



Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

The Quail

Volume 67, Number 9

JUNE 2022

Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, June 2

Join us for our first in-person Mt. Diablo Audubon Society meeting in two years! We will meet Thursday, June 2, in the Camelia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, **1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek**. Unlike previous years, we will not be able to serve refreshments at our meeting.

We encourage the wearing of masks for this indoor event, as recommended by the Contra Costa Health Services.

6:30 PM Doors Open

7:00 PM Slideshow: Local Birds from MDAS Photo Contests

7:20 PM Board Announcements

7:30 PM Main Program: *Emperor Penguins with Birgitte (Gitte) McDonald*

Main Program:

Emperors of the Ice: Ecology and Physiology of an Iconic Antarctic Predator, The Emperor Penguin

Dr. Birgitte (Gitte) McDonald, *Physiological and Behavioral Ecologist*

Emperor penguins are the largest species of marine bird, and perhaps

because of its size, it is able to fast longer, dive deeper, and endure harsher conditions than any other avian species. As a top predator in the Antarctic ecosystem, they have a significant top-down effect on prey. Additionally, as top predators, their survival and reproduction depends on the functioning of the entire food web.

Join Gitte McDonald as she talks about her research expeditions to the Ross Sea to study the ecology and physiology of emperor penguins. She will start off with an introduction on basic biology and ecology of emperor penguins before talking about current research on the behavioral and physiological adaptations that allow them to thrive in the Antarctic ecosystem. The talk will conclude with a discussion of current and future challenges.

As a physiological and behavioral ecologist, Dr. Gitte McDonald investigates adaptations that allow animals to survive in extreme environments. Marine mammals and birds provide an ideal study system to investigate how animals deal with extreme conditions because of their large size variation, geographic distribution and physiological challenges they face on a daily basis including hypoxia, extreme temperatures, and fasting. Understanding the mechanisms that allow an organism to interact and survive in its environment is crucial for predicting, and potentially mitigating, their response to climate change. Her research has provided opportunities to work with a broad range of species in a diversity of habitats from the Antarctic to the Galapagos.

Slideshow:

Local Birds from MDAS Photo Contests

Krista Vossekuil, *MDAS Education Chair*

Krista Vossekuil will share some of the photos from the MDAS Photo Contests! Check out all the amazing entries and enjoy pictures of some of our incredible local birds.

President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDAS President*

Dumb Luck Pays off for Bumbling Birder

Bradford Island, in far northeast Contra Costa County, is a Delta island with a ~7.5 mile-long unpaved levee road that offers great birding opportunities. It is accessible only by ferry from nearby Jersey Island, or by boat. Only a handful of people live on the island, especially since a fire in 2021 burned almost half of it.

A few weeks ago on a Saturday, I invited a couple other birders, Srikant Char and Steve Imialek (who are to remain blameless), on an excursion to Bradford Island. We got the first ferry over at 8AM and had the island to ourselves for a great, if breezy, morning of birding. Overall, we saw 65 species, including Eurasian Wigeon, Red-Necked Phalarope, large numbers of Semipalmated Plovers, several Blue Grosbeaks and a Yellow-Breasted Chat. In fact, here is one of the most reliable places in the county to see the latter two birds. We thoroughly birded the road, with many stops, and found ourselves at the ferry landing shortly before 1PM, to await our trip back to civilization.

No ferry. Maybe it was their lunch break. I vaguely remembered reading about lunch breaks on the ferry schedule webpage, which I had read over a year ago. So, we went back to some ponds to look again for rarities, returning for the 2PM ferry. Again, no ferry. Doubt began to creep in. Luckily, there is cell coverage on the island, so I called the ferry hotline. It was then that I discovered that on Saturdays, ferry service stops at noon. I had it in my mind that the ferry ran until 3PM, but this is the *Sunday* schedule!

