

Happy Holidays!

The QUAIL

a publication of the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek, CA
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December 2001-January 2002

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Next Deadline: January 4

December Program Features Wildlife Photographer

Lior Rubin, an internationally known and published wildlife photographer, will present a show of some of his local bird and animal slides at our December 6 general meeting. Rubin, who was born in Israel and grew up on a kibbutz, is a MDAS member and a Contra Costa resident.

He has traveled around the world for nature magazines to photograph wildlife ranging from mountain gorillas to the migration of monarch butterflies. His photographic work often focuses on the coexistence between people and nature.

Among others, Rubin's photographs have been featured in *International Wildlife*, published by the National Wildlife Federation. If you would like to see what a marvelous program lies in store for us, visit the NWD website at <<http://www.nwf.org/internationalwildlife/2001/pelicans01.html>>. This is the website of "Send Them all Packing" by Haim Watzman and photographs by Lior Rubin (*International Wildlife*, Sept/Oct 2001). The article is about migrating White Pelicans raiding Israeli fish farms. Rubin's photographs are vivid and beautiful as well as graphic illustration of the often distressful interaction between man and wildlife.

Combined Quail Issue

This *Quail* is a combined issue for December and January. The *Quail* will return at the end of January.

Due to escalating expenses related to publication, the *Quail* is being published ten times a year, eliminating separate issues for January and August.

Birding Information

Jim Edgar and Maury Stern will discuss the two upcoming MDAS Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) scheduled for two consecutive Saturdays, December 15 and December 22 (see page 9).

This year is the 47th annual CBC in Central County for the Mt. Diablo Chapter. Last year 82 birders saw 151 species on Count Day. This is the second year for a CBC in East Contra Costa.

EBRPD Beverly Lane Is January Speaker

Beverly Lane, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) Director from Ward 6, will talk to us about the future of the East Bay Regional Parks at our January 3 meeting.

Beverly Lane, the former Mayor of Danville, has been active in local conservation for many years. She helped establish the Iron Horse Trail. Her district includes much of the San Ramon Valley as well as the Diablo Valley. Beverly Lane represents Alamo, Blackhawk, Clayton, Concord, Danville, Diablo, Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek. The parks in her ward include Bishop Ranch, the eastern portion of Briones, Diablo Foothills, most of Las Trampas, Morgan Territory, and Round Valley.

The East Bay Regional Park District is governed by a seven-member board of directors who are publicly elected to serve four-year terms. Each director represents a specific geographic area of the Park District. The District itself comprises all of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

MDAS Meeting Schedule

The next two MDAS general meetings will be on **Thursday, December 6**, and **January 3**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 10).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open

7 p.m.—Birding Information

7:25 p.m.—Business meeting

7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing

8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your coffee cup!

Visit the EBRPD website at <<http://www.ebparks.org/>> to learn more about this vast park district and its many educational and recreational offerings.

Birding Information

Joel Summerhill will update MDAS members about the plans for the Delta Science Center. Joel represents MDAS on the Board of the Delta Science Center.

The Delta Science Center is proposed for a 40-acre site in the 1,648-acre Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley. It will be a facility for education, interpretation, and research into the ecology of the Delta. It will offer programs for students of all ages and the general public and be a research facility for Delta-related resource issues.

The Audubon Society is a partner in the Delta Science Center along with the EBRPD, Contra Costa County, California State University Hayward, the Ironhouse Sanitary District, Sierra Club, Oakley, Brentwood, and the Contra Costa Water District.

Connections**Support Urged for EBRPD Parcel Tax Measure**

On the ballot in March 2002 will be a parcel tax proposed by the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). The parcel tax would raise approximately \$7.7 million annually for environmental maintenance and operation of East Bay Regional Parks. The cost of the proposed tax would be **ONLY \$1 PER MONTH PER SINGLE-FAMILY HOME! ONLY 69 CENTS A MONTH FOR APARTMENTS!** After 12 years, the measure would expire. At \$12 a year, this parcel tax is an incredible bargain for East Bay residents.

This is an extremely important ballot measure, and EBRPD needs our help to pass it. Vote for it. Urge your friends and family to vote for it. Write letters to newspapers urging its passage.

"Over the past 10 years, the district has grown in size by 31 percent," said EBRPD General Manager Pat O'Brien. "During the same period, funds for maintenance and operations have grown slowly in constant dollar terms."

The District has acquired over 27,000 acres using funds from Measure AA in 1988 and matching funds from other public agencies. Although the District has improved the efficiency of its operations, more funds are needed to develop and open the land newly purchased, and maintain those parklands that are already open to the public.

By law, bond revenues cannot be used for routine operational and maintenance expenses. Yet these expenses are increasing, especially in older regional parklands with infrastructure that dates back to the late 1930s and 1940s.

