See **BELOW** for webinar access info.

- 7:00 PM** Welcome and Introductions
- 7:05 PM** Birding Info: *Female Bird Day* with Joanna Wu
- 7:25 PM** Board Announcements
- 7:35 PM** Main Program: *Coldest, Driest, Windiest: Studying Adélie Penguins on the Harshest Continent* with Annie Schmidt
- 8:30 PM** Adjourn

Main Program: *Coldest, Driest, Windiest: Studying Adélie Penguins on the Harshest Continent*

Annie Schmidt, *Antarctica Program Director*, Point Blue Conservation Science

Annie Schmidt will provide an Introduction to the Adélie penguin, the Ross Sea and its global importance, and discuss how they study Adélie penguins, highlighting recent work and conservation applications.

Annie currently manages the Adélie Penguin Ecology research at **Point Blue**. Their research covers a range of questions including why are some colonies growing faster than others, where and what do penguins do in the winter, how does penguin nesting habitat influence breeding success, and how will climate

change influence their populations. Annie is lucky enough to spend a few months of the year at their field site on Ross Island, Cape Crozier, one of the largest Adélie penguin colonies in the world.



Annie started at Point Blue in 2004 as an intern investigating Leach's Storm-Petrel demography on the Oregon Coast. The first time she held one of these tiny, incredibly tough birds, she was hooked and subsequently went on to study seabirds on the Farallon Islands. There is nothing like the bustling activity of a seabird metropolis to stimulate curiosity, wonder, and a desire to contribute toward a sustainable future. In 2013, she completed a PhD in Ecology at UC Davis where she studied the changing influence of ocean conditions on seabird populations on the Farallones. Annie recently returned from her eighth season conducting research in Antarctica.



Photos of Adélie Penguins in Antarctica by Annie Schmidt

Birding Info: ***Female Bird Day***

Joanna Wu, *Avian Ecologist*, National Audubon Society

Beginning with a brief introduction to the **Female Bird Day** effort (established 2019), Joanna Wu, GIS Analyst and Biologist with the National Audubon Society, will explain the consequences of overlooking female birds, both in birding and the sciences. Then she will cover some tips for female identification based on appearance, vocalizations, behavior, and more.



Webinar Access Info:

Date: Thursday, April 1, 2021
Time: 7:00 PM–8:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)
Location: Zoom online meeting
Access: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84195831657?pwd=KzZna2ViSIVtV2FSTTVBY1Y1L2R5Zz09>
Meeting ID: 841 9583 1657
Passcode: 307321
Phone access: **One tap mobile**
+16699006833,,84195831657#,,,,*307321# US (San Jose)
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Dial by your location

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
+1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 841 9583 1657

President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDAS President*

Spring has sprung—according to some of the local birds anyway! Spring always seems to come a little later here in the hills of Morgan Territory, and as of this writing I have yet to see any spring migrants around the house, but the White-breasted Nuthatches and Oak Titmice are busily working on their nests. One of our resident birds is a distinctive White-breasted Nuthatch identified by a complete white band around the nape of its neck. Dubbed "Ms. Whitney" by our granddaughter, though we don't know if it's male or female, it has chosen a different nest box this year among the several scattered around our house, and is hard at work setting up a nest again along with its partner. We look forward to seeing the fledglings in a month or so.



"Ms. Whitney" feeding her brood last Spring

Photo: Jerry Britten

Also springing, it seems, is a pervasive sense of optimism that the end of the pandemic is in sight. The pace of vaccinations is quickening and things are opening up around the county. The MDAS board will continue to monitor progress and listen to our members' desires in determining the right time to open up our in-person program meetings, classes, and field trips.

Don't forget to enter your favorite bird photos in Mt. Diablo Audubon's 2021 Photography Contest! It is open to all members and to all youth regardless of membership. Find out more and submit your entries at: <https://mt-diabloaudubon.org/photo-contest-2021/>. Whether you have great photos or horrible ones, we have a category for you, and look forward to all of your submissions. Deadline to enter is Friday, May 14.

Stay safe, and get out there for the birds!

Welcome, New Members!

