



The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

January 1998

Vol. 44, No. 5

Next Deadline: January 8

Draft Mission Statement

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society is committed to the well-being of our community's native birds and other wildlife through conservation, education, and leadership.

Conservation

- Strive to ensure the highest degree of habitat diversity and preservation.
- Restore and protect critical habitat.
- Observe, collect, and report information concerning the welfare of birds and other wildlife.

Education

- Sponsor activities to promote environmental awareness and volunteerism with a special focus on youth.
- Enhance public awareness and appreciation of the natural world with an emphasis on birds.
- Observe and identify birds/nature.

Leadership

- Think globally, act locally by taking a pro-active role in local political activities and issues.
- Strengthen ties with the Audubon organization at state and national levels.
- Support community organizations with similar goals.

MDAS Board Considers Adoption of Mission Statement

by Carol Frischmann

Editor's Note: In order to present the proposed mission statement to the MDAS membership, the Quail format has been changed. Information on the January meeting has been moved to page 3.

What Is the Mount Diablo Audubon Society?

Longtime Chapter members know what MDAS is. Newer Chapter members may have little or no historical perspective on Chapter people, activities, and aims.

With many new people and organizations in Contra Costa County, and a greater need than ever to work together, we must clearly communicate who we are.

To answer this question and to provide a basis for planning, the MDAS Board is considering the adoption of a Chapter Mission Statement and provisionally adopted goals.

A mission statement is a simple declaration of an organization's purpose. The goals give some indication of how the mission will be achieved. An individual or an organization reviews the mission statement and goals to learn what the organization intends to accomplish.

By stating our purpose and our goals clearly, we can attract even more interest and support from individuals and organizations

We hope you find the mission and goals reflect the activities we are engaged in now, as well as those we wish to undertake in the future.

Most wonderful about MDAS members is their willingness to work tirelessly to share what they know and to preserve birds and the places the birds depend on. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* includes the line, "What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how."

I believe the proposed mission statement and goals describe what MDAS is and has been striving to do—conserve, educate, and provide leadership

How Can You Help?

This is your opportunity to participate in this important step for MDAS. Consider how well the mission statement and the goals reflect your view of our organization. If the Board adopts this mission statement and goals, can you support the direction that MDAS is taking?

1) Make comments on the mission statement and goals. The Board plans to adopt these goals at its January 15 meeting. Please call me or a member of (Continued on page 2)

Conservation Notes

by Al McNabney

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

When you read this, we will be ringing out 1997, ringing in the new 1998. The new year will bring with it promises, threats, hopes, and expectations.

Will 1998 be a good environmental year?

Will Contra Costa County continue its drift towards Los Angelization?

Major development proposals are on the books awaiting approvals. Thousands of dwellings have already been approved; and when the "right" time comes, construction will start.

1997 saw a tiny lessening of the frontal attack on all environmental laws. Will 1998 be a similar year? My guess is NO!!!!!!! The attacks may be more subtle but just as significant. The thing that slowed or halted the destruction of key laws was public outcry, public pressure. 1998 may well be another year in which "we the people" have to exert ourselves to save habitat, forests, steams, and, yes, even the air we breathe.

A Global Warming Treaty was recently negotiated. It is already under serious attack. I'm optimistic that the tiny beginnings made in creation of the Treaty will eventually lead to worldwide ACTION.

'Tis said these days, that the US economy is "doing well." Clearly the stock market is doing well. But I'm far from certain our birds are doing well. I'm far from certain there's enough recognition of the hundreds of avian species that are in an endangered status. Or the hundreds more that are threatened. If you don't know, "endangered" means the species is sliding toward extinction. As has been said by those with more wisdom than I have, "extinction is forever." As I'm wont to say, birds don't vote, they don't lobby, they don't make campaign contributions. It's OUR job to speak and work FOR them.

We humans have the ability to FIX ALL of our environmental problems. 1998 will be a year in which we can move toward a better environmental world. I hope that's what we do.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

May it be a year of health, happiness for YOU,
and many environmental successes for all of us.

Al McNabney
December 11, 1997

PRESIDENT'S NOTES (Continued from page 1)

the Planning Committee (Cecil Williams, Nancy Wenninger, Joel Summerhill, or Al McNabney) with your suggestions or comments.

(2) Let us know how you want to participate in helping MDAS reach our goals. Give any Board member a call to discuss what you can do to help.

Carol Frischmann,
President, MDAS
(510) 895-1313, ext. 1471
FAX: (510) 614-3652
carol@mdli.com

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
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News from *Wild Birds Unlimited*

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

Interested in going birding in Arizona? Come to the January MDAS meeting or come by the *Wild Birds* store. WBU is organizing two trips to Arizona—one in May and one in August. Have you seen a Trogon?

Birding Classes by Denise Wight
Beginning class starts Tues., Jan. 6, and runs for 5 consecutive Tuesdays. *Continuing Birding Class* starts on Wednesday, Jan. 14, and runs for 5 consecutive Wed. nights.

Cost for each is \$40, which includes five classes and one birding outing. Call WBU for reservations.

WBU Winter Birdfeeding Tips

Tip #1 American goldfinches are here in good numbers. Keep your thistle seed and feeders (or other feeders) dry by putting a baffle over the feeders. Baffles act and look like an umbrella and do a good job of protecting the feeders.

Tip #2: Keep feeders and the areas below them clean to prevent spread of disease. Also, replace any wet birdseed with clean, dry seed.

Tip #3: During cold, wet days, a bird's caloric intake greatly increases. Provide high-energy food such as peanuts, suet, and sunflower seeds. These are very attractive to titmice, woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches.

Tip #4 Refill your hummingbird feeder weekly. Anna's are year-round residents in Contra Costa and need the feeders to help survive during winter. On very cold nights, bring feeders inside to prevent freezing.

Please report any sightings of Pine Siskins this winter to WBU.

January Meeting

MDAS Panel to Discuss Arizona Birding

Southeast Arizona is a favorite destination for birdwatchers in the United States. The area's breeding diversity is fantastic, and birds such as Elegant trogon, Montezuma quail, Varied bunting, and Five-striped sparrow are just a few of the species that inhabit the "sky islands" and high desert country. The January program will feature a panel format to focus on the birding opportunities of this beautiful state. Mike Williams will show slides of Arizona birds followed by an open forum discussing Arizona birding.

Participants include Jean Richmond, Denise Wight, and Mike and Cecil Williams. They will discuss the "hot spots," their Arizona birding experiences, and answer questions.

Christmas Count Results to be Reported

The January Birding Information portion of the meeting will focus on the results of the Christmas Bird Count. Jimm Edgar will give us a tally of the total numbers of birds seen and the species counted.

Audubon Announces Asilomar Conference April 4-7

The National Audubon Society will hold its 1998 Western Regional Conference at the beautiful Asilomar Conference Center on the Monterey Peninsula April 4-7. The theme of this year's event is "Adventures in Bird Conservation: A Century of Audubon Accomplishments." Hundreds of birders, nature enthusiasts, and environmental activists are expected at the annual conference.

The conference will feature a special retrospective of Audubon's accomplishments during this century. There will also be a 100th birthday party celebrating a century of the life and work of Hazel Wolf, this year's recipient of the Audubon Medal.

Conference goers will choose from thought-provoking plenary sessions, excellent speakers, and informative and fun workshops on topics ranging from beginning birding and backyard habitat enhancement, to conservation activism. Speakers include celebrated wildlife artist and conservationist Robert Bateman, author Ken Kaufman (*The Kingbird Highway*), and distinguished photographer and naturalist Arnold Small. Invited speakers include Vice President Al Gore.

Field Trips

The Conference offers six different field trips on Monday, April 6, including a pelagic boat trip, pontoon boat trip through Elkhorn Slough Reserve, and hikes through Fort Ord, and local birding trails. The Big Sur Ornithological Lab will open its facilities for participants to see and learn techniques used to monitor neotropical migrants and other species.

Youth Programs

Young people, ages 3-12, will have their own concurrent youth program directed by the educational staff of the Richardson Bay Audubon Center. Call Meryl Sundove at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center (415) 388-2524 for details. A Youth Program for high school and college-age students will include a trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

For more detailed information, contact Audubon-California, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento 95825. For copies of the registration form, contact Jill Hedgecock 256-8270 or email Audubon-California at jjacobs@audubon.org. Registration is \$60 if you register by January 19. The youth registration fee is \$25.

CBRP Volunteers Work to Save the Bluebird

The California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP), founded in 1994, by MDAS member Don Yoder, seeks to encourage and preserve cavity nesters—especially bluebirds—in the West.

It is estimated that the nation's bluebird population plunged 90 percent between the 1920s and the 1970s. The western species, native to the Bay Area, is thought to be the least common of the three species (Eastern bluebird, Western bluebird, and Mountain bluebird).

Bluebirds are not protected by the Endangered Species Act; but, as with all migratory birds in the United States, killing and harassing bluebirds is a federal crime under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. By installing nest boxes all over the United States, members of the national North American Bluebird Society and the National Audubon Society have contributed significantly to the recovery of bluebirds.

In 1996, about 180 CBRP volunteers maintained over 2,400 nest boxes. That year over 5,000 cavity nesters fledged from those nest boxes—more than 3,000 of them were Mountain and Western bluebirds. This is up from 2,210 in 1995, due in part to the expansion of the bluebird trail programs

Cavity nesters are bird species that live in cavities in wood and include the three bluebird species as well as Tree swallows, Violet-green swallows, Mountain chickadees, and Ash-throated flycatchers. Unlike other cavity nesters, bluebirds are unable to create their own nests, so they rely on old nests carved by woodpeckers, cavities and cracks in old fence posts, and knot holes in old trees. But as development has swept through California destroying habitat, there are fewer nest sites available. These nest sites are sought not just by bluebirds and wood-

peckers, but also by other cavity nesters. Bluebirds readily nest in manmade boxes. In some cases, it actually prefers them. Bluebird boxes have an entry hole that is just large enough for a bluebird but too small for the starling and sparrow. Still, only about one-third to one-half of all boxes host a nest in any given year, and not all these nests are productive. Raccoons, skunks, domestic cats, and even squirrels often raid the nests.

Don Yoder describes the bluebird population as "teetering." "Because of the disturbance of the area, it's hard to get them back in," he said.

A bluebird trail is planned at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve in Antioch. Volunteers have built 15 nest boxes which will be installed in the preserve this winter.

From May 15-18, the North American Bluebird Society will be meeting at Newport Beach. For more information on the meeting, call Ernest

Schimmelman at (714) 693-9025 or by e-mail at schimmew@sce.com. CBRP will have a display table at the Conference and is seeking volunteers to staff it.

CBRP welcomes new members, especially those willing to place an appropriate box in the proper habitat, monitor it, and report on the results yearly. Shirley and Warren Engstrom at (510) 376-4695 and Oscar Enstrom at (510) 837-8392 are CBRP coordinators for Contra Costa County and are happy to give advice and guidance on building and locating nest boxes.

If you want to join the effort to restore bluebirds, contact Don at 937-5974 or at cbrp@designlink.com or send \$5 or more with your name and address to Don at 2021 Ptarmigan Dr #1, Walnut Creek 94595 (make checks payable to MDAS-Bluebirds. All contributions are tax deductible.)

—from "For the Bluebirds," and "Walnut Creek man takes bluebirds under his wing," Matt Weiser, *Contra Costa Times*, Nov. 9, 1997, and the CBRP newsletter.

Hats Off to Don Yoder!

One person *can* make difference. When Don Yoder discovered in 1994 that California had no organized bluebird monitoring program, he founded the California Bluebird Recovery Program.

He sought volunteers who, like himself, were willing to build, install, and monitor nest boxes for bluebirds. Today there are 180 such volunteers. Don is the Program Director of the CBRP and a member and former Board member of the North American Bluebird Society. The North American Bluebird Society recently honored him for the outstanding contribution he has made to restore the bluebird population in the West. With characteristic modesty, Don said, "It is a plaque that should be hanging on the walls of at least a dozen other people because they all made it happen." He and the CBRP were the subjects of recent in-depth articles in the *Contra Costa Times*.

"Many states," Don said, "have active bluebird programs. I wanted to see an organization step forward to establish a network connecting people who want to promote the welfare of bluebirds in California."

Know Your Bluebirds

Bluebird Facts

Size: About 6 1/2 in. from beak to tail.

Habitat: Open fields bordering woodlands, golf courses, open parks, farms, cemeteries, orchards.

Food: Caterpillars, grasshoppers, beetles, and other insects

Western Bluebird

Color: Deep blue upperparts, wings, and tail with a rust red breast, females paler.

Voice: A short *pew* or *mew*; also a hard chattering note

Range: West of the Rockies from British Columbia to central Mexico. After nesting season, Western bluebirds travel in flocks, feeding on berries as well as insects.

Mountain Bluebird

Color: Turquoise sky-blue with lighter blue breast; female is also blue on rump, tail, and wings and dull brown on head, back, breast, and flanks.

Voice: Low *cher* or *phew*, song is infrequent, short, subdued warble.

Range: West of the Rockies from Alaska to New Mexico. Frequents open sagebrush plains, mountain meadows, and timberline areas.

Where to Find Bluebirds in Contra Costa

In general, look for bluebirds in oak-savannah woodland. They almost completely shun denser forest or treeless grassland. They are absent from the bay plain around Richmond, from all urban and most suburban neighborhoods, and the flat Central Valley portion of eastern Contra Costa.

Bluebirds are easily found on Mt. Diablo (Mitchell Canyon parking area, upper White Canyon, lower Donner Canyon, and along North Gate and South Gate Roads). Other areas where they can easily be found include almost all of Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, Morgan Territory Regional

Preserve, Las Trampas Regional Park, and Briones Regional Park.

Jeannette von Kinsky, Martinez, has seen flocks at tennis courts near Northgate High School in Walnut Creek.

Joyce Haven reports "frequent" sightings on Summit Road, Walnut Creek

SF Bay Crew Group Offers MDAS Sail and Bird Tour

The nonprofit, all-volunteer San Francisco Bay Oceanic Crew Group is offering Audubon members a wonderful opportunity. This group of sailing enthusiasts will take MDAS members on a free day sail on Saturday, January 17, to observe wintering birds on the Bay.

The Oceanic Crew Group has made it their environmental mission to take members of Bay Area environmental groups on sailing trips to view the Bay's rich population of wintering birds.

MDAS members will be assigned to one of the six to ten participating boats on a space-available basis. Each boat will accommodate four or five people. Lunch time is pot luck with everyone contributing.

If you are interested in this adventure, call Nancy Wenninger at (510) 938-7987. You will need to provide your name, address, and phone number by January 5.



Salton Sea International Bird Festival

Imperial Valley, California
Presidents' Day Weekend,
February 13 - 16

The 2nd annual Salton Sea International Bird Festival promises to be a delight for those who attend. Prepare to see more than 100 different species of birds each day in five extensive bird habitats; attend birding seminars on atlassing, bird photography, biodiversity and the Sea of Cortez, and the Sonoran Desert; travel to the best birding spots in the county; attend the banquet and listen to the keynote speaker Kenn Kaufman; visit over 50 booths at the trade show; and travel to the Sea of Cortez in Baja California. For more information, call the Brawley Chamber of Commerce at (619) 344-3160 or go to <http://www.imperialcounty.com/birdfest/schedule.htm>

[Editor's note: the February Quail will carry Audubon-California's position paper on the threats to the Salton Sea].

Eagle Watch Tours

Lake San Antonio, Monterey Co.
January 3-March 8

Monterey County claims 90 golden and bald eagles in the area of Lake San Antonio. On this guided tour of the lake, visitors will travel on Eagle One, a 60-ft tour boat, to view the eagles, other birds, and wildlife around the lake. Tours start at the South Shore Resort, Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. at a cost of \$10 per person. On Sundays, a special brunch tour is at 8:30 a.m. (\$20 per person) and a regular tour at 12:30 p.m. Call (888) 588-2267 for reservations and information.

Condor Visits Lindsay

View the largest flying bird in the world at Lindsay Wildlife Museum during January and February. This special visitor is a ten-year-old Andean condor with a wingspan of 9.5 feet. Condor Day at the Museum is scheduled for Sunday, January 11, 10 to 5.

Observations

by Steve Glover

Red-necked grebes continue to be widely reported in Northern California. The adult was first found by Hugh Harvey on 11/8 at Seven Hills School in Walnut Creek and was seen again on 11/12 (FB) and last seen 11/13 (SG). One was also in Emeryville north of Powell St. on 11/22 (KS), and two were at the adjacent Berkeley Aquatic Park on 12/8 (MF).

One **Brant** of the eastern form, long talked about as a good candidate to be split, was at Hayward Regional Shoreline on 11/? (BR). Sixty **Redheads** were at their traditional wintering spots at Emeryville and Berkeley Aquatic Park on 11/22 (KS). A male **Tufted duck** was seen on Upland Circle in Corte Madera, Marin Co., on 12/2 (JR, JD, EM-RBA). An **Oldsquaw**, rare but of regular occurrence in the East Bay, was north of Powell St. in Emeryville on 11/22 (KS). **Black scoters**, always tough to find in the East Bay, were north of Ashby Ave in Berkeley on 11/22 (2 fem., KS) and at the Berkeley Pier on 12/8 (1 female, MF). A male **Barrow's goldeneye** was at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 11/13 (SG), and another male was seen from the frontage road north of Emeryville on 11/25 (JR, FR). A male **Hooded merganser** was found at Berkeley Aquatic Park on 11/22 (KS) and was seen through at least 12/5 (JR, JD, FR). A female **Red-breasted merganser** was at Clifton Court Forebay on 11/13 (SG) and 11/20 (DW and Class).

A light-phase **Swainson's hawk** was at Holland Tract on 11/13 (SG). This bird may be a late migrant rather than a winterer since the vast majority of the flock that winters nearby are dark-phase birds. **Rough-legged hawk** has been

almost completely absent from Contra Costa the past few winters so the one on Orwood Rd. near Knightsen on 12/4 was encouraging (SG). A **Prairie falcon** was at Holland Tract on 11/20 (DW and class)

Common moorhen is declining rapidly in the East Bay, but the population at Marsh Creek Res. west of Brentwood seems to be thriving. A high count of 10 was noted there 11/13 (SG). This winter seems to be a good one for the rare **Rock sandpiper** in northern California. One was at Bodega Head, Sonoma Co., on 12/2 (JR, EM, JD, FB, MJC, BG), and another has been noted regularly at the lighthouse in Santa Cruz, the furthest south one has been seen in many years.

A **Laughing gull** was at the Palo Alto Baylands duck pond on 12/3 (GF, JR-RBA). The immature **Lesser black-backed gull** continued at Lake Cunningham in San Jose on 12/3 (JR, GF-RBA). Two **Black skimmers**, the first ever for winter in the East Bay, were at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline on 12/1 (AW and friends). As far as I know this is the most northerly winter record for the west coast. An **Ancient murrelet** was inside the mouth of Bodega Harbor on 12/2 (DH, JR, EM, JD).

A **Greater roadrunner** was at mile 8.89 on Mines Rd., Alameda Co., on 11/17 (GF). The adult male **Yellow-bellied**

sapsucker has returned for another winter to Ed Levin Co. Park, Santa Clara Co. It was seen on 11/4 (FB, MJC, BG-RBA). A bird thought to be an adult male **Red-naped sapsucker** was found at the John Muir Natural History Site on 11/28 by Cheryl Abel and seen later that day by SG. The bird appeared to be a classic Red-naped with an oversized red nape patch. It has been suggested that such a large red nape patch indicates hybridization with Red-breasted, but such birds normally have red sprinkled throughout the crown, and the red on the throat usually bleeds into the black breast. There are approximately 10 county records.

The **Eastern phoebe** has returned for another winter at Shady Oaks Park in San Jose. It was seen on 11/25 (FB, MJC-RBA). The adult male **American redstart**, first found 11/9 by SG, was seen again 11/11 (B&BB). I do not believe anyone has looked since. Two **Sage sparrows** were on South Gate Rd., Mt. Diablo State Park, on 11/4/97 (GF). At least six were noted in White Canyon, MDSP, on 11/9. All were noted flying down the chaparral slopes to drink from the creek (GF). A **Vesper sparrow**, now quite difficult to find in the county, was on Empire Mine Rd. south of Antioch on 11/13 (SG). Single **White-throated sparrows** were at Tilden Park on 11/8 (ES) and Holland Tract on 11/20 (DW & class) and again 12/4 (SG).

Observers.

F. Bennett, Bob and Barbara Brandriff, M.J. Culver, Jane Dang, Mike Feighner, G. Finger, B. Gallagher, S. Glover, Hugh Harvey, Dave Hoffman, B. Richmond, J. Richmond, Ellie Mulke, Fred Reischling, Kirk Swenson, Emilie Strauss, Anna Willcox and friends, Denise Wight

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Field Trip Reports

Mountain View Sanitary Plant, October 30. Whilst the weather changed from overcast to sun, fluffy clouds, and light wind, 19 birders enjoyed a morning at Mountain View Sanitary Plant marsh and Shell Marsh. Dick Bogarde, the company biologist joined us, sharing his broad knowledge which was appreciated by all. We saw 47 species, including five raptors. Most birders saw Sora rail and Common moorhen. Everyone had numerous excellent views of Green-backed heron and Blue-winged teal. —*Norah Bain*

Arrowhead Marsh, Alameda County, November 13.

After an introductory downpour, three birders spent a productive morning watching the changes brought on by a high tide. Highlights included a pair of Blue-winged teal, four Clapper rails, two Soras, and a Burrowing owl among the 48 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Charleston Slough, November 22.

The Charleston Slough area is always quite birdy, and this beautiful Saturday morning was no exception. The 12 birders present saw the Red-necked grebe, Barrow's goldeneye, Redhead, 14 Black skimmers, and a late Barn swallow. At our lunch stop at the Palo Alto Duck Pond, we saw the immature Greater white-fronted goose. After lunch, the trip quickly degenerated into a futile attempt to find the Eastern phoebe and Lesser black-backed gull in San Jose. We saw 96 species.—*Steve Glover*

As migration approached, two elderly Vultures doubted they could make the trip south, so they decided to go by airplane. When they checked their baggage, the attendant noticed that they were carrying two dead raccoons. "Do you wish to check the raccoons through as luggage?" she asked. "No, thank you," replied the Vultures. "they're carrion."

January 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday, January 10, Putah Creek.

Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m. southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet 8:15 a.m. at the intersection of Cherry Glen and Pleasant Valley Rds., approximately 1 mi north from I-80. Park on Cherry Glen. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy area. Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Canyon and Rock wrens, and Hooded merganser. Leader: Florence Bennett, 689-3106 Category 1

Thursday, January 15, Sunol Regional Park.

Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m. on El Cerro Blvd., just west of I-680. Or meet 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-80 to Calaveras Rd. Go left under I-80 and drive 4 mi south on Calaveras Rd.; turn left on Geary Rd. and go 2 mi to park. Watch and listen for Turkey along Geary Rd. Golden eagles, raptors, Rufous-crowned sparrows, Dippers, and Canyon and Rock wrens possible. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for more information Category 2

Saturday, January 24, Santa Cruz.

Carpool 7:30 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Meet in Santa Cruz at Neary's Lagoon at 8:45 a.m. at Bay and Laguna. 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 Bay

St. Go left on Bay. May have to park along streets. This is an area we have not visited in some time. Trip will include a visit to the Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges State Park. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Wednesday, January 28, Grizzly Island Refuge.

Carpool meets at 7:00 a.m. southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet 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 Grizzly 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 raptor area. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 1

Future trip note: Saturday and Sunday, February 3 and 4, Los Banos and the Panoche Valley. It's not too early to make motel reservations. In Los Banos is the Bonanza Motel, (209) 826-3871. Nearby in Santa Nella are Best Western Andersen's (Pea Soup) Inn, (209) 826-5534, Holiday Inn Mission de Oro, (209) 826-4444, and Motel 6, (209) 826-6644. Either day of the trip may be done alone. If you plan to go on this trip, please call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Full trip information will be in the February *Quail*.

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.

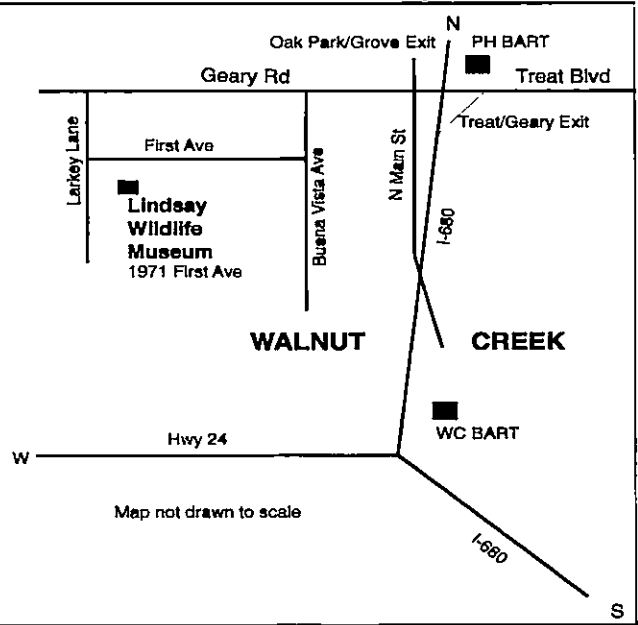
CALENDAR

Jan. 8, Thurs., 7 p.m. (Please note: this is one week later than usual)—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (For directions, see map to the right.)

Jan. 15, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH. All members welcome.

Jan. 23, Fri., 9 a.m.—Quail Mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH (Volunteers prepare Quail issue for mailing.)

Feb. 5, Thurs.—February meeting



The Quail is published monthly except for the combined July/August issue. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the Quail and Audubon magazine. To join, write a check (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available) to National Audubon Society but send it, with letter or subscription card, to the Membership Chairman, Mike Williams, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. The Chapter benefits financially from the membership applications it processes. Full Audubon membership is encouraged, but subscription to the Quail is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the Quail to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer.

ADDRESS CHANGES AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION: Mike Williams, Membership Chair, (510) 376-1631.

Gloria Cannon, Editor, P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565, (510) 753-0862, email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

February 1998

Vol. 44, No. 6

Next Deadline: March 5

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Help Wanted

MDAS members have many things we wish to accomplish. Many worthy projects are awaiting help to be realized. MDAS runs on volunteer power. Your involvement can be small or large. The salary is excellent—it's the good feeling you have when you help your community! Is that stuff about feeling good really true? Sure it is. We can give you references! What if you're not ready now? No problem. We'll be running Help Wanted ads, letting the *Quail* readership know of available jobs. If you have a talent you'd like to use, let a Board member know.

Here's a list of some of the help we need. If you can volunteer some time, give any Board member or me a call (735-3836) or sent a note to me at carol@mdlh.com.

- Official greeters—Greet and answer questions for new members and guests at monthly meetings.
 - Web master—Create and maintain the MDAS web page.
 - Information technology specialists—Build and maintain databases of various types for the chapter. Word processing specialists also needed and welcomed.
 - Information booth staff—Work at fairs, farmers markets, and other special events telling the public about MDAS and the work we do and help recruit new members. (No experience)
- (Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Events:

MDAS to Explore CA Birding Trails

For the February 5 general meeting, John Kemper, past president of Yolo Audubon Society, will talk about birding trails in California.

Started by coastal Central California Audubon Societies, these auto routes link high-quality birding sites that are of interest to the general birding public.

The success of these trails has spurred discussion of having similar trails all over the state. One proposed route will link Bodega Bay to Lake Tahoe. Hopefully, these routes will soon go around the San Francisco Bay Area. Kemper will give us a slide presentation on the trail elements and some of the

wonderful birds that are present along the way.

He has been working with local Audubon chapters on developing trails in Northern California and is in the final stages of writing a guide about them. He will discuss ideas for areas to be included and will also take a look at the challenges of funding this ambitious project.

MDAS Members Will Share Birding Spots

At 7 p.m. during the Birding Information portion of the February meeting, MDAS members will describe their favorite birding spots in California.

Atlas Training Slated for February

To kick off the MDAS Breeding Bird Atlas, two training classes are scheduled for February at the Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek.

One class will be **Saturday, Feb. 14**, from 2-4 p.m., and the other will be **Thursday, Feb. 19**, from 7-9 p.m. Both meetings will be the same. Experienced atlasers will likely discover that much of the information sounds familiar, but it would be nice for everyone to meet, and I have a lot of materials to hand out. If you cannot make it to one of these, we will work it out somehow, but please try. Let

me know if you can attend and which one.

Also, the MDAS Atlas officially started January 1, so keep an eye out for early nesters and write the basics down so that we can keep track. Anna's Hummingbirds are already building nests (watch the females, the males play no part after copulation). Also watch Red-tails, Bush-tits, and Hutton's Vireos, which sometimes nest very early.

—Steve Glover
sgloverccc@aol.com
866-1409

Conservation Notes

by Al McNabney

Big Bird Watching

WOW! GOLLY, GEE WHIZ. Boy, would you look at that!

A smallish boy was heard to say to his dad, "How big is that bird?" To which dad responded, "It is BIG, isn't it!" "Impressive," said a bespectacled lady standing nearby

Those people, plus many others, were staring at a specimen of what is considered to be the largest flying bird in the world. Having had a chance to briefly visit the BIG bird, I HAVE to agree. Initial sighting gives one a feeling of awe, great respect, and yes, even a bit of humility.

YOU, as a birder, or Twitcher if you want to get a bit snooty about the whole thing, can go birdwatching, and I GUARANTEE if you follow my instructions you will see and be awed by the bird.

A wingspan of 9.5 feet. Weight 28 pounds and only 10 years old. I'm writing, of course, about the Andean Condor (*Vultur gryphus*) [known as Veedor] now on display at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek.

My first sighting occurred when he was preening. Quite a sight The white ruff around the neck was being cleaned and pressed by the amazingly agile bird's beak. This amazing bird carried on its "clean-up" with NO concern for all the "watchers."

Later, John McNeely, who handles the bird, had him out in the center of the wildlife area. Wings spread, amazing. Seemingly filled the entire area. Quite calm, and as Executive Director Michael Duty commented, "we've been struck by this bird's energy and charisma. When you make eye contact with him, you can see a clear intelligence and great liveliness." I would totally agree with such thoughts.

Interesting Condor Facts*

- Condors live to ages of 70 to 80 years.
- Breeding pairs lay one egg every other year.
- Young remain with the parents at least one year.
- Incubation is 6-7 weeks with both parents participating.
- Andean Condors are slightly larger than California Condors
- California Condors like the West's open, brushy, semi-desert country
- Condors have figured in Indian mythology for thousands of years. Their image appears on the pottery and textiles of many of the pre-Inca cultures

(*Facts courtesy of the Lindsay Museum)

Thoughts

Yes, folks, if you want to see this beautiful BIG bird, visit the Lindsay Museum. If you can make the visit when John McNeely is handling and demonstrating the bird, DO SO. As a birder, I guarantee it will be a sight you will NEVER forget

The Andean Condor can be seen in the Exhibit Hall at Lindsay Museum, during its open hours through February 22.

Western Regional Conference, April 4-7

The National Audubon Society's 1998 Western Regional Conference celebrates "Adventures in Bird Conservation: A Century of Audubon Accomplishments" at the beautiful Asilomar Conference Center on the Monterey Peninsula on April 4-7, and you are invited.

A wide variety of events, programs, and speakers are scheduled. For more detailed information, contact Audubon-California, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento 95825. For copies of the registration form, contact Jill Hedgecock at 256-8270.

February Birding Events

It's **California Duck Days, February 7-8**, in Davis! This is the fifth anniversary of one of the largest and most successful bird festivals in California. It features a wide variety of field trips (for example, Lake Berryessa, Stone Lakes NWR, Sacramento NWR, Grizzly Island, Yolo Bypass, Conaway Ranch, Putah Creek among many others); demonstrations; performances; presentations, and social events as well as family-oriented activities and ongoing children's programs. Cost is \$12 a day for all activities, including field trips, or \$6 for on-site activities. Call (800) 425-5001 for registration and more information. Or email: duckdays@dcn.davis.ca.us Website: www.yolobasin.org

* * *

Eagle Watch Tours continue at Lake San Antonio in Monterey County. Guided boat tours are available weekends through March 8. See the January *Quail* for more information or call (408) 755-4895

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 53
WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA
94597-0053
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(510) 283-8266**

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938-7987
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Christmas Count: Jim Edgar, 658-2330
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Christmas Bird Counters Set New Record

by Jimm Edgar

The 1997 Mount Diablo Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 20. It was a record setting day (see the table below.) We finally broke the elusive 160 species barrier! We saw exactly 160 species. We missed seeing two birds that we have never missed before—Western Gull and Tri-colored Blackbird, but we made up for those losses by seeing lots of other unusual winter birds for our area. Tufted Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Eurasian Widgeon, Osprey, Clapper Rail, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Pygmy Owl, House Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Black-throated Gray Warbler were highlights. The species with the highest individual count was the Northern Shoveler with over 7,800 counted. For whatever reason, we experienced low numbers of all “irruptive” species this year. Varied Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Pine Siskin were all very low. We had a total of 30,228 individuals.

The weather was fairly decent with overcast skies for part of the day followed by partly cloudy skies. There was no rain this year. We had 54 people in the field in 16 groups with an additional six monitoring bird feeders. Thank you to all participants.

Species Seen

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Pied-billed Grebe | Cooper's Hawk |
| Horned Grebe | Red-shouldered Hawk |
| Eared Grebe | Red-tailed Hawk |
| Western Grebe | Ferruginous Hawk |
| Clark's Grebe | Rough-legged Hawk |
| Double-crested Cormorant | Golden Eagle |
| American Bittern | American Kestrel |
| Great Blue Heron | Merlin |
| Great Egret | Peregrine Falcon |
| Snowy Egret | Prairie Falcon |
| Green Heron | Ring-necked Pheasant |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | Wild Turkey |
| Tundra Swan | California Quail |
| Greater White-fronted Goose | Clapper Rail |
| Snow Goose | Virginia Rail |
| Canada Goose | Sora |
| Green-winged Teal | Common Moorhen |
| Mallard | American Coot |
| Northern Pintail | Killdeer |
| Blue-winged Teal | Black-necked Stilt |
| Cinnamon Teal | American Avocet |
| Northern Shoveler | Greater Yellowlegs |
| Gadwall | Lesser Yellowlegs |
| Eurasian Wigeon | Willet |
| American Wigeon | Spotted Sandpiper |
| Canvasback | Long-billed Curlew |
| Ring-necked Duck | Western Sandpiper |
| Tufted Duck | Least Sandpiper |
| Greater Scaup | Dunlin |
| Lesser Scaup | Short-billed Dowitcher |
| Common Goldeneye | Long-billed Dowitcher |
| Bufflehead | Common Snipe |
| Hooded Merganser | Mew Gull |
| Common Merganser | Ring-billed Gull |
| Ruddy Duck | California Gull |
| Turkey Vulture | Herring Gull |
| Osprey | Thayer's Gull |
| White-tailed Kite | Glaucous-winged Gull |
| Northern Harrier | Forster's Tern |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Rock Dove |

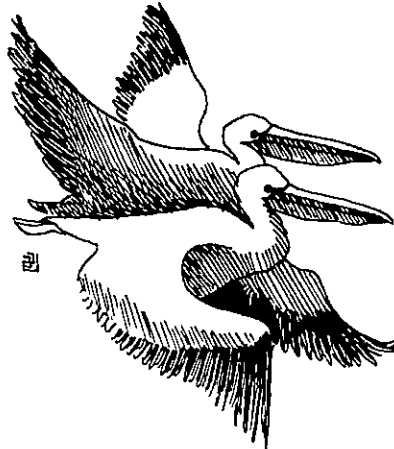
Date Held	Total No. of Individuals Observed	No. of Species Observed	Weather Conditions
1/2/88	53,742	153	cold, rainy
2/31/88	36,385	152	cold, foggy
2/30/80	33,703	158	pleasant
2/15/90	34,500	156	cold 25 deg
2/14/91	44,747	157	cloudy but nice
2/19/92	89,000	159	good weather
2/18/93	51,785	156	good weather
2/17/94	33,471	158	foggy
2/16/95	31,686	159	sunny, beautiful
2/21/96	30,083	144	very rainy
2/20/97	32,228	160	overcast

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Band-tailed Pigeon | Western Scrub Jay |
| Mourning Dove | American Crow |
| Barn Owl | Common Raven |
| Western Screech-owl | Chestnut-backed Chickadee |
| Great Horned Owl | Oak Titmouse |
| Northern Pygmy-Owl | Bushtit |
| Burrowing Owl | Red-breasted Nuthatch |
| Short-eared Owl | White-breasted Nuthatch |
| White-throated Swift | Brown Creeper |
| Anna's Hummingbird | Rock Wren |
| Belted Kingfisher | Canyon Wren |
| Acorn Woodpecker | Bewick's Wren |
| Red-breasted Sapsucker | House Wren |
| Nuttall's Woodpecker | Marsh Wren |
| Downy Woodpecker | Golden-crowned Kinglet |
| Hairy Woodpecker | Ruby-crowned Kinglet |
| Northern Flicker | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher |
| Black Phoebe | Townsend's Solitaire |
| Say's Phoebe | Hermit Thrush |
| Horned Lark | American Robin |
| Tree Swallow | Varied Thrush |
| Steller's Jay | (See Count Species on page 4) |

President's Notes (continued from page 1)

- needed, but an outgoing personality helpful.)
- Fundraising and development activities—Work with our Development Chairperson on special fundraising projects, including planning medium- to large-sized social events.
 - Organizational liaisons—Provide an official communications pathway between Audubon and other area organizations concerned with wildlife.
 - Youth activities—Provide assistance to the MDAS Board in establishing activities for area young people and organizing and providing a youth program during the general meetings.
 - Visitors—Visit nursing homes and convalescent homes to present birding/nature programs and work with staff to install bird feeders and bird friendly gardens.