Most of EBRPD's revenues come from property taxes, but it only receives about 3 cents of every dollar collected. Since Proposition 13 precludes raising property tax rate, a parcel tax is the only way EBRPD has to raise funds for maintenance and operations.

EBRPD now operates 59 regional parks and more than 1,000 miles of trails on 93,000 acres in Alameda and Contra

Costa Counties. These parks and trails provide a safe, welcome respite from urban life for people and important habitat for wildlife. Vote Yes on the EBRPD parcel tax.

Big Break Land Plan Approved

The East Bay Regional Park District Board has approved the Land Use Plan for Big Break Regional Shoreline in East County—another important step in this regionally important area.

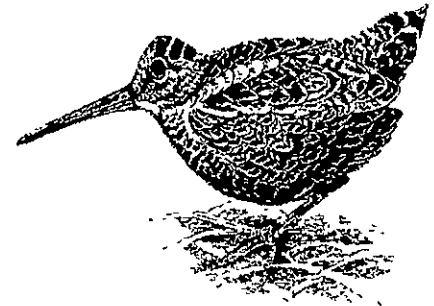
Big Break consists of 1,648 acres of open water, marshland, and uplands along the San Joaquin River at the end of Big Break Road in Oakley.

The Land Use Plan will serve as a general guiding document for development of the park. It calls for preservation and protection of the park's extensive wildlife habitats as well as for continuance of Big Break's existing water-related recreational activities. These recreational activities include fishing, boating, and hunting. The plan identifies 40 acres off Big Break Road for interpretive, educational, research, and recreational facilities, including a 40-acre site for the Delta Science Center. Most of that 40 acres would be set aside as wildlife habitat.

The EBRPD Land Use Plan identifies measures that will be taken to minimize impact of facility development on neighbors and wildlife, including appropriate landscaping.

Ask Beverly Lane

If you have questions about the upcoming parcel tax ballot issue, the Big Break Land Use Plan, McNabney Marsh and Waterbird Park, or any other issue related to the East Bay Regional Park District, come to the January 3 Chapter meeting. Beverly Lane, EBRPD Director from Ward 6, will be our guest speaker.

**The Quail**

is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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MDAS Makes Once-a-Year Request for Support

Dear Audubon Supporter,
Your Mt Diablo Audubon Chapter is issuing its once-a-year request for financial support. Our request is especially meaningful as the events of September 11th bring into focus the values of our community. For 50 years, our Chapter has contributed to education, activities, and policies important to our community's health. To remain strong and healthy, our Contra Costa community must include wildlife diversity and must protect natural places for reflection and rejuvenation, and as a heritage for future generations.

Please help us to fund our local programs and to increase the number of people we educate and serve. Five important community programs in 2001-2002 are:

- A viewing platform and native vegetation at McNabney Marsh in conjunction with East Bay

Regional Park District.

- A MDAS website for education, communication, and membership development.
- School-based education programs.
- Fifty field trips, ten monthly meetings, and ten issues of the *Quail*.
- Two Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Counts and the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas.

You will be receiving more information in the mail. But if you would like more information about these and our many other programs, please contact Carol Frischmann at (925) 735-3836 or at frischma@mindspring.com. A copy of our Annual Report for 2000-2001 is available on request and will appear December 1 on our new website.

Thank you for your support and good birding,

Mike Williams
MDAS Vice President

NAS President Links Population Report with Worldwide Environmental Decline

Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2001 - Audubon President John Flicker today hailed the release of the 2001 UN Population Fund report and praised its focus on the link between population growth and environmental degradation.

"No environmental victory is permanent as long as population growth remains unchecked," Flicker said. "So much of the environmental destruction we see across the globe today is fallout from the population explosion that has occurred over the last 50 years."

The State of World Population 2001—Footprints and Milestones: Population and Environmental Change shows how poverty, hunger and environmental degradation are worsening worldwide. The report demonstrates that an important solution to these problems is slowing global population growth.

The worldwide decline in migrant bird species is just one sober indication of how human population growth has affected the natural world. More than 50 percent of neotropical migrant bird species that are monitored in the eastern

United States and prairie states have been in decline for the last three decades. This alarming drop is largely due to habitat destruction, caused by rapid rates of population growth both overseas and in the United States.

"Like the canary in the coal mine, the decline of migrant bird species is clearly telling us that population growth is stressing the environment to the breaking point," Flicker said. "Many species of birds and mammals have seen their habitats reduced to a fraction of their old range, and their numbers decimated by pollution and human predation."

More severe environmental problems may lie ahead.

Rapid population growth, together with the increasing use of natural resources in the developing world, means that the environmental footprint of humans will double in these regions in the next seven to ten years.