We took stock of our situation. No food, a couple bottles of water. I have a mattress, sleeping bag and blanket in the back of the truck for camping, but to sleep 3 we would have to be *very* good friends. We decided to find someone with a boat and ask for a ride to Bethel Island, where we would arrange for a pickup. It was then we found out firsthand how few people live on the island, and how fewer operational boats were. In fact, the first person we met informed us that he came out on the ferry for the weekend to stay in his boat, which didn't have an engine, and that he knew of only 1 full-time resident. We then met a man and his son who were again out for the weekend, via ferry. They offered us some food if we had to stay the night, but suggested that we flag a passing boat at the ferry landing and ask for a ride out. That sounded like an excellent plan, so we went back down the ferry, and immediately signaled a boat that came over. Turned out to be two very nice bass fishermen from Chico scouting for a fishing tournament, who agreed to take us over to Bethel Island. We grabbed our gear, piled into the boat and

enjoyed a somewhat cramped but reasonably dry half-hour boat ride to Bethel Harbor Marina on the north side of Bethel Island.

Bethel Harbor Marina is a birder-friendly place with a convenience store and a second-story open-air balcony that faces north over Frank's Tract. While we were waiting for our ride, we purchased some beverages and went up to the balcony, where almost immediately we were treated to the sight of a flyby **Black Tern**, a species that hadn't been recorded in the county for 6 years!

We got our ride, made it back to our domiciles, and then next day Carrie and I went out to retrieve my truck, without incident. So, all's well that ends well, for an excursion that ended up more memorable than intended. Here's the ferry schedule for those who may be interested to explore: <https://bradfordisland.com/ferry-info/> – just be sure to read it more carefully than I did! Finally, a special thank-you to Florence Imialek who rescued us from the marina!

Stay safe, and get out there for the Birds!

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Officers Election Results

Ariana Rickard, *MDAS Vice-President*

The people have spoken! Thank you to our members for participating in the annual election for Officers of the Board of Directors for the 2022-2023 term.

The votes have been counted, and it's unanimous. There were 84 votes, of which 100% were in favor of the proposed slate of candidates: Jerry Britten as President, Ariana Rickard as Vice-President, Steve Buffi as Treasurer, and Carol Pacht as Secretary.

We included a second question on our ballot regarding a revision in the Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation to change the minimum number of Directors required to operate from 12 to 9. **Read the full text of the proposed amendments here.** That measure passed, with 81 yes votes and 2 no votes.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the election, and our officers sincerely thank you for your support.

Ballot: MDAS Board Officers 2022-2023 Election

Do you approve the slate of: Jerry Britten, President, Ariana Rickard, Vice President, Steve Buffi, Treasurer, and Carol Pachi, Secretary, as Board of Directors Officers for the year 2022-2023?

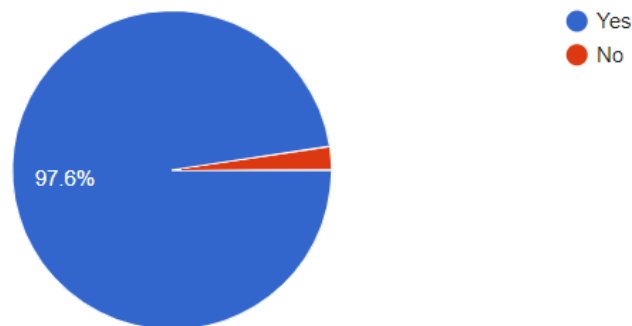
84 responses



Bylaws:

Shall the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws be amended to lower the minimum number of directors required to conduct business from 12 to 9? (See full text of both amendments here: https://mtdiabloaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MDAS_Amendment_FebMar.pdf)

83 responses



Welcome, New Members!

(Note: we are changing the way we report the new members because of The Quail deadline. We will be reporting a previous whole month.)

Anna Gil, San Francisco (April)

Lori Guariento, Danville (April)

Lorian Jones, El Cerrito (April)

Dean Kelch, Crockett (April)

MDAS Field Trips

Hugh Harvey, *MDAS Field Trip Chair*

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society field trips are back. There are some changes from the way we used to do things, however. First, there will be a sign-up process for each field trip, accessible on our website [HERE](#). By signing up, you will be acknowledging the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#). Second, some of the trips may require limited participation due to traffic/parking limitations. The sign-up process will allow us to manage this.

