



The QUAIL

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Next Deadline: February 4

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

1999—A Note of Encouragement

Give yourself a New Year's gift and join the group of MDAS members who are attending the Audubon-California Conservation Leadership Conference at the end of January. (You don't need to have a leadership role in MDAS to attend.) Why is going to the Audubon Conference a gift to yourself?

Better Understand the Issues

Learn about the issues confronting Californians from many who have devoted their lives to working with environmental stakeholders.

Ask Audubon-California Why or Why Not

Ask Audubon-California Board Members why Audubon is or isn't taking a particular action. These Board members are accountable to you. If you have a question or a concern, they will be there to discuss it with you.

Share Information

Meet people who are working on projects that are of interest to you in other areas of California. Hear encouraging news from those who have had successes. Exchange information with activists and researchers in your special interest areas.

(Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Events:

Cavity Nesters Are Topic of January MDAS Meeting

MDAS's Don Yoder will be the guest speaker for the January program. Don, the founder and Program Director of the California Bluebird Recovery Program, will discuss CBRP's support for all cavity-nesting birds. CBRP members have installed and annually report on 3,600 nest boxes.

In 1997, more than 8,000 cavity nesters fledged from these boxes—nearly 5,400 of them Western and Mountain Bluebirds.



Although the CBRP has primarily focused its efforts on the restoration of bluebirds, Don will remind us of the plight of other cavity nesters whose numbers are in drastic decline. Barn Owls are down nearly 80 percent over the last 30 years. Bewick's Wren, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and American Kestrel have declined by almost 50 percent. Because of this potential environmental disaster, CBRP is broadening its focus to benefit the widest range of cavity-nesting species.

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, Barn Owls, Mountain and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and Ash-throated Flycatchers. Cavity nesters create

their own nests in old fence posts and knot holes in old trees or re-use existing nest holes. Widespread development in California has destroyed much of this habitat. By the 90s, fewer nest sites were available until CBRP got involved. CBRP provides guidance on building and placing appropriate nest boxes in the proper habitat, encourages the establishment of "nest box trails," and monitors the fledging of broods.

Jimm Edgar to Report on CBC

During the Birding Information portion of the program, Jimm Edgar will report on the results of the December 19 Christmas Bird Count.

Jimm will give us the final tally of birds seen and the species counted. MDAS members will learn how the 1998 CBC compared to past years, especially 1997 when volunteers counted a record-setting 160 species in the MDAS count circle

MDAS Meeting Information

The next MDAS general meeting will be Thurs., Jan. 7, 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.

Connections

NAS Endangered Species Campaign

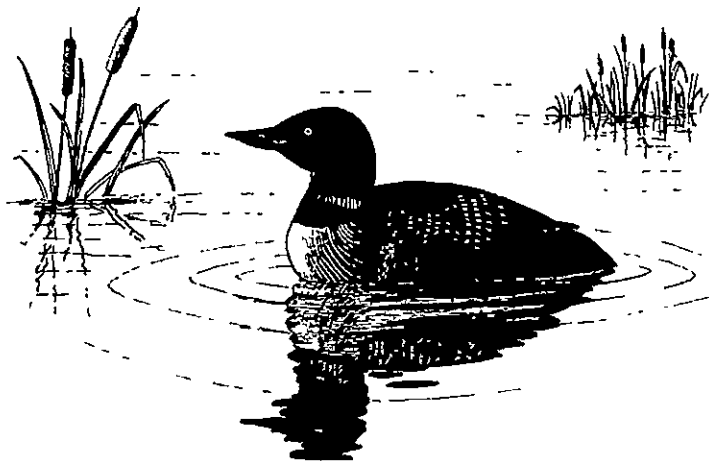
National Audubon Society's Endangered Species Campaign has launched a new email listserve to communicate with Audubon members and others concerned about endangered species protection.

ESA-NEWS is a mailing list through which you can receive the following information related to endangered species:

- Information and updates on current endangered species issues
- Briefings on endangered species policy decisions in Congress and the Administration.
- Action alerts detailing how you can influence decisions affecting endangered species.
- Endangered Species Campaign press releases.
- Notices on major activities of the Audubon Endangered Species Campaign.

To subscribe, send an email message to: LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG Leave the Subject: line blank, and in the body of your message, write: subscribe ESA-NEWS.

For more information about the Endangered Species Campaign, visit: www.audubon.org/campaign/esa
For more information on other Audubon LISTSERV discussion lists, visit: www.audubon.org/net/list/



NAS Launches Latin America Program

The National Audubon Society recently launched a conservation program for the Latin American and Caribbean regions under the directorship of Alejandro Grajal. The program's primary focus is to create an equal partnership and alliance between the NAS, its Latin American Audubon partners, and other organizations, based on mutual respect and shared values.

To facilitate communications, the program's Audubon Latin America Bulletin will be published in English and Spanish. The Bulletin will help to build new links and strengthen existing ties throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America. Program staff invites you to visit their Web site <http://www.audubon.org/local/latin> and welcomes your input for future bulletins.

If you have additional questions, please contact Alejandro Grajal at e-mail agrajal@audubon.org or by phone (305) 371-6399.

Audubon Staffer Nominated As a "Hero for the Planet"

The December 14 issue of TIME magazine nominates Audubon's Bonnie Phillips for its "Heroes for the Planet," a new series that pays tribute to people working to save the earth.

Phillips is distinguished for her dedication to preserving the forests of the Pacific Northwest. In 1987 despite the onset of fibromyalgia (a painful muscle disorder which restricted her to a wheelchair), Phillips became an activist in the effort to protect the uncut forests north-east of Seattle.

She became executive director of the Pilchuk Audubon Society in Everett and then campaign coordinator for the ForestWater Alliance.

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
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Changes in the Status of Birds of the East Bay: Part Two

by Steve Glover

In this issue, the Quail continues with a series of articles by Steve Glover on changes in the breeding areas of birds of the East Bay. The articles focus on changes in breeding species that have colonized the East Bay in recent times.

Naturally, a species that colonizes an area has been the focus of attention, and this is still true to this day. Great-tailed Grackles will most likely establish themselves, for better or worse, in the not-too-distant future. For now they are still rare enough that every sighting is carefully noted. Once their shrieks and screeches become commonplace at every sewage pond and cattle pen, the number of reports will quickly diminish.

This is exactly what happened with a number of species that now breed in varying degrees of commonness in the East Bay. Some of them are among our most familiar and conspicuous species: Canada Goose, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Sparrow, and, of course, European Starling.

For most species that have colonized the East Bay in modern times, it is a relatively straightforward process to pinpoint a specific period of time for colonization and at least make a good guess about where it happened first. What is more elusive, at least for some species, is an explanation for these range expansions. What happened in the past 100 or so years that allowed these species to colonize the East Bay?

Even more intriguing (although probably impossible to ever discover) is the possibility that some of these species may actually be re-colonizers. For all that we have learned about bird distribution, we are forced to confront the simple fact that our knowledge only extends back a mere 100 years, a mere blink of the eye in the overall scheme of things.

Osprey

Ospreys were unknown to Grinnell and Wythe (1929) except from the Russian River. Although Ospreys remain a rare breeder in the East Bay, they have nested at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline and Briones Reservoir. They have clearly benefited from the construction of reservoirs (and planted food supply) and from buoys and channel markers (which they nest on). This species is commonly reported in newsletters, but there were probably fewer than ten sightings before the early 1970s.

Red-shouldered Hawk

The colonization of the East Bay by the Red-shouldered Hawk has been well documented. I can only find one record of this species from the 50s (and none before) and only four from the 60s. The records begin to increase rapidly in the mid-70s with the first nesting coming from Morgan Territory Road, Contra Costa County, in 1979.

A 1973 journal article includes the East Bay in the primary range of the species and states that this range is little changed since the 1920s (Sanford R. Wilbur, "The Red-shouldered Hawk in the Western United States," *Western Birds*, 1973, V. 4, pp. 15-22), but this is clearly incorrect.

They are now rather widespread in the East Bay, particularly in eucalyptus groves, and are even found in such situations in the lightly wooded eastern portion of East Contra Costa.

Ring-necked Pheasant

Ring-necked Pheasant was an introduced species and was said by Grinnell and Miller (1944) to be established only at Milpitas and San Jose. *The Gull*, however, lists sightings from the Lake Merritt area from 1932 and 1933 (*Gull* 14, 2/32, #2, and *Gull* 15, #2, 2/33). Since then, they have spread throughout the East

Bay, especially in East Contra Costa where they continue to be released.

Their future in the East Bay is less than secure, however. They are slowly disappearing from many sites, especially along the Bay. This should hardly be surprising due to their preference for open grassland which is usually the first habitat to be built upon (just ask the Burrowing Owls).

Wild Turkey

Wild Turkey is another introduced species whose origin is unquestioned. The first breeding evidence I can find is from Mines Road in 1986 (*American Birds*, Fall, 1986). They are now found in wooded areas throughout southeastern Alameda County; and in recent years, they have colonized the slopes of Mt. Diablo, Contra Costa County. In 1998, they were found at Las Trampas Regional Park west of Danville, a portent of an almost certain spread through the watershed areas.

Black Oystercatcher

Black Oystercatcher is one species that may have nested in the East Bay long before it was ever recorded as doing so. On the other hand, it was unknown inside of San Francisco Bay by Grinnell and Wythe (1929); and I find no records from the East Bay until 1982 (*American Birds*, 11/82).

The first nest record came from Brooks Island in 1984 (*American Birds*, 11-12/1984). The habitat this species uses for nesting has gone unchanged through the century, so that the key may be the construction of breakwaters, a habitat they use frequently here. It may be that the few natural rocks in the Bay were insufficient to support them.

**To Be Continued
in the February Quail**

“Exploring the Landscapes of California”

Audubon—California’s

1999 Conservation Leadership Conference

Sacramento, January 29–February 1

Plan 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 in order to build conservation awareness, membership, and activism. The Conference focuses on three symbolic landscapes—the City, the Farm, and Wild California. These landscapes symbolize Audubon’s bird and wildlife conservation agenda; reflect California’s diverse population; and provide opportunities for hands-on nature experiences.

The Conference will kick off Friday evening with a welcome reception at 7:30 p.m. and a “meet-the-Board” session with Audubon—California’s newly formed Board of Directors. Bring your questions and ideas.

Saturday workshops and speakers will share programs designed to 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.

- “The City” will emphasize education, development of Audubon Nature Centers, and land use planning efforts within the urban landscape. There will be walking tour of a Sacramento nature center.
- “The Farm” will focus on strategies for building relationships with farmers and habitat enhancements. A tour of farmlands with restored native plants is slated for the afternoon.
- “Wild California” will include major conservation agenda items, including the restoration of the Salton Sea, conserving and restoring Bay Area wetlands, and restoration of riparian habitat in the Kern River Valley. The afternoon session of Wild California will take place at the Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary along the Feather River in Sutter County.

After the guided tour participants will gather for the Important Bird Areas workshop. This is a “working” session to fill out IBA forms for sites you wish to nominate and a strategic planning session for IBA sites already designated.

Saturday evening will feature dinner, a presentation by State Senator Patrick Johnston, and a program by Jerry Bertrand, President Emeritus of Massachusetts Audubon Society.

A core component of the Conference will be Sunday morning when we devote time for chapter feedback on how best to accomplish our agenda at the local and regional level. This symbolic landscape summit will leave Audubon members and chapters with the tools and strategy for conserving essential wildlife habitat in California. Then join us for a tour of Stone Lakes NWR and be back in time for a Superbowl party!

Registration for the Conference is \$35.00 per person. Housing costs start at \$89.00 for a single or double per night. Alternative off-ground housing is also available nearby. If you need a registration form or more information, please contact the Audubon-California office at (916) 481-5332 or by email- jjacobs@audubon.org.

PRESIDENT’S NOTES

Continued from page 1

Have Some Fun

The people who attend this Audubon Leadership Conference share at least some values with you. They are interesting, experienced, well traveled and usually thoughtful people. Great discussions, lively dinner conversations, and interesting personalities make this event something I’ve come to eagerly anticipate. I hope you’ll join the fun and the learning.

Happy New Year!

Carol Frischmann,

MDAS Chapter President

Winter Birding Events

Flyway Festival, Jan. 22-24

The San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge is celebrating its 25th anniversary with the Flyway Festival at Building 505, Mare Island, in Vallejo. The weekend features birding and wetlands walks, canoe trips, family activities, bat and bird house building workshops, and a wine-and-cheese reception Friday evening. Call 707-562-2473 (BIRD) for more information.

Duck Days, Feb. 6 & 7

The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is sponsoring two weekend days of free wildlife and bird viewing as part of Duck Days. The programs run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Environmental Education Center, 1751 Grand Blvd., in Alviso. Call (408) 262-5513 for more information.

California Duck Days, Feb. 12-14

The sixth annual Duck Days takes place on the weekend of Feb. 12-14 in Davis at the Veterans Memorial Center, 203 E. 14th Street. Duck Days features workshops, 40 field trips, and exhibitions. Field trips are scheduled to the Sacramento Valley Refuges, Hedgerow Farms, the Yolo Bypass and the Grizzly Island Wildlife Areas, Putah Creek, and Stone Lakes. A full weekend pass is a \$25 donation. For registration information, call 1-800-425-5001.

Field Trip Reports

Tilden, Thursday, October 15—A beautiful day! Cold but clear. The leader was late, and Audubon joined EBRP Thursday bird walk.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Arrowhead, Wednesday, November 2—Five birders enjoyed a clear, warm day at Arrowhead. The tide was 6.7. We saw 44 species with the highlights being two Clapper Rails huddling in marsh grass, two Soras moving between clumps of grass, and a pair of Blue-winged Teal. The pier at Arrowhead was covered with Willets and Godwits with Short-billed Dowitchers and Black Turnstones moving around their feet. A new tidal marsh is being developed and is already attracting birds. We watched a flock of several hundred Peeps circling over the mud flats.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Sibley Volcanic Preserve, Thursday, November 12—Warm and slightly hazy weather greeted nine birders and guests at Sibley. We explored the trails around Round Top. We noted lots of activity in the pines and chaparral on the west side. Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and a Myrtle-type Yellow-rumped Warbler were highlights. On the open, eastern side, we had great views of a soaring Golden Eagle (another remained perched on the antenna tower) and watched two Sharp-shinned Hawks harass a Red-tail. Only 28 species were seen and heard, but it was an enjoyable morning.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Limantour, Saturday, November 14—Twelve members went to the Pt. Reyes Headquarters and Limantour areas with fair weather and 60-degree temperatures. We saw 85 species in spite of not seeing many shorebirds. Highlight birds included Black Scoter and 13 additional duck species; Osprey; Peregrine Falcon; Virginia Rail; Golden-crowned Kinglet; Varied Thrush; and Townsend's Warbler.—*Maury Stern*

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: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, January 6, Upper San Pablo Reservoir. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking area on Bear Creek Rd. just east of San Pablo Dam Rd. Riparian marsh and grassland. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. if you plan to go. Category 3

Saturday, January 9, 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 Pleasants 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 14, Sunol Regional Park. 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. Or meet 8:15 a.m. in the parking lot, Sunol Park. Go south on I-680 to Calaveras Rd. Go left under I-680 and drive 4 mi south on Calaveras Rd.; turn left on Geary Rd. and go 2 mi to park. Watch and listen for Turkey along Geary Rd. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Dipper, and Canyon and Rock Wrens possible. Leader: Steve Glover, (925) 828-7793 Category 3

Wednesday, January 20, Berkeley shoreline. Carpool meets at 8:15 a.m. at

Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Or meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to 880 West; turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. exit, turn left on Powell; go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy. Loons, grebes, and bay ducks. Leader: Denise Wight, 370-7342 Category 1

Saturday, January 23, Santa Cruz. 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. 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. Trip will include a visit to the Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges State Park. Leader: Joel Summerhill, 753-0862 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. There is an 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

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

The **Cattle Egret** has returned for yet another winter at Lake Merritt. It was seen on 11/10 (JR,EM,JD,B&MJG). Ten **Cattle Egrets** were along Cypress Rd. near Bethel Island on 11/25, and 17 were there 12/10 (SG). An **Oldsquaw** was at Pt. Isabel, Richmond, on 11/21 (SG,KV). The bird flew into Alameda Co. and continued into San Francisco Co. waters! A male **Hooded Merganser** was at Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley, on 11/12 (SG, EBRPD).

An immature **Bald Eagle** was watched flying southeast over Vasco Rd., Contra Costa Co., on 11/25, apparently commuting between Los Vaqueros Res. and Clifton Court Forebay (SG).

Two **Peregrine Falcons** were at Pt. Isabel, Richmond, on 11/21 (SG,KV). This is the first record of two birds from that area. **Sandhill Cranes** were noted throughout the period at Webb Tract, just north of Bethel Island. They can be seen when in flight with a scope from the levee at Piper Slough (JR,SG).

One of the finds of the fall was a first-winter **Franklin's Gull** at Iron House Sanitary District. It was first found 11/15 (DW) and was still present 11/16 (SG). This is probably the third county record. Most bizarre was an immature male **Costa's Hummingbird** on Del Puerto Canyon Rd., Stanislaus Co., on 11/17 (FB,MJC,JR,JD,EM). This species does winter in Northern California on rare occasions but usually only with the aid of feeders.

A most spectacular find was a **Tropical Kingbird**, probably Contra Costa's second, first found at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez, on 12/2 (ED). It was still present to at least 11/9 (DW,SG,JLu). The bird covers a large territory and can be very hard to find, but it will probably remain through the winter.

Two extremely late **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were at Upper San Leandro Res., Moraga, on 12/3 (DW).

There is one previous county record from December (17th), with both probably representing late migrants rather than winterers.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Steller's Jay continued to be all the rage (see the December *Quail*), including up to six from a Martinez feeder from 9/5 to at least 9/25 (DW). Birds have apparently appeared in literally hundreds of East Bay yards where they had previously been unrecorded (fide M&CW). There has been much speculation over the origin of these birds and some of the birds may in fact be locals wandering in search of food due to the complete failure of the acorn crop this year. It seems more likely, however, that most of the birds that have descended upon us represent one of the several Alaskan/British Columbian races, also responding to a lack of food. It would probably be impossible to distinguish the various races without a specimen, so if anyone who has had this species this fall (and does not normally) finds a dead bird we would be interested in seeing it.

An out-of-place **Yellow-billed Magpie** was seen by EBRPD personnel at Iron House Sanitary District on 10/27 (fide Mike Moran). This is yet another new location for this increasing species.

Red-breasted Nuthatch staged a small-scale invasion this fall, including one in an Alamo yard on 11/2 (JR). Three **Winter Wrens**, probably settled in for the winter, were at Piper Slough on 11/25 (SG).

An out-of-place **American Dipper** was at Lake Temescal, Alameda Co., on 11/19

(JP). This species has been noted sporadically from non-suitable breeding habitat in the fall and winter. The last CCC record was apparently from the winter of 1986-7. 1/98 San Ramon Creek

A **California Thrasher** has been frequenting an Alamo Garden since 11/5 (JR). They formerly bred at this location; but as with so many other ground-dwelling species, they were likely extirpated by cats. A **Swamp Sparrow** was found on 11/10 at Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley (DW). At least two and probably more were present there on 12/11 (SG). Although **Swamp Sparrow** has rarely been detected in the county (less than 10 times) it undoubtedly occurs annually in fall and winter. **White-throated Sparrows** reported from several locations, including a Danville yard since 11/15 (PK), Holland Tract on 11/21 (SG,KV), and 2 at Hidden Lakes Park on 12/4 (DW).

Observers. Florence Bennet, Mary Jane Culver, Jane Dang, Elizabeth Dickey, Steve Glover, Bill and Mary Jane Greene, Pam Keiser, John Luther, Ellie Mulke, Jean Puffer, Jean Richmond, John Robinson, Kent VanVuren, Denise Wight, Mike and Cecil Williams.

Is Your Address Label Correct?

The U.S. Postal Service has conducted a Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS) evaluation of our data base of MDAS members and *Quail* recipients for efficient and correct mail delivery. (No names of residents are involved in this.)

To receive a postage discount by using barcoded mailing labels, we must maintain a very high percentage of correct addresses. Please review your address and revise it if necessary. Add apartment or suite numbers at the end of the street address in the form APT, STE, UNIT, etc. followed by the correct number(s) or character(s). Please call the Data Base Manager, Gifford Young, at (707) 745-4134 with corrections or drop a postcard to MDAS. NAS, which publishes your *Audubon* magazine, also will be notified of any changes, helping assure its prompt delivery.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Visit Our Web Site at
<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>
where you can:

- Report interesting bird sightings.
- See other birdwatchers' reports.
- Learn about interesting local happenings in the "bird world."
- View many informational pages.
- See the calendar of coming events.
- Check out all the birding links.

Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 19-22, 1999

The Great Backyard Bird Count takes place Feb. 19-22, 1999. It is sponsored by National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Wild Birds Unlimited.

This is the first bird count that invites individuals, families, schools, and others to count birds at birdfeeders and in backyards, local parks, or other outdoor locations. The results are then reported online through the BirdSource web site at <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu/gbbc>>

This web site will also be showing the results of all your reports, and it has maps that are constantly updated with these reports. It's fun to watch!

You can spend as much or as little time as you like counting the birds. The data you submit will help to define bird ranges, populations, migration pathways, and habitat needs. With your participation, this can be a powerful tool for bird conservation. In 1998, 14,000 people participated in the first Great Backyard Bird Count.

Information and count sheets will be available at the February MDAS meeting or at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill. Note: if you do not have access to a computer, bring your count sheets to Wild Birds Unlimited, and we will transmit your report.

Backyard FeederWatch Seeks Winter Volunteers

Citizen Science

As part of its ongoing research, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (CLO) is seeking volunteer FeederWatchers to help track birds that come to backyard bird feeders.

Project FeederWatch, a winterlong study of feeder birds conducted by volunteers across the country is already helping researchers find the answers to important bird-related questions.

Everyone knows what last winter's El Niño meant to people living in North America—exceptionally wet weather on the West Coast, warmer-than-average conditions in the Midwest and Northeast. But what did it mean to the birds?

"Rain was a major preoccupation for humans in California," says Wes Hochachka, a CLO scientist. "But, the numbers of birds reported by California FeederWatchers were very similar to the numbers reported last years and to data from other non-El Niño winters. What's not so good for people isn't necessarily bad for birds." Data from this coming FeederWatch season will help identify changes in breeding birds.

"Top Ten" List

Another popular feature of FeederWatch results is the "top 10" list—the list of the 10 most-widespread species in each region as reported by FeederWatchers.

The top 10 list is fun, but it also provides insights into birds and their habitats," says Hochachka. "For example, the birds visiting your feeder may seem common to you. But if your region is the only place where a particular species is common, we need to pay attention from a conservation standpoint. A species' survival may depend on continually finding good wintering areas in that one region. A good example is the California Towhee, which is a very common feeder bird in California that is found nowhere else."

Submit Data Electronically

Increasingly, Feeder Watch volunteers are submitting their data online, allowing CLO researchers to analyze the information quickly. This year FeederWatch maps will be updated every few weeks to show how bird populations are moving over the course of the winter. CLO is developing month-by-month animated maps that will demonstrate how FeederWatch species fluctuated over the years.

If you have access to the Internet, please email your data to CLO. Even if you don't have access to the Internet, you can still send in paper data forms.

How to Sign-up

If you'd like your feeder bird observations to count for science, become a FeederWatcher. To enroll, call 1-800-843-BIRD. Send a check for \$15 (\$12 for CLO members) along with your name and address to Project FeederWatch/BC, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, P.O. Box 11, Ithaca, NY 14851-0011.



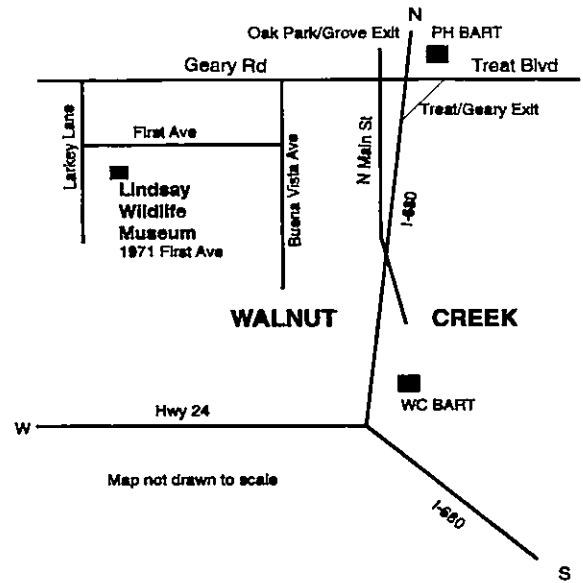
CALENDAR

Jan. 7, 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.

Jan. 14, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

Jan. 22, 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 follows: February 4, March 4, April 1, May 6, and 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.

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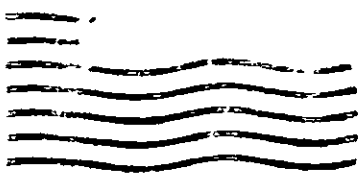
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The QUAIL

a publication of the
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Walnut Creek, CA
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February 1999

Vol. 45, No. 6

Next Deadline: March 7

Connections

by Gloria Cannon

What's wrong with growth?

In the American culture, growth has always been equated with development, and both are considered "good." For most Americans, growth means prosperity, and most believe that bigger is better. The right to develop one's land is a sacrosanct part of property rights. The ability to own a home is part of the American dream.

Today, Contra Costa residents are experiencing the impact of such philosophy. People are traveling further and further from their jobs in order to find an affordable home, spending more and more time locked in traffic. Meanwhile, developers are profiting from the American dream by turning farmland and ranches into sprawling cookie-cutter suburbs.

Where once we saw open hills and glimpsed wild creatures, where there was once open space where we could find some restorative connection with nature, our eyes now rest on identical beige homes. Suburban sprawl has become our nightmare.

Contra Costa Supervisors are now at least being realistic with residents, telling us that even if more roads were built and existing freeways widened, the congestion will only get worse. Now they are admitting that those roads and freeways probably won't get built anyway, because they cost too much.

(Continued on page 6)

Upcoming Events:

Feb Meeting Features Jim Lomax's "Untitled" Bird Show

The program for the February 4 general meeting program will be presented by Jim Lomax.

Not exactly your average backyard birder, Jim has gone looking for birds in New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and all 58 counties of California during the last two years.

The result of this odyssey is a collection of photographs of common, hard-to-find, or rare birds, such as Sage Grouse, Purple Gallinule, Purple Sandpiper, American Woodcock, Belcher's Gull, Black-crowned Rosy Finch, Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, Yellow-footed Gull, Bristle-thighed Curlew, and many more. It should be an interesting evening.

Jim has been photographing birds since 1988. He is past president of Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

The Wonder of Wetlands Topic of Birding Information

To Internet surfers, *www* means the worldwide web. However, at Mountain View Sanitary District in Martinez, *www* also means "The Wonderful World of Wetlands." At the February 4 meeting, Leslie Engler, the Pollution Prevention Coordinator at MVSD, will tell us about the District's wetlands and the educational program that she developed using the wetlands as a showcase.

Chapter Fundraiser

What a Great Idea!

Available for a limited time only, MDAS is offering *Restaurant Secrets*. This terrific, money-saving book contains recipes from over 40 of the top Bay Area and Wine Country chefs plus a \$10-off coupon for each restaurant represented.

Restaurant Secrets sells for only \$20, and supply is limited. Buy your copy at the February general meeting or for a short time thereafter at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill.

MDAS Meeting Information

The next MDAS general meeting will be
Thurs., Feb. 4, 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.

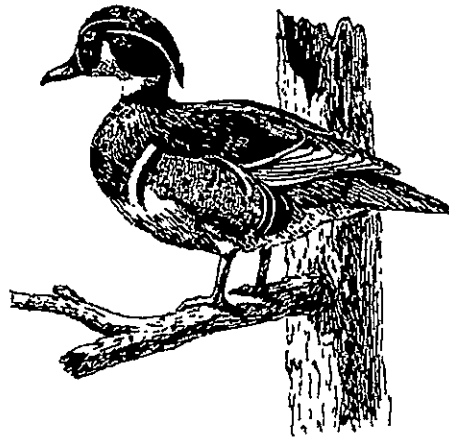
Field Trip Reports

Sacramento Valley Refuges, Saturday and Sunday, December 5-6—Thirteen birders saw 78 species and thousands of birds at the five Sacramento Valley Refuges. Skies were overcast on Saturday, and temperatures on the chilly side, but Sunday was clear and bright. In Yuba City Saturday night, seven of us enjoyed dinner at the Refuge Restaurant. Sunday included tours of Gray Lodge, and we promised ourselves a springtime visit to its varied habitat. From there, we circumnavigated the western edge of the Sutter Buttes, the smallest contiguous mountain range in the world. Species of birds seen included a Bald Eagle, Sandhill Cranes, American Bitterns, White-faced Ibis, and a couple of blue-phase Snow Geese, the legendary "blue goose."—*Joel Summerhill*

Hidden Lakes, Thursday, December 10—On a cold and foggy day, 14 birders explored the Martinez park. The Tropical Kingbird was not seen, but a Yellow-shafted Flicker was observed in the eucalyptus trees. Both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were seen or heard among a total of 42 species.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Niles Canyon and the Alameda Creek Quarries, Saturday, December 16—December 16 felt like June. It was just over 80 degrees and a beautiful day. Four members and guests attended, and we saw and heard 65 species in a pleasant morning of birding. We had a pair of Nuttall's Woodpeckers setting up house in a hole in a tree. Great looks at Western and Clark's Grebes side by side, and Eared and Horned Grebe together also gave us great comparisons. Common Merganser and Spotted Sandpipers were good birds to see, but the highlight of the day was three Wood Ducks—two males and a female in a small tree-filled pond. We watched them with the sun at our backs and perhaps only 30 feet away as they swam around completely unaware of our presence. A nest box was on a tree in the pond. Possibly a nesting pair?—*Jimm Edgar*

Palo Alto Baylands, Thursday, December 31—After all the cold and fog, the sun came out for a day, and five birders came out for the high tide. Everyone had excellent looks at Clapper Rail, and varying glimpses of Black and Virginia Rails or Soras. Another highlight of the morning was a Swamp Sparrow. A pair of Blue-winged Teal were among the ducks along the frontage road. A total of 67 species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*



Upper San Pablo Reservoir, Wednesday, January 6—Another foggy, cold day, but nine birders and a lot of birds were stirring. The trail goes through wooded areas and along the upper edge

of the reservoir. We saw the recently installed Osprey platform and Bob Wisecarver's bat boxes. The best birds were a pair of Hooded Mergansers. A total of 53 species were seen and heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Putah Creek, Saturday, January 9—Fourteen birders braved the cold and foggy weather. Few passerines were active due to the conditions. Highlights did include six Barrow's Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck, Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk, ten Turkeys, two Virginia Rails, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Tree Swallows. We heard White-throated Swifts in the rock crevices near the top of Monticello Dam. Total species was 63.—*Florence Bennett*

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY**
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Changes in the Status of Birds of the East Bay: Part Three

by Steve Glover

In this issue, the *Quail* continues with a series of articles by Steve Glover on changes in the breeding areas of birds of the East Bay. The articles focus on changes in breeding species that have colonized the East Bay in recent times.

American Avocet

Grinnell and Wythe (1929) labeled the American Avocet as an irregularly common visitor, especially in the South Bay in fall and winter. I find no nest records until 1951 when they were found nesting at Bay Farm Island (*American Birds*, 10/51) It seems that despite the first nest record coming from Bay Farm Island, the primary reason for their establishment was the construction of salt ponds in the South Bay.

California Gull

California Gulls were known by Grinnell and Wythe (1929) as an abundant winter visitor with small numbers of non-breeders remaining through the summer. The first nests were not found until 1983 when there were nine nests at the Leslie Salt Ponds at Fremont (*American Birds*, 11-12 1983). But by 1985, there were 270 nests! (*American Birds*, Fall, 1985). It doesn't seem like much of a stretch to say that it was the construction of salt ponds that allowed the gulls to colonize the area although one might wonder what took them so long.

Western Gull

Grinnell and Wythe (1929) cite nest colonies of Western Gull only from the coast. The first specific breeding record I find from inside the Bay came from Red Rock Island, Contra Costa, in 1952 (*Gull*, 34, 9/52, 9) although the article mentions occasional nests on piles at the Bay Bridge. In 1967, 40 pairs were found nesting on West Brothers Island, Contra Costa (*American Birds*, 10/67). They now nest commonly along the Bay to as far east as West Pittsburg. It seems clear that this species benefited from the addition of pilings and channel markers and, when they were

plentiful around the Bay, from garbage dumps. The fact that they have continued to increase despite the closure of garbage dumps suggests that it is the lifestyle of humans that has allowed their increase.

Caspian Tern

Caspian Terns are thought to have begun breeding in southern Alameda County as early as 1922 and were first confirmed in 1926. Dudley S. DeGroot commented in the "History of a Nesting Colony of Caspian Terns on San Francisco Bay" that "They were reported as numerous in 1924" but were not counted until 1926 when 164 nests were found (DeGroot, *Condor*, V. 33, 9/31, pp. 188-192). Note that Grinnell and Wythe (1929) reported this location as San Mateo County. Either way this was the only known colony in the Bay Region at that time. Since then, large colonies have been established at the Alameda Naval Air Station and Brooks Island near Richmond. Salt ponds may have been largely responsible for their colonization.

Least Tern

The first record of Least Tern for the Bay Region was at Alameda on August 19, 1923 (Grinnell and Wythe, 1929); and there were but a handful of records until the early 1950s, when they began to accumulate rapidly. By the 1960s, it was clear that they were breeding somewhere but were defying detection. It wasn't until 1967 that they were finally confirmed breeding in Alameda when three nests were found (*American Birds*, 10/67). This number had grown to 108-114 pairs by 1990 (*American Birds*, Winter 1990). A few pairs also breed to the east at Pittsburg. It is unclear to me what allowed Least Terns to spread to the Bay Area, but it may be the salt ponds in the South Bay because the breeding birds take their young there to forage and roost after fledging. It should also be noted that it has taken a lot of human intervention to protect the colony and allow the numbers to increase. Fortunately, the birds settled

in areas somewhat protected from human disturbance.

Black Skimmer

The first East Bay record of Black Skimmer came from Alvarado, Alameda County, on July 20, 1978, when one was photographed (*American Birds*, 11/78). Birds were noted sporadically in ensuing years, mostly in May. Nesting first occurred at Hayward Regional Shoreline, Alameda County, in 1994. It is interesting that southbound birds have been noted with regularity at Moss Landing, Monterey County. Were a few Skimmers nesting undetected somewhere in the Bay before 1994? The range expansion of Black Skimmer in California seems tied to the construction of salt ponds at South San Diego Bay. The first record there was in 1971; the first nest record in 1976; so it doesn't seem surprising that our first record came in 1978 (Phillip Unitt, *The Birds of San Diego County*, 1984).

Rock Dove

Colonization of the East Bay by Rock Doves apparently occurred before there were any observers in place to detect it. Nevertheless, they are present in developed areas throughout the East Bay.