For example, if China's per-capita annual oil consumption rises to the per-capita level of Taiwan, China alone would be

consuming two-thirds of all the oil now being produced in the world. The Audubon Society believes that one of the most important steps toward tackling looming environmental problems is to invest in effective international family planning programs.

"International family planning is a core environmental issue," Flicker said. "No single investment in human health, environmental protection, or economic and political stability can ever match the investments made in international family planning."

Yet, in inflation-adjusted dollars, U.S. funding for international family planning has declined by one-third since 1995. Among the 20 leading industrialized countries, the U.S. is last when international family planning donations are counted as a percent of Gross National Product.

For more information about the environment-population connection, check Audubon's web site at <http://www.audubonpopulation.org/>.

December-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. 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.

December Field Trips

Saturday, December 1, Limantour.

Carpool leaves from Acalanes Avenue off Pleasant Hill Rd., north of SR24 at 7 a.m. or meet at the Bear Valley Visitors' Center, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, Olema, at 8:30. From I-101 north, take San Rafael exit, go 2 blocks, turn left, and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on SFD Blvd. at SR1, turn right 0.25 miles, and turn left into Visitors' Center. We expect shore birds, waterfowl, also land birds on the ridge. Trails may be muddy. Call Elizabeth Dickey at 925-254-0486 for more information.

Thursday, December 6, Concord City Parks. Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot at 8 a.m. Meet at John Baldwin Park at 8:20. Go east on Willow Pass Rd., turn left onto Port Chicago Hwy, right at Bonifacio and left onto Parkside Dr. Park in the lot on the left. This is a visit to several parks to see the possibilities in nearby sites. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Wednesday, December 12, Niles

Canyon Gravel Pits. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit El Pintado, turn right and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit El Cerro, turn left, and then right onto LaGonda and go about 1/4 mile north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:45 at Vallejo Mill Historic Site in Fremont. Take I-680 south to SR84 and go right 7 miles to the park on the right. Various habitats. Green Heron, Ring-necked Duck, and various land birds. Leader: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2300 Category 2

Saturday, December 29, Palo Alto Baylands. Seasonal high tide. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m., from LaGonda way in Danville. See Niles Canyon Trip for directions. Or meet at 9 a.m. in the

parking lot at Baylands Nature Center. Take I-680 south, I-580 west to I-880 south. Take Dumbarton Bridge to I-101 south, exit at Embarcadero east; at stop sign go the left toward Yacht Harbor and follow road to parking lot at marsh edge. This trip is to take advantage of the tide to see Clapper and possibly Black Rails. It's a long, cold wait to see the Rails; prepare for mud and wind. Trip goes in light rain. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

January Field Trips

Thursday, January 3, Lake Merritt.

Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Avenue off Pleasant Hill Rd, north of SR24 in Lafayette. Meet at 8:30 in the parking lot between the boathouse and the old aviary. Go west on SR24 which becomes I-980. Take 29th St. exit and go straight through the light at 27th St. and continue on Northgate Ave. to the end at Grand Avenue; go left on Grand to park entrance by Children's Fairyland. Ducks, grebes and herons. Lake Merritt is most reliable place for Barrow's Goldeneye. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486

Wednesday, January 9, San Pablo Creek Trail. Meet at 8 a.m. in parking area at northeast corner of Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Rd. From SR24 west, take Orinda exit north. Continue past the Wagner Ranch School and turn left at the last stop light. Park on the left side of the road. Morning walk along creek trail to the lake. 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.

Saturday, January 12, Putah Creek.

Carpool leaves at 8:15 from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 9:00 at corner of Cherry Glen and Pleasant's Valley Roads. Go north on I-680 and east on I-80 to Cherry Glen exit. Dress warmly; this is a cold, windy trip. Possible Osprey, Phainopepla, Hooded Merganser, Canyon and Rock Wrens. Leader: Florence Bennett, 689-3106 Category 1

Thursday, January 17, Lake Chabot.

Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave. off Pleasant Hill Rd north of SR24 in Lafayette. Meet 8:45 in parking lot at lake. Go west on SR24, take Aclanes ROAD exit. go under freeway and continue on Acalanes which becomes Glorietta Blvd. Continue to end (light), turn left onto Moraga Way to end, turn left onto Canyon Road. At its end, turn left onto Pinehurst Rd, then left onto Redwood Rd. Turn right onto Castro Valley Blvd and right onto Lake Chabot Road to parking lot. (There may be a parking fee.) Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Wednesday, January 23, Sunol Regional Park. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. See Niles Canyon Trip for directions. Or meet at 8:15 a.m. in the parking lot at 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 3 miles to park. Watch for turkeys along Geary Rd. Golden Eagles and other raptors, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Canyon and Rock Wrens, and sometimes Dipper Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 for more information. Category 3

(See *Field Trips* on p. 5 for information on Field Trips to Santa Cruz and Thornton in January.)