The biggest change to previous years is that, due to safety concerns brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 situation, MDAS will no longer organize or meet up at staging areas for carpooling. Participants are encouraged to arrange their own carpools with people they are comfortable traveling with, but must expect to provide their own transportation to meet at the trip destination. This is the main reason why participation may be limited on some excursions. Some historical destinations will be abandoned for now, as well, due to traffic/parking considerations.

As usual, the field trips will be ranked according to difficulty:

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.

MDAS Field Trips

You can view and print a complete list of planned MDAS field trips for the 2022 season [HERE](#).

Upcoming field trips include:

Sat, June 7	Outer Point Reyes	Hugh Harvey
Sat-Sun, June 11-12	Yuba Pass	Registration Closed
Sat, Aug 20	Bodega Bay	Hugh Harvey

Outer Point Reyes

Saturday, June 4, 8:30 AM to 3 PM

Leaders: Hugh Harvey and Beth Branthaver

This is a trip to see some spring birds, and visit some of the migrant traps. We will stop at the lighthouse overlook and spend some time above the fish docks. Bring water and lunch.

Rating: Category 1 — Some walking through the grass under trees and on paved roads

Elevation change: N/A

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 925-935-2979, Beth Branthaver, 510-502-4860

Meet: Bear Valley Visitor Center, Olema

Directions: From US 101 north of San Rafael, take Lucas Valley Road to Nicasio, at the reservoir turn left. Follow signs to Point Reyes Station, stop for coffee and pastries at the Bovine Bakery, then drive to Olema and the Visitor Center. From the Concord/Pleasant Hill area it may be advantageous to cross the top of the Bay on SR 37, exit at Atherton Avenue, turn left and cross US 101 to San Marin Drive. Turn right at the high school and drive about 6 miles to stop sign, turn left on Point Reyes-Petaluma Road for 7 miles to another stop sign. Turn right at the painted bridge, drive 3 miles to SR 1 and turn left into Point Reyes Station.

This field trip is limited to 10 participants. Register for this event [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

Bodega Bay

Saturday, August 20, 9 AM to 3 PM

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 925-935-2979

The last trip of our field trip calendar, but sometimes considered the first trip for fall birding. At Bodega Bay are flocks of shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher, Wandering Tattler, Marbled Godwit, as well as tern, gulls, cormorants, near-shore pelagic, and more. Bring liquids, lunch, and sunscreen.

Rating: Category 1 — Moderate walking

Elevation change: N/A

Leader: Hugh Harvey, 925-935-2979

Meet: The Tides Restaurant

Directions: From Concord/Pleasant Hill, take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge, go west on I-780 to Vallejo, then I-80 toward Sacramento. Exit to SR 37, then drive about 15 miles to Lakeville Road. In Petaluma, turn left on E. Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road, and SR 1 to Bodega Bay. Walk through or around the Tides Restaurant to find the group. Bring lunch, liquids, and sunscreen.

This field trip is not limited to participants. Register for this event [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

Other Birding Opportunities:

In 1958 while we lived in Cincinnati, a flock of birds flew out of the yard facing our apartment, and one of them hit our second-floor window. We kids ran downstairs and outside to pick it up. My Mom identified it for us as a Cedar Waxwing. It soon revived and flew away.

Later that year our family visited Mammoth Cave National Park. One evening my Mom helped me purchase a pair of salt-and-pepper shakers in the shape of Cedar Waxwings. They were a huge purchase for me, costing the then gigantic sum of 50 cents. One must realize that I was not yet 8 years old and still received an allowance of only seven cents a week. During one morning of our visit, Mom sat on the grass outside our cabin and showed me some Purple Grackles. The cabins were still there when Rosita and I stopped on a cross-country drive to Maryland in 1996. The salt-and-pepper shakers are on my desk even today.

My Mom's interest in birds came from her father, after whom I am named. For many years we used his 1937 hard-bound National Geographic Guides and his gigantic field glasses. We used the books to see pictures of the Cedar Waxwing, the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Kansas, and the then-named Sparrow Hawk which perched under the overhang of the barn next door to our house here in Walnut Creek.