Belted Kingfisher

Belted Kingfisher was known to Grinnell and Miller (1929) only as a rare spring and fall migrant. The first nest record came from Arroyo Mocho in 1939 (*Condor*, date lost). Kingfishers currently breed locally in the East Bay, mostly in southern Alameda County and eastern Contra Costa. It seems highly likely that this species bred in these unbirded areas previous to 1939. It must be stressed that little exploration was done away from a few selected areas around the Bay, especially at Berkeley, Alameda, Hayward, and the South Bay. It is quite reasonable that local species such as kingfishers could be overlooked.

**To Be Continued
in the March Quail**

MDAS Reports 152 Species for Christmas Bird Count

The December 19 Christmas Bird Count had excellent participation with over 80 volunteers in the field and six individuals who counted birds at their backyard feeders.

We reported a total of 152 species either seen or heard (see list below). Although this was not a record as in 1997, MDAS placed 30th out of 1,735 Christmas Bird Counts held nationwide. We had our second highest total number (58,108) of individual birds since 1987.

There were some surprises. For the first time, we did not spot any American Bitterns in our count circle, possibly an indication of the impact of development on this very elusive species. (The 1989 CBC

had 23 American Bitterns.) Other species missing this year were Western Gull and Peregrine Falcon. However, we did spot some interesting rarities, including Red-throated Loon, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Green Heron, Osprey, Barn Owl, Varied Thrush, Winter Wren, House Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Tricolored Blackbird.

The most exotic bird reported was a Costa's Hummingbird. Spotting this beautiful hummer at his backyard feeder won Bob Wisecarver the first annual prize for most unusual bird.

This year over 50,000 volunteers participated in the United States. A total of 650 species were reported with the highest

count being 235 species seen at the Madd Island Preserve in Texas.

Jimm Edgar, CBC Coordinator, said "We fielded more teams than ever before. We really appreciate having so many volunteers out there counting birds." Next year will mark the 100th anniversary of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Edgar said that MDAS hopes to field at least 100 volunteers to celebrate this end-of-the-century event.

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology now has 99 years of CBC data online at its website <<http://birdsource.tc.cornell.edu/features/cbc/>>. Enter CACC as the ID to access the data on Contra Costa County.

Species Reported

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

Comparison of MDAS Bird Count Results, 1988-1998

Date Held	Total No. of Individuals Observed	No. of Species Observed	Weather Conditions
1/2/87	53,742	153	cold, rainy
12/31/88	36,385	152	cold, foggy
12/30/89	33,703	158	pleasant
12/15/90	34,500	156	cold, 25 deg.
12/14/91	44,747	157	cloudy but nice
12/19/92	89,000	159	good weather
12/18/93	51,785	156	good weather
12/17/94	33,471	158	foggy
12/16/95	31,686	159	sunny, beautiful
12/21/96	30,083	144	very rainy
12/20/97	32,228	160	overcast
12/19/98	58,108	152	warm, sunny

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Glaucous-winged Gull | Northern Flicker |
| Forster's Tern | Black Phoebe |
| Rock Dove | Say's Phoebe |
| Band-tailed Pigeon | Tropical Kingbird |
| Mourning Dove | Horned Lark |
| Barn Owl | Tree Swallow |
| Western Screech-owl | Steller's Jay |
| Great Horned Owl | Western Scrub Jay |
| White-throated Swift | American Crow |
| Anna's Hummingbird | Common Raven |
| Costa's Hummingbird | Chestnut-backed Chickadee |
| Belted Kingfisher | Oak Titmouse |
| Acorn Woodpecker | Bushitit |
| Red-breasted Sapsucker | Red-breasted Nuthatch |
| Nuttall's Woodpecker | |
| Downy Woodpecker | |
| Hairy Woodpecker | |

Continued on page 5--Species Reported

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: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Thursday, February 4, Thornton.

Carpool 7:30 a.m., southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 8:45 a.m. in park at end of Glascock Rd. Take SR 4 to Antioch Bridge (toll), go north on SR 160 along river to Rio Vista. 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. Call the leader with any questions. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 1

Wednesday, February 10, Bolinas La-

goon—5 Brooks. Carpool at 7:30 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet at 8:45 a.m. in front of Audubon Canyon Ranch. New route to San Rafael Bridge: take Dam Rd. to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit, turn left and proceed straight through stop light.

Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From US101 north, take the San Rafael exit. Go two blocks, turn left and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR1, turn left and follow SR1 to Bolinas Lagoon and Audubon Canyon Ranch. Pullout area on lagoon shore. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 2

Saturday, February 13, Santa Fe

Grade & Los Banos. Carpool at 7 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 a.m. on SR140 in front of service station off I-5. Car caravan through valley grasslands. Ducks, geese, possibly Bitterns and Ibis. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 1

Wednesday, February 24, Lafayette

Reservoir. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at the top of the dam. Parking costs \$4 and is prohibited at the bottom of the hill. A good place to learn local birds, and the chance of a surprise on the reservoir. Leader: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732
Category 2

Saturday, February 27, Anderson

Marsh, Lake County. Carpool at 6:30 a.m. at southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 9 a.m. parking lot (\$\$fee) at Anderson Marsh State Park. Take SR 29 into Lake County to Lower Lake where SR29 goes to left, continue straight onto SR 53. About 1 mile north turn left onto Anderson Marsh Parkway and right into Park Marsh birds and possible Bald Eagles. 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.

Species Reported on 1998 Christmas Bird Count

(continued from page 4)

White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Rock Wren
Canyon Wren
Bewick's Wren
House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Townsend's Solitaire
Western Bluebird
Hermit Thrush

American Robin
Vaned Thrush
Wrenit
Northern Mockingbird
California Thrasher
American Pipit
Cedar Waxwing
Phainopepla
Loggerhead Shrike
European Starling
Hutton's Vireo
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Townsend's Warbler
Common Yellowthroat

Spotted Towhee
California Towhee
Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Sage Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Golden-crowned Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco

Red-winged Blackbird
Tricolored Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Purple Finch
House Finch
Pine Siskin
Lesser Goldfinch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

Observations

by Steve Glover

A **Red-throated Loon**, very rare on the Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count (CBC), was at Mallard Reservoir on 12/19 (JRo,SG). A **White-faced Ibis**, virtually accidental along the bayshore in winter, was at Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont, on 12/17/98 (DR et al) and was seen again on the Hayward-Fremont CBC on 12/20.

Two **Snow Geese** flew south over the Concord Naval Weapons Station at dawn on 12/19 (JRo,SG). Another Snow Goose was at the Albany Crescent Alameda/Contra Costa on 12/20 (GE). A Snow/Ross's Goose was at Heather Farms Park, Walnut Creek, on 12/26 (MR).

Two male **Eurasian Wigeons** were on Mallard Reservoir north of Concord on 12/19 (SG,JRo). One lone female **Canvasback** at Mallard Reservoir on 12/19 (SG) was the only one found on the Contra Costa CBC—a pathetic showing. A female **Tufted Duck** continued at Lake Merritt to at least 12/20 (Oakland CBC). One male and two female **Hooded Mergansers** were at Mt. View Cemetery, Oakland, on 12/13 (RS), two pairs were at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 12/12 (MF), one female was at Briones Reg. Park on 12/25 (ES,MM), and a pair was at Heather Farms Park, Antioch, on 12/26 (MR)—these all being regular locations for this local species.

An **Osprey** was at Mallard Reservoir on 12/19 (SG,JRo) while another was seen almost simultaneously at McNabney Marsh (FB, MJC). Another or the same bird was at the north end of the Concord Naval Weapons Station (MS, et al). **Bald Eagles** are rare but annual winter visitors in the county. An adult was at Lafayette Reservoir on 12/20 (MS), and an immature was near the intersection on Hwy 4 and Hwy. 242 on 1/3 (JB).

A **Red-tailed Hawk** was already nest-building at Black Diamond Mines near Antioch on 12/19 (JB, et al)! This is a fine example of just how early some of our resident species can begin nesting. Two

Surfbirds were at Pt. Isabel Reg. Shoreline, Richmond, on 12/20 (Oakland CBC). A first-year **Glaucous Gull** was at the Berkeley Marina, Alameda, on 12/20 (GE).

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Northern California Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422

A **Long-eared Owl** was reported from Siesta Valley, CC, on 12/20 (Oakland CBC). A **Celasphorus** hummingbird was at Redwood Regional Park on 12/20 (Oakland CBC). Although the bird was at least originally called an Allen's, all winter specimens from Northern California have proved to be **Rufous**. The second county record of a **Tropical Kingbird** has continued at Hidden Valley Park, Martinez, to at least 12/29 (FB).

The saga of the **Steller's Jay** invasion continues with four remaining in an Antioch yard (where accidental) to at least 12/12 (JB-pers. comm.). Red-breasted Nuthatch is a rare species in East County, but a total of three birds have been in two Antioch yards this winter to at least 12/25 (JB-pers. comm.). A wintering **House Wren** was at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 12/12 (MF). A **Varied Thrush** was at Antioch where accidental on 12/12 (JB). **Townsend's Warblers** are rare winterers in Central Contra Costa so one in a Danville yard was nice (SH).

A **White-throated Sparrow** was in a Concord yard on 12/26 (MB). A **Harris's Sparrow** (Note the new spelling: Harris's rather than Harris'. Other species such as Ross's Goose and Lewis's Woodpecker have followed suit.) was at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Fremont, on 12/12 (Ohlone A.S.). Four **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Pacheco Slough north of Concord on 12/



19 (JRo, SG), and at least nine were there on 1/1 (DW). These birds were part of a mixed flock of over a thousand birds, mostly **Red-winged** and **Tricolored Blackbirds**.

Observers: Michael Beeve, Jeanne Bonner, Florence Bennett, Mary Jane Culver, Graham Etherington, Mike Feigner, Steve Glover, Susan Heckley, Mike McCloskey, Marjorie Rattner, Dave Reinsche, John Robinson, Rusty Scalf, Maury Stern, Emilie Strauss, Denise Wight

Connections (cont. from page 1)

Is there any hope for preserving our quality of life?

There may be. On January 11, Vice President Al Gore announced an Administration initiative to use tax credits to pay interest on financing of local open space protection. The bond program, called Better America Bonds, will help local governments and groups raise nearly \$10 billion for land acquisition and improvement projects.

This innovative approach to land conservation harnesses the power of the tax code to help save vanishing bird and wildlife habitat, and to buy land for greenways and open space as well as easements on private land to prevent development.

National Audubon Society helped to craft the proposal and will work to ensure that Congress approves the initiative. The Sierra Club applauded the Gore initiative as a "good first step toward addressing suburban sprawl, which is now the fastest growing threat to our environment." Now we have to put together our wish list of projects.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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15% off all 20 lb. to 50 lb bags

SUET SALE

Buy 4 cakes or tubs & get 1 FREE
(Sale 1/20/99 - 2/15/99)

Events at Wild Birds Unlimited

(Each starts at 10.30 a.m.)

Sat., Feb 6: Habitat Management Workshop. Learn how to change your habitat to enhance bird activity. Many plants will be displayed and available to buy.

Sat., Feb 13: Slide show on "Glory of the Incas." Bill Klaproth's beautiful images of this lost civilization will be shown.

Sat., Feb 20: Don Yoder will give a presentation with slides on "Bluebirds & Other Cavity Nesters." Birdhouses will be on display.

Sat., March 6: Butterfly Rearing & Gardening Workshop. The butterfly life cycle will be explained, and specimens will be shown. Nectar-producing plants will be available.

Sat., March 13: Slide Show on "Galapagos—the Enchanted Islands." Bill Klaproth will show his amazing slides of the Galapagos, including a Booby feeding frenzy, Flightless Cormorants, and the Waved Albatross

Bird feeding tip: large flocks of Goldfinches are being reported. Many Pine Siskins are being seen in Moraga and Lafayette. Get out the thistle feeders!

California Duck Days! February 12-14

Veterans Memorial Center, Davis

A Wetlands Festival in the Heart of the Pacific Flyway!

For information, call(899) 425-5001

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count! February 19-22, 1999

The Great Backyard Bird Count takes place over the four-day weekend of February 19-22.

Sponsored by National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ford, and Wild Birds Unlimited, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is the first bird count that invites individuals, families, schools, and others—at all birding skill levels—to count birds at birdfeeders and in backyards, local parks, or other outdoor locations. The results are then reported online through the BirdSource web site at <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu/gbbc>>.

Cornell started the GBBC last year without a lot of prior planning. Despite that it was organized only a short time before the event, over 14,000 enthusiasts participated, reporting more than 11 million birds. The goal for 1999 is to involve more than 1 million participants.

Here is what you do:

- Select a location for your bird count. Start identifying the birds that are there, using a field guide.
- Download the tally sheet and step-by-step guide available at BirdSource <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>>
- At the day and time you've chosen over

the 4-day weekend of February 19-22, count the number of birds and the number of species present.

- Report the information online at the BirdSource website or if you do not have access to a computer, take your tally sheet to Wild Birds Unlimited, and they will transmit your report.

The Cornell website will also show the results of the reports from participants, and features online maps that are constantly updated with these reports. It's fun to watch! Visit the web site now just to view the fascinating birding information available on it now.

You can spend as much or as little time as you like counting the birds. The data you submit will help to define bird ranges, populations, migration pathways and habitat needs.

Last year's concentrated effort created an immense snapshot of the distribution and population of birds that winter throughout the continent. From Alaska to Florida, backyards appeared on state-of-the-art BirdSource maps displaying the whereabouts of America's winter birds.

Information and tally sheets will be available at the February MDAS meeting or at Wild Birds Unlimited in Pleasant Hill.



**National Audubon Society
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
and Wild Birds Unlimited**



**Invite You to Participate in
The Second Annual
Great Backyard Bird Count
February 19-22**

- Help scientists define the status of birds at the close of the 20th century
- Join other backyard birders from Nome, Alaska, to Key West, Florida
- Use the power of the Internet to map numbers of birds.

For more information, read the *Quail*, come to the February MDAS meeting, or go to <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>>

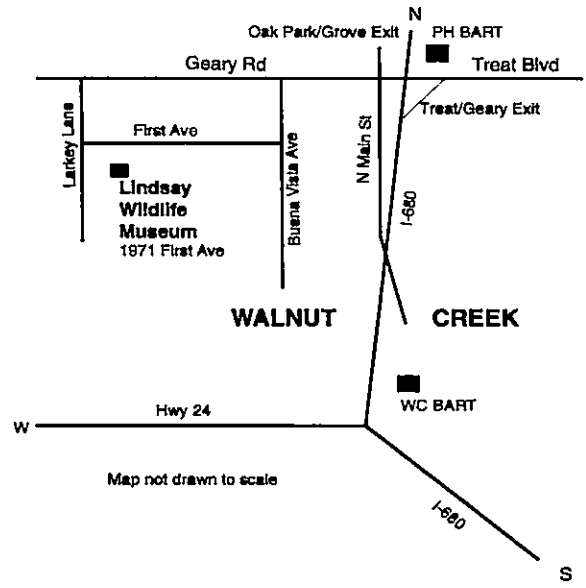
CALENDAR

Feb. 4, 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.

Feb. 11, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

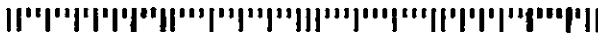
Feb. 19, Fri., 9 a.m.—*Quail* mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. (Volunteers prepare the *Quail* issue for mailing.)

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 follows: March 4, April 1, May 6, and 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 new member/\$35 membership renewal), 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.



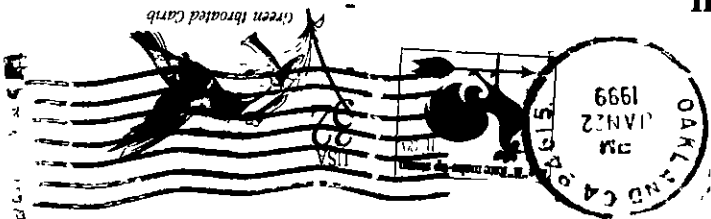
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March 1999

Vol. 45, No. 7

Next Deadline: March 4

Audubon-California Plans for a Changing California

There is a "profound need to incorporate nature into our lives," said Dan Taylor, Director of Audubon-California, at the Audubon Leadership Conference in January. "We must make wildlife an everyday part of people's lives."

At the opening session of the Leadership Conference, Taylor presented the activities and achievements of Audubon-California in the last year and reviewed its objectives and the challenges ahead. The primary objective of Audubon-California is to "build a culture of conservation and improve its education programs."

Audubon-California is the bridge between California's local Audubon chapters and the National Audubon Society headquartered in New York City. As the state voice of 67,000 Audubon members and 53 chapters in California, Audubon-California represents us in working with federal, state, and local governments on environmental issues. It is also responsible for the operation of our eight nature sanctuaries that protect approximately 12,000 acres.

In his presentation, Taylor pointed out the significance of California's changing population demographics on Audubon. California will have 34.6 million residents in the year 2000. By 2025 that will jump to over 50 million. Seventy percent of those residents will be of non-European descent, with 48 percent being Latino. Those numbers require Audubon-California to make hard decisions about priorities and programs.

One of Audubon-California's priorities is to increase its outreach to diverse audiences. Conservation organizations must work with people not traditionally aligned with our movement and inspire them to become integral participants in our conservation efforts.

To preserve California's biological diversity, conservation must be a value shared by all its citizens. Audubon-California, Taylor said, intends to be "the premier nature education organization in California in order to build conservation awareness, membership and activism."

(continued on page 2)

Upcoming Events:

Doyle Speaks on Our East Bay Parks

For the March 5th general meeting, Robert Doyle, Assistant General Manager of Advanced Planning, Land Acquisition and Regional Trails Division, for East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) will give us a look at our existing East Bay regional parks and 26,000 acres of new and wonderful habitat.

The EBRPD, now in its 65th year, serves 33 cities and approximately 2.2 million people in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. It is made up of 56 parks totaling approximately 90,000 acres and over 1,000 miles of regional trails.

Since the passage of Measure AA, which Bob co-authored, the District has ac-

quired \$146 million in park and trail properties; \$66 million from grants and other sources; and has cooperative agreements with other agencies on 25,000 acres, including federal, state, and local park and water agencies.

In 1998, under Bob's direction, the Land Acquisition Department completed \$35 million in land preservation projects, including environmental and endangered species recovery partnerships with over a dozen federal, state, local, and non-profit land trust partners.

Bob, a lifelong conservationist, is a founding Board member of the East Bay Conservation Corps and Save Mount Diablo. He is Vice-Chair of the Shell Oil Spill Litigation Settlement Trustee Committee, which has overseen \$30 million in wetland restoration projects.

MDAS Meeting Information

The next MDAS general meeting will be Thurs., March. 4, in 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.

Birding Information

Jill Hedgecock will present the Birding Information portion of the program. Rescheduled from November, her fun-filled slide show is inspired by *Our Amazing Birds* by Robert S Lemmon

Audubon's Conservation Leadership

(continued from page 1)

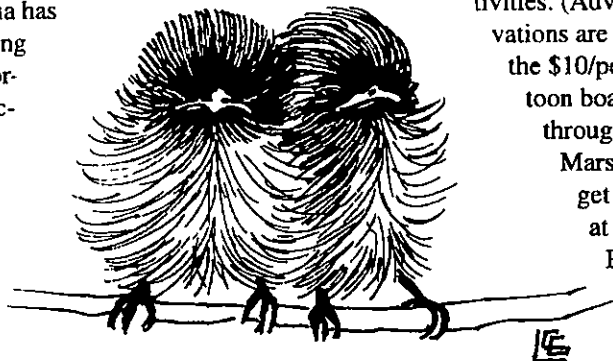
Last year Audubon-California has programs that provided nature education for 100,000 children; education and recreation programs for over 130,000 adults; and grassroots training for chapter leaders and teachers. This year, 40 percent of Audubon-California's \$1.45 million budget will be directed toward expanding education programs, especially those for children.

Audubon-California wants a community-based Audubon Center within every major population center in California. The first in such projects is a Nature Center in a predominately Latino community in Los Angeles (see related story on Debs Park on page 4).

Last year Audubon-California launched a Habitat and Population program to promote rational, habitat-sensitive land use practices and encourage local chapters to become involved in growth and population issues at the community level.

The centerpiece of Audubon-California's farm program is an outreach campaign to private farms and ranches. Our goals include improving habitat potential on private lands and creating partnerships with landowners to manage and protect key habitats on private lands. Audubon has secured funding for a model farmland restoration effort.

Protecting California's rich wildlife heritage is at the core of our mission. Our sanctuaries, like the Kern River Preserve, are living examples of environmental stewardship. Audubon-California has \$5 million in funding for southern California wetlands protection. It has a leading role in efforts to save the Salton Sea.



Spring Festivals and Birding Classes

The Fremont Adult School is offering continuing birding classes designed for both beginning and experienced birders. Classes will meet on six Tuesdays, **March 2** through **April 13** (no class on April 6), from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The instructor is Alice Hoch, a birding instructor for over 20 years.. Call the Adult School at 791-5841 for class location and more information.

Butterflies and Hummingbirds Festival

On Sunday, **March 7**, Ohlone Audubon is sponsoring a butterfly and hummingbird festival at the Fremont Main Library, 2200 Stevenson Blvd., from 1-4:30 p.m.

Los Banos' Wild on Wetlands

Get set to go wild! Wild on Wetlands Weekend in Los Banos is scheduled for March 13-14. The WPWW festival has been designed to appeal to families with variety of events, workshops, field trips, concerts, and BBQ dinners. There are tours focused on birds, spiders, wildflowers, vernal pools, tule elk, grasslands and wetlands, and water bugs. Love to bicycle? They've got a "Bicycling the Grasslands" tour as well. Admission is only \$15 for both days. For more info, call (209) 827-4772 or (800) 336-6354 or visit the website at <<http://www.losbanos.com/wow.htm>>.

Heron Days at Clear Lake

The fifth annual Heron Days Wildlife Festival on **April 10 and 11** (Saturday and Sunday) at Clear Lake features pontoon boat rides, nature walks, slide shows, and kids' activities. (Advance reservations are required for the \$10/person pontoon boat rides through Anderson Marsh where you get good looks at the Great Blue Heron

Rookery.) Call the Lake County Visitor Information Center at (800) 525-3743 to make reservations or call Roberta Lyons, Redbud Audubon Society president at (707) 994-2024 for more information.

Kern Valley Festival

Celebrate spring at the Kern Valley Bioregions Festival **April 23-25** in Weldon/Kernville. The five bioregions in the Kern Valley area provide habitat for 330 species of birds, 120 species of butterflies, 2000 species of plants, and 115 species of mammals. Workshops, field trips, exhibits, and activities are planned. Contact 760-378-3044 or (800) 350-7393 for more information.

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
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The City, the Farm and Wild California

The Audubon Leadership Conference, held in Sacramento January 31-February 2, was organized around three "symbolic" landscapes: the City, the Farm, and Wild California. These landscapes also symbolize the strategic principles that Audubon-California is using to organize its programs. Here the three MDAS representatives provide their impressions of the conference and the symbolic landscapes.

The City

National Audubon Society was organized to fight the decimation of wildlife, particularly birds, from hunting. In recent decades, our attention has been directed to conserving habitat. Throughout our history, our members have tended to be older, well educated, and Anglo.

By 2025, California will have 59 million residents. Two-thirds of the state's population will be Latino, Asian-American, and African-American. While the rest of the country focuses on an aging population, California will have the lowest proportion of elderly in the nation and a rapidly expanding population of school-age children.

In "The City" session, we learned how important it is for Audubon-California to reach out to California's diverse residents who, as voters, will make crucial decisions about protecting and respecting wild California.

In response to the need for conservation education, Audubon-California is targeting educational initiatives and local projects sponsored by urban chapters. The first such project is being planned for Debs Park in East Los Angeles. Melanie Ingalls, Director of the Los Angeles Education Center, told us why the project was important to Audubon and to the Latino community, why Debs Park was selected, how she worked with community leaders to make it happen, and how the project is being carried out (*see related story*).

In the afternoon, we toured the Effie Yeaw Nature Center on the banks of the American River not far from downtown Sacramento. We met with its director Sue Whittorf and got a first-hand look at the activities sponsored by this community nature center. We could have our own Nature Center at the Julia Cox Freeman wetlands in Antioch. Visit this 22-acre

marsh and envision our own children learning about birds and nature there.

—Gloria Cannon

The Farm

The Farm workshop was led by John Anderson, a member of the Audubon-California Board of Directors. We visited his farm in the afternoon and saw the contrast between his farm with its willows and other plants along field borders and canals, and the monoculture fields of his neighbors with their eroded canal banks and no cover for wildlife.

Over the past 15 years, Dr. Anderson has developed alternatives to the "clean-culture, plant-to-the-property-line" ethic of contemporary large-scale farming. Those farming practices result in the growth of annual, mostly introduced, plants along roadsides and canal edges, erosion of the canal banks, and sheet erosion from irrigated fields with consequent costs for weed control and canal dredging.

On his farm, Dr. Anderson has planted native grasses along the roadside and willows and native perennials on the canal banks. The roadsides are mowed once a year and the deep-rooted plants protect the canal banks. He also raises native grass seed for restoring depleted range land.—Elizabeth Dickey

Wild California

This session focused on Wild California, the traditional stronghold of Audubon, through three case studies: our Kern River Preserve, San Francisco Bay, and the Salton Sea.

The **Kern River Preserve** is a wonderful example of the riparian habitat so heavily impacted by agriculture and development throughout California. Audubon acquired the property from The Nature Conservancy. The threatened or endangered bird species being studied extensively on the Preserve are the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and

the Willow Flycatcher. (MDAS plans a field trip to the Preserve over the Memorial Day weekend, providing you with an opportunity to visit this very special area.)

San Francisco Bay is poised to become a major battleground for the expansion of the San Francisco airport. Restricted by urban development, noise controls, and with existing runways located too close to each other for simultaneous take-offs and landings in inclement weather, SF Airport wants to expand on approximately 1000 acres of new fill located in San Francisco Bay.

Golden Gate Audubon Chapter and other concerned environmental groups would exchange this one-time filling of the Bay for 30,000 acres of Leslie salt ponds. Tidal action would be restored to these wetlands, and millions of migrating and resident wild fowl would benefit. However, the powerful and wealthy corporation that owns the salt ponds has not shown any interest in selling. The airport does have condemnation powers, but such a move could involve lengthy lawsuits.

The **Salton Sea** may represent Audubon-California's most difficult challenge. Formed by accident years ago by misdiverted irrigation water from the Colorado River, the Salton Sea has been deteriorating in quality ever since.

Two major problems involve steadily increasing salinity levels in the water body which has no natural drainage outlet, and wildly fluctuating surface levels.

The myriad public agencies and environmental organizations involved, separate political jurisdictions, adjacent private property owners, and uncertain funding sources present enormous obstacles to consensus on any long-term solutions. But the thousands of birds that come to the Salton Sea have no other place to go.—Joel Summerhill

Audubon-CA to Build Debs Park Nature Center in Los Angeles

Audubon-California has chosen Los Angeles as the focal point of its urban education strategy for very good reasons. There are more species of birds in Los Angeles County than in any other county in the country except San Diego. The Los Angeles Unified School District has 680,000 children who speak 90 different languages. Half of the children who live in Los Angeles have never seen the ocean. Los Angeles has less open space per person than New York City. There is virtually no public transportation.

Melanie Ingalls, Director of Audubon's Los Angeles Education Center, and other Audubon staff members and in cooperation with the City of Los Angeles have been laying the groundwork for the past 18 months for a new urban Audubon Nature Center.

They wanted a city park for public access close to downtown Los Angeles. They found Debs Park—an underutilized, neglected 200-acre jewel—in Highland Park. Debs Park is natural oasis that is home to nearly 80 species of birds but only 5 miles from downtown Los Angeles. More than 25,000 school-age, mostly Latino, children live within a 2-mile radius of the park but have never visited the park.

The initial phase of the project was to organize a coalition of local leaders, elected officials, city staff, and the philanthropic community in an innovative public/private partnership. In community meeting after meeting, Melanie Ingalls explained what the Audubon Society is. To people who

had never heard of the National Audubon Society, she told them that Audubon is dedicated to helping people understand, appreciate, and love the natural world.

She won enthusiastic support from community leaders who saw that their children—and entire families—could benefit from a giant outdoor classroom.

As the leader of the coalition, Audubon is now preparing to build a 7,500-sq ft Nature Center with space for exhibitions, classrooms, office and retail space, and an outdoor amphitheater. The grounds of the Nature Center will feature native plant demonstration gardens to attract birds and butterflies and provide easy wildlife viewing for the very young, elderly, and the disabled.

Once built, the Nature Center will provide safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences for urban youngsters and their families, offer free afterschool and summer programs that also employ local youth and prepare them for environmental careers, and train teachers in natural history.

The Los Angeles program has enormous potential to provide meaningful opportunities to enjoy and appreciate birds and other wildlife. It will also help preserve and protect wildlife habitat in an urban area.

For more information about Audubon-California's urban education program in Los Angeles, contact Melanie Ingalls by email at <mingalls@netcom.com> or call 310-574-2799.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Refreshments Courtesy of Nature

The last several months have been a blur of activity and mostly business travel for me. I do try to get out and see a bird or two wherever I go—Cardinals in Nashville, Carolina Wrens in South Carolina, Sora in Monterey County, Bald Eagles in Portland. Why does seeing birds wherever and whenever make the trouble and the fatigue melt away?

The answer is in my backyard. My backyard overlooks the Dougherty Valley project. The golf course is rapidly being completed. Each time I return from a trip, a new section of housing is complete.

Even here, nature resists. Two years ago, engineers built basins to catch the annual water runoff. The basins filled last year, and some birds did come. Mallards mostly. The basins filled again this year, and Bufflehead, Mallard, Canada Geese, herons, and egret are regulars at the basins. Now that I am resigned to the construction process, watching my new backyard birds is pretty refreshing.

Have you noticed that wherever there's a piece of habitat, like these basins, the birds will come? Where the birds appear, something is again all right about the place. By their presence, the birds confer a higher status on a place. This place is good enough to sustain life. Looking on these places, perhaps the refreshment comes from noticing that we are part of something larger—and very interconnected.

*Good birding
and happy
travels to you!*



Third Annual Wetlands Cleanup! Celebrate Earth Day with MDAS!

Donate just 3 hours on Sat., April 24,
and join other MDAS volunteers to clean up
our own Julia Cox Freeman Wetlands in Antioch.
See the April *Quail* for information on how you can get involved.

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: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders, tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, March 3, 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 shore birds. Leader: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732. Category 2

Wednesday, March 10, Upper San Leandro Reservoir. Meet at 8 a.m. at Valle Vista staging area off Moraga Rd. (road to Canyon). Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Group will decide length of hike. For further information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 3

Saturday, March 13, 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 (\$5 entrance fee). New route to San Rafael Bridge: take Dam Rd. to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and proceed straight through stop light. Cross the 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 is on the right. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980. Category 2

Thursday, March 18, Bodega Bay. Carpool at 7 a.m. at Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd. north of Highway 24. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Tides Restaurant in Bodega Bay. Suggest that use Richmond Parkway going north on 101 to 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. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information.

Wednesday, March 24, Huckleberry Reserve. Meet at 8 a.m. at parking lot on Skyline Blvd. From Hwy 24 westbound take Fish Ranch Rd, turn left onto Grizzly Peak and left again onto Skyline. Parking is on left just past Sibley Preserve. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2

Saturday, March 27, Black Diamond Mines Regional Park. Carpool 7:30 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., north of Hwy. 24. Meet at 8:15 a.m. in the parking lot at park. Go east on Ygnacio Valley and Kirker Pass Roads turn right on Buchanan Rd. Go east on Buchanan Rd to Somersville Rd. and turn right. Follow the road to the parking lot at the end. Woodland, chaparral, and some grassland birds. Leader: Pat MacEchern, 934-3041. Category 3

Field Trip Reports

Sunol, Thursday, January 14—Six birders spent a slow, rather crisp, morning hiking out to Little Yosemite. Most of the specialties such as American Dipper and Wood Duck were missed, and Canyon Wren was heard buzzing on but one occasion. On the bright side, we did get nice looks at Rufous-crowned Sparrows and a small group of Townsend's Warblers. We saw a total of 46 species — *Steve Glover*

Berkeley Shoreline, Wednesday, January 20—Despite an impending storm, nine dedicated birders, including a visitor from Kansas City, showed up for this field trip. We were able to bird for about an hour before heavy rain hit. The highlight was the adult male Oldsquaw near the breakwater, north of the Berkeley Pier (good spotting, Maury!), but we did not locate the Tufted Duck, which had been reported from Point Emery. We eked out 29 species, including many Redheads, Black Turnstones, and an American Avocet standing in puddle between University Avenue and the Bay — *Denise Wight*

Santa Cruz, Saturday, January 23—Four die-hard birders braved the cold rain and wind until I started shivering so hard that I was afraid I was going to get a black eye by using my scope. You know you are having a bad day when your best birds are European Starlings and American Coots.—*Joel Summerhill*

Grizzly Island, Wednesday, January 27—Nine members spent a clear, crisp, sometimes windy day at Grizzly Island Refuge and Rush Ranch. The views of Mt. Diablo with snow were exceptional. The highlight of the day was a herd of at least 50 Tule Elk running in front of our cars no more than 100 feet away. Highlight birds included American White Pelican at the very end of the trip, Green Heron, eleven species of ducks, numerous Northern Harriers, Virginia and Sora Rails, Bonaparte's Gulls, Tree Swallow, and many Loggerhead Shrike — *Maury Stern*

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

Thirteen **Cattle Egrets** were on Byron Highway and six more were along Cypress Rd., east Contra Costa County, on 2/3 (SG).

An immature **Snow Goose** was at the Concord Golf Course on 1/10 (JE). A **Ross's Goose** was at Heather Farms, Walnut Creek, from 1/8-1/11 (HH). The premier Contra Costa County wintering site for geese is Webb Tract north of Bethel Island. On 2/3 it proved its worth when a truck flushed up an estimated 7,500 **Greater White-fronted Geese** and 14,000+ **Snow/Ross's Geese** (SG).

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** continued at the south end of McNabney Marsh to at least 1/12 (FB,MJC). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at the south end of McNabney Marsh on 12/19 (FB.MJC).

A female **Redhead** was at Seven Hills School, Walnut Creek, in January (HH). **Tufted Ducks** are rare in the East Bay, but they have proven annual in small numbers in the past 15 or so years. Adult males were found at Pt. Emery, Alameda County, on 1/19 (GE) and Martinez Regional Shoreline on 2/7 (DW).

A male **Oldsquaw**, called by several "the most beautiful they have ever seen," was still present at the Berkeley Marina to at least 1/30 (ES). There have been at least two birds here this winter. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 2/7 (DW). A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** was at Canyon Lakes east of San Ramon on 2/5 (DW), and another pair of **Hooded Mergansers** was at Heather Farms Park, Walnut Creek, on 1/8 (FB,HH).

An **Osprey** was at the intersection of Highways 680 and 242 on 2/5, a location which has produced several sightings the past couple of winters (SG). A **Merlin**, uncommon and local in the East Bay, was at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 1/4 (GF,MP).

A **Black Oystercatcher** was on the rocks at Pt. Emery near the Emeryville Marina on 1/24 (GF). Piper Slough's first record of **Western Gull** was present on 2/3 (SG). This is rather far inland for this coastal species.