Sarah Tancredy, Martinez

Christine Bidwell, Danville

Joan De Vries, Clayton

John Ehrenfeld, Napa

Don Heston, Livermore

Richard Huey, Oakley

Judy Meade-Silaj, Elk Grove

Carrol Mills, Martinez

Carly Clements Owens, Alamo

Lindsey Pannell, Crockett

Terry Sullivan, Albany

Suzy Wear, Pleasant Hill

Call for Candidates

Nominations are open for the 2021–2022 officer positions on the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Board of Directors.



If you would like to be a candidate for President, Vice-President, Treasurer, or Secretary for the term of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, please contact anyone on the Nominating Committee: Rosalie Howarth, Hugh Harvey, or Carol Pachl, by clicking [HERE](#).

A slate of candidates has been proposed that includes Jerry Britten continuing as President, Ariana Rickard continuing as Vice-President, Steve Buffi staying on in the role of Treasurer, and Carol Pacht remaining as Secretary. Nominations and self-nominations from our MDAS membership are also welcome.

The election will be held via an email ballot to be sent to all members in early May. Results will be announced in the June edition of *The Quail* and at the June 3rd monthly program meeting.

Please check your email for your ballot in early May and return it as quickly as possible. Every vote counts!

All of us on the Board of Directors of the Mt. Diablo Audubon chapter thank you for your ongoing support and participation.

Rosalie Howarth, *Nominating Committee Chair*

Image: Manco Capac / [CC-BY-SA-3.0](#)

The Birdability Movement

Alan Bade, *MDAS Community Science Advisory & Board Member-at-Large*

In a [recent article on Dal Leite's Bird Wide Web](#), I learned about an excellent organization called **Birdability**. This growing organization focuses on removing barriers for birders with mobility issues, blindness/low vision, intellectual or developmental disabilities (or mental illness), being deaf or hard of hearing, and other health concerns. The Birdability movement arose when members in [these communities](#) engaged directly within Audubon to help create maps, documents for planning access, and other guidelines to make birding more inclusive and accessible.

Audubon is embracing this movement and has created a [fantastic mapping tool](#) where birders can upload features of their favorite birding spots. It is an easy way for individual birders to help! Popular birding locations can be added to the map with much of the information a mobility-challenged user may need to decide whether to visit. Criteria such as handicapped parking spaces, accessible bathrooms, paved vs dirt trails, and whether trails have steps can be added to the map. Keep in mind that map users will have a wide range of abilities. Some wheelchair users, for instance, can handle sloped and/or dirt tracks while others will need pavement. A description of the birding habitat and what species to expect with [eBird](#) hotspot links are also helpful. Map users can then find accessible options for birding all in one location rather than having to search many venues for the information they need.

I encourage MDAS members to check out the map and see if their favorite park or birding spot is on the map. If not, it is easy to add. My suggestion is to print **Birdability's "access consideration document"** and take it with you when you go yourself. Keep it folded up in a back pocket and check off items on the list as you bird. Then upload the site's description into the website's **easy to use questionnaire**.

The Birdability map in our area needs additions. Only a few sites have been added so far. The map's usefulness will grow immensely as local parks and birding hotspots are added, so I encourage MDAS members to fill it in with your favorite birding spots. Birdability is a wonderful part of making birding more inclusive and has just added a **monthly newsletter** and acquired non-profit status. For more information, visit **their site** and Dal's **excellent article on the Bird Wide Web**.



Birdability focuses on removing barriers to access for birders with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, intellectual or developmental disabilities (including autism), mental illness, being deaf or hard of hearing, chronic illnesses or other health concerns.

Because birding is for everybody and every body!
Learn more at birdability.org

@birdability

Got Hope on Climate Change?

Juan Pablo Galván, *MDAS Conservation Chair*

"Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up. In contrast to optimism or despair, hope requires that one actually do something to improve the world. Authentic hope comes with an imperative to act."

—D. W. Orr



It's great that there are actual classes led by experts in the field about how to effectively communicate and take action on climate change. Check out some new ideas below on how to most effectively make a difference.

1. **Just Chat About It.** One key to effectively communicating about climate change is to stop being silent about it and make it part of normal communication. That way we convey that thinking and worrying about climate is a shared human experience. Normalizing concern for climate change is part of the work toward climate change solutions. One of the best ways we can normalize our concern is by talking about it with friends, family, and colleagues. Watch this short video on how to start **HERE**.