To be born into this world is a blessing, and we have all received many other blessings besides. One of those special blessings for me is that my eyes were opened to the natural world around me by my Mom when she introduced me to

the world of birds. I still say, "Thank you, Mom," every time I see Cedar Waxwings.

It would be very difficult for me to count the number of Mount Diablo Audubon field trips I have attended over the years. The first was 1986 or 1987. These are the members' trips, not the chapter officers' trips, not the trip leaders' trips, they are all your trips.

For the last sixteen years, it has been a privilege to make an annual calendar of those trips. This means printing an actual calendar for September through August, finding dates for the various trips we might want to make, finding leaders, and then asking them if all the information looks correct. Only then is the calendar of trips sent to the Quail editor before the September issue publishing deadline.

It is a lot harder than it sounds, but I have been blessed over the years to have help from a lot of our chapter members. It has, however, been even more difficult due to the pandemic and the cancellation of trips for one-and-a-half years. The resumption of our trips in September brought additional changes including the Eventbrite registration, a Covid waiver, no chapter-sponsored carpools, and limits on the numbers of participants.

Many of you probably know of the tennis player Naomi Osaka. She went through a period during which she withdrew from actively playing in tournaments due to outside pressures and stress.

Last September I told our chapter board that I was feeling a lot like Naomi. After sixteen years I no longer want to be helping to organize your field trips or sit on the board. A fine volunteer, Matt Tarlach, has offered to step in and work coordinating your field trips. He and I have met several times in hopes of setting him off on the right foot. I pray that you will all offer Matt as much help as you have offered to me.

Holly Merker is a birder, eBird monitor, and cancer survivor. Four years ago Rosita and I met her at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine. She recently wrote a book called *Ornithotherapy*, a book which explains why going out to see birds is therapeutic. I am not a trained naturalist, not an ornithologist, not a theologian. But I do know that being out and seeing birds is a great therapy. It is just us, the birds, and God. I call it being in the Cathedral of the Great Outdoors. So, this month for Other Birding I will just say, "Go out there anywhere and see birds.

Thank you for your kindness,
Hugh Harvey

Field Trip Reports

Del Puerto Canyon, April 25

Beth Branthaver, *Trip Leader*

For our annual Del Puerto Canyon Trip, eight of us traveled to Patterson on I-5 where Del Puerto Canyon Road begins. We spent most of the day winding our way up the canyon stopping at several pull-outs. At the end of Del Puerto Canyon Road, we headed South on San Antonio Valley Road looking for Lewis's Woodpeckers. It was a very warm day, but we did see 44 species including Lewis's Woodpeckers, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, a nesting Red-tailed Hawk, Wood Ducks, Western Kingbirds, Bullock's Orioles, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Phainopepla, Yellow-billed Magpies, Western Tanagers, and Black-headed Grosbeak.

Mitchell Canyon, April 28

Sandy Ritchie, *Trip Leader*

Our morning started out with windy and cool weather, which might have been the reason for low bird activity. Things did pick up after a couple of hours, and we started to see a good variety of birds. There were quite a few different flycatchers, including Olive-sided, Ash-throated, Pacific Slope, and Hammond's. There were still plenty of wildflowers blooming, but we missed out on seeing any Calliope Hummingbirds. We did have several good looks at Lazuli Buntings, and we also saw a male Western Tanager. We wrestled with identifying a sparrow we sighted, and finally had good enough looks to go with Steve Buffi's call of Chipping Sparrow. The warblers were well represented with Orange-crowned, Nashville, Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, and Wilson's, only missing a sighting of a Hermit Warbler.

In total, the 11 participants saw 43 species. An honorable mention was given to the Bobcat sighting we had ahead of us on the trail.