A now-resident **Costa's Hummingbird** has continued at a Pt. Richmond feeder to at least 1/24 (Jerry Daniels). Another male **Costa's** was at a Walnut Creek feeder on 12/19, a nice surprise for the Christmas Bird Count (BW). There are only about four previous winter records for the county.

The **Tropical Kingbird**, the star of this winter's avifauna, was at Hidden Valley Park in Martinez on 12/29 and 1/6 (BG,MJC,EL,FB) and was noted to at least 1/11 (GF). Three **Steller's Jays** have decided to participate in the 1998-1999 winter invasion, these wintering at Pt. Richmond and found on 1/24 (BL and Friends). This is the first record I know of from west Contra Costa County.

Two **Winter Wrens**, living up to their name, are again wintering at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline in Richmond, this time being seen on 1/24 (RS). A male **Phainopepla** continued to winter at Howe-Homestead Park, Walnut Creek,

this being the most reliable winter location for this local species (FB,HH).

A male and a female **Townsend's Warbler** were in a yard on North Gate Rd. near Mt. Diablo State Park 12/28-31 (LA). This species is very uncommon in Central Contra Costa Co. in winter.

Single **White-throated Sparrows** were at Carquinez Regional Shoreline on 1/5 and Harbor Way, Richmond, on 1/7 (DW).

Observers: Lynn Ashlock, Florence Bennett, Mary Jane Culver, Jerry Daniels, Jimm Edgar, Graham Etherington, George Finger, Betty Gallagher, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Eugenia Larson, Bob Lewis and friends, Marjorie Plant, Rusty Scalf, Emilie Strauss, Bob Wisecarever, Denise Wight, Dennis Wolf

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Northern California Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422

Bob Walker Retrospective Scheduled for SF Main Library

Bob Walker was an award-winning Bay Area environmentalist and a freelance photographer who specialized in bay area landscapes, many of which are threatened by development.

Walker was also a cinematographer with the Independent Documentary Film Group on "Treasures of the Greenbelt" and "Secrets of the Bay," two films about the Bay Area's open space. These films will be shown on two consecutive Saturdays, **March 20 and 27**, at the San Francisco Public Library followed by a Bob Walker

photography exhibit, "After the Storm," **April 1-May 31** at the Wallace Stegner Room in the San Francisco Main Library. The title is related to development battles that took place during Bob's lifetime.

A public relations consultant with the East Bay Regional Park District and for People for Open Space/Greenbelt Congress, Walker was East Bay Project Director for the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Walker died in 1992 of AIDS. His work is preserved as the Bob Walker Archives at the Oakland Museum.

Changes in the Status of Birds of the East Bay: Part Four

by Steve Glover

In this issue, the Quail continues with a series of articles by Steve Glover on changes in the breeding areas of birds of the East Bay. The articles focus on changes in breeding species that have colonized the East Bay in recent times.

Band-tailed Pigeon

Band-tailed Pigeon was an unknown species in summer in the East Bay by Grinnell and Miller (1929). The first detected nesting wasn't until 1960 when it was confirmed at Strawberry Canyon, Alameda County (*Condor*, 64, p. 455). Today they are uncommon breeders in forested canyons of the Coast Ranges, east even into the moister canyons of the Diablo Range. It is interesting to speculate what allowed Band-tails to colonize the East Bay. As with many other species, there was plenty of suitable habitat before 1960. Is this a case of a species that has re-colonized the area? Will it again withdraw in the future?

Some species, such as Pygmy Nuthatch and Chestnut-backed Chickadee, are not highly migratory and are thus less likely to expand into a distant open niche. Band-tails, on the other hand, are highly migratory. If plantings in the Berkeley Hills allowed them to colonize, as it may have done for it and several others, why didn't they colonize the rest of the East Bay earlier since there was already suitable habitat? It seems likely that many species invaded the East Bay from the south because that is the only direction in which there is an uninterrupted corridor of habitat.

The East Bay is but a finger of woodland habitat, bordered on the west and north by water and on the east by the Central Valley, not at all a large area when you think about it. It wouldn't take much of a withdrawal for a species to recede from the East Bay. Has something happened on a larger scale to allow so many woodland species to invade in such a short period of time?

Lewis's Woodpecker

Lewis's Woodpecker was not detected breeding in the East Bay until 1914 at an area along Niles Canyon, Alameda County (*Condor*, 16, 7/14, p. 183). It seems highly likely that they had been breeding in southern Alameda County long before 1914 but went unrecorded because of a complete lack of exploration. Unfortunately, they have again withdrawn, this time almost solely due to the spread of the aggressive European Starling.

Pileated Woodpecker

One Pileated Woodpecker was apparently taken from Mt. Diablo prior to 1870 (Grinnell and Wythe, 1929), but one was not noted again until 1983. Since then, birds have been sporadically noted from Mt. Diablo and especially from the area of Redwood Regional Park/Canyon. There was at least some coverage of Mt. Diablo and Redwood Canyon earlier in the century, but it remains very possible that a tiny population defied detection.

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Olive-sided Flycatchers were thought not to have nested in the East Bay until "altered by man" (Tracy Stores, "Range Extensions by the Western Robin in California," *Condor* V.28, 11/26, pp. 264-267). According to Joseph Grinnell, "the appearance in the past few years seems to correlate with growth of planted groves as early as 1909" ("Second List of Birds of the Berkeley Campus," *Condor*, V. 16, 1/14)

Common Raven

Common Ravens were unknown to Belding or to Grinnell and Wythe (1929). The following charming account from 1935 is the first record I can find for the East Bay: "Mr. Dyer asked for suggestions as to the identity of a large black bird with pointed wings which flew slowly and steadily across his view in Piedmont on November 21. The bird was high in the air and, soaring in a wide circle, it disappeared. Its call was "kruk,

kruk." The several members who ventured opinions were inclined toward the Raven as the identity of Mr. Dyer's bird, a stranger in our region." (*Condor*, 37, 3/35, p. 92)

On April 19 and 21, 1976, pairs were seen in Berkeley and Hayward. Because of their scarceness, it was questioned whether or not they were the same pair! (*American Birds*, 8/76) Common Ravens are now fairly common permanent residents and appear to be increasing rapidly. The nests thus far have invariably been on transmission towers.

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Red-breasted Nuthatches were unknown as nesters in the Bay Region in 1929 (Grinnell and Wythe, pp. 142-143). The first nesting was at Diamond Canyon, Alameda County, in 1932 (*Condor*, V. 34, 9/32, p. 234). Based on their current range here, primarily confined to redwood forest or stands of introduced Monterey Pines, it seems likely that exotic plantings allowed this species to colonize the East Bay. It could be that this species was formerly present in the redwood forests of the East Bay before wholesale logging, but their absence from the humid coastal forests seems to rule this out.

Pygmy Nuthatch

There were but two records of Pygmy Nuthatch for the East Bay known to Grinnell and Miller (1929), one from 1900 and one from August of 1935. It was thought that the 1935 bird (or possibly birds) was an immature. The first nest record came from Redwood Regional Park, Contra Costa, in 1986 (*American Birds*, Fall of 1986). Pygmy Nuthatches in the East Bay are found almost exclusively in Monterey Pine stands in the western Berkeley Hills so there clearly was no suitable habitat before they were planted. Again, we have to wonder what took them so long.

To be continued
in the April Quail

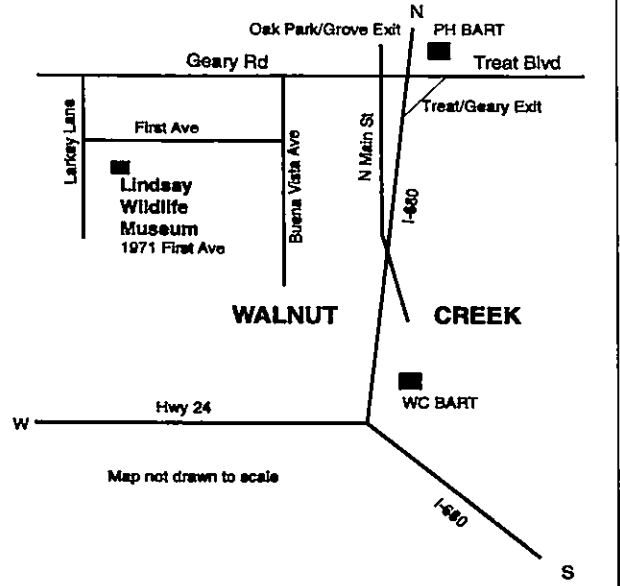
CALENDAR

March 4, 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

March 11, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

March 19, 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 follows: April 1, May 6, and 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 new member/\$35 membership renewal), 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.

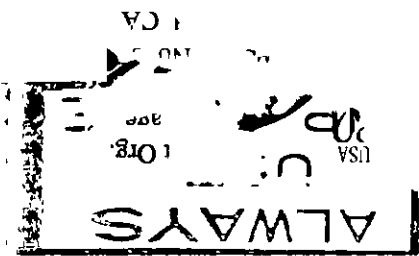
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94597-0053

April 1999

Vol. 45, No. 8

Next Deadline: April 1

Upcoming Events:

April **Birds in Art Feature of May Program**

MDAS is pleased to announce that Michael Duty, Executive Director of the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, will speak at our April 1 general meeting on the *Birds in Art* exhibit. This outstanding art collection is organized by the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum of Wausau, Wisconsin, and features paintings and sculpture of birds by contemporary artists

We will begin our meeting in the upstairs exhibit hall. Duty will introduce us to the art exhibit and give us an overview of the artists and their works. We will then have a guided tour of the exhibit. Exhibition catalogs will be available for purchase.

Birds in Art is an internationally known juried exhibition. For an exhibit of about 100 pieces, over 600 artists submit over 1,000 pieces of art for consideration.

The art depicts birds both in native habitats and interacting in environments with humankind. Birds that are rendered in a realistic manner perch comfortably next to more impressionistic paintings

Some works are whimsical and humorous while others convey the harsh realities of nature. Images of solitude are contrasted with representations of family and flock. Works influenced by passionate environmental concerns are balanced by works meant to present the sheer beauty of the natural world.

Michael Duty has spent the last 20 years writing, lecturing, and teaching in the fields of Western American art, culture, and history. He was the founding executive director of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art in Indianapolis, Indiana, and former director of the Rockwell Museum in Corning, New York, both of which have extensive collections of American Western and Native American art and objects.

He began his museum career as Director of Public Relations and Development at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth and was also the Director of the Wichita Falls, Texas, Museum and Art Center.

Join us for this rare treat. You will see vistas created to increase our understanding and awareness of the world around us as well as birds poised to challenge and expand the imagination and inspire us with their beauty

MDAS Meeting Information

The next MDAS general meeting will be
Thurs., April 1, in the upstairs Exhibit
Hall 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.

Words for Birds

Jimm Edgar, former MDAS president, will lead the Birding Information portion of the program. He will talk about and show slides of some of our North American birds. There are lots of interesting and even amusing stories of why birds have the names that they do. Blackbirds are easy, but why Vultures or Flicker? Who was Stellar and Cooper anyway? After Jimm's talk, you'll be able to answer those pressing questions and many others.

Election of MDAS Officers Slated

In accordance with the by-laws of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, the Nominating Committee is presenting to the general membership the following slate of nominees for the elective offices of the Society for the year 1999-2000:

President—Carol Frischmann
Vice President—Mike Williams
Secretary—Mike Tischler
Treasurer—Pam Keiser

The nominees will be presented to the general meeting on April 1. Nominations from the floor may also be made at that time. The election of officers will be held at the May 6 general meeting. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Ellis, chair of the Nominating Committee, at 838-8840.

Guest Column

On Behalf of Starlings and House Sparrows

By Christopher Patton

While applauding efforts to revitalize the Bluebird population through the nesting box program (MDAS monthly meeting in January 1999), I was bothered by the accompanying denigration and inhumane treatment of house sparrows. This attitude seems to be regrettably widespread within the wildlife management community. Personally, I find that killing one avian species to favor another for no good reason is a moral anathema—and there is no good reason in the case of either the House Sparrow or the European Starling.

Species Exposed to Abuse

In this country, the unrestrained abuse of European Starlings and House Sparrows can be attributed to the fact that they are not protected under federal law. They are not covered because they are labeled “non-native” or “introduced.” For non-predatory starlings and House Sparrows, these pejorative labels are as meaningless as the lack of protection is criminal.

To begin with, there's the ephemeral definition of “native.” Typically, “having evolved with other organisms in the region where it (the animal in question) is found.” One major problem with this is the inconsistency between evolution (dynamic) and the concept of “native” (static). Since evolution means continuous change, then “native” can only be defined by some arbitrary cut-off date. If the justification of this cut-off cannot be made logically and scientifically watertight, then the exercise is meaningless—as it is in the case of starlings and House Sparrows.

That starlings and House Sparrows were introduced into this country by man is held against them because introduction is not considered evolutionary. But man and his actions are an obviously integral part of nature and evolution is a process of Nature. So, man clearly DOES impact evolution, and his actions DO constitute evolutionary process.

A popular ploy used against starlings and House Sparrows is the telling of parochial anecdotes in which these birds are reported to have behaved despicably in the wild. Such anecdotal indictments can usually be matched by equally parochial anecdotal exonerations. Also, anecdotal finger-pointing is frequently emotionally driven and regularly fails the simplest tests of scientific reason.

Questionable Competition

The specter of local species being outcompeted for precious resources is yet another argument used against European Starlings and House Sparrows. If this were broadly true, then it would be documented all over the scientific literature—which it's not. A serious blow to this myth was struck by the most comprehensive and rigorous study conducted to date, which found that the implied accusation continued in the myth was completely without merit.

Antipathy towards starlings and House Sparrows may be partly due to the lack of importance accorded to their status and, therefore, to the persecution issue which surrounds them. Yet, the issue IS important—for two significant reasons.

Man's Destruction of Habitat

The first stems from the fact that man's ruination of habitat is by far and away the single most devastating impact on wildlife. An almost irresistible force, it is extremely difficult to contain or mitigate. In contrast, the feel-good campaign against defenseless house sparrows and starlings is a cause easily served. However, this kind of facile action by the wildlife management community is an unconscionable distraction way from the vastly more critical problem and the REAL threat to Nature.

Persecution a Poor Role Model

The second reason is that the mindless persecution of starlings and sparrows

serves as a poor role model for wildlife preservation. Baseless, negative, and regressive—without compassion or concern—it is guaranteed to turn off the public at a time when the fate of all wildlife is more dependent than ever on massive public involvement.

Despite the irrationality, the lack of logic and science, attacks on starlings and house sparrows continue unchecked. But there are rays of hope. One is that the MDAS has allowed European Starlings and House Sparrows some equal time. This is a rare event in the literature and I, for one, am proud of the chapter's gesture.

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
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MDAS Seeks Volunteers for Third Annual Marsh Cleanup

We need your help! On Saturday, April 24, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., MDAS is sponsoring its third annual cleanup of the Julia Freeman Cox Wetlands. All ages are welcome. Celebrate Earth Day in a new way and teach your children about community activism.

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 the importance of the marsh to birds and other wildlife, MDAS is partners 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. MDAS is working to make this the site of an outdoor environmental classroom and education center for school-children and families.

This type of habitat is among the most productive in the world, important for fish, wildlife, and plants 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.

This summer, the Flood Control District plans to enlarge the wetland area and improve the tidal flow that will flush the marsh, replace nutrients and balance the concentrations of salinity. We are also investigating methods of controlling water hyacinth, currently a serious threat to the health of the marsh.

In the interim, the MDAS Wetlands Action Committee is overseeing the site, performing species surveys, and beginning community education efforts.

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 a hat. We will provide rubber gloves, snacks, and soft drinks. Call Nancy Wenninger at 938-7987 for more information.

Events & Classes

Audubon Camps

Audubon has summer camps and workshops for kids, families, and adults—great forteachers—in spectacular settings, including Maine, Wyoming, Connecticut, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Activities include wildlife viewing, hiking, kayaking, and nature photography. For a free catalog, call (203) 869-2017.

SFBBO Field Trips

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is offering several field trips in April and May. On April 18 and May 2, there is a 6-hour kayak tour of Bair Island in San Francisco Bay. Once a month from March to September, you can accompany SFBBO biologists on wildlife surveys of Bair Island. For more information about costs and locations, call (408) 946-6548.

Camping at Del Valle

Ohlone Audubon is a sponsor of an overnight camping trip at Del Valle. Scheduled for Fri. and Sat., June 4 and 5, the camp will provide opportunities to watch the bald eagles, fish, hike, swim, and canoe. Cost is \$6 per person plus \$6/night for parking. Participants share in a potluck evening barbecue. For more info, contact Ron Barklow at (510) 886-4730 or Brad Sundeen at (510) 888-1221.

News from *Wild Birds Unlimited*

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

Results of the Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count took place February 19-22. Many thousands of people across the United States participated.

Locally, over 100 submissions were copied and sent to us for a compilation. A total of 5,968 birds were seen, representing 84 species.

The numbers and the species most seen were 1,168 American Robins, 505 White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, 478 House Finches, 446 American Goldfinches, and 400 Morning Doves. Other sightings worth mentioning include a Bald Eagle, four Golden Eagles, 147 California Quail, seven White-throated Sparrows, and nine Tricolored Blackbirds.

In California overall, observers reported a total of 163 species. House Finches were the most numerous, followed by American Robins, Morning Doves, White-crowned Sparrows, and American Coots.

Nationwide, the most numerous species were European Starlings, Canada Geese, House Sparrows, Common Grackle, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

The Great Backyard Bird Count was a great experience, and a lot of fun for many folks. Thanks again for your support.

Birdfeeding Tips:

Put out your oriole feeders for the Orioles that will be showing up soon. Lots of Goldfinches are being seen. They love thistle seed.

Join Our Team!

It is not only fun at Wild Birds Unlimited, it is also very rewarding helping people discover the "world of birds." We are anticipating a couple of part-time staff openings in the near future. If you are looking for an entertaining and rewarding experience, please let us know.

Field Trip Reports

Thornton, Thurs., February 4—Nine birders spent a the morning along Woodbridge Rd. and noontime at the Consumnes River Preserve. Highlights amongst the 74 species were Snow and Ross's Geese, a male Eurasian Wigeon, and several Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Cranes, as usual, were present in good numbers. Best of all, the day was fog-free, an unusual observation for this trip.—*Steve Glover*

Bolinas, Wed., February 10—On a beautiful clear, but windy day, three birders enjoyed ducks and shore birds. Highlights were three male Eurasian Wigeons on the lagoon and a female Common Merganser that rode the rapids down Papermill Creek. A total of 55 species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Santa Fe Grade Road, Sat., February 13—We began the overcast day by watching a Ferruginous Hawk and ended watching Burrowing Owls at the Merced Refuge. In between, 12 birders saw 67 more species, including three American Bitterns, three Bald Eagles, an early Cliff Swallow, Cattle Egret, and Tricolor and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Near noontime we watched several thousand Snow

Geese filling the sky with their movements —*Elizabeth Dickey*

Lafayette Reservoir, Wed., February 24—Ten eager birders circled the reservoir on a mild morning, always hopeful that the Bald Eagle seen frequently there this winter would make an appearance, but it was not to be. However, several raptors were in attendance. The most abundant birds of the day were Audubon Warblers, which flitted about in small flocks everywhere. We saw a total of 41 species in all.—*Barbara Vaughn*

Lake County, Sat., February 27—Seven members and two guests visited Clear Lake State Park and Anderson Marsh on a cloudy, windy day. We had 58 species, including Bald Eagle, Wood Duck, Violet-green Swallow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Pine Siskin.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Hayward Regional Shoreline, Wed., March 3—We were afforded a beautiful day after a night of rain and enjoyed the morning all the more because of it. Marsh Wrens seemed to pop up frequently and allow an unusually long view (for the species) of their little vibrating bodies as they sang. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was probably the most interesting bird of the day as he sat on a post for us to view for about 10 minutes. We saw 35 species.—*Barbara Vaughn*

Connections

Miller Introduces Endangered Species Recovery Act

On March 3, our Congressman George Miller introduced the Endangered Species Recovery Act (ESRA) of 1999, his bill to reauthorize the Endangered Species Act. When first introduced in the 105th Congress, ESRA set a new standard for science-based species recovery and included incentives for cooperation from private property owners.

Audubon and the entire conservation community strongly supported ESRA, and helped the bill gain 108 bipartisan cosponsors by the end of the 105th Congress.

Miller Bill Increases Wildlife Conservation Funding

Rep. George Miller and Sen. Barbara Boxer introduced "Permanent Protection for America's Resources 2000." This legislation would use Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas revenues for conservation programs. The bill guarantees approximately \$2.3 billion annually for the acquisition of public lands by federal and state governments; restoration of national and urban parks; preservation of farmland and open space; preservation of historic buildings; and restoration of depleted fish and wildlife resources. It would also fully fund for the first time the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), established by Congress a quarter century ago.

—from *The Audubon Advisory*, Feb. 26 and Mar. 12, 1999

Another CA Species Threatened

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated the Sacramento splittail, a fish found only in California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Central Valley rivers, as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Splittail populations have declined 62 percent in the last 15 years.

Congressman George Miller's Second Annual Environmental Update

Saturday, May 1, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Come explore scenic Rush Ranch in the Suisun Marsh and discuss Congress's environmental agenda with George Miller

10 a.m.–12 noon: Docent-led walks or explore on your own.
12 noon–1:30: Discussion with George Miller over brown bag lunch. Bring your lunch, water, and binoculars. Soft drinks provided.

RSVP: Kathy Hoffman in Congressman Miller's Office, 925-602-1880

Directions: I-80 east to Highway 12 in Fairfield. West to Suisun City to Grizzly Island Road and Sunset. Turn right and go 2.5 miles to Rush Ranch.

Sponsored by Mt. Diablo and Napa-Solano Audubon, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Sierra Club, and East Bay Area Trails Council

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: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Thursday, 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. Beware of poison oak along shaded trails. Leader: John Davis, 228-9516 Category 2

Saturday, April 3, 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 m 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. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906 Category 3

Wednesday, April 7, 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). New route to San Rafael Bridge: take Dam Rd. to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and proceed straight through stop light. Cross the 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 17, Pine Canyon. Meet in parking lot at end of Castle Rock Rd at 8 a.m. Hike up Pine Canyon. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Spring migrants. Leader: Pat MacEchern, 934-3041 Category 3

Wednesday, April 21, 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 mountains. This is a car birding trip with no meeting place in Sonoma County. The carpooling is needed due to limited parking on some roads. Leader: John Jordan, 680-7490 Category 1

Thursday, April 29, Del Puerto Canyon. Carpool at 7:45 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 on Del Puerto Road west of I-5 at 9 a.m. at Patterson exit of I-5 (59 mi. from El Cerro). Take 580 east to I-5 south. (Recommend stop at Westley Rest Area. There are no facilities on trip until noon.) Yellow-breasted Chat, Costa's Humming-

bird, and other goodies. Leader: Florence Bennett, 689-3106 Category 1

May 29-31, 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 Preserve is Lakeview Motel (800-929-8250); it is clean but basic; the owners love birders. The KOA (760-378-2001) is in Lake Isabella. It may be quite hot in the desert but frosty in the mountains, so be prepared. Call Steve Glover in mid-May for Saturday meeting time and place. (This is a wonderful weekend of birding and nature.—the editor)

Help MDAS with Binoculars, Prizes

For the next two months, MDAS is dedicating the money it raises through door prizes to the purchase of binoculars. The binoculars will be used for chapter activities, including educational outreach programs. Wild Bird, Inc., has agreed to supply the binoculars at cost and has donated a feeder and a supply of birdseed as a door prize at the April general meeting.

MDAS would appreciate the donation of:

- Binoculars and spotting scopes in good, usable condition for family field trips and school programs.
- Books, art, collectibles, and other items to be used as door prizes.

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

Although it is raining outside even as I type this, proof of spring is in the air. Literally. Allen's Hummingbirds were the first to arrive, followed quickly by swallows and Orange-crowned Warblers. House Wrens and Orioles should both be in very soon, closely followed by vireos, warblers and Black-headed Grosbeaks. Breeding activity has also started to increase, particularly amongst raptors, hummingbirds, and Bushtits. As the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas enters its second year, I would like to encourage all of you to submit sightings of nesting activity of all species to me, either through the mail or via e-mail.

Great Blue Herons are once again nesting at Marsh Creek Reservoir near Brentwood. On 3/5 three birds were perched on nests, and two other nests were being constructed (SG). Five **Cattle Egrets** were in unusual habitat, in an orchard, near Byron on 3/4 (SG). Two **White-faced Ibis**, the only ones reported in the county this winter, were over Webb Tract in northeast Contra Costa County on 2/14 (SG,KV)

A **Ross's Goose** was at Heather Farms Park, Walnut Creek through at least 2/26 (HH).

The adult male **Tufted Duck** was last seen at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 2/8 (JC). A **White-winged Scoter** was amongst small numbers of **Surf Scoters** at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 2/14 (KV). There are but two previous county records from this far inland. Four **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were at Iron House Sanitary District at Oakley on 2/14 (KV,SG). A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** was at Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 2/17 (HH).

An **Osprey** was at Piper Slough on 3/4, this date seeming rather typical for spring migrants (SG). A female **Merlin** was at Donner Canyon, Mt. Diablo S.P., where rare, on 2/28 (J&MR).

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at Jersey Island on 3/4 (SG). The status of **Surfbird** in the bay is somewhat muddled, especially in winter, but 25 on 2/14 and 42 on 3/7, both along the Emeryville/Berkeley frontage road, are high numbers (GE). The previous high record for the East Bay was apparently 35.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

**Northern California Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422**

An adult **Franklin's Gull** flew east past Martinez R.S. on 2/14, furnishing only the fourth record for Contra Costa County (and second this winter) and the long overdue first for Solano County. (SG,KV).

A male **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found wintering in the Monterey Pine grove at the Moraga parking lot of Upper San Leandro Reservoir on 2/13 (RS and class). It was also noted 2/21 (HH) and 3/6 (JRo and group). This species is rare in the county but is now recorded annually.

The **Tropical Kingbird** that wintered at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez, was last found 2/1 (DW).

The first **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** of the season was reported at Heather Farms Park on 2/25 (HH). The earliest county record appears to be 2/23.

Lingering **Steller's Jays**, a product of last fall's invasion, are still being reported from varying locations, including three in Martinez on 2/17 (DW) and four in Antioch on 3/6 (JB). I would like to encourage observations of **Steller's Jays** from areas not normally occupied, with special attention paid to spring departure dates. Since these birds probably represent northern races, I doubt that they will remain to nest but keep an eye out nonetheless.

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in Antioch, where rare, has survived the winter and was still present on 3/7 (JB).

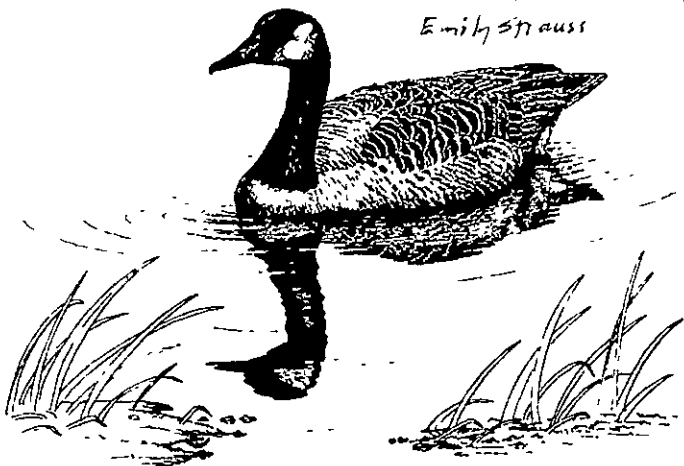
Two **Winter Wrens** were at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, on 2/14 (SG,KV).

A **Wilson's Warbler** was at the Berkeley Marina on 2/13 (ES,LF,SH). This species is extremely rare in winter in the East Bay.

One of the wintering **Swamp Sparrows** at Iron House Sanitary District was coaxed into view on 2/14 (SG,KV).

Observers: Jeanne Bonner, Judi Cooper, Graham Etherington, Lillian Fujii, Steve Glover, Steve Hayashi, Hugh Harvey, John Robinson and group, John and Marlene Robinson, Rusty Scalf and class, Kent VanVuren, and Denise Wight

Emily Strauss



Changes in the Status of Birds of the East Bay: Part Five

by Steve Glover

In this issue, the Quail continues with a series of articles by Steve Glover on changes in the breeding areas of birds of the East Bay. The articles focus on changes in breeding species that have colonized the East Bay in recent times.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

The range expansion of Chestnut-backed Chickadee is far and away the most closely monitored and documented case for the East Bay. Grinnell and Miller (1944) considered them vagrants (as of 1944) to the East Bay District, recorded once at Berkeley and just a few times at Hayward (p. 304). In 1938, a pair was seen nest-prospecting at a creek near Sunol; and in 1940 Henry W. Carriger took five fresh eggs near Niles on April 12. They apparently spread northwest, being found at Redwood Regional Park in 1943.

By spring of 1945, they were nesting at Wildcat Creek in Tilden Park. Joe Marshall found a bird at U.C. Berkeley on July 1, 1946; but no evidence of nesting was found there until 1950 (Keith L. Dixon, "Some Ecological Relations of Chickadees and Titmice in Central California," *Condor*, V. 56, 5-6/54, pp. 113-124). Citations since have documented the expansion to Moraga, Mt. Diablo, and Livermore. The expansion seems to be complete with the birds in the more arid eastern regions, such as Mt. Diablo, appearing to have a rather tenuous hold, often withdrawing in drier years.

It is clear that the source of the East Bay's chickadees is from the south because they are of the race *barlowi*, the "Santa Cruz Chestnut-backed Chickadee," rather than the "Marin Chestnut-backed Chickadee" whose race is labeled *neglectus*. Cohen (see Dixon above) stated in an 1895 report that they breed "in the most unsettled portions of the county (Alameda)." So were chickadees occupying the southeastern portions of Alameda County around Sunol for at least half a century before spreading into the rest of the East Bay? Dixon discounts

this theory. He felt that "vegetational discontinuities" in the Santa Clara Valley presented a barrier to eastward dispersal and that if birds had been present in Sunol for at least 50 years, as contended, they would have expanded much earlier. He felt that this barrier was bridged by the planting of orchards and shade trees. The explanation seems plausible, but we have already noted several examples of species whose expansion came long after the creation of the conditions that appear to have allowed their spread.

Brown Creeper

Brown Creeper was first noted in the East Bay in 1890 by W.O. Emerson ("Notes From Hayward, California," *Condor*, V. 2, 3/1900, p. 34). First noted nesting at U.C. Berkeley (Greek Theater) in 1918 and thought not to have nested there until the habitat was altered by man (Tracy Stores, "Range Extensions by the Western Robin in California," *Condor*, V. 28, 11/26, 264-267). Again it appears that exotic plantings allowed this species to gain a foothold in the East Bay; and they have since spread throughout the forests of the East Bay, even sparingly into the arid regions.

Winter Wren

Winter Wrens were known to Grinnell and Wythe (1929) and Grinnell and Miller (1944) as winter visitors to the East Bay. There were few citations to indicate even probable nesting until the late 1980s, and the first documented nesting came in 1992 at Redwood Regional Park. They are still rather limited in distribution here and always will be, but they are very conspicuous during the breeding season and are not likely to have been overlooked by early observers.

American Robin

Grinnell and Wythe (1929) list American Robins as nesting only as far south as Marin and Cazadero until 1917 when a nest was found at the Claremont Country Club (Amelia S. Allen, "Additional Notes

of Birds of a Berkeley Hillside," *Condor*, V. 45, 7-8/43, pp. 149-157). They appeared at U.C. Berkeley as nesters in 1920. Again, landscape alterations was credited (blamed?) for this colonization (Tracy I. Storer, "Range Extensions by the Western Robin in California," *Condor*, V. 28, 11/26, pp. 264-267). They are now widespread breeders throughout the majority of the East Bay.

Northern Mockingbird

It comes as a surprise to many to discover that Northern Mockingbirds, such a common sight in our yards, are but johnny-come-latelys to the East Bay. A brief history of the Northern Mockingbird in the East Bay is as follows: They began nesting in Walnut Creek, Contra Costa, in 1929. By 1934 there were at least 16 birds in the area. The first breeding at Hayward came in 1931 although winterers had been noted there since 1899.

By 1935, there were also pairs present at Niles, Alameda County (John A. Arnold, "The Changing Distribution of the Northern Mockingbird in California," *Condor*, V. 37, 7/35, pp. 193-199). Other citations document nesting at Richmond by 1931 and in East Oakland in 1940. Arnold felt that arboreal plantings on a large scale in the Central Valley had furnished food and nest sites. The planting of ornamental shrubs in places like Walnut Creek helped them spread into the Bay Region. Arnold felt that when suitable agricultural conditions were combined with dry weather, such as from 1928-1930, the result was the spread of mockingbirds. The spread came from the south end of the Central Valley north, nesting north to Marysville by 1890, the exact opposite of other passerines we have looked at who have moved from cooler, moister situations to drier ones. It appears that the East Bay is just arid enough that they can be successful with the abundant food and nest sites.

To be continued next month

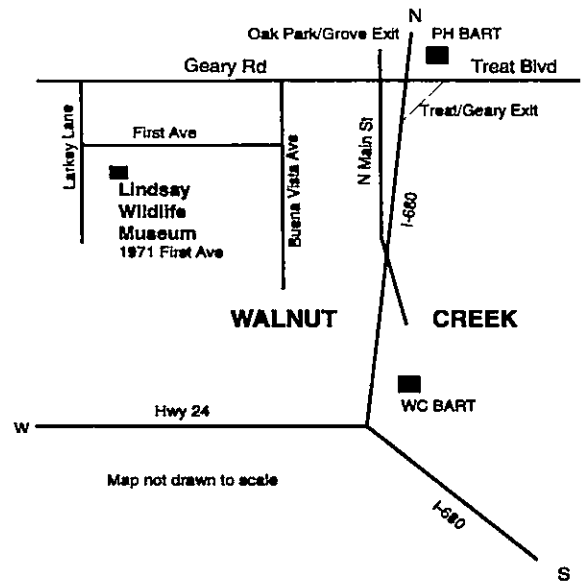
CALENDAR

April 1, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

April 8, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

April 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 follows: May 6 and June 3.



Map not drawn to scale

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 new member/\$35 membership renewal), 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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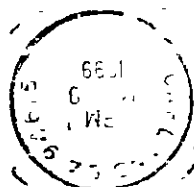
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PRESIDENT'S NOTES

By Carol Frischmann

Panamanian Ecotourism

Two projects by Panamanian conservationists show how attention to ecology provides both tourist dollars and an educational experience for visitors.

Canopy Tower Lodge (<http://www.canopytower.com>), the brainchild of Raul Arias de Para, began as a U.S. radar tower. Convincing the Panamanian government to grant a long lease, Raul converted the tower, surrounded by a protected rainforest, to a small ecolodge. Red-legged Honeycreepers, Blue Dacnis, and King Vultures can be seen from the canopy-level viewing area.