2. **How to Not Be (Completely) Depressed About Global Warming.** Check it out [HERE](#). Doing something every day can be very helpful in giving people hope, and it's a path to change.
3. **What Do Scientists FEEL About Climate Change?** Is dealing with the idea of climate change overwhelming for you? Wonder what the people that deal with the science of climate change every day for a living feel about it? Find out [HERE](#).
4. **Visuals and Graphics: What's Really Warming the World?** Want to visualize climate science instead of reading it? Check [THIS](#) out. What works? What doesn't? Is it effective? What would you change?
5. **What Do People Actually Think About Climate Change?** What percent of people in the US think global warming is happening? Would you be surprised if the answer were 72%? How many people in Contra Costa County do you think support regulating CO2 as a pollutant? Does 78% of the county sound about right? Get facts about how many people truly talk about, take action on, and are worried about climate change and all sorts of related policies with Yale Climate Opinion Maps and Factsheets [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). By the way, the US county with the lowest percentage of people agreeing with the statement "Global warming is caused mostly by human activities" is Loving County, Texas, at 39%. The county with the highest percentage of people agreeing is Alameda County, right next door, at 74%.

"hope" by @polsifter is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Update on Community Science

Alan Bade, *MDAS Community Science Advisory & Board Member-at-Large*

Climate Watch Update

In January, several members of MDAS participated in Audubon's Climate Watch and completed surveys for White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebirds, and Spotted Towhees. This community science program was introduced in 2016 and is designed to test whether projections of range shift in Audubon's study [Survival by Degrees](#) are accurate. I wrote about Climate Watch in these [January](#) and [February](#) articles in *The Quail*. The next season is May 15th to June 15th. If anyone would like to join these surveys, [send me an email](#) and I can help you map a route.

Members can also map their own routes in unclaimed squares [HERE](#). To see which 10 km x 10 km squares are available, zoom in to our area. Then, click on the layer icon and turn on your species of interest by checking the box next to the species. This will illuminate the squares. Claimed squares will be colored in, but only for any species that

are already claimed. Additional species may be available for that claimed square. After finding a square of interest, click on the Survey Planner tab and look at where you may want to plan a route. Instructions for this entire process are [HERE](#).

Numerous 10 km x 10 km squares are still available for all the Climate Watch birds in our area; Lesser Goldfinch, American Goldfinch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, and Spotted Towhees. A survey route consists of 12 points at least 200 m apart, preferably on publicly available land in natural habitat. A survey should be completed before noon and consists of 12 five-minute individual counts, recorded on the eBird app, Audubon phone app, or on paper, and uploaded later. Audubon has a two-page project description [HERE](#) and a one-page Climate Watch Protocol Overview [HERE](#).

Survival by Degrees predicts a greater variation in ranges in east Contra Costa County in certain species, so participants for east county routes are particularly encouraged. The squares to the west also overlap with Golden Gate Audubon's area, so MDAS and GGAS are collaborating on setting up routes in these areas. [Contact me](#) and I can connect you with the right person in GGAS, as they are setting up a Climate Watch program.

Tricolored Blackbird Survey

The statewide Tricolored Blackbird survey will unfortunately again be cancelled due to COVID-19. A primary reason is that many government agencies are on reduced field work details and are formally prevented from participating. This census is normally conducted every three years and has been a vital tool in understanding the health of the population and how to save it. Hopefully next year we will be able to participate in this important work.



The survey is usually conducted in early April. MDAS birders who find groups of Tricoloreds while out birding should record them in eBird. Make a note of the exact location in the details section for Tricolored Blackbirds within eBird if possible. The location data is especially important for large groups of birds and will be useful during the next survey. If enthusiasts out there want to take it one step further, I can provide a list of previous locations to be checked. Even the absence of birds is helpful as an update to these locations. I'll upload any records sent to me into the [Tricolored Blackbird survey portal](#). Try to record GPS coordinates of where birds are seen, as location data is needed to enter anything into the portal. See the portal's instructions for data entry [HERE](#) for guidance on data needed. Alternatively, you can make a google

map or send me an accurate description of the location. Be sure to be COVID-safe while making your observations!