- Atlassers—Participate in the MDAS Breeding Bird Atlas projects. Volunteers are needed, even those who can just check their yards or neighbor hoods.
- Marsh restoration—Do the physical work of removing trash and cleaning up the marsh at our wetlands project in Antioch. Our next work day is scheduled for April.



Count Species (continued from page 3)

Wrentit
 Northern Mockingbird
 California Thrasher
 American Pipit
 Cedar Waxwing
 Phainopepla
 Loggerhead Shrike
 European Starling
 Hutton's Vireo
 Orange-crowned Warbler
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Black-throated Gray Warbler
 Townsend's Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Spotted Towhee
 California Towhee
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow
 Lark Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow
 Fox Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 Golden-crowned Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Western Meadowlark
 Brewer's Blackbird
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Purple Finch
 House Finch
 Pine Siskin
 Lesser Goldfinch
 American Goldfinch
 House Sparrow

Audubon Launches ARK

Refuge 1 : shelter or escape or protection from danger or distress **2** : a place that provides shelter or protection **3** : a means of resort for help in difficulty

A year ago National Audubon launched its Wildlife Refuge Campaign (ARK). This event was the latest effort Audubon has made to enhance and protect the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) system. Audubon's efforts began 96 years ago when local Audubon Societies hired wardens for the first refuges.

Today the NWR system is more besieged than ever by threats, including legislative attacks, inadequate budgets, and harmful activities (mining, development, drilling) occurring near refuges.

The purpose of ARK is to develop a nationwide network of refuge supporters who will work to develop community support for local refuges as well as for the broader NWR System. It supports the

National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, which established conservation as the central mission of the NWR System. Audubon worked hard to get Congress to pass this act and save the NWR System, and their wildlife, birds, and habitat (see Salton Sea story, p. 5).

National Audubon and the California State Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Game Service is presenting California "Audubon Refuge Keepers" workshops. The last one in California is scheduled for January 31 at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR Visitor's Center, Fremont. This is a FREE conference designed to inform participants about the new joint partnership between Audubon and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Also on the agenda are presentations on the imperiled Salton Sea NWR and tours of the host NWR. Contact Gloria Cannon (510) 753-0862 for registration forms or Lora Wondolowski at (202) 861-224 at the NAS Washington office.

Cups and Mugs

As a conservation measure, MDAS members are requested to bring their own coffee cups and mugs to meetings. Let's do our part to reduce landfill waste.

* * *

OOPs

The next National American Bluebird Society meeting will be held in Regina, Saskatchewan, June 25-28 (not Newport Beach as was reported in last month's *Quail*). More information will be available later this spring.

Audubon-California Speaks Out on the Environmental Crisis at the Salton Sea

The Salton Sea is one of the most critical wildlife habitats in the nation. An enormous inland ocean that straddles the Riverside–Imperial County line in Southern California, it is home to five endangered species, numerous sensitive species, and literally millions of migrating and wintering waterfowl and shorebirds.

Yet, the Salton Sea is dying. Increased salinity and toxins flowing to the Sea from agricultural fields and urban runoff from the burgeoning city of Mexicali across the border have transformed the Salton Sea into a toxic soup lethal to fish and wildlife. Over the last four years, the Sea has experienced at least three massive die-offs, involving over 175,000 birds. Fish die-offs are even greater.

Without a solution, the Salton Sea may perish in less than ten years. With the loss of over 90 percent of our wetlands in Southern California and the near total loss of wetlands in the Colorado River delta, sizable percentages of North America's remaining ducks, geese, pelicans, grebes, and other waterfowl would have nowhere else to go.

The Salton Sea must be saved. It is the intention of Audubon-California, in partnership with its 53 chapters and state and federal agencies, to insure that it is saved. Several proposed cures for the Salton Sea's problems have been put forth. However, it is much too early to embrace any of these projects, singly or in combination. Study is needed as to the long-term efficacy of each of them. As proposals are made to restore and secure the long-term ecological viability of the sea, the following principles should be applied:

- Any proposed solutions to the Sea's problems must include the entire basin of the Sea and must take into account the entire regional ecosystem and all human activities that impact it. The latter include agriculture, waste treatment and disposal, hunting, nature study, fishing, and geothermal energy.
- The most urgent reason for undertaking a Salton Sea project is to restore a significant inland saltwater lake suitable for use by a wide variety of wildlife. Goals that focus on regional development, while important, should be compatible with the primary goal.
- The Salton Sea is an interior drainage and, like all interior drainages, is naturally subject to severe fluctuations in both surface level and salinity. Before trying to regulate either, the full costs in both monetary and ecological terms should be carefully assessed.
- Any proposals for reducing salinity must adequately deal with the question of the disposal of the extracted salt, including a study of the effects on the region where these excess salts will be relocated. The salts must not be disposed of in such a manner that significant wildlife habitat is destroyed or adversely affected.
- Environmental studies of the harmful pollutants that enter the Sea should include, as a central part of the solution, plans for source reduction of pollutants, not just removal or neutralization.
- No proposal for relieving the problems of the Salton Sea will be viewed as acceptable that deteriorates the Gulf of California, especially its upper end. If feasible, improvement in the quality of the upper Gulf of California should be incorporated into the Salton Sea restoration plans.
- All proposed solutions . . . should undergo competent, independent, scientific review, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.
- There should be full public participation in the deliberations leading to solutions. . . . Field hearings conducted to date have not included input from the general public.
- It is clear that any plan that will adequately address the Salton Sea's problems will be very expensive. An early commitment from Congress and/or the State to fund the endeavor is essential.
- Until the ecological health of the Sea is restored, public monies should be provided for the rehabilitation of sick and injured birds.

For more information, contact Audubon-California at (916) 481-5332.

Salton Sea: California's Environmental Disaster

In the southeast corner of California lies a large area of 600,000 acres of fertile but arid land just across the Colorado River from Arizona and north of the Mexican border. In 1901, developers and farmers built an irrigation system to tap the Colorado River. However, spring floods in 1905 tore through flimsy diversion works, and the entire Colorado River poured through a break a mile wide, sweeping northwestward into the Salton Sink for two years before the flooding could be shut off.

Today, the Salton Sea is 35 miles long and from 9 to 15 miles wide, making it the largest inland body of water west of the Rockies. It has no outlet. Agricultural drainage and runoff continue to pour water into the lake, so the lake level continues to rise. With the runoff comes dissolved salts from the land itself and from herbicides, fertilizers, and pesticides. During hot summer months, the water evaporates, leaving behind the salt. The Salton Sea is more than 10 percent saltier than the Pacific Ocean.

Because of continued human diversion of Colorado River water, wetlands habitat disappeared from the river delta. With its disappearance, the Salton Sea became a favorite stopping point for birds migrating through the Pacific Flyway.

Thousands of waterfowl and other birds winter here, including Canada Geese, Snow Geese, White Pelicans, American Avocets, Black-Necked Stilts, Green-winged Teal, Pintails, and Eared Grebes. The Yuma Clapper Rail, an endangered species, breeds in its marshes.

Now thousands of birds and millions of fish die each year from bacterial infections and other ailments. Fish kills have increased nearly tenfold over the past five years. During that time, at least 156,000 birds have died. Last year, avian botulism killed about 10,000 white and brown pelicans, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate. Today, the lake is a briny mess (*see Salton Sea continued on page 7*)

Observations

by Steve Glover

This winter continues to be spectacular for inland **Red-necked Grebes**. This time in Alameda County, with a bird observed at the Calaveras Reservoir Dam on 12/21 (MM & group). Two **American White Pelicans** were at Holland Tract, east Contra Costa County, on 1/3 (JS, SG). The returnee **Greater White-fronted Goose** was present at Newhall Park in Concord on 12/20 (SF) and continued to be noted through at least 1/3 (JS, SG). Three **Ross' Geese** were noted amongst Snows on 1/3 over Hollland Tract (JS, SG). Two adult and two juvenile Ross' were on Busch Rd. in Pleasanton on 12/14 (RC). A flock of White-fronts and Snow/Ross' over Webb Tract, north of Bethel Island on 12/4 was estimated to be about 30,000 birds. Of these, about 17,000 were White-fronts and 13,000 were Snow/Ross' (SG, RL).

A male "**Eurasian**" **Green-winged Teal**, the first ever found in the county, was at the south end of Shell Marsh on 1/9 (RT). A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at the south end of Shell Marsh on 12/20 (FB, MJC), and two males were there on 1/9 (RT). This is the most reliable spot in the county for this species. A female **Blue-winged Teal** was along Waterfront Rd. on the Naval Weapons Station on 12/20 (SG). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at the south end of Shell Marsh on 12/20 (FB, MJC). A female **Tufted Duck** was studied at close range at Mallard Reservoir on 12/20 (SG, JRo). The only previous county records were a male at the same location in the winters of '86-87, '88-89, '89-90, '90-91, '91-92, '93-94, and another male at Clifton Court Forebay last year. Two **Oldsquaws** continued along the Berkeley shoreline on 12/31 (BB & DVZ). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 1/3 (JS, SG).

Forty **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were at Lake Merritt on 1/1 (MJC, FB). Two female and one male **Hooded Merganser** were at Newhall Park in Concord on 12/20 (SF), and a pair was still present 12/29 (SG). Two males and one female **Red-breasted Merganser** were at Piper Slough on 1/4, the first for that location (SG, RL).

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

There were three **Osprey** sightings from the Concord area, possibly all of the same bird. One was at Mallard Reservoir on 12/20 (SG, JRo), one was fishing in the Walnut Creek Channel near the intersection of I-680 and 242 on 12/24 (BD), and another was at Shell Marsh (GF).

An adult **Bald Eagle** was on Dougherty Rd. east of San Ramon on 1/9 (DWo). Another Winter **Swainson's Hawk** was noted at Holland Tract on 1/4 (SG, RL). As usual, this bird was dark-phase. This winter continues to be much better for **Rough-legged Hawks** than recent years, especially in East County. One was found on the count on 12/20 at Pittsburg (BC & group), and separate birds were noted around Knightsen on 1/3 & 1/4 (SG, JS, RL). A **Merlin** was in suburban San Ramon on 1/3 (DWo).

Four **Black Rails** responded to tapes at Hastings Slough on the Naval Weapons Station on 12/21 (SG, JB). A nice total of nine ^{CLIPPERS} were at Arrowhead Marsh, Oakland, on 1/1 (FB, MJC). Eight **Sandhill Cranes** were at Holland Tract on 1/3 and 1/4 (SG, JS, RL). One **Lesser Yellowlegs** was along Waterfront Rd. on 12/20 (SG). A **Laughing Gull** was at the Palo Alto

Baylands duck pond on 12/4 (MJC, FB, B & BG).

A **Greater Roadrunner** was on Patterson Pass Rd in the Altamont Pass area on 12/1 (GF, MP). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was at Briones Regional Park on 12/20 (DWo), just the third time it has been recorded on the count. Single **Short-eared Owls** were found along Waterfront Rd. on 12/20 (JRo, SG) and 12/22 (JB, SG).

A single **Vaux's Swift** was over Codornices Park, Berkeley, on 12/14 for one of the very few winter records for the East Bay (LF & SH). A large flock of at least 102 **White-throated Swifts** was over Wickland Oil property on Waterfront Rd. on 12/22 (SG, JB). A wintering **Empidonax flycatcher** was found at Newhall Park in Concord on 12/27 (KH) and seen again on 12/29 (SG). Both observers feel that the bird is a "Western." Separation of Pacific-slope and Cordilleran is impossible for silent birds. This is the first record of a winter Empidonax for the county but note that there are winter records for Alameda County for Western, Hammond's, and Least. A **Tropical Kingbird** was found on 12/21 at the Hayward Shoreline (DW, SG) and has been noted by many observers since. This was about the eighth county record. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was near Deer Flat at Mt. Diablo State Park on 12/20 (SH & group). A **White-throated Sparrow** was at Codornices Park, Berkeley, on 12/14 (LF & SH) and another was in the Walnut Creek yard of GF on 1/1.

Observers: Florence Bennett, John Boyd, Barbara Burek, Rich Cimino, Mary Jane Culver, Bob Doyle, Sharyn Fernandez, George Finger, Lillian Fujii, Bob and Betty Gallagher, Steve Glover, Steve Hayashi, Scott Hein, Kevin Hints, Ron Lindeman, Mike Mammoser, Marjorie Plant, John Robinson, John Sterling, Robert Thomas, Dan Van Zile, Denise Wight, Dennis Wolfe

Salton Sea (continued from page 5) of agricultural runoff, human waste, and the remains of dead fish and birds.

Saving the Salton Sea was important to recently deceased Congressman Sonny Bono. On January 17, Newt Gingrich promised bipartisan legislation to save the Salton Sea as a tribute to Congressman Bono. Called the "Sonny Bono Memorial Salton Sea Restoration Act," the legislation could mean millions of dollars in appropriations for this unique area. There is yet hope.

**News from
Wild Birds Unlimited**
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA
798-0303

BIRD SEED SALE

15% off all 20-lb. to 50-lb. bags

SUET SALE

Buy 4 cakes or tubs & get 1 FREE
(Sale 1/21/98—2/16/98)

Events at Wild Birds Unlimited

Jan. 31 (11 a.m.—noon): Mr. Crabtree will discuss how to "plantscape" your garden to make it more attractive to birds and how to use National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program in your yard.

Jan. 31 (1:30—2:30 p.m.): Bill Klapproth, wildlife photographer, will share his experiences and slides from several trips to Africa. Exotic birds, magnificent mammals, and the highly threatened Mountain Gorilla of the Virunga Mountains will be featured.

Feb. 7 (11 a.m. & 2 p.m.): Winter Birds Slide Show with Mike Williams, featuring our winter birds and some early spring arrivals and how to attract them to your feeders.

Birding Classes with Denise Wight
Beginning class starts Tues, Feb. 17
Continuing class starts Wed, Feb. 25.
Classes run for 5 consecutive weeks, from 7-9 p.m. Cost is \$40 for either session, which includes 5 classes and 1 birding outing. Call WBU for reservations

February 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday and Sunday, February 7 and 8, Los Banos and the Panoche Valley.

For motel reservations, we suggest the Best Western John Jay Inn ([209] 827-0958 or [800] 528-1234) in Los Banos. Nearby in Santa Nella are Best Western (Pea Soup) Andersen's Inn, (209) 826-5534, Holiday Inn Mission de Oro, (209) 826-4444, and Motel 6, (209) 826-6644. Either day of the trip may be done alone. If you plan to go on this trip, please call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486.

Thursday, February 12, Thornton.

Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m., southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. in park at end of Glascock Rd. Take SR 4 to Antioch Bridge (remember the increase in bridge toll), go north on SR 160 along river to Rio Vista. Turn right on SR 12 for 11.5 miles, 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: Jimm Edgar, 658-2300 Category 1

Saturday, February 21, Bodega Bay.

Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m., southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Tides Restaurant. Go north on US 101. Take the Washington St. exit in Petaluma, go west on Bodega Hwy. to SR 1, turn right to Bodega Bay. The Tides is on left, opposite a Union '76 station. Shorebirds, rails, waterbirds, migrants. Leader: Pat McEchren, 934-3041 Category 1

Wed., Feb. 25, Berkeley shoreline.

Carpool meets at 8:30 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Or meet at 9:00 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. Leader: Denise Wight, 370-7342 Category 1

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.

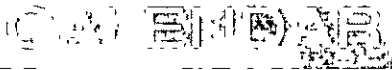
Field Trip Report

Niles Canyon, December 18.

We could not have picked a more beautiful day for a field trip. After many days of rain, fog, cold wind, this Thursday was spectacular—crystal clear, no wind, and even pleasantly warm. Seven guests and members observed 65 species. Three Spotted Sandpipers were expected and nice to see. We did not see Green Heron, which we almost always see. We did see good comparisons between Clark's and Western Grebe. A kettle of 30-40 Turkey Vultures right over

was interesting, and a soaring flock of 35 White Pelicans in the clear sky was beautiful.

No unusual birds were seen, and this may be due to the unfortunate "enhancement" of the huge quarries area. It has been bulldozed into nothingness. All of the foliage has been removed, roads put in, paths, cemented, etc. I suppose the public will have better access, but there will be little in the way of wildlife for anyone to see.—Jimm Edgar

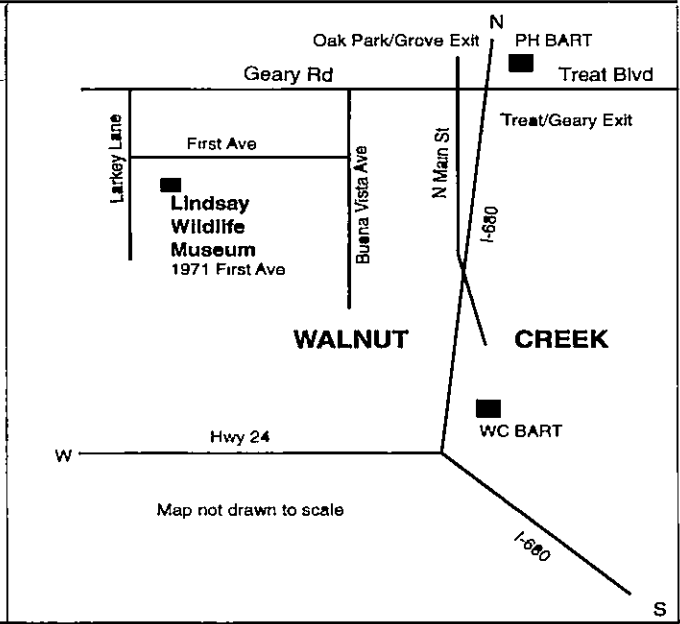


Feb. 5, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (For directions, see map to the right.)

Feb. 12, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH

Feb. 20, Fri., 9 a.m.—*Quail* Mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH (Volunteers prepare *Quail* issue for mailing.)

April 4-7, Sat.-Tues.—Western Regional Audubon Conference, Asilomar, Monterey

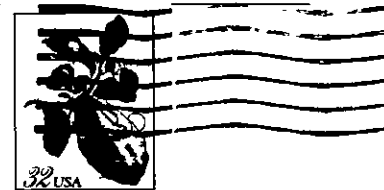
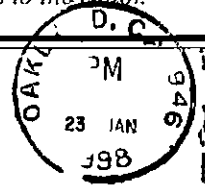


The *Quail* is published monthly except for the combined July/August issue. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine To join, write a check (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available) to National Audubon Society but send it, with letter or subscription card, to the Membership Chairman, Mike Williams, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA, 94556 The Chapter benefits financially from the membership applications it processes. Full Audubon membership is encouraged, but subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer.

ADDRESS CHANGES AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION Mike Williams, Membership Chair, (510) 376-1631

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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

March 1998

Vol. 44, No. 7

Next Deadline: March 5

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Hands-On Conservation

MDAS is fortunate to have many different types of activities to offer our membership and potential future members. Hands-On Conservation is a Chapter group that is getting its feet wet (literally) in doing conservation work with tools as well as letters, meetings, and funding proposals.

Our first Hands-On Conservation project is restoring the Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands in partnership with the Contra Costa County Flood Control District and the City of Antioch. We want to provide activities which mean something to the community in East County, and we believe that this wetlands project offers the opportunity to integrate education and nature experiences into a "urban" natural area will benefit the residents, both human beings and birds alike.

The Chapter has also committed itself to working closely with other groups or agencies which have some overlapping goals. For example, we are beginning a completely new effort (we're just in the discussion stages) with a number of other groups and the City of Walnut Creek regarding Heather Farms Park. Restoring some of the Park's habitat for birds, and creating a better situation regarding the park birds (domestic and wild) are among the goals. *(continued on page 3)*

Upcoming Events:

Swainson's Hawk Focus of MDAS March Meeting

Did you know that in the areas around Woodland and Davis, California, Swainson's Hawks nest in trees in suburban backyards? In other places where this beautiful and increasingly rare bird of prey is found, this form of nesting behavior is unusual.

For the past six years, Sid England, the past chair of the Swainson's Hawk Technical Advisory Committee, has followed these city- and county-dwelling birds around Davis.

At the March 5 MDAS general meeting, England will tell us about this unusual behavior, discuss the overall natural history of this threatened species, and update us on the most recent findings related to pesticides poisoning in Argentina.

Join us to learn more about these fascinating California birds. See page 8 for a map to the site of our meetings at the Lindsay Museum.

The "Grasshopper Hawk"

Swainson's Hawks are substantially smaller than Red-tail Hawks and have smaller feet. These factors mean that Swainson's cannot successfully take many kinds of prey that red-tails can. Insects, such as crickets and grasshop-

pers, make up 95% of the diet for Swainson's Hawks. (They are sometimes called "grasshopper hawks.") They often even catch their prey by running after it on the ground—a very unhawk-like behavior. They do take small animals such as mice and ground squirrels, but larger prey are more difficult for Swainson's

These hawks are tied to insect populations and must go where their prey is. Swainson's Hawks—like other birds that depend upon insects—generally retreat from North America in winter when insects decline. Then, as breeding season approaches, the birds move back north when insect populations rebound. The process of breeding requires enormous energy, and abundant insects are needed. Migration is successful as a survival strategy but carries grave risks for migrating birds. *(continued on page 4)*

MDAS Launches Annual Birdathon Fundraising

At 7 p.m. during Birding Information of the March program, Joel Summerhill will tell us about plans for the annual MDAS Birdathon to be held April 25. The Birdathon is a major fundraiser for the chapter, and members are encouraged to participate in this fun event. See page 7 for more information.

Conservation Notes

by Al McNabney

A New Era?

Bill Clinton in the early days of his presidency established a high-level commission to further the idea of "Sustainable Development." Many policy wonks have worked on creation of "Sustainable Community." So far in Contra Costa County not one of those advanced ideas has been put into practice.

There are stirrings among the idea people which at least give hope for change

Planning—What Hath It Brought

A few weeks ago an article in the news indicated Contra Costa Fire Departments were in some degree of difficulty in trying to meet their obligations. Fire protection for sprawled developments is necessary but not do-able on present budgets. So how did that situation arise? One thought. When MAJOR projects are proposed, all sorts of studies are undertaken. One usually involves the providing of essential services, such as fire protection. Often someone in authority provides a "will-serve" letter indicating the service can be provided to the proposed development. As time passes, new fire stations have to be constructed. Additional personnel and fire equipment have to be purchased.

The individuals who purchased the new residences have NO idea as to how basic services are to be provided, paid for, etc. Reality sets in. There just isn't enough money in the budgets to provide for needed services. Tax increases are tough to carry out. So, the next best thing is to cut the staffing of the fire services, *ergo* saving money. A scenario that probably has a basis in fact.

The flooding taking place throughout the Bay Area is costly. Development has occurred in huge areas. Much needed drainage areas have been covered with

paved roads, buildings, etc. Drainage systems are costly to create, install, and maintain. Thousands of yards of soil have been removed from hills. The proof of the pudding shows when the human-created drainage systems don't work. Floods. Houses slipping and sliding down hills. Hills slipping and sliding down onto houses. All are a result of land use methods presently in vogue.

There are better ways. A few tiny steps toward better land use decisions. Stay tuned.

CALFED

The CALFED program for returning the Delta to its former glory has appeared to be important and valuable. Now, indications bring (menacing) dark clouds, which we have to worry about.

CALFED has proposed funding some 50 projects to the tune of about \$100 million as a result of the first round of funding. According to CALFED, this allocation of funds "makes possible the early implementation of projects that benefit the environment prior to the completion of the complete Bay/Delta solution package."

Congress and the Environment

A new Congressional report demonstrates how House Republicans developed a strategy in 1996 to blunt criticism of their anti-environmental record by passing symbolic environmental measures and avoiding controversial legislation even while the GOP remains hostile to strong environmental policies and refuses to address major issues to protect the environment and taxpayers. If you want more information, ask your Congressional representative for the paper, *The Camouflage Congress: Republicans and the Environment in the First Session of the 105th Congress*.

Favorite Birding Spots of MDAS Members

At the February meeting several MDAS members shared descriptions of their favorite birding spots with their fellow members

In case you missed it, make a note to visit these special places:

- Marshes in the Oakland Airport area—Barbara Vaughn
- Grizzly Island—Carolyn Erdman
- Pt. Lobos & Morro Bay—Mike Tischler
- Her backyard—Pam Keiser
- Alameda Creek (south of Niles Canyon)—Oscar Engstrom
- Pt. Reyes, especially Limantour & Estero Trail—Maury Stern
- Heather Farm Park—Shirley Ellis (Shirley delighted us with her observation of a river otter that obeyed the law and used a crosswalk to cross a Heather Farm road.)

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Field Guide: Jean Richmond
Christmas Count: Jim Edgar, 658-2330
Mailing: Gifford Young, 707 745-4134

President's Notes (continued from page 1)

Hands-On Conservation projects offer a different kind of involvement for adults and possibly for families with energetic school-age children. These activities take place on a weekend and involve physically working together in a group towards a specific goal.

How Can You Become Involved?

I invite MDAS members to:

- Participate in the April 18 Marsh Cleanup.
- Provide your input regarding Heather Farms Park.
- Let us know about other projects you feel we should consider, or other projects you would like to initiate.

Nancy Wenninger is our Hands-On Conservation Chair. Please contact her at 938-7987 for additional information. Be sure to read the *Quail* story about the Julia Cox Freeman marsh.

Golden Trout Natural History Workshops in the Sierras

Located at the 10,000-ft level in the Cottonwood Lakes basin of the southern Sierra Nevada near Mount Whitney, Golden Trout Natural History Workshops proved special educational adventure to individuals and families.

These 6-day workshops have been organized by a nonprofit overseer since 1974 and provide professionally led tours of Sierran natural history. The Golden Trout camp serves as a high-altitude base camp for daily hikes within the Cottonwood Lakes basin and surrounding areas. All meals and shelter are provided.

The 1998 sessions begin June 28. Enrollment is limited. For more information, write to Golden Trout Natural History Workshop, 1230 Friar Lane, Redlands, CA 92373, Attn: Cindi McKernan. Or call 909-798-3060; or visit the website at www.1startists.com/gtc/index.htm

MDAS Acts to Restore Antioch Wetlands

by Nancy Wenninger

On Saturday, April 18, MDAS is sponsoring its second marsh cleanup of the Julia Freeman Cox Wetlands from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. MDAS is a partner with the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the city of Antioch to restore and protect this critical salt marsh habitat in the western Delta. The East Antioch Creek Marsh (also known as the Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands) is about 22 acres of urban wetland located on Wilbur Avenue near the San Joaquin River not far from downtown Antioch.

The marsh has been degraded by contamination from runoff and dumping, invasion of non-native plants and wildlife, and human incursions. Because of its importance to birds and other wildlife, MDAS has decided to take an active role in the restoration and preservation of the marsh.

This type of habitat is among the most productive in the world, important for fish, wildlife, and plants that are dependent on marshes and tidal shallows. Once continuous from San Francisco Bay into the Delta, this kind of saline emergent wetland habitat has been severely reduced and fragmented by land use changes over the past century.

During the summer of 1999, the Flood Control District plans to enlarge the wetland area and improve the tidal flow which flushes the marsh, replacing nutrients and balancing the concentrations of salinity. We are also investigating methods of controlling water hyacinth, currently a serious threat to the health of the marsh. Ultimately, MDAS plans to establish a special-use park on the site with a small, outdoor classroom, interpretative signs, and a trail.

In the interim, our Wetlands Action Committee will watchdog the site, perform species surveys, and begin community education efforts.

We need your help. This is a wonderful way to celebrate Earth Day and teach children about community activism.

To find the marsh, take the A Street/Lone Tree exit from Highway 4, turn left on A St. to Wilbur Ave. Turn right on Wilbur Ave and right on Marie St. to the parking area. The marsh is between Marie and Cavallo Rd.

Please wear clothes and shoes or boots that can get muddy and bring rubber gloves and a hat. We will provide snacks and soft drinks. If you want to participate in this important and interesting activity, call Nancy Wenninger at 938-7987 for more information.

What is a Wetlands Anyway?

Wetlands provide vital nursery grounds for fish and crabs, feeding and sheltering grounds for waterfowl and other wildlife. They also act as power natural filters and traps for sediments, making them vital not only to the estuarine ecosystem but also to water quality.

Wetlands are transitional lands between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water.

Many of the San Francisco Estuary's historic wetlands have been filled in or altered over the years as a result of urban development, agriculture, flood control, and other human activities.

The Decline of Swainson's Hawks

(continued from page 1)

Almost all Swainson's migrate to central Argentina. This species holds the record for the longest migration of any North American hawk—up to 12,000 km. The species has spectacular migrations because they travel in large, often immense, flocks.

Deadly Pesticides

One authority (Ryser, *Birds of the Great Plains*) says that large flocks of these birds in the past pursued clouds of locusts which infested the Argentine pampas. In articles appearing in *International Wildlife*, *National Geographic*, and *Audubon* magazines, Michael Goldstein alerted the world to the alarming events in Argentina where tens of thousands of Swainson's Hawks have disappeared over the last decade because of pesticide use. Argentine farmers use monocrotophos—highly toxic chemical pesticides, banned in Canada and the U.S., to kill grasshoppers feeding on their crops.

After eating grasshoppers poisoned with pesticides, the birds die. Some 5,000 to 20,000 birds were killed in the 1995/1996 agricultural season in Argentina. Largely for this reason, the number of Swainson's Hawks has declined by 90 percent since the 1940's.

Loss of Habitat

But in California where Swainson's Hawk is state-listed as a threatened species, there is an additional problem—loss of habitat. Swainson's Hawks are still common throughout most of the western plains areas, yet in many parts of California, especially southern California where they once were common, they have almost completely disappeared as breeding birds.

As the Swainson's Hawks return each year, they find that their open, grassy habitat has been further reduced by human activity and there are fewer trees for suitable nesting sites.

How to Identify a Swainson's Hawk
In our area most Swainson's are "light morphs" with a pattern in the underwings: the forward part of the wing is light-colored, and the rear part is dark (so-called "flight feathers"). No other hawk in our region shows this pattern. The belly is white, and they have a broad, dark chest band. The wings of Swainson's Hawks are narrower and more pointed than in their nearest look-alikes, Red-tailed Hawks, and Swainson's Hawks are substantially smaller, with the females measuring about 22 inches.

Websites and Reference

For more information on Swainson's Hawks, check out these resources:

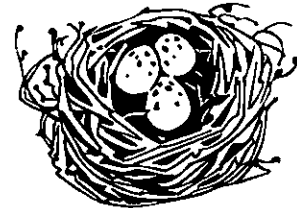
- John Kempler's article on Swainson's Hawks: <http://www.yolo.com/~lrichter/YAS/swainson/html>
- Michael Goldstein: <http://www.clemson.edu/research/news/stories/11896.htm>
- Carl Thelander, ed. *Life on the Edge: A Guide to California's Endangered Natural Resources*, 1994.

Audubon Ecology Camps and Workshops

The Audubon Ecology Workshop series is offered weekly throughout the summer with programs for adults 19 years of age and older; for families; and for youth, ages 10-18. Field studies range from geology and marine life, to birds, mammals, plants, insects, and science research skills. Programs are totally ecologically based and contain a core element of training in citizen activism.

Camps and Workshops are in breathtaking settings: on a wild Maine island, in Minnesota's northwoods, in the shadow of Wyoming's Wind River Mountains, and among the woodlands of Vermont and Connecticut. Cost is \$485-\$795 per week per participant.

Faculty are nationally renowned educators and specialists. College credit is available. For a free catalog, phone 203-869-2017.



Field Trip Reports

Putah Creek, January 10. Light rain didn't deter 18 birders. The highlights included Common Goldeneye, two male Barrow's Godeneye, 14 Wood Ducks, Ring-necked Duck, three Osprey, three flocks of Wild Turkey, a Prairie Falcon, Lewis' Woodpecker, Yellow-Shafted Flicker, Tree Swallow, Rock Wren, and Phainopepla. Songbirds were few due to the rain. Species totaled 74.—*Florence Bennett*

Santa Cruz, January 24. Beautiful, sunny day for eight birders to visit several parks and the butterfly trees. The warm day made the butterflies quite active; the birds were rather quiet. Neary's Lagoon has been "improved" with a re-

sulting decrease in waterfowl. However, we had good looks at the Dusky-capped Flycatcher. Another highlight was a Peregrine Falcon near the San Lorenzo River mouth. Species totaled 43.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Grizzly Island, January 28. Cool and overcast with light drizzle and increasing wind. Mallards and Ruddy Ducks were the most abundant species on the refuge with small numbers of other species, mostly outside the refuge. A Barn Owl and a Bittern were seen briefly. One car had a good view of an adult Merlin after leaving the refuge. Total number of species was 59.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Kern River Field Trip, May 23-25

by Steve Glover

The Kern River area field trip is coming up rapidly so those planning to go should make motel reservations as soon as possible. The trip is **Memorial Day weekend, May 23-25 (Saturday-Monday)**.

There are also some other things to plan for such as heat, heat, and more heat [and mosquitoes—editor]. Our base will be the Lake Isabella area on Highway 178 east of Bakersfield. We will be birding the Kern River preserve, Joshua Tree desert to the south as well as a couple of the famous vagrant traps, some nearby mountain areas, the Kern National Wildlife Refuge, and the Maricopa area (where LeConte's Thrashers are found). I would be surprised if we did not find at least 150 species.

It will likely be quite hot in this area, so be prepared. We will be in pretty remote areas so bring food and water and keep plenty of gas in your car.

Lodging is in Kernville, just north of Lake Isabella, with prices ranging from \$50-100 per night. Be aware that they may ask for 2-night minimum. Lodging listed by AAA is as follows: Barewood Motel (760-376-1910), Kern Lodge Motel (760-376-2223), Kern River Inn B&B (760-376-6750), and the Riverview Lodge (760-376-6019). The closest motel to the Reserve is Lakeview Motel (800-929-8250; the Jamisons are the nice, bird-friendly owners.) The KOA (760-378-2001) in Lake Isabella may turn out to be noisy but does have showers.

This is Memorial Day Weekend, so get your reservations early. With the weekenders and boating buffs coming to Lake Isabella, motels will fill up. Without reservations, you may have to stay in Bakersfield over an hour away. Those interested in going should call me at 510-866-1409. I need to talk to everyone before we go

March 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday, March 7, Tomales Bay State Park. Carpool 7:00 a.m., Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of SR 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at Heart's Desire Beach at Tomales SP. Cross San Rafael Bridge. From US 101, take San Rafael exit, go 2 blocks, turn left onto Sir Frances Drake Blvd. Follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd. through Inverness. Just over the ridge, turn right onto Pierce Point Rd. The park entrance (\$6 entrance fee) is on the right. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 2

Thursday, March 12 (note date change), Hayward Regional Shoreline. Carpool 7:30 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:15 a.m. in front of HRS Visitor's Center. Take I-880 to SR 92 west. From the Clawiter exit, turn on Breakwater to the Visitor's Center. Water and shorebirds. Leader: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732 Category 2

Wednesday, March 18, Sunol Regional Park. (This trip was originally scheduled for January but rescheduled because of rain.) Carpool 7:30 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Or meet 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-80 to Calaveras Rd. Go left under I-80 and drive 4 mi south on Calaveras Rd.; turn left on Geary Rd. and go 2 mi to park. Watch and listen for Turkey along Geary Rd. Golden Eagles, raptors; Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens possible. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Saturday, March 28, Black Diamond Mines Regional Park. Carpool 7:30 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., north of Hwy. 24. Or meet at 8:15 a.m. in the park. Go east on Ygnacio Valley and Kirker Pass Roads to Railroad Ave. in Pittsburg. Take Railroad Ave. to Hwy. 4. Go east on Hwy. 4 to the Somersville Rd. exit and turn right on Somersville. Park in first parking lot. Woodland, chaparral, and some grassland birds. Leader: Anne Brandon, 754-9260 Category 3

Wednesday, April 1 (note date change), Briones Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at north entrance. Take Briones Road off Alhambra Valley Road. Wildflowers, spring birds. Poison oak along shaded trails. Leaders: Betty Smith and Bessie Smyth, 228-6033 Category 2

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.