Hotel & Cabanas Los Quetzales (<http://www.LosQuetzales.com>), a project of Carlos Alfaro, provides a complete cloud forest experience. The cattle were removed from the property, which had been clear-cut and used as pasture. After 30 years, second growth forest has emerged, and the water supply has returned. Guests of the small facility are invited to walk the forest roads and paths in the company of skilled guides.

I was lucky to be part of a group of 12 visiting these places on a trip organized by Golden Gate Audubon and Sociedad Audubon de Panama. We also had the opportunity to see how monoculture affects wildlife diversity, meet wonderful Panamanians, and learn about the challenges
Continued on page 7

Upcoming Events:

MDAS To Tour the Galapagos Islands with Bill Klapproth

For the May 6th MDAS general meeting, Bill Klapproth will give us a slide presentation of his 1998 trip to the Galapagos Islands. Bill saw and photographed many Darwin's finches, tortoises, boobies, gulls, Lava Herons, and marine and land iguanas.

The Galapagos Islands with their extremely sensitive ecosystem are a premier eco-tourism destination with up to 3000 visitors a month. Bill will give us some insight into lives of the animals that inhabit this unique area as well as a bit of the history of the islands.

The Galapagos are an archipelago of 13 large islands and 6 smaller ones and together form a province of Ecuador. The islands are home to many unique animals, most of which are fearless due to the lack of natural predators. One of the best known is the giant tortoise. Other reptiles include marine iguanas, land iguanas, lava

lizards, and snakes. There 13 species of small, brownish finches that are know collectively as Darwin's finches. Other birds of the Galapagos include a tool-using woodpecker and mangrove finches. Among the endemic sea birds are a flightless cormorant, two species of gull, and the only penguin species which lives in the Northern hemisphere.

Bill Klapproth is a wildlife and nature photographer who is well known to MDAS members for his wonderful slide tours of Africa. Bill has visited five continents, capturing their wild beauty and wild creatures on film. He followed the Galapagos trip with an extension to Peru, a combination which was so popular Bill will be returning again with a group of 14 people in year 2000.

Join us for this great photographic journey on the last formal MDAS meeting before the summer break (the June meeting is the potluck).

MDAS Meeting Information

The next MDAS general meeting will be
Thurs., May 6, in the upstairs Exhibit Hall 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.

Why We Want Bats in Our Belfry

During the Birding Information portion of the program, Brian Murphy will give us the facts on bats and bat houses. This informative session will provide you with information about this insect-eating nocturnal mammal which plays such an important role in maintaining nature's balance.

Connections: NAS Sets Its Congressional Agenda

by Gloria Cannon

National Audubon Society has released its Action Agenda for the 106th Congress. NAS has identified 11 key actions that it wants Members of Congress to take on environment issues. The agenda represents the cornerstone of Audubon's advocacy program for this Congress. NAS asks its members to join it in supporting these important bird, wildlife, and habitat issues:

- Agricultural policy.
- Endangered species.
- Everglades restoration.
- Forest habitat.
- Living oceans.
- Platte River restoration.
- Upper Mississippi River restoration.
- Wetlands.
- Wildlife refuges.

NAS urges Congress to support President Clinton's proposal for **Better America Bonds**. The bonds would leverage \$700 million in federal tax credits to provide \$9.5 billion to purchase open space in the next five years and protect water quality. The Better America Bonds give communities like ours a critical tool: the financial ability to compete on a level play field with developers to buy open space and wildlife habitat.

Support the National Wildlife Refuge System

Both Congress and the public often overlook the National Wildlife Refuge System. With over 550 refuges across the U.S., the Refuge System is larger than the National Park System.

Refuges offer outstanding opportunities for bird watching, wildlife viewing, outdoor education, and hunting and fishing. Many of these refuges are within easy reach of large urban areas. But not enough money has been provided for basic operation and maintenance of the Refuge System. The backlog has grown to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Our closest National Wildlife Refuge is no further away than the Antioch Dunes. This unique spot along the Delta has been set

aside to protect two endangered plants and a butterfly that live no other place. At present, there is no public access to the Antioch Dunes primarily because of the lack of funds.

Support for Family Planning

NAS takes a strong position on the need to promote family planning and population assistance. NAS believes that human population growth is one of the most urgent threats to the living creatures of this planet, imperiling birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. U.S. international planning and population assistance programs are some of the most cost-effective and positive initiatives to address population growth and environmental health.

In each of the past four years, funding for these programs has been under attack by opponents in the House of Representatives, who have attached anti-family planning riders to legislation, especially unrelated international appropriations bills. The riders, containing onerous restrictions on population programs, serve only to undermine the effectiveness of family planning programs around the world.

Effective family planning programs are a crucial investment for the future of the environment. Just as an example of why such programs are needed, consider Costa Rica. According to a recent article in the *Tico Times*, 40 percent of Costa Rica's population is under the age of 15. Many hundreds of children live in poverty. The educational system, which has distinguished Costa Rica from its Central American neighbors, is overwhelmed. There are not enough teachers, books, classrooms, cafeterias, maintenance workers, or funds to serve such growing numbers of children.

As Costa Rica struggles to maintain its economic development for its young population, it is losing wildlife habitat as are other Caribbean and Latin American countries. Migratory birds have fewer

places to stop on their long migrations and fewer places to spend the winter.

Another NAS action item is to pass the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Habitat Enhancement Act**. This legislation is a sound investment for bird conservation. It leverages federal tax dollars by building partnerships with the business community, non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments to manage and preserve bird habitat in countries like Costa Rica.

Source material: *Audubon Action Agenda for the 106th Congress*. To obtain more information or to subscribe to the Audubon Advisory, contact NAS at (202) 861-2242 or policy@audubon.org or visit the website at <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/>.

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CBRP Reports 11,000 Fledglings in '98

The California Bluebird Recovery Program reported recently that totals of cavity-nesters fledged in California increased in 1998 despite the problems caused by El Nino.

In 1997 the CBRP reported a total of 8,393 birds fledged from their monitored nestboxes. For 1998, the group total is 11,326 from the 4,142 nestboxes. As shown in Table 1 below, over 5,000 Western Bluebirds were fledged in California. Tree Swallows fledglings increased nearly fourfold—up from 554 in 1997 to 2,008 in 1998

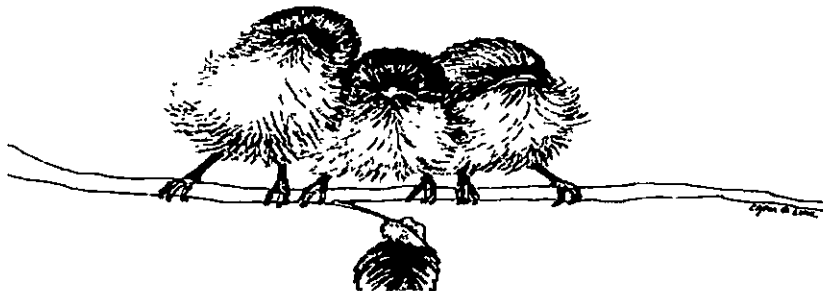
Orange County alone produced 2,384 fledglings of all species. In Yuba and Sutter Counties, nestboxes produced 1,609 fledglings, including 1,279 Wood Ducks.

Founded in 1994, the California Bluebird Recovery Program is for the encouragement and conservation of cavity-nesting birds, especially bluebirds, anywhere in the West. The nonprofit CBRP is supported by Audubon-California and is affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society. CBRP members have placed and monitor over 4,000 nestboxes.

New members are welcomed, and the organization needs your help both financially and with donations of time and effort. Membership, which includes a quarterly newsletter, is available for a donation of \$5 or more, made payable to "MDAS—Bluebirds" and mailed to CBRP, 2021 Ptarmigan Dr. #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595.

Table 1. 1998 Cavity Nesters Fledged from CBRP Nestboxes

Species	Number of Fledglings
Western Bluebird	5227
Mountain Bluebird	160
Acorn Woodpecker	2
Downy Woodpecker	4
Ash-throated Flycatcher	562
Tree Swallow	2008
Violet-green Swallow	324
House Wren	445
Bewick's Wren	55
Oak Titmouse	627
Mountain Chickadee	83
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	66
White-breasted Nuthatch	126
Common Barn Owl	6
American Kestrel	40
Wood Duck	1591
Total	11326



News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

May Activities at WBU:

- Saturday, May 1, 9:30 a.m. Birding Optics Workshop.
Trying to select the right optics for local birdwatching or that next birding trip? Join us at for a 45-minute workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics." There will be many brands of binoculars and scopes on display. Check out the Bausch & Lomb's Elite binoculars (incredibly sharp and close focus to 6 feet) and the 60-mm KOWA scope. Call for reservations as seating is limited.
- Saturday, May 8 2.00 p.m.
Lee Dempsey will lead a workshop on plantings to attract birds and butterflies. Garden layouts and types of plants will be covered. Varieties of plants will be available, including milkweed, which is necessary to the survival of Monarch butterflies. Monarch caterpillars will also be available for purchase.

Birdfeeding Tips:

It's time to put out your Oriole feeders. Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles—the most spectacular birds that we can attract to our backyards during the summer—are now arriving. They are nectar-feeding birds but are too large to feed from most hummingbird feeders. They will readily come to an oriole feeder. Please report all oriole sightings to WBU. We keep track and map all sightings.

Black-headed Grosbeaks are back and will stay until August or September. These sunflower-seed lovers nest in our backyards and seem to return each year to reclaim the same territory.

Join Our Team!

It's not only fun at Wild Birds Unlimited, it's also very rewarding helping people discover the "world of birds". We are anticipating a few part-time staff openings in the near future. If you are looking for an entertaining and rewarding experience, please give us a call.

Field Trip Reports

Upper San Leandro Reservoir, Wed., March 10—Overcast day, muddy trails, but eight birders saw 61 species. Highlights included California Thrasher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, a hybrid Flicker with many yellow-shafted markings and a good look at Winter Wren.
—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Tomaes Bay State Park, Sat., March 13—13 members and guests spent a beautiful day at Tomaes Bay State Park. The bird of the day was an enchanting male Allen's Hummingbird which glistened in the sun while it went from place to place. Forty-nine species were seen, including Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, a large raft of hundreds of Greater Scaup, Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, a hybrid Northern Flicker, Winter Wren, many singing Hutton's Vireos, Orange-crowned Warbler, and singing Purple Finch. The Spotted Owls at the green gate have moved on and are now in an inaccessible canyon at the park.—*Maury Stern*

Bodega Bay, Thurs., March 18—Only the leader showed up. Cold and windy. Good views of Brant.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Huckleberry Preserve, Wed., March 24—Six birders hiked the nature trail and got back to the cars before the rain started. Rufous Hummingbirds were

the highlight. A Bushtit nest was located. More species were heard than seen.
—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Black Diamond Mines Regional Park, Antioch, Sat., March 27—Ten birdwatchers saw 40+ species on this beautiful day at Black Diamond Mine Regional Park in Antioch. Highlights were two Great Horned Owls, a beautiful male Phainopepla, Blue Gray Gnatcatcher, and Rock Wren. Shooting Stars, Indian Warrior, and other early wildflowers were blooming everywhere.—*Pat MacEachern*

Garin Regional Park, Sat., April 3—Five members and a guest enjoyed a cold, windy morning at Garin Park. Eventually the sun came out, and there were many birds. Four kinds of swallows swooped low to let us look at their backs; there were migrating Rufous Hummingbirds and there were Bullock's Orioles. There were courting Cooper's Hawks and courting kites. There was an Osprey and a Golden Eagle, and it added up to 49 species. Oh yes, when we got back to the carpool spot, it was snowing in Danville!—*Fred Safier*

Lake Lagunitas, Wed., April 7—Another cold, windy, gloomy day. Two birders spent the morning and heard or saw a total of 21 species. A Piliated Woodpecker flew back and forth across the lake, but did not give us a good view.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Classes and Events

Dow Environmental Faire

Dow Chemical is holding its annual Environmental Faire on Saturday, May 8, at the Dow wetlands next to the Pittsburg-Antioch Highway from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. MDAS will be there, so come join the fun! Exhibits, events, and nature walks.

Sierra Summer Classes

San Francisco State University is offering a variety of 5-day natural history classes at its scenic Sierra Nevada Field Campus located next to the North Yuba River just east of Sierra City. Classes offered in June-August include Birds of the Sierra Nevada, Bird Identification by Sound, Butterflies of the Sierra Nevada, Bird watching in the Sierra Nevada, and Medicinal and Edible Plants. Tuition is generally \$175 per class. Meals are \$15/day, and use of large platform tents with beds and washroom is \$12 per night. Call Jim Steele at (415) 338-1571 or visit their website at <<http://thecity.sfsu.edu/snfc>>.

Raptor Observers Needed

The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory is recruiting volunteers to monitor and track raptor flights over the Marin Headlands. Tens of thousands of hawks, falcons, and eagles pass over the Headlands each fall. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and able to commit to one regular day every two weeks from August through December plus attend training in July. Call the GGRO at (415) 331-0730 for more information.

Bair Island Wildlife Surveys

Accompany San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory biologists to Bair Island to survey wildlife and birds, including herons, egrets, and terns on their nesting grounds. Limited to only four participants each trip. Dates: May 14, June 11, July 14, August 11, and September 9. Cost is \$50 for nonmembers. Call (408) 946-6548.

Congressman George Miller's Second Annual Environmental Update

Saturday, May 1, 10 a.m.—2 p.m.

Come explore scenic Rush Ranch in the Suisun Marsh and discuss Congress's environmental agenda with George Miller. Bring your lunch, water, and binoculars. Soft drinks provided.

RSVP: Kathy Hoffman in Congressman Miller's Office, 925-602-1880

Directions: I-80 east to Highway 12 in Fairfield. West to Suisun City to Grizzly Island Road and Sunset. Turn right and go 2.5 miles to Rush Ranch.

Sponsored by Mt. Diablo and Napa-Solano Audubon, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Sierra Club, and East Bay Area Trails Council

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: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday, May 1, 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. Carpools leave at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Wild Turkey, Greater Roadrunner, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Lawrence's Goldfinch all possible. Call the leader for meeting time. Leader: Hugh Harvey, 932-4715 Category 1

Wednesday, May 5, Redwood Regional Park. From intersection of Moraga Way and Moraga Rd., go west on Canyon Rd., turn left on Pinehurst, and continue to park entrance. Park at last parking area. Wooded canyon. Spring migrants. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Saturday, May 8, Mitchell Canyon. Birds, butterflies, and flowers. We will join Sharon Fernandez' April on the Mountain trip. Meet at 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. Carry lunch and liquids. Birders will continue after lunch. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information. Category 3

Thursday, May 13, Mt. Diablo State Park. Carpool leaves at 8:00 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right,

and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 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

Wednesday, May 19, Napa River. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from 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

Saturday, May 22, East Contra Costa. Carpool leaves at 6:30 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 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. Usually hot! Blue Grosbeak, Burrowing Owl, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Yellow-breasted Chat all possible. Leader: Steve Glover, 866-1409 Category 2

Thursday, May 27, Annadel State Park. Carpool leaves at 7:00 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet 8:30 a.m. at parking lot of Annadel Park. Go north on I-680, west on I-780 to Vallejo. North on State Route 29 to State Route 121/12. Go left to SR 12, turn right and drive about 17 miles. Turn left onto Los Alamos Rd., right on Melite Rd., then left on Montgomery Rd. for 0.6 mi. Turn left on Channel Dr., 2 mi. to road end. Pileated Woodpecker

possible. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Please note: The Memorial Day weekend trip to the Kern River Preserve is cancelled.

Mono Lake Trip, July 10-11

Plan now for the MDAS Mono Lake Trip on Saturday and Sunday, July 10 and 11 (and possibly the morning of July 12). Steve Glover will lead this weekend MDAS field trip.

On Saturday, we will bird various areas in the vicinity of Mono Lake looking for Great Basin specialties such as Common Nighthawk, Lewis's Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, Sage Thrasher, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

On Sunday we will bird around Big Pine. We will bird Baker Creek for nesting Yellow-billed Cuckoos before heading up Westgard Pass in search of Chukar, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Pinyon Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Plumbeous Vireo, and Brewer's Sparrow.

Make hotel reservations as soon as possible as summers are busy so close to Yosemite. There are a few hotels in Lee Vining, and this is where we will be meeting Saturday morning. For Saturday night, Big Pine would be ideal, but Bishop will suffice.

In Lee Vining:

- Best Western Lake View Lodge, 760-647-6543.
- Murphey's Motel, 760-647-6316.

In Big Pine:

- Big Pine Motel, 760-938-2282.
- Bristlecone Motel, 760-938-2067.
- Starlight Motel, 760-938-2254.

Please let Steve (866-1409) know if you plan to go because the size of the group is limited.

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

Slim pickin's this month but next month should pick up considerably. **American Bitterns** are scarce at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, so one flushed there on 3/25 was nice (SG). Two more were at Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley, on 4/1 (SG). The tiny **Great Blue Heron** rookery at Marsh Creek Reservoir near Brentwood had three birds on nests and a bird standing beside a fourth on 3/13 (SG). At least two **Cattle Egrets** remained at Iron House Sanitary District to 4/1 (SG).

The male **Tufted Duck** remained at Emeryville to at least 3/14 (JL,SR).

A pair of urban-dwelling **Cooper's Hawks** were watched building a nest on 4/1 and 4/2 at Lake Cascade, Orinda (RB). Cooper's Hawks were noted in tremendously surprising numbers in residential neighborhoods during the Alameda, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Breeding Bird Atlases.

Four **Black Oystercatchers** flew over Emeryville on 3/14—a nice number this far south into the bay (JL,SR). A wintering **Lesser Yellowlegs** was near Piper Slough, Bethel Island, on 3/25 (SG).

A **Black Skimmer** was reported from the Richmond Marina (but seen without binoculars) on 3/15 (RM). This is 6-7 weeks earlier than a spring migrant would be expected to appear so the best guess is that this is a member of the group that has wintered the past few years at Charleston Slough, Santa Clara County. It is also possible that a few have wintered unnoticed in the north bay.

A female **Allen's Hummingbird** was found on a nest in residential San Ramon on 3/26 (DW). The status of this species in central county as a breeder is very poorly understood; hopefully the atlas will help clear it up.

Common Ravens are continuing to expand at breakneck pace in the Bay Area. A pair carrying nest material in Antioch

on 3/31 was from a new location (JB). We can only wait and see what effect their spread has on other nesting species.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Northern California Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422

A single **Western Bluebird** was at Hayward Regional Shoreline on 3/12 (BR). This is the first Hayward Regional Shoreline record for this species that is completely accidental along the bayshore.

Single **Phainopeplas**, always local in the county, were at Morgan Territory Regional Preserve on 3/7 (Jo&MR) and Black Diamond Mines on 3/27 (SG and group).

Observers: Reginald Barrett, Jeanne Bonner, Steve Glover, John Luther, Richard Mix, Bob Richmond, John and Marlene Robinson, Steve Rovell.



Birdhouse Online

A new website for the birdhouse enthusiast is located at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology website.

This new website gives birdhouse landlords the opportunity to share observations about their birdhouses online during the breeding season, March to August.

The website provides:

- The basics of birdhouses.
- Birds that might move in.
- How to share observations over the web.

You can also view nesting activities of cavity-nesting birds as they occur on the Nest-box Cam (a feathered Truman Show). The website address is <<http://birds.cornell.edu>> and click on **Birdhouse Online**. Birdhouse online is a joint project of CLO and the North American Bluebird Society.

National Wetlands Month!

May is National Wetlands Month. Celebrate early by helping MDAS clean up the Julia Cox Freeman Marsh on Saturday, April 24, from 10 a.m. to noon. Come to Wilbur and Cavallo Road in Antioch. Wear mud boots, old clothes, and a hat. MDAS volunteers will provide gloves, instructions, and soft drinks and snacks.

International Migratory Bird Day is Saturday, May 8

Changes in the Status of Birds of the East Bay: Part Six

by Steve Glover

In this issue, the *Quail* concludes the six-part series of articles by Steve Glover on changes in the breeding areas of birds of the East Bay. The articles focus on changes in breeding species that have colonized the East Bay in recent times.

European Starling

The first European Starling did not reach California (at Tule Lake) until 1942. The first East Bay record was from Pt. Isabel, Richmond, in 1950. I don't have a date of the first nesting, but it was probably late in the 1950s. Since then, they have spread throughout the entire East Bay and become our most common species by a wide margin.

Western Tanager

Grinnell and Wythe (1929) knew of Western Tanager breeding only from Sonoma County. The first nest record I found is a probable record from 1924 and a confirmation from 1930 near Moraga. It is possible that this species went overlooked, but it seems unlikely.

Dark-eyed Junco

Known to Belding as a winter visitor, the first known nest record of the Dark-eyed Junco for the East Bay wasn't until 1917 when partly-feathered young were found at the Claremont Country Club (A.A. Allen, "Western Robin and Sierra Junco Nesting in Alameda County, California" *Condor*, V. 19, 11/17, p. 185). A pair had been seen on campus as early as 1912, without any signs of breeding by J. Grinnell who speculated that "sooner or later, as planted groves become denser and taller, a colony will establish itself, as at Stanford" ("Second List of Birds of the Berkeley Campus," *Condor*, V. 16, 1/14). They did and have since spread throughout the woodlands of the East Bay.

Brown-headed Cowbird

The story of the spread of Brown-headed Cowbirds throughout the west in the 20th century is well documented, particularly in the East Bay. The invasion apparently

began at the Colorado River in about 1900, reaching the Bay Region by 1922! The first record is believed to be the discovery of ten eggs in nests in Irvington (Fremont) in 1922. The fact that they apparently spread both north and south from Irvington over the next ten years indicates that this original population may have been a disjunct one. They were not noted at Berkeley until 1934.

The reasons for the spread are several. The creation of preferred foraging areas, namely areas of short grass or bare ground amongst large grazing animals, allowed them to forage away from breeding areas. High fecundity of females (30-40 eggs per season) provided enormous growth potential. Finally, the pathway provided by man allowed this parasitic species to come into contact with host populations not previously sympatric with any species of brood parasite. (Stephen I. Rothstein, "The Cowbird's Invasion of the Far West: History, Causes and Consequences Experienced by Host Species" from *A Century of Avifaunal Change in Western North America*, edited

by Jehl and Johnson, 1994, Cooper Ornithological Society).

Hooded Oriole

Hooded Orioles apparently did not reach the Bay Region until after 1930. The first nesting appears to have been at Wildcat Canyon in 1937 (Grinnell and Miller, 1944, p. 431). By the early 1950s they were well established along the Bay plain. I have no information on the statewide spread of this species, but it is clear that the most important factor is the planting of washingtonia palms because there appear to be no nest records from the East Bay away from this species.

House Sparrow

This species was already abundant in populated areas of the East Bay by the end of the 1880s (L. Belding, 1890, "Land Birds of the Pacific District," *Occasional Papers of the California Academy of Sciences*, 2:1-174).

I welcome any comments, particularly criticisms, of this brief history of bird colonization in the East Bay.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Continued from Page 1

facing Panama and Panama Audubon with the reversion of the Canal in December 1999. We saw 309 avian species, a sample of the 929 species existent.

I'd encourage you to consider Panama in your travels and include these two places in particular. Supporting projects like these ecolodges is one way we can help these conservationists make a difference. After all, these are our birds too.

For a taste of Panama, try Steven Hilty's *Birds of Tropical America*, Jon Kricher's *A Neotropical Companion* (including an explanation of how a rainforest works), and *A Guide to the Birds of Panama* by Ridgely and Gwynne.

—Carol Frischmann

Buy a Ticket and Help Expand Our Outreach!

Help us with our educational outreach. MDAS wants to expand its outreach programs for families. But not all families have access to binoculars. The money we raise at the May meeting through door prizes will be used to purchase loaner binoculars for family field trips and school programs. Wild Bird, Inc., has agreed to supply the binoculars at cost.

Please get involved by :

- Donating binoculars and spotting scopes in good, usable condition.
- Donating books, art, collectibles, and other items to be used as door prizes.
- Buying door prize tickets, especially at the May meeting. You may win!

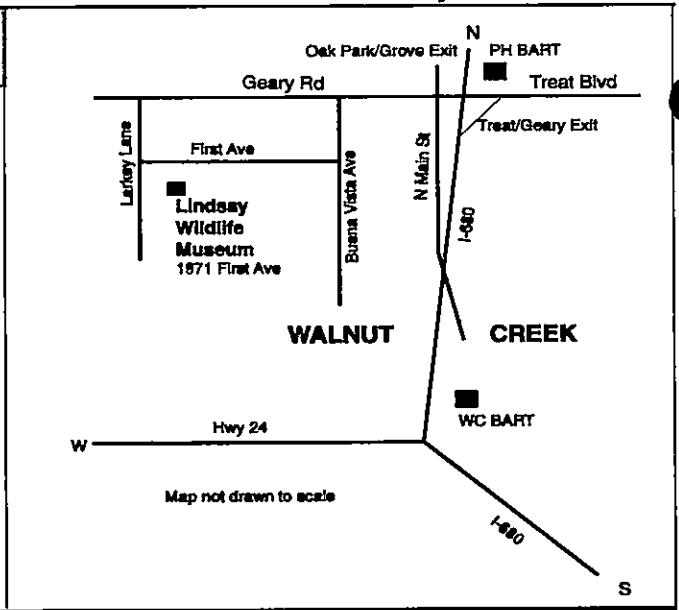
CALENDAR

May 6, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

May 13, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

May 21, 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. June 3 is the annual potluck and is the last meeting before the 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 new member/\$35 membership renewal), 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.

66/S



JEAN RICHMOND
125 VIA SERENA
ALAMO CA 94507-1841

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Vol. 45, No. 10

Next Deadline: June 3

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

By Carol Frischmann

Interpreting Avian Activities

Springtime is a great time to talk with your friends and neighbors about the avian activities which almost everyone notices this time of year. Activities such as territory establishment and nest building sometimes create tension between man and our avian friends. Late-night singing and insistence on building over the front door really get to some folks.

Talking with your neighbors about what is going on this time of year for the birds, and reminding them that this is a short-term activity can help ease these tensions. Letting the nest be completed can lead to some rewarding "wild kingdom" viewing right from the kitchen window. Kids and adults can enjoy observing the day-to-day activities of our back yard birds.

Help friends select a feeder or place a water dish in the back yard. The birds will reward your friends with hours of entertainment.

When people notice and understand something, they care more about it. Once they care, then they'll be interested in preserving it. One of our missions is education and outreach. You don't need to participate in a formal program to be an educator or to reach the public. Just look across the driveway and lend a hand.

Best wishes for many interesting hours of observations and good fellowship with your neighbors!

—Carol Frischmann

Upcoming Events:

Annual MDAS Potluck Set for June 3

MDAS will hold its annual end-of-the-year potluck on Thursday, June 3, at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum (for directions, see p. 8). Doors open at 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. Members should bring a dish—salad, entree, casserole, vegetable, or dessert—for 10. Remember to bring serving pieces for your contribution and your own cutlery, plates, and cups. The Chapter provides complementary tea, coffee, and punch.

There will be a short business meeting followed by the ever-popular, member-provided slide program. Bring 10 or fewer slides of your birding adventures, bird

nests, bird houses, or bird feeders to share with the group. You are also invited to bring and display 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. Come and join us!

MDAS Meeting Information

There will be no general meeting in July or August. The next general meeting is Thursday, September 3, at the Lindsay Museum.

MDAS Web Site Adds Chat Feature

Our web site at <<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/mt-diablo/>> has been updated for the month of May. Browse and enjoy. Take a look at the new feature, "Forum." Here you can create discussion topics, participate in discussions, sign our guest book, and chat among ourselves. To chat, at least two members have to sign on at the same time. Make use of these features in our web site. Please give me your feedback.

—Thanks, Mani Keeran, MDAS webmaster

NAS Seeks Feedback for Its Website

NAS is redesigning and enhancing its web site, Audubon Online. The goals for the new site are to attract and engage people in Audubon issues and activities, encourage local action, support and grow our constituency, build community, and help people connect with the natural world. Help NAS build a web site that is easy to navigate, dynamic, interactive and user-guided—meaning that it is designed and organized around your interests—by going to <www.audubon.org> and filling out a short survey.

Also, to subscribe to Audubon's online policy newsletter, the Advisory, send a message to <listserv@list.audubon.org>, leave the subject blank, and in the message, type: sub Audubon-news.

Connections

by Gloria Cannon

A Failure of Will

Although the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors promises a new vision of Contra Costa, including serious growth management, one recent key vote showed that nothing much has changed. Major developers (like Shapell) want beautiful, rural Tassajara Valley southeast of San Ramon carved into cookie-cutter subdivisions. They (Shapell, Ponderosa, and Kaufman & Broad) proposed to do a General Plan Amendment (GPA) study for the "Intervening Lands" between the Tassajara Valley and Danville. A GPA study is a mechanism to change land use from that designated in the County's General Plan. Contra Costa planning staff didn't need the study, and they could not recall any GPA study that did not later result in approval of a General Plan Amendment.

Speaking in opposition were representatives from Greenbelt Alliance, Save Mt. Diablo, Green Party, Concord Citizens Alliance, and Sierra Club as well as Danville councilwoman Millie Greenberg and former supervisor Gayle Bishop.

The Supes voted 4-1 (Gerber dissenting) to approve. This vote indicates business-as-usual continues behind the facade of growth management.

NAS Testimony on Growth Management

In March, Eric Draper, NAS's Senior VP for Conservation Campaigns, testified before the Senate's Environmental and Public Works Committee in support of federal growth management legislation.

He pointed out that growth as represented by residential and commercial development outside town centers is taking a heavy toll on habitat. Lessons from places, such as Florida, show that citizens support both growth and habitat protection at the same time. In-fill strategies in existing urbanized areas take pressure off habitat. Water resource restoration is another vital but largely unaddressed issue

in community growth strategies. The smartest of smart growth ideas is to finance open space programs with a new federal environmental bond program.

Habitat Loss Is Major Impact of Growth

Audubon is on the front line of the environmental impacts of urban and suburban growth, said Draper. Nationwide, we attend zoning meetings, challenge development permits, buy land, and restore habitat. The problems of sprawl are a very real challenge for almost every Audubon chapter, including MDAS. We've experienced the dismay of seeing a favorite birding spot cleared. Our common plea is to save some for the birds and wildlife.

Loss of habitat is occurring in virtually every part of the nation. Birds migrate and need places to nest, stage and winter. Forests, prairies, swamps and fields all provide home to birds. Yet, according to Draper, more than 90 watchlist species are in critical decline because of habitat loss.

Growth of human communities usually comes at the expense of natural communities. Residential and commercial development alters habitat. While creating new space for people is necessary, we see the benefit of growth strategies that set aside some special places and open space.

Environmental Bonds

In his testimony, Draper said that Audubon supports the use of environmental bonds leveraged by federal tax credits. Federally supported bonds would help state and local governments finance the costs of open space and water resource protection and brownfields remediation. Comparable to other programs, such as the successful Low Income Housing Trust Credit, communities could issue environmental bonds by pledging federal tax credits in lieu of interest payments.

State and local governments facing rapid expansion of population and urban boundaries need to freeze the costs of land protection while increased revenue from growth creates the means to pay. Environmental bonds backed by federal tax credits will allow land values to be locked in at present prices while minimizing carrying costs, Draper said. Tax credits are an excellent method of leveraging outcomes. The availability of tax credits will create a market for both institutional and private investors looking for secure, income-producing opportunities.

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
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Observations

by Steve Glover

A **Common Loon** was at the unusual location of Contra Loma Reservoir in Antioch on 5/6 (MBS). At least two were at the Richmond Marina, where they will probably summer, on 5/7 (SG,MBS).

Flocks of 8 and 15 **American White Pelicans** flew northeast over Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley, on 4/14 (SG).

Any nesting herons and egrets are of interest in Contra Costa, but five **Great Egret** and four **Great Blue Heron** nests in a eucalyptus near Clyde were especially so. Great Egret is unknown as a nester anywhere else in the county (JH,SG). Exciting was a report of an adult **Little Blue Heron** at the Concord Naval Weapons Station on 5/5 (SR). This is probably the third Contra Costa record. Eight lingering **Cattle Egrets** were along Delta Rd. near Knightsen on 4/25 (SG).

Two **Brant** were at Brooks Island, Richmond, on 4/25 (SG). The male **Harlequin Duck** remained at Brooks Island, Richmond, on 4/25 (SG).

An **Osprey** flew north over Piper Slough, Bethel Island, on 4/16 (SG). A **Prairie Falcon** was over her Antioch home on 5/2 (JB).

Three **Spotted Sandpipers** were at Heather Farms Park on 5/6 (FB,HH). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was at Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley, on 5/5 (SG).

A **Caspian Tern** was at the unusual location of Heather Farms Park, Walnut Creek, 5/5-5/7 (FB,HH).

A single **Vaux's Swift** flew north over Piper Slough on 4/20 (SG). A **Rufous Hummingbird** was at Piper Slough on 4/16 where the species is unusual (SG).

Acorn Woodpeckers are rarely reported away from breeding areas, so one away from suitable breeding habitat on the Concord Naval Weapons Station on 4/21

was noteworthy (SG,JH). A

Pileated Woodpecker, extremely rare in the county, was reported based on voice from Lake Anza, Tilden Park, on 5/5 (MBS).

The last of the Antioch **Steller's Jays** departed on 4/14, presumably heading to a breeding site to the north (JB).

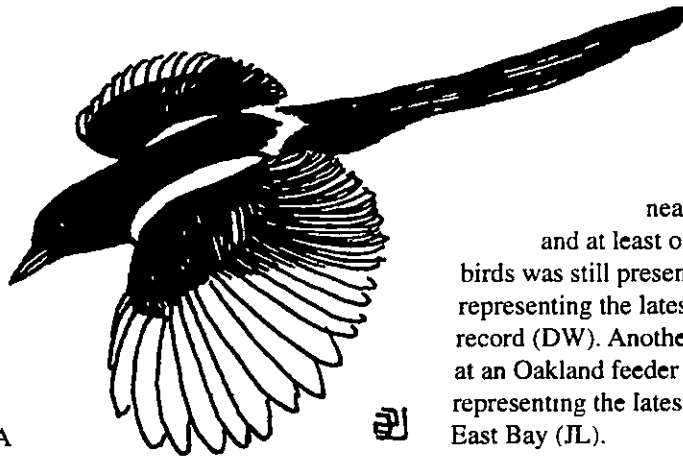
Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

Northern California Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422

The Antioch **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was last seen in an Antioch yard on 4/8 (JB).

A male **Phainopepla** was in Mitchell Canyon, M.D.S.P., on 4/25 (SG). Another was still near the parking lot at Black Diamond Mines on 5/3 (MBS). Much more unusual were three males at Carquinez Shoreline R.P. on 5/5 (DW).

Many winter species are lingering late into the spring this season, amongst the noteworthy being **White-throated Sparrows**. One was singing at Carquinez Shoreline R.P. on 4/24, three different



☞

birds were nearby on 4/28, and at least one of those birds was still present on 5/5, representing the latest Contra Costa record (DW). Another has lingered at an Oakland feeder to at least 5/9, representing the latest record for the East Bay (JL).

The first April records of **Yellow-headed Blackbird** came 4/14 when up to 13 males were noted at Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley (SG,MF). At least one was still there on 4/25 (SG).