Some veteran surveyors in southern California are going out, so if anyone wants to survey south of the Tehachapis, **let me know** and I'll try to help you connect with locations. Thanks to all of you who've been interested in helping with the survey!

Photo of Tricolored Blackbird by Nigel Voaden/Macaulay Library at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology \(ML46575451\)](#)

How Do Birds Survive In Winter?

Mike Eliot, *MDAS Board Member-at-Large*



In the cold of winter, we often wonder how backyard birds find ways to keep warm. Even though many weigh less than 25 grams (about the weight of a slice of bread), they somehow keep their motors running using several techniques. Here are five reasons that help explain how birds survive when the weather gets cold:

First—they often expend more than 10% of their body weight each night producing heat to stay warm in cold weather. During the day they must consume lots of high energy foods such as suet, nuts, oil sunflower, or niger (thistle). Hummingbirds, on the other hand, are finding few flowers, so they visit nectar feeders more often to help maintain their high energy levels. When they rest, they also can go into torpor, which slows their metabolism and allows their body temperature to decrease without injury.



Photo: Mike Eliot

Second—fluffy down feathers that are kept clean do an amazing job of insulating and trapping body heat. To keep them clean, birds need clean water in which to bathe even in cold weather.

Third—birds are more often seen in flocks when it's cold for two reasons: they roost together to stay warmer by keeping the cold away from parts of their bodies that are touching one another and, because birds move slower in cold weather, flocks can do a better job of protection than individuals by seeing and warning the others about predators.

Fourth—birds may be seen avoiding winds, rain, and snow by moving to the other sides of trees or structures to dodge them. They also hide under leafy eaves, tree branches, or fern fronds to keep dry.

Fifth—many birds will take advantage of any cavities in trees, unused nest boxes, or even snow tunnels. Nestled in closed spaces helps hold in heat produced by their bodies.

We can do our part to help them through winter by providing lots of fresh, high-energy foods, clean sources of water for bathing, and clean nest boxes.

Mike Eliot

Wild Birds Unlimited, Pleasant Hill

Get Those Photo Contest Entries in!

Rosalie Howarth, *MDAS Publicity & Social Media Chair*

Krista Vossekui, *MDAS Education Chair*

We can't wait to see those cool shots in your photo files. Got a great closeup? Caught some hungry birds chowing down? A family group? A flock in motion? One that makes you laugh out loud? A lousy shot you just can't bring yourself to delete?

2020 Photo Contest

Runner Up

Species: Yellow-breasted Chat

Photographer: Eleanor Soulette

Category: Youth

Location: Clayton



"What an attitude! No doubt who's boss here!"

Now's the time to send them in! We're processing entries and we'd love to add yours to the growing gallery.

You can enter one time in as many categories as you like (except Youth), but we'd love to see photos taken by the young people in your life too.

2020 Photo Contest

Runner up

Species: Canyon Wren

Photographer: Jerry Britten

Category: Bird Portraits

Location: Morgan Territory



"So hard to catch these guys so close, with their furtive nature."

You don't need any special skills or equipment—it's all for fun (though there is a modest award for the winner in each category)!

Click [HERE](#) for the official rules and to enter the 2nd annual Mt. Diablo Audubon Photography Competition!

California Bluebird Recovery Program Spring Update

Georgette Howington

CBRP Assistant Director and Contra Costa County Coordinator

We are thrilled to report that data for the 2020 nesting season is 16,223 successful fledges—making our average since 1996 a whopping 16,271! We can say that this is incredible considering how many trails were closed due to restricted access during the COVID pandemic. Our count was over 19,000 in

2019. Now as the 2021 nesting begins, monitors have already repaired and cleaned their boxes, the birds are actively looking for housing, and some have already made nests. We've even had a few reports of eggs! Another nesting season—another chance for renewal and a fresh start.



On behalf of Dick Blaine, Program Director, and the rest of the board members at CBRP, we thank MDAS for the generous donation of \$500.00. Being affiliated with and supported by Mt. Diablo Audubon Society has been our backbone of credibility since Don Yoder established the nest box program. This relationship is extremely important to us—now more than ever as we forge ahead, grow, and reenergize the program.

One project we have in the works is contacting each of the 46 Audubon Chapters to offer our services if they would like to start their own nest box programs. After 25 years, we have much to offer in terms of guidance, training, and individualized coaching. The nest box program is so effective and rewarding that we are confident the chapters will reach out to us for our help. So far, we have had positive responses.