Joint MDAS/SMD Birdwalk at Curry Canyon, May 5, 2022

Jerry Britten, *Trip Leader*

Fourteen birders enjoyed a bountiful excursion at Save Mt. Diablo's Curry Canyon Ranch and out into Mt. Diablo State Park on an out-and-back trip of 3 miles on a cool, breezy, cloudy morning. Spring migrants were in abundance, with at least 10 each Hermit and Wilson's Warblers, and a few Townsend's thrown in. Also seen were beautiful Western Tanagers, Bullock's Orioles, and Black-Headed Grosbeaks. We had good looks at Cassin's Vireo, Western Wood Pewees, and Ash-Throated Flycatchers, along with a handful of beautiful Lazuli Buntings. Some of these were life birds for several participants. A total of 42 species were seen or heard, with a notable absence of only Swainson's Thrush.

Events

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

Martinez Beaver Festival is Back!

Saturday, June 25

After a 2-year COVID-driven hiatus, the annual Martinez Beaver Festival is Back! This fun family-friendly event celebrates the inclusion of the Beaver into the downtown Martinez ecosystem. It's being held Saturday, June 25 at Susana Park, Martinez, from 11 AM to 4 PM. MDAS is planning to have a table at this event. Please find out more about the festival [HERE](#).

Third Annual Black Birders Week

May 29th through June 4th

Black AF in Stem Collective

Black Birders Week is back! This year's theme is: "**Soaring to Greater Heights.**" Each day includes fun activities so be sure to follow their **Social Media** accounts for all updates and entry links!

Sunday May 29 - #BlackInNature

We kick off the week with our annual #BlackInNature Networking Event. Introduce yourself and meet other Black birders, outdoor lovers, and naturalists.

Monday, May 30 - #InTheNest

How did you first get interested in birds? What is your earliest birding memory or spark bird? Who took you under their wing? If you've been at it for a while, how are you being a mentor to someone else?

Tuesday, May 31 - #LearningToTakeFlight

What were your first steps into birding on your own? When did you feel comfortable enough calling yourself a birder?

Wednesday, June 1 - #DayOfRoost

Did you know that birds choose where, when, and how to roost carefully? Today's theme is about mental health, prioritizing and choosing when to rest.

Thursday, June 2 - #FlyingTheCoop

What motivated you to take the leap to go after your passion? What's something you've always wanted to try or challenge yourself with? When is it time to pivot and "Fly The Coop"?

Friday, June 3 - #AsTheCrowFlies

We will discuss the paths paved and relationships different cultures across the diaspora have with birds, and how that has shaped your birding journey.

Saturday, June 4 - #LifelongJourney

Birding is a lifelong journey and there are various activities you can participate in according to your age group. We'll also focus on intergenerational learning and how birding can connect your family.

[Click here for more information.](#)

East Bay Regional Park District

The Black Birders Week is a **week-long program series** that runs from **Sun, May 29 to Sat, June 4**. It is a collaboration between Park District Naturalist staff and Park District Black Employee Collective members to create safe spaces for guided discussions about Black experiences and the outdoors, while exploring and enjoying the Regional parks. All programs are free. Coffee and snacks, binoculars, and birding books are provided. Everyone is welcome.

Sunday, May 29 - Big Break Regional Shoreline: 9:00 - 10:30 AM

Seek out birds living in the Delta while discussing past and current challenges faced by Black birders. Using the wetland habitat as our guide, we will explore how ecological and social diversity is needed in outdoor spaces and brainstorm ways to increase both.

Monday, May 30 - Crown Memorial State Beach: 9:00 - 10:30 AM

Search for birds along the shore, in the park, and at the nearby pond. Beginners are welcomed and encouraged!

Tuesday, May 31 - Point Pinole Regional Shoreline: 9:00 - 10:30 AM

The Dotson Family Marsh represents success in a long struggle to maintain an important community open space. Our walk will be about 2 miles on flat trails as we search for our winged and feathered friends.

Wednesday, June 1 - Martinez Regional Shoreline: 8:30 - 10:30 AM

We love Martinez and the marshes. Come share the experience with us and a few winged friends. All experience levels welcome!

Thursday, June 2 - Martin Luther King Jr. Shoreline: 12:00 - 1:30 PM

Enjoy a Bay Area birding hotspot, with so many kinds of birds to observe in marshland, open water, and on land. All levels welcome!