Observations

by Steve Glover

A **Red-throated Loon** was at Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island on 2/9, a place where it has been curiously regular in recent years (SG). Even more unusual was a **Pacific Loon** at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 2/9, providing only the fifth record for East County (SG). Five more **Pacific Loons** around Brooks Island on 1/31 may be a new county high count (SG). Seventy **Horned Grebes** were around Brooks Island and in the Richmond Marina on 1/31 (SG). The presence of any or all of the above birds may be storm related.

Nine **American White Pelicans** were at Clifton Court Forebay on 1/21 with eight remaining there on 1/31. As usual, they were around the intake at the southeast corner (SG). Eight **Great Blue Herons** were at Marsh Creek Reservoir on 2/9, two of them building nests (SG). Twelve **Cattle Egret** were along Delta Rd. near Knightsen on 1/21, and 72 were on Cypress Rd. just south of Bethel Island on 2/9 (SG). The previous high for the county was just 30. Fourteen **White-faced Ibis** were over Webb Tract on 2/9 (SG). This species is increasing steadily in the Central Valley. There were only two county records before the winter of 1994-95, but there have been at least 15 since.

A blue-phase **Snow Goose**, just the third for the county, was amongst 900 Snow and **Ross' Geese** at Holland Tract on 2/9 (SG). The first county record of the eurasian race of **Green-winged Teal**, reported in the February *Quail*, was first seen 1/8 (GF). A male **Blue-winged Teal** and a male **Eurasian Wigeon** were also present that day (GF). There were 16 **Ring-necked Ducks** at the Boundary Oaks Golf Course in Walnut Creek on 1/8 (FB). Three adult male **Surf Scoters** were most unusual at Clifton Court Forebay on 1/21 (SG). There are only three

previous records of single birds in East County, one from late October and two from mid-December. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at Pt. Isabel near Richmond on 1/31 (SG). One male **Red-breasted Merganser** continued at Piper Slough through at least 2/9 (SG).

An **Osprey** that has been seen in the Concord/Martinez area since the Christmas Count was at the Mt. View Sanitary District on 1/8 (GF) and at the intersection of I-680/24 on 1/30 (JE). An adult **Bald Eagle** was at Lafayette Reservoir on 12/21 and 1/11 (MS). Another adult was reported on 12/21 at San Pablo Res. A **Peregrine Falcon** was along Byron Hwy. near Discovery Bay on 1/31 (SG).

A correction from last month's issue: 9 Clapper, not Black, Rails were at Arrowhead Marsh on 1/1 (FB, MJC) Twenty-four **Mountain Plovers** were in Panoche Valley, San Benito Co., on 1/27 (GF, MP). Six **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at the end of Jersey Island Rd. on 2/9 (SG). Three **Surfbirds**, always rare in the bay, were at Pt. Emery near Emeryville, Alameda Co. on 2/8 (MF). A first-year **Glaucous Gull** was at the Fremont Lagoons in southern Alameda Co. on 1/23 (NL).

A **Cassin's Auklet**, possibly just the third for Alameda Co., was at Hayward Reg. Shoreline on 1/5 (BR). The previous two were in May and August. Three **Burrowing Owls**, declining rapidly in the area,

were along Kelso Rd. in eastern Alameda Co. on 1/6 (FB, MJC, BG). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Holland Tract, East County, on 1/6 (FB, MJC, BG).

A female **Allen's Hummingbird** was already building a nest at Pt. Pinole Reg. Shore. on 1/28! (SG). The **Tropical Kingbird** at Hayward Reg. Shore, first found 12/21, was seen again on 1/27 (BR). An immature **Northern Shrike**, a very long overdue county first, was at the west entrance to Briones Reg. Park on 1/17 (KB) It has not been seen again since. The adult male **American Redstart** at Pt. Pinole Reg. Shore., first found in November, was still present on 1/28 (SG). Two **Lark Buntings** were in Panoche Valley, San Benito Co., on 1/27 (GF, MP-RBA). A **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow**, the first for Hayward Reg. Shore., was found during very high tides on 1/12 (BR). This secretive species remains unrecorded in CCC. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** is elusive in the county, but a flock remained at Holland Tract to at least 1/31 when 40 were noted. It was felt that at least 100 were present (SG). **Pine Siskin** is almost unknown in East Count so the four present since Christmas to at least 1/15 in residential Brentwood was noteworthy (KH).

Observers: Florence Bennett, Ken Burton, Mary Jane Culver, Jimm Edgar, Mike Feigner, George Finger, Steve Glover, Kelly Hazen, Nick Lethaby, Marjorie Plant, Bob Richmond, Maury Stern.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Tales from the Backyard

The rain finally stopped. Towhees begin hopping around picking up millet. The first Junco comes out of the abelia and goes to the ground feeding tray. Ten of its cousins soon follow.

"Swee, swee, swee" go the American Goldfinches, joined by Lesser Goldfinches, as they drop down to the thistle feeders. They keep coming and coming. Over 70 have arrived. Ten House Finches go to the sunflower chip feeders. Ten to fifteen White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows are competing with the Juncos and Towhees for millet. A Lark Sparrow joins them.

Whoosh! Everybody takes off like an explosion. A large Cooper's Hawk (female?) is sitting "empty-handed" above a feeder, wondering why everyone left. With a frustrated cry, she leaves.

The suet feeders are getting a lot of activity today. With the very cold nights, birds burn up lots of calories trying to stay warm, and suet is a high-energy food source. The Bewick's Wren darts in for a mouthful. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet comes for suet every hour. Even the Juncos are coming to the suet feeders!!

Whoosh! Missed again! All day Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Nuttall's Woodpecker, and an Oak Titmice dart in for suet and peanuts. A male Anna's Hummingbird chases off a female and goes to the hummingbird feeder. He'll probably be mating with her soon if he hasn't already.

Whoosh! Missed again! It's the end of the day. Everybody is here, getting a last feeding before night. I guess the Cooper's given up (for now).

—Mike Williams

Annual Birdathon Set for April 25

by Joel Summerhill

Okay, Birdathoners and wanna-be's, mark your calendar for Saturday, April 25, the 1998 MDAS BIRDATHON DAY. This year our goal for the Birdathon is to raise \$3000 for the chapter and Audubon-California.

April 25 should be a challenging day with our sunny skies back and a host of birds migrating through the county. We will have a marathon of birding from dawn until dusk for those hardy souls so inclined to join a team and participate for fame and glory—and prizes too!

Why does a Chapter that is on good financial footing like ours need to raise \$3000? Half of the funds raised will support the conservation and education activities of Audubon-California.

In addition, with the funds that we retain in the chapter, we will support our own greatly expanded conservation efforts:

- MDAS is a partner in restoring the Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands. Our long-range goal is to create an outdoor teaching facility for "hands-on" conservation experience.
- We are developing a Breeding Bird Atlas for Contra Costa County.
- MDAS is a participant in the development of the Delta Science Center at Big Break near the city of Oakley in East County.
- MDAS will be working with Heather Farms to restore habitat for birds.

Join a Birdathon team and experience the fun yourself. But even if you don't choose to spend the day birding, there are many ways in which you can participate.

- Sponsor a Birdathoner or a Birdathon team. Individual Birdathoners can be sponsored for a \$25 pledge; teams for \$250.
- Solicit pledges from family, friends, or your employer. A 10¢-per-species pledge would amount to about \$15.
- Donate prizes for the team members raising the most money.

- Make out a gift check to MDAS and mark it Birdathon. All contributions are tax deductible.

Contact me at (510) 753-0862 to sign up for a Birdathon team, or to discuss how you can contribute. Come to the March meeting to learn more details and pick up pledge cards (or use the one enclosed.) The April *Quail* will have more ideas on how you can support the 1998 MDAS Birdathon.

1998 National Birdathon Sets \$1 Million Goal

The National Audubon Society announced the commencement of Birdathon '98, the world's largest competitive birdwatching event. Each year, Audubon coordinates Birdathon as an unique way to celebrate the importance of migratory birds while raising funds for Audubon's conservation programs. This year's goal is to raise a \$1 million nationally. Over 100,000 individual sponsors and 30,000 volunteers are expected to participate in over 300 communities throughout North America.

In Birdathons, Audubon members and friends use their birding skills to raise much needed funds for Audubon's sanctuaries, environmental research, education, habitat rehabilitation, and activist programs. Previous Birdathons have financed the establishment of an Atlantic Puffin sanctuary in Maine and the restoration of California's Condor population.

Birdathon participants meet in groups and scan the skies to identify as many bird species as possible within a one-day period.

Like a walk-a-thon, Birdathoners solicit pledges from sponsors who agree to contribute a certain amount of money for each species seen in a 24-hour period. Pledges range from 10 cents to \$10 or more for each species spotted.

CALENDAR

March 5, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (See map to the right.)

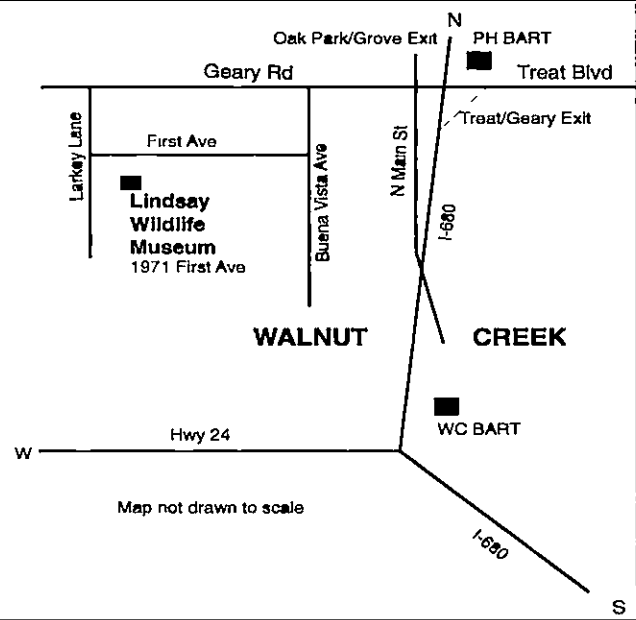
March 12, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH

March 20, Fri., 9:30 a.m.—Quail Mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH (Volunteers prepare *Quail* issue for mailing.)

April 4-7, Sat.-Tues.—Western Regional Audubon Conference. Asilomar, Monterey

April 18, Sat, 10 a.m.-1 p m —East Antioch Creek cleanup, Wilbur Ave. between Marie St. and Cavallo Rd

April 25, Sat.—MDAS Birdathon.



The *Quail* is published monthly except for the combined July/August issue. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine. To join, write a check (\$20/year individual, \$30 family, introductory and senior rates available) to National Audubon Society but send it, with letter or subscription card, to the Membership Chairman, Mike Williams, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. The Chapter benefits financially from the membership applications it processes. Full Audubon membership is encouraged, but subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer.

ADDRESS CHANGES AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION. Mike Williams, Membership Chair, (510) 376-1631

Gloria Cannon, Editor, P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565. (510) 753-0862, email: gcannon@hotcoco infi.net
Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

April 1998

Vol. 44, No. 8

Next Deadline: April 2

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

The Importance of Our Bird-A-Thon

On April 25, MDAS is hosting our most important fundraising event, the annual Bird-A-Thon. What is a bird-a-thon? It's individuals and teams that bird on a designated day, attempting to see as many species of birds as possible in that one day. Like a walk-a-thon, birders or teams of birders obtain sponsors who pledge funds to support that individual or team.

This year Joel Summerhill is our Chapter's Chair for this event. He needs the support of Chapter members to make this event a success. We have set a fundraising goal of \$3,000, and member involvement goal of 20% (about 300 people). To date, we have pledges for \$1,100 and about 20 members involved. (Wouldn't it be great to exceed our goals?)

The Bird-A-Thon, aside from being a day of fun for lots of people, is also important as a fundraising activity. This year, the MDAS is setting aside 50% of the proceeds from the Bird-A-Thon to support our local conservation programs, such as our plans to restore the Julia Cox Freeman (East Antioch Creek) marsh to provide habitat for birds and other wildlife and outdoor educational facilities (trails and observation decks, information kiosk, and an outdoor classroom).

(continued on page 3)

Upcoming Events:

Concord Naval Weapons Station: Our Environmental Treasure

At the April 3 MDAS general meeting, John Keibel will take us within the protected and scenic tidal and inland areas of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, one of the areas MDAS is proposing for an Important Bird Area.

His slide presentation will treat us to a broad sampling of the beautiful flora and fauna at the Station, which is generally off limits to the public. Since it was established over 50 years ago, the Naval Weapons Station has preserved a special and significant piece of our country's regional and natural history. Its plant and animal life have been and continue to be a protected time capsule.

John's presentation will also provide an opportunity to consider thought-provok-

ing questions regarding stewardship of the environment. This program will foster a new awareness and appreciation for our local environment, especially that of the Naval Weapons Station.

John Keibel is currently involved with several other documentary photographic projects, including *Take Too*, a comparative photography history of Contra Costa County.

Bird Visitors at April Meeting

The Lindsay Wildlife Museum will provide the 7 p.m. Birding Information portion of the April program. The museum's Avian Activity Team will introduce us to two characters and long-term residents: a Loggerhead Shrike and an Acorn Woodpecker.

Volunteers Needed for April 18 Marsh Cleanup

Grab your rubber boots and rubber gloves. Put on your work clothes and join fellow Chapter members, local residents, and other volunteers in the second annual cleanup session at the Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands on Saturday, April 18, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The East Antioch Creek Marsh (also known as the Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands) is about 22 acres of urban wetland located on Wilbur Avenue near the San Joaquin River not far from downtown

Antioch. MDAS is a partner with the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the city of Antioch to restore and protect this critical salt marsh habitat in the western Delta.

To reach the marsh, take the Avenue A exit from Highway 4, turn left on Avenue A to Wilbur Ave. Turn right on Wilbur Ave. and right on Marie St. to the parking (Marsh Cleanup continued on page 6)

Conservation Notes

by Al McNabney

[Editor's note: Al McNabney is taking a hiatus from writing "Conservation Notes." In his much-missed absence, we are re-printing a few of his classic essays. The one below was originally published in the January 1989 *Quail*. Have things changed for the better in the past 10 years? You decide.]

John Muir—What would he think?

MDAS members had a treat at the November [1988] meeting when John Davis walked those present through Yosemite and the surrounding Sierras with John Muir. Contemplation of Muir's ideas, ideals, and accomplishments soon brings to mind a comparison between his views and what this generation is accomplishing (?) in the way of maintenance of natural beauties. I'm afraid John Muir would be most distressed were he to look at our land today.

California, with its long heritage of productivity, the beauty of the State and its great diversities of bird, plant and wildlife, is rapidly becoming saturated with concrete, freeways, business parks and (sometimes) ticky-tacky housing projects. All in the name of progress, of course. Yosemite, like many of our National Parks, is (at times) overcrowded and over-used. Authorities talk of limiting public access. Wetlands are mostly gone, the remainder under serious attack from development projects of one sort or another. Our national forests are being clearcut at a disgraceful rate, with the trees being sold off at bargain-basement rates. The devastation left following a clearcut program is great. Thoughtful folks, looking to the future, attempt to encompass parts of our deserts into national parks. Opposition is fierce. It comes not from people who care or worry about the planet on which we live but from individuals (and groups) interested only in use of the wilderness for the pleasure of driving an RV or mo-

torcycle through it. We complain about Brazil permitting the hewing and axing of rainforests. At the same time, so-called developed nations are permitting elimination of thousands of acres of old-growth timber. John Muir would probably start a crusade. I'm certain he would at least be outspoken in opposition to things we are permitting these days. One could say, quietly, "Oh, where, oh where is OUR John Muir?"

The Greenhouse Effect

A leading scientist who has studied the Greenhouse Effect, giving a description of what's happening, said, "When I bought my home in the Berkeley Hills, I didn't realize I was buying beach front property." Exaggerated? Maybe, unless his property is in the lower hills.

According to ALL of the scientists I've heard speak on the subject, our atmosphere has already been heated and the effects attributable to that heat are to be felt, without question. All of the scientists assert what we do in the next two or three years will determine to some extent how devastating the combined Greenhouse Effects are likely to be.

If we act to curb the uses of fossil fuels, reduce the destruction of the world's forests, we "may" be able to get through initial phases without serious trauma and devastation. If we putter around, as our nation has been doing for eight years with the acid rain problems, the Greenhouse Effects can be devastating to whole areas of the earth.

California is particularly vulnerable because of the diversity of climate, terrain, wildlife, and farmable lands. Our park and wildlife protection system may be in serious jeopardy. Think of the parks as islands in which birds and wildlife live.

As the Greenhouse Effect moves forward, rainfall amounts are likely to be distinctly different.

If an area is today considered to be climatically temperate and it becomes essentially arid, what happens to the wildlife trapped in the park? In centuries past, wildlife could sometimes move with the climate. Some of the wildlife couldn't move and as time passed, it became extinct. Here in California we have extensive water systems, dams, canals, lakes and the like. If, instead of heavy winter snows in the Sierras, we find more rain, and we have snow only at VERY high elevations, we'll have problems. Are we ready to accept severe limitation (through taxes, fees, etc.) on the use of OUR cars? If we are to attack the Greenhouse problems head-on, that's but one of the areas we'll have to review.

[Read Al's assessment of the impact of development in the May *Quail*.]

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY
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WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA
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753-0862
Hands-On Conservation: Nancy Wenninger,
938-7987
Field Guide: Jean Richmond
Christmas Count: Jim Edgar, 658-2330
Mailing: Gifford Young, 707 745-4134

President's Notes (continued from page 1)

The other half of the proceeds will go to support the work of Audubon-California, our state organization.

How Can You Get Involved?

You can be involved in this event in any of a number of ways:

- Join one of the Bird-A-Thon teams or form your own team of friends and family members. Contact Joel (753-0862) for ideas on how to organize your team.
- Pledge what you can on the pledge form in this newsletter and mail it in. Give at a level appropriate for you.
- Make your pledge and ask your company about matching contributions. Alternatively, you could provide the name of the public affairs coordinator in your company to Joel Summerhill, and we will ask for the matching contributions.
- Do a Backyard Birdathon. Challenge your friends and neighbors to pledge based on number of species in their own yards during an agreed-upon time period.
- Do an Independent Birdathon. Challenge yourself to see as many species as possible and ask friends to pledge.

If you have other ideas about how to support this important activity, please phone Joel.

Conservation is important to all of us who love birds. No habitat, no birds. The birds of Contra Costa County and those birds migrating through California will be the better for your support.



**Let's Do It
for
the Birds!**

How to Make a Successful Birdathon

To make 1998 the most successful MDAS Birdathon ever, just follow the recipe below:

First, make your own personal pledge using the enclosed pledge sheet. Fill in your own pledge per species. Yes, it costs money; but if every MDAS member gave only \$2, we'd make our \$3,000 goal. Plus, you'll feel more at ease approaching prospective sponsors by asking them to do as you do. Pledge what you feel comfortable with.

Second, consider your own personal sponsors: spouse and children, aunts and uncles, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Consider your workplace, clients, or co-workers, your bosses, friends, and neighbors. Show them the pledge sheet—there's an explanation of the Birdathon and why it is a worthwhile cause. If you're too shy to ask, write them a letter and send them a copy of the pledge sheet. Joel can provide sample letters.

Third, ask for pledges per species or straight donations. Always give sponsors an idea of what pledges will cost them and allow them to put a top limit. Even \$5-10 donations add up. Supporting MDAS is a

good cause, and all donations are tax deductible.

Fourth, reach out into the community. Maybe you are a member of another organization and you can approach those members for pledges. Ask your doctor, your dentist, your landlord—you may be surprised about how receptive they are. If one of them offers merchandise, take it. We can add it to our prizes. Remember it's tax deductible for the donor.

Fifth, ask with a smile. Let everyone know about the Birdathon. When they ask about the unusual name, tell them the Birdathon story and ask for a pledge.

Sixth, when the Birdathon is over, collect those pledges with a smile. You're a winner, and you're helping MDAS restore valuable habitat. To be eligible for prizes, you must turn in your pledge sheets and collected donations by 6 p.m., May 25, or the envelope must be postmarked by May 25. Mail to Joel Summerhill in care of the MDAS address. Make checks payable to MDAS; write "Birdathon" in the memo field of checks. Got Birdathon questions? Call Joel Summerhill at 753-0862.

You Can Be a Prize Winner!

This year MDAS is offering prizes to top fundraisers in various categories, and you do not have to be an MDAS member to win. Here are a few!

Grand Prize to the individual raising the most money—

One night at the beautiful **Point Reyes Seashore Lodge** in Olema just minutes from the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, including a complimentary continental breakfast for two. (Subject to availability; reservations required.)

Individual raising the most money over \$30 in Backyard Birdathon—

A cedar-and-glass bird feeder

Team with the highest species count—

5 lb of sunflower seeds for each team member

Prize sponsors: Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
Wild Birds Unlimited
Walmart
Gloria Cannon and Joel Summerhill

Kern River Preserve Saves California's Past

MDAS members and guests have the opportunity to visit and bird at one of California's special places—Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve over Memorial Day weekend, May 23-25.

Northeast of Bakersfield where the Sierras descend to foothills, the Kern River cascades out of the mountains and forms Lake Isabella. The Kern River Preserve lies near the southeastern finger of the lake. Purchased in 1981 by The Nature Conservancy, the KRP had been the A. Brown Ranch since the mid-1800s. Since 1986, local citizens and volunteers have joined KRP staff to replant native vegetation. Today it is the largest contiguous cottonwood-willow riparian forest in California and was one of the first ten Important Bird Areas designated in the U.S. In February 1997, Audubon-California was chosen to manage the Preserve.

The river forests of Fremont's Cottonwood and Willows on the Preserve create

a very special place. The riparian forest there is one-quarter of all that is left in California. It provides habitat for the only significant nesting populations of Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Summer Tanager in California. It has one of the largest populations of the Federally Endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. Alkali Mariposa Lilies raise lavender banner above the marshes, and Western Pond Turtles nest on the banks of the ponds. The Preserve is nature's museum of how much of the Great Central Valley once looked.

The Kern River Preserve is also unique because of the bioregions that meet here. A bioregion is a habitat where certain types of soils, climate, plants, and animals form a unique system. There are six bioregions in California, and five of them are found in the Kern River Valley. Nowhere else north of Mexico do five bioregions converge to create such ecological diversity. Just by driving and hiking in the area, visitors can see the Great Basin Desert, Mojave Desert, Great

Valley Grassland, Coastal Chaparral, and Sierran Forest bioregions—a mini-tour of California.

Terri Gallion, the KRP volunteer who wrote the paragraphs above, concludes: "As I've worked and learned [on the Preserve], I've come to see it as a very much more than a just a piece of land. The Kern River Preserve is a stronghold against the storm of a world gone crazy with greed and need. It is a unique place that gives us a chance to go back and see some of what we have lost. It challenges us to go forward to preserve and restore the precious parts that remain. It is a richly beautiful and charming place I have come to know and love."

To see this special place for yourself, join Steve Glover on the first MDAS field trip there. For more information, see the March *Quail* and call Steve at 866-1409.

April Birding Events and Festivals

National Audubon Society's 1998 Western Regional Conference

NAS is holding its Western Regional Conference at Asilomar, Monterey, April 4-7. The Conference theme is "Adventures in Bird Conservation: A Century of Audubon Accomplishments," and a special retrospective of Audubon's accomplishments during this century will be featured. There will be informative sessions and workshops, field trips, and special speakers, like wildlife artist Robert Bateman. For more detailed information, contact Audubon-California, (916) 481-5332. There's still time to make reservations.

Point Reyes Bird Walk

On Sunday, April 7, at 10 a.m., biologists from the Point Reyes Bird Observatory will lead a bird walk at the Bolinas Lagoon. The Observatory requests a \$5/person donation. Call 868-1221, ext. 40

for further details, times, and location.

Clear Lake Celebrates Heron Days

The fourth annual Heron Days Celebration will be held at the Anderson Marsh State Park near Clear Lake, Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19. The celebration features pontoon boat rides in Anderson Marsh as well as nature walks, slide presentations, and children's activities. Call the Lake County Visitor Information Center at 1-800-525-3743 to make reservations for the boat rides (\$10/person). Trips leave at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m. For more information about the celebration, call Roberta Lyons, Redbud Audubon Society president, at 707-994-2024.

Nature Classes at Elkhorn Slough

Two nature classes are offered at Elkhorn Slough. "Photography Class by Boat" is scheduled for Saturday morning, April

18, for \$38. The instructor is professional photographer Frank Baithis. "Shorebird Class by Boat" is scheduled for Saturday mornings, April 4, April 25, and May 16 for \$35/class. The instructors, Rod Norden and Jennifer Green, each have 25 years of birding experience. Call 408-633-5555 to register.

Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival

The third annual Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival, April 24-26, will coincide with the arrival of thousands of migrating shorebirds, creating the largest congregation of shorebirds south of Alaska. For information or a brochure, contact Grays Harbor Audubon, P.O. Box 444, Montesano, WA 98563, or call GHAS at 800-303-8498, or on the web at <http://www.wln.com/dschwick>.

April 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, April 1, Briones Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at north entrance. Take Briones Road off Alhambra Valley Road. Wildflowers, spring birds. Poison oak along shaded trails. Leaders: Betty Smith and Bessie Smyth, 228-6033 Category 2

Saturday, April 4, Garin Regional Park. Carpool 7:15 a.m. at 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 parking lot at end of Garin Rd., 8:00 a.m. Take I-680 south and I-580 west. Exit on East Castro Valley Blvd and continue west. Turn left onto Crow Canyon Rd. and go under freeway. Crow Canyon Rd becomes Grove Way and then A St. At A St and SR238 (Foothill Blvd), turn left. Foothill Blvd/SR 238 becomes Mission Blvd. Go south about 3 mi to Garin Rd., turn left, and follow to end. Grasshopper Sparrow is one possibility. Leader: Fred Safir, 937-2906 Category 3

Thursday, April 9, Lake Lagunitas. Carpool 7:15 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet 8:30 a.m. in parking lot at lake (entrance fee). Cross San Rafael Bridge north to US 101, take San Rafael exit two blocks, turn left and go through town. Turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. In downtown Fairfax, turn left and then right

onto Broadway, 1/2 block; turn left onto Bolinas Ave., and left again onto Old Fairfax-Bolinas Rd. Watch for signs for park entrance. Both land and water birds, spring migrants. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Saturday, April 18, San Mateo Coast. Carpool 7:15 a.m., at 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 at 9:00 a.m. in beach parking lot off SR 1 opposite Pescadero Road. Cross the San Mateo Bridge, continue west on SR 92 to Half Moon Bay, go left on SR 1 for 15 miles to Pescadero Rd., turn right into parking lot. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 2

Wednesday, April 23, Ida Clayton Road. Carpool 7:00 a.m. at the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. This area is north of Calistoga in the Napa County mountains. This is a car birding trip with no meeting place in Napa County. The carpooling is needed due to limited parking on some roads. Leader: John Jordan, 680-7490 Category 1

Thursday, April 30, Del Puerto Canyon. Carpool at 7:45 a.m. in the shopping center at the southwest corner of Crow Canyon Road West and San Ramon Blvd., near Garcia's Restaurant.

Meet west of I-5 at 9:00 a.m. at Patterson Exit of I-5 (59 mi. from El Cerro). Yellow-breasted Chat, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, spring warblers. For more information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Field Trip Reports

Thornton, February 12. Sandhill Cranes were the target bird for this field trip to the Delta. Although the day began and ended with steady rain, one birder showed up, and we decided to go since we would be looking from the car most of the time. We traveled the route that the chapter has historically used and saw hundreds of Sandhill Cranes. They were mostly in groups of 5-20, and we were able to stop the car at times only 100 feet or so from these magnificent animals. A few land birds, some waterfowl, and six species of raptors rounded out the 41 species seen. A Prairie Falcon seen diving on birds was a highlight along with the cranes. If you have not taken a drive out to see these birds, it is a must-do.—*Jimm Edgar*

Berkeley Shoreline, February 25. The typical target birds for this area are Redheads, but we missed them. Instead we were treated to Surf, White-winged, and Black Scoters at Point Emery. (All the Scoters species in the world in a flock of only about 25!) We had good luck with raptors, too, seeing an adult male Northern Harrier cruise over the trees at the tip of the Emeryville Harbor, close views of Cooper's Hawk in the base of the trees next to Charlie Brown's Restaurant, and a Merlin on top of the Holiday Inn. Our best luck was that we got to finish our picnic lunch before the rains hit. Seven birders encountered 63 bird species.

—*Denise Wight*

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.

Observations

by Steve Glover

Another inland **Red-necked Grebe** made an appearance this month, this time at Shell Marsh on 2/15 (DW). This was the first for this location. The group of **American White Pelicans** at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron reached 17 on 2/24 (SG). They are virtually always noted along the south side near the intake, which, not coincidentally, is also where the best fishing is.

The **Great Blue Heron** rookery at Eucalyptus Island on the south side of Clifton Court Forebay was in full operation on 2/24 with at least 33 active nests (SG).

The flock of 72 Cattle Egret near Bethel Island, first noted on 2/9, still numbered 67 on 2/11 (FB, MJC, BG), 70 on 2/13 (GF), 56 on 2/14 (MF), and 35 on 2/28 (SG). A lone **Cattle Egret** was at Ironhouse Sanitary District on 2/14 (DW).

3,000 +/- **Snow/Ross' Geese** were at Holland Tract on 2/28 (SG). Four **Blue-winged Teal**, three of them males, were near Pt. Edith in northern Contra Costa on 2/15 (DW). Single, adult male **Tufted Ducks** were noted at Las Gallinas Sewage Ponds near Novato on 2/14 (FB, MJC-RBA) and at Bolinas Lagoon on 2/20 (GF-rba).

Two **Oldsquaws** were at Brooks Island near Richmond on 3/3 (BR). Five Oldsquaw were at the Port Sonoma Marina on the Petaluma River, Sonoma County, on 1/31 (FB, MJC).

Eight **Black Scoters** were at Pt. Emery at Emeryville, Alameda County, on 2/16 (KS); five were still present on 2/29 (PG). A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was on a pond along the entrance road to Clifton Court Forebay on 2/9 (BG, FB, MJC). One

female **Red-breasted Merganser** remained at CCF on 2/24 while a pair remained at Piper Slough on 2/28 (SG).

A good year for **Rough-legged Hawk** continued with a female at Jersey Island on 2/13 and 2/18 (GF) and an immature on 2/28 at Holland Tract (SG). The **Peregrine Falcon** was again sighted at Pt. Isabel near Richmond on 2/16 (SG, JM).

Sandhill Crane has been reliable at Holland Tract all winter, reaching a sudden, dramatic peak of 172 on 2/20 (SG, RL). There were still 48 there on 2/28 (SG).

Black Oystercatchers were found at the Richmond Marina with two on 2/16 (SG, JM) and two on 2/28 (SG). **Lesser Yellowlegs** continued at the end of Jersey Island Road with three on 2/11 (FB, MJC, BG), 7 on 2/18 (GF) and at least 12 on 2/28 (SG).

Surfbirds are rare in the East Bay in winter, but this year they have been reliable on the breakwater at Pt. Emery, Emeryville, including three on 2/16 (KS) and one on both 2/29 (PG) and 3/1 (LF).

The area around the Fremont Lagoons in sw Alameda County is one of the best places around to study the large gulls with **Glaucous Gulls** being regular. This winter at least five separate individuals have been studied there, including one second winter and one adult. At least three Glaucous x Herring Gulls were noted there on 2/16, as if gulls aren't confusing enough already (NL). An adult Glaucous Gull was on Hwy. 113 in Solano County on 2/24 (GF-rba). A

Common Murre, rare in the East Bay in winter, was at the east end of the Dumbarton Bridge on 2/22 (NL). It had a

band on the left leg.

Late February and early March are traditionally slow for interesting landbirds, and this winter is no exception. The lone report of interest was a male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at the north end of Jersey Island on 2/13 (BD).

Observers: Florence Bennett, Mary Jane Culver, Bob Dunn, Mike Feigner, George Finger, Lillian Fujii, Betty Gallagher, Steve Glover, Peter Grace, Nick Lethaby, Ron Lindeman, Jennifer Matkin, Bob Richmond, Kirk Swenson, Denise Wight.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Marsh Cleanup (continued from page 1)

area. MDAS will provide snacks and soft drinks.

Marshes, rivers, seasonal wetlands, like the East Antioch Marsh, provide an important habitat for birds and wildlife in the Bay Area. Together they create the ecosystem of San Francisco Bay. Two hundred years ago, there were 200,000 acres of tidal wetlands surrounding the Bay. Today only 35,000 acres remain. Saving and preserving the East Antioch Marsh is one way MDAS is working to reverse this trend. If you want to participate in this important and interesting activity, call Nancy Wenninger at 938-7987 for more information.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Spring nesting time comes early in California. Some of our early "cavity" nesters have already started establishing housing. Others will be soon. As natural habitats continue to disappear, nesting boxes not only provide cavity-nesting birds with needed nest sites, but they also give you an opportunity to learn more about their fascinating courtship and family life. You can play a part in nest building by providing colorful string, yarn, hair, and fibers (no longer than 3 inches) for birds to use when building their abodes.

Chickadees, wrens, titmice, and nuthatches prefer a smaller house with a 1 1/8–1 1/4-inch hole size. The house should be mounted 6–10 feet up in a tree or foliage at least 15 feet from feeders. These birds may have more than one brood each year.

Bluebirds, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and swallows are larger birds and need bigger houses with larger hole sizes (1 1/2–1 9/16 inches). To attract Western Bluebirds, you need to live very near open space or

grasslands. (Stop by Wild Birds Unlimited and pick up your FREE copy of our Housing Guide.)

Each species has different and interesting facets to their nesting behavior. Watch for the male bluebird to feed the female and sing sweet warbled notes as he raises a quivering wing to further entice her. The male House Wren will work hard making two or three nests to attract a female. As part of courtship, he takes the female to each site to choose her favorite nest.

- It's time to put out your oriole feeders. Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles arrive by April and they readily come to a nectar feeder.
- Black-headed Grosbeaks will be arriving soon. Their favorite food is sunflower seeds.

Denise Wight's bird classes start soon

- Beginning—Tuesday, April 7, 7-9 p.m.
- Continuing—Wednesday, April 8, 7-9 p.m.

Each costs \$40 and includes five evening classes and a Saturday birdwalk.

Birding in Kenya with GGA

Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring a safari to Kenya September 23–October 6. Similar trips have produced sightings of wildebeest, zebra, lions, leopards, black rhinos, Lesser Flamingo, Gray-crowned Crane, Lilac-breasted Roller, Malachite Kingfisher, along with hornbills, bee-eaters, and sun-birds—more than 300 species. There is also a pre-tour extension to Tanzania and a post-tour to western Kenya for more birdwatching. For more information, call Alan Hopkins at (415) 664-0983.

Costa Rica Nature Classes

The Tropical Science Center at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve in Costa Rica is offering an "Introduction to Field Ornithology" course, April 27-May 9, and from August 3-15. Another class, "Tropical Dendrology [study of trees] in Costa Rica," is offered from June 22-July 4. Taught in English by experienced instructors, the classes (including meals and lodging) cost \$1,900 and \$1,800 respectively. Call Joel Summerhill for a copy of the brochure or see the Center's webpage at <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/9148>

Records for Bluebird Fledglings Soar in 1997

In its 1997 Annual Report, the California Bluebird Recovery Program reported that total cavity-nesting birds rose from 5077 to 8393. Out of that total, 5404 were Western and Mountain Bluebirds. CBRP members reported on more than 3600 nest boxes by the end of 1997

The CBRP is an impressive example of grassroots conservation as participants spread the word to friends and neighbors about the need to install and monitor nest boxes for cavity nesters. Last year CBRP Program Chair Don Yoder traveled over 2000 miles to give 15 programs around California.

Such efforts are paying off. In 1997 El Dorado had 183 reports from monitors—more than the statewide total in 1996. Contra Costa County showed a great increase from 4 reports to 35. Warren Engstrom reported 214 fledglings from the nest boxes he monitors; Don Yoder 205; and Oscar Enstrom 125.

While bluebirds show signs of resurgence, other cavity nesters are declining. Over the past 29 years, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, populations of American Kestrel have declined 44%, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Bewick's Wren 49%, and Common Barn Owls 78%.

You can help. Membership in CBRP is \$5 a year (includes the newsletter). Make checks payable to "MDAS—Bluebirds" and mail to Don Yoder, 2021 Ptarmigan Dr. #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. Donations in any amount are tax-deductible.