Another exciting project is our partnership with **Wild Farm Alliance**. Wild Farm Alliance already has about 40 farms and vineyards with nest boxes installed on them. Unfortunately, there are none in Contra Costa County yet. So, here's how you might want to get involved. If you visit an organic farm, and you ask the owner(s) if they are interested in having nest boxes on their land, please **send me an email** with their contact information. If it works out we will arrange to have the boxes installed, and then recruit a trained monitor to adopt the trail. You might even want to be the monitor. What fun to have a trail on a farm!

Recently I started working with an Eagle Scout candidate who's striving to start a new trail in Pinole for his project. We are in the very beginnings of our journey; I'll write an update on this when we are further along. I enjoy the process with the candidate, the troop, and the parents. It's surely a beneficial project, both for the candidate and the birds.

Thank you again for all your support. I hope to see all of you again when the pandemic no longer keeps us apart. I pray you and your families are well and safe.

Bluebird Blessings—Georgette Howington

Spring Birding During COVID-19

Hugh Harvey, *MDAS Field Trips Chair*

In our continuing pandemic situation, everyone wants to know when the chapter might start having public field trips. Our field trip leaders have responded with their thoughts, and the MDAS Board of Directors had a discussion at our March meeting. This is a very fluid and delicate situation. Many parameters must be met before it will be safe for everyone to participate in these types of activities. Some of the parameters are mandated by the CDC, the state, and the county. Because things change so fast and nobody knows what might happen next, the board made a unanimous decision that we should wait until September before trying to offer these popular events to the public. It is disappointing, I am sure, because we all want to see our friends after what has already been a long year. In light of this, using our collective decades of experience as birders and field trip leaders, my team and I have come up with the following guide to seeing some of the best Spring birding our local area has to offer.

Thank you for your continued patience, Hugh Harvey

April is a busy month on our usual field trip calendar. Many changes are occurring in the bird world, winter birds are leaving for the north, others are arriving from the south and continuing north, and our regular nesters are arriving for the breeding season. The Diablo Range is one of the great locations in our Bay Area to experience these changes. We would ordinarily have visits to Pine Canyon, Black Diamond Mines, Mitchell Canyon, and Del Puerto Canyon, either on Mount Diablo or in the Diablo Range. We also would visit Garin Regional Park and North Briones Park. See information below.

WEBCAM SITES

For those who want to enjoy local and non-local birding from the comfort of their homes, there are many interesting bird webcams available including the following:

- **Decorah, Iowa Bald Eagle** (currently with snow on the nest)
- **SF Bay Osprey cam** from Richmond, CA
- **UC Berkeley Campanile Peregrine Falcon nest**
- **PG&E Peregrine Falcon nest** in San Francisco
- **Cornell Sapsucker Woods feeder cam** in New York
- **Panama fruit feeders** at Canopy Lodge at El Valle de Antón, Panama

BIRDING INFORMATION

These may all be done alone or with family quite easily. **Birding is recommended during the week to avoid crowds.**

GARIN REGIONAL PARK is located on the ridge of the Oakland Hills in south Hayward. It is next door to Dry Creek Regional Park and our chapter walks a loop passing through both of them. Drive south along Mission Blvd. from downtown Hayward, then into the park on Garin Ave. This location usually has our first true spring birds: Bullock's Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Wilson's Warblers, and Pacific-slope Flycatchers. Walk right through the picnic area, and continue past Jordan Pond. Follow the Dry Creek Trail south for almost 1½ miles. You will arrive at a gate for the May Rd. entrance to the park. Turn right and walk uphill along the High Ridge Loop Trail. As you reach the top, one last specialty bird is sometimes found here—the Grasshopper Sparrow. The trail continues north and eventually returns to Jordan Pond and the parking area.

Some of the trails here are very narrow. Poison Oak is coming out, too, so watch the edges while you walk. An entry fee may be charged if you arrive after 9:00 AM.

Check **THIS** website for more information.