Eastern Contra Costa's first record of **Lawrence's Goldfinch** came from Piper Slough, Bethel Island, on 4/16. It was a male (4/16). Three to five pairs were on private property on the north side of Mt Diablo State Park on 5/9 (S&CH).

Observers: Florence Bennett, Jeanne Bonner, Mike Feigner, Steve Glover, Hugh Harvey, Jill Hedgecock, Scott and Claudia Hein, John Luther, Steve Rottenborn, Mary Beth Stowe, Denise Wight

**Heaven is
under our feet,
as well as over
our heads.**

—Henry David Thoreau

Field Trip Reports

Castle Rock/Pine Canyon, Sat., April 17—Nine birdwatchers had a great birding day! We saw 61 species—among them, Black-headed Grosbeak, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, at least 10 Warbling Vireos, 4-5 Cassin's Vireos, Orange-crowned Warblers, Wilson's Warbler, and a Nashville Warbler. We had good views of a Prairie Falcon and a Peregrine Falcon perched high on the cliffs. Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned and Coopers Hawks were seen flying over the ridges. We saw Bushtits entering and leaving a nest, and Anna's Hummingbird on a nest. In addition, we found a White-throated Sparrow in dense brush beside the trail and about 50 yards past the last gate entering Mt. Diablo State Park. On our return, a very, very large rattlesnake crossed the trail in front of us—3-4 feet with lots of rattles.—*Pat MacEachern*

Ida Clayton Road, Wed., April 21—Eight birders spent a beautiful sunny day enjoying the birds and wildflowers in this wonderfully scenic area. The flowers were not as abundant as last year, but they were still breathtaking in some areas. Dogwood, larkspur, and shooting stars were among the floral highlights, but we didn't see any fawn lilies, and the candy stick wasn't up yet. We saw or heard 67 species, including two life birds for one birder. Highlights included a most cooperative Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Wood-pewee, Wood Ducks, nesting Great

Blue Herons and Ospreys, and a good comparative look at Clark's and Western Grebes.—*John Jordan*

Del Puerto Canyon, Thurs., April 29—The twelve birders were challenged by the very windy conditions. A pair of Golden Eagles at a nest was great. Other highlights included 3 male Costa's Hummingbirds, 10 Rock Wrens, 2 Canyon Wrens, a Green Heron, four species of swallows, 2 Lewis' Woodpeckers, 14 Lawrence's Goldfinches, and 20 Tricolored Blackbirds. We also watched a large Tarantula cross the road. Total species: 57.—*Florence Bennett*

Mines Road, Sat., May 1—Beautiful blue skies and still-green hills surrounded six members and one guest as they birded the 31 miles of Mines Road and the first mile or so of the San Antonio Valley Road. We saw or heard 71 species including a Great Horned Owl on a nest with three half-grown chicks, White-throated Swifts, California Thrasher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, four Wild Turkeys walking up a hillside, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Wood Duck, and copulating Lewis' Woodpeckers. Among the warblers, we saw only Yellow-rumped Warblers, and at only one place, and no Empidonax flycatchers were found. The three hummingbird feeders hanging outside The Junction did not seem to bother the cyclists, whether bi- or motor-, though they did attract a large population of Anna's Hummingbirds.—*Hugh Harvey*

After the Storm: Bob Walker's Landscape Photographs

The beautiful photographs of Bob Walker are being exhibited from April 1 through July 31 at the Wallace Stegner Room, 5th Floor, San Francisco Main Library. Walker was a well known environmentalist and a member of Save Mount Diablo's Board of Directors before his death in 1992. He was often immersed in the 'storm' of development threats to his favorite landscapes.

Nature Photograph Workshop, July 25-27

Professional photographer Steven Ruley is teaching a class on outdoor photography on July 25-27 (Sun.-Tues.). There will be hikes, slide presentations, group individual critiques, field demonstrations, and shared experiences—all designed to improve your skills and the visual impact of your images. The setting will be the Carson Pass and Hope Valley of the Sierras. Call 925-449-2245 for more info and reservations.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

8th Anniversary Party Saturday June 5th

WBU invites everyone to join them in a celebration of their eighth anniversary. WBU is offering:

- Birdseed Sale (6/1-6/20)
- Workshop on plants to attract bird and butterflies. Plants will be available for purchase
- Monarch caterpillars and milkweed plants for the Monarchs will be available.
- John Muir will be present to talk about his amazing life.
- A Swarovski representative will be present to show these phenomenal birding optics.
- The Lindsay Wildlife Museum will present programs with live birds (Red-naped Sapsucker and Common Nighthawk) and a bat program with a Pallid bat.
- MDAS will have a display.
- Sample environmentally safe coffee, grown in the shade to protect our neo-tropical migrants.

Join the fun!!

The new 3rd edition of the *National Geographic Field Guide* is now available!! Over 80 new species have been added.

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 every 3-5 days. 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. Please report all oriole sightings as we are again tracking them.

Keep at least one thistle feeder out. Last year Lesser Goldfinches continued to visit all summer.

Chapter Announcements

Get Your Updated Bird List

MDAS has updated and printed its Bird List. Copies are available at the general meeting and at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill.

What Have You Been Doing?

MDAS President Carol Frischmann is collecting information about birding-related activities of the chapter for the chapter's annual report to Audubon-California. If you've participated in an educational program related to birds or performed some other type of community outreach, let Carol know the details.

PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY: CEQA WORKSHOP FOR ACTIVISTS

The Planning and Conservation League Foundation is offering an introductory workshop in the fundamentals of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

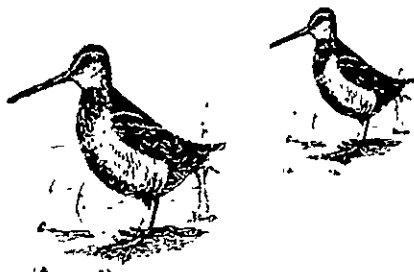
All participants will receive a copy of the *Citizens Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act* (a layperson's guide to California's premier environmental protection law). A \$10 donation at the door is requested. Attendance is limited to 30. To reserve your spot, please RSVP by calling Jennifer Palyash at (916) 444-8726, Ext. 137.

Date: Saturday, June 5

Time: 10 am - 3 pm, with a complimentary lunch served

Location: Lindsay Wildlife Museum

Instructor: Peter J. Uzzi, Attorney-at-Law, specialist in environmental law



Why I Am a Lister

by Hugh B. Harvey

Most birders keep track, in one way or another, of the birds they have seen. Some do it as a simple life list, some do it by continent, country, state, or county; still others keep a list by year; but all of us want to know what we have seen. I have a life list for the U.S. and Canada as well as for birds I have seen in Africa, Asia, South America, and at sea.

Admittedly, my list is scattered and disorganized, and I do not know *exactly* how many birds are on it. I have tried to put my North American list in chronological order, but poor record keeping early on has thwarted my efforts. Still, I know that the number is around 480

Four or five years ago, while on a regular Tuesday outing with my "girl friends," Florence Bennett, Mary Jane Culver, Betty Gallagher, and Eugenia Larson, it came out that they were keeping year lists for the birds we saw. Innocently enough, I started to do that too; it was still early in the year; and now I cannot stop. Because Rosita and I travel at times, I keep an MDAS checklist for California with date and place recorded across the three columns, and I use an ABA checklist for nationwide birding.

This simple method of listing is useful for several reasons. We plan our outings for various times of the year to see a wider variety of birds. For example, Central Valley refuges are good for winter waterfowl. The South Bay is good for winter and migrating shorebirds.

Spring migrants are good on Mines Road, or Mitchell, but fall migrants are better at Point Reyes. MDAS plans their field trips from this same viewpoint.

The year list also helps us see trends in the bird world. We can see growth in some populations and decline in others. Some years, we find that just cannot find this or that bird. On occasion, the Rare Bird Alert, operated by Golden Gate Audubon Society, reinforces us—no one else is seeing these birds either.

Regularity is another trend we can follow. Over time we can learn when certain things should happen in the bird world. This knowledge allows us to know when things are early or late.

Even when the bird world seems normal, our lists help us because we are constantly using reference books to teach us something new. We visit state parks and learn local history, and because we bird year-round, we are conscious of patterns in the weather and plant life.

No matter how you keep your list—be it worldwide, or for your backyard, for the one time you went to Arizona, or the hundreds of times you visited Martinez Regional Shoreline, whether it is a single, life-time list, or a calendar-year list, or even a school-year list—the information saved will help you to better know, understand, and appreciate the bird life around you.

Hats Off! MDAS Says Thank You!

MDAS salutes two of its members for their contributions to the chapter.

Gifford Young, who oversees mailing of the *Quail*, works hard to keep our membership list perfect. Thanks to his efforts, the Post Office extended the chapter's coding accuracy certification for the next six months. Bar-coding reduces our mailing costs, one of our major expense items. Special thanks also to **Mrs. Diane Berg** of PDQ Printing in Martinez, who worked with Gifford to convert our Macintosh mailing list to PC format.

Barbara Holloway is leaving her post as Hospitality chair. We thank her for organizing the delicious refreshments we've enjoyed over the past year. Barbara, like many other members, contribute their time and effort to making MDAS a functioning organization, and we appreciate it. When you see her at the potluck, give her a pat on the back!

Travel Tips for a Safe, Enjoyable Trip to Anywhere

If you are traveling abroad this summer, here are a few travel tips that may make your trip safer and more enjoyable

Basics

- Make sure your passport is current.
- Take a good guide book, a language dictionary, and a phrase book.
- Know the exchange rate of the currency of your chosen destination, where you are going, and how to get there
- If you have any special health problems, have your doctor prepare your medical history for a foreign doctor. You might want to carry a medical alert card in your wallet or purse
- Carry prescription drugs in the bottle from the drugstore
- Make at least two photocopies of all your documents—passport, birth certificate, prescriptions, travel check numbers, credit cards, tickets, reservation confirmations. Pack them separately from the original documents. Bring two extra passport photos. Should you lose any of the documents, having copies will speed the replacement process. At a minimum, have your passport number and the date and place of its issue

Handy Things to Bring

- Carry with you toilet paper, antiseptic, aspirin, cold tablets, antacids, insect repellent, sunscreen, Imodium/Lomotil, band-aids, and prescription drugs
- Take a small flashlight and extra batteries, a travel alarm clock, a few ziplock bags of various sizes, and a large towel (It can double as a blanket, a scarf, a pillow, and padding for breakables)

Packing

- Pack a change of clothes, your essential toiletries, camera, binoculars, and medications in your carry-on bag.
- Bring a travel diary to record the name of that wonderful little restaurant, the address of that great B&B, and the name and address of a new friend.
- Before you go, take a photo of your suitcase; and on the back of the photo, list the contents. This is helpful if you have the misfortune to lose your luggage and must fill out insurance or claims forms.
- Be sure to label all your luggage clearly. Remove old destination labels. Paste your name and tour group in a prominent place on the outside. Inside each bag, paste a label with your name and address, and put a copy of your itinerary in each bag.
- Stick bright-colored tape near the handle of your bags or tie ribbon around the handle to help you pick it out.

What about Money?

- Bring a credit card. Visa is the most widely accepted. ATM machines are widely available so bring your bank ATM card.
- Make major purchases with a credit card—you get a good exchange rate, the protections of charge-back provisions, and often a guarantee on your purchase.
- Exchange your funds overseas. Banks offer the best exchange rates.
- Keep some money in small denominations in several locations throughout your luggage and your person, just in case.

Security

- Don't hand your passport over to unauthorized persons or pack it in your luggage. It's valuable—keep it with you!
- Lock your suitcase. And even if it is locked, don't put valuables in it, such as jewelry, camera, electric shaver, or binoculars. As much as possible, leave expensive items—jewelry and watches—at home. Don't wear them on the street.
- Use hotel safes to store your passport, tickets, numbers of credit cards, traveler's check numbers, and phone numbers of credit card companies.
- Consider using a money belt or body pouch for some of your checks, cash, credit cards, and passport
- If you rent a car, put duct tape over the sign that indicates it is a rental and don't leave anything in it overnight.
- Don't be suckered by the nice person who acts so friendly and knows a few words of English.
- If you are robbed, report it immediately to local police. If your passport is taken, notify the nearest American embassy or consulate. You'll be issued a three-month temporary passport, but you'll have to fill out a detailed report and follow the same procedure required to obtain your original passport, and you will need copy of your birth certificate and two passport photos.

Coming Home

- Reconfirm your return flight early. In some countries, you must reconfirm your departure 72 hours in advance or you will be dropped from the computer.
- Keep receipts for all purchases. Generally, each U.S. citizen may bring in \$400 worth of merchandise duty-free. The next \$1,000 is taxed at 10 percent. All items mailed home are subject to duty.

Most of all, bring your smile and a positive attitude. Travel can be wearisome, but traveling with a grump makes it even worse. If you want to eat American food and stay in American hotels, visit some of the wonderful places in the U.S. Avoid pointing out the faults and failures of your host country as it compares to the U.S. BE CHEERFUL—you'll end up enjoying your trip more!

June 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, June 2, West Briones.

Meet at 8:45 a.m. in parking lot on the right hand side of the west entrance road off Bear Creek Rd. Wildflowers, spring birds; Lazuli Buntings are usually abundant. Poison oak along shaded trails. Leader: Denise Wight Category 2

Saturday, June 5, 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. New route to San Rafael Bridge: take Dam Rd. to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and proceed straight through stop light. Cross the 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 MacEachern, 934-3041 Category 2

Saturday, June 12, Bobelaine Sanctuary.

Carpool 6 a.m. southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet 8 a.m. at the entrance to the sanctuary. Take I-80 east from I-680. After the Yolo Bypass, stay on I-80 to I-5, then go north on I-5 to SR 99-70. When SR 99 splits off, follow SR 99 and the signs toward Yuba City. Two miles after SR 99 crosses the Feather River, turn right on Laurel Ave. to Bobelaine Sanctuary at the end of the road

on the levee. This is riparian habitat. Possibilities include Blue Grosbeak and Swainson's Hawk. Be prepared for hot, humid weather and mosquitoes. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-05486. Category 2

Yuba Pass—Sierra Valley, June 19-20

This Saturday/Sunday trip, June 19-20, to Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley is one of our most popular weekend birding outings. Hugh Harvey will lead the trip. On Saturday, the group will bird in Yuba Pass for mountain birds. Sunday will be spent in the Sierra Valley looking 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 also campgrounds at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Make reservations now. Leader: Hugh Harvey, 932-4715 Category 2

Difficulty of field trip:

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

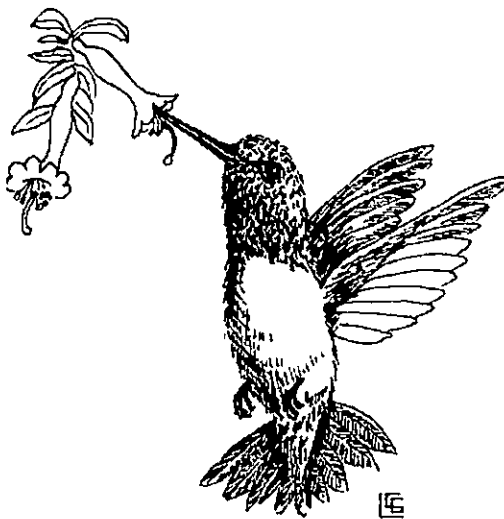
Category 2: Moderate, 1 mile or more, possibly rough terrain.

Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Cowbirds Not Culprits?

NAS Science recently completed a white paper on the impact of cowbirds on bird populations. The study revealed some unexpected issues with the general message that cowbirds are probably NOT having population-wide effects on native birds. The paper has been endorsed by the NAS Board of Directors.

It is published online at <<http://www.audubon.org/bird/research/>> or on paper by writing NAS Science, 700 Broadway, NY, NY 10003.



Mono Lake Trip, July 10-11

Plan now for the MDAS Mono Lake trip on Saturday and Sunday, July 10 and 11 (and possibly the morning of July 12). Steve Glover will lead this weekend MDAS field trip to the Mono Lake and Big Pine areas. Make hotel reservations as soon as possible as summers are busy so close to Yosemite. See the *May Quail* for a list of motels

Call Steve (925-828-7793) if you plan to go because the size of the group is limited.

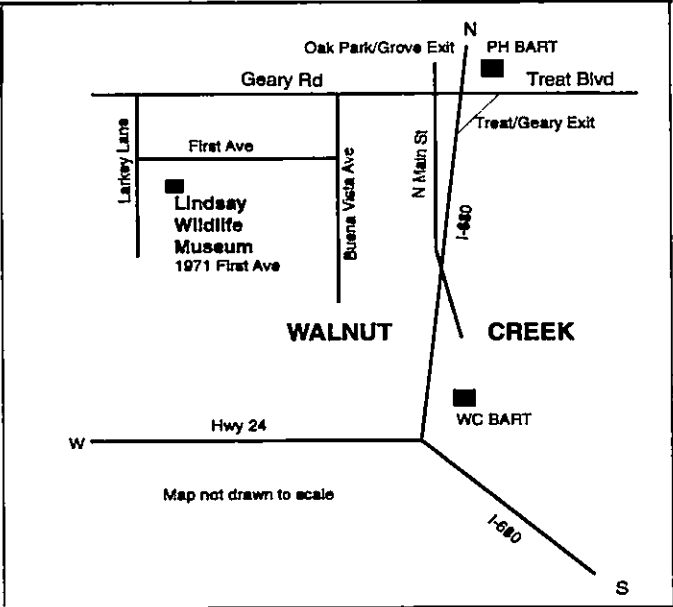
CALENDAR

June 3, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Potluck, Lindsay Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

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

June 25, Fri., 9 a.m.—*Quail* mailing, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. (Volunteers prepare the *Quail* issue for mailing.)
Note: this is one week later than usual.

No general meeting in July or August. Have a great summer!



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 new member/\$35 membership renewal), 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.

66/9



JEAN RICHMOND
125 VIA SERENA
ALAMO CA 94507-1841

FEB 00 MFB



Mr. Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

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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 1999

Vol. 45, No. 11

Next Deadline: August 13

President's Notes

by Carol Frischmann

Thank You, Volunteers and Donors!

I wish we were able to have a Volunteer and Donor Recognition Event every year. That way, the Chapter could formally thank people individually by name for the things that they do. I would at least like to recognize some of the groups of people that are contributors:

- Board members
- Field trip leaders
- Breeding Bird Atlas-ers
- Quail folders
- Birding Information speakers
- Event and festival workers
- Meeting refreshment contributors
- Door prize ticket purchasers
- Door prize donors
- Liaisons with other organizations
- Audubon Adventures sponsors
- Marsh xleanup workers
- Quail xontributors
- General meeting attendees
- Field trip attendees
- Bird-A-Thon contributors
- Individual gift donors
- Corporate gift donors
- Memorial gift donors
- Purchasers of *Birding Northern California*

Finally, I'd like to thank all Chapter members. Through your membership in Audubon and in the Chapter, you support programs and communications that help
(continued on page 3)

Washington State Audubon Chapter Scores Victory

A federal court of appeals ruled last week in favor of Pilchuck Audubon Society in Everett, Washington, and its co-plaintiff, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, by halting a land exchange in the Cascade Mountains in Washington until more thorough environmental analysis is completed.

Pilchuck Audubon Society challenged the Huckleberry Land Exchange outside of Seattle, in which the Forest Service traded 4,300 acres of old-growth forest in and around Huckleberry Mountain, including one of the last unlogged forests in the lower Green River Basin, for 30,000 acres of mostly cutover Weyerhauser land. Though the exchange ostensibly was made to help consolidate federal lands in the area, the plaintiffs held that the Weyerhauser lands to be traded were ecologically inferior.

The Court of Appeals agreed that the deal heavily favored Weyerhauser and that the Forest Service had not examined enough alternatives or all of the environmental impacts before approving the swap.

The affect of this ruling on the controversial federal land exchange program

could be significant, because it requires the government to more carefully consider environmental impacts and public interest in land exchanges.

Volunteer Opportunities

Birding Info Speakers Needed

Each month our programs begin with Birding Information, a short, 15-minute program. Are you interested in sharing an aspect of birding or nature with other MDAs members and guests? Volunteer to give a Birding Information Program. Or maybe you have an idea for a Birding Information Program. In either case, give Shirley Ellis a call at 938-3703.

MDAS Representative to the Citizens' Advisory Committee

Tired of the traffic in Contra Costa? Believe in mass transit? Want to find out why it takes so long to build a BART station? Participate in shaping transportation issues in this county by serving as a member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee to the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

MDAS is looking for an interested, concerned representative who is able to attend a 2-hour meeting on the last Wednesday of each month during their two-year term, write a brief report to the MDAS Board, and present an occasional action item to the Board. No prior experience in transportation is required. For more information about this important volunteer position, call Shurley Ellis (938-3703) or Joel Summerhill (753-0862).

**NEXT MDAS
GENERAL MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2
7 P.M.**

Connections

Protect CoCo Open Space with Better America Bonds

Background

Congress is considering a tax credit bond proposal called Better America Bonds. The proposal would offer \$9.5 billion in bond authority to local, state, or tribal governments over the next five years for open-space protection, water-quality protection, and brownfield cleanup and redevelopment. Local communities would pay back these 15-year bonds interest-free. Investors who purchase the bonds would receive tax credits in lieu of interest payments. This proposal would require a change in the IRS tax code, with legislation originating in the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee.

Legislative Update

In the Senate, Better America Bonds legislation has been drafted, and bipartisan support is being sought. Sen. Hatch (R-UT) is a potential co-sponsor. Letters or phone calls of support to Sen. Hatch are needed to encourage his support.

A bill is expected to be introduced in the House Ways and Means Committee in the next two to three weeks by Rep. Matsui, Gephardt, and Doggett. Bipartisan support is also needed in the House.

Action Needed

Better America Bonds have been mentioned several times in this column. Now you have the opportunity to participate in saving open space. Your letters or phone calls are needed to those senators or representatives on the Senate Finance Committee or House Ways and Means Committee (see the list of Senators and California Representatives below). Ask them to support Better America Bonds legislation. A sample letter is included at the end of this message. To reach your representatives and senators by phone, call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask for his or her office by name.

Letters or phone calls are particularly important to Sen. Hatch (R-UT), Rep.

SAMPLE LETTER OF SUPPORT:

The Honorable (full name) OR The Honorable (full name)
U.S. House of Representatives U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative or Senator (last name):

I am writing to ask for your support of the Better America Bonds initiative. Better America Bonds are a tool my community could use to help protect open space, wetlands, and other special places threatened by sprawl and development. Without tools for open-space protection, places like Mt. Diablo, Tassajara Valley, and east Contra Costa County cannot be protected. Better America Bonds promises to allow communities like mine the opportunity to protect critical bird and wildlife habitat, protect water resources, and other open space from development and suburban sprawl.

I support the Better America Bonds proposal and ask you to support this important, new, and exciting legislation, championing local communities and quality of life.

Sincerely,
Your Name

Nancy Johnson (New Britain, CT), and Rep. Jennifer Dunn (Bellevue, WA). Ask your congressperson to support Better America Bonds legislation and tell him or her how these bonds will be used in your community. Bond money could be used to protect vanishing open space around Mt. Diablo, purchase development rights in Tassajara Valley and East County. Take a few minutes to write a letter or make a phone call.

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Frank Murkowski, AK	Kent Conrad, ND
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Phil Gramm, TX	Richard Bryan, NV
Trent Lott, MS	Robert Kerrey, NE
James Jeffords, VT	Charles Robb, VA

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Wally Herger - Dis. 2, Chico, CA	
Pete Stark - Dis. 13, Fremont, CA	
Robert Matsui - Dis. 5, Sacramento	

**BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO
AUDUBON SOCIETY**
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*Gloria Cannon, Editor, (925) 753-0862,
P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565,
email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net*

New Hope for the Endangered Yellow-eared Parrot

At the beginning of 1900s, the vast mountain forests of the Andes in Colombia and Ecuador were home to abundant numbers of Yellow-eared Parrots (*Ognorhynchus icterotis*). By 1991, however, only two flocks were known to survive in the wild, and the global population numbered less than 50 individuals. Unlike other parrots, the Yellow-eared Parrot does not survive in captivity

Despite extensive conservation and research efforts in Ecuador, the last flock vanished a year ago. Extinction seemed imminent.

A multi-national project, "Proyecto Ognorhynchus," commenced in 1998 to locate the species in Colombia. But the project's intensive searches over the Colombian Andes failed to locate the parrot. Then, three months ago, a project fieldworker, Bernabe Lopez-Lanus, witnessed an amazing scene—two flocks of Yellow-eared Parrots,

totaling 61 birds flying over wax palms and forest in a remote valley in Central Colombia. More exciting still was the discovery of a nest with young.

This remarkable discovery comes at a critical moment, as mounting threats by hunters, illegal parrot collectors, and forest clearance continue to endanger the species.

Proyecto Ognorhynchus is funded by Loro Parque Fundacion, Zoologische Gesellschaft/Fonds für Bedrohte Papageien, and the American Bird Conservancy, and supported in Colombia by Sociedad Antioqueña de Ornitología. For further information and photos, visit this website <www.proaxis.com/~salaman> or contact Paul Salaman of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, University of Oxford, by email salaman@proaxis.com. —source: Partners in Flight newsletter

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 in previous years. Southern California has had many more orioles than normal this year. Perhaps some did not migrate as far north this year due to our cool spring. The lack of oriole sightings in backyards could also be due to the abundance of natural food after good winter rainfall. If you see any of these spectacularly beautiful, nectar-feeding birds, please call in your reports so that 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 to deter them!

Try safflower seed if squirrels or black birds are a nuisance. They do not like safflower, which is a high-energy food. Doves and Titmice 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 seeds in a feeder.

Establishing a squirrel feeding station 15-20 feet away from birdfeeders to keep squirrels occupied and full. The key to having a successful squirrel feeding station is to offer a variety of foods: squirrel mix (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. They certainly live up to their name with a very large bill, which is ideal for eating their favorite food—sunflower seeds. They will readily come to bird feeders. These grosbeaks nest in our backyard and seem to return year after year.

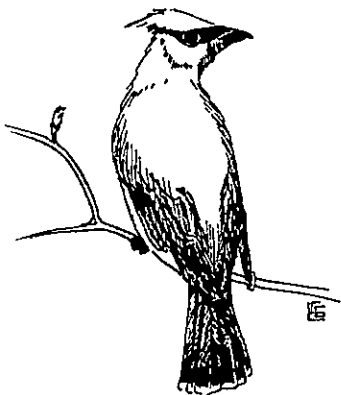
PRESIDENT'S NOTES

(continued from Page 1)

educate the public about birds and other wildlife and preserve the habitat that is vital to their survival.

Many individual contributors are not included below. You know who you are! Your individual good works are very much appreciated!

Have a terrific summer. I hope to see you in person at the meeting in September. —Carol Frischmann



Summer Events

Wildlife Paintings by Hans Peeters

Local artist Hans Peeters has an exhibition of his wildlife paintings at the Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center through July 31. Peeters' work has been published in the UC Press California Natural History Guide to California Mammals. The Interpretive Center is located at 4901 Breakwater Ave., Hayward. For center hours, call 510-881-6751.

Southwest Wings Birding Festival

Sierra Vista is hosting the 8th annual Southwest Wings Birding Festival, Aug. 18-21. The focus will be the nearby Huachuca and Chiricahua Mountains, the San Pedro River, and Ramsey Canyon, and Patagonia-Sonita Creek—all places that resonant with birders. For more information, call (800) 946-4777 or (520) 378-0233.

Photographs from Far and Near by Jianhua Gong

The Valley Art Gallery (1661 Botelho Dr., Walnut Creek) has an exhibit of extraordinary travel and nature photos by Jianhua Gong through July 24.

Observations

by Steve Glover

The highlight of this remarkably windy month was Contra Costa's third record (possibly the first to be documented) of **Little Blue Heron**. The bird, an adult, was seen 5/9 at the Concord Naval Weapons Station near Bay Point (SR).

Two male **Redheads** at Iron House Sanitary District, Oakley, on 6/3 constitute an unexpected record for such a summery date and probably represent the only county record between March and August (JC, DW & class). This species historically nested in Alameda County, but this was pre-World War II.

An **Osprey** was at Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island on 5/22, mid-May being prime time for migrating Ospreys in east county (LT, MDAS). A **Swainson's Hawk** was seen carrying nest material over Deer Valley Rd., Antioch, on 5/7 (SB). The few Swainson's Hawk nests ever found in the county have been to the west in the "true" Delta.

Two **Black Swifts**, rare but roughly annual in the county in spring, were over Alamo on 4/22. They were in the company of approximately 100 **White-throated Swifts** (JR). Another flock of over 100 at the same location on 4/25 included 18 **Vaux's Swifts** (JR).

A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** on the nest at Piper Slough on 6/3 was the first for the Breeding Bird Atlas (SG).

Two **Willow Flycatchers** were at Piper Slough on 6/3, this being the only known location of regular occurrence in spring in the county (DW & class, SG).

The **Steller's Jay** invasion of this past winter continues to raise interesting questions. Many had suspected that the invasion birds were from northerly populations and would thus return north in spring while others argued that it was probably local wanderers coming out of hills, the result of a failure in the acorn crop. The necessarily wishy-washy answer appears to be a little of both. Some birds, such as some in residential Martinez and Antioch, departed on schedule around

April. Others, such as a group at Pt. Richmond, have made it into June, meaning that either they are now breeding or never will this season. I suspect that the birds that have decided to stay are those who managed to wander to more suitable nesting habitat. Unfortunately, we will probably never know the exact source of these birds. Winter Wrens had only been confirmed breeding in Contra Costa only around Redwood Regional Park, so a pair feeding fledglings at Blake Gardens near Berkeley were a nice find (HG).

A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Lake Anza, Tilden Park, on 5/13, and two were singing there on 5/22 (ES). The previous late record for the East Bay was 5/17.

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your telephone number with your observation.

**Northern California Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422**

At least ten, and possibly 12, singing **Black-chinned Sparrows** were along South Gate Rd., MDSP, below the kiosk on 6/3. This is a high number even for Mt. Diablo (JP). A **Vesper Sparrow** at Briones Regional Park on 5/15 was noteworthy for several reasons: 1) They are now quite rare in the county. 2) This is the latest record



for the county. 3) I can find no spring records for the county at all. (L&CL).

Migrant **Hooded Orioles** are rarely detected in the East Bay, so a first-year male far from any palms at the Bear Creek entrance to Briones Regional Park on 5/25 was of great interest (EM, JD, JR, T&FR). This has been a one of those years when **Lawrence's Goldfinches** could appear as nesters just about anywhere. A pair was at the Valle Vista Staging Area near Moraga on 5/22 (JH). Two more pairs were at MDSP on 5/25 (RB). Three to five pairs, including a pair building a nest, were on private property on the north flanks of Mt. Diablo 5/9 to 5/12 (S&CH).

Observers: Ruth Barcelon, Sharlee Beasley, Judi Cooper, Jane Dang, Steve Glover, Helen Green, Scott and Claudia Hein, Joel Herr, Leslie and Cindy Lieurance, Ellie Mulke, J.D. Phillips, Trish and Fred Rentschler, Jean Richmond, Steve Rottenborn, Emilie Strauss, Larry Turnstall, Denise Wight

MDAS Thanks Birdathon Donors!

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society thanks all of the following generous donors who supported Denise Wight in her one-woman Birdathon:

Norah Bain
Ellen Beans
Polly Bossivain
Judi Cooper
Elizabeth Dickey
Dorothy Furseth
Janet Goodman
George Griffeth

Judi Hamberg
Hugh and Rosita Harvey
Barbara Holaway
Alice Holmes
Bessie Smyth
Wild Birds Unlimited
Betty Ann Williams

Denise raised a total of \$548 to support MDAS activities. MDAS extends a special thank-you to Denise. What a Birder!!

Field Trip Reports

Redwood Regional Park, Wednesday, May 5—A pleasant day for three birders to walk through the redwoods and listen to bird songs. Best sighting was a Wilson's Warbler which responded very excitedly to phissing. Three invisible Winter Wrens were vigorously defining their territory. A total of 28 species were seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Mitchell Canyon, Saturday, May 8—Ten Audubon members joined the April-on-the-Mountain "Butterflies and Wild Flowers" walk up Mitchell Canyon. Butterfly highlights were Comstock's Fritillary and several Two-tailed Swallowtails. Birding highlights were Cassin's Vireo and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nests. We also had sightings of Black-throated Gray and Townsend's Warblers, Lazuli Bunting, California Thrasher, and quick glimpses of Golden Eagle and Prairie Falcon. A total of 40 species were seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Mt. Diablo State Park, Thursday, May 13—Twelve members and guests spent a lovely day on Mt. Diablo near Rock City, Junction Campground, Curry Point, and Blue Oak Picnic Area. We saw 53 species, including many springtime migrants. Highlights were wonderful views of several Hermit Warblers, both male and female, and 4 Western Tanagers together in one spot. Other notable birds were Cooper's Hawk, Western Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Cassin's, Hutton's and Warbling Vireos, Townsend's Warbler, and Lazuli Bunting.—*Maury Stern*

Napa River, Wednesday, May 19—The flood control workers chose this week to repair the levees so there was no river birding. Weather was somewhat cloudy and definitely windy. Patrick Road produced a total of 26 species. The highlight was a Rufous-crowned Sparrow which responded to Grasshopper Sparrow tape, perched on a fence post by the road, and sang for five minutes, (A Grasshopper Sparrow eventually appeared higher up the hill)—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Annadel State Park, Thursday, May 27—Six birders spent a rather windy morning hoping to see warblers and pileated woodpeckers. Orange-crowed and Wilson's Warblers were plentiful and there was a 2-second glimpse of a Pileated Woodpecker. The best sight at the park was a mother Turkey with seven young birds (2-3 weeks old) following her through the oak trees. At Spring Lake Park we saw three young Green Herons. A total of 40

species were seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Outer Pt. Reyes, Saturday, June 5—Five birdwatchers saw 50 species on what started out as a somewhat foggy day, but cleared by midmorning. The highlight was definitely a beautiful male Chestnut-sided Warbler in full breeding plumage and in plain view foraging in the fennel at the gate at Mendoza.—*Pat MacEachern*

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: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Mono Lake, Saturday and Sunday, July 10 and 11. Join Steve Glover for a week-end of birding in Mono Lake, Big Pine, Baker Creek, and Westgard Pass. See the *May Quail* for a list of motels in the area. Call Steve at 925-828-7793 if you plan to go.

Saturday, August 7, 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 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. Note: No carpool bridge discounts on weekends. Leader: Pat MacEachern, 934-3041 Category 2

Saturday, August 21, 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. Note: No carpool bridge discounts on weekends. Leader: Fred Safier. 937-2906 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.