Bluebirders to Hold Canada Conference June 25-28

Regina, Saskatchewan, is the site of the 1998 North American Bluebird Society's 21st annual meeting on June 25-28. The Canadian hosts promise an educational and scenic vacation trip to attendees. For more information and registration materials, contact NABS, P.O. Box 74, Darlington, WI 53530.

CALENDAR

April 2, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right).

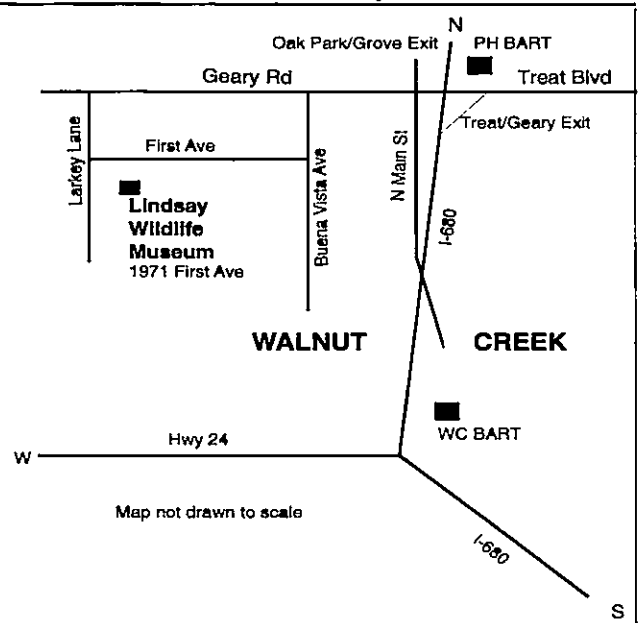
April 4-7, Sat.-Tues.—Western Regional Audubon Conference, Asilomar, Monterey.

April 9, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH. All members are welcome to attend.

April 17, Fri., 9:30 a.m.—*Quail* mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH (Volunteers prepare *Quail* issue for mailing.)

April 18, Sat., 10 a.m-1—Clean up East Antioch Marsh (see p. 1 for directions).

April 25, Sat.—MDAS Birdathon.

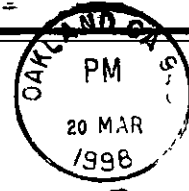


The *Quail* is published monthly except for the combined July/August issue. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine. To join, write a check (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available) to National Audubon Society but send it, with letter or subscription card, to the Membership Chairman, Mike Williams, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. The Chapter benefits financially from the membership applications it processes. Full Audubon membership is encouraged, but subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer.

ADDRESS CHANGES AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION: Mike Williams, Membership Chair, (510) 376-1631.

Gloria Cannon, Editor, P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565, (510) 753-0862, email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net
Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

May 1998

Vol. 44, No. 9

Next Deadline: June 4

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Regarding the Audubon Western Regional Conference

Sixteen MDAS members attended the Western Regional Conference held at Asilomar Conference Center, Monterey, on April 4-7. Why?

Fellowship

It's good to be in the company of people who value some of the same things you do, including natural beauty and wildlife. Conferees enjoyed an exchange with 400 other like-minded people.

Fun

- What's not fun about Monterey?
- What are authors Kenn Kaufman and Arnold Small really like?
- What is Robert Bateman doing to get those effects in his art?
- What is really inside the gates of Fort Ord?

Inspiration and "Activism"

Honored at the Conference were Audubon members who had:

- Founded 42 Audubon Chapters over the last 50 years
- Challenged ESPN and the city of San Diego to protect California Least Terns
- Attracted 2000 visitors to Northern San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival
- Started an Audubon Youth Environmental Service (YES!) Chapter Group.

(continued on page 3)

Upcoming Events:

Bats and Ringtails Subject of May MDAS Meeting

At our May 7th general meeting, State Biologist David Wyatt will talk about bats and ringtails—two California mammals that are rarely seen because of their nocturnal habits. Dave conducts research on both bats and ringtails and will present a slide program for us on his studies. His interest in ringtails began in 1986. Ringtails are a little larger than squirrels. They have squirrel-like bodies, raccoonlike tails, and heads and ears like those of a tiny fox.

A biologist with Cal Trans since 1990, Dave also teaches biology at American River College near Sacramento. Dave Wyatt's program has been highly recommended by an MDAS member who is also interested in bats.

HEDGECOCK TO UPDATE IBA PROJECT

During the Birding Information portion of the May program, Jill Hedgecock will update us on the work of her committee to identify Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Contra Costa County. Her committee is nominating Shell Marsh as the first MDAS IBA. The IBA project is part of a nationwide Audubon effort to systematically identify and ultimately protect a network of sites in each state critical to birds and their habitats. IBAs are another Audubon effort to protect declining bird

populations, particularly migrating species. Jill will review the criteria for nominating sites, such as it provides habitat for a threatened or endangered species or California species of special concern.

MDAS MEETING INFORMATION

Birding Information 7 p.m.; Business Meeting 7:30 p.m.; Program 8:30 p.m. For directions to the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, see page 8.

BIRDATHON!

**COLLECT PLEDGES TO WIN
VALUABLE PRIZES**

**HELP RESTORE LOCAL
HABITAT**

**SUPPORT
AUDUBON-CALIFORNIA
CONSERVATION
EFFORTS**

CALFED TAKES WRONG TURN, BATTLE LOOMS

In March, our state and federal governments released a draft *Water Plan* and EIR for the Central Valley rivers, the Delta where they merge, San Francisco Bay, the Sierra Foothills, and Southern California water users. Called CalFed Bay/Delta, this program will profoundly influence our environment, quality of life, and our future well into the 21st century.

The CalFed plan has been described as advocating "the largest and most destructive public works projects currently under consideration in the United States."

The draft plan is comprised of 12 volumes, 3500 pages of documents. It is summarized in a 150-page "Phase II Interim Report" that is the basis for public comment. For a copy of the report, call 1-800-900-3587.

The water plan minimizes water conservation potential, predicts massive water shortages for the future; and rates new dam, reservoir, and other water development projects. It will become the blueprint for all state and federal planning and actions related to water in California.

Three Alternatives Proposed

The document proposes up to 5.5 million acre-feet of new water storage and three alternative "fixes" to move water through the Delta—the heart of the California water system. The cost of each alternative ranges from \$8 billion to \$10.5 billion. Although no "preferred alternative" was identified, the California Department of Water Resources favors Alternative 3, a resurrection of the Peripheral Canal.

Alternative 1—a change in diet—California would use the water we already have more efficiently to provide enough water for families, farms, business, and wildlife.

Alternative 2—angioplasty to clear the arteries—This alternative would dredge,

widen, or completely re-configure the water channels in the Delta.

Alternative 3—bypass surgery—this alternative would construct a separate canal to carry water around the Delta to the pumping plants near Clifton Court Forebay, sending the water to farms and cities in southern California (similar to the proposed Peripheral Canal that environmentalists rallied the voters to defeat in 1982.)

Environmentalists Oppose Plan

More than 12 environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, Friends of the River, Natural Resources Defense Council, Save San Francisco Bay Association, Pacific Coast Fishermen's Association, and Audubon-California—are uniting to fight this re-packaging of tired ideas. They fear increased destruction of habitat and more decimation of fish, birds, and other wildlife will result without improving water quality.

November Bond Bomb

Meanwhile, Governor Wilson is pushing hard to have a bond proposal on the November ballot. The bonds would be used to finance the new dams and reservoirs and other water storage projects not yet approved under CalFed. The price tag for just land acquisition is estimated to be \$150–300 million.

Local Reservoirs to Be Enlarged

The water plan identifies 43 new dams and reservoirs and 14 enlarged dams and reservoirs. These proposals would destroy many rivers and watersheds that we have worked to protect. Thousands of acres of public and private property, including wildlife and bird areas, small communities, and farms would be sacrificed. The new plan may include enlarging Los Vaquerous and Del Valle Reservoirs and building Buckhorn Dam. Among the other projects, existing dams on the Mokelumne would be enlarged and two more new projects built on that river.

The operation of the existing Prado dam in Riverside County would be changed, drowning riparian habitat of the endangered Least Bell's Vireo and Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Public Comment to June 1

The time to influence California's water future is now! The deadline for public comment is June 1. Let CalFed know that their planning is inadequate and that increased water conservation would benefit all Californians.

Attend a CalFed public hearing on Wednesday, May 13, at the city of Pittsburg's Marina Center, 340 Marina Center (downtown) at 7 p.m. This is the only CalFed public hearing in our area.

To see a full copy of the *California Water Plan* online, go to <http://rubicon.water.ca.gov/pdintro.html>

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
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P.O. BOX 53
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Members Remember '98 Western Regional Conference

Steel-gray sky above a steel-gray sea, a froth of lacy white waves smash against the rocky shore. Faces scan the sky. A lone gull is closely studied in a dozen binoculars—another Western. Will it rain again today? What about the field trip to Fort Ord? Should I take my coat with the hood? Maybe just a T-shirt, it could warm up. The breakfast bell sounds from Crocker Hall, and attention shifts to the promise of hot coffee and a full breakfast.

Over orange juice and French toast, strangers become friends. What's the birding like in Portland? at Crater Lake? near the Salton Sea? The evening programs are discussed. What did you think of Hazel Wolf? Of Robert Bateman? Of the children with their rain sticks? Have you been to the Audubon store yet? I got this great T-shirt there and three Breeding Bird Atlases. What sessions are you going to? The talk turns serious. "We lost Walpert Ridge in Hayward to the developers." Another voice: "Up on the Tuolumne, the gravel mining tore up the creek. They cut down 200-, 300-year-old sycamores. Left 'em lying beside the road."

Some of the sessions were fun—how to sketch birds in the field, the future of ecotourism. But most were hard work, serious discussion, crash courses in activism. The history of the California water wars and the new battle over CalFed blow in like today's storm. Another session taught me where to read between the lines of an EIR in 10 steps. To those fresh to the environmental wars, old Auduboners share memories of painful defeats, predict a darker future as California busily paves over its golden hills, cuts its forests down, and loses its birds.

Outside, the sun breaks through. The wonderful Monterey air smells of pine and sea. The sun glints off the windows of the new Spanish Bay development that blocks the view. Another battle we lost.

But we keep fighting. Audubon has always fought. Audubon's lawsuit saved Mono Lake. Another Audubon lawsuit

helped stopped the destruction of the Delta. We're working to save the spotted owl, the clapper rail, and old-growth forests. Giants like Hazel Wolf keep on forming Chapters, getting people to listen and learn about conservation. The creatures and the places that we love have to be protected with our dedication and our money.—*Gloria Cannon*

* * *

The highlight for me from the 1998 Western Regional Conference was a presentation by Robert Bateman, gifted painter and naturalist. Among his expressed ideas were that the best things in life are no longer free—fresh air, clean water, and the song of a bird. We can choose to pay now, or we will have to pay more later. Caring people must join and financially support environmental organizations. The real problems facing our planet are not economical or technical—they are philosophical. We should ask the question, "Is this a good idea?"—*Shirley Ellis*

* * *

My fourth attendance at Western Regional Audubon was shared with my 6-year-old daughter Kelly. The children's program was an inspiration! Most of you may not know that: John James Audubon did not start the National Audubon Society. The first National Wildlife Refuge was Pelican Island. The first Game Wardens were provided by NAS, and three wardens lost their lives in the line of duty.

The millinery (feather) trade resulted in the localized extinction of Reddish Egrets and Roseate Spoonbill.—*Jill Hedgecock*

* * *

Kenn Kaufman is an ornithologist, author, artist, accomplished birder, and recently named field editor for *Audubon* magazine. The highlight of the Western Regional Conference for me was becoming acquainted with Kaufman, beginning with his speech and shaggy-bird stories on Saturday night. He autographed a copy of his latest book, *Kingbird Highway*, to read "enjoyed a great day of birding with you." And it was that. This trip in and around Monterey with Kaufman as the leader produced 90 species of birds in seven hours. We saw a Peregrine Falcon and all six species of grebes. I strongly believe that to really improve your birding skills you need to place yourself in the company of superior birders. Kenn Kaufman is one of those birders for me.—*Joel Summerhill*

President's Notes (continued from page 1)

Information

We absorbed information and ideas about:

- Educating kids about nature in cities where there seems to be little nature.
- Setting up a birding trail, having community economic impact.
- Starting a "learning to bird" program

Being involved in Audubon takes many forms. I'm not sure it's more important to be an activist than it is to take simple pleasure from the birds in your backyard, but it certainly broadens your point of view. This Conference was an extension of the experience you can have right here in Contra Costa County with MDAS.

If you would like fellowship, inspiration, information and fun, we have 'em—both activities you can enjoy and ways you can contribute. The scope is from small to large, from active to passive. Please call or write me at carol@mdli.com if you want to join the activity.

MDAS Board Elections

Four MDAD Board positions are elected by the general membership. These elections will take place at the May meeting. Candidates proposed by the Board are:

President: Carol Frischmann
VP Conservation: Al McNabney
Secretary: Mike Tischler

The Treasurer position is open. Nominations will be taken from the floor.

White-crowned Sparrows in the East Bay

by Steve Glover

The White-crowned Sparrow is one of the species of particular interest in the *Breeding Bird Atlas*. Ironically, the current status of this species in Contra Costa County is amongst the most poorly understood. You may not even realize that White-crowns breed here, since in most of our yards they are present only as migrants and winterers.

In fact, the highly sedentary race *nutalli* does breed here although it is unclear what their present range is and in what numbers they are present. Below is an outline their historical range in the East Bay and followed by clues to help separate this subspecies from those that winter here but do not remain to breed.

Historical Range

In winter, three subspecies of White-crowned Sparrow are present in the East Bay with a fourth being completely accidental. As stated above, our breeder is the highly sedentary coastal race *nutalli*, which breeds from Cape Mendocino south to about Pt. Conception. They are generally found in areas with persistent summer fogs, and the East Bay is no exception. Nesting is known from only the Berkeley Hills and the bayshore from Emeryville north to Richmond.

They are known historically from as far east as the north slope of Rocky Ridge near St. Mary's College and from Las Trampas Ridge. These spots are exceptionally far inland and quite arid. A couple of records of birds thought to be *nutalli* have come from Lafayette and Walnut Creek as recently as the summer of 1986.

Complicated Identification

This situation is clouded considerably by the presence of two regularly occurring subspecies that do not breed here, and one of the subspecies is a dead ringer for *nutalli*. The race *gambelii*, which breeds

from Alaska west to about James Bay, is an abundant winter visitor, arriving as early as September but is almost always gone by May. It is easily separated from *nutalli* and its look-a-like *pugetensis* (see below).

Coloration Is a Clue

The bill of *gambelii* ranges from yellow-orange to orange-pink, the color sometimes being described as "candy-corn" orange. The bill of both *nutalli* and *pugetensis* is dull yellow with no pink tones. The underparts of *gambelii* are a clear gray color with a slight wash of brown on the flanks and undertail coverts while both *nutalli* and *pugetensis* have extensive brown throughout the underparts.

There are other differences between them, notably the coloring of the streaks on the back and the much longer primary projection of *gambelii*, but these should suffice. While *gambelii* is easy to separate from *nutalli*, *pugetensis* is almost impossible. In fact, in their recent paper in *Birding*, Dunn and Garrett used drawings of *pugetensis* to describe both subspecies. Fortunately, *pugetensis* breeds only as close as Humboldt County. My advice when away from the areas described above is to basically ignore *pugetensis/nutalli* types until May.

Pairs vs Flocks

Obviously if you see a bird doing something to indicate breeding before May you should start paying attention, but I wouldn't spend any valuable atlas time watching them. If you are in areas along the bay or in the fog-shrouded hills you might want to pay attention to any yellow-billed birds, especially birds in pairs or seeming to be on territory. My advice for birds in flocks is to ignore them completely. Even if a *nutalli* did fall into a flock of the others, the fact that

it is in a flock is a strong indication that it isn't breeding yet anyway.

Habitat of *nutalli*

A note on habitat is also needed. This is not a bird fond of forests. It apparently prefers a predominance of shrubs only a few feet high that have some spacing in between. The ground around these shrubs is preferably clothed with a one foot or shorter mat of grasses or vines. The larger shrubs will probably most often be California Sage or Coyote Bush. Some bare ground is also needed to permit foraging near escape routes. A bird in coniferous forest or heavy riparian is not likely to be *nutalli*. Sadly, *nutalli* was not found during the Alameda Atlas Project away from the shoreline around Emeryville.

Species in Decline

While it is possible that a few were overlooked elsewhere, it is pretty clear that it has declined precipitously there. This may be due to several factors including the prolonged drought of the early to mid-nineties. Cats may be partially responsible. I suspect that the tremendous amount of artificial plantings in the Berkeley Hills is the main culprit since they do not like shady, forested areas.

Since it has clearly declined in adjacent Alameda County and since its status here is completely muddled, I am asking everyone to make a special effort at this species. For those of you who get *Birding* magazine, the article by Garrett and Dunn is in the June 1995 issue. The new sparrow book by Rising, entitled *A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada*, also has nice drawings of *gambelii* and *nutalli*.

May 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday, May 2, Mines Road. Because of limited parking along Mines Road, carpooling is essential. This is an all-day trip and usually hot! Bring lunch and liquids. For carpools meet at 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., in Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Wild Turkey, Greater Roadrunner, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis' Woodpecker, and Lawrence's Goldfinch all possible. Call the leader for meeting time. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906 Category 1

Wednesday, May 6, Mt. Diablo. Carpool 8:00 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Meet 8.30 a.m. in first parking lot on left after entering South Gate. Usually hot! \$5.00 entrance fee. Sage, Rufous-crowned, and maybe Black-chinned Sparrows. Leader: Jimm Edgar, 658-2330 Category 2

Saturday, May 9, Mitchell Canyon. Meet 9:00 a.m. in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$5.00 parking fee. From I-680 in Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to Clayton Rd. Turn

right on Clayton and right on Mitchell Canyon Rd. to the end. Morning emphasis on wild flowers, bird in afternoon for gnatcatchers, summer sparrows, etc. Usually hot! For information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Thursday, May 14, Napa River. Carpool 7:30 a.m. at southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. A car birding trip with no meeting place due to limited parking on some roads. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Sat. through Mon., May 23-25, Memorial Day weekend, Kern River Preserve north of Bakersfield. Lodging is in Kernville at Lake Isabella, with pricing ranging from \$50-100 per night. Be aware that they may ask for 2-night minimum. Lodging listed by AAA is as follows: Barewood Motel (760-376-1910), Kern Lodge Motel (760-376-2223), Kern River Inn B&B (760-376-6750), and the Riverview Lodge (760-376-6019). The closest motel to the Reserve is Lakeview Motel (800-929-8250). The KOA (760-378-2001) is in Lake Isabella. It will likely be quite hot in this area, so be prepared. Call Steve Glover in mid-May for Saturday meeting time and place. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 3

Thursday, May 28, Ironhouse Sanitary Plant. Carpool 8:15 a.m. at the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 9 a.m. at the plant office.

Take Hwy 4 to Oakley. In Oakley turn left on Vintage Pkway. Take first right onto Walnut Meadows Dr. Follow this and turn right to office. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 2

May 30, Saturday, East Contra Costa County. Carpool 6:30 a.m. southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet 7:00 a.m. on Cypress Rd. just beyond the Shortstop Market. Go north on I-680, east on SR 4 through Oakley, left onto Cypress Rd. Burrowing Owl, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Yellow-breasted Chat all possible. Hot. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 2

Field Trip Reports

Tomales Bay State Park, March 7. Ten members braved the approaching rain and were rewarded with a full morning of pleasant birding. Skies were overcast and the temperature was in the 50s, but we saw or heard 52 species.

Highlights included an Osprey with a large fish in its talons flying by, a Spotted Sandpiper at Indian Beach, several beautiful male Allen's Hummingbirds doing mating flights and showing very bright gorgets, Winter Wrens briefly seen, a Varied Thrush male, an early Nashville Warbler, several Townsend's Warblers, and a flock of brightly colored Purple Finches. We searched diligently for the Spotted Owls usually there but did not find any.—*Maury Stern*

Garin Ranch, April 4. Ankle-deep mud and washed-out trails could not prevent five intrepid birders from enjoying a fine cool day walking parts of the park. Birdsong was everywhere. Although we saw no unusual or exciting species, we were never bored, for there were lots of individuals, including Bullock's Oriole and Orange-crowned Warbler. We had good looks at a cooperative Cooper's Hawk and Western Bluebirds.—*Fred Safier*

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.

Observations

by Steve Glover

Beginning this month you will notice that many of the sightings in the column pertain to nesting birds in Contra Costa County. We are off to a nice start with a couple of surprises already. Please send me any nest observations, no matter how common the bird. Please include the date of the sighting, what the birds were doing, and good directions.

Green Herons have already been seen building nests in two blocks in the Walnut Creek/Concord area (FS, JH).

White-faced Ibis, once rare in the county, were seen on two additional occasions: 45 flying south along the CC/San Joaquin Co. line at Orwood Rd on 3/25, and 70 near the Bradford Island Ferry on 4/2 (SG).

The introduced population of **Canada Geese** continue to increase. A startling 41 birds were counted on nests at Pacific Bell in Bishop Ranch in late March without including the birds that have radiated out into the rest of the park (fide CD).

Two male and one female **Wood Duck** were over her Alamo yard on 3/29, her first ever there (JR). Two male and two female **Black Scoters** remained at Pt. Emery, Alameda Co., to at least 3/15 (ES) with two males still present 3/18 (JR). One female **Red-breasted Merganser** remained at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, to at least 3/12 and two males and one female were still at Clifton Court Forebay on 3/25 (SG).

An **Osprey**, likely the one present in the area all winter, was over the Contra Costa Canal on Monument Blvd. on 3/29 (SF). Another was over Byron on 3/25 (SG). A **White-tailed Kite**, the first for her Walnut Creek neighborhood, was present 3/18 (MP). Most exciting was the report of an Osprey on a nest on a power pole near Pt. Pinole RS on 4/2 (JD). The pair of **Bald Eagles** has again set up shop at Del Valle Res. near Livermore. One was

noted on the nest on 3/22 (JM). The Alameda and Santa Clara atlas projects found many **Cooper's Hawks** nesting in urban areas, previously thought to be a rare phenomenon at best. Our first pair was found building a nest in a eucalyptus on Detroit Ave. in Concord on 3/22 (JJ).

Red-shouldered Hawks, not present as nesters as recently as only 20 years ago, have been found on nests in at least 8 blocks with pairs present in many others! **Swainson's Hawks** have also increased in recent years, culminating in a light-phase adult building a nest in a cottonwood near Holland Tract on 3/26 (SG). There were only two previous nest records. A light-phase bird was seen over Wall Ridge, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 3/22 (KH,RL). Another light-phase, always very rare along the bay, was noted at the Newby Island dump in extreme SW Alameda on 4/8 (SR). Thirteen dark-phase birds were following a tractor at Holland Tract on 4/7 (SG).

A **Ferruginous Hawk** was still at Jersey Island to at least 3/8 (GF). A **Golden Eagle** was over Heather Farms Park on 3/19 (MJC,FB,HH). Two more were over Piper Slough where rare on 4/2 (SG).

Two **Black Rails** were heard "singing" at Iron House Sanitary Dist. near Oakley on 4/11 (SG, JH et. al.). This species was recorded at Big Break in the 70s but as far as I know has not been since. A nice count of 40 **Lesser Yellowlegs** was present at Jersey Is. on 3/8 (GF). 35 **Surfbirds** were at Pt. Emery, Ala. Co., on 3/15 (ES) with 18 still present on 3/17 (JR).

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

A **Great Horned Owl** was seen on the nest at Holland Tract on 3/26 (SG). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl**, confusingly rare in the county, was heard in Jackass Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 3/15 (SG).

A female **Allen's Hummingbird** was found on the nest in Jackass Canyon on 3/15 (RL,SG). This may be as far east as we find this species breeding. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was along Morgan Territory Rd. on 4/9 (SG). A male **Purple Martin**, the first for her yard, was in Alamo on the astoundingly early date of 3/17 (JR). The only known nesting pair of **Yellow-billed Magpies** in the county were nest-building in Knightsen on 4/7, and four birds were noted a few miles to the south on Byers Rd. on the same day (SG).

Ravens have increased steadily in the East Bay in recent years, but nesting was unsuspected in East County until a nest was found on a transmission tower near Holland Tract on 4/7. Four days later three more nests were found on transmission towers on Cypress Rd. just south of Bethel Island! (SG).

It is unclear whether or not **Canyon Wrens** have increased locally or if more people are looking but another was found singing at the end of Finley Rd. near Blackhawk on 3/14 and again on 3/15 (SG). A **Winter Wren** was at Piper Slough on 3/12 (SG). A male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was in her Alamo yard on 3/22, her previous early date being 3/31 (JR). A **White-throated Sparrow** was in his Walnut Creek yard on 3/20 (GF).

Observers: F. Bennett, Mary Jane Culver, Connie Diernisse, Joe DiDonato, Sharyn Fernandez, George Finger, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Jill Hedgecock, Kevin Hints, Janet Jamerson, Ron Lindeman, Joe Morlan, Marjorie Plant, Jean Richmond, Fred Safier, Emilie Strauss.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

May Activities at WBU

Saturday, May 2

9:30 a.m.—*Birding Optics Seminar.*

Trying to select the right optics for local birdwatching or that next birding trip?

Join us for a 30–45-minute seminar on “How to Buy Birding Optics.” Many brands of binoculars and scopes will be on display. Call for reservations; seating is limited.

Saturday, May 9

10:30 a.m.—Come see Bill Klapproth’s stunning slide show on Alaska wildlife and scenery around Admiralty Island.

11:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.—View a demonstration beehive and learn about these amazing creatures from the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association.

1:00 p.m.—Butterfly expert Bob Gendron’s Monarch Butterfly program will bring these fragile creatures up close and personal. Milkweed plants that Monarch caterpillars require to survive will be available for purchase.

It’s time to put out your oriole feeders. Both Hooded and Bullock’s Orioles are now arriving. They are nectar-feeding birds, but they are too large to feed from most hummingbird feeders. They will readily come to an oriole feeder. These are the most spectacular birds that we can attract to our backyards during the summer.

Please report all sightings of Hooded and Bullock’s Orioles to WBU. Again, we are keeping track and mapping all sightings.

Denise Weight’s bird classes starting:

Beginning—May 19, 7–9 p.m.

Continuing—May 20, 7–9 p.m.

Each cost \$40 and includes five evening classes and a day birdwalk. Call WBU for more information.

Hazel Wolf Doesn’t Play Pinochle

by Gloria Cannon

Hazel Wolf wants to live to the year 2001. Born in 1898, she dreams of living in three centuries. With her indomitable spirit, living to the age of 103 seems an easy task compared to her other accomplishments.

Hazel Wolf has founded more than 20 Audubon Societies, more local chapters than anyone else in the history of the Audubon movement. She is co-founder of the Community Coalition for Environmental Justice, past president of the Federation of Outdoor Clubs, and former editor of *Outdoors West*. She is the recipient of more than a dozen awards, including the 1997 Audubon Medal for Excellence in Environmental Achievement.

She was most recently honored at the Western Regional Audubon Conference for her extraordinary life and dedication to the environmental movement.

At the Conference, I had the privilege of interviewing Ms. Wolf for the *Quail*.

“The Audubon Society is different from other environmental groups like the Sierra Club,” she told me. “The Sierra Club focuses on wilderness; the Audubon Society focuses on birds. It’s easier to relate to birds than to wilderness. Birds do something we’d like to do but can’t—they fly! Birds lead normal lives like we do. They raise young; they build; they search for food—it’s easier for us to relate to birds than to wilderness.”

Ms. Wolf believes the environmental movement is a growing global movement. “Everything is connected. They want to protect the birds and the environment as much as we do,” she said, bobbing her cloud of white hair. Women, she believes, bring special skills to the environmental movement. “It’s that mother business,” she said. Women are “brought

up to be more caring. And we are housecleaners. We want to keep nature shipshape.”

A longtime volunteer herself (she was secretary of the Seattle Audubon Chapter for 26 years), Hazel Wolf is known for her ability to recruit volunteers for her environmental projects. How does she find them? “I find volunteers on bird walks. People think I go on bird walks to find birds, but I don’t. I go to pick up volunteers,” she said, smiling gently.

“I walk alongside somebody, talk to them, tell them about myself, find out about them.” She looks first for competence. If a person doesn’t seem competent, she moves on to someone else and repeats the process. After competence, she looks for availability. It “doesn’t do any good to be competent if the person has a job and three kids because there’s no time,” she said. Along with competence and availability, she looks for willingness. Tiny, frail-looking, Hazel Wolf has the heart of a lioness. It would be hard to tell her you’re too busy.

At meetings she doesn’t sit with cronies. She mixes with strangers, always looking for that mixture of competence, availability, and willingness.

“Some people want to work for the environment,” I said, “and some people—”

“Just want to play pinochle? Well, to hell with pinochle players. Drop them immediately,” she said firmly, her blue eyes flashing. “Activists have to feel the urge. They have to want to do something in the first place. Pinochle players won’t be among them.”

Hazel Wolf will be featured in *Women Pioneers in the Environmental Movement*, due out in July.

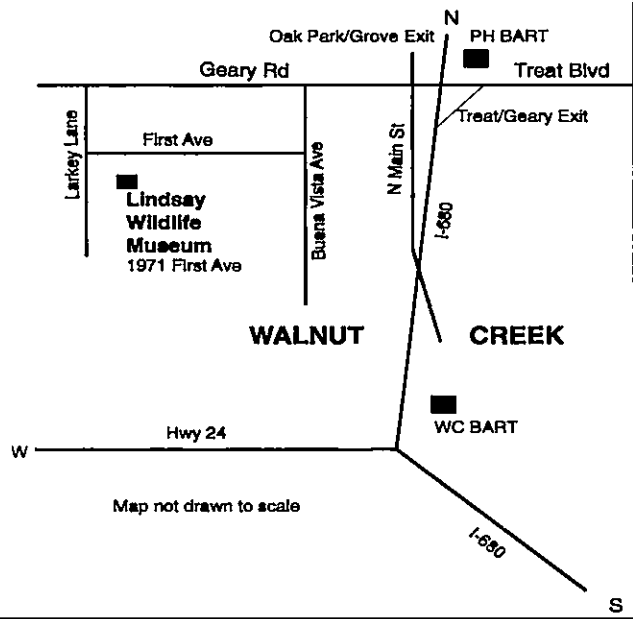
CALENDAR

May 7, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right.)

May 9—International Migratory Bird Day

May 14, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH

May 22, Fri., 9:30 a.m.—*Quail* Mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH (Volunteers prepare *Quail* issue for mailing.)



The *Quail* is published monthly except for the combined July/August issue. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine. To join, write a check (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available) to National Audubon Society but send it, with letter or subscription card, to the Membership Chairman, Mike Williams, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. The Chapter benefits financially from the membership applications it processes. Full Audubon membership is encouraged, but subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer.

ADDRESS CHANGES AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION: Mike Williams, Membership Chair (510) 376-1631

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Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

June 1998

Vol. 44, No. 10

Next Deadline: July 2

Thanks, Al!

by Carol Fischmann

Celebrating Al's Life

MDAS and Contra Costa County lost a person of great importance, vision, and energy with Al McNabney's death on May 1.

Each of us who knew Al feels this loss in a personal way, and we all need to celebrate Al's life. June's potluck dinner program will be devoted to remembering Al, his contributions, and the birds and places that he loved.

Many groups in Contra Costa County have expressed an interest in remembering Al. Accordingly, an inter-group celebration of Al's life is being planned for later in the year. A proposal to rename Shell Marsh in Al's honor is also being submitted. If you would like to be a part of either of these efforts, please let me know.

Three Gifts from Al

Al's more than twenty years of passionate advocacy, comprised of thousands of letters, telephone calls, and meetings that consumed many of his days and nights, left a substantial legacy from which all County residents benefit.

The first legacy includes cleaner water and air, more habitat for the "birds and bugs" of the county, and educational programs to teach the importance of sustaining a diversity of species (including our own) to achieve a better quality of life. Al's hallmark was his use of facts and reason. Al understood that the County's population was booming and that people need a place to live, services, utilities, and jobs. His conservation work emphasized accommodating growth while preserving those attributes of the land that attracted people to the area. Al punctuated facts and reason with humor, which is often absent from the practice of conservation. Friends and foes on an issue listened to Al.

His second legacy is that MDAS now has a reputation for a reasoned presence in these discussions. Vision and effective implementation are hard to come by individually and extremely rare in one individual. Al had both. He was a role model to many and a mentor to some in the community. When Al left us, he had already seen the year 2020. He knew what the conservation community needed to do to preserve a good quality of life and the best possible biodiversity for our county's citizens. For those of us lucky enough to know him and share his vision, the path forward is clear.

His third legacy is this vision of our future. What an important, enduring and self-sustaining legacy! What more could a person hope to achieve? For these gifts to our community and your many gifts to us as individuals, thanks, Al!

End-of-the-Year Potluck Set for June 4

MDAS members will celebrate an extraordinary year of achievements, programs, projects, and changes, at the annual end-of-the-year potluck on Thursday, June 4, at 7 p.m. Members should bring a dish—salad, entree, casserole, vegetable, or dessert—for 10 as well as serving pieces and their own cutlery and cups. The Chapter provides coffee and punch. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m.

The program will be provided by members who bring 10 or fewer slides of birds or adventures, bird nests, bird houses, or bird feeders to share with the group. Members are invited to bring anything interesting that relates to natural history. In years past, the MDAS potluck has been an entertaining evening of food, fellowship, and a few tall tales of birds and birdwatchers. This year we will pay tribute to Al McNabney. We will also have a summary report of the Birdathon and awarding of prizes.

There will be no general meeting in July or August. The next general meeting will be Thursday, September 3.

NAS reported that 14,000 participants provided data on specific bird species from the Christmas Bird Count. The February weekend bird count generated an amazing 1.1 million visits to the BirdSource Web site. All Christmas Bird Count data is now online.

Conservation Notes

by Al McNabney

Al McNabney

December 1, 1914–May 4, 1998

On Friday, May 1, an extraordinary man, Al McNabney, passed away. His achievements in the environmental wars were numerous; his devotion to preserving the environment and its creatures was extraordinary. In 1991 the Chapter honored Al by establishing the Al McNabney Environmental Distinction Award and naming him its first recipient. The certificate presented to Al on that occasion read, in part,:

Be it known that the Board of Directors of the MDAS in establishing the measure by which we set the standards of this award for high esteem in the protection of the environment and all wildlife within, Found it most fitting and honorable to hold as the measure, the man, Who year after year tirelessly and selflessly pursues the preservation and enhancement of our environment and all life's creatures, Who attends meeting upon meeting, Who writes letter upon letter, Who gives freely of his time on this Earth to save this Earth, holding forth against the vast forces of development, pollution, ignorance, and apathy, using his remarkable inner strength and resolve to overcome such adversity and never giving up even in the times of defeated causes, but renewing again and taking up the banner of environmental protection so that new generations may live in harmony with nature."

Among his many other awards and honors are the following:

- Delta Science Center Recognition Award.
- Contra Costa Avian Society Award, 1989.
- John Muir Conservation Award, 1991.
- Environmental Achievement Award (National Audubon Society), 1997, which he received for outstanding leadership and commitment to preserving our natural heritage through environmental education, advocacy and habitat restoration.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, also a long-time MDAS member.

By request, no traditional services have been held for Al; however, members will have an opportunity to share memories and stories about Al and his work at the June potluck. Al was known for his old jokes and bad puns. If you were especially struck by some turn of phrase of his, please share it with us at that time.

'98 Birdathon Results Announced

by Joel Summerhill

Great news! We have exceeded our 1998 Birdathon goal of raising \$3,000 for MDAS, and the fundraising continues through the month of May.

The MDAS Birdathon was held Saturday, April 25. In an unusual display of cooperation, the "Juveniles," led by Joel Summerhill; "Glover's Plover Lovers," led by Steve Glover; and the "Wight-crowned Spare O's," led by Denise Wight all birded together. Three other birders joined us to make a strong team of six people in the field.

We began at 4:30 a.m., listening for owls at Inspiration Point in Tilden Park, and the last bird identified for most team members was a Poorwill near 9 p.m. at

Mitchell Canyon near Clayton. Steve's team counted the most bird species, claiming 150. Denise's team had 141 species, and Joel's Juveniles had 127 species.

It is time to collect your pledges and turn in your pledge sheets and checks (made

out to MDAS and marked "Birdathon" to Joel Summerhill, 4801 Shavano Peak Court, Antioch 94509. Checks will be gladly accepted any time, but to be considered for prizes, envelopes must be postmarked midnight May 31. Winners will be announced at the June potluck. There is still time to be a prize winner

Hats Off! to Three MDAS Volunteers

MDAS and the MDAS Board of Directors wish to thank **Norah Bain, Pam Keiser, and Carol Erdmann**, three members who have made a special contribution of service to the Chapter.