Wilson's Warbler



Pacific-slope Flycatcher

Photos: Isaac Aronow

BRIONES REGIONAL PARK spans the hills between Martinez, Lafayette, and Orinda. Felipe Briones built a home near the current Bear Creek entrance to the park in 1829. Just think of the parking he had available in those days! But our first spring visit to the park is from the Martinez side, a much more difficult place for Señor Briones to reach. We have our cars and the paved Briones Rd. off Alhambra Valley Rd. for our use. Park at the top and notice the tall towers for the high voltage electric transmission lines. These lines were originally intended to be routed right through the park, but a

demonstration in the 1960s forced PG&E to go around. The demonstration was one of the early ecological fights and was covered by Life magazine.

Hike uphill from the parking lot. Spring flowers line the fire road and birds such as the House Wren may be singing. After passing through a gate, wander over to the Maricich Lagoons, then continue up through the open grasslands. Stay to the right and continue to the Sindicich Lagoons. We sometimes have lingering winter ducks, newly arrived swallows, and maybe even our first Lazuli Bunting here. Grasshopper and Lark Sparrows, along with Horned Larks, might be seen below the ridge, along with a variety of raptors.

Wonderful views of the Carquinez Strait, Benicia, and maybe even the Sierra Nevada are possible from these heights.

Check the website [HERE](#).



Lazuli Bunting

Photo: Joy Shonfeld



Lark Sparrow

Photo: Maren Smith

PINE CANYON and **MITCHELL CANYON** are near each other on the lower reaches of Mount Diablo. Pine Canyon is beyond North Gate High School and Borges Ranch, Mitchell Canyon is closer to Clayton. These two sites are very popular on the weekend, and we have moved our chapter visits to a weekday. Because Mitchell Canyon is within Mount Diablo State Park, an entry fee is required.

Migrating flycatchers and hummingbirds are highlights of Mitchell Canyon, along with the many flowers. These include the endemic **Mt. Diablo Fairy Lanterns**. Walk in on the main trail, continuing up the canyon beyond Red Rd. If a Lazuli Bunting has not yet been found, this might be the place. Walk up Red Rd. until you reach the chaparral habitat and listen and look for California Thrashers and Calliope Hummingbirds. The unusual **Chaparral Broomrape** plant might be found along the edge of the road. It is a saprophyte, a plant without chlorophyll.

Return to the parking area by walking the Globe Lily Trail, which is parallel to, but above, Mitchell Canyon Rd. The flowers along here are often spectacular, including the Fairy Lantern/Globe Lilies, Purple Larkspur, Ithuriel's Spear, and Purple Sanicle. Join the main road at the Black Point trail.

For more information about Mitchell Canyon see [THIS](#).

Pine Canyon is just as popular with locals due to the ease of access along Castle Rock Rd. The Castle Rocks are one of the chief attractions. Bullock's Orioles are most easily seen over the swimming pool at the picnic area. After passing the ball fields, you will enter Diablo Foothills Regional Park. A short hill goes around a dam and on toward Pine Canyon. Walk the Shell Ridge Trail a bit and look for Wrentits, California Thrashers, and Rock Wrens in the chaparral/sage habitat of the south-facing slope.

As you enter Pine Canyon, with the wonderful oaks, flowers, and grasses, you will be staring directly at the Castle Rocks. They are actually within Mount Diablo State Park, while Stage Road Trail is in the regional park. Two meadows have benches at the top of them, from which you might view the cliffs. Pine Creek must be crossed in order to reach the second meadow, though it may be dry this year. Beyond the second meadow is a picnic area and a gate into the state park. There are about seven more creek crossings before reaching the dam forming Pine Pond, which is mostly filled in now.

For more information about Pine Canyon see [THIS](#).

Be sure to carry water and snacks in both of these canyons, as it may be much warmer as the day passes.



California Thrasher

Photos: Maren Smith



Bullock's Oriole

BLACK DIAMOND MINES is at the northern edge of the Diablo Range, overlooking Pittsburg and Antioch. Both coal and sand were mined here—coal to the early 1900s, sand into the 1940s. The main entrance is off Somersville Rd., and an entry fee may be charged if you arrive later in the morning. The area around and just above the upper parking and picnic area is good for our spring birds, including the Wilson's and Yellow Warblers, Bullock's Orioles, maybe Lazuli Buntings, and Hermit Warblers. Take the stairs to the Greathouse Visitor Center, which is closed, but walk to the left toward the Hazel-Atlas Mine and enjoy the flowers along the hillside. The rare white **Shooting Star flower** may have already bloomed here by the time April comes around. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers may be visible along here.