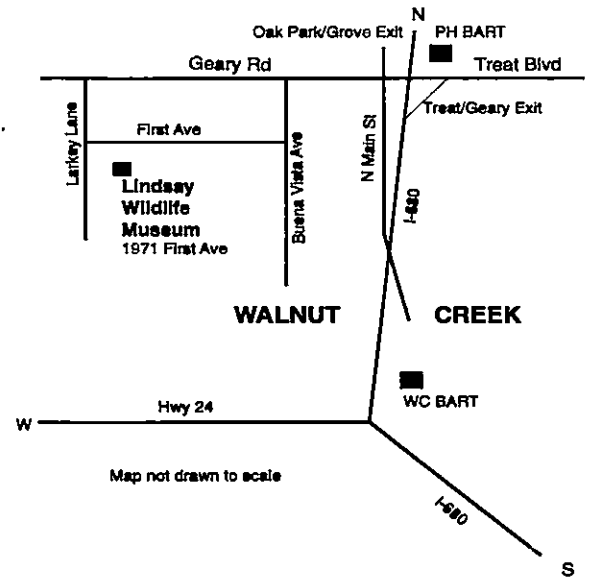
CALENDAR

July 18, Sun., 21:30-4:30 p.m.—Planning Meeting for MDAS Board, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

August 12, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

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

September 2, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General meetings resume after summer break. Community Room, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (see 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.**

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

66/L

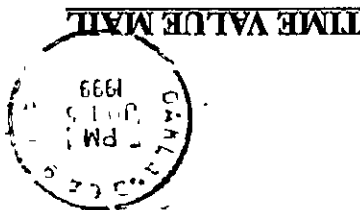
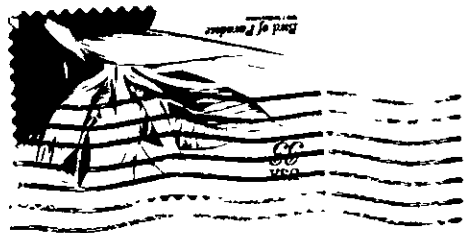


JEAN RICHMOND
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FEB 00 MFB



Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
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 1999

Vol. 46, No. 1

Next Deadline: September 2

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Planning: The Board's Summer Activity

Over the summer, the MDAS Board met with a volunteer facilitator to set some priorities for the coming year. There's quite a bit that happens "behind the scenes" to keep MDAS running. In addition to our usual activities, you might want to know about these new items:

In the area of Education and Outreach, MDAS is working on a series of nature walks in East County aimed at introducing our local birds to families. We've purchased loaner binoculars and plan an introductory presentation in English and Spanish. If you are interested in having a nature walk in your area, or assisting in organizing these nature walks, please call Cecil Williams at (925) 376-1631.

MDAS plans to work hard on growth and conservation issues in the county. If you have an interest in helping us by attending public meetings and speaking for conservation, please contact Nancy Wenninger at (925) 938-7987 or Gloria Cannon at (925) 753-0862.

We need volunteers with computer experience to learn about, advise on, and help maintain our member database in FileMaker Pro. If you have a few hours a month and know Macs or PCs, call Gifford Young at (707) 745-4134.

(Continued on p 2)

Upcoming Events:

Birding in Contra Costa County

Welcome back! For the September general meeting in the Lindsay's naub Exhibit Hall, Denise Wight will take us on a slide-show field trip around Contra Costa County, showing us some of the birding hot spots and the bird species we might expect to see.

We live in an amazing county for avian diversity. At least 353 bird species have been recorded within Contra Costa County limits—Denise has seen most of them! This program will stir your enthusiasm for birds and help you kick off the fall birding season right here in our backyard.

Denise Wight has lived in Contra Costa since 1963. She has an intimate knowledge

of its birds and hot spots. She has participated in more than seven birdathons within Contra Costa County alone. She is also credited with finding one of the most unlikely avian visitors to Contra Costa, the Field Sparrow. She is in demand as a teacher of birding classes and as a field trip leader.

Birding Information

Barbara Vaughn will present "How We View Birds: Observations Both Enlightened and Unenlightened" during the Birding Information portion of the program.



MDAS Board members make plans for the year 2000. Back row, left to right: Alice Holmes, Gifford Young, Beverly Hawley, Barbara Vaughn, Nancy Wenninger, Shirley Ellis, Elizabeth Dickey, Mike Williams, Gloria Cannon, Cecil Williams, Mike Tischler. Front row: Joel Summerhill, Facilitator Arthur Feinstein, MDAS President Carol Frischmann, and Jill Hedgecock.

Connections

by Gloria Cannon

McNabney Marsh

This summer much attention was focused on the future of McNabney Marsh (formerly Shell Marsh). East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) published a land use plan for the portion of McNabney Marsh that it owns. The Mt View Sanitary District asked for control over the entire marsh area so that it could be managed as an ecological unit.

MDAS Board members Barbara Vaughn and Shirley Ellis researched the issue and attended public hearing as our representatives. We recommend that EBRPD and the Mt View Sanitary District work cooperatively to manage the marsh as a unit. We urge that dogs and feral cats be excluded from the area. If EBRPD allows grazing on the upland areas as a fire control measure, MDAS wants a barrier between the cattle and the wetlands

CALFED Draft Plan

CALFED Bay-Delta has drafted a plan for restoring ecological health in the Bay and the Delta. The plan promises to provide a reliable water supply for all uses while improving water quality for the environment. The public comment period ends September 23 and can be submitted in writing or orally at a meeting. You can obtain a summary of the Draft EIS/EIR by calling 1-800-900-3587 or at the CALFED website <<http://calfed.ca.gov>>. MDAS needs a member to attend the public hearing on Thursday, August 26, at Preservation Park, Nile Hall, 668 Thirteenth St., Oakland, from 6-8 p.m. If you can attend, please call Gloria Cannon at (925) 753-0862.

Leghold Traps to Be Reinstated?

Audubon supports the use of padded-leghold traps to catch predators that hunt ground-nesting birds. Audubon's most pressing concern has been the threat posed by the non-native red fox to populations of endangered ground-nesting birds in coastal nesting areas, such as the Clapper Rail, Least

Tern, and Western Snowy Plover. All of these species are protected under state and federal endangered species laws.

Proposition 4 was the anti-trapping initiative passed in California in November 1998. In December 1998, in cooperation with the Marin Audubon Society, the Golden Gate Audubon Society, and the California Waterfowl Association, Audubon-California sued in federal court to challenge one—and only one—section of Proposition 4.

The suit was based on U.S. Constitution prohibition against a state law which voids or frustrates the enforcement of a federal law. In this case, the law at issue is the federal Endangered Species Act. The court ruled in Audubon's favor, but there are still a few more issues to address before the use of padded-leghold traps are reinstated to protect endangered species.

Now Audubon is the target of a misleading, inaccurate fundraising appeal by an animal rights coalition. The use of padded-leghold traps is a very complex issue and one very difficult for all Audubon members to accept.

If a more humane alternative existed to the padded-leghold trap, Audubon would endorse its use. Until that time, Audubon cannot support a wholesale ban on the one tool that has been effective against very smart, very mobile predators.

Padded-leghold traps are used by researchers to capture large animals, including wolves and kit foxes, for relocation programs. Audubon believes that the court injunction will give endangered species a better chance to survive. Think about it.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

(Continued from p. 1)

We also need a Membership Chair. If you have enthusiasm for the goals of Audubon, like to meet new people, or have some ideas on attracting new members, please call Barbara Vaughn at (925) 376-8732 to volunteer as Membership Chair.

Additionally, each Committee Chair and Board Member is completing a succession plan this year. We encourage participation from new people and new ideas.

This year we have many jobs to be done, and looking at the rate of growth of our county, there's no time like the present.

The birds and other bird-lovers appreciate your support!

—Carol Frischmann

**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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Field Trips: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486

Membership: OPEN

Publicity: Jill Hedgecock, 256-8270

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Access: Beverly Hawley, 947-0479

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753-0862

Hands-On Conservation: Nancy Wenninger,
938-7987

Field Guide: Jean Richmond

Christmas Count: Jimm Edgar (510) 658-2330

Mailing: Gifford Young (707) 745-4134

*Gloria Cannon, Editor, (925) 753-0862,
P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565,
email: gcannon@hotmail.com*

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. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, September 8, Jewel Lake, Tilden Park. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the nature area (north end of Tilden Park) for a morning walk around the lake. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2.

Saturday, September 19, Moss Landing—Monterey. Carpool leaves LaGonda Way in Danville at 6:30 a.m. 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. Or meet at 8:30 a.m. in Moss Landing at the parking area opposite Dolan Rd. just south of the PG&E plant on SR 1. Leader: Steve Glover, (925) 828-7793 Category 1

Thursday, September 23, Hayward Regional Shoreline. Carpool leaves LaGonda Way in Danville at 8 a.m. 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. Or meet at 8:45 a.m. (or later depending on traffic) 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 shore birds. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information. Category 2

Wednesday, September 2, Pt. Pinole. Carpool at 7:15 a.m. at Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24.

Meet at parking lot at the entrance from Richmond Parkway. Going south on I-80 take Richmond Parkway exit. Going north on I-580/80, take Cutting Blvd. to Richmond Parkway. Bay shore and marsh areas. We haven't birded this area for a long time. 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.

Field Trip Report: Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley

by Hugh B. Harvey

Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley, weekend of June 19 & 20—The mountain air was strangely quiet as 18 members, guests, and spouses walked the logging road at the 6700-foot elevation of Yuba Pass on Saturday morning. We saw a pair of Williamson's Sapsuckers in the same tree they used last year, a singing Dusky Flycatcher, and Mountain Bluebirds. Before lunch, we stopped at the store at Bassets to see Calliope Hummingbirds at their feeders and then proceeded down the river to seek Dippers.

We did not see one right away and eventually searched farther down towards a bend where we finally found one. Then we discovered that this was an adult bringing food to two young that were in the shadows along the far edge of the river. One of the young finally came out onto a rock with water spilling over it,

though the parent was still bring it food. Despite the sound of the water, we could hear the young bird calling when the parent came close with a morsel. The late David Gaines wrote, "No Sierran river or stream is too cold or too swift for American Dippers." While this young bird bobbed much as its parent, it did slip on the mossy surface and seemed to be asking if it was really expected to enter the roiling waters. This was one of the highlights of the weekend.

The afternoon was warm as we searched futilely for Black-back Woodpeckers in the burned area above Loyaltan. Nevertheless, we did find Townsend's Solitaire, Lewis's Woodpeckers at a nest hole, a Pygmy Nuthatch bringing food to a nest hole, and Northern Goshawk passing overhead. After supper, we drove to Chapman Saddle Road where we called out a Common Poorwill and a large black bear!

Sunday morning we dropped down to below 5000 feet to tour the Sierra Valley. Before stopping in Loyaltan for lunch, we saw Green-tailed Towhees, a Gray Flycatcher, Brewer's and Vesper's Sparrows, a Sage Thrasher, many Marsh Wrens and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Sandhill Cranes, and White-faced Ibis. One of the pair of nesting Swainson's Hawks flew over us as we ate.

During this brief trip, we saw many aspects of mountain nature, though we concentrated on the birdlife. We could easily have spent several more days visiting other spots in the vicinity of Yuba Pass to see nearby lakes, waterfalls, and high mountain areas. When we tallied our checklist, we found we had seen or heard 101 species.

Editor's note: Look for Steve Glover's field trip report on birding the Eastern Sierras in the October Quail.

MDAS Annual Financial Report, FY 1999

Pam Keiser, Treasurer

	<u>GENERAL FUND</u>	<u>RESERVED FUND</u>	<u>TOTAL FUNDS</u>
REVENUE			
Contributions			
Donations	\$ 2,143.50	\$ 6,898.00	\$ 9,041.50
Birdwalk Donations	190.00	--	190.00
Door Prize Donations	854.00	--	854.00
Birdathon Donations	493.10	--	493.10
Total Contributions	3,680.60	6,898.00	10,578.60
National Audubon Dues Share	9,077.49	--	9,077.49
Investment Income	458.45	888.62	1,347.07
Quail Subscriptions	549.00	--	549.00
Sales			
Advertising	540.00	--	540.00
Entertainment Books	2,041.00	--	--
Books and Other	225.45	2,383.15	2,608.60
Total Sales	2,806.45	2,383.15	5,189.60
Funds for Transmittal	445.00	--	445.00
TOTAL REVENUE	17,016.99	10,169.77	27,186.76
EXPENSES			
Administrative and General			
Equipment	888.52	--	888.52
Insurance	480.00	--	480.00
Office Supplies	65.93	481.84	547.77
Professional Fees	310.00	--	310.00
Rent	825.00	--	825.00
Telephone	199.85	96.55	296.40
Total Administrative and General	2,769.30	578.39	3,347.69
Donations to Other Organizations	1,207.53	1,200.00	2,407.53
Cost of Sales	1,762.53	140.10	1,902.63
Membership and Promotion	57.79	117.25	175.04
Newsletter Expense	6,828.78	1,695.86	8,524.64
Programs and Services			
Christmas Bird Count	804.45	--	804.45
Education	315.00	--	315.00
Field Trips	15.15	--	15.15
Hospitality	86.94	--	86.94
Monthly Programs	921.15	--	921.15
Total Programs and Services	2,142.69	--	2,142.69
TOTAL EXPENSES	14,768.62	3,731.60	18,500.22
EXCESS REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	2,248.37	6,438.17	8,686.54
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE	11,766.06	23,641.30	35,407.36
ENDING CASH BALANCE	14,014.43	30,079.47	44,093.90

Observations

by Steve Glover

In the July issue of the *Quail*, I mentioned that migrant **Hooded Orioles** are rarely detected in the East Bay. This produced an avalanche of phone calls from birders throughout the county who have nesting Hooded Orioles in their neighborhoods.

When I used the term "migrant," I was referring to birds found in Spring or Fall away from breeding sites, usually assumed to be on the way to, or heading away from, nest areas. Because Hooded Orioles have yet to be detected nesting in the East Bay away from fan palms, I assume birds during migration away from fan palms to be migrants.

This isn't to say that nesting Hooded Orioles aren't noteworthy. If you have seen Hooded Orioles, or any other species, nesting in Contra Costa County this year, the *Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas* would dearly love to know where, when, and exactly what indicated nesting to you. A nearby large street or landmark would also be helpful. These can be sent directly to me.

An immature **Little Blue Heron**, one of only a handful yet found in Alameda County, was first found at Coyote Hills Regional Park on 8/1 (AW) and was present to at least 8/5 (RBA). This species breeds in tiny numbers just to the south of there in Santa Clara County, and this bird is likely a product of that colony.

A pair of **Green-winged Teal** and a pair of **Blue-winged Teal**, neither of which have ever been confirmed nesting in the county, were at McNabney Marsh on July 6. This is likely the first summer record for the county of Blue-winged Teal (SG).

The female half of the resident pair of **Harlequin Ducks** at Brooks Island, Richmond, was present on 8/13 (SG).

A pair of light-phased **Swainson's Hawks** were noted carrying food to a nest in a lone oak tree just east of Marsh Creek Reservoir on 6/22. Although technically at

the extreme west edge of the Central Valley, this still the first Contra Costa nesting away from the true delta (SG). A **Prairie Falcon** was very unseasonal for eastern CCC at Orwood Rd. on 6/24 (SG).

A half-grown **Ring-necked Pheasant** was in south San Ramon on 7/20. This species is believed to be declining in the East Bay and, at the current rate of development in the San Ramon area, will likely be extirpated from there soon (SG).

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

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at McNabney Marsh, Martinez, on 7/21 (DW). A pair of **Wandering Tattlers** was at the Richmond Marina on 7/17 (LF). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was near Brooks Island, Richmond, on 8/13, this species being unusual there (SG).

The most exciting news of the summer came from Hayward Regional Shoreline when the famous **Arctic Tern**, summering for its sixth consecutive year, finally managed to lure a male **Forster's Tern** into mating. Two of the chicks disappeared quickly, but the third was able to eventually fledge. This represents the southernmost nest record for the West Coast and the first for California and probably also represents the first recorded hybridization of the two species (BR, JR). A **Black Skimmer** was present at Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont, on 8/5 (LT,OC).

The status of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds is still muddled in the East Bay and especially in the eastern portions of the region. A male **Allen's Hummingbird** was

seen frequenting an Antioch feeder from 7/18 to 7/23+ (JB).

A **Bank Swallow** in a mixed species flock at Mt. Diablo's Rock City was on the strangely summery date of 6/15 (JR).

Red-breasted Nuthatches in the county are restricted to the Redwood/Monterey Pine forests of the fog belt when breeding, so one in an Alamo yard 7/18/24 was likely an early post-breeding wanderer but was certainly noteworthy (JR).

A singing male **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 6/18, a date which suggests possible breeding in the area. A very few county nest records have all come from Pine Canyon, MDSP (JRo).

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a Berkeley Hills feeder on 7/1. This species has proven annual in summer in the Berkeley Hills in recent years. A male hybridized with a female Black-headed at Tilden Park in 1992, and the spat of recent summer records indicates that breeding may well be taking place but is going undetected (B&BB).

Eight singing male **Black-chinned Sparrows** on 6/15 along South Gate Road, MDSP, was a healthy count even for this, the best location in the county (JR, EM, FR).

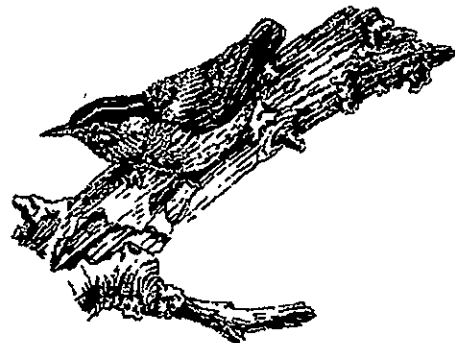
The last Contra Costa nesting of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** was reported in Grinnell and Miller's landmark treatise of California birds, published in 1944, but nesting may have occurred this year at Iron House Sanitary District at Oakley. Birds, including singing males, were present there in April, but the site was not visited again until 8/11. On that date, 50+ males were there as well as a few females. No evidence of nesting was secured at such a late date, but it seems likely that it did occur this year. At least 350 male **Tricolored Blackbirds** were also there on 8/11 (SG). (Continued on p. 7).

1999-2000 MDAS Field Trip Schedule

Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

This is a **tentative** schedule of MDAS field trips in 1999-2000. 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 Mt Pinos/ San Luis Obispo trip is three days. The trips to the Los Banos Panoche Valley, Yuba Pass, and the Sierras 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 8, Wednesday	Jewel Lake, Tilden Park (1)	March 23, Thursday	San Leandro Reservoir (2)
18, Saturday	Moss Landing-Monterey (3)	(cont) 25, Saturday	Black Diamond Reg. Park (3)
23, Thursday	Hayward Regional Shoreline (2)	29, Wednesday	Huckleberry Reserve (2)
29, Wednesday	Pt. Pinole Reg. Park, Richmond (2)		
October 2, Saturday	Outer Point Reyes (2)	April 6, Thursday	Briones/ wildflowers (2)
7, Thursday	S.F. Bay Wildlife Refuge (1)	8, Saturday	Garin Regional Park (3)
13, Wednesday	Wildcat Canyon, Tilden Park (2)	12, Wednesday	Shell Ridge (2)
16, Saturday	Hawk Hill, Marin Cty (2)	20, Thursday	Ida Clayton Rd, Napa Cty (1)
21, Thursday	Charleston Slough (2)	22, Saturday	Pine Canyon
<u>27, Thursday</u>	Lafayette Reservoir (2)	26, Wednesday	Del Puerto Canyon
30, Saturday	Abbott's Lagoon, Pt. Reyes (3)		
November 4, Thursday	Arrowhead Marsh, Oakland (1)	May 4, Thursday	Mitchell Canyon (3)
6, Saturday	Bodega Bay (1)	6, Saturday	Mines Road, Alameda Cty (1)
10, Wednesday	Iron House Sant. Dist. (2)	<u>11, Wednesday</u>	South side/Mt Diablo State
18, Thursday	Mt. View Sant. Plant/McNabney	<i>is wed</i>	Park (3)
	Marsh, Martinez (1)	18, Thursday	Napa County (2)
20, Saturday	Limantour, Pt. Reyes (2)	20, Saturday	East Contra Costa County (2)
		24, Wednesday	West Briones (2)
		27-29, Sat., Sun	
		& Mon.	Mt Pinos/San Luis Obispo (3)
December <u>1, Thursday</u>	Altamont (1)	June 1, Thursday	Consumes Preserve
4, Saturday	Palo Alto Baylands (1)	3, Saturday	Outer Point Reyes (2)
8, Wednesday	Niles Canyon (2)	7, Wednesday	Annadel State Park (2)
15, Wednesday	Hidden Lakes (1)	10, Saturday	Bobelaine Sanctuary (2)
18, Saturday	CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT	17-18, Sat. & Sun.	Yuba Pass-Sierra Valley (2)
January 6, Thursday	San Pablo Res. (2)	July 8&9, Sat. & Sun.	Sierras (3)
8, Saturday	Putah Creek (1)		
12, Wednesday	Sunol Regional Park (2)	August 5, Saturday	San Mateo coast (2)
20, Thursday	Sibley Volcanic Preserve	19, Saturday	Bodega Bay (1)
22, Saturday	Santa Cruz (2)		
26, Wednesday	Grizzly Is. Wildlife Refuge (1)		
February 3, Thursday	Briones Lagoons		
5 & 6, Sat. & Sun.	Los Banos/Panoche Valley (2)		
9, Wednesday	Thornton (1)		
17, Thursday	Lake Merritt, Oakland (1)		
19, Saturday	Yolo County (2)		
23, Wednesday	Bolinas—5 Brooks (2)		
March 1, Wednesday	Berkely-Richmond Shore. (2)		
4, Saturday	Tomaes Bay St. Park (2)		
9, Thursday	Round Valley (3)		
<u>16, Wednesday</u>	Tilden Park, Wildcat Creek (2)		
18, Saturday	Anderson Marsh, Lake County (2)		



On circled trips, date + date do not march.

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Birdfeeding Thoughts

One of the fun aspects of bird watching and feeding is how each year is different from others. This summer we saw far fewer orioles than in previous summers. In Arizona and Southern California, there were record numbers of orioles. (Perhaps our cool weather kept them in the south.)

We saw larger numbers of House Finches and Mourning Doves this summer, while jay numbers were down, just the opposite of last year. There were abundant numbers of Lesser Goldfinches at the thistle feeders with some American Goldfinches.

California Quail were very plentiful this year. They apparently experienced a good nesting season as we received many reports of the young following their parents everywhere.

Preseason Sale

15% off all birdseed feeders, birdbaths, and fountains (ends 9/12)

Summer Clearance

25-50% off selected items throughout the store (ends 9/12)

Denise Wight's Birding Classes

Beginning Birding Class begins Sept. 14 from 7-9 p.m.

Continuing Class begins Sept. 15, 7-9 pm. Each costs \$40 and includes five evening classes and a morning birdwalk. Learn more about your favorite hobby and have a lot of fun, too!

For more interesting information about your backyard birds, bird feeding ideas, supplies, and equipment, visit our web site at <www.wbupleasanthill.com>.

Another fun site to visit with lots of information of Arizona birding is <www.aztrogon.com>.

Support Your Chapter and Save Money Too!

The 2000 Entertainment Book is a terrific book of discount coupons. The price is still an incredible \$40, and the coupons can be used immediately. This great savings book will be available after September 16 though year's end at MDAS general meetings or at either of the two Wild Birds Unlimited locations: 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill; or 7182 Regional St., Dublin.

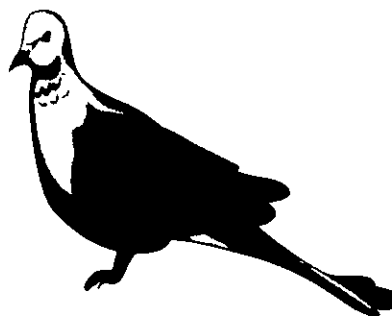
Butterfly Classes Offered

MDAS butterfly expert Sharyn Fernandez is teaching two classes:

•"Bay Area Butterflies" (#SI-17) — Saturdays, from Sept. 18 to Oct. 16, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the Acalanes Adult Education Center, Del Valle Campus, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd, Walnut Creek. The fee is \$40. The class will focus on butterfly identification, life history, butterfly counts, Monarch tagging projects, and how to make a simple butterfly rearing box. Pre-register by September 10. For registration form or a schedule of classes, call (925) 935-0170.

•"Butterfly Rearing Boxes" (#LSS-3210; ages 9-12) on Monday, Sept. 20, 3:30 to 6 p.m., Heather Farms Community Center, Club Room. The fee is \$12 (pre-registration) plus \$5 materials (pay in class). Children will make a 12-in. (cardboard) rearing box and take home a Painted Lady caterpillar, starter plant, and instructions. For a registration form or a schedule of classes, call Walnut Creek Leisure Services (925) 943-5858.

For other information, call Sharyn at (925) 691-4898. Sharyn Fernandez has a BA in biology and is a member of the Lepidopterist Society.



Observations (cont. from p. 5)

This has been a strong year for **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, with confirmed nesting in two Atlas blocks in the eastern Tilden Park area. A pair and probably more birds were on the DeLaveaga Trail near downtown Orinda on 7/6 (JH). This species is thought to breed this far west into the moister parts of the county only in "good" years for the species.

Observers: Jeanne Bonner, Bob and Barbara Brandriff, Ore Carmi, Lillian Fujii, Steve Glover, Joel Herr, Ellie Mulke, Fred Rentschler, Bob Richmond, Jean Richmond, John Robinson, Larry Turnstall, Denise Wight, Anna Wilcox

News & Events

On September 11, Coyote Hills Regional Park (8000 Patterson Ranch Road, Fremont) is celebrating **Quail Day** with a release of young California Quail at 9 a.m., followed by playing quail games, coloring quail art, and learning about quail habitat.

Plan now to attend the **Central Valley Birding Symposium**, November 18-21. Held at the Stockton Raddison, the Symposium brings together the best in birding events and speakers. John Kemper, Joe Morlan, and Paul Lehman will be among the speakers. Registraton is \$75. For more information, check the website at <<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/5954/cvbc.html>>.

Mark your calendars now for the **Western Regional Conference of the National Audubon Society** will be held next spring, April 14-18, at the beautiful Asilomar Conference Center on the Monterey Peninsula. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Audubon's activities, meet other birders, and enjoy Asilomar.

CALENDAR

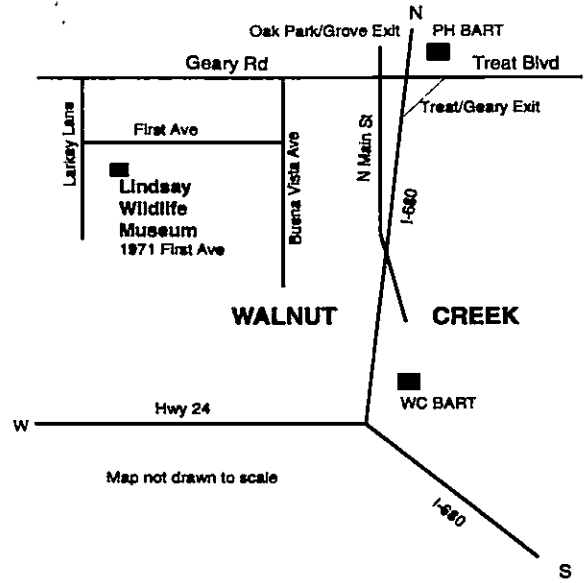
Sept. 2, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meetings resume after summer break, UPSTAIRS EXHIBIT HALL, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

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

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

Oct. 2, Sat.—BAAC meeting.

General meetings are held the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. The meeting schedule for 1999-2000 is October 7, November 4, December 2, January 6, February 3, March 2, April 6, May 4, and June 1. General meeting dates are also *Quail* deadlines



National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly *Audubon* magazine and the *Quail* (monthly except August). Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years. Seniors and students only \$15; membership renewal is \$35/year. Of that, \$10 is to Audubon and is nondeductible. To join, send a check payable to NAS to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556-2602. The *Quail* may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507-2704. First-class delivery of the *Quail* is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.



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Next Deadline: October 7

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Growth: Speak Now

Initiatives to curb suburban sprawl are surfacing all over Contra Costa County. Why is it important for you to hear more and perhaps become involved in this unsettling topic?

Like it or not, market forces and public opinion dictate what choices will be made available to you in the future. Choices about transportation, housing and availability of recreational space will be decided at the polls and in the marketplace.

What you buy and how you vote will determine how our county will look in the future, and whether there is enough habitat left to support the birds and other wildlife which drew many of us to this area. This is a time when political participation and reconsideration of the resources we individually require can make a difference.

Imagine a situation where we could live close to our jobs, eliminating commuting. Imagine that the tax base for our towns could grow, without expanding the boundaries of our towns. Imagine that we could have less property but retain our privacy. Imagine areas set aside with enough space to support the wildlife that enhances the quality of our lives.

If we can imagine it, we can make it come true. Please get involved in the process by contributing your positive ideas on how to accommodate our growing population and a good quality of life for all our county's residents.

When you're birding next, consider whether this place will be available for the birds to live and your enjoyment next year or the year after. Audubon is not just about birds. Please remember, no habitat, no birds!
—Carol Frischmann

Upcoming Events:

Raptor Expert to Speak

At the October general meeting, Pamala Swan will give a presentation on raptors. She will give us some tips on how to identify these diurnal birds of prey and give us some insight into their lives. This timely program coincides with the annual hawk migration at the Marin Headlands. Come learn how about these magnificent birds of prey, then consider making the trip to "Hawk Hill" to view these birds on their journey south.



Pamala Swan was the former Adult Education Program Manager at the Lindsey Wildlife Museum, and has extensive experience with birds of prey. She was the leader of "Raptor Quest" and "Raptors of the Delta," two popular excursions which were offered by the Museum.

Birding Information

Sandhill Cranes are an ancient breed; they grazed with the dinosaurs 60 million years ago. Today they are still found worldwide.

Do you love Sandhill Cranes? Then you will want to be on hand for Bonnie Harrigan's Birding Information talk on these wonderful birds.

It's COMING SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18—
THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
Join other birders of all skill levels
to celebrate this historic
sunrise-to-sunset field event.
See the November *Quail* for details.

Guest editorial**Your Legacy, John James?**

by Christopher Patton

Wild birds, chained in boxes having all the habitat appeal of solitary confinement cells at Alcatraz, gazed dolefully down on September's MDAS meeting. The irony of this scene was surpassed only by its tragic inequity.

Wildlife seems to attract more than its fair share of inequities. Poignantly, animals—like small children—cannot speak up and defend themselves. In presuming to speak for them, one of the tools which man has created is wildlife management.

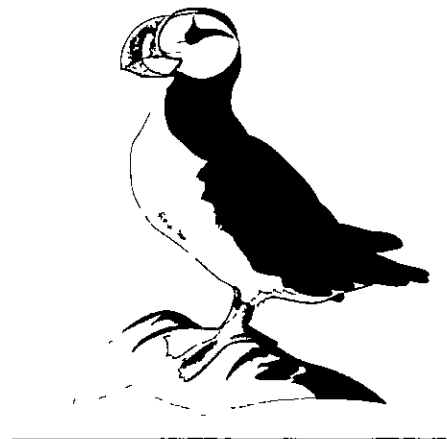
Wildlife management is a grab-bag concept. From rehabilitation hospitals to feral cat groups, from education and research to hunting, these fragmented and uncoordinated activities are more chaotic than a Feydeu farce.

Cases of wildlife management beating up on wildlife in yet another good cause are reported frequently. Typically, killing is an acceptable first option, especially when it involves species that we don't like, or those that are in the way of our cherished projects, or those just being a "nuisance."

Close to home, the July/August 1999 issue of *Audubon* magazine had a breathless-with-admiration account of one man's efforts to reintroduce puffins onto a deserted Maine island. The project included the slaughter of predatory gulls. That this, and other well-worn techniques he employed, were lovingly reported as breakthrough, "aggressive" wildlife management, raises wildlife management inequities to new levels.

The principle of two piles of corpses being better than one (yesteryear's hunted puffins and today's exterminated gulls) is a standard tenet of wildlife management. In this case, however, its application is the more shameful because the Audubon Society proudly sponsors the puffin project

Not all of wildlife management operates at the same level of ineptitude and callousness represented by this example. But the reporting frequency on those that do suggest that the blight is disturbingly widespread. Why, then, are wildlife management inequities so disproportionately important?

**Great News for the Pale-headed Brush-Finch**

The last remaining 28 hectares of land holding the critically endangered Pale-Headed Brush-Finch, *Atlapetes pallidiceps*, were purchased by the Jocotoco Foundation of Ecuador.

A study funded by the American Bird Conservancy found 11 singing males (pairs) in the area, nine of which were within the secured land, almost certainly the only remaining site holding this species.

The foundation must now develop and carry out an effective management plan. Several considerations include:

- The species was heavily parasitized by Shiny Cowbird.
- It suffers from interference by the more numerous Stripe-headed Brush-Finch (which was observed displacing singing *A. pallidiceps* on numerous occasions and once directly attacking).

The answer is, simply, the public. If man is to make any serious progress in redressing wildlife inequities, then the public must become more involved. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to be a role model of genuine compassion, care, and thoughtfulness towards wildlife.

When respected institutions, such as the Audubon Society, openly support killing, the wrong message becomes permanently incorporated into society's values.

And then we dopyly stand round wondering why almost all of wildlife is having such a tough time of it.

**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,
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Fall Birding Events

October 1-3 is the **Monterey Bay Bird Festival** in Moss Landing. It features field trips to Big Sur, the Carmel River, the Salinas River, Watsonville, and the wonderful Elkhorn Slough. There is a full schedule of family activities, kalyaking, photography and illustration seminars, and workshops. Local chefs will be cooking up a welcome banquet. Registration is \$35 (teens \$15) and includes T-shirt, entry to Elkhorn Slough Reserve, Sat. Bird Fair, beginner bird trips, restaurant discounts, and the evening program. Other events are individually priced. See the website at <www.elkhornslough.org> or register at the door.

The **Sandhill Crane Tour** season opens. The California Department of Fish & Game has expanded its naturalist-led tours to view fly-ins of Sandhill Cranes. It is awe inspiring to watch the evening sky fill with these big birds flying in to their roosts.

These tours start from the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve near Lodi, but they go to some sites normally off-limits to visitors. Tours last two hours, ending at sunset. To register for a tour, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and a card with your 1st and 2nd choices of dates, the number in your party, name, and complete address and phone number. Send to Crane Tours, DF&G, 1701 Nimbus Rd, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. A \$5 donation per adult payable to the California Wildlife Federation is requested. For more info, call (916) 991-226. Dates are Oct. 3, 7, 10, 17; Nov. 13, 14, 21, 28; Dec. 2, 5, 11, 12, 19; Jan. 6, 8, 9, 16, 23, 30; Feb. 3, 6, 13, 27.

Field trips, workshops, family programs, and an art show are all on the agenda for the **Sandhill Crane Festival** in Lodi on Nov. 5-7. Call (209) 368-6444 for more information.

Central Valley Birding Symposium is Nov. 18-21 in Stockton. For more info, visit the CVBC website at <<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/5954/cvbc.html>>.

Hats Off! MDAS Salutes Shirley Ellis

MDAS salutes Shirley Ellis, one of its best friends and hardest working members. For ten years, Shirley has served as publicity chair, nominations chair, Birding Information chair, volunteer coordinator, and chapter historian. In her spare time, she has attended public meetings to represent MDAS and led many birding field trips. In September, Shirley decided to take a break from her MDAS responsibilities, but her friends miss her. Like Gifford Young said, "We have the deepest appreciation of all she has done for MDAS and we've had the pleasure of associating with her all these years."