Friday, June 3 - Del Valle Regional Park: 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Once a federally endangered species, the bald eagle has made a comeback in the east bay. We'll walk through the campground on a paved path to view the eagles' nest from a distance. We hope to see a glimpse of the adult eagles and their eaglets.

Saturday, June 4 - Ardenwood Historic Farm: 8:00 - 9:30 AM

The farm provides valuable habitat for migratory birds. Let's explore the gardens, forests, and fields looking for these delightful visitors.

[Click here for more information.](#)

The Awe of Birdwatching

June 2, 2022

African-American ornithologist John C. Robinson utilizes his own personal and transformational experiences to explain the multiple ways that inner city and minority youth and young adults can become motivated to discover and appreciate nature through bird-watching. This presentation will focus on the barriers (and opportunities) to reaching a wider, more diverse audience to let them know that “birding is for everyone.”

John C. Robinson is a professional ornithologist, an environmental consultant, a leader of birding and natural history tours, and an author and speaker. He holds a B.S. degree in Biology from Iowa State University. He has published six books about nature and birds. For over 20 years, John has been an advocate for minorities in birdwatching. He is the author of *Birding is for Everyone: Encouraging People of Color to Become Birdwatchers* (2008).

Date: Thursday, June 2, 2022
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: Zoom online meeting
Presenter: John C. Robinson
Sponsor: **Golden Gate Audubon Society**
Cost: Free
Registration: **[Click here to register online](#)**

Trace DNA on Talons and Beaks Reveal Interactions Between Migrating Raptors and Songbirds Along the California Coast

June 9, 2022

Every autumn, billions of birds migrate thousands of kilometers from their breeding grounds to more favorable environments. Migrations of raptors and

songbirds often overlap in space and time, creating predator-prey interactions that shape behaviors and migration strategies. However, the wide-ranging movements of a migrating avian community make specific ecological interactions difficult to study.

Join us to hear Ryan Bourbour discuss how a new approach that involves migration monitoring stations, eDNA techniques, and eBird can be used to study the relationship between bird-eating raptors and songbird communities along the California Coast. Using this approach, he investigates prey selection by raptors on migration and songbird traits that may influence their encounters with their hungry migrating predators.

Date: Thursday, June 9
Time: 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Location: Zoom online Meeting
Presenter: Ryan Bourbour
Sponsor: **San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory**
Cost: Free
Registration: **[Click here to register online](#)**

How Do New Bird Species Arise?

June 16, 2022

In the evergreen forest of the Pacific Northwest, two species of wood-warbler that hybridize are on the brink of forming a new species. A more northern species, the Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi* and a more southern species, the Hermit Warbler *Setophaga occidentalis*, overlap in range and hybridize. This provides a natural laboratory for understanding the process by which new species arise. By leveraging genomic sequencing, field behavior experiments, and climate and color pigment analyses, we have uncovered the evolutionary genetic basis of speciation in these very precious wood warbler species. I will also discuss why we should treasure existing wildlife species, as speciation is a reversible and treacherous process.

Date: Thursday, June 16, 2022
Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Zoom online meeting
Presenter: Silu Wang
Sponsor: **Golden Gate Audubon Society**
Cost: Free
Registration: **[Click here to register online](#)**

Current Bird Banding Research at the Coyote Creek Field Station and Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve

June 30, 2022

Join us for a presentation on the current bird banding research projects at the Coyote Creek Field Station and Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. Bird banding is an incredible research tool for understanding the complexities of the avian life-cycle and how humans are modifying its key stages: migration, reproduction, and molt.

Julian will briefly summarize the methods used at these field sites and then describe the results of our two most recent peer-reviewed publications: one on the methodological biases of using mist-nets and another on the molt patterns of California Towhees. Julian will also share some initial findings of our study investigating how climate change has altered the timing and location of molt.

Date: Thursday, June 30
Time: 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Location: Zoom online Meeting
Presenter: Julian Tattoni
Sponsor: **San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory**
Cost: Free
Registration: **[Click here to register online](#)**

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Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Leadership

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