Norah Bain has been the steward of the Chapter's collection of birdskins. We are very appreciative of Norah's contribution in caring for the collection, giving presentations based on the collections, and arranging loans of the skins for special events.

Pam Keiser has been Chapter treasurer from October 1992 to 1996 and 1998. In this role, she converted MDAS books from

paper-based bookkeeping to computer software. She streamlined the process of reimbursing members for out-of-pocket expenses, organized and presented an annual Chapter budget, and prepared monthly financial reports. Under her guidance, the Chapter reached sound financial practices. Thank you, Pam, for your work.

Carolyn Erdman has announced that she is stepping down from her post as the Chapter's Hospitality Chair. In that capacity, she organized refreshments for the meeting and set up the refreshments and cleaned up afterward. Thanks to Carolyn, that socializing has been enhanced with great treats.

BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY

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0053
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P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565
email: gcannon@hotmail.com

Fond Memories of Sally Steller

We extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Sally Steller, a long-time active member of MDAS, who died at her Danville home on May 4 following a lengthy illness.

She served us well with dedication, enthusiasm, and humor in many capacities, including secretary in the early 60s, as president from 1972-74, and as field trip chairman from 1976-81. She planned, organized, and led 9-day birding excursions to southeast Arizona in 1977, northeast California in 1978, and southern California in 1979.

For five years, she led the committee which compiled and wrote our Contra Costa County checklist, published in 1982. She kept extensive records of our county's bird sightings before, during, and for long after that time. She was a member of the mailing crew from the mid-80s to 1997.

We fondly remember Sally and her devotion to MDAS and will miss our friend very much. Address condolences to her family to her son, Tom Steller, 4274 Heyer Ave., Castro Valley, CA 94546.—Jean Richmond

Field Trip Reports

Sunol, March 18. What is so rare as a rainless day? This was one, and five birders enjoyed a beautiful morning in green hills with many flowers. Birds were not very active. Notable were a Golden Eagle and an early House Wren and Orange-crowned Warblers. We saw and heard 31 species.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Black Diamond Mines, March 28. Five of us were greeted by the singing of Meadow Larks and the flying of Barn and Cliff Swallows as we began our hike into Black Diamond Mines Preserve. Our six hours hike on crisp, windy day gave us great views of the Delta and a surprise sighting of Lawrence's Goldfinches. We saw Kestrels and a Prairie Falcon as well as a Mallard. Our species count was 39.—*Anne Blandin*

Garin Regional Park, April 4. Ankle-deep mud and washed-out trails could not prevent five intrepid birders from enjoying a fine, cool day walking parts of the park. Bird song was everywhere. Although we saw no unusual or exciting species, we were never bored, for there were lots of individuals, including Bullock's Oriole and Orange-crowned Warbler, and we had good looks at a cooperative Cooper's Hawk and Western Bluebirds.—*Fred Safier*

Lake Lagunitas, April 9. The highlights of the day came in the first 10 minutes—a beautiful, full breeding-plumage Common Loon and a Pileated Woodpecker. However, the five birders who dared the weather trudged around Lake Lagunitas in constant drizzle without seeing very much. When the rain stopped, a few birds came out. The Pileated Woodpeckers were active around last year's nest hole, and there was a lot of calling and drumming on the far side of the lake. A total of 41 species were seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Ida Clayton Road, April 22. Nine birders enjoyed a beautiful day of birds and spectacular El Niño-assisted wildflowers. We were early for dogwood and candystick, but the fawn lilies, goldfields,

meadow foam, and other field flowers were the best we've seen on this trip in recent years. Birding highlights included two coveys of Mountain Quail, Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck, Common Loon, nesting Osprey, nesting Great Blue Herons, Chipping Sparrow, and California Thrasher were among the 67 species seen, which included life birds for more than one birder.—*John Jordan*

Del Puerto Canyon, April 30. Good weather and great birding were enjoyed by eight birders. Birds seen included Grasshopper Sparrows, two male Costa's Hummingbirds, Blue Grosbeak, Prairie Falcon, two Common Mergansers, one Lewis's Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Greater Roadrunner, Tri-colored Blackbirds, and Canyon and Rock Wrens. The wildflowers were very nice. Total species. 56.—*Florence Bennett*

Mines Road, May 2. Phainopepla, Golden Eagle, Lewis's Woodpecker, a pair of Great Horned Owls on their nest with two downy young, being harassed by 10 Yellow-billed Magpies, and lots of other birds. Seven birders enjoyed the morning, and, after some showers, part of the afternoon too. We saw 64 species in all.—*Fred Safier*

Mt. Diablo, May 6. The day proved to be a rainy one from start to finish. But three members braved the wet, foggy weather to meet me at Rock City. We only saw 30 species during the morning and ended at noon. It was too wet to even sit down for lunch. We did have some highlights, including good looks at Hermit and Townsend's Warblers and a flock of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. We also saw copulating Lazuli Buntings at Curry Point.—*Jimm Edgar*

MDAS Reelects Officers

At the May 7 meeting, MDAS members elected the slate of officers nominated for the 1998-1999 term: Carol Fischmann, Chapter president; Mike Tischler, secretary; and Al McNabney, vice president and conservation chair.

Out of respect for Al McNabney, who served MDAS so ably as vice president and conservation chair for many years until his recent death, president Carol Fischmann proposed reelecting him posthumously to his post. She explained that the MDAS Board would be considering how to restructure the duties that Al had performed single-handedly. She proposed a conservation committee to continue the Chapter's work in local and state environmental issues. The members agreed that this was a fitting and proper means of honoring Al McNabney and of preparing for the changes that will be required

Congratulations to Carol and Mike on their reelection.

We are still accepting nominations for treasurer. Please call Shirley Ellis (938-3703) if you are interested. The responsibilities of Chapter treasurer require basic computer (especially IBM PC) and bookkeeping skills, an appreciation for balance sheets and financial practices, and about 20 hours a month

If you are interested in serving on the Conservation Committee, or if you have a particular environmental issue which you wish to follow, please contact Carol Fischmann.

Concord Naval Weapons Station Achieves IBA Status

The Concord Naval Weapons Stations has been selected as the first Important Bird Area in Contra Costa County, announced Jill Hedgecock at the general meeting in May. Jill, who chairs the IBA committee, updated members at the May general meeting on the Chapter's participation in this nationwide effort to identify and protect important bird habitat. The Concord Naval Weapons Stations is MDAS's first nomination.

Volunteers Clean Up Julia Cox Freeman Marsh

Twenty-nine volunteers labored to remove trash from the Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands during the annual cleanup on April 18. The Chapter appreciates their efforts.

A special thanks from MDAS goes to the members of the Lindsay Museum's Roots and Shoots group. They brought two canoes and pushed and paddled through mud and matted water hyacinths to remove debris.

MDAS, the City of Antioch, and the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District are partners in an effort to restore and protect this 22 acres of critical salt marsh habitat and wetlands in Antioch.

CalFed Update

Opponents of the CalFed environmental impact report for restoring the Delta by building more dams and canals have won a small victory. The public comment period has been extended to July 1, so you still have time to send your letters telling CalFed that you don't want an engineering solution that drowns wildlife habitat, prime farmland, and open space or allows more water to be shipped to southern California.

About 100 people attended the May 13 public hearing in Pittsburg, including representatives from MDAS, the Environmental Water Caucus, Clean Water Action, and the Sierra Club. The MDAS position is that none of the three alternatives proposed in the EIR/EIS adequately consider water conservation and water use efficiency and that no dams or canals should be built.

Send your letter urging a reconsideration of alternatives to the state's latest effort to build a peripheral canal to:

Mr. Rick Breitenbach
CalFed Bay/Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 115
Sacramento, CA 95814

Summer 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Please note the May 28 field trip to Iron House Sanitary Plant has been changed to Wednesday, June 3.

Carpool 6:45 a.m. at the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 7:30 a.m. at the plant parking lot. Take Hwy 4 to Oakley. In Oakley turn left on Vintage Pkwy. Take first right onto Walnut Meadows Dr. Follow this and turn right to office. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409. Category 2.

Saturday, June 6, Outer Point Reyes.

Carpool 6:30 a.m. Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at Drake's Beach, 8:30 a.m. Cross San Rafael Bridge. From I-101 north, take San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1, turn right 1/2 mile, left onto Bear Valley Rd. about 3 miles, and onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. again. Continue about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Rd. on left. Spring vagrants. Be prepared for variable weather. Leader: Pat MacEchern, 934-3041. Category 2.

Saturday and Sunday, June 20-21, Yuba Pass-Sierra Valley. Meet at 8 a.m. Saturday at Yuba Pass parkin lot.

Saturday at Yuba Pass for mountain birds. Sunday in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Motels in Sierra City: Herrington's Sierra Pines, (916) 862-1151; Sierra Chalet, (916) 862-1110; Shannon's Cabins, (916) 862-1287. There are campgrounds at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. For more information, call Hugh Harvey or Pat MacEchern (934-3041). Category 2.

Saturday-Sunday, July 11-12, Lassen National Park.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Manzanita Lake parking lot at northwest entrance. We will spend Saturday looking for montane species at Lassen. The park campgrounds are first come, first serve. Motels outside the entrance include the Hot Creek Resort, (916) 335-7121, in Old Station on SR 44/89, and Padilla's Rim Rock Ranch, (916) 335-7114.

Sunday morning we will meet at 7:30 a.m. at Lassen and head east to the Honey and Eagle Lakes area for montane and some Great Basin species, including Black Tern, Pinyon Jay and Yellow-headed Blackbird. We expect to see 130 to 140 species. The drive home through Reno is about six hours. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409. Category 2.

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.

Observations

by Steve Glover

In the six or so years that I have done this column I believe that this is the first month that I have actually had too many observations. Isn't atlasing wonderful?

A calling, breeding-plumaged **Common Loon** was at Clifton Court Forebay on 4/16 (DR). Loons are surprisingly scarce there. A **Cattle Egret** lingered to 4/14 at Iron House Sanitary in Oakley (MM). A pair of **Green Herons** were seen building a nest at the Briones Reservoir spillway on 4/25 (BB). Their status remains unclear in the watershed area. RS noted a very late **Tundra Swan** flying over his Berkeley home on 4/12. Three families of **Northern Pintail** were at McNabney Marsh, formerly Shell Marsh, on 5/5 (SG). A **Gadwall** nest with eggs was found on 4/25 at Wildcat Creek in N. Richmond, an area where unknown as a breeder until recently (RS). A male **Surf Scoter**, always rare in the Central Valley, was at Clifton Court Forebay on 4/16 (DR) and 4/28 (MF).

A large kettle of 60 **Turkey Vultures** was on Briones Valley Rd. south of Antioch on 4/26 (JB). The wintering Osprey was seen again at McNabney Marsh on 4/5 (ED), and another was seen over Redwood Reg. Park, Alameda County, on 4/25 (JL). An adult **Swainson's Hawk** was still incubating eggs at Holland Tract on 5/3, and another nest with incubating adult was found at Jersey Island on the same day (JM). It will be interesting to see just how common this bird has become. Two **Black Rails** were heard singing at Iron House Sanitary on 4/11 (SG, JH), and two more were heard in another area of the property on 5/9 (SG). It remains to be seen how common they are in East County. Two hundred **Whimbrels** were a good count for East Contra Costa County on 4/14 at Iron House (MM). Single **Black Terns** were at Clifton Court Forebay on 4/27 and at Iron House on 5/9 (SG). Six were at Clifton Court Forebay on 4/28 (MF).

Most exciting were reports from two independent observers of a **Greater Road-runner** at and near the Contra Costa Country Club in Pleasant Hill on 4/15 (GT, JM). Reports have trickled in sporadically the past few years from the East Bay Hills. This species historically nested west to Piedmont but is unknown as a nester in the county in modern times. A pair of courting **Lesser Nighthawks**, very rare in the county, were at Clifton Court Forebay on 4/28 (JS). An apparent family group was noted in the area in July 1995, but nesting has never been proven in the county. One **Vaux's Swift** was seen flying north over Iron House on 5/9, and six more were seen flying north over Piper Slough the same day (SG). Five male **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were at Piper Slough on 4/28 (FB, MJC, BG). At least four **Calliope Hummingbirds** were in White Canyon, Mt Diablo State Park, on 4/17 (JRo, P.S) and 4/27 (JS, SG), and another was out of place at Piper Slough on 5/9 (SG), providing the first record for East Contra Costa County. A single **Hammon's Flycatcher** was on Morgan Territory Rd. on 4/9 (SG), and ten were in Mitchell Canyon on 4/17 (RS). Two **Dusky Flycatchers**, rare in the county, were in Mitchell Canyon on 4/17 (RS).

A **Yellow-billed Magpie** was west of its limited known range on Empire Mine Rd. south of Antioch on 4/26 (JB). **Common Raven** continues to amaze in East County where it was unknown and unsuspected as a nester until the atlas started. So far at least seven nests have been found in five different blocks (SG). An-

other nest was seen at the east edge of the Diablo Range on Deer Valley Rd on 4/26 (JB). Single **Townsend's Solitaires** were in Oakland on 4/25 (JL) and at Barbecue Terrace, MDSP, on 5/4 (SG). This equals the latest county record. The second county nest record of **Phainopepla** came 4/14 on Old Nortonville Rd. just north of Clayton when a pair was watched carrying mistletoe berries into a nest (MP, GF, P&PM). A **Plumbeous Vireo**, only the second county record, was in White Canyon, MDSP, on 4/17 (RS).

Six **Yellow-breasted Chats** were seen at Piper Slough, Bethel Is., on 4/28 (FB, MJC, BG). Their arrival was particularly anticipated this season because so much of their available habitat at Piper Slough has been obliterated. **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** fledglings were noted in Pine Canyon on 4/16 for the first atlas record (GF, MP, P&PM). GF noted a **White-throated Sparrow** in his Walnut Creek yard on 4/7. A male **Great-tailed Grackle**, possibly just the second for Contra Costa County, was at Iron House Sanitary on 5/9. This species is now breeding as close as Stockton and could be found in the county during the atlas project.

Observers: Florence Bennett, Jeanne Bonner, Bob Brandriff, Mary Jane Culver, Elizabeth Dickey, Mike Feigner, George Finger, Betty Gallagher, Steve Glover, John Luther, Pat and Paul MacEachern, John Mason, Mike Moran, Joe Morlan, Marjorie Plant, Rusty Scalf, Rich Stallcup, George Trabert.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

who are they?
SH - Still Hedgecock?

DR -
SRo - Sohn Robinson?

RS + RS - Rich + Rusty
JS -

News from *Wild Birds Unlimited*

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

7th Anniversary Party Saturday, June 6th

- Birdseed Sale
- Heather Farms Garden Center will be selling plants that attract birds and butterflies.
- Learn about the Killer African Bees from CC Mosquito Abatement Control.
- Monarch caterpillars and milkweed plants for them will be available.
- See a Monarch butterfly release.
- Talk with California's famous naturalist John Muir himself about his books.
- A Swarovski representative will be present to show these phenomenal birding optics.
- The Lindsay Wildlife Museum will present two programs with live birds: one on Woodpeckers and one on the Bald Eagle.
- MDAS will have a display and will be doing a membership drive.
- Sample environmentally safe coffee, grown in the shade to protect our neotropical migrants.
- Come see the world's largest chickadee (over 5 1/2 feet tall).

Join the fun!!

Birdfeeding tips:

- Change the nectar in hummingbird and oriole feeders every 3-5 days to prevent mold. Make 2-3 quarts of nectar at one time. Rinse out and refill your feeders and keep the rest of the nectar in the refrigerator. You will then have minimal problems with mold. A ratio of 5 parts water to one part sugar is suitable if you are feeding both species. If you are only feeding hummers, you can use a 4:1 ratio.
- Keep at least one thistle feeder out. Last year Lesser Goldfinches continued to visit all summer.

Please report all oriole sightings as we are again tracking them

Ptychoramphus aleuticus—A Birding Adventure Up Close and Personal

by Hugh B. Harvey

As many of you know, I sail for a living. This past winter I spent 125 days working on the *MV Sea-Land Explorer*. Many times I am asked about my pelagic bird list, and it is necessary to remind the questioner that I work in the engine room. However, there are times when we must work on deck; and we take advantage of these limited opportunities to see the sun, sightsee port arrivals, or just to look across the sea at an endless horizon.

Sunday morning, February 1, was our first day at sea beginning my third 6-week trip to the Far East. As our first stop was to be Dutch Harbor, Alaska, we were headed mostly north. The ship was just south of Cape Mendocino, but well off-shore. We were rolling slowly in one of the many storms to pound Northern California over the winter. For a short while, I was on deck just aft of the house; and the wind whistled port to starboard between the house and the row of containers stacked four high.

It was at this time I saw what I thought was an immature seabird flopping along the deck. It went to the recess for a watertight door and hid under the ramp to the door. I looked under the ramp and saw there were four of these birds. Wow! It occurred to me that these birds would find no food on our ship; and because they were in an area of heavy foot-traffic, they were liable to be hurt. The best option was to help them off the ship and back to a familiar environment.

At the same time these thoughts went through my head, I realized I should try to identify them. They were dark gray and had a prominent white mark above the eye. Small and awkward, they seemed unable to fly. Their webbed feet looked oversized as they flapped their wings and ran along the deck bumping into obstacles. One bird started across the ship and actually flew; but because it was into the wind, it flapped its wings like crazy 3 feet off the deck but made almost no headway. It fell back to the deck. On

the port side, I got behind the bird, and we started back to starboard. This time, with the wind behind it, it flew up and took off like a bullet for the open ocean. As I cornered the second and third birds and gently picked them up, I noticed the pale mark at the base of their dark bills. I carried them one at a time to the starboard rail and tossed them gently into the air. They, too, flew like bullets across the water.

The last bird was harder to catch. It hid under the ramp; it made its way to port; and it hid behind paint cans. Finally, I was able to catch it; and I spoke softly to it, hoping to calm it. I wanted to examine this one closer so I could remember its look and hopefully find it in the field guide. Its eyes were almost white with a large black pupil, but the iris seem to have just a hint of blue. I pulled out a wing, also dark, and looked at its stubby tail. Continuing to talk softly, I turned it over and saw how the dark gray-brown color faded on the breast. The belly, vent, and undertail areas were almost all white. The oversized, webbed feet were bluish-gray. I thanked this bird; and when we reached the starboard rail, I said something like, "Okay, little guy, here you go!" With no hesitation, it was gone and quickly disappeared across the wind-tossed seas.

Cassin's Auklets, I have since learned, winter off our western coast and are one of the commonest breeding birds on the Farallon Islands. They may spend 2 months digging a burrow, at least 37 days incubating a single egg, another 40 days tending a chick until it fledges; and there is evidence that they may double-brood. With as much time as these pelagics spend ashore, it is no wonder I found them on the deck of an 840-foot container ship. We were probably the biggest rock around. Still, we would not make a good home to these small creatures, and I have no qualms about having helped them over the railing. I am, in fact, thankful that their presence gave me the occasion to study them up close and personal.

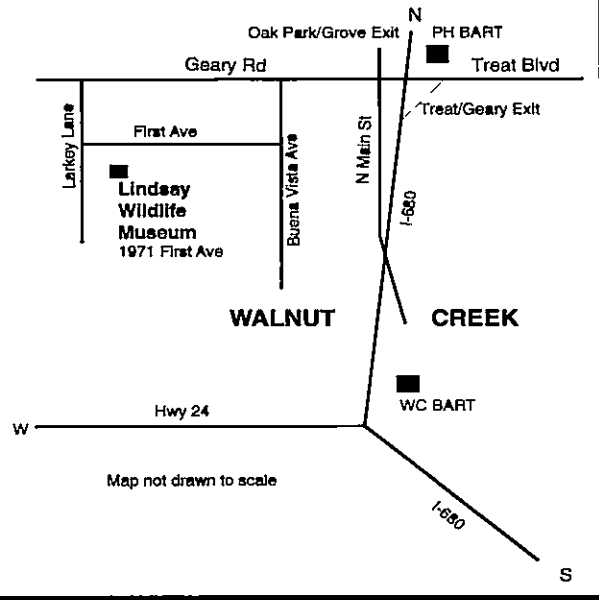
CALENDAR

June 4, Thurs., 7 p.m.—ANNUAL POTLUCK, General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right.)

June 11, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd , 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH

June 19, Fri., 9:30 a.m.—*Quail* Mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd , PH (Volunteers prepare *Quail* issue for mailing.)

September 3, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meetings resume after summer break.



The *Quail* is published 11 months of the year. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine. Send a check made out to NAS (\$20/year individual, \$30 family, introductory and senior rates available), to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. Subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3 50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

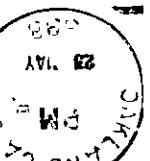
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Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053





The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

The *Quail* takes a break—look
for September issue

July 1998

Vol. 44, No. 11

Next Deadline: August 13

President's Notes

by Carol Frischmann

Funding Our Future

We've made great progress over the last several years in creating a financially stable Chapter. Because of the efforts of the *Quail* mailing team and our inhouse printing of the *Quail*, we are financially solvent and able to operate a fine program for our current membership base. However, there is more that we would like to do. We have only to look around us to see the challenges that birds and other wildlife face in our county. Conservation work can sometimes be expensive.

Recent Gifts

To support our efforts, MDAS has been fortunate to receive some wonderful gifts recently. The generosity of some members provided financial support or organizational support in our recent Birdathon. Lesley Benn, concerned about preserving appropriate habitat for birds in our area, contributed \$500 to support Chapter activities.

McNabney Memorial Fund and Planned Giving

At the request of several members, MDAS has established the McNabney Memorial Fund to support conservation projects that were Al's passion. At the June Board meeting, Mike and Cecil Williams of Wild Birds Unlimited made a \$1,000 gift to that fund. Anyone who wishes to make a contribution to honor Al, may send a check to our Treasurer at the MDAS address. Please make
(continued on page 2)

MDAS Remembers Al, Sums Up Birdathon

At the June general meeting, over 70 MDAS members gathered to celebrate Al McNabney's life, enjoy good friends and good food at the potluck, and hear about a successful Birdathon.

Dan Taylor, Director of Audubon-California, paid tribute to Al as his mentor and an environmental leader. He spoke of Al's ability to keep meetings and speakers focused on the essential points and remembered the influence of Al's wisdom on his own development in the California environmental movement. Then Jimm Edgar described Al's contributions to the Chapter as its Vice President and Conservation Chair for over 20 years. Jimm enlivened his talk with Al sto-

ries, anecdotes, and puns. Jill Hedgecock spoke of Al as her friend and mentor in bird conservation.

MDAS raised a total of \$3,704 from the April Birdathon, reported Joel Summerhill, chair of the Chapter's fundraiser. The top prize—a night at the Pt. Reyes Seashore Lodge—was awarded to Mike and Cecil Williams, who raised and donated \$635. The second place prize, a \$25 gift certificate, went to Denise Wight. Chapter President Carol Frischmann presented Dan Taylor with a check for \$1500, representing the amount pledged to Audubon-California for its Conservation programs.

There will be no general meeting in July or August. The next general meeting is Thursday, September 3, at 7p.m.



Dan Taylor of Audubon-California accepts Audubon-California's share of MDAS' Birdathon fundraising from MDAS President Carol Frischmann at June meeting

We Appreciate . . .

The Chapter thanks the following individuals and organizations for their Birdathon contributions, that will be used for our conservation projects at Heather Farms and the Julia Cox Freeman Marsh in Antioch as well as for the legislative efforts of Audubon-California:

Wild Birds Unlimited
 Dow Chemical
 Southern Mortgage
 USS-POSCO Steel Co.
 Wal-Mart Corp
 Joel Summerhill
 Denise Wight
 Rebecca Freed
 Rick Wicker
 Nancy Wenninger
 Alice Burns
 Carol Frischmann
 Jill Hedgecock
 Paul Dunn
 Ralph Bruns
 Gloria Cannon
 Shirley Ellis
 Oscar Enstrom
 Al and Helen McNabney
 Bob Wisecarver
 Gifford and Winnie Young
 Sal Mercurio
 Edna Mass
 Ann Hughes
 Betty Ann Williams
 Carolyn Cogan
 Genevieve Sattler
 Pam Keiser
 Barbara Vaughan
 Hugh and Rosita Harvey
 Robert Small
 Cheryl and John Abel
 Karen Pearson
 Dave Hobbs
 Bingham Gibbs
 Anne Blandin
 Don Yoder
 Janet Goodman
 Lillian Fujii
 Elizabeth Dickey
 Dave Shuford

Linda Kirsch
 Pat Smyers
 Patsy Hansen
 Stephen Kowalewski
 Karen Laws
 Steven and Lydia Owens
 Robert Tavenier
 Goldie Leslie
 William Neth II
 Carmen Pina-Sandoval
 Louis Lazaroff
 Rachel Torres
 Janet Smith
 Carol Dockery
 Mary Frank
 Paul Kaplan
 Polly Boissevian

From time to time our Chapter receives generous bequests, gifts, and donations given in memory of friends or relatives, or as spontaneous contributions to the Chapter's activities. These donations are welcomed as a significant support of our goals of wildlife appreciation and conservation. The MDAS Board and members wish to express their gratitude for recent donations from the following individuals and organizations:

Janet Hilton
 (in memory of Dede Fulton)
 Barbara Vaughn
 Bob and Diane Malucelli
 Piedmont Garden Club
 Concord Garden Club
 Sons in Retirement
 Rejeshri and Ravindra Patel
 Clayton Women's Club
 Mike and Cecil Williams
 William and Marge Chapel
 (in memory of Norma Scudero)
 P.E.O. Sisterhood
 Jimm Edgar
 Denise Wight
 Lesley Benn
 (whose gift was in appreciation of efforts of MDAS members to preserve Southwood Valley in Orinda)

President's Notes (Continued from page 1) out your check to MDAS and note McNabney Memorial Fund on the memo line.

The McNabney Memorial Fund is a first step for the Chapter. We will also be establishing a Planned Giving Fund, an endowment fund to provide income for critically needed conservation projects. For more information about planned giving, contact Joel Summerhill or myself.

For the recent gifts, and the many other contributions which members have made, in dollars and in services, the Board expresses its deep thanks. They provide the Chapter with options.

Have a wonderful summer! Happy Birding!

Carol Frischmann
<http://www.mdli.com/ohs>

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
 AUDUBON SOCIETY
 P.O. BOX 53
 WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA 94597-
 0053
 (925) AUD-UBON
 (925) 283-8266**

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 Mailing: Gifford Young (707) 745-4134
 Gloria Cannon, Editor, (925) 753-0862
 P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565
 email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net

Field Trip Reports

Kern County, May 23-25

Seventeen birders came along for a learn-as-you-go, usually-the-hard-way type of weekend. We were plagued by strong winds throughout the weekend as well as by flooding that kept the Kern River Preserve closed.

Still, we did manage to see and hear 140 species.

On Saturday we did some roadside birding along the Kern River. Among the many valley specialties, we managed to find Cassin's Kingbird, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and a brilliant male Summer Tanager.

The plan for the afternoon was to escape the normally stifling heat of the valley and head into the mountains. Instead, the climb brought us from merely cool temperatures to downright frigid ones. Despite the weather, we did eke out Mountain Quail, Dusky Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, and a calling Spotted Owl.

Sunday we headed south into the Joshua Trees of the Piute Mountains. We finally reached Butterbrecht Springs but not until we had freed one of the vehicles from a sandy anchorage. The Springs were loaded with migrants, including a singing male Northern Parula. Other birds included Costa's Hummingbird. There was a Bendire's Thrasher seen nearby. While eating lunch at the city park in California City, one of our group spotted a male Vermillion Flycatcher. This little beacon was a life bird for many in the group and a thrill for all of us.

That afternoon at Chimney Peak, part of the group had nice looks at Gray Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, and Calliope Hummingbird. Monday morning we again birded the river, and we were finally able to pin down a Willow Flycatcher. A male Prothonotary Warbler was also seen briefly. From there we went west. Unfortunately, the trip went south. We failed to find any dippers along the river and, after the

long trek to Maricopa, also failed miserably in our attempts to find LeConte's Thrasher. All in all, things didn't go too badly for a first attempt. Thank you to Bob Barnes for his expertise and finding tips.—
Steve Glover

East County, June 3

Eight Birders spent a beautiful, nearly windless, morning at Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island. Highlights included all of the East County specialties, such as Hooded Oriole, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, and Yellow-breasted Chat. A Spotted Sandpiper, spots and all, put in a brief appearance on the breakwater. By far, the highlight was a singing male Indigo Bunting perched atop a blackberry bramble. This beautiful bird was the first record for East County. 51 species were seen for the day.—*Steve Glover*

Outer Pt. Reyes, June 6

Eight birdwatchers saw 44 species on this trip. A few people were quick enough to see two gulls with black heads skim over Drake's Beach just as we arrived. Unfortunately, no one got a full view, and the gulls did not return to give us that opportunity. Our best bird and only vagrant was a very pretty, immature male American Redstart at the Fish Docks. We enjoyed watching this bird for some time.—*Pat MacEachern*.

MDAS WEBSITE ANNOUNCED

MDAS is developing its own website! It is still under construction, but the potential is exciting. The address is: <http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/mt-diablo/member.htm>

We are looking for someone with design skills to work with Mani, our webmaster. If you have such skills and would be interested in designing the MDAS website, please contact Carol Frischmann.

What to Do about Tick Bites

In this El Niño year, ticks appear to be thriving, and they are nasty passengers to bring home. When hiking, stay on trails. Avoid brushing against low-hanging shrubbery and walking through tall grass. Wear a long-sleeved shirt, a hat, and long pants tucked into socks.

Spray down all outer clothing, especially hat, collar, waist, and ankle areas. Deep Woods Off works for open as well as woody areas. If you are hiking in pine/cedar country, use Deet (use it according to label instructions). The really heavy repellent is Permethrin, which is sprayed onto outer clothing and lasts 2-3 weeks per application. Even when you've used a repellent, check your body carefully when you return from the field.

To remove a tick, use tweezers to pull the tick straight out. Be careful that all its mouthparts have come out. Clean the bite with soap and water and use an antiseptic.

Some ticks carry Lyme disease, and this illness is more common than most realize. California has hundreds, if not thousands, of Lyme cases each year. The final outcome of this disease is vascular dementia. Lyme disease is easily cured in the first few weeks after a bite, but very difficult to get rid of after a few months have gone by.

If you have been bitten by a tick, your choices are to get a blood analysis (the cost is about \$100) and wait weeks for the results. Or start treatment right away with 21 days of an antibiotic like doxycycline (cost is about \$40). See *Coping with Lyme Disease* by Denise Lang (Henry Holt and Company, NY, 1997) for more information. A vaccine against the disease is close to being available.



Observations

by Steve Glover

Two **Common Loons**, possibly summering, were at Brooks Island near Richmond on 6/4 (SG). Loons are very rare in the county in summer. Twenty-seven **American White Pelicans** were over Richmond on 5/22 (LF, SH), and four more were seen flying west over Iron House San. District, Oakley, on 6/3 (SG, MDAS). Two **Pelagic Cormorants** were at West Brothers Island near Richmond on 6/4, but there appeared to be no nesting activity (SG). This is the only known nest site in the county.

A **Brant** was at Brooks Island on 5/25 (SW, DS). A female **Gadwall** with six youngsters was noted on 6/3 at Iron House San. District at Oakley (SG, MDAS). The resident male **Harlequin Duck** was seen at Brooks Island, Richmond, on 5/30 (EM, JR, JD, B&MJG, FR), 6/4 (SG), and 6/7 (DR, RC). An adult male and a female-type **Surf Scoter** were still at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 5/15 (SG). There were 201 Surf Scoters still around Brooks Island on 6/4 (SG). A female **Bufflehead**, apparently attempting to summer, was at Iron House San Dist. on 6/3 (SG, MDAS). I know of no summer records for the county.

A **California Quail** was heard calling on 6/7 at Piper Slough, Bethel Island. This is the first record there since 4/96 (SG). Four singing **Black Rails** were heard at Iron House San. Dist. on 6/3 (SG, MDAS). There are at least seven males at this location. A late migrating **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Piper Slough on 5/30 (SG, MDAS). Out of our area but exciting nonetheless were the first California records of **Bristle-thighed Curlew**, including one at Pt. Reyes, Marin, on 5/19 (JR, JD, MJ&BG) and 5/21 (GF). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was near Brooks Island on 5/30 (JR, JD, EM, FR, B&MJG)

Four **Elegant Terns** were at Brooks Island on 5/25 (SW, DS), and at least 110 were there on 6/4 (SG). Numbers this

high so early in the summer are unprecedented and are an indication of trouble to the south. Indeed, there has been an almost complete nesting failure of this species in Southern California due to El Niño conditions. Two **Common Terns** were at Brooks Island on 5/30 (JR, FR, B&MJG, JD, EM). This species is very rare in the county in Spring. The **Arctic Tern** has returned to Hayward Reg. Shoreline for its sixth consecutive year. Two **Least Terns**, also rare in the county, were at Brooks Island on 5/25 (SW, DS) and on 5/30 (JR, FR, B&MJG, JD, EM) Five **Black Terns** were at Clifton Court Forebay on 5/15 (SG).

Two fledgling **Great Horned Owls** were on the Black Diamond Mines Trail north of Clayton on 5/2/98 (GF). A **Black Swift** was at the 680/24 intersection on 5/10 (JR). A single **Vaux's Swift** was flying north over Highland Rd. near Danville on 5/13 (SG). A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was at DW's Martinez feeder from 5/14 to at least 5/29. A female **Selasphorus Hummingbird** was at Piper Slough on 5/30 and 6/7 (SG). A pair of **Belted Kingfishers** were watched carrying fish into a hole in the ditch along Bethel Island Rd. on 5/30 (DW, SG). Seven **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were in Mitchell Canyon on 5/30 (JRo). This is a very high count for this species in the East Bay. A singing **Willow Flycatcher**, rare but annual in Spring, was at Piper Slough on 6/7 (SG). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez, on 5/8 (DW).

A **Yellow-billed Magpie** nest was found on 6/7 in Byron (SG). This is only the second known nest site in the county.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

150+ **Cedar Waxwings** were along Sellers Rd. on 5/30—this is a high count for East County (SG, MDAS). A pair of **Phainopeplas** were at the Black Diamond Mine Trail parking lot near Clayton on 5/25 (GF). The male was building a nest. There appear to be four singing male **Yellow-breasted Chats** at Piper Slough this season, down slightly from last year's six but not bad considering the bulldozing that has taken place (SG). A singing male **Indigo Bunting** was at Piper Slough on 5/30 (SG, MDAS). It has been seen by many through at least 6/7. A female Indigo Bunting was described from an Orinda feeder on 6/4 (KG).

Tricolored Blackbirds have been confirmed in two blocks thus far, both near Byron. Approximately 50 pairs were watched carrying food near the intersection of Camino Diablo and the old Vasco Rd. on 5/15 (SG). Three adults and a begging juvenile were noted on 6/7 at Byron Hot Springs (DR, RC).

Observers: Rita Caratello, Jane Dang, George Finger, Lillian Fujii, Steve Glover, Ken Gustafson, Steve Hayashi, Bill and Mary Jane Greene, Ellie Mulke, Fred Rentschler, Jean Richmond, Don Roberson, John Robinson, Don Schmoldt, Denise Wight, Sally Walters

Summer Bird Quiz

Some groups of birds have special names. Below are five special group names of birds. Match the group name to the bird associated with it. (Answers are on page 5.)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| ___1. Kettle | a. sparrows |
| ___2. Flights | b. larks |
| ___3. Cast | c. vultures |
| ___4. Exaltation | d. hawks |
| ___5. Host | e. doves |

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Summer Birdfeeding

Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles are being reported throughout our area, but in much smaller numbers than previous years. Have you seen any of the spectacularly beautiful nectar-feeding birds? You might also try feeding grape jelly to the orioles. We have received some reports that they really enjoy it. In the eastern U.S. many people feed fruit to orioles, but we haven't had too much luck in California. Please call in your reports so we can map the sightings.

Troubled with Band-tailed or city pigeons? Put a wire cage around your tube feeder or over ground feeder stations. It really works! Try safflower seed if squirrels or blackbirds are a nuisance. They do not like safflower, which is a high-energy food source. Doves and Titmice really appreciate it. For other birds, such as finches, chickadees, and jays, it is an "acquired" taste. Introduce safflower by combining it with black oil sunflower in a feeder. Over a period of time, reduce the percentage of sunflower until you only have safflower. It can be used in all regular seed feeders.

Establishing a squirrel feeding station 15-20 feet away from bird feeders will help keep squirrels occupied and full. They will then tend to avoid your bird feeders. The key to having a successful squirrel feeding station is to offer a variety of foods: squirrel mix (composed of sunflower, peanuts, and corn), corn on the cob, and squirrel suet.