The most difficult part is walking uphill along the Loop Trail. It is very steep and crosses smooth sandstone. It also affords an excellent chance to enjoy a Canyon Wren singing. If you continue to the Ridge Trail at the top, turn left to walk through some oak habitat before reaching the Stewartville Trail. The grassy ridge rising to the front has a trail along its edge. Grasshopper Sparrows may be along this slope. Walk down the Stewartville Trail back to the parking area. Carry water with you.

See: [HERE](#) for more information.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Photo: Jerry Britten



Yellow Warbler

Photo: Isaac Aronow

DEL PUERTO CANYON goes into the Diablo Range from the Central Valley starting near Patterson. The road is almost 25 miles long from I-5 to The Junction with many birding spots along the way.

Starting three miles into the canyon is a wonderful riparian area that has Costa's Hummingbirds, Western Kingbirds, Bullock's Orioles, and maybe Phainopeplas. Parking and walking along the road here brings you past the Painted Rock to the Owl Rocks. Rock Wrens, Barn Owls, or Great Horned Owls may be possible here. At MP 10.5 are some cliffs where it is possible to find Canyon Wrens or Rufous-crowned

Sparrows. Lunch may be eaten at the picnic area at the Deer Park OHV area on the right side of the road. Bathrooms are available. Birding around the picnic tables is one of the best chances for finding Lawrence's Goldfinches, but do not ignore the riparian area along the creek.

Before entering Santa Clara County, you will see a small lake with reeds on the right side of the road. This is a good place for Tricolored Blackbirds. At the intersection with San Antonio Valley and Mines Roads is The Junction. If it is open, they sell drinks and ice cream. Bathrooms may be available.

If Lawrence's Goldfinches or Lewis's Woodpeckers were not seen at The Junction, drive south about one-half mile and search along both sides of the road. Another mile along the road is a small pond on the left that often has Wood Ducks.

It is about 30 miles back to Livermore via Mines Rd., a one-time route of the Amgen Tour of the California bicycle race. This is some of the most accessible area of the southern Diablo Range. While San Antonio Valley Rd. goes south to the summit of Mount Hamilton, the next best access is miles south along I-5 into the Panoche Valley and the surrounding areas.



Phainopepla

Photo: Maren Smith



Great Horned Owl

Photo: Beth Branthaver

Events

Be sure to check the [MDAS website](#) for the most up-to-date listing of events.

Golden Gate Audubon Birdathon 2021

March–May, 2021

Join Golden Gate Audubon Society for Birdathon, their annual spring fundraiser. This year's Birdathon offers innovative new programs from March through May

that will keep everyone healthy while still reveling in the Bay Area's amazing birds:

- **Virtual Field Trips** to ten birding hotspots, presented on Zoom by some of their best trip leaders.
- **Christmas-in-May Bird Count** on May 8th, socially distanced, and in conjunction with eBird's Global Big Day.
- **Birdathon Adventure Auction.** Starting May 1st, bid online for exciting adventures you can enjoy once public health guidelines permit.



Part of this event is a series of ten Virtual Field Trips to California birding hotspots from March 24 through April 27. Join a pelagic trip to the Farallon Islands, the Pacific Coast's most important seabird breeding site south of Alaska. View majestic California Condors in Pinnacles National Park. Or journey to the basin-and-range country of northeastern California to watch Greater Sage-Grouse engage in dawn courting dances on their leks. Because of COVID, it's all on Zoom, of course. Each session is just \$15 and led by Golden Gate Audubon's best field trip leaders. They're a great way to plan and gather logistics for a future trip on your own! **REGISTER NOW** for one of ten virtual field trips offered during this event.

Egg Dissection Virtual Program

April 3, 2021

In this interactive virtual program, **Environmental Volunteers** will lead kids in their own egg dissection! Learn about what eggs are, and what is inside of them—there is more than just the yolk and the shell! We will cover different kinds of birds, different kinds of eggs, and of course have an egg dissection—which participants will be able to do themselves! For ages 6–11.



ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERS

Inspiring a love of science and nature

Date: April 3, 2021

Time: 1:30 PM–2:30 PM

Location: Zoom online meeting
Presenters: Environmental Volunteers
Cost: Free
Registration: [Click here to register online](#)

Vernal Pool Wildflower Tour At Woodland Regional Park

April 10, 2021

Tuleyome is hosting a tour of the wildflowers at Woodland Regional Park, highlighting the sensitive vernal pool areas. Due to COVID-19 and the sensitive nature of the vernal pools onsite, this tour will be held via Zoom. California Naturalist, Nate Lillge will be in the field live-streaming while Tuleyome Board member, Dr. Glen Holstein, will provide information about each of the flowers.



TULEYOME

Date: April 10, 2021
Time: 9:00 AM
Location: Zoom online meeting
Leaders: Nate Lillge and Dr. Glen Holstein
Cost: Free
Registration: [Click here to register online](#)

Mitchell Canyon Birding Hotspot—Spring Migration

April 21, 2021

Mitchell Canyon Birding Hotspot – Spring Migration

With Juan Pablo Galván Martínez

*Mount Diablo Audubon Society Conservation Chair
Senior Land Use Manager at Save Mount Diablo
Mount Diablo State Park volunteer*

Hosted by Mount Diablo
Interpretive Association:
April 21st, 7:00 PM
Via Zoom

rufous hummingbird



Spring in the East Bay outdoors means enjoying comfortable weather, looking at beautiful wildflowers, and greeting the colorful migratory birds flying up from further south that either settle here to find mates and nest, or stop briefly before continuing up north. Mitchell Canyon, on the north slope of Mount Diablo and lying within Mount Diablo State Park, is known by birders as perhaps the best place around to see this annual rush of feathered color and song.

Logon at 7:00 PM on April 21st for the next **Mount Diablo Interpretive Association** virtual presentation to see some beautiful birds, fascinating migratory maps, and learn what we all must do to help Mitchell Canyon's beautiful birds survive. Presented by Juan Pablo Galván Martínez (Mount Diablo State Park volunteer, Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Conservation Chair, and Senior Land Use Manager for Save Mount Diablo).



Date: April 21, 2021
Time: 7:00 PM–8:00 PM
Location: Zoom online meeting
Speaker: Juan Pablo Galván Martínez
Cost: Free
Registration: [Click here to register online](#)

Point Reyes Birding & Nature Virtual Festival

April 22–April 25, 2021

Join West Marin Environmental Action Committee (EAC) in celebration of the 12th Annual Point Reyes Birding & Nature Virtual Festival and EAC's 50th Anniversary



Due to the pandemic uncertainty and restrictions, their team has decided to prioritize the health and safety of the community by hosting their annual event virtually over their regularly scheduled festival dates from April 22nd to April 25th, 2021 from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM (Pacific time) each day.

Together with their amazing guides, they are building a virtual 4-day conference offering over 24 webinars with some of their local guides, and new guides from around the country, and beyond—all for one flat fee. EAC members will receive reduced pricing for the LIVE STREAM ONLY PASS or the LIVE STREAM + VIDEO PASS.

Sponsors are encouraged, and receive special perks including (4) additional exclusive, Live-Only Keynote Meet & Greet Zoom meetings, plus chances to win special prizes. Each sponsor gift or additional donation to the cause will be matched up to \$10,000 by the EAC Albatross sponsor!

Gifts are 100% tax-deductible minus any benefits received. This a great way to support their annual mission, help them to keep pricing low, and provide scholarships when needed. Learn more [HERE](#).

Date:	April 22–April 25, 2021
Time:	9:00 AM to 7:00 PM each day
Location:	Zoom online meeting
Sponsor:	West Marin Environmental Action Committee
Cost:	\$100
Registration:	Click here to register online

April Gallery



MDAS March 4 Monthly Program Meeting:
Stephen Smith presents a rich, visual narrative of the wildflowers of Mount Diablo.
View the entire virtual meeting [HERE](#).



Red-shouldered Hawk

Photo: Cassie Tzur



Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Photo: Isaac Aronow



Spotted Towhee
Photo: Isaac Aronow



Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)

Photo: sam hough/Macaulay Library at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology \(ML38293181\)](#)

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Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Leadership

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