Her friends had these comments about what makes Shirley special and why she was such an asset to MDAS.

"Her social skills are paramount; she seems to be able to talk to strangers and draw them out. Part of that may be due to her many interests, such as art, jazz, birding, and sports. In any of the organizations she's been involved with in the past, she's often GIVEN more than she's gotten back. As someone said recently, any time there's something to be done you can usually count on Shirley to volunteer, and you can be sure it DOES get done," said Barbara Vaughn.

That's the assessment heard many times. As Elizabeth Dickey pointed out, "Shirley has shown great dedication to the Audubon cause—always applying a dogged effort to gain the end of a project."

"Shirley likes jazz because she is jazzy!! When she takes on a project she does it with gusto and she does it right" said Cecil Williams. "You can count on Shirley."

Beverly Hawley agrees, "Shirley is surely always there for us—as individuals, as a group, and for Audubon as a whole."

Several MDAS members said, "Don't forget her marvelous sense of humor and ability to see the ridiculous in human situations." "I love her laugh and sense of humor," added Mike Williams.

Everyone has a "Shirley" story. Here's Nancy Wenninger's: "Shirley is one of the bravest women I know. On a recent birding outing in Briones, Shirley and I split up. After a few minutes, she came back and, cool as cucumber, said, 'Don't go down to the creek—there's a rattlesnake there.' I would have been hyperventilating, but Shirley didn't even break a sweat."

Winnie Young says that Shirley has been invaluable on the nominations committee: "She knows the capabilities of many of our members and has been able to persuade good candidates to accept positions." Another friend described Shirley as "direct and to the point. She doesn't mince words and says what she means!"

MDAS President Carol Frischmann said, "Shirley, as a person of exceptional integrity, capability, and energy, has contributed so very much to Audubon in the years I have been President. I cannot imagine how we would have accomplished so much without her willingness to pitch in and do what was needed."

Shirley, when you get rested up and restless, we want you back!

An Account of the July Field Trip to the Eastern Sierras

by Steve Glover

When we got out of the car at the Mono Lake Visitor's Center, we were immediately greeted by a chorus of singing birds that included Sage Thrasher, Green-tailed Towhee and Brewer's Sparrows—all of which posed on convenient perches for all to see. For two and a half days, the birding never really slowed down.

Many familiar birds were singing away at Mono Lake County Park at the north end of the lake, including Yellow Warblers, House Wrens, and Lazuli Buntings. From across the way came a handful of Black-billed Magpies, the very similar but circumpolar version of our own Yellow-billed Magpies. A quick jaunt down the boardwalk to the shore revealed just how quickly the level of the lake has risen in the few years since diversions have ceased. From there we saw little but the ever-present California Gulls, but a few snappily attired Eared Grebes, just beginning to stage, were out beyond a small tufa.

Heading east on Highway 120 we spent an hour or so birding the Jeffrey Pine forest that Emilie Strauss tells me is the largest such forest in the world! The western edge of the grove is well known for its nesting Lewis's Woodpeckers, and we were able to spot one before we could even stop the car. For over a half an hour, we watched adults repeatedly carrying food to a nest next to the road, a rare treat indeed. A Gray Flycatcher was calling nearby, but no one seemed willing to stop watching the glorious pink-and-green woodpeckers for something so drab and understated as a mere empidonax.

Other birds in the pine grove included Pygmy Nuthatch and Mountain Chickadee while an opening in the forest created by an ancient lava flow featured several spectacularly colored Mountain Bluebirds, a species described by the late David Gaines as "feathered epiphanies."

The habitat on the way to Benton Hot Springs consists almost exclusively of Big Sagebrush and Bitterbrush, so the diversity there was not as high, but who can resist an area where the most common

bird is the Green-tailed Towhee? Their mewing call and Fox Sparrow-like song would follow us most of the weekend.

We stopped at fascinating rock formation which seemed an appropriate spot for a Canyon Wren, and one gave a few buzzes almost immediately. A short while later, it gave one of its extraordinary cascading arias, scarcely discernible over the talking and gravel-stomping of 20 birders.

I was one of the last cars to turn my car around from the lakeshore; and, as I was passing cars to reassume the lead, I noticed Bob Dunn in the front car pointing up the road. I lifted my binoculars and was stunned to see a female Sage Grouse timidly crossing the road! By the time it had crossed to the other side and back into the sage most of the group was able to get at least a decent look at it. Just ahead, another female did the exact same thing!

On the way around the north side of the lake, we stopped at a small pond in hopes of seeing our first Wilson's Phalaropes. No luck on those, but we did see baby Killdeer, baby American Avocet, and baby Gadwall. If I hadn't been so busy scanning the pond, I might have been the first to notice yet another female Sage Grouse—this one not more than 10 yards away! Even better, this female was in the company of two slightly smaller juveniles, birds born just in the last month or two!

We headed on to Big Pine for dinner and a good night's sleep with 85 species already under our belts.

From Big Pine we headed east up 168 to Westgard Pass in the White Mountains. Just up the pass, we heard a singing Black-throated Sparrow. Fortunately, the habitat there was so sparse that the bird was unable to hide well, and we were able to admire him and his smart black bib for several minutes before we moved on.

After a brief rain shower, we birded the pinyon/pine habitat along the entrance road to the Ancient Bristlecone Monument. I should say we chased after an extremely elusive Gray Flycatcher. A few

eventually got good looks at the bird, but most had to be satisfied with watching it fly about in response to 20 birders tromping about on rocky ground and screaming, "There it is!"

Then we the familiar song of a Plumbeous Vireo. Once again the din raised by a horde of birders trying to ascend a talus slope resulted in the bird's disappearance, so we contented ourselves with watching a group of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers while they "speezied" about their business.

On the way back to Lee Vining, we stopped at the west end of Crowley Lake where there were summering American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, three Black-necked Stilts, a pair of Spotted Sandpipers close enough to see the spots, and, at long last, a few Wilson's Phalaropes.

Next stop was Olmstead Point. We made our way down the granite in hope of finding the Blue Grouse. Maury Stern tried an imitation that apparently had been successful earlier in the week, but which sounded to me more like a dry heave. Fortunately, Blue Grouse are not as discriminating as I am because almost immediately there was a female grouse just downslope from us! Apparently their sight is more acute because once it saw us it scurried away pretty quickly.

By the end of the trip we had managed to locate and identify over 140 species, some of these being species that are normally very difficult to see. Who can argue with a trip where you see two species of grouse?

A final word about the group as a whole. I have never led a more cooperative group on a field trip. We birded each day until well into the evening with never a complaint heard. On several occasions I found myself expecting to lose half the group at any moment to the lure of dinner and a warm bed, but everyone stayed until the bitter end. Thank you to all of you and see you next time! (*See our website for the full text of Steve's report.—Editor*)

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. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Saturday, October 2, Outer Point Reyes. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at Drake's Beach, 9 a.m. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the 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 left onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd. again. Continue about 14 miles to Drake's Beach Rd. on left. Fall vagrants. Be prepared for variable weather. Leader: Steve Glover, 828-7793
Category 2

Thursday, October 7, San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Meet at 9 a.m. at parking lot at refuge entrance. Take I-680 to I-580 west, south on I-880, west on SR 84 to Thornton Ave. exit. Go left on Thornton to refuge entrance. We will bird the marshes east of the entrance road first. Mostly levee walking. Bring lunch. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 2

October 13, Wednesday, Tilden Regional Park. Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot at the Nature Center at the north end of the park. Depending in part on the weather, we will walk either down Wildcat Creek or up the Laurel Trail. A half-

day trip for local birds. Good beginners' trip. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486.
Category 2

Saturday, October 16, Point Diablo (Hawk Hill). Carpool leaves at 8:00 a.m., from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Or met at 9:15 a.m. in parking lot at upper Rodeo lagoon. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. Take US 101 south to second (Alexander Ave.) exit for Sausalito. At stop sign, go left UP the hill. At the intersection, go right downhill. At stop sign, turn left and continue to upper lagoon. Migrating hawks and swifts. At noon there is a talk and demonstration by the Raptor Watch people. Leader: Fred Safier, 937-2906
Category 1

Thursday, October 21, Charleston Slough. Carpool leaves El Pintado at 8:00 a.m. See Oct 7 trip. Meet at 9:30 a.m. on Terminal Rd. in Mountain View. Take Dumbarton Bridge and drive south on US 101 to the San Antonio Rd. exit. Go north and/or east on San Antonio and turn right onto Terminal Rd. Water and salt marsh birds. Levees may be muddy. Bring lunch. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 2.

Thursday, October 28, Lafayette Reservoir. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the top of the dam. Parking costs \$4 and is prohibited at the bottom of the hill. A good place to learn local birds. Morning trip. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Category 2

Saturday, October 30, Abbott's Lagoon. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at 9 a.m. at Bear Valley Visitor's Center, Point Reyes. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the 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 0.25 mile, then left onto Bear Valley Rd. Visitors' Center is off Bear Valley. Waterfowl, shorebirds, and hawks. Carry lunch and liquids. Leader: Joel Summerhill, 753-0862
Category 3

Difficulty of field trip:
Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths.
Category 2: Moderate, 1 mile or more, possibly rough terrain.
Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Field Trip Report on Bodega Bay on August 21

It was unusually warm, though not hot, on a beautiful late summer Saturday at Bodega Bay. Fifteen members enjoyed the day, which included excellent looks at Osprey and Black Oystercatcher. A very cooperative loon displayed every feather of its somewhat transitional plumage for long enough at our feet so that it was finally determined to be a Common. Fifty species were seen.—Fred Safier

Observations

by Steve Glover

Fall is here, and with it comes the premier time of year for finding vagrant songbirds, especially flycatchers, vireos, warblers, and sparrows. The best place to begin such a search has traditionally been the Jewel Lake area of Tilden Park, but Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline at Richmond and Piper Slough at Bethel Island have begun to produce interesting records in recent years. Better yet, go out and find your own little patch to call home. Let us know what you find.

Eighteen **American White Pelicans** drifted over Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island on 9/3 (SG).

Great Blue Herons were still feeding young in two nests at Eucalyptus Island near Clifton Court Forebay, Byron, on 8/17 (SG).

A **White-faced Ibis** at Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island on 8/15 provided one of just a handful of August records for the county (SG).

An **Osprey** was at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 8/17 (SG). Another or the same bird was on a telephone pole nearby on 9/3 (SG). A **Peregrine Falcon** was at its normal winter perch on the radio towers at Pt. Isabel, Richmond, on 8/25 (SG).

Five **Red-necked Phalaropes** were at Iron House Sanitary District at Oakley on 9/4, this being the most reliable spot for this species in the county (SG).

Belated word of a pair of **Western Gulls** at Lake Merritt has come in, a first for that location and the first I am aware of from the East Bay away from the immediate bayside areas (RB). Hayward Regional Shoreline's pair of **Black Skimmers** were incubating 3 eggs on 9/1; this date seeming to be very late (PD).

Anna's Hummingbird is apparently a scarce migrant at Piper Slough and much less common Spring through Fall than

Black-chinned, so one there on 9/3 was noteworthy (SG).

Lewis's Woodpeckers have become extremely scarce in Contra Costa County in recent years so an immature bird at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 8/29 was welcome news (NW).

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was at Piper Slough at the north end of Bethel Island on 8/15—this species being unusual out there (SG).

The first **Willow Flycatcher** of the season was at Iron House Sanitary District in Oakley on 8/28 (SG). Two were at Piper Slough on 8/31 (DW), but numbers there exploded soon thereafter with 23 at that location on 9/3. The previous county high of 22, also at Piper Slough, came on 8/29/94. Another **Willow Flycatcher** was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 9/10, where more unusual (SG).

A rather late **Yellow-breasted Chat**, possibly a migrant rather than one of the local breeders, was at Piper Slough on 9/3 (SG).

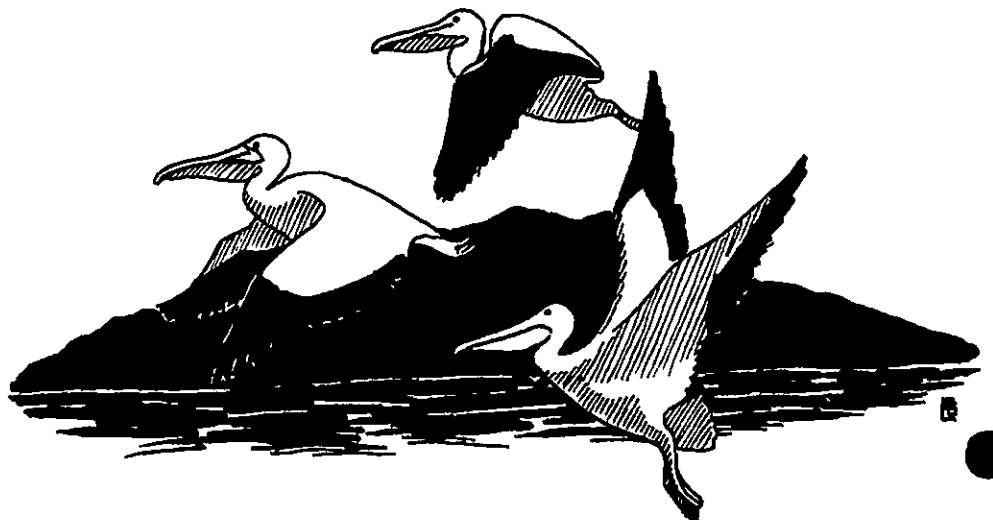
A nice concentration of 20+ **Western Tanagers** was at Martinez Regional Shoreline 9/9-9/10 (LF).

A **Chipping Sparrow** at Piper Slough on 9/3 may have provided the first fall record for eastern Contra Costa County, a fact probably more indicative of birder coverage than actual scarcity (SG). A **Lark Sparrow**, detected only rarely in eastern Contra Costa County, was at Eucalyptus Island near Clifton Court Forebay on 8/17 (SG).

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a Walnut Creek feeder on 7/15, another curiously summery date for this species (JS). A male **Indigo Bunting** molting into winter plumage was at a Berkeley feeder on 9/1 (KL). A lone male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Iron House Sanitary District at Oakley on 8/28 (SG).

Observers: Rex Burress, Peter Dramer, Lillian Fujii, Steve Glover, Kay Loughman, Joanie Smith, Nat Weber, Denise Wight

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



News from *Wild Birds Unlimited*

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

Seed & Suet Sale (Oct. 1- 24)

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. (Wild Birds Unlimited donates Shade Grown Coffee to the MDAS meetings.)

Feeding Tips:

As fall gets into full swing, we should see feeder activity increase. There will be less natural food available. Some species will be eating more seeds, suet, or peanuts, and fewer insects. These include woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees and titmice.

Meal worms are something different you can offer the birds in your backyard. These worms are about one inch long and should be placed in a small plastic feeder dish so they can't escape. Birds that will be attracted include wrens, jays, mockingbirds, warblers, and woodpeckers. Keep the meal worms in a sealed container in the refrigerator (keeps them dormant) and put out a few each day. The birds will be waiting!

Something else new that you can provide is Woodpecker Treat, a large cake of pecans, peanuts, and sunflower seeds. Not only is it very attractive to woodpeckers, but chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and jays also love it.

American & Lesser Goldfinches should increase in October. Their favorite food is thistle seeds. White-crowned & Golden-crowned Sparrows will start arriving soon. Their favorite foods are millet seeds and suet. Juncos are not far behind!

Denise Weight's birding classes are starting:
Beginning - Oct. 19: 7-9 pm;
Continuing - Oct. 20: 7-9 pm
Each cost \$40 and includes five evening classes and a day birdwalk.

Population Grows in Record Time

In October, world population will reach 6 billion—doubling in just one generation, according to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB).

It took until approximately the year 1800 for human population to reach 1 billion. It took 130 years to reach the second billion, 30 years to reach the third billion in 1960, 14 years to reach 4 billion, and 13 years to reach 5 billion. It took only 12 years to reach 6 billion in October 1999. PRB notes that world population in

the 20th century increased by 4.4 billion, more than 300 percent growth.

Exactly when the world's population will reach 7 billion "depends almost entirely on the number of children women in less developed countries will have," according to PRB demographer Carl Haub.

For copies of PRB's 1999 World Population Data Sheet, contact the publications department at 202-939-5417 or rsilvis@prb.org.

Audubon Adventures Calling

Since 1984, over 7 million children have been connected to nature through Audubon Adventures.

This year MDAS has again 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 30 student newspapers on birds and other wildlife, a CD-Rom, a teacher's guide, a nature video, 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 or want more information, call Cecil Williams at (510) 798-0303. Give the gift of nature to the next generation!

MDAS Volunteer Opportunities

If you have some time and would enjoy being more involved in MDAS activities, we are looking for volunteers to fill the following positions:

- **Membership chair.** This is a Board position. The membership chair oversees recruiting new members. Requires attendance at general meetings and the board meeting. For more information, call Mike Williams at (925) 376-1631.
- **Assistant Database Coordinator.** Requires knowledge of the Macintosh OS and 2-3 hours a month to update the database of MDAS members. For more information, call Gifford Young at (707) 745-4134.
- **Representative to the Citizen's Advisory Committee** to the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

Requires attending an evening meeting of the CAC once a month and writing a brief report to the Board. For more information, call Joel Summerhill at (925) 753-0862.

- **Nominations and volunteer coordinator.** Requires attending the general meeting and the board meeting and some telephoning. The nominations and volunteer coordinator identifies members for four Board positions and organizes members for membership campaigns, staff MDAS booth at festivals. For more information, call Carol Frischmann at (925)735-3836 or Mike Williams at (925) 376-1631.

On Sale Now!
Year 2000 Entertainment Book
at General Meetings and
WBU Stores

CALENDAR

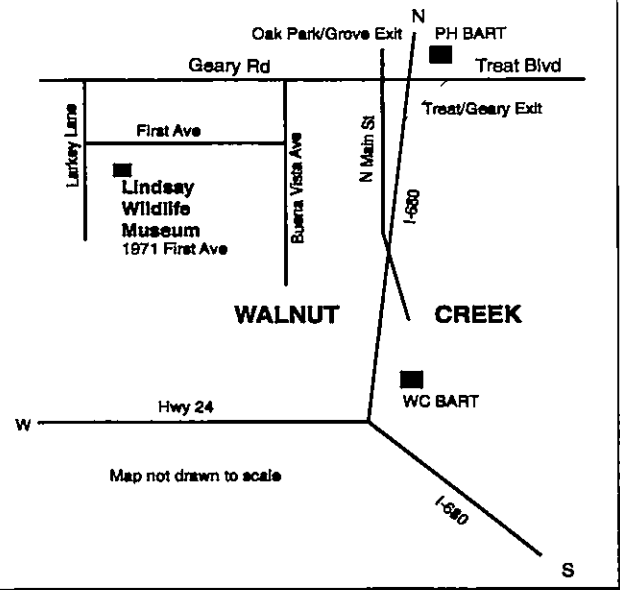
Oct. 2, Sat.—BAAC meeting.

Oct. 7, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, UPSTAIRS EXHIBIT HALL, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, 1931 First Ave., Walnut Creek (map to the right.). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 14, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members welcome to attend.

Oct 22, 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 schedule for the remaining meetings for 1999-2000 is November 4, December 2, January 6, February 3, March 2, April 6, May 4, and June 1. General meeting dates are also *Quail* deadlines.



National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (monthly except August). Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years. Seniors and students only \$15; membership renewal is \$35/year. Of that, \$10 is to Audubon and is nondeductible. To join, send a check payable to NAS to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556-2602. The Quail may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507-2704. First-class delivery of the Quail is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS 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

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94597-0053

November 1999

Vol. 46, No. 3

Next Deadline: November 4

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Carol Frischmann

Why a New Home for Our General Meetings?

When MDAS moved to the Lindsay Museum for our meetings two years ago, we believed we would have a regular meeting room as well as a partnership with the Museum. We knew there would be occasional meetings upstairs, but although this was inconvenient, the Board believed that arrangement would not substantially impact the value of our experience at the General Meetings.

Our meetings are very important to MDAS members—we have the highest attendance of any Chapter that I've heard about anywhere in the United States. I believe this is due to the quality of our meeting programs and the comradeship and dedication of our members which is fostered by our coming together to share ideas and experiences.

When the MDAS Board learned in September that we would be meeting upstairs at Lindsay for most of this year, we knew this arrangement would diminish the quality of our meeting experience. We were forced to reschedule several speakers because they would draw too many people to be accommodated in the upstairs space. The upstairs meeting space is cramped and awkward. The acoustics are unsatisfactory.

Members expressed concern about the impact of the lights and noise on the birds and animals in the display area.

(Continued on page 3)

Welcome to The Gardens! MDAS Has New Meeting Site

Beginning with our Thursday, Nov. 4 general meeting, MDAS has a new site for our monthly general meetings.

We will now meet in the Camellia Room, at The Gardens at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., in Walnut Creek. (The meeting schedule has not changed—our general meetings are still at 7 p.m. the first Thursday of every month except July and August.)

The Camellia Room is an exquisite meeting site for us and easily accommodates 200 people. Two walls of this light and airy room are glass. One side faces the demonstration gardens, and one side faces Mt. Diablo. Both sides have decks. Lighting is excellent because the illumination was designed for plant shows. Acoustics are much improved from our former locations.

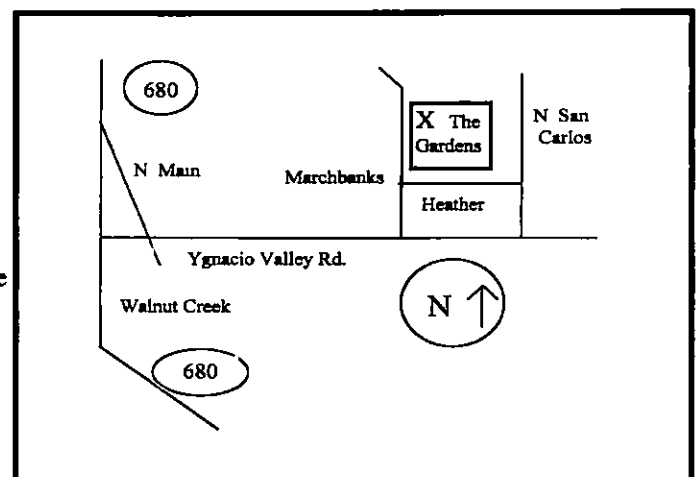
Everything is on one level for exceptionally easy access—the Camellia Room itself, the kitchen, and the rest rooms. Parking is excellent with a large, well-lit lot available, and additional parking on the street. But please DO NOT PARK in the lot across the street, which belongs to a restaurant.

The MDAS Board believes you will find our new facility to be an absolute delight, and we want your feedback on seating arrangements, acoustics, access, etc. As we settle in, we would like to make our accommodations the best possible.

To inaugurate our new meeting site, the MDAS Board is sponsoring a special celebration with refreshments and special door prizes, including a pair of Celestron 9x25 binoculars (\$90 value; courtesy of Wild Birds Unltd.), wine, and decorative items. Come join us at this special event.

To reach the Gardens from I-680/Hwy 242, take Ygnacio Valley Dr. in Walnut Creek east to Marchbanks. Turn left and drive just over one block to 1540 Marchbanks. See the map below.

(See p. 3 for The Gardens, and information on speakers and topics.)



MDAS Addresses EBRP Board on Priorities

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) Board held a workshop on Saturday, Oct. 2, with environmental organizations in its district. MDAS was represented by Nancy Wenninger, Conservation Committee chair, and Gloria Cannon, who read a statement for MDAS into the record.

EBRPD is planning to place a park bond or parcel tax on the ballot in the year 2000. The workshop provided environmental organizations with the opportunity to suggest activities and facilities that could be provided by the funds generated.

A bond would pay only for capital improvements. A parcel tax would cover operation and maintenance expenses. District representatives reviewed the list of projects that were paid for by the bond passed in the 1980s and the list of items that reflect deferred maintenance.

Proposition W, a parcel tax that EBRPD had on the November 1998 ballot, failed to pass by the necessary two-thirds approval. Current EBRPD Board members hope that outreach to environmental

organizations, such as MDAS, the other two Audubon chapters in the district, Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance, and Save Mt. Diablo, will help achieve passage of a similar measure in 2000.

The EBRPD is considering a residential parcel tax of \$9.80 per single family unit and \$6.80 per multiple unit. No tax would be proposed for commercial property, in part because, commercial property, no matter how large, would be taxed as a single parcel.

In its letter to the EBRPD Board, MDAS urged the District to protect and preserve wildlife habitat and to provide more opportunities for environmental education to children, especially minority children. (The full text of the MDAS letter is on our website at <<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/mt-diablo/>>.

MDAS wants the District to give wildlife conservation equal priority with recreation. Sensitive areas must be safe for the native birds and animals that depend on them.

We strongly urged that the District develop policies and programs to protect cavity-nesting birds. Volunteers with the California Bluebird Recovery Program would welcome to opportunity to establish additional trails in other EBRPD parks.

MDAS also urged the District to build elevated bird and wildlife viewing platforms in such areas as McNabney Marsh.

We recommended that the District to step up its efforts in nature education, especially for urban and minority youngsters. Environmental education programs must keep pace with the needs of our children or future generations of Californians may be ill-equipped to make tough decisions about clean water, wildlife, and open space.

BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O.Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
(925) AUD-UBON
(925) 283-8266

<<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/mt-diablo/>>

Audubon Society Urges Protection of Heiritage Forests

On Wednesday, Oct. 12, President Clinton took steps to establish a conservation legacy that could rival that of Teddy Roosevelt, who created the National Forest System and protected many other public lands. Clinton announced a plan to protect tens of millions of acres of wild, "roadless" areas in America's national forests from environmentally destructive activities.

The Forest Service estimates that this plan would protect approximately 40 million acres of unroaded forests, including most roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more, from the destructive impact of new roads. The plan also includes smaller roadless areas which may prohibit activities such as logging or mining, but leaves open the question of whether the plan will include the 17 million-acre

Tongass National Forest in Alaska, the nation's largest national forest.

The Heritage Forests Campaign, of which Audubon is a leading member, is urging the Clinton administration to adopt a forest policy "yardstick" that would apply to all national forests and protect national forest roadless areas from other destructive activities, such as helicopter logging.

"If this is done right, it will be the boldest conservation move of the century, sheerly because of the magnitude," said Ken Rait, Heritage Forests Campaign Director. "These areas are not only the last best place for wildlife, but also they are a source of clean drinking water for millions of Americans in more than 3,400 communities."

President: Carol Frischmann, 735-3836
Vice President: Mike Williams, 376-1631
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P.O. Box 8367, Pittsburg, CA 94565,
email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net

President's Notes

Continued from page 1

While we understand the Lindsay's need to have paying exhibits in the downstairs space, we depended on that same space for our meetings and could not accept compromising the quality of our audience's experience.

Lack of an adequate meeting room has forced us to leave the Lindsay Museum and find an alternative meeting place. As the saying goes, "When one door closes, another opens."

The Board has chosen The Gardens at Heather Farms as our new meeting site. The Board believes that it is important to affiliate with another organization whose mission includes public education and outreach, and this move allows MDAS to do that.

The staff at The Gardens at Heather Farms is eager to work with us. They value environmental education and already offers a variety of programs focused on the natural world. We believe that in addition to meeting space, we have an opportunity for cooperative activities that can benefit both organizations.

The accompanying article explains more about our new facility and the characteristics that made it appropriate for us.

We wanted to make the move as quickly as possible so that we can resume our planned schedule of speakers, retain our high attendance rate, and increase the enjoyment of our members.

After you've experienced our new meeting place, please contact me; or Alice Holmes, our Facilities and Hospitality Chair; or any of our other Board Members to let us know your thoughts. The Board's concern is to provide a pleasurable experience for you each month. Your input is appreciated.

We appreciate the way the Lindsay staff worked with us. There will be many future projects between us because we both believe in the vital importance of conservation.

Happy birding!
Carol Frischmann

November MDAS Meeting

7 p.m.—Birding Information "Birding on the Internet" with Maury Stern

The Web makes available a huge amount of data on a variety of birding topics almost anywhere in the world. Maury Stern will tell us how to access the best birding sites.

7:30—Business Matters

8:00—Hospitality and Door Prize Drawings

**8:30 p.m.—General Membership Meeting
with special guest speaker**

The Gardens

(continued from page 1)

This year, The Gardens (formerly the Garden Center) at Heather Farms is celebrating its silver jubilee. For 25 years, this outstanding nonprofit organization has been providing education, service, and beautification to the community.

The Gardens occupies a 5.4-acre site located adjacent to the City of Walnut Creek's Heather Farm Park. In addition to the Camellia Room, its community building houses classrooms, a horticultural reference library, and offices.

Three acres have been developed as 20 demonstration gardens and interactive learning sites, all with handicapped accessible pathways. The demonstration gardens are free and open to the public daily.

Education is the focus of the Gardens, and the alliance between MDAS and the Gardens is a "natural." The possibilities for information exchange and mutual benefit seem limitless.

Notice: We have had a set of car keys turned in. If you lost keys and the emblem from an Antioch car dealer possibly in June, call Gloria Cannon, 753-0862.

Entertainment Books Now on Sale for 150 U.S. Cities

MDAS members can now order Entertainment Books for 150 other areas of the U.S. as well as the East Bay. The special people in your life would be thrilled to receive the Entertainment card for discounts at elegant dining locations and hotel discounts as well as coupons for take-out meals, movie tickets, and much much more! Or order copies for your out-of-town birding adventures!

Selling Entertainment books is a major fundraiser for MDAS, so support your chapter and enjoy the money-saving benefits.

The new Entertainment book for the East Bay is bigger than ever and offers discounts at hundreds of locations all over the East Bay.

Purchase the new Entertainment Book at MDAS general meetings (see Barbara Vaughn) or at either of the two Wild Birds Unlimited locations (692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill, or at 7182 Regional St., Dublin).

Kill the Condors? ENRON Wind Farm Plan Threatens Rare Species

by **Daniel P. Beard**
Senior Vice President
for Public Policy, NAS

Today the National Audubon Society is launching a campaign to stop the newest lethal threat to the California condor—ENRON Corporation has proposed building a wind farm literally next door to what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated critical California condor habitat.

The California condor is perched on the brink of extinction. A controversial captive-breeding program has succeeded in restoring about 50 condors back into the wild in California. The California condor is being given a rare second chance to roam the skies again.

Yet, at this critical moment in the recovery of the California condor, ENRON is proposing to build a giant condor death trap. They plan to build 53 wind turbines at the crossroads of the California condors' range. Two-hundred-foot-tall, spinning blades would be placed in the heart of Condor Pass. This must be stopped.

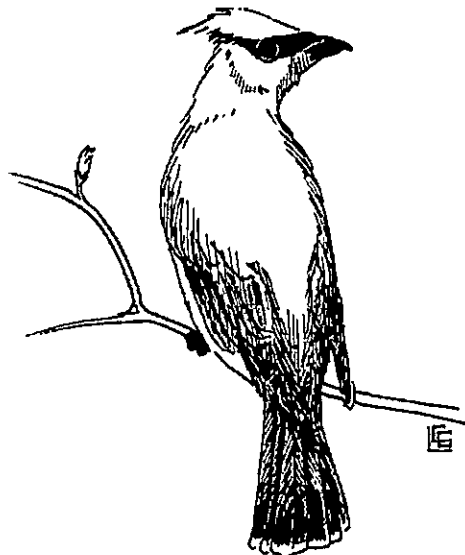
Wind power may well play an important role in America's energy future. But the choice here is clear. If ENRON builds this wind farm, there is little future for the California condor. The survival of the condor comes first.

In our effort to save the California condor, we are launching the "Kill the Condor?" campaign. Billboards with this question and the web site <www.condor-pass.org> are up this morning in Los Angeles and Houston, the corporate home of ENRON. To help educate Members of Congress, we have placed this advertisement in Capitol Hill publications and are distributing this brochure to the Senate and House of Representatives. The brochure can be viewed on the web site.

Fortunately, we believe there is a solution. The Wind Energy Tax Credit expired this summer. Without this federal tax subsidy, ENRON would not find it profitable to build the wind farm at Condor Pass. We urge that when the Congress renews the Wind Energy Tax Credit, it says that no wind farm can receive the federal tax subsidy if it is within 10 miles of designated critical condor habitat. We urge people to contact their Members of Congress in support of the condor and this vital change in the Wind Energy Tax Credit. People can use the web site to send this message to Congress.

The California condor is one of the rarest of North America's birds. The Fish and Wildlife Service spends a million dollars a year to try and help this magnificent bird recover in the wild. It is hard to imagine a worse idea than putting a condor Cuisinart next door to critical condor habitat.

Kill the Condor? The answer must be NO. We look forward to working with Members of Congress and the public to ensure a future in the skies for the California condor.



Field Trip Report on Moss Landing, Sept. 19

Seven birders spent Saturday, Sept. 19, around Moss Landing and at the Carmel River. Two outstanding rarities had been present during the week, and we were hoping to see both.

We arrived at the Carmel River just after the Great-crested Flycatcher had been seen; but despite over an hour of looking, we were unable to relocate the bird.

The White-winged Tern at Moonglow Dairy was more cooperative, providing scope-filling views as it flew daintily around the ponds picking off insects. We also saw at least five Pectoral Sandpipers and a Willow Flycatcher in the area.

We returned to the Carmel River for another attempt at the Great-crested and were rewarded after about 15 minutes of searching —*Steve Glover*

Field Trip Report on Hawk Hill, Oct. 16

We had a glorious, warm October day on Saturday, October 16. Ten members and one guest birded Rodeo Lagoon in the mid-morning, where the best sighting was a cooperative Palm Warbler. Then we drove to the top of the hill and enjoyed spectacular views over San Francisco, the hills, and the Bay, plus dozens of migrating Buteos and Accipiters, including one Broad-winged Hawk and one Merlin. We saw 54 species. —*Fred Safier*

NATIONAL EAGLE CENTER AGREEMENT

National Audubon also announced its participation in a partnership with the City of Wabasha, Minnesota, and a local non-profit, EagleWatch, Inc., in completing the design, planning, construction and development of the National Eagle Center. Audubon will also provide staff to interpret the site and educate visitors from all across the country.

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. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Thursday, November 4, Arrowhead Marsh. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from 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. Go west on Hwy 24 or I-980 to I-880. Then go south on I-880 to Alameda exit. Take Webster St. tunnel and Webster St. Go left on Central and right at the first light. Follow Shoreline Dr to end at Broadway. We will visit several marsh and pond areas and reach Arrowhead near high tide. Rails probable. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Saturday, November 6, Limantour. Carpool leaves at 7:00 a.m. from 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. Take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the 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 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 10, Lake Merritt. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at parking lot between the Boat House and the abandoned aviary at Lake Merritt. Go west on Hwy 24 which becomes I-980. Take 29th St. exit; go straight through light at 27th St. and continue on

Northgate Ave. to end at Grand Ave. Go left on Grand to park entrance by Children's Fairyland. Ducks, grebes, herons. Lake Merritt is most reliable place for Barrow's Goldeneye. Leader: Barbara Vaughn Category 1

Thursday, November 18, Mountainview Sanitary Plant/McNabney Marsh. Meet at 9:00 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. Trails may be muddy. Close-up looks at dabbling ducks; possibly bitterns and heron. If you wish, bring a lunch and explore Martinez shoreline in the afternoon. Leader: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732 Category 1

Saturday, November 20, Bodega Bay. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd. north of Highway 24. Meet at 9:15 a.m. at the Tides Restaurant in Bodega Bay. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge.