We are receiving many reports of Black-headed Grosbeaks. The males have an orange breast and collar and black head. Females have a buffy, lightly streaked breast and eyebrows. Their favorite food is sunflower seeds, and they readily come to bird feeders.

Summer 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday-Sunday, July 11-12, Lassen National Park. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Manzanita Lake parking lot (accessed by way of the northwest entrance). We will spend Saturday looking for montane species at Lassen. The park campgrounds are first come, first serve. Motels outside the entrance include the Hot Creek Resort, (916) 335-7121, in Old Station on SR 44/89, and Padilla's Rim Rock Ranch, (916) 335-7114.

Sunday morning we will meet at 7:30 a.m. at Lassen and head east to the Honey and Eagle Lakes area for montane and some Great Basin species, including Black Tern, Pinyon Jay, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. We expect to see 130 to 140 species. The drive home through Reno is about six hours. Leader Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 2

Saturday, August 1, San Mateo Coast. Carpool at 7:15 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in beach parking lot off SR 1 opposite Pescadero Road. Cross the San Mateo Bridge, continue west on SR 92 to Half Moon Bay, go left on SR 1 for 15 miles to Pescadero Rd., turn right into parking lot. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Saturday, August 15, Bodega Bay. Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m., southwest corner of Sun Valley Shopping Center parking lot. Or meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Tides Restaurant. Go north on US 101. Take the Washington St. exit in Petaluma, go west on Bodega Hwy. to SR 1, turn right to Bodega Bay. The Tides is on left, opposite a Union '76 station. Shorebirds, rails, waterbirds, migrants. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 1

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.

The annual field trip planning meeting will be held Thursday, August 6 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Elizabeth Dickey, 113 Hillcrest Dr., Orinda. Call 254-0486 for directions. Everyone interested in selecting and participating in MDAS field trips is invited to attend this important planning session. If you cannot attend but have a suggestion for a field trip destination, call Elizabeth or drop her a note.

Note: Elizabeth's serving spoon turned up missing after the potluck. If a mysterious stainless steel spoon with a squared end appeared in your bowl or platter, please call her.

CALENDAR

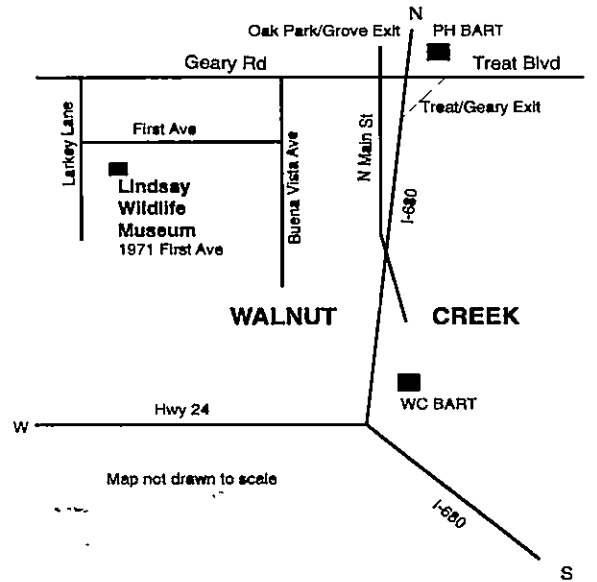
July 9, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd, PH

August 6, Thurs., 7:30 p.m.—Field Trip Planning Meeting at E. Dickey's home, 113 Hillcrest, Orinda (Call 254-0486 for directions)

August 13, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Cost Blvd., PH

August 21, Fri., 9:30 a.m.—*Quail* mailing, Wild Birds Unltd 692 Contra Costa Blvd , PH (Vounteers prepare *Quail* issue for mailing.)

September 3, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meetings resume after summer break. Community Room, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right.)



The *Quail* is published 11 months of the year Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine. Send a check made out to NAS (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available), to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. Subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632

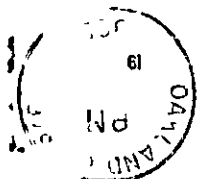
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P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053





The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

September 1998

Vol. 45, No. 1

Next Deadline: September 3

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Welcome Back from Summer

Summer vacations provide relief from the routine and possibly from the frenetic pace of our regular schedule of activities. As a kid, I'm sure you wrote an essay each fall, "What I Did on My Summer Vacation."

One of our Chapter members saw his 600th and 700th life birds on his summer vacation in Costa Rica. Accompanying him, his wife enjoys the natural beauty, the people, and the total experience. I don't know if she keeps a list.

Arizona was the destination of two other friends (and one more will soon depart). The birds there draw these people to Arizona. The landscape and the plant life also contribute to the enjoyment that these folks have in their vacation break.

Another friend spent time at Lake Tahoe, where the captivating Sierra scenery is home to many avian species as well as other wild creatures that we enjoy. My most memorable moments included seeing a Peregrine falcon demonstrate pigeon hunting to its fledgling in a cityscape. Two hours later, I watched Sora parents with their four chicks on their pre-dusk forage.

Thanks to all of you and to like-minded people in other areas, we have these bird
(Continued on page 2)

Upcoming Events:

MDAS to Enjoy an Evening with John Muir

Warm summery. A peach tree is now in bloom. There are thirty-one heron nests along the sycamores on Alhambra Creek, thirteen on one tree ... The overflow from the regular heronry consists of about a dozen nests on large oaks on the hills to the westward.

From *The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, Alhambra Valley, Contra Costa County, California, February 13, 1896.

Welcome back. For our first general meeting of the fall season on Thursday, September 3, we will meet in the Exhibit Hall of The Lindsay Wildlife Museum. In that special setting, we are pleased to have Steve Pauly, through his wonderful impersonation, bring to life the passion-



John Muir (Steve Pauly) and Shirley Ellis, MDAS Board member, at the 7th anniversary celebration of Wild Birds Unlimited

ate naturalist/writer and Sierra Club Founder, John Muir. "John" will speak on the natural history of our area, as it was over 100 years ago.

John Muir lived in Martinez with his family until his death in 1914. To enhance your enjoyment of this presentation, you may want to take your own tour of the John Muir National Historic Site before the September 3 meeting, and then come and ask "Mr. Muir" questions you may have about his life and times.

Steve Pauly is a active volunteer at the John Muir National Historic Site. His resemblance to John Muir has made him a natural at impersonating John Muir.

Birds of John Muir's Home

Cheryl Abel, a park ranger at the John Muir National Historic Park site, will begin the general meeting at 7 p.m. with a talk about the birds seen at the site and the Mt. Wanda area.

Shell Marsh to Be Renamed to Honor Al McNabney

The Mountainview Sanitary District and East Bay Regional Park District announced that Shell Marsh will be renamed McNabney Marsh in honor of Al McNabney, long-time environmental leader in Contra Costa. Al served as Vice President and Conservation Chair of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for over 20 years until his death on May 1. The ceremony to rename the marsh will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 19, during the Sanitary District's Open House.

Al's many friends and colleagues supported naming the marsh for him as a way to recognize his extraordinary dedication to the environment. He loved the marsh and worked hard to restore and protect it. MDAS President Carol Frischmann said, "Al would be so proud to be remembered this way. To him, saving Shell Marsh was one of his most important contributions."

Both the Sanitary District's Board and the Park Board strongly endorsed the name of McNabney Marsh as a memorial to Al. Michael Rugg of the California Fish and Game and member of the marsh management committee, will present the resolution to Helen McNabney. Space at the presentation is limited, and reservations are required. More details about reservations and the Open House activities will be provided at the September 3 MDAS general meeting.

Connections

Keep an Eye on CCWD

According to a story in the August 9 *Contra Costa Times*, Los Vaqueros Reservoir is being carefully studied by the Ag-Urban Policy Group as the site of an expanded reservoir that could provide enough water for 700,000 new homes in southern California.

In this latest water grab, the Ag-Urban Group—a coalition of California's largest water users—are considering the feasibility of tearing down the recently completed Los Vaqueros dam and replacing it with a reservoir 10 times bigger. Such a reservoir would inundate the 20,000 acres of open space whose preservation was a major selling point when Los Vaqueros was up for voter approval in 1988. **Local ratepayers approved the dam on the condition that its water not be exported.**

As part of the CalFed process, CCWD's General Manager Walter Bishop is actively involved with the Ag-Urban Group and CCWD has taken a neutral position on the expansion. Four of CCWD's Board of Directors are unusu-

ally quiet about the topic, but the East County representative Noble Elcenko has stated that he favors a larger reservoir. For local residents, a larger reservoir would destroy wildlife habitat and recreational use of the open space while providing more water for southern California's constant thirst.

House Passes Salton Sea Bill

Buoyed by the persistence of Audubon members, NAS claimed a partial victory in the passage of an amended version of the Sonny Bono Memorial Salton Sea Reclamation Act, H.R. 3267, on July 15

H.R. 3267 will provide \$22.5 million for an 18-month study of the Salton Sea problems, \$350 million for implementation of an approved reclamation plan, and \$3 million for a wetlands restoration project on the New and Alamo Rivers. However, NAS points to several bad provisions that remain in the bill, including limits on liability that would protect local water agencies from being sued for just about any action taken in the area. — from *The Audubon Advisory*, July 21, 1998.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Continued from page 1

and wild creatures to see, and these places of natural beauty and habitat to visit. Most of us are only visitors, but these creatures need these open spaces and habitat in order to survive. Your participation in Audubon and support for conservation and education in cities, suburbs, and in the wilderness helps ensure that in the years to come, our friends and we can continue to enjoy these natural pleasures on our vacations.

carol@mdl.com
510-895-1313 Ext. 1471
510-483-4738 (Fax)

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY
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WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA 94597-
0053
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*Gloria Cannon, Editor, (925) 753-0862,
P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565,
email. gcannon@hotcoco.inf.net*

Field Trip Reports

September 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. 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: 10 cents per mile per rider is suggested; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday, May 9, Mitchell Canyon—

Mostly sunny with a little wind—a good day to look for spring migrants. Nine birders enjoyed the walk up the canyon sighting 42 species, including 12 migrants. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Western Tanager, and Lazuli Bunting were highlights.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Thursday, May 14, Napa River—

The little bridge had washed out so the three birders were not able to reach the major portion of the Napa River Preserve, but we did see four species of Swallows, Western Bluebird, and Brown Creeper. The day was cloudy, and the birds rather quiet. At Lake Hennessy we saw Great Blue Heron and Osprey nests. We saw or heard a total of 36 species —*Elizabeth Dickey*

Saturday and Sunday, June 20–21,

Yuba Pass-Sierra Valley—Warm weather and sunny skies awaited 16 MDAS members at Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley. Snow was still present, and few flowers were seen. Saturday morning's walk at the top of the pass produced White-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Williamson's Sapsucker, White-headed Woodpecker, American Robin, Western Wood-Pewee, and Western Tanager either building or sitting on nests or at nest holes. Bob Dunn rose early to find Mountain Quail at 6 a.m.; the rest of us heard their calls throughout the morning. We also had glimpses of Northern Goshawk and Band-tailed Pigeon flying overhead.

During a walk around Madora Lake in Plumas-Eureka State Park, we found many Tree Swallows, Ring-necked Ducks, a Bufflehead duckling, and an

Saturday, September 12, **Moss Landing—Monterey**. Carpool. 7 a.m. on El Cerro Blvd west of I-680 freeway. Or meet at 9 a.m. at the Moss Landing Wildlife Viewing Area jut north of Elkhorn Slough

Osprey. At the Basset's Store we saw hummingbirds and found a Dipper at the Yuba River. At Chapman Saddle Road we had a marvelous look at a Poorwill. At evening we had a Northern Pygmy Owl respond to our tape

Sunday was not as long, but equally enjoyable. Our stop at Mountain Quail Road produced numerous Green Towhees and an extended look at a Gray Flycatcher. We saw Vesper and Brewer's Sparrow well but had to settle for long distance views of Sage Thrashers. This was offset by excellent views of American Bittern, White-faced Ibis everywhere, and a long distance look at a Black Terns. The terns have not nested in Sierra Valley for 8 or 9 years, and we would have missed them, but for the generous help of "Mac" McCormick of the S. F. State Field Station. Swainson's Hawks were harassed by blackbirds while we lunched the Loyalton Museum.

We spotted almost as many birders as we did species. Our Chapter was one of five groups in the area over the weekend. Still, we tallied 100 species seen or heard.—*Hugh Harvey*

San Mateo Coast, August 1—Five birders enjoyed a beautiful, sunny day with patchy fog along the coast. We saw 63 species. Certainly the most difficult bird was a much-discussed Wandering Tattler.—*Joel Summerhill*

Bridge on SR1 right hand side. Leader: Steve Glover, 846-7382 Category 3.

Thursday, September 17, **Hayward Regional Shoreline**. Carpool: 7:30 a.m. in Danville From the north, take El Pintado exit off I-680, turn right (away from freeway), turn right again on La Gonda Way, and park along La Gonda From the south, take the El Cerro exit, turn left on El Cerro to La Gonda and go right to near the El Pintado off ramp. Or meet at 8:15 in front of Visitor's Center at the Hayward Regional Shoreline. Take I-880 to SR 92 west From the Clawiter exit, turn on Breakwater to the Visitor's Center. Water and shore birds. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2.

Saturday, September 26, **Outer Point Reyes**. Carpool: 7 a.m. on Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Or meet at Drake's Beach at 9 a.m. Cross San Rafael Bridge From I-101 north, take San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left, and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1, turn right 1/2 mile, left onto Bear Valley Rd. about 3 miles, and onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. again. Continue about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Rd. on left. Be prepared for variable weather. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2.

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.

MDAS Annual Financial Report, FY 1998

Pam Keiser, Treasurer

	<u>Operating</u> <u>Account</u>	<u>Conservation</u> <u>Account</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Funds</u>
REVENUE			
Advertising	\$ 540.00		\$540.00
Birdathon	3,640 30		3,640 30
Donations	1,481 67	3,632 50	5,114 17
Fund Raising Revenue			
Birdwalks	150.00		150 00
Entertainment	2,337.00		2,337 00
Door Prizes	<u>1,139.00</u>		<u>1,139.00</u>
Total Fund Raising Revenue	3,626 00		3,626 00
Funds for Transmittal	900 00		900.00
Interest Earned	394 16	801 04	1,195.20
National Audubon Dues Share	9,221 47		9,221.47
Newsletter Subscriptions	585.50		585.50
Other Sales	<u>224.96</u>	<u>2,044.35</u>	<u>2,269.31</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	<u>20,614.06</u>	<u>6,477.89</u>	<u>27,091.95</u>
EXPENSES			
Administration	371 36	355 83	727 19
Birdathon Expenses	300 15		300.15
Birding Information	-	24.80	24.80
Christmas Bird Count	561.18		561.18
Conservation	147.25		147.25
Contributions	1,950.00	800.00	2,750.00
Education	70.00	(42.94)	27.06
Fund Raising Expense	1,791.00		1,791.00
Funds for Transmittal	900.00		900.00
Insurance	523.00		523.00
Lobbyist, Audubon California	736.65		736.65
Monitoring Guides	-	40.00	40.00
Newsletter Expense	7,007 68	1,852.35	8,860.03
Programs	900.00		900.00
Promotion	-	308.50	308.50
Rent	750.00		750.00
Sales Expense	12.39	1,465.60	1,477.99
Telephone	<u>200.74</u>	<u>87.95</u>	<u>288.69</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>16,221.40</u>	<u>4,892.09</u>	<u>21,113.49</u>
EXCESS REVENUES			
OVER EXPENSES	4,392.66	1,585.80	5,978.46
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE	<u>7,373.40</u>	<u>22,055.50</u>	<u>29,428.90</u>
ENDING CASH BALANCE	<u>11,766.06</u>	<u>23,641.30</u>	<u>35,407.36</u>

Observations

by Steve Glover

Common Loons are very rare in Contra Costa County in summer, but one in breeding plumage has been present all summer at the Richmond Marina. It was accompanied by a second bird, this one in non-breeding plumage, on 8/9. This is apparently a new high summer count for the county (SG). **Tundra Swans** are usually gone from the county by April, so the following records are exceptional: On 5/18, six immature birds were seen flying north over the Concord Naval Weapons Station, and three apparently healthy, free-flying adults were present on 6/1 (SR). Nine **Mute Swans**, first detected on last year's Christmas Bird Count, are still present at the Concord Naval Weapons Station, and on 5/22 four small young were noted. Mute Swans are non-native birds that are infamous for their aggressiveness, so their establishment could be detrimental to native species (SR). The male **Harlequin Duck** has continued to be seen on and around Brooks Island, Richmond, through the summer. A report appeared on the Bird Box in late July of a **Black Scoter** at Brooks Island, a report of great interest because there are no county records for summer.

The *Breeding Bird Atlas* had its first confirmation of **Turkey Vulture** when young were seen at the nest on the south flanks of Mt. Diablo on 5/17 (MS). Surveys in past years have found **Black Rails** to be common along Waterfront Rd., and this appears to still be the case. Four were heard along Waterfront Rd. on 7/14 (DW), and three more were heard on 7/17 (JL). A **Virginia Rail** was heard at Marsh Creek Reservoir on 6/10, a date that strongly suggests breeding (SG). **Black Oyster-**

catchers have been confirmed at Brooks Island and West Brothers Island, these probably being the only nest sites in the county. A **Wandering Tattler**, regular in Richmond in Fall, was at the Richmond Marina on 8/9 (SG). The **Caspian Tern** colony on Brooks Island was censused on 6/25. An estimated 550 nests were found, making this the largest colony in northern California (TR). Five **Least Terns**, rare but regular in the Richmond area in summer, were at Brooks Island in June (SG)

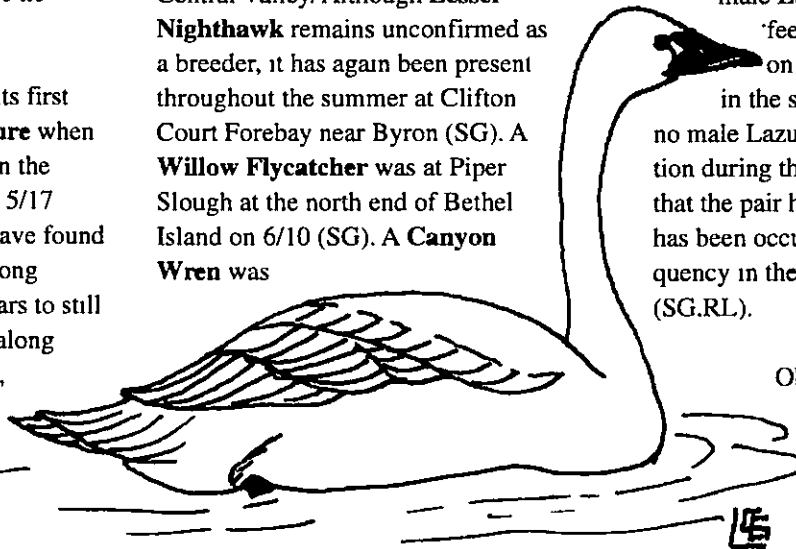
Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

The bird of the summer for Contra Costa was a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** that hit a window in Richmond on 7/18 and was taken to The Lindsay Museum for rehabilitation. It is hoped that the photos of this long overdue county first will allow subspecific identification although it is likely a post-breeding wanderer from the Central Valley. Although **Lesser Nighthawk** remains unconfirmed as a breeder, it has again been present throughout the summer at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron (SG). A **Willow Flycatcher** was at Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island on 6/10 (SG). A **Canyon Wren** was

heard at the Falls Trail, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 6/15, this being a previously unknown location (KH,RL). Eight pairs of **Winter Wrens** were present along Pinehurst Rd. west of Moraga on 6/20 (SG).

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was singing at Jackass Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 6/19/98. There are only a couple of county nest records, all from Pine Canyon, but this date indicates breeding (SG). A male **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 6/8 (ES). An immature male **Blue Grosbeak** was near the intersection of Highland and Collier Canyon Rds. in southern CCC on 6/9. Although likely a late migrant, this is but the third county record away from the Delta (SG).

The adult male **Indigo Bunting**, present since at least 5/30, continued to at least 7/28 (many observations). On that date he responded territorially to our pishing, flying rapidly to the boundaries of his territory, the center of which was a small willow clump. In that clump was a female **Lazuli Bunting** that was feeding begging young. Based on the male being on territory in the same bush and the fact that no male Lazulis were found at that location during the summer, it seems likely that the pair hybridized, a situation that has been occurring with increasing frequency in the Bay Area in recent years (SG,RL).



Observers: Steve Glover, Kevin Hints, Ron Lindeman, John Luther, Steve Rottenborn, Tom Ryan, Malcolm Sproul, Emilie Strauss, Denise Wight.

1998-1999 MDAS Field Trip Schedule

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

This is a **tentative** schedule of MDAS field trips in 1998-1999. Trips are open to members and nonmembers alike. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Read the *Quail* for details or call the Audubon tape at (925) 283-8266. Weekday trips are often switched between Wednesday and Thursday to take advantage of tides or other opportunities. The Kern River trip to southern California is a three-day trip. The trips to the Sacramento Wildlife Refuges, Yuba Pass, and Lassen NP are two days. Two-day or three-day trips may be done either day or any day alone. The number in parentheses indicates difficulty of the trip with (1) easy with little walking, (2) moderate, and (3) difficult with extensive walking.

September 12, Saturday	Moss Landing—Monterey (3)	18, Thursday	Shell Ridge (2)
17, Thursday	Hayward Regional Shoreline (2)	24, Wednesday	Huckleberry Reserve (2)
26, Saturday	Outer Point Reyes (2)	27, Saturday	Black Diamond Reg. Park (3)
October 3, Saturday	Bodega Bay (1)	April 1, Thursday	Briones Wildflowers (2)
7, Wednesday	S.F. Bay Wildlife Refuge (1)	3, Saturday	Garin Regional Park (3)
15, Thursday	Tilden Park (2)	7, Wednesday	Lake Lagunitas (2)
17, Saturday	Hawk Hill, Marin Cty (2)	15, Thursday	Pine Canyon (3)
21, Wednesday	Charleston Slough (2)	21, Wednesday	Ida Clayton Rd, Napa Cty (1)
29, Thursday	Ironhouse Sant. Dist. (2)	24, Saturday	BIRDATHON
31, Saturday	Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes (3)	<i>29 Thurs</i>	<i>Oct 24-25-26</i>
November 4, Wed.	Arrowhead Marsh (1)	May 1, Saturday	Mines Road, Alameda Cty (1)
12, Thursday	Sibley Reserve (2)	5, Wednesday	Redwood (2)
14, Saturday	Limantour, Pt. Reyes (2)	8, Saturday	Mitchell Canyon (3)
18, Wednesday	Mt View San Plant (1)	12, Wednesday	Mt Diablo State Park (2)
December 3, Thursday	Altamont (1)	20, Thursday	Napa River (2)
5&6, Sat & Sun.	Sacramento Refuges (1)	22, Saturday	East Contra Costa County (2)
10, Thursday	Hidden Lakes (1)	26, Wednesday	Annadel State Park (2)
16, Wednesday	Niles Canyon (2)	29-31, Sat., Sun. & Mon.	Kern River (3)
19, Saturday	CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT	June 3, Thursday	West Briones (2)
31, Thursday	Palo Alto Baylands (1)	5, Saturday	Outer Point Reyes (2)
January 6, Wednesday	Upper San Pablo Res. (2)	9, Wednesday	Bobelaine Sanctuary (2)
9, Saturday	Putah Creek (1)	19-20, Sat. & Sun.	Yuba Pass—Sierra Valley (2)
13, Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park (2)	July 10-11, Sat. & Sun.	Lassen National Park (2)
21, Thursday	Berkeley Shoreline (2)	August 7, Saturday	San Mateo coast (2)
23, Saturday	Santa Cruz (2)	21, Saturday	Bodega Bay (1)
27, Wednesday	Grizzly Is. Wildlife Refuge (1)		
February 4, Thursday	Thornton (1)		
10, Wednesday	Bolinas—5 Brooks (2)		
13, Saturday	Santa Fe Grade & Los Banos (2)		
18, Thursday	Los Gallenos (2)		
24, Wednesday	Lafayette Reservoir (2)		
27, Saturday	Anderson Marsh, Lake County (2)		
March 4, Thursday	Hayward Reg. Shoreline (2)		
10, Wednesday	Tilden Park (2)		
13, Saturday	Tomaes Bay St. Park (2)		

This year MDAS features "Explore Contra Costa." Twelve of our field trips will explore a different area of our diverse County. See the *Quail* each month for more details



News from *Wild Birds Unlimited*

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

Backyard Birdfeeding

For the third consecutive summer we have had many reports of Lesser Goldfinches at our thistle feeders. In previous years there were very few sightings of this yellow-and-black bird at feeders. This year, many people saw the adults bringing fledglings to the feeders. This possibly indicates the ability of some birds to adapt to new food sources.

With nesting finished this season for most birds, the numbers of birds at the feeders is increasing dramatically. Chickadees, titmice, and woodpeckers are coming to the suet-and-peanut feeders. Many finches are at the sunflower-and-thistle feeders. Jays are everywhere, trying to dominate the feeders. Hooded and Bullock's Orioles will be leaving soon on their southward migration. Oriole reports were low this season, probably due to the abundance of natural food.

Providing water for the birds is very important. In the hot weather it is sometimes necessary to fill the birdbaths twice each day. We have seen birds take a 30-minute bath on hot days with 5-6 more waiting their turn! Many birds that don't come to bird feeders will use birdbaths. We recently had a Cooper's Hawk take a 20-minute bath

Birding Arizona in August?

Yes! It was cooler in Arizona than here in August, the month of "second spring" in Arizona. This is when the rains arrive (sometimes monsoons). The hills are green, and there are wildflowers everywhere, including cactus. We saw 135 bird species, including 10 hummingbirds, a Green Kingfisher, and nine Elegant Trogons. It was fantastic!

Miller Canyon, which is just south of the famous Ramsey Canyon, was very pleasant at 5800 feet. The hummingbirds were great, and very few people.

Thank You, Donors! Donations to the Al McNabney Memorial Fund:

Wild Birds Unlimited

Dr. and Mrs. Maury Stern

Ruth Riordan

Ruth Stewart

Donations to the
MDAS General Fund:

Dolores Velez

Lesley Benn

Mr. and Mrs. Marriott Dickey
(in memory of Sally Steller)

Support Your Chapter and Save Money Too!

The 1999 Entertainment Book will be available at the September 3 MDAS general meeting and its savings coupons can be used immediately. Help your Audubon Chapter by purchasing this great savings book at chapter meetings or at either of the two Wild Birds Unlimited locations: 692 Contra Costa Blvd. Pleasant Hill, or 7182 Regional St. Dublin.

Calling All MDAS Bird Photographers

The first Wednesday of each month, the Palo Alto Bird Photography Group meets at the Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretative Center in Palo Alto. If any MDAS members are interested in attending the September 2 meeting or in forming a similar group in Contra Costa, call Bonnie Harrigan at (925) 943-1306

Animal Eyes at The Lindsay Wildlife Museum

The Lindsay Wildlife Museum is featuring *Animal Eyes*, a fascinating look at five facets of animal vision. "Different Kinds of Eyes" focuses on the various eye types, "Different Places on Different Faces" looks at how the position of animal eyes affects what they see. "Night Eyes" explores how animals see at night, "Seeing in Color" explores how eyes process color. "3 Eyes, 5 Eyes, 6 Eyes, More" examines animals with multiple eyes. Developed by

the Museum of Ophthalmology in San Francisco with support from the National Science Foundation and LensCrafters, *Animal Eyes* runs through November 1.

Bidding on Better Birdhouses

On Sunday, October 4, the Sulphur Creek Nature Center is hosting a Build a Better Birdhouse auction of over 125 birdhouses. The auction will raise funds for an expansion of the Hayward Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and Nature Study Classrooms. Sulphur Creek Nature Center is located at 1801 D St., Hayward. For more information, call Randy Gates, (510) 881-4747.

Denise Wight Offers Fall Field Classes

Denise Wight will be teaching field classes for both beginning and intermediate birders through the Orinda Community Center. Beginning classes will meet Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon, September 22-October 27 at various Contra Costa locations. Bay Area Birding Classes range farther afield and will meet Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., September 24-October 29. For class details, call Denise at 370-7342. Please call the Orinda Community Center at 254-2445 for cost and more information on registration.

SFBBO Classes

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is offering a class in raptor identification, behavior, migration ecology, and conservation. Joe Didonato, Head Naturalist for East Bay Regional Park District, is the instructor. Classes meet on two Thursdays, October 1 and 8, from 7:30-9:30 p.m. followed by a field trip to the Marin headlands on Sunday, October 11. Cost is \$40 (member); \$55 (nonmember)

John Luther, a field trip leader for Field Guides, a Nature Company Betchart Expeditions, will teach a class in shorebird identification on two Wednesdays, September 30 and October 7, 7-9 p.m., with a field trip to the Hayward Shoreline on Saturday, October 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Cost is \$50 member, \$65 (nonmember).

For information on either class, call (408) 946-6548.

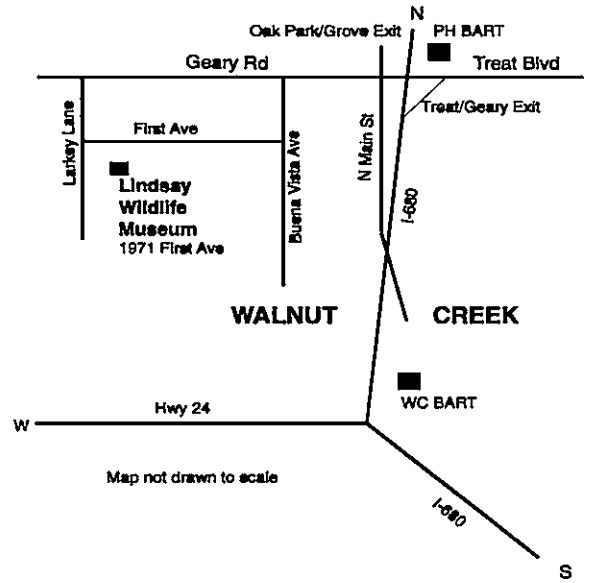
CALENDAR

September 3, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meetings resume after summer break, EXHIBIT HALL, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right.). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

September 10, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members welcome to attend.

September 18, Fri., 9 a.m.—*Quail* mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd. PH. (Volunteers prepare the *Quail* issue for mailing.)

General meetings are held the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. The meeting schedule for 1998-1999 is as follow: October 1, November 5, December 3, January 7, February 4, March 4, April 1, May 6, June 3.



The Quail is published 11 months of the year. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the *Quail* and *Audubon* magazine. Send a check made out to NAS (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available), to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. Subscription to the *Quail* is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the *Quail* to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

October 1998

Vol. 45, No. 3

Next Deadline: October 1

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Thanks PG&E, EBMUD, Bob and Brian

Individuals with ideas and with the assistance of corporations can accomplish what is otherwise impossible or improbable. You may have seen Gary Bogue's story in the September 5 edition of the *Contra Costa Times*. This wonderful story described how MDAS's Bob Wisecarver and Brian Murphy representing Lindsay Museum worked with individuals at PG&E and EBMUD to create an "osprey nest platform" at San Pablo Reservoir.

We'll all be watching, hoping, and waiting to see what will happen over the spring. However, without the support of PG&E and EBMUD, there would be nothing to anticipate. Purchasing a 50-foot pole, transporting it over narrow roads, and installing this 1,200-pound "tree replacement" would not have been possible for MDAS alone. With Bob and Brian's ideas and support from these two utilities, the imagination of many people in our community will come alive—watching and waiting.

One job of the Audubon Society is to stimulate the interest of the community in learning more about birds. Bob and Brian succeeded in sparking the imagination of people within two local organizations and together the individuals and the organizations acted to further conservation.

(Continued on page 1)

Upcoming Events:

Mono Lake Update

Bartshe Miller, Education Director at the Mono Lake Committee, will give our program for the October 1 meeting in the **Exhibit Hall** of the Lindsay Wildlife Museum. Miller update us on the story of Mono Lake, including recent revelations about Mono's bird life, its rising lake level, and what the future might hold for this ancient inland sea.

The slide presentation blends Mono's unique natural and human history. Audubon California played an instrumental role in making protection for Mono Lake possible. But questions still remain: Is the work finished? Is it time to walk away from Mono Lake? Can the lessons of Mono's political past be applied to other threatened waters in California?

1998 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Mono Lake Committee's founding. Miller has lived in the Mono Basin for 6 years. He worked as a Forest Service

Ranger before beginning work with Mono Lake Committee three years ago. His background is in Environmental Education, graduating with a B.A. in U.S. History from Northwestern University in 1988.

Birding Information Features Hugh Harvey

During the Birding Information portion of the general meeting, we will hear Hugh Harvey speaking on "Signs of the Times," his witty observations on life and the environment. Harvey, a longtime MDAS member and field trip leader, travels extensively as a merchant seaman. His comments on the state of the environment are sure to be both informative and perceptive.

MDAS Meeting Information

Lindsay Museum, EXHIBIT HALL,
Doors open 6:30 p.m.; Birding Information 7 p.m.; business meeting 7:30 p.m.; Program 8:30 p.m. For directions to the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, see page 8.

Audubon Adventures Seeks Sponsors

Are you interested in teaching children to observe, understand, and appreciate birds, other wildlife, and the relationship of the human species to the natural world? Consider subscribing to, or sponsoring a classroom, grades 4-6, in **Audubon Adventures**.

Sponsoring one classroom in Audubon Adventures costs only \$35 and provides 32 student newspapers for each topic; a Teacher's Resource Manual; Resource Directory for Internet; CD-Rom, book and video resources; a 20-minute video on wolves, and Internet access to National Audubon experts. If you want to sponsor a class or nominate a class for sponsorship, call Cecil Williams at (510) 798-0303.

Editorial**Connections***by Gloria Cannon*

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society joined other environmental groups (including the Environmental Water Caucus, Save Mt. Diablo, Sierra Club, and Clean Water Action) and asked the Board of Directors of the Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) to clarify its position on enlarging Los Vaqueros Reservoir at its August 19 meeting.

Recent articles in the *Contra Costa Times* reported that CCWD was involved in negotiations with the Ag-Urban Group whose objective was to store water in a reservoir located near the Delta before transporting the water to southern California.

In response to MDAS's written comments, CCWD General Manager Walter Bishop stated in a August 28 letter that Los Vaqueros was one of 20 sites being examined as part of CalFed: "Los Vaqueros is just one of the sites being examined. CCWD is not supporting any proposal at this time. The District has emphasized to CalFed that CCWD voters would have to approve any proposal to use Los Vaqueros if it is selected."

Bishop's letter included "a set of principles the CCWD Board has submitted to CalFed to be used to guide consideration of an expanded Los Vaqueros Reservoir." Here are those principles:

1. Project must improve water quality and reliability for CCWD
2. Project must enhance the Delta environment
3. Project must protect and enhance the fisheries and terrestrial species benefits provided by the existing Los Vaqueros Project
4. Project must preserve and increase the recreational opportunities of the Los Vaqueros Project
5. CCWD must retain control of the watershed and operation of the reservoir
6. Project must protect and reimburse the financial investment made by CCWD customers who financed the existing \$450 million Los Vaqueros Project
7. Project must have the full support of the residents of Contra Costa County."

Do not be comforted by this list of principles; there is too much "wiggle room" in them. For example, #4 states that such a project would have to "increase recreational opportunities of the reservoir." On Wednesday, September 2, the CCWD Board approved a recreational plan that was so anemic, so skeletal that adding a multiuse trail would qualify as an improvement.

Many speakers at the August Board meeting are convinced that CCWD does not want to build recreational facilities that will only be buried under water in a few years. The Board, they said, does not want Contra Costans to become attached to all that open space that will be lost when the reservoir is enlarged.

Principle #5 states that CCWD would retain control over the watershed. That issue will be a moot point if the reservoir is enlarged to 10 times its present size. The present, 18,000 acres of open space would be inundated. Most of the habitat for birds and wildlife would be lost, and the housing development that is strangling East County would be spurred by access to a plentiful, cheap water supply.

We have much more to learn about the intentions and participations of CCWD in a dam solution to California's water woes.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES*Continued from page 1*

Conservation is fueled by the dreams of individuals. If you have dreams like Bob and Brian, let's spread our dreams by talking about them. Talk with corporations in our community to make possible the otherwise impossible. People in these organizations have dreams too!

If MDAS can help, please contact me or one of our other Board members.

Carol Frischmann

<http://www.mdli.com/ohs>

510-895-1313 Ext. 1471

Environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas Dies

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, tireless environmentalist, died May 15 at her home in Florida. She was 108.