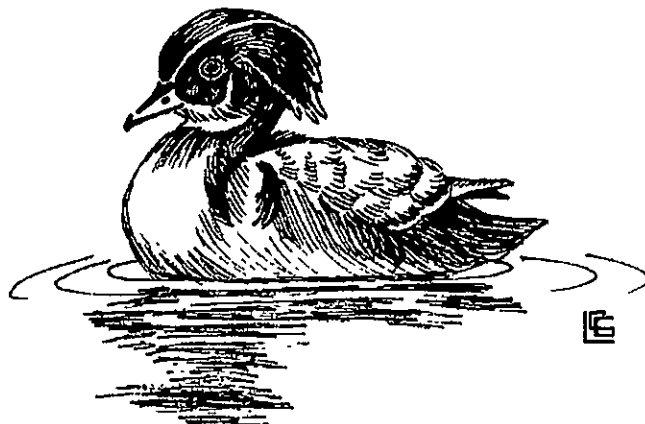
Go north on 101 to Washington St. exit in Petaluma. Go west on Bodega Hwy. to SR 1, turn right to Bodega Bay. The Tides is on left, opposite a Union '76 station. Shorebirds, waterbirds, migrants. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information Category 1

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.

Audubon Adventures Needs You!

Audubon Adventures offers children a wealth of information about nature. With a small, tax-deductible donation of \$35, you buy an environmental education kit that includes 30 student newspapers on trees, birds, and nature, a CD-Rom, teacher's guide, nature video, and Internet access to Audubon birding experts.

See Cecil Williams at the general meetings or call her at (510) 798-0303.



Observations *by Steve Glover*

Pacific Loons are normally quite scarce in Contra Costa County even in mid-winter so the first county record for September at Brooks Island on 9/13 was particularly noteworthy (SG).

Eleven **American White Pelicans** were at McNabney Marsh (formerly Shell Marsh) on 9/30, and 24 were there on 10/9 (SG). Two more American White Pelicans flew over Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline at Richmond on 9/26 (SG).

A **Wood Duck** was at Lafayette Reservoir on 10/4 (MT). An early **Bufflehead** was at Piper Slough on 10/11, but a **Common Goldeneye** on the same day at Clifton Court Forebay was even earlier, about three weeks earlier than normal (SG).

A young **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, where it is very unusual, on 9/25 (SG). Two **Broad-winged Hawks** flew over Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline at Pt. Richmond on 9/26 (SG). The vast majority of California records come from fall, yet this was the first for the county at that season—the other two records pertained to wintering birds! A **Ferruginous Hawk** also flew over Miller/Knox on 9/26, as did seven **Cooper's Hawks** and 15 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** (SG). Two **Merlins**, unusual in the East Bay hills, were at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 10/1 (SG). A **Peregrine Falcon** was at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline on 10/2 (MF).

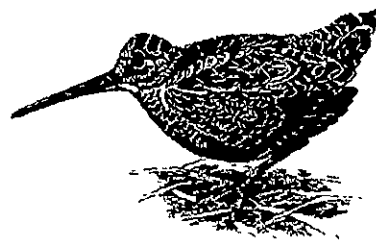
Single **Baird's Sandpipers** were at Pt. Isabel near Richmond on 9/13, the Richmond Sewer Ponds on 9/13, and McNabney Marsh on 9/30 (SG). A single **Red Phalarope** at Pt. Isabel on 9/13 was just the third for western Contra Costa and probably just the fifth for the county. It was in the company of a **Red-necked Phalarope**, also unusual in Richmond (SG). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at the Richmond Sewer Ponds on 9/13, a location where they appear to be regular when proper conditions exist (SG).

Twenty-four **Sandhill Cranes** were at Bethel Island on 10/6/99 (BC).

An apparently pure "**Yellow-shafted Flicker**" was in Concord on 10/6 (S&CH). Most flickers with yellow-wing linings in the East Bay turn out to be intergrades with "Red-shafted" Flickers.

Two **Willow Flycatchers** were at Piper Slough on 9/22, and four were there on 9/25 (SG). A late individual was at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline on 10/5 (BR).

A **Red-eyed Vireo**, still rare but now approximately of annual occurrence in the county, was at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park, on 9/23 (SG).



A new high count for Contra Costa County of **Common Raven** came from the Richmond Dump in North Richmond on 9/13—68! (SG).

What was most certainly just a small part of a massive movement of **Tree Swallows** through our area was noted at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, in late September. In 2 hours on 9/22, 2,265 were tallied, all headed roughly southwest. Another two hours on 9/25 produced another estimated 2,000 birds, again heading southwest. (SG).

An early **Winter Wren** was at Piper Slough on 9/22, this being a wintering location the past few years (SG). Two calling **Swainson's Thrushes**, rarely detected in fall and almost never quite so late, were at Jewel Lake, Tilden Park on

10/5 (SG). A still-streaky juvenile **Cedar Waxwing**, an unusual plumage in the East Bay, was at Piper Slough on 9/25 (SG).

An immature **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline on 10/4 (SG) and seen again 10/5 (BR). This has been a spectacular fall for this species on the coast, but it is still very rare in the East Bay. A **Palm Warbler**, surprisingly scarce on this side of the bay, was near the Berkeley Marina, Alameda Co., on 10/9 (OC,LF).

A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** flew west over Piper Slough on 9/25 (SG).

Observers: Ore Carmi, Bethi Carver, Mike Feigner, Lillian Fujii, Steve Glover, Scott and Claudia Hein, Bob Richmond, Marilyn Tabert

November Birding Events

CORRECTION: The correct phone number for the Sandhill Crane Tours is 916-991-2236. Tours are available until Feb. 27, but pre-registration is required. Remember that the **Sandhill Crane Festival** in Lodi is Nov. 5-7. Call 209-368-6444 for registration information.

Sunday, Nov. 14, at 12 noon is the **2nd Annual Birdhouse Auction** where over 100 birdhouses will be auctioned off to benefit the Sulfur Creek Nature Center in Hayward. The auction is held at the San Felipe Community Center, 2058 D St., Hayward.

The **Central Valley Birding Symposium** is Nov. 18-21. The Symposium brings together the best in birding events and speakers, including John Kemper, Joe Morlan, and Paul Lehman. Landscaping for Birds, Basic Bird Photography, and Bird Sketching are among the presentations. Last year, symposium birders observed 160 species. Registration is \$75 for the whole event; one day is \$30. Check the website at <<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/5954/cvbc.html>>.

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

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

In the Backyard

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 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.

American Goldfinches should begin appearing in larger numbers, often accompanied by Lesser Goldfinches. Their numbers will increase through the winter. By January or February, many people see flocks of up to 100. They can be seen eating wild thistle seeds and seeds on liquid amber and birch trees. Both will readily come to thistle seed bird feeders. If you stand outside and hold your feeder at arm's length, the goldfinches will land on the feeder because they are so anxious to feed.

Want to try a new type of feeding? Try mealworms. These 1-inch long worms are very attractive to bluebirds, jays, wrens, and titmice as well as to many birds that would not normally come to a feeder such as robins, and warblers.

It's not too early to put out birdhouses. Many birds, such as wrens and bluebirds, may use the houses to roost in during cool nights. If you already have birdhouses in your yard, this is the perfect time to clean them out. Wear gloves, remove the old nests, and clean with a 10% bleach solution. Rinse well, allow to dry, and then re-hang the house.

MDAS Christmas Bird Count Scheduled for Dec. 18

All MDAS members and guests are invited to participate in the 1999 MDAS Christmas Bird Count. This annual chapter event will be held *down to dusk* Saturday, Dec. 18, *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.

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 100th Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Why do thousands of par-

ticipants 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. This is the longest running ornithological database and provides valuable data on resident and migratory bird populations.

Contact Jimm Edgar

For early registration, return the form below to Jimm Edgar. 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.

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 at the San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church, 902 Danville Blvd. in Alamo at 5:30 p.m. Everyone, even non-counters, are welcome to attend.

See the December *Quail* for more details.

Yes! I want to participate in the 1998 MDAS Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 18, 1999.

- 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

Nov. 4, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, The Gardens at Heather Farms. See page 1. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; meeting starts at 7 p.m.

Nov. 11, Thurs., 7 p.m.—Board Meeting, Wild Birds Unltd., 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members welcome to attend.

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

Dec. 18, Sat., dawn to dusk—100th Anniversary Christmas Bird Count followed by potluck.

General meetings are held the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. The schedule for the remaining meetings for 1999-2000 is December 2, January 6, February 3, March 2, April 6, May 4, and June 1. General meeting dates are also *Quail* deadlines.

MDAS/City of Pittsburg-Sponsored Family Nature Walk

**Saturday, November 6, 8:30-10 a.m.
Buchanan Park Community Building
Harbor St. and Buchanan Rd., Pittsburg**

This is an opportunity to introduce our children, ages 6-12, to our local birds. Join Joel Summerhill and Gloria Cannon for a 30-minute slide presentation followed by nature walk along Kirker Creek. Loaner binoculars will be available, on a first-come, first-served basis.

The walk is free, but pre-registration is required. Call 439-4842. (Children must be accompanied by an adult.)

National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (monthly except August). Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years. Seniors and students only \$15; membership renewal is \$35/year. Of that, \$10 is to Audubon and is nondeductible. To join, send a check payable to NAS to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556-2602. The Quail may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507-2704. First-class delivery of the Quail is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

66/11



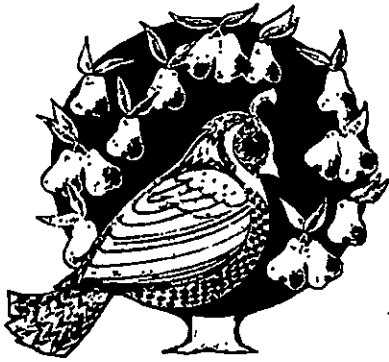
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Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053





*Happy
Holidays!*

The QUAIL

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

December 1999

Vol. 46, No. 4

Next Deadline: December 2

MDAS Speaks Out on Concord Naval Weapons Station

The Concord Naval Weapons Station (CNWS) stretches from Suisun Bay east almost to Clayton and Mt. Diablo State Park in Contra Costa County. Its 13,000 acres provide invaluable open space in an increasing urbanized area of central Contra Costa. While the U.S. Navy plans to continue using its cargo facilities there, a regional CNWS Joint Use Study Committee—comprised of the East Bay Regional Park District, the City of Concord, and Contra Costa County—has been formed. The Joint Use Committee is putting together a plan for joint military/civilian use of the Station by November 15, a very short time for project of such magnitude.

Recently, interested organizations proposed a variety of uses for this public land. MDAS's Conservation Chair, Nancy Wenninger, addressed the Joint Use Study Committee, on behalf of MDAS. MDAS was the only organization that urged preservation of the Weapons Station as bird and wildlife habitat. Here is the letter that Nancy presented to the Committee:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and members of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, I would like to voice our strong support for the preservation of important and diverse wildlife habitat located within the boundaries of the Concord Naval Weapons Station. Its nearly 13,000 acres includes grassland, saline emergent and (See CNWS on p. 6)

Upcoming Events

Art, Architecture, and Birds of Northern Spain

Touring and birding in Northern Spain is the topic of the December program. Gloria Cannon and Joel Summerhill will be presenting a slide tour of Northern Spain, including the cities of Madrid, Bilbao, and Burgos; the Basque communities of Cestona and San Sebastian; Barcelona and the Ebro River Delta in Catalan, and the Pyrenees Mountains.

This part of Spain is steeped in history and art and has a character of its own. From the Royal Palace of Madrid to the Gaudi's cathedral in Barcelona, we will get a good look at some of Spain's treasures.

Spain is among the most popular birding destinations in Europe. Northern Spain is home to about 300 species, including the Eurasian Hoopoe and European Bee-eater. Joel and Gloria will show us the Ebro River Delta, one of Europe's finest and most important wetlands area where bird life is abundant and diverse, and the

Pyrenees, home of the Lammergeier and Giffon vulture.

Birding Information

During the Birding Information portion of the program, Mike and Cecil Williams will preview some of the new optics that are dazzling birders of all skill levels. They will also tell us about two new, not-to-be-missed birding locations in Arizona.

MDAS Meeting Information

The next MDAS General Meeting will be Thursday, December 4, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm (see map on p. 8)
6:30 p.m.—Doors open
7 p.m.—Birding Information
7:30 p.m.—Business meeting
8 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing
8:30 p.m.—Program

Please bring your own coffee cup—it means one less styof foam cup going to a landfill.

Participate in History! Join the MDAS Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 18

All MDAS members and guests are invited to participate in the 1999 MDAS Christmas Bird Count—Audubon's 100th Anniversary Christmas Bird Count. (See p.7 for related story.)

MDAS has participated in this national count since 1953. This special year we want hope you will join us for this historical event, *dawn to dusk*, on Saturday, Dec. 18, *rain or shine*. Teams of counters will be lead by (see MDAS Bird Count, p. 7)

Connections

by Gloria Cannon

Park and Water Bonds Go to Voters

The Legislature and Governor Davis have approved two large bond measures for the March 2000 ballot. The \$2.1-billion State Park Bond (Prop 12) includes money for wetlands, watersheds, and coastal protection. Environmental organizations succeeded in keeping out funds for construction of new dams from the bond issue.

Silva Ranch Acquired for Mt. Diablo State Park

Save Mount Diablo (SMD) has closed escrow on the spectacular 427-acre Silva Ranch. Located high in Riggs Canyon, the ranch property is crossed by Finley Road, is adjacent on the south and east to Mt. Diablo State Park, and is approximately 1/2 mile from Morgan Territory Regional Preserve.

SMD hopes that the passage of Prop 12, the State Park Bond, on the March ballot will provide additional funding for the purchase.

The acquisition of the ranch widens the critical mile-wide Mt. Diablo State Park corridor to Morgan Territory Regional Preserve to include nearly all of Riggs Canyon, one of the most rugged and spectacular canyons on Mt. Diablo.

Silva Ranch straddles Highland Ridge east of Oyster Point and Blackhawk. Windy Point (2112 ft) and Cave Point (2080 ft) are just outside its NW and SW corners. It rises from 1150 ft in elevation to 2100 ft and drains into both Marsh Creek in the Morgan Territory area and Tassajara Creek, which continues through the controversial Tassajara region and on to Alameda County.

The purchase protects the habitat of a variety of rare and endangered species, including the federally listed California red-legged frog, mountain lions, the rare Big tarweed, and Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks.

Governor Jeb Bush Nixes Water Storage Land Acquisition in Florida

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush (R) intervened in the eleventh hour to kill a land acquisition deal critical to increasing water storage capacity for the Everglades ecosystem and stabilizing water management for Southwest Florida.

Audubon, despite our apprehension that the purchase price exceeded the appraised value of the property by 27%, supported this acquisition as the most cost-effective way of providing water storage in west side of the Everglades.

Unfortunately, the governor's last-minute intervention represented an unusual and unexpected reversal of the position that his Department of Environmental Protection had expressed in a letter only two weeks before.

Also, according to a story in *PEER Review*, Gov. Bush's administration ousted a marine biologist and respected environmental administrator as one of the six directors of its Department of Environmental Protection. The environmentalist was replaced by a lawyer from a law firm representing coastal developers. Guess we see the direction of the wind.

Migratory Bird Bill Chances Diminish

The U.S. Senate separated the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (S. 148) from a bill that would relax hunting regulations for Snow Geese, whose burgeoning populations threaten the Arctic breeding grounds of many birds.

The Senate amendment dims hopes for passage of a bill to protect Neotropical Migratory Birds. The Snow Goose bill, H.R. 2454, has been passed by both chambers and is expected to be signed by the President.



BULLETIN OF THE MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
(925) AUD-UBON
(925) 283-8266
<<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/mt-diablo/>>

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email: gcannon@hotcoco.infi.net

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Holiday Open House!

Saturday, Nov. 27
Free Refreshments
Free Suet Cake with Each Purchase
Free Contests
A Free Gift for the Birds!
Prize Drawings All Day
Put nature under your tree!

Birdfeeding Thoughts

Winter is our favorite birdfeeding time and it is rapidly approaching. Backyard birds were somewhat sparse this spring and summer, possibly due to cooler than normal weather. Southern California reported record numbers of grosbeaks and orioles. Perhaps they stayed where the weather was nicer.

White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Red-breasted Nuthatches and Northern Flickers are being reported in good numbers. Large flocks of goldfinches are being seen at the feeders. They are mainly Americans, with some Lesser Goldfinches included. As usual at this time of year, there are a few Pine Siskins with the goldfinches.

Birding Optics Seminar

Saturday, December 11

Mike Williams, of WBU and a member of MDAS, will lead 30-minute workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics" on Sat., Dec. 11, at 10:30 at Wild Birds Unlimited. This is your opportunity to learn more about the crystal-clear Bausch & Lomb Elite and the new Zeiss binoculars. There will also be many other brands of binoculars and spotting scopes on display. As seating is limited, please RSVP to 798-0303.

Fourth Annual Northern San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, January 21-23

Mare Island, located near Vallejo, is the site of the 4th Annual Northern San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival. Jointly hosted by the Napa-Solano Chapter of National Audubon Society and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, the Flyway Festival features a Family Wildlife Exploration and Birding Day on Sat., Jan. 22, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

The free festival features more than 50 natural resource-related exhibits and a fine art exhibition indoors and wetland, birding, and historic tours of Mare Island. The three-day festival celebrates the return of over 1 million shorebirds and hundreds of thousands of waterfowl that migrate through or winter in the San Francisco Bay Area each year. A wine-and-cheese reception featuring the festival's fine art exhibition will be held Friday evening, January 21.

For a detailed festival brochure with directions, call Myrna Hayes at (707) 557-9816.

October Field Trip Reports

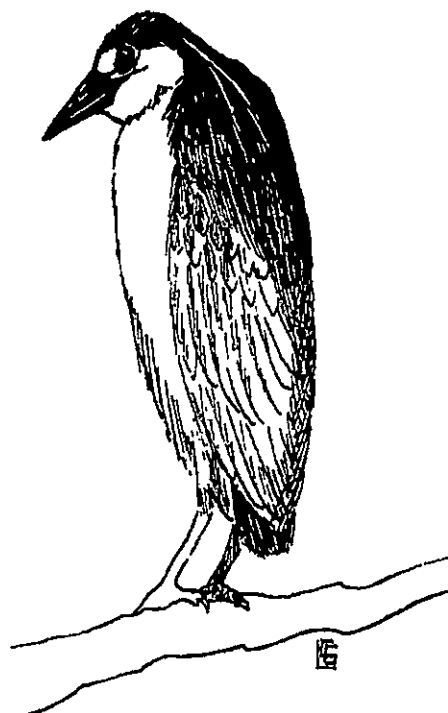
San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge, Thurs., Oct 7—The weather was pleasantly warm with a light wind. Six birders found the birds rather quiet. A few ducks. Most waders were at the base of the Dumbarton Bridge. Some songbirds in the marsh edges at Coyote Hills. A Warbling Vireo was probably the most outstanding among the 42 species seen or heard.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Laural Canyon in Tilden Park, Wed., Oct. 13—Four birders enjoyed the walk up the canyon. We saw a flock of six Townsend's Warblers at the start, and we ended with a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. We saw or heard a total of 23 species.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Charleston Slough, Thurs., Oct. 21—Six birders found 61 species on this trip. Seven Black Skimmers and an early Hermit Thrush were the high points. Lots of ducks and shorebirds, several Pheasants, and a variety of songbirds around the lake.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Lafayette Reservoir, Thurs., Oct. 28—A cloudy day with light sprinkles. Six birders saw a total of 48 species. Three Wood Ducks, an Osprey, and a Green Heron were good sightings, but the highlight of the day was Virginia Rail.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Abbott's Lagoon, Sat., Oct. 30—I apologize to any participants that I missed at the Acalanes Ave. meeting site. But six of us enjoyed a beautiful day of sunshine at Abbott's Lagoon and 54 species of birds. Included in that total were a Peregrine Falcon, Say's Phoebe, and hundreds of Ring-necked Ducks and American Wigeons. The highlight of the day was a good, long look at a bobcat moving through the underbrush.—*Joel Summerhill*



Wanted: MDAS Volunteers

MDAS has several opportunities for volunteers. Find one that interests you and become an active member.

Assistant Quail Editor. Write and edit features for the *Quail* newsletter. Must be familiar with Macintosh and Microsoft Word and have email access. Would require 4-5 hours a month. Call Gloria Cannon, 753-0862, for more information.

Program Chair. Contact potential speakers for the main program and birding information for the monthly general meetings. Prepare brief writeup and bio for the *Quail*. Introduce the speakers at the meetings. Requires 2-3 hours a month. Call Denise Wight, 370-73422.

Assistant Database Coordinator. Assist in keeping the MDAS membership database current. Assist in transitioning preparation of labels to mailing service. Must be Mac literate and preferably familiar with FileMaker Pro. Requires 3-5 hours a month. Call Gifford Young, 707-745-4134.

Representative to the Contra Costa Transportation Authority Citizens' Advisory Committee. Requires attending monthly CAC meeting and writing brief report to the Board. Call Joel Summerhill, 753-0862, for more information.

Membership Chair. Organize membership drives. Coordinate membership activities with Database Coordinator and Board members. This is a Board position and requires attendance at monthly Board meetings. Call Mike Williams, 376-1631.

Shopping for Christmas Gifts?

Why not pick up copies of the *Entertainment Book* for all your local friends at the next MDAS General Meeting (and don't forget to get one for yourself!) Those discount coupons for meals and movie tickets as well as hotels, car rentals, and much more are sure to be enjoyed during the holidays.

So, your family and friends live out of the Bay Area? No problem. *Entertainment Books* are available for over 40 areas of the U.S. To order ANY Entertainment book online, go to <www.entertainment.com>

Enter city or ZIP code and state and follow the directions on the screen. When it asks you to enter the group number, ours is 175587.

Once They're Gone, They're Gone Forever

America's last, untouched scenic wilderness forests need your help! At stake are 60 million acres—just 30% of the National Forest system—still wild and roadless. Our Heritage Forests provide Americans with outstanding recreational opportunities; invaluable fish, bird, and wildlife habitat; and clean drinking water. But they are unprotected from logging, mining, and road building.

Only 4% of America's ancient forests remain standing. Two-thirds of these are unprotected within the boundaries of our National Forests.

Eighty percent of the nation's freshwater resources originate on National Forest land. The cleanest and largest amount of surface water runoff in the nation comes from forest landscapes.

In the year 2000, recreation on National Forests lands will generate \$110 billion in benefits compared to \$3.5 billion from logging. Yet, 95% of the 380,000 miles

of roads in National Forests were built with public funds for logging companies.

Last November, over 700 religious, scientific, and conservation leaders urged Vice President Gore to take advantage of an "unprecedented opportunity to leave a legacy of Heritage Forests for future generations" and adopt a policy that forever protects America's last Heritage Forests.

What You Can Do

This is your opportunity to make a difference. Send a letter to Vice President Al Gore. A sample letter is shown below. Send your letter to Vice President Al Gore, Old Executive Office Building, Room 276, Washington, DC 20501 or send your email to <www.ourforests.org> for forwarding to the White House.

Dear Vice President Gore,

America's Heritage Forests comprise just one-third of all lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Yet they are not protected from logging, mining, or road building. Before you lies an unprecedented opportunity to leave a legacy of pristine Heritage Forests for future generations. I urge you to develop a strong roadless policy that gives permanent protection to all of America's Heritage Forests. The Forest Service must adopt a policy to permanently protect all remaining roadless areas 1,000 acres and larger in our National Forests from damaging activities. Please act now, Mr. Gore. Once these Heritage Forests are gone, they are gone forever.

Sincerely,

Your Address:

Your email address:

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. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, December 1, Niles Canyon Gravel Pits. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 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, 658-2300 Category 2

Saturday, December 4, Palo Alto Baylands. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro

Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot near the Nature Center at Baylands. Take the Dunbarton 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. We should see Clapper Rails and possibly Black Rails. Prepare for mud, cool breezes. There is a lot of waiting for Rails. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Thursday, December 9, Altamont. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. A caravan trip, with mostly

car birding. Migratory hawks, Mountain Bluebirds, and grassland species. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Wednesday, December 15, Hidden Lakes, Pleasant Hill. Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot at Morello and Chilpancingo. Oak woodlands and ponds. This has been a very productive area in the middle of housing areas. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

December 18, Saturday—Christmas Bird Count, see p. 7.

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.

New Birding CD Available

A new instructional, multimedia bird CD-ROM program has recently been released by LANIUS Software, located in Walnut Creek.

It includes 910 species accounts of North American birds, over 770 bird photographs, more than 400 bird songs, and over 625 distributional range maps. For school kids and beginning birders, there are close to 20 essays on birds and ornithology. A tutorial, quizzes, and a full-featured life listing utility are included in the program. It features the songs of Lang Elliott and Kevin Colver, and the photographs of Brian Small and Kevin Karlson.

This CD-ROM is available at wild bird supply stores throughout the San Francisco Bay area.

Incomparable Art by MDAS Member Harry Adamson

Considered the undisputed master painter of wildfowl on the wing, MDAS member Harry Adamson, 82, may also be the oldest living wildlife artist today. Now his art and the story of his life are told in *From Marsh to Mountain: The Art of Harry Curieux Adamson* by Diane K. Inman with an introduction by David Maass.

From Marsh to Mountain chronicles Harry's life from the early 1940s to the present. Included are beautiful reproductions of many of his best-known oil paintings and sketches as well as many that have never been publicly displayed. The 200-page volume contains over 90 illustrations.

The book is available as a hardbound trade edition and in a very limited deluxe edition, signed by Harry Adamson. The books are available from Di-Les Books, P.O. Box 1654, Lafayette, CA 94549. For more information, call 800-913-3363.

"You must have the bird in your heart before you can find it in the bush."

—John Burroughs, *Art of Seeing Things* (1908)

Observations *by Steve Glover*

Two **Eared Grebes** were again noted out on the open bay at Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline at Richmond on 11/7, an occurrence that I have always felt to be rare but which I am having to reconsider (SG).

Twenty-eight **American White Pelicans** were still at McNabney Marsh on 10/14 (NW), but this number had declined to 6 by 11/7 (SG).

Five **Cattle Egrets** were at Holland Tract at the east end of Delta Rd. east of Oakley on 11/3, and 16 were present on 11/7 (SG). This is probably the locale most heavily frequented by this species in the county.

Five **Mute Swans** were at Heather Farms Park in Walnut Creek from 11/5 to at least 11/9 (BW,NW). Please be aware that Mute Swans are now breeding at Concord Naval Weapons Station and possibly elsewhere, meaning that all swans should be scrutinized, especially for swans seen away from regular **Tundra Swan** wintering locations.

An immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline at Pt. Richmond 11/6 to 11/7 (SG). Also present amongst the hordes of Canada Geese at Miller/Knox on 11/6 were six very small **Canada Geese**, either representing the Aleutian or Cackling races. This spot has been the most reliable spot in the county for small forms of Canada Geese.

Three eclipse-plumage **Wood Ducks** were at Lafayette Reservoir on 10/28 (MS). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was on the pond at Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline on 11/6 and 11/7 (SG). The ten **Red-heads** at Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline on 11/7 probably represent a new high total for the county (SG).

A male **Black Scoter** was at Pt. Isabel Regional Shoreline at Richmond on 10/16 (SG). This species is generally found annually in the county but is always extremely difficult to find, particularly

because the large scoter flocks tend to amass well offshore.

A **Merlin** was on Cypress Rd. just south of Bethel Island on 11/3 (SG). This species has proven elusive in eastern Contra Costa County. A Peregrine Falcon was at its usual wintering location on the radio towers at Pt. Isabel near Richmond on 11/6 and 11/7 (SG).

Fourteen **Common Moorhens** at Marsh Creek Reservoir on 10/23 was a healthy total for a species on the decline in the county (SG).

The **Bonaparte's Gull** flock at Iron House Sanitary District reached 225 on 11/7 (SG). This would be the best place to search for Contra Costa's long overdue first record of **Little Gull**. A **Heerman's Gull** was at the Richmond Sewage Ponds on Richmond Parkway on 11/7 (SG). Heerman's Gull is usually hard to find in the county and has only once been located away from the immediate bayshore.

A **Common Murre** was at the Richmond Marina, where rare but annual, on 11/11 (L,F,DF).

Two lingering **Barn Swallows** were at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron on 10/21 (SG).

A **Phainopepla** was at Lafayette Reservoir on 10/26 (MS).

A lingering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was in a Lafayette yard on 10/19 (MS).

A **White-throated Sparrow** was at Piper Slough on 11/3, possibly just the third found at this well-worked location (SG).

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

Two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Holland Tract east of Oakley on 11/7 (SG).

Observers: Lillian Fujii, Dorothy Furseth, Steve Glover, Maury Stern, Nat Weber, Bob Wisecarver

CNWS, cont. from p. 1

estuarine wetlands, and, to a lesser extent, valley foothill hardwood and riparian habitats. Several rare and important plant and animal species can be found there, including the federally-endangered Peregrine falcon and Clapper rail, the salt marsh harvest mouse and the San Joaquin kit fox. In addition, many threatened species and species of concern are present.

Each year Mt. Diablo Audubon Society includes the Concord Naval Weapons Station in its Christmas Bird Count and has extensive historical data of species present. Our Board of Directors considered the area so significant that we nominated it as a **Nationally Important Bird Area** in *American Bird Conservancy's United States Important Bird Areas* program. It was accepted in part because the site provides habitat for more than 1% of the population of California Black Rails, Suisun Song Sparrow and a qualifying number of Greater Scaup occasionally occurring in Suisun Bay.

Relentless pressure from surrounding development makes the assemblage and protection of large parcels of habitat more critical than ever. A diverse and healthy natural community is vital to our quality of life. Therefore, we urge you to incorporate stewardship of these important lands into your plans for the future of the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

Sincerely,
Nancy H. Wenninger
Chair, Conservation Committee
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

100th Anniversary Christmas Bird

On a cold Christmas Day in 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman led a group of 25 friends on the first Christmas Bird Count. This first count was a protest against the traditional "side hunt," in which participants hunted all species, and the winner was the side having shot the most individuals and types of birds.

This year, Christmas Count hits a significant milestone; it celebrates its 100th anniversary. Over 50,000 volunteers will participate in more than 1,700 individual Christmas Counts held in all 50 states, every Canadian province, Central and South America, the Caribbean and several Pacific Islands (areas where North America's breeding birds winter). They will count and record every bird species encountered in one calendar day during the two-and-a-half-week count period between December 17-January 3.

Compilers will enter their group's results at BirdSource, <<http://birdsource.org>>. This online source for bird information, is run by Audubon and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

"Christmas Bird Count has served many purposes since it was first conceived by Ornithologist Frank Chapman in 1900," says Audubon President John Flicker. "It has promoted bird-watching and conservation in unforeseen ways, and in the last year, it has made a century of invaluable data available, free to the general public, through the BirdSource website."

Audubon's count is more than a much-anticipated holiday event; the results are vital in assessing the status and health of continental birds as well as the general state of the environment.

"Christmas Bird Count is the world's longest-running ornithological database," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology Director John Fitzpatrick. "Global warming, weather trends and urban sprawl may be affecting birds with increasing impact."

MDAS Bird Count Continued from p. 1

competent leaders 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. To mark the anniversary, we hope to have a total of 100 counters.

1998 CBC Record

In 1998, MDAS tallied 152 species with 80 volunteers in the field and six feeder watchers. The most exotic bird was a Costa's Hummingbird spotted by Bob Wisecarver at his backyard feeder.

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.

To Participate

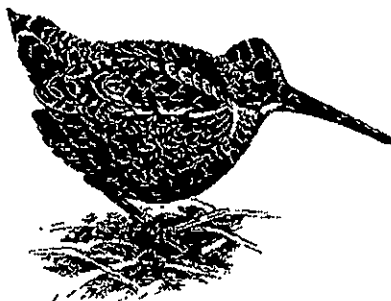
If you want to participate, contact either of the MDAS co-compilers, Jimm Edgar or Maury Stern by:

- Signing up at the Dec. 2 general meeting
- Calling Jimm at (510) 658-2330.
- Or returning the form below. 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 at the San Ramon Valley Methodist Church, 902 Danville Blvd., Alamo (1.3 miles southeast of Danville Blvd. and Stone Valley Rd). 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.



Yes! I want to participate in the 1998 MDAS Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 18, 1999.

- 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

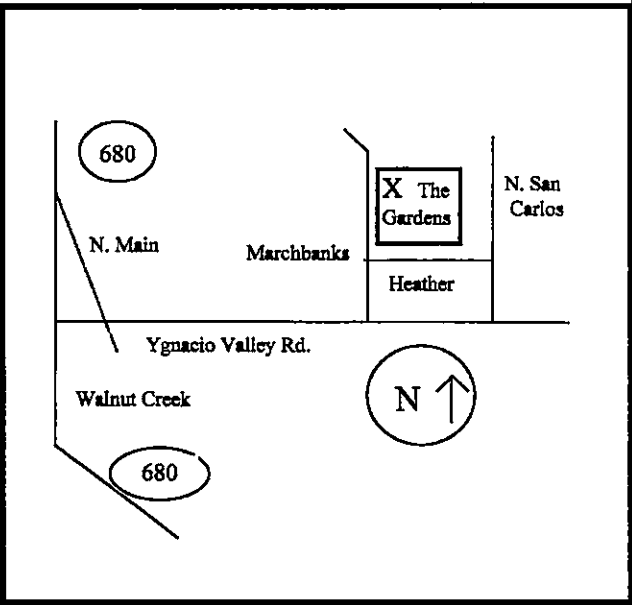
Dec. 2, Thurs., 7 p.m.—General Meeting, The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr. See map on the right. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; meeting starts at 7 p.m.

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

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

Dec. 18, Sat., dawn to dusk—100th Anniversary Christmas Bird Count followed by potluck at San Ramon Valley Methodist Church, 902 Danville Blvd., Alamo.

General meetings are held the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. The schedule for the remaining meetings for 1999-2000 is January 6, February 3, March 2, April 6, May 4, and June 1. General meeting dates are also *Quail* deadlines.



National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (monthly except August). Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years. Seniors and students only \$15; membership renewal is \$35/year. Of that, \$10 is to Audubon and is nondeductible. To join, send a check payable to NAS to Mike Williams, Membership Chairman, at 1172 Larch Avenue, Moraga, CA 94556-2602. The Quail may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. The check should be made out to MDAS and mailed to the MDAS Treasurer, Pam Keiser, 505 Wild Flower Place, Alamo, CA 94507-2704. First-class delivery of the Quail is an additional \$3.50/year payable to MDAS & sent to the Treasurer. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to GIFFORD YOUNG, 1451 Janet Court, Benicia, CA 94510-2632.

Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

12/99



FEB 00 MFB

JEAN RICHMOND
125 VIA SERENA
ALAMO CA 94507-1841

TIME VALUE MAIL



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Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053