Douglas was considered the authority on the Everglades, and she helped to lead the effort to have the 1.6 million acres designated as Everglades national Park in 1946. That same year she published her book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*. She was co-founder of Friends of the Everglades, and she also worked to protect Big Cypress National Preserve from development. In 1985 Douglas was the first recipient of the National Parks and Conservation Association award named for her.—From *National Parks* (the NPCA journal), July/August 1998

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY**
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*Gloria Cannon, Editor, (925) 753-0862,
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Observations

by Steve Glover

Observations were few this month due to heat and perhaps a little atlas burnout, so I thought I would summarize some of the data that has been submitted thus far for the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas. A few non-atlas sightings are mixed in as well.

This month I have tackled species up through the woodpeckers; next month I will start with the flycatchers. As of 9/2 I have received data from about 70% of the blocks that were atlased this season.

For atlasing purposes, the county has been broken into 106 blocks that are 5-square-kilometers each. Of these less than 70 are complete blocks, the rest are at least partly composed of another county. Only 16 blocks were left uncovered this season, almost all of them only partial blocks. Thus far I have records of 1300 breeding confirmations. Put in proper context this is more nest records than have been published in the entire birding history of the county!

Wood Duck, an extremely rare breeder in the county, was confirmed only at Discovery Bay. **Mallard**, in contrast, has already been confirmed in 22 blocks. Not surprisingly we confirmed just one pair of **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, this one at Las Trampas Regional Park. We confirmed five of the more common **Cooper's Hawk**, including one from suburban Concord. Before the very late 1970s **Red-shouldered Hawk** was unknown as a breeder in the county. Just 20 years later, we have confirmed them in nine blocks and found pairs in seven more blocks. Always our most common buteo, **Red-tailed Hawk** was found nesting in a healthy 18 blocks with pairs in 21 others. Before the atlas, there were but two nest records for the county of **Swainson's Hawk**. We have already added two more in extreme East County.

Wild Turkey has increased rapidly in recent years in the foothills of Mt. Diablo. Its presence in two blocks at Las Trampas Regional Park, including one confirmation, means we should expect it

to spread rapidly in the watershed areas west of I-680. **California Quail** has been confirmed in 13 blocks. This low number is almost assuredly attributable to atlasers packing it in too early for the season. Due to late rains this season, no baby quail

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 178 Country Brook Loop, San Ramon, CA 94583, or call 866-1409. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

were noted until well into June, a time when many stopped atlasing.

Black Oystercatchers were confirmed from both of the known nest sites at Richmond. Disappointing was just three confirmations for **Black-necked Stilt** and two for **American Avocet**. Such small numbers in an historically wet year don't bode well for future seasons that will surely be drier. The **Caspian Tern** colony at Brooks Island, thought to be the largest in Northern California, was estimated to contain 550 nests this season (Tom Ryan, pers. comm.).

Band-tailed Pigeons have been confirmed in three blocks thus far—all in blocks in the moist Berkeley Hills. **Mourning Doves**, by contrast, have already been confirmed in 23 blocks. Owls are the bane of all atlasers due to the simple fact that it is much easier to get observers to venture out by day than by night. Despite a feeble effort, we confirmed **Barn Owl** in four blocks, **Western Screech-Owl** in three blocks, and **Great Horned Owl** in six blocks. Species like **Burrowing Owl** are a major reason why atlas projects are undertaken. Unfortunately, they are also reasons why the results of an atlas can be disheartening. We managed confirmation of this vulnerable species in just one solitary block.

Once again, **Lesser Nighthawk** was detected at Clifton Court Forebay, but once again it defied confirmation. **White-throated Swift**, really a pretty easy species to confirm, was found in only 8 blocks. Frankly, we should have done better.

Anna's Hummingbird, always our most common hummer, was confirmed in 19 blocks. **Allen's Hummingbird**, closely tied with the moister climate of the Berkeley Hills, was confirmed in five blocks.

Much of the natural habitat of **Belted Kingfishers** has been lost to channelization and rip-rapping so a total of only two confirmations did not come as a surprise.

Nuttall's Woodpecker was confirmed in 20 blocks (with pairs found in 10 others). Although the populations are nowhere near as dense as further inland, they were found in a surprising number of blocks in the western Berkeley Hills. Enlightening are the ranges of **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpeckers**, two species probably not long separated from each other: Downy's, partial to more open areas including residential, were confirmed in 18 blocks. Pairs were found in 13 others. Hairy's, strongly tied to hardwoods and, thus absent from west and east county, were confirmed in only three blocks.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was at Prospector's Gap, MDSP, on 8/16, a date which matches well with our few records of fall migrants (KH,RL). Nine **Willow Flycatchers** were at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, on 9/1 (SG). Two **Bank Swallows**, rare in the county, were amongst 110+ **Tree Swallows** at Piper Slough on 9/1. A **Red-eyed Vireo**, a rare but regular vagrant in the county, was at Carquinez Straits Regional Park in Martinez on 6/21 (DW).

Observers: Steve Glover, Kevin Hints, Ron Lindeman, Denise Wight

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

692 Contra Costa Blvd.
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798-0303

October Fest!! Sat., Oct. 3

Come for a fun-filled and educational day

- Seed & Suet Sale (through 10/25/98).
- 8:00 a.m. birdwalk—call for reservations.
- Meet and talk with John Muir.
- See Takai, the 3-year old gray wolf
- The Lindsay Wildlife Museum will have a presentation with live bats
- Dee Dee, the 6-foot chickadee is returning
- Serenescapes will exhibit & sell plants to attract birds & butterflies
- Contra Costa Beekeepers will exhibit honeybees (not from Africa)
- Mt Diablo Audubon Society will have a table & display.
- C.C. County Mosquito Abatement will have a display on local insects & spiders

Sample our Shade Grown Coffee which benefits the birds. This coffee preserves the migratory bird habitats by maintaining the native tree canopy and helps protect endangered species.

Buy Your '99 Entertainment Book Now and Save All Year!

The Entertainment '99 Book is available for purchase! Its valuable, money-saving coupons for restaurants, hotels, events, and services can be used immediately!

MDAS sells Entertainment books as a fundraiser for the chapter. You help MDAS when you buy Entertainment '99 at our general meetings, or at either of the two Wild Bird Unlimited stores: 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill, or 7182 Regional St., Dublin

Classes and Events

Second Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium, Nov. 19-22

The Central Valley Bird Club announces its second annual symposium will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton November 19-22. Speakers include Pete Dunne, John Dunn, and Arnold Small. There will be field trips, workshops, a Birder's Market, and more. Tens of thousands of waterfowl and cranes and over 200 species of other birds are featured in field trips. (Denise Wight, who attended last year's symposium, has raved about this event ever since; she highly recommends it.) For a brochure/ registration form, write F. Oliver, 1817 Songbird Place, Lodi 95240 or call the Convention/ Visitors Bureau at 1-800-350-1987

Paddle through Arrowhead Marsh

Canoes in Sloughs, Save the Bay's education program, is offering a paddle around Arrowhead marsh, near the Oakland International Airport, on either Saturday, October 3, or Saturday, December 5. Trip goers will spend 2 hours on land and approximately 2 hours paddling. All skill levels are welcome. Cost is \$40 for members and \$60 for non-members. Lunch is included. Send a check or money order to Save the Bay (1736 Franklin St, 4th floor, Oakland 94612) along with your name, address, phone, preferred trip date, and preferred lunch (vegetarian /nonvegetarian)

Sandhill Crane Festival, Oct. 9-11

Participate in the family activities, workshops, nature tours, music and dances planned for the Sandhill Crane Festival in Lodi. Call (209) 368-6444 for more information

Central Coast Birding Rally, Santa Barbara County, Oct. 24

The La Purisima Audubon Society (LPAS) of northern Santa Barbara County, announced its first annual Central Coast Birding Rally to be held on Saturday, October 24

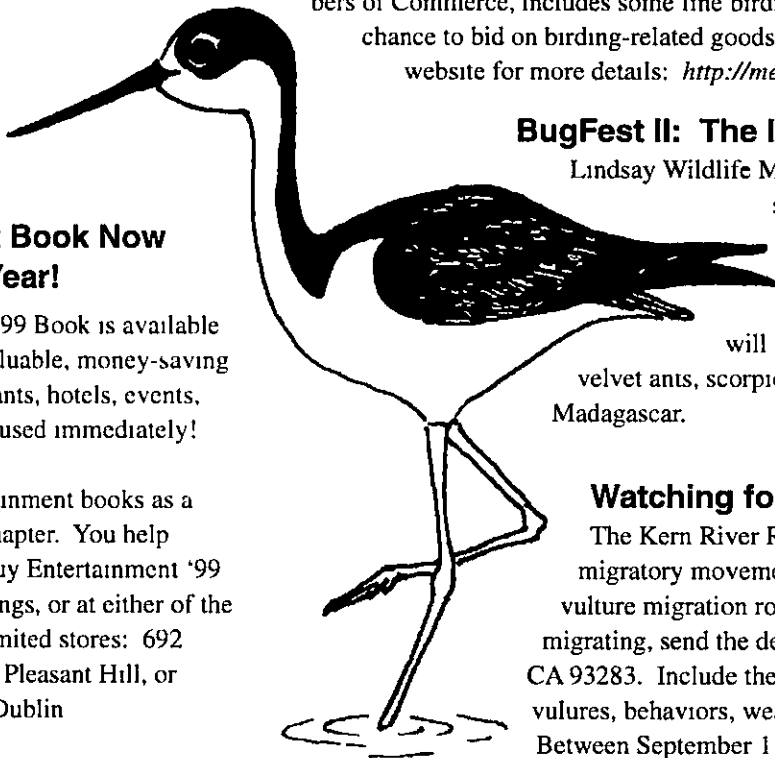
The Rally, held in cooperation with community businesses, organizations, and Chambers of Commerce, includes some fine birding, a free barbecue picnic, and the chance to bid on birding-related goods at a mini-auction. Visit the LPAS Rally website for more details: <http://members.wbs.net/homepages/lp/al/pas.html>

BugFest II: The Insects Return

Lindsay Wildlife Museum's 1998 Family Insect Festival is set for Saturday and Sunday, October 3 & 4. This "creepy" event provides an opportunity to get in touch with these amazing critters. Insects on exhibit will include walking sticks, praying mantis, velvet ants, scorpions, and the Hissing Cockroaches of Madagascar.

Watching for Vultures

The Kern River Research Center seeks information on the migratory movements of vultures. If you know of a regular vulture migration route or see an unusual number of vultures migrating, send the details to KRRC, P.O. Box 990, Weldon, CA 93283. Include the date, location, time of day, number of vultures, behaviors, weather, and any other relevant information. Between September 1 and October 31, over 33,000 vultures pass through the Kern Valley.



October Field Trips

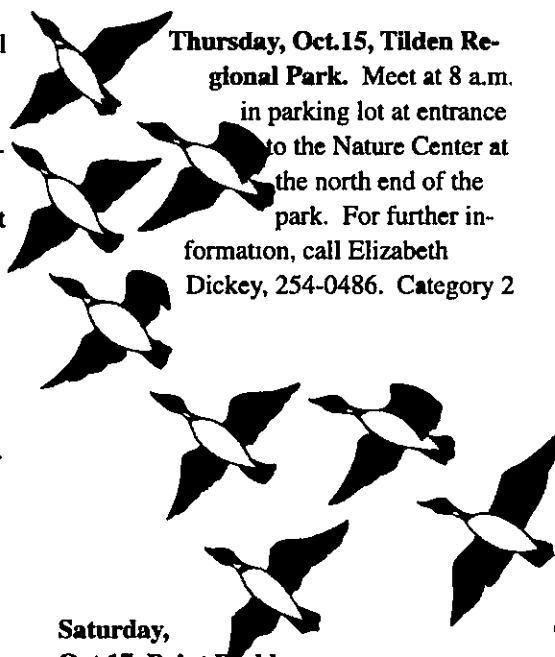
Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

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. 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.

Saturday, Oct. 3, Bodega Bay. Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m., southwest corner of Sun Valley Shopping Center parking lot. Or meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Tides Restaurant. Go north on US 101. Take the Washington St. exit in Petaluma, go west on Bodega Hwy. to SR 1, turn right to Bodega Bay. The Tides is on left, opposite a Union '76 station. Shorebirds, rails, waterbirds, migrants. Leader: Pat McEchren, 934-3041 Category 1

Wednesday, Oct. 7, San Francisco Bay Refuge. Carpool meets at 8 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 9 a.m. at parking lot at entrance to refuge. We will first bird on the flats east of Thornton Ave.; look for people with binocs on the levee; traffic is difficult.

As an alternate route to I-880 and SR 84, take I-680 south to Fremont; exit Washington Ave. and continue to end. Go right on Fremont Blvd., and turn left onto Stevenson to I-880. Go north on freeway to Thornton exit and go west (to the left) on Thornton Rd. This will eventually bring you to the refuge entrance. Walking is mostly level, 1-2 miles. Leader: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732 Category 2



Saturday, Oct. 17, Point Diablo (Hawk Hill). Carpool meets at 8 a.m., Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of SR 24. Or meet at 9:15 a.m. in upper lagoon parking area. Take the San Rafael Bridge and US 101 south to SECOND Sausalito exit. At stop sign, go left UP the hill. At the intersection, go right downhill. At the next stop sign, turn left and continue on to parking lot at upper lagoon. Migrating hawks and swifts. Leader: Fred Safir, 937-2906 Category 2

Wednesday, Oct. 21, Charleston Slough. Carpool meets at 7:00 a.m. on El Cerro Blvd., just west of I-680. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at end of Terminal Rd., Mountain View. Take the Dumbarton Bridge and drive south on US 101 to the San Antonio Rd. exit. Go north and east on San Anto-

Thursday, Oct. 15, Tilden Regional Park. Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot at entrance to the Nature Center at the north end of the park. For further information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2

no and turn right onto Terminal Rd. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 2

Thursday, Oct. 29, Ironhouse Sanitary Plant. No carpool. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the plant's parking lot. Take Pacheco Blvd. exit from I-680, turn right onto Arthur Rd., and go under the freeway. Arthur Rd. turns left, then right; at the second turn, turn sharp left onto a non-county-maintained road. Follow the road into the sanitary plant. Possibly bitterns and heron. Leader: Norah Bain, 254-4516 Category 1

Saturday, Oct. 31, Abbott's Lagoon. Carpool meets at 7:00 a.m., Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of SR 24. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. at Bear Valley Visitor's Center, Point Reyes. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From US 101, take San Rafael exit, go 2 blocks, left onto 3rd St. In San Anselmo, turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. At SR 1, turn right 0.25 mile, then left onto Bear Valley Rd. Turn left off Bear Valley into the Visitor's Center. Waterfowl, shorebirds, and possibly hawks or eagles. Carry lunch and liquids. Leader: Maury Stearn, 284-5980 Category 2

Field Trip Report

Fifteen members and guests spent a nice day at Bodega Bay. The 60°, foggy weather was a welcome change from the heat of the Diablo Valley. Highlights of the 62 species seen included an Osprey at eye level at Bodega head, a Virginia Rail; Black Oystercatcher; Wandering Tattler; Ruddy and Black Turnstones; Short-billed Dowitchers in partial breeding plumage; and Caspian and Elegant Terns.

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.

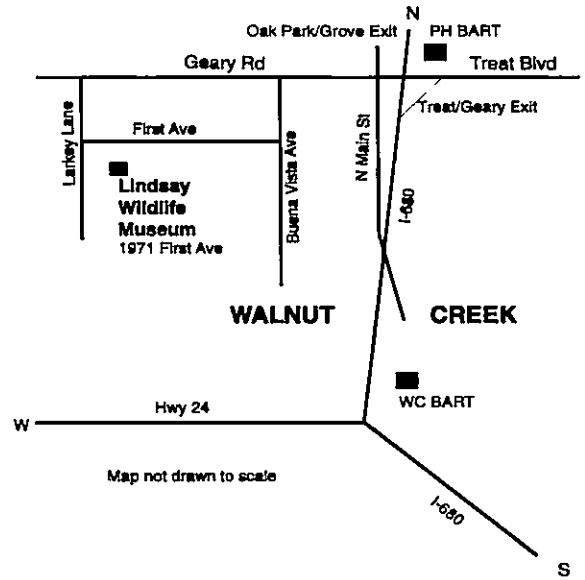
CALENDAR

October 1, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Exhibits Hall, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right.). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

October 8, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH.

October 16, Fri., 9 a.m.—*Quail* mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd. PH (Volunteers prepare the *Quail* issue for mailing.)

General meetings are held the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. The meeting schedule for the remainder of 1998-1999 is as follow: November 5, December 3, January 7, February 4, March 4, April 1, May 6, June 3



The Quail is published 11 months of the year. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the Quail and Audubon magazine. Send a check made out to NAS (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available), to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. Subscription to the Quail is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the Quail to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.



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



The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
94597-0053

November 1998

Vol. 45, No. 3

Next Deadline: December 3

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Gifts That Keep on Giving

Thinking ahead to the holiday season, I'm selecting gifts for friends and family. Gifts that seem to mean a lot to people involve spending time with them. Another meaningful gift is one that is used many times.

This year I'm trying something new. Instead of fruit baskets for relatives I don't see often, I'm going to send an Audubon membership and a bird feeder. For local friends who enjoy nature and know little about birds, I'll take them on a walk. We'll see birds along the way and maybe learn to use the most basic Stokes guide. To celebrate the memory of friends I lost this year, I'm giving a donation to MDAS to support education projects here in Contra Costa County. Barbara Vaughn (our Sales Manager) will help me get Entertainment Books for my friends who don't care about the out-of-doors but who do like a bargain.

When friends, family, and neighbors become more aware of and educated about nature, they value it more. Perhaps they'll think more about the creatures we love when they vote. Maybe they'll pass the information on to others. That's when a gift keeps on giving.

Good luck with your shopping. If you need some suggestions for these perpetual gifts, please give Barbara or myself a call. Please finish your shopping early so you can join us on our annual Christmas Count and Countdown Dinner!

Upcoming Events:

International Efforts to Protect Taiwanese Spoonbill Habitat

At our November general meeting MDAS is pleased to have Randy Hester and Marcia McNally of Spoonbill Action Voluntary Echo (SAVE) International describe the international efforts to save the habitat of one of the rarest birds in the world, the black-faced spoonbill of Taiwan.

In 1993, two Taiwanese consortiums, Tuntex and Yei-Long, jointly announced their intention to develop a petrochemical industrial complex in the Tsengwen Estuary, located along the southwest coast of Tainan County.

Less than a year later, environmental and bird groups both within Taiwan and abroad began the fight to stop the project. because the estuary is the wintering grounds for the endangered black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*). The black-faced spoonbill is one of the rarest birds in the world. More than half of the remaining 600 birds winter in the coastal wetlands of Chi-gu Lagoon at the mouth of the Tsengwen River. The complex and related development would destroy one-third of the spoonbill's habitat.

In 1997 Randy Hester, a UC Berkeley Professor, was visiting his friend and colleague John K.C. Liu at National Taiwan University (NTU). Liu took Hester to the site of the controversy. They met the fishermen engaged in the Bin-nan battle, saw the spoonbill, and looked at coastal subsidence problems that were the result of pumping out groundwater for agricultural and industrial purposes.

Hester and Liu agreed to run simultaneous studio projects focusing on the Tsengwen Estuary and Chi-gu Lagoon, the proposed site for the petrochemical complex. (See *Saving the Spoonbill* continued on page 4)

MDAS Meeting Information

The next General Meeting: Thurs., Nov. 5 in the Lindsay Museum Community Room. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.;

Birding Info, 7 p.m.,
Business meeting at 7:30.
Refreshments at 8 p.m.
Program begins at 8:30.

For directions to the Lindsay, see p. 8.

Amazing Birds Featured in Nov Birding Information

Birding information for November will be presented by MDAS International Conservation Chairperson, Jill Hedgecock. Inspired by Robert S. Lemmon's 1952 book, *Our Amazing Birds*, Jill will present a fun-filled slide show featuring clever bird nicknames along with odd and interesting data. What species might be called "A Prize Package of Oddities"? Come find out what bird species inspired this title.

Connections: Contra Costa Transportation Authority

by Joel Summerhill

Measure C of 1988

In 1988, Contra Costa voters approved Measure C, which established a half-cent sales tax to raise about \$594 million for road projects over 20 years.

The tax measure was paired with a growth management plan for traffic and municipal services. Each year 18 percent of the money raised is distributed among participating local jurisdictions. The money can be spent on any transportation project they chose as long as the Transportation Authority approves it. Each jurisdiction had to, among other requirements, adopt a growth management element in its General Plan, a development mitigation program (to ensure new growth paid its share of costs), and performance standards for fire, police, parks, water, flood control, and sewer.

When Measure C was formulated, one of the major principles was that more than \$1 billion in available funds would be expended for major regional projects. Several specific projects were included, such as the BART extension to East County, improvements to the Interstate 680 Corridor and Highway 4, and construction of the Richmond Parkway.

The CoCo Transportation Authority

The Transportation Authority has generally rubberstamped the projects submitted by local jurisdictions although four years ago it tried to show a little backbone. The Authority planned to consider a proposal that would require cities and the county to obtain approval from neighboring towns before allowing a development whose traffic would impact those towns. Because of protests from developers and development-friendly governments, the proposal slid into oblivion, and the Transportation Authority returned to business-as-usual of handing out checks.

Currently, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority consists of Barbara Guise,

Chair; Charlie Abrams, Vice Chair; Irma Anderson; Jane Bartke; Joe Canciamilla; Donna Gerber; Millie Greenberg; Sarge Littlehale; Allen Payton; Julie Pierce; and Hermann Welm.

At its October 1 meeting, the Administration and Projects Committee of the Transportation Authority authorized expenditure of \$20 million to acquire rights of way necessary to widen Highway 4. Total construction cost is estimated to be \$19.7 million.

Included in Measure C was a stipulation that the Transportation Authority work with a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). There are about 10 other members of the CAC although not all cities have appointed a representative. MDAS was asked to provide an at-large representative to that Citizens Advisory Committee, and I am the MDAS representative. The Sierra Club also has an at-large representative on the CAC. Although advisory-only in nature, having a representative on the Advisory Committee provides MDAS with the opportunity to influence the expenditure of over \$500 million in transportation funds.

Lessons Learned

What I have learned from sitting on the Advisory Committee is the complexity of growth and transportation issues in Contra Costa. Even with the improvements to the I-680 Corridor and Highway 4 and new BART stations in North Concord and Bay Point, traffic continues to exceed road capacity. I've also learned that there simply isn't enough money being generated to alleviate traffic woes. Until recently, three additional BART stations were expected to be built in Antioch and Pittsburg. Current plans call for only one additional station to be located between Pittsburg and Antioch.

You can judge for yourself how well Measure C has worked to manage growth in Contra Costa's cities.

Hats Off!! to Gifford Young

Thanks to the dedication and initiative of Gifford Young, mailing labels of the *Quail* are now all bar coded. Bar coding allows the Post Office to sort and distribute copies of the *Quail* more efficiently, resulting in faster delivery. A recent evaluation by the Post Office gave MDAS a 97.9% accuracy rating and entitles MDAS to six months of reduced mail rates. Thank you, Gifford!!

You want to join the MDAS's volunteers, call Shirley Ellis at 938-3703.

BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 53

WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA

94597-0053

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(925) 263-8266

<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/mt-diablo/member.htm>

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email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net

Thank You for Remembering . . .

The MDAS Board and members wish to express their gratitude for recent donations from the following individuals and organization:

Walter and Jacqueline Knisley in memory of Sally Stellar
 Bob and Diane Malucelli
 The Rosmoor Ceramic Art Club in memory of Opal Callaway

For the Al McNabney Memorial Fund:

Wild Birds Unlimited
 Board of Trustees, San Francisco Culinary,
 Bartenders, and Service Employees Welfare Fund
 Genevieve Sattler
 Marjoire Ratner
 Florence Burek
 Eric and Jill Hedgecock

A very special thank you to Mike and Cecil Williams for their continued generous support of MDAS.

Vote Yes on Prop 7

On November 3 California will vote on Proposition 7, the Air Quality Improvement Initiative. This proposition is endorsed by the National Audubon Society. Its passage would result in substantially reduced emissions of oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter pollutants.

Air pollution seriously threatens environmental quality in California. Several tree species in the Sierra Nevada suffer from the damage inflicted by pollutants that drift over from the Bay Area, the Central Valley, and Southern California.

Air pollution has ravaged trees in the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests for decades. And noxious emissions deposit various acid materials into Sierra, central, and southern California lakes.

Proposition 7 offers a new and innovative approach to alleviating these environmental threats by going after sources of pollution that have been previously difficult to regulate. The initiative offers tax credits as an incentive for the purchase and use of equipment that emits fewer pollutants than called for by the current regulations. It focuses on older, dirty diesel buses and trucks, which constitute a significant source of nitrogen oxide emissions in the state.

It also offers incentives for people to find an alternative to burning agricultural waste and rice straw, which are the sources of a high level of particulate matter emissions. Proposition 7 would improve California's environment. Vote yes on Proposition 7.

**Vote
November 3!**

Coffee and Coffee Cups: How MDAS Shows Environmental Responsibility

MDAS members are requested to bring their own coffee cups to the general meetings. Bringing your own cup reduces the number of styrofoam cups that we discard and helps us remember our commitment to the environment.

At all MDAS meetings, we enjoy shade-grown Song Bird coffee from Wild Birds Unlimited. Song Bird Coffee is the product of a joint venture between the American Birding Association and Thanksgiving Coffee Company, a socially and environmentally aware business attempting to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

One reason that migratory songbirds are disappearing is the destruction of tropical forests to grow coffee in the sun. Sun-grown coffee is a relatively new phenomenon, begun about 25 years ago with encouragement by the U.S. government to increase crop yields in developing nations.

One disastrous result was the massive removal of tropical hardwoods with the accompanying loss of rainforest canopy. Another disaster for birds was the massive chemical inputs of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides required for farmers to produce coffee under the "technified," high-yield, full-sun growing conditions.

Song Bird Coffee is coffee for bird lovers. It promotes a sustainable way of coffee growing and enables bird lovers to vote with their pocketbooks for the survival of bird habitat.

At the same time, Song Bird Coffee generates dollars for the ABA and their work with Partners In Flight (15 cents per package is returned to the ABA).

For more information on research underlying the "shade-grown-coffee-and-bird" issue, check out the Web site of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center:
<http://www.si.edu/natzool/zooview/smbc>.

Saving the Black-faced Spoonbills

(continued from page 1)

These studios culminated in two successful conferences at which the studio students and faculty from Berkeley and NTU were joined by scientists and planners from the U.S. and Taiwan to discuss sustainable development in the Chi-gu area.

Since that January 1997 trip, a great deal has happened. Spoonbill Action Voluntary Echo (SAVE) International was formed in August 1997 and now includes several hundred members from the U.S., Taiwan, Europe, and South America. At the core are NTU and UCB faculty and students who have been generating new scientific data to fight the Bin-nan project, engaging in international endorsement campaigns, and sponsoring environmental art and education events to draw attention to the issue.

Malcolm Coulter, SAVE's expert on the black-faced spoonbill, studied the spoonbill's habitat needs and concluded that an coastal and wetland reserve 35 kilometers in radius is needed to support spoonbill roosting and feeding areas in the Tseng-wen Estuary and Chi-gu Lagoon. The proposed Bin-nan complex is located within this radius.

Using the funds raised through SAVE's Adopt-a-Spoonbill campaign, a scientific delegation presented new findings and updated alternative plan to the Taiwanese Environmental Protection Administration and others.

At the November MDAS meeting Hester and McNally will describe the latest efforts of SAVE International to protect the home of these rare birds.

If you cannot attend the November meeting but are interested in joining SAVE or getting more information, contact Barbara Butler, SAVE Coordinator, at 510/594.9466 fax: 510/549.9431, or e-mail: bbutler@uclink4.berkeley.edu. Up-to-date information may be obtained on SAVE's website: http://www4.ced.berkeley.edu:8004/student_org/save.

Randolph Hester, Jr. is Professor and former chairman of landscape architecture at UC Berkeley and a partner in the firm, Community Development by Design. He holds a M.A. in landscape architecture.

Marcia J. McNally is a partner in the firm, Community Development by Design. She teaches citizen participation at the UC Berkeley. She has a M.A. in city and regional planning.

The Black-faced Spoonbill is a wading bird belonging to the red duck family and are now mainly found in southeast Asia. The body of the Black-faced Spoonbill is white with a yellow crest and rather large, long-legged, and long-necked. The most distinguishing physical characteristics are its sizable spatulate bill and a continuous black band around the middle. With such an elegant visage, it has been called the "black-faced dancer."

The native habitats of the Black-faced Spoonbill are in northeast China and on the Korean peninsula. A migratory bird that flies south for the winter, it generally lives in the areas of southern China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and returns north at the turn of the season. While the number of Black-faced Spoonbills appearing in mainland China and Taiwan is relatively small, flocks of nearly 200 birds spend the winter in the area near the mouth of the Tseng-wen Creek marshlands. Black-faced Spoonbill wildlife sanctuaries have already been established in Hong Kong and Vietnam, and four small North Korean islands where Black-faced Spoonbills reproduce.

What a Great Gift Idea!

Free Meals! Reduced rates on tickets! Lodging! Purchases! Admissions! All this and more is yours with the purchase of a 1999 Entertainment Book. These books of valuable money-saving coupons are a great buy, and MDAS receives a percentage from each sale. With Christmas coming up, Entertainment Books make great gifts.

To get your copy, go to either of the two Wild Birds Unlimited stores: 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill, or 7182 Regional St., Dublin. Or buy one from our Sales Manager at the general meeting.

Audubon Adventures

MDAS has a waiting list of teachers eager to use Audubon Adventures in their classroom. For a donation of \$35, you can provide an environmental education kit that includes 32 student newspapers on birds and other wildlife, a CD-Rom, book and video resources, a teacher's guide, a 20-minute video on wolves, and Internet access to Audubon birding experts. If you want to sponsor a class or know of a class that wants to use Audubon Adventures, call Cecil Williams at (510) 798-0303. Help educate the next generation on the value of the environment.

Arrowhead Marsh Trip

If you want a close-up look at the restored Arrowhead Marsh near the Oakland International Airport, here's your chance. On Saturday, December 5, Canoes in Sloughs, Save the Bay's education program, is offering a paddle trip around the marsh. Trip goes will spend 2 hours on land and approximately 2 hours paddling. All skill levels welcome. Cost is \$40 for members and \$60 for non-members. Lunch is included. Send a check or money order to Save the Bay (1736 Franklin St, 4th floor, Oakland 94612) along with your name, address, phone, and preferred lunch (vegetarian / nonvegetarian).

November 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. 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 October Field Trips

Oct 29, Thurs., Mt View San. Plant

Oct 31, Sat, Abbott's Lagoon

See October *Quail* for details

Wednesday, November 2, Arrowhead

Marsh. Carpool meets at 8 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Or meet at the corner of South Shore and Broadway in Alameda at 8:30 a.m. We will visit several marsh and pond areas and reach Arrowhead near high tide. Rails are probable.

Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 1

Thursday, November 12, Sibley Re-

serve. Carpool meets at 8:30 a.m. at Acalanes Ave and Pleasant Hill Rd just north of Highway 24. Sibley Reserve is interesting geologically and is a new trip offered as part of our exploration of Contra Costa County. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486

Category 2

Saturday, November 14, Limantour,

Point Reyes. Carpool meets at 7:00 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Bear Valley Visitor's Center, Pt. Reyes National Park, Olema. Cross San Rafael Bridge. From US 101, take San Rafael exit, go 2 blocks, turn left on

Third St. In San Anselmo, turn right onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. At SR 1, turn right 0.25 miles, then left on Bear Valley Rd. for about 3 miles. Turn left into Visitor's Center off Bear Valley. We expect shorebirds, waterfowl, and land birds on the ridge. Trails may be muddy. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 2

Wednesday, November 18, Ironhouse

Sanitary Plant. Carpool 8:00 a.m. at the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. at the plant office. Take Hwy 4 to Oakley. In Oakley turn left on Vintage Pkwy. Take first right onto Walnut Meadows Dr. Follow this and turn right to office. Leader: Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information. Trip leader will be Mike Moran of East Bay Regional Parks

Category 2

Planning for Dec Field Trip

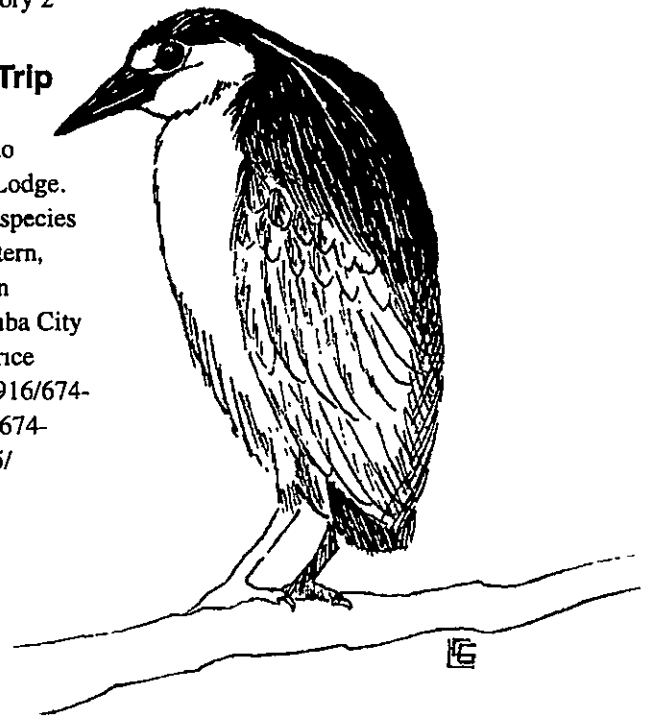
MDAS plans a weekend (Dec. 5 and 6) field trip to the Sacramento Valley Refuges, including Gray Lodge. Past trippers have seen over 100 species with good looks at American Bittern, Snow and Ross's Geese, Eurasian Wigeon, and White-face Ibis. Yuba City has motels and B&B in a wide price range, such as the Bonanza Inn, 916/674-8824; Yuba City Motor Inn, 916/674-4000. Call Joel Summerhill (925/753-0862) if you plan to go.

1998 Christmas Bird Count Slated for Dec. 19

Do your Christmas shopping early so that you are free to count birds! Jimm Edgar reminds MDAS members that the annual Christmas Bird Count will be held dawn to dusk on Saturday, December 19. Volunteers are needed. Last year MDAS bird counters set a new record when they spotted 160 species.

This year the annual potluck that revives the counters will be held at the Lindsay Museum. See the December *Quail* for more information. To volunteer, call Jimm Edgar at (510) 658-2330.

If you really love CBC events, Santa Clara Valley Audubon will hold its count on Sunday, December 20, and the Palo Alto CBC will be held Monday, December 21. Volunteers are always welcomed. Call (408) 266-5108 for more information on those CBCs.



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.

Observations

by Steve Glover

Last month, due to a paucity of observations, I summarized the results of the first year of the MDAS Breeding Bird Atlas project, covering the birds up to the woodpeckers. Fortunately, this month there are more observations so the summary will include birds up to European Starling. For more atlas details, please see the October *Quail* newsletter.

What would be the first county record of **Little Blue Heron** (if documented) was reported from Pt. Isabel Reg. Shoreline near Richmond on 11/19. Two **Cattle Egrets**, possibly the earliest fall county record, flew over Piper Slough on 9/1 (SG).

A beautiful **Oldsquaw** was near Brooks Island, Richmond, on 9/27 (SG). The resident male **Harlequin Duck** was also near Brooks Island on 9/27 (SG). The first **Ferruginous Hawk** of the fall was near Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 9/17 (SG).

Two alcids once thought to be quite rare in the county but proving to be annual were near Brooks Island on 9/27: an adult **Pigeon Guillemot** and a winter-plumaged **Marbled Murrelet** (SG).

Sixty **Vaux's Swifts** were over Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 9/27 (SG). Two female/immature **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** lingered at Piper Slough to at least 9/6 (SG). Migrant **Acorn Woodpeckers**, rarely detected in the county, were at Tilden Park on 9/11 (DW) and 9/20 (Rusty Scalf) and Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline in Richmond on 9/21 (SG). Two **Bank Swallows**, always elusive in the county, were at Piper Slough on 9/1 (SG).

Olive-sided Flycatchers, a local species in the county, was confirmed nesting in two blocks in the Berkeley Hills while **Western Wood-Pewee**, a much more widespread species, was confirmed in eight blocks. Nine **Willow Flycatchers**

were at Piper Slough on 9/1, seven were there on 9/6, two were there on 9/17, and four were there 9/26 (SG). Two more were at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline in 10/1—this ties the late date for the county (SG).

Note new address for Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568 or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Pacific-slope Flycatchers can be tough to confirm so 13 confirmations is a sure sign of a lot of effort. **Black Phoebe** was confirmed in 28 blocks, in almost every case on a manmade structure. **Western Kingbird** was confirmed in a healthy 20 blocks with most in East County as expected.

An empidonax flycatcher, thought to be the second county record of **Least Flycatcher**, was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 9/8 (SG). There is only one previous record.

The more local species of swallows were confirmed in modest numbers: **Tree Swallow** in six blocks, **Violet-green Swallow** in 12, and **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** in seven. **Cliff and Barn Swallows**, on the other hand, were confirmed in 24 and 30 blocks respectively. Forest-dwelling **Steller's Jays** were confirmed in 15 blocks while the open country **Western Scrub-jay** was confirmed in 30. **Yellow-billed Magpie**, previously known to breed in only one block, was found in four—all in East County. **Common Raven**, almost unknown in the county 20 years ago, was found in a shocking eight blocks.

The parids tend to be fairly easy to confirm as evidenced by 22 confirmations of **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** and 21 of

Oak Titmouse. The widespread **Bushtit** was confirmed in 28 blocks. **Canyon Wrens** were found in three blocks but so far have resisted confirmation. Two **Winter Wrens** were at Piper Slough on 10/2 (SG). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, the second for East County, was at Piper Slough on 9/26 (SG). This species was also confirmed in eight blocks, which was a good showing. **Western Bluebirds** were confirmed in 20 blocks. **Swainson's Thrush**, our more expected breeder, was found in three blocks but never confirmed. More than consolation was a **Hermit Thrush** nest at Redwood Regional Park, the first county nest record in over 50 years. **American Robins** have adapted well to suburban plantings, which helps explain confirmations in a whopping 26 blocks. **Northern Mockingbirds**, also a recent immigrant well adapted to suburbs, were confirmed in 19 blocks, this total being a little disappointing. **Phainopepla** was confirmed near Black Diamond Mines for just the second county nest record. Tragically, the species with the most confirmations was the ubiquitous **European Starling**, which was confirmed in 45 blocks.

Two **Winter Wrens** were at Piper Slough on 10/2 (SG). An immature female **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, probably the fifth for the county, was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 9/8 (SG). Three **Yellow-breasted Chats** lingered at Piper Slough to at least 9/13 (DW). The county high count of **Western Tanager** came from Martinez Regional Shoreline on 9/18 when a flock of 30-40 was found (DW). The first Richmond area (below the hills) record of **Lazuli Bunting**, a female or immature, was at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline on 9/23 (SG). An immature **Green-tailed Towhee**, probably the seventh for the county and first for fall, was in the Pleasant Hill yard of Helen Holm 9/21-22. A **Red Crossbill**, early for the East Bay, flew over Tilden Park on 9/22 (SG).

Observers: Steve Glover, Helen Holm, Rusty Scalf, Denise Wight

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Backyard Birdfeeding:

This continues to be the year of the Jays. Many people are seeing groups of 5-10 Western Scrub-jays in their backyards. There has also been a very large increase in the sightings of Steller's Jays. The Steller's are not as aggressive as the Scrub-jays and can be driven off the feeders.

Both of these species love sunflower seeds, peanuts and suet. Put these feeders in a separate location, away from your other seed feeders. This separation will allow the other birds to continue using their feeders even though Jays are present.

The Golden-crowned Sparrows have arrived. Their plaintive, whistled three-note song ("oh-dear-me") can be heard all day long, but especially early in the morning. White-crowned Sparrows have also migrated in for the winter. They often flock with the Golden-crowned Sparrows. Both of these are ground or tray feeding birds and love white millet seed. They also will eat suet.

The Dark-eyed Juncos are also arriving. Mainly we see the "Oregon" sub-species with their dark hood. Sometimes it's possible to find a "Slate-colored" Junco with their dark bodies and white bellies. Look for the white outer tail feathers on both of these when in flight.

*Denise Wight's bird classes starting:

Beginning October 27, 7-9 pm

Continuing October 28, 7-9 pm

Each costs \$40 and includes five evening classes and a morning birdwalk

*Birdwalk to Hidden Lakes Park in Martinez: Sat., Nov 7. Meet at WBU at 8:45 am. Call 798-0303 for details.

Special Event

From Dinosaurs to Birds

MDAS members are invited to hear dinosaur expert Dr. Kevin Padian of UC Berkeley discuss "How Did Birds Evolve from Dinosaurs (And How Do We Know?)" on Thursday evening, November 19, at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum.

The Northern California Geological Society (NCGS) has arranged for Dr. Padian to discuss evidence from fossils and living animals that birds evolved from dinosaurs and how that evidence is used to support the theory, including how flight evolved and the three possible animal lines from which birds evolved.

Dr. Padian is professor of integrative biology and a curator in the Museum of Paleontology. He is editor and an author

of *The Beginning of the Age of Dinosaurs* (1986) and *Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs* (1997). This year he published a translation of Philippe Taquet's *Dinosaur Impressions*. He has published over 100 papers and articles and is currently President of the National Center for Science Education.

The November 19 NCGS meeting will begin with refreshments at 7 p.m. followed by Dr. Padian's talk at 7:30. The NCGS requests its normal \$5 contribution per family to defray expenses. MDAS members who plan to attend should leave a message with the number of attendees on the recorder at (925) 294-7530 by November 17.

Land Trust Works to Save Heron Rookery

Near the shores of Clear Lake in Northern California, more than 200 Great Blue Herons nest in an undisturbed rookery. With over 111 nests, this rookery is one of the largest in Northern California. The property where the rookery is located is for sale, and the Lake County Land Trust with support from Redbud Audubon Society and Audubon California, is working to purchase the 400-acre parcel, known locally as the Rodman Ranch and Slough.

The Trust is presently pursuing funding to purchase the property through the State Wildlife Conservation Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other funding sources.

The Trust has purchased an option on the property that is good until April 1999. So far, \$20,000 has been raised to pay for the option, but another \$20,000 must be raised by November 1998. The Trust is asking for donations to help fund this option payment; all of the option money

will go toward the purchase price of the property after the Trust is successful in securing the needed grant funds for the total acquisition.

The Trust has developed an "Adopt-A-Nest" fundraiser; and for a \$100 tax-deductible donation, each donor will receive a certificate suitable for framing, featuring a picture of a heron on its nest at the Rodman Rookery. Smaller donations, of course, are also welcome.

Along with the heron rookery, the area is home to two Osprey nests and resident Bald Eagles, it is an important stopover for many migratory songbird species. Extensive stream and lakeside habitat, with dense tule marsh and oak-studded hills, make up the majority of the parcel.

If you would like to contribute to this worthy cause, please send your tax-deductible donation to the Lake County Land Trust, P.O. Box 158, Lower Lake, CA 95457. For more info, call Robert Lyons (707) 994-2024.

CALENDAR

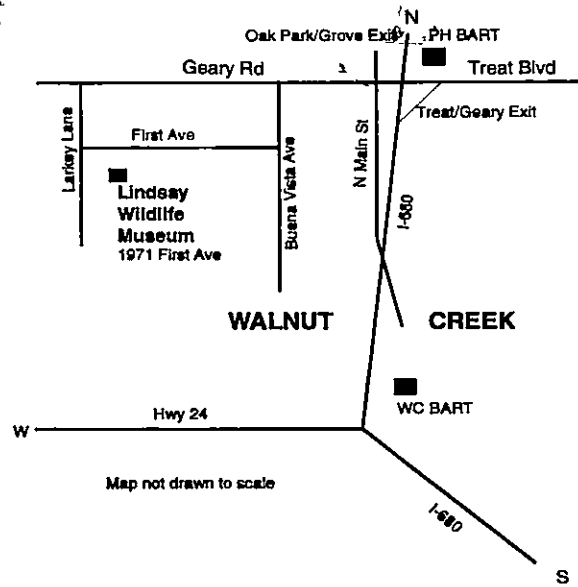
Nov. 5, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right).

Nov. 12, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH.

Nov. 20, Fri., 9 a.m.—Quail mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd. PH. (Volunteers prepare the Quail issue for mailing.)

Dec. 3, Thurs., 7 p.m.—December general meeting.

Dec. 19, Sat., all day—Annual Christmas Bird Count followed by potluck dinner at the Lindsay Museum



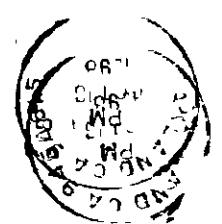
The Quail is published 11 months of the year. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the Quail and Audubon magazine. Send a check made out to NAS (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available), to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. Subscription to the Quail is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the Quail to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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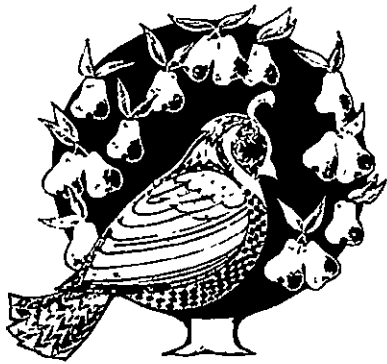
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*Happy
Holidays!*

The QUAIL

a publication of the
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94597-0053

December 1998

Vol. 45, No. 4

Next Deadline: January 7

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Audubon's Christmas Bird Count

At daybreak in Morristown, NJ, on Dec. 15, 1984, the temperature was 12°. When I walked over to the van which appeared some 20 minutes later in this out-of-the-way parking lot, my footsteps sounded hollow, like they do when the ground has been frozen for a long time. The four folks in the van gave me coffee and began to explain what the Audubon Christmas Count was about.

By day's end at dusk, some 20 stops later, I was tired. We had been to fields, woods, lakes, the shore near the chemical plants, and suburban neighborhoods. Astoundingly, there had been many birds in all those places.

Finding the meeting place had been nerve wracking. The birds' names were confusing. I had no clue what this event was about. To this day, I don't know what birds we saw. What I did learn was that the people in the van were generous with their time, their patience, and their food. They gave me a checklist and let me "keep count." When I couldn't find the birds on the checklist, they showed me where to find them. I got to participate!

The Audubon Christmas Count began as a substitute for an annual bird shoot. Now Audubon members in many countries count the number and types of birds they

See p. 7 for the President's Notes and more information on the Christmas Count.

Upcoming Events:

Atlas Results Focus of Dec. Meeting

For the December 3 program, Steve Glover will present the results of the first year of MDAS Breeding Bird Atlas observations. Glover, who is coordinating this five-year effort for MDAS, will have preliminary maps and will discuss the findings of the atlassing team.

A Breeding Bird Atlas maps all the bird species that breed in a given geographical

information in Contra Costa that will be of great value to local bird conservation.

Birding Information

Birding Information for the December meeting will be given by Mike and Cecil Williams. The topic will be those very intelligent Corvids (from Jays to Ravens). Two surprise visitors from the Lindsay Museum will also participate.

Dec. 6 Meeting Scheduled for Atlas Participants

The first-year results of the MDAS Breeding Bird Atlas will also be presented on Sunday evening, Dec. 6, from 6-8 p.m. at the Lindsay Museum. Everyone is welcome to attend, but Steve particularly invites Atlassing team members. He will review the first-year Atlas results in detail. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for atlassers to become better acquainted.

MDAS Meeting Information
The next MDAS general meeting will be Thurs., Dec. 3, in the Community Room of the Lindsay Wildlife Museum:
6:30 p.m.—Doors open
7—Birding Information
7:30—Business meeting
8—Refreshments
8:30—Program
For directions to the Lindsay, see p. 8.

area. Observations for the Breeding Bird Atlas are conducted during the peak of the nesting season, March through June, although this year El Niño delayed the breeding season for some species. Atlassers follow a consistent methodology, based on specific criteria for possible, probable, and confirmed breeding.

When the atlas is completed, we will know what birds breed in Contra Costa and where they breed; and we'll have a sense of their abundance. The atlas will set up a baseline of accurate breeding bird

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Connections

by Gloria Cannon

105th Congress and the Environment

Strong public reaction to the anti-environment 104th Congress (1993-94) drove home to congressional leaders that the majority of Americans—some polls say as many as 80 percent—consider themselves environmentalists, and they don't want laws repealed that have cleaned our air and water, preserved open space, and protected wildlife and habitat.

The 105th Congress heeded this message in part. Unfortunately, they failed to address a number of significant policy areas:

- The Clean Water Act has yet to be reauthorized.
- The Endangered Species Act needs to be renewed and improved.
- Funding for open space, wilderness, and wildlife habitat land acquisition has slowed to a trickle.

Bad Legislative Riders

Even worse, Congress used low-visibility legislative tactics to undercut environmental laws. Anti-environmental legislative riders were added to must-pass agency funding bills and the 4,000-page Omnibus Appropriations Bill (HR 4328). Among the more than 70 special-interest provisions with horrific environmental consequences were:

- The Bureau of Land Management is allowed to re-authorize grazing permits without any environmental review.
- Logging is more than doubled on 2.5 million acres of national forest land in California's Sierra Nevada.

The Omnibus Bill includes provisions that:

- Allow just a single Senator to block funding to promote policies in developing countries that are environmentally sound and protect the climate.
- Limit environmental review of a proposed tollroad through prime California gnatcatcher habitat in southern California.

A Few Positive Acts

To be fair, this Congress passed some positive pieces of legislation and turned down some bad ones. The **Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997** codified the mission and purposes of the refuge system, establishing that refuges are to be managed first for wildlife, with "compatible wildlife-dependent recreation," including bird watching, designated as the priority public use.

Other significant pieces of legislation passed by this Congress were the **National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998** and the **Salton Sea Reclamation Act**. The Volunteer Act encourages the establishment of support groups for wildlife refuges, including Audubon Refuge Keeper (ARK) groups; facilitates private fundraising efforts; and helps refuges realize their potential as outdoor classrooms.

The Salton Sea Act brought attention to the plight of this highly polluted lake and will direct initial funding to wildlife studies of the area, where thousands of birds have died from disease.

The Camouflage Congress

But these successes were the exception, not the rule, for this Congress. In fact, the 105th Congress passed 44 anti-environmental laws—the worst environmental record of any recent Congress. It is probably more accurate to label this the "Camouflage Congress." They presented a "green" image to the public, but behind the scenes they failed to address major problems and worked hard to pass anti-environmental special-interest provisions and under-fund vital programs.

Sources: THE AUDUBON ADVISORY, National Audubon's Weekly Policy Report, 10/23/98 and 11/9/1998, and Charles Levendosky, "Spending bill a monster to kill the environment," *Contra Costa Times*, Nov. 8, 1998, page F10.

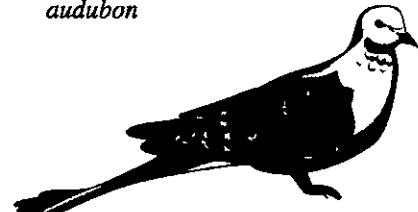
Websites for Birders

Joe Morlan, well-known Bay Area birding expert, maintains an excellent web site at <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan/>

The **Central Valley Bird Club** has a web site with information on current field trips and other events:

<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/5954/cvbc.html>

Yolo Audubon Society's email discussion group about **birding in the Central Valley** is maintained at <http://www.yolo.com/audubon>



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Changes in the Status of Birds of the East Bay: Part One

by Steve Glover

In this issue the Quail begins an important series of articles by Steve Glover on changes in the breeding areas of birds of the East Bay.

About eight years ago, I began to research the changes in colonizing patterns of birds of the East Bay, meaning the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa.

Sources Consulted

In that time, I retrieved every observation I deemed interesting from *The Condor* (the journal of the Cooper Ornithological Society), *Field Notes* (in all of its various forms throughout the century), *Directory to the Birdlife of the San Francisco Bay Region* (Grinnell and Wythe, 1929), *The Distribution of the Birds of California* (Grinnell and Miller, 1944), and the newsletters of the three East Bay Audubon Chapters (*The Quail* of Mt. Diablo Audubon, *The Kite Call* of Ohlone Audubon, and, the oldest of all, *The Gull* of Golden Gate Audubon). The result is a binder 3 inches thick with over 13,000 observations.

Perusing old journals and newsletters is a classic two-headed monster, sometimes inspiring and enlightening, sometimes frustrating and even downright depressing.

The first thing I had to figure out were the limitations of old sightings in the context of what I was trying to learn. The foibles of past observers, at least from the perspective of the current era of field guides and identification articles, are downright comical. Other sightings, from observers still well known to this day, can generally be trusted with caution. In between is an immense gray area of species that are reasonable but often misidentified even today, of watchers long gone, and of things that could have been or might not have.

Even more frustrating is the fact that newsletters, for some very good reasons, nearly always emphasize the unusual and the out-of-place.

The end result glares from my 3-inch binder: a page and a half for Red-necked Grebe but only 3/4 of a page for Western/Clark's, four pages for Cattle Egret but only half a page for Snowy Egret. What this means is that these sources are better suited for some species than others.

In this case we are focusing on breeding species that have colonized the East Bay in recent times—just a little over a century since sightings appeared in journals that are easily found.

It turns out that for the thread we are trying to follow, these sources actually work quite well although not in every way. Species that we take for granted as we approach the end of the century were in many cases unknown at the beginning.

For each species, I've noted the times and places of sightings that establish the colonization of the species and, when applicable, discuss likely reasons this occurred. Some of these species are poorly established but nevertheless have begun to breed in certain situations.

Western and Clark's Grebes

Western and Clark's Grebes are unknown as breeders in Contra Costa, but in recent years the species have been found nesting in small numbers at the Alameda Creeks Quarries and San Antonio Reservoir in Alameda County. It seems likely that breeding has probably gone unnoticed in the past and that they breed in years when conditions are suitable.

It also seems apparent that nesting could not have taken place before the construction of reservoirs. Consistent water levels and the protection of shoreline vegetation at the watershed reservoirs would probably result in consistent breeding of both species.

Double-crested Cormorant

A colony of Double-crested Cormorants was first discovered nesting on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge in 1984 when

five nests were found near the east end (*American Birds*, 11/84). That same year 102 nests were found at the east end of the San Francisco Bay Bridge (*American Birds*, 11/84). By 1988, there were 350–375 nests on the Bay Bridge and 275–300 nests on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (*American Birds*, Winter, 1988). This species was unknown as a breeder in the East Bay prior to these records. These manmade structures appear to have provided nest sites for a species already widely expanding its range.

Pelagic Cormorant

The Pelagic Cormorant was first discovered as a breeder at West Brothers Island near Richmond, Contra Costa County, in 1995, when nine pairs nested. It is unknown whether or not these birds nested in 1996 or 1997, but they appear not to have bred in 1998. It remains to be seen whether or not this may have been due to El Niño conditions.

Canada Goose

If this were a baseball record book, then Canada Goose would almost surely have an asterisk attached to its name. The population of Canada Geese that breeds in the East Bay (and continues to spread rapidly) was introduced. Wing-tipped birds of the race *moffitti* were noted nesting at Lake Merritt, Alameda County, beginning in the early 1950s (source lost) and was said to have nested there "many years ago" (*Gull* #29, 9/47). An unrestrained pair was first noted breeding at Brooks Island, Contra Costa County, in 1959 (*American Birds*, 10/59). Canada Geese were noted breeding at the Bay Bridge Toll Plaza in 1961 (*American Birds*, 10/61). They apparently first nested at Bay Farm Island, Alameda, in 1967 (*American Birds*, 10/73). They are now established throughout populated areas of the East Bay, especially golf courses, and appear to be spreading into East County.

**To Be Continued
in the January Quail**

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
SATURDAY, NOV. 28
Free Refreshments
Free Suet Cake with Each Purchase
Free Contests
Free Gift for the Birds!
Prize Drawings All Day
Put nature under your tree!

Birdfeeding Thoughts

This has been the year of the Jays, both Steller's & Western Scrubs. Large numbers of Scrub-Jays have been seen since last summer. Recently many Steller's have been seen in backyards. We have had 160 reports of over 600 Steller's Jays. Almost all of these sightings are from people who either have never had this bird before or are seeing a big increase.

Pine Siskins are being seen in the parks and in some backyards in the county. It has been 5 years since the last Siskin invasion. They often flock with American Goldfinches. Please report all sightings to WBU.

Birding Optics Seminar Saturday, December 12

Mike Williams, of WBR and a member of MDAS, will lead 30-minute seminar on "How to Buy Birding Optics" on Saturday, Dec. 12, at 10:30 a.m. The presentations will be held at Wild Birds Unlimited. Have you seen the new Bausch & Lomb Elite binoculars? (Crystal clear and close focusing to 5 ft.) There will also be many other brands of binoculars and spotting scopes on display. As seating is limited, please RSVP to 798-0303.

For Great Savings
Remember to Buy
Your Entertainment Book
at WBU or the MDAS Meetings!

Field Trip Reports

Pt. Reyes, Saturday, September 26—

According to reports, the birds were there Thursday, but the birders were there on Saturday. After all the vagants reported on the Bird Box, we saw only western species. A Least Flycatcher and White-throated Sparrow were the most exotic seen by any of our seven birders. We had great looks at several Pacific-slope flycatchers, saw two Great-horned Owls, and Drake's Bay was full Sooty Shearwaters. Windy, but mostly clear, weather. We saw a total of 37 species.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

San Francisco Bay Refuge/Coyote Hills, Wednesday, October 7—

Five members started out at the refuge on a mild, sunny day with high hopes, but bird life was minimal although we did have a good sighting of a Clapper Rail darting out of the tules for a drink. After an hour or so, we decided to adjourn to the nearby Coyote Hills Regional Park where the ponds yielded a fairly good variety of ducks. 48 species were seen or heard.—*Barbara Vaughn*

Hawk Hill (Point Diablo), Saturday, October 17—Six members and one guest enjoyed stunning views of the City, the Bay, and the ocean from Hawk Mountain, on a splendidly clear, warm day. Highlights included flocks of Golden-crowned Kinglets and Red-breasted Nuthatches in the trees, and flocks of White-throated Swifts and Violet-green Swallows in the air. Raptors included so many Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks that we almost felt like experts by the end. One each of Broad-winged Hawk and Merlin were the icing on the cake. 58 species were seen.—*Fred Safier*

Charleston Slough, Wednesday, October 21—It seems like it gets harder and harder to get to this Charleston Slough field trip each year, and this year was no exception. The entire group was a whopping 45 minutes late thanks to horrendous traffic the whole way. When we finally got there, we had a nice morning, including two male Eurasian Wigeons, two

drake Redheads, oodles of American White Pelicans, and great looks at a flyover Peregrine Falcon. A total of 76 species were found by six observers.—*Steve Glover*

Abbott's Lagoon, Saturday, October 31—Twelve members and guests, including two from Holland, spent the morning and early afternoon at the Pt. Reyes headquarters and Abbott's Lagoon. The weather went from fair to overcast to drizzly to raining at the end of the trip. The sharp eyes of the participants allowed us to see 90 species. The highlights were: Black-Vented Shearwater, Hooded Merganser, and 11 other species of ducks, Golden Eagle, Winter Wren, Townsend's Warbler, and Tricolored Blackbirds.—*Maury Stern*

Birding Events

The **Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival** is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 15, through Monday, Jan. 18. The 2,200-acre Morro Bay estuary attracts thousands of migratory birds and as many as 195 species. Workshops offered include Bird Photography, Gardening for Birds and Butterflies, Gull Identification, and Pelagic Birds of California. For more information, visit the Festival's website at www.morro-bay.net/birds or call 1-800-231-0592.

"**Waterbirds of the World,**" a fine art exhibit by Leigh Keller Reagan, features glass art, watercolors, and oil paintings of egrets, cranes, herons, and waterbirds. The exhibit is at the Laveview Club, Kaiser Center Bldg, 28th floor, 300 Lakeside Dr., Oakland, from Nov. 9 to Dec. 31. The opening reception is 6–8 p.m. on Dec. 2.

The Condor Is Back! The male Andean condor whose wingspan measures 9.5 feet is paying a return visit to the Lindsay Museum, beginning Friday, Nov. 27, to Jan. 17. This is your opportunity to get a great look at one of the largest flying birds in the world.

December 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. 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.

Wednesday, December 2, Altamont.

Carpool meets at 7:30 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. A caravan trip, with mostly car birding. Migratory hawks, Mountain Bluebirds, and grassland species. Leader: Steve Glover, (925) 828-7793 Category 1

Saturday and Sunday, December 5-6, Sacramento Valley Refuges. On Saturday, meet at the Sacramento NWR at 9 a.m. in the visitor's center. On Sunday, meet at Gray Lodge Headquarters at 8 a.m. Meet at the first parking lot beyond Headquarters. For the Sacramento Refuge, leave I-5 at the Norman exit and go north on frontage road. To get to Gray Lodge, take I-80 to SR 113. At Tudor, take US 99 north to Pennington Rd and follow Pennington Rd. to refuge entrance. There are several turns and the road eventually runs north. If you plan to go on this trip, please call Joel by November 30. Leader: Joel Summerhill, (925) 753-0862 Category 1

Thursday, December 10, Hidden Lakes. Carpool meets at 8 a.m. at the southeast corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at Morello Ave. entrance. Oak woodlands and ponds. This has been a very productive area in the middle of housing areas. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, (925) 254-0486 Category 2

Wednesday, December 16, Niles Canyon Gravel Pits. Carpool meets at 8 a.m. at 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 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. at Vallejo Mill Historical Park in Fremont. Take I-680 south through Dublin to SR 84; go west 7 miles to park entrance on right. Varied habitats; Green-backed heron, Ring-necked Duck, Spotted Sandpiper, often many land birds. Leader: Jimm Edgar, (510) 658-2300 Category 2

Saturday, December 19, MDAS Christmas Bird Count, all day. To volunteer, call Jimm Edgar, (510) 658-2300.

Thursday, December 31, Palo Alto Baylands. Carpool meets at 8 a.m. at

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 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot near the Nature Center at Baylands. Take the Dumbarton Bridge to US 101 South. Take Embarcadero exit and go east on Embarcadero to stop sign. Go left toward Yacht Harbor, follow road to end in parking lot on right. Clapper Rails and possibly Black Rails. Prepare for mud, cool breezes, and a lot of waiting for Rails. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

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.

"Exploring the Landscapes of California"

Audubon—California's 1999 Conservation Leadership Conference, Sacramento, Jan. 29—Feb. 1

Make plans now to attend Audubon—California's 1999 Conservation Leadership Conference, January 29—February 1, at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento.

"Exploring the Landscapes of California" reflects an exciting new conservation strategy for Audubon in California. Audubon intends to become the premiere nature education organization in the state. The Leadership Conference will focus on three symbolic landscapes that promote Audubon's bird and wildlife conservation agenda.

Workshops and speakers will share programs that inform and inspire you. Workshops will be followed by field trips that illustrate the beauty of the landscapes and the challenges we face in protecting them.

Registration for the Conference is \$35.00 per person. See the January *Quail* for more details about the Conference. If you need a registration form, contact the Audubon-California office at (916) 481-5332 or by email at jjacobs@audubon.org.

Observations

by Steve Glover

A **Red-necked Grebe** was at the end of Marina Bay Pkwy. in Richmond on 10/21, possibly representing the earliest record for the East Bay (JR, EM, B&MJG, JD). A lone **American White Pelican** was at San Pablo Reservoir on 11/4 (SG). The first East County record of **Brandt's Cormorant** was at Clifton Court Forebay on 10/11 (SG). This species is accidental inland. **White-faced Ibis** are quite rare along the bayshore at all seasons, so two at the end of Harbor Bay Pkwy. and one at the new marsh at Arrowhead Marsh on 10/1 are noteworthy (JR, EM, JD, B&MJG). Previous bayside records have been in concentrated in May and September.

A female **Redhead**, curiously rare along the bayshore of Contra Costa County, was at Pt. Isabel on 11/6 (SG).

An unusually late fall **Wandering Tattler** was at the Richmond Marina on 10/16 (DF).

The third county record of **Sabine's Gull** flew past Brooks Island on 10/19 (SG). A **Common Murre** was at Pt. Isabel, Richmond, on 10/18 (SG).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker**, about the tenth for the county, was at Briones Regional Park on 10/8 (AK, *et al.*). A rare fall **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Jewel Lake on 10/15 (SG).

Steller's Jays were the story of the fall season, staging an unprecedented invasion into normally unoccupied areas of the East Bay. The first report was of one at an Antioch feeder on 10/9, possibly just the second East County record. Three were in the same yard to at least 11/8 (JB). One in an Alameda yard on 10/17 was thought to be just the second island record (MS), a flock of 11 was noted in S. Berkeley on 10/18 (RS), eight to ten were in El Cerrito 10/17-18 (KS), four were in Emeryville on

10/21 (MS), and finally one was in a Berkeley yard on 11/8 (PW). This appears to be the first East Bay invasion by this normally quite sedentary species.

Red-breasted Nuthatches also staged a minor invasion this fall with birds appearing in Alamo 11/2 (JR) and Antioch 11/8 (JB). They are rare in East County.



Winter Wrens were found in small numbers this fall, including one at Hidden Lakes, Martinez, on 10/12 (DW) and a high number of three at Piper Slough on 10/20 (SG).

Two **Varied Thrush** were at Piper Slough on 10/17, representing just the second East County record and the first for that location (JS).

Vireos were well represented on the first year of the Breeding Bird Atlas with three confirmations of **Cassin's Vireo**, 13 of **Hutton's Vireo**, and ten of **Warbling Vireo**. Few warbler species breed in any numbers in the East Bay, but **Orange-crowned Warbler** was confirmed in 11 blocks, **Wilson's Warbler** in 5, including a nest as far east as arid Las Trampas Regional Park.

Black-headed Grosbeaks were recorded in a healthy 14 blocks. **Lazuli Buntings** were confirmed in 8 blocks. Both

Towhees were widespread with 19 confirmations of **Spotted Towhee** and 21 confirmations of **California Towhee**.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, about the sixth for the county, was north of Pt. Isabel on 10/19 (SG). Increased diligence has proven this sparrow to be of annual occurrence in the county in fall. A confirmation of **Black-chinned Sparrow** from Las Trampas Regional Park was very welcome for such an elusive species. A **White-throated Sparrow** was in Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, on 10/18 (JRo), and another was in a Martinez yard on 10/18 (DK). Thirty-three confirmations of **Red-winged Blackbird** and 36 of **Brewer's Blackbird** are testaments to how common these species are. A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** flew over Piper Slough on 10/9 (DW).

Hooded Orioles were confirmed in nine blocks, and **Bullock's Oriole** in 15. The ubiquitous **House Finch** was confirmed in 33 blocks while urban-loving **House Sparrows** were confirmed in 26. Two **Pine Siskins** at a Brentwood feeder on 10/22-24 were rare for East County (name?), as were two at Piper Slough on 10/20 (SG). This species has had a much better showing this year than last when they were completely absent.

Observers: Jeanne Bonner, Jane Dang, Dorthy Furseth, Steve Glover, Bill and Mary Jane Greene, Alan Kaplan, Debbie Kershin, Ellie Mulke, Jean Richmond, John Robinson, Rusty Scalf, Mary Schaefer, Joel Summerhill, Kirk Swenson, Phoebe Watts, Denise Wight.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Annual MDAS Christmas Bird Count and Potluck Set for Sat., Dec. 19

All MDAS members and guests are invited to participate in the 1998 MDAS Christmas Bird Count. This annual chapter event will be held *down to dusk* Saturday, Dec. 19, *rain or shine*. You do not need to be an expert birder to participate. Teams of counters will be lead by a competent leader who will identify the bird species. Every pair of eyes is helpful in seeing birds, but binoculars are essential. An all-day commitment is preferred. The more counters we have in the field, the better chance we have of setting another record.

1997 CBC Record

In 1997, MDAS achieved its highest count ever—an outstanding 160 species! Fifty-four field observers and six feeder watchers spotted 32,228 individual birds! We have not seen less than 150 species since 1984.

15-mile Count Circle

Our count area covers a 15-mile-diameter circle centered near Treat and Cowell in Concord. This circle has been carefully set to incorporate as many diverse habitats as possible, including most of Mt. Diablo; Black Diamond Mines; the Pittsburg marshes; some of Briones Park; Heather Farms; the suburban creeks of Alamo, Lafayette, and Walnut Creek; and many urban parks and communities in Contra Costa County. We also welcome home feeder counters if their home is within the count circle.

Why We Do the CBC

This is the 99th Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Why do thousands of participants spend a winter day in frequently terrible weather counting birds? The first CBC was one of American's first environmental protests. It took place on Christmas Day 1900, to protest the traditional bird shoot that killed every bird in sight. Today, there are counts every state, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, and many Pacific islands. Over 45,000 volunteers will participate in about 1,700 counts this year. This is the longest

running ornithological database and provides valuable data on resident and migratory bird populations.

Contact Jimm Edgar

Again this year, Jimm Edgar is the MDAS compiler. To participate, please sign up at the Dec. 3 general meeting, or call Jimm at (510) 658-2330, or return the form to Jimm. There is a \$5.00 charge to cover the expense of publishing the annual Christmas Count issue of *American Birds*. There is no charge for feeder watchers.

New CBC Potluck Location

Traditionally, we have a potluck dinner and countdown of birds seen following the Christmas Count. This year our potluck dinner will be held in the Community Room of the Lindsay Museum. Everyone, even non-counters, are welcome to attend.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Please bring your own table service and a salad, main dish, or dessert for 8 to 10 people, plus any serving utensils needed. Coffee and punch will be provided.

NAS to Celebrate 100 Years of CBC

Next year National Audubon Society will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its Christmas Bird Count with publications highlighting CBC citizen science and sto-

ries from CBCs over the century. If you want to share your memories, send them to Geoff LeBaron, the CBC editor, at glebaron@audubon or by mail in care of: Christmas Bird Count, National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003

All CBC results from 1900 to the present will be available through the Internet by this spring along with analyses tools so that you can look at the results by region, species, etc. The web site address is <http://birds.cornell.edu/cbc/98info.htm>.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES *continued from page 1*

see each December on the locally designated day. This data is compiled locally and then sent to National Audubon. Information collected is used to help establish trends in bird populations.

If you would like to participate, please contact Jimm Edgar, our Christmas Count Chair. If you plan to participate, you can take a friend with you but bring a lunch—and join the potluck afterwards!

That day 15 years ago had an enormous impact on my life. Many thanks to Jimm (and to those like the folks in the van that day) for making possible this very important and enjoyable event.

Yes! I want to participate in the 1998 MDAS Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 19, 1998.

- Put me wherever you need the help.
 I would prefer a hiking area.
 I would prefer a less strenuous area.
 I can monitor a feeder or garden.

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Years of birding experience: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

(Make checks for \$5/participant payable to MDAS.)

Mail to: Jimm Edgar, 4614 Jacobus Ave., Oakland, CA 94618

CALENDAR

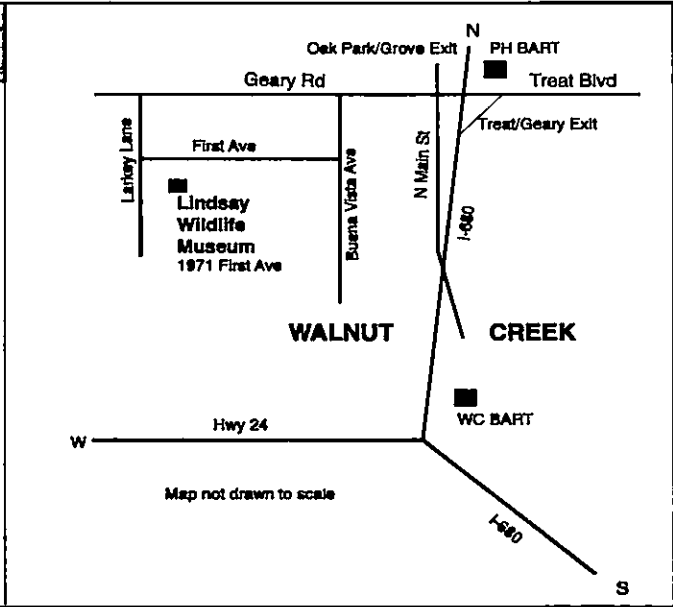
Dec. 3, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Community Room, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right). Doors open at 6.30 p.m.

Dec. 10, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members welcome.

Dec. 18, Fri., 9 a.m.—Quail mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. (Volunteers prepare the Quail issue for mailing.)

Dec. 19, Sat., Dawn to Dusk—Annual Christmas Bird Count.

Dec. 19, Sat., 5:30 p.m.—CBC Potluck, Community Rm, Lindsay Museum. See page 7 for details.



The Quail is published 11 months of the year. Audubon membership includes subscriptions to the Quail and Audubon magazine. Send a check made out to NAS (\$20/year individual, \$30 family; introductory and senior rates available), to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556. Subscription to the Quail is available separate from membership at \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507. First class mailing of the Quail to member or nonmember is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.



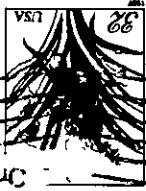
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