Field Trips

(continued from p. 4)

Saturday, January 26, Santa Cruz.

Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. See Niles Canyon Trip

on Dec. 12 for directions. Meet in Santa Cruz at Neary's Lagoon at 9 a.m. Take I-680 south to SR237; west to I-880 and south on Hwy 17. In Santa Cruz, turn north on SR 1 to Bay St. Go left on Bay. Turn left on Laurel and right on Blackburn to parking lot. Trip may include visit to

Butterfly Trees at Natural Bridges State Park. Bring lunch and water. If you plan to go, call the leader or email at gcannon4@excite.com. (If no advance sign-ups are received, this out-of-town trip may be canceled.) Leader: Joel Summerhill, *82-925-753-0862 Category 1

Thursday, January 31, Thornton.

Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 8:45 in park at end of Glascock Rd. Take SR4 to Antioch Bridge (\$2 toll), go north along river toward Rio Vista, turn right onto SR12 for 11.5 miles, then turn left onto Glascock Rd. Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, raptors, and geese. Trip will go in light rain. For questions or information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Who Decides the Rarities: The Role of the California Bird Records Committee

Beginning and intermediate birders sometimes wonder about who decides if that mystery bird sighted in Calpatria last January was really an Eurasian Dotterel. Or who determines whether that was really a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron sighted last May in San Diego.

We all use birding checklists. So who decides what birds are endemic to California? What makes a rare bird rare?

The "official" decision-makers on mystery birds and keepers of California bird data are the ten members of the California Bird Records Committee, a subcommittee of the Western Field Ornithologists. The most important purposes of this committee are to:

- Keep the official California State List of birds.
- Endorse records of California birds and the adjacent Pacific ocean for records submitted for publication to any official journal or to the checklist of the Western Field Ornithologists.
- Maintain permanently the original bird records and all Committee votes and comments use by future bird students.

- Publish at least minimal data on all records receiving a decision.
- Provide a means by which sight records can gain universal acceptance as valuable scientific data.
- Increase knowledge of the birds of California.
- Establish standards of observation and reporting against which field observers may compare their own techniques.

The current membership list of this committee reads like the Who's Who of California Birding: Kimball Garrett, Guy McCaskie, Robert Hamilton, Michael Patten, Peter Pyle, Jon Dunn, Tristan McKee, Richard Erickson, Joseph Morlan, and John Wilson.

The CBRC has 168 species on its state list. Rare birds are those that average four or fewer occurrences per year in California and have been recorded fewer than 100 times.

The committee's website at <http://www.wfo-cbrc.org/cbrc/index.html> not only provides a checklist of California species but also has photographs of California rarities.

Upcoming Birding Festivals

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, Morro Bay, California, January 18-21

This event offers over 35 field trips and workshops in this Globally Important Bird Area. Morro Bay has repeatedly ranked in the top five of Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, and over 200 species were counted last year. A fine art exhibit and vendor show are also included in this three-day weekend event. Contact: Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce, 880 Main St., Morro Bay, CA 93442 or call 805-772-4467 or go to www.morro-bay.net/birds.

Northern San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, Mare Island, Vallejo, January TBA

The Flyway Festival celebrates the return of over 1 million shorebirds and hundreds of thousands of waterfowl which migrate through or winter in San Francisco Bay. The Family Wildlife Exploration Day offers indoor hands-on activities and exhibits, slide shows, a fine art exhibition, nature theme vendors, nearby wetland and birding walks and tours of historic sites. Contact: USFWS, San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, 816 Branciforte Street, Vallejo, at 707-557-9816.



Field Trip Reports

September 12, Jewel Lake. It was a gloomy, overcast day, but the willows along the boardwalk were full of warblers and other small birds. Yellow, Townsend's, and Wilson's Warblers and a Brown Creeper were seen. The highlight of the day was a Merlin, which perched for a long time. Four observers; 30 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 15, Moss Landing. Heavy fog until afternoon. At Moonglow, three Pectoral Sandpipers and a MacGillvrey's Warbler, a Brant, and a Peregrine Falcon. At Zmudowski State Beach, there were a variety of ducks, including a Ruddy Duck with downy young. One observer; 38 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 20, Hayward Regional Shoreline. High fog. The ponds near the Nature Center are still dry, but the ponds near the shore had lots of Shovelers and Pintails. Bird of the day was a Red Knot. One observer; 36 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 26, Point Pinole. Sunny day, a good day for a shoreline walk. "The Usual Suspects." Two observers; 30 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

September 28, Outer Point Reyes. Clear day with increasing wind. Unusual birds included Eastern Phoebe at Nunez; Willow Flycatcher, Palm Warbler and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Fish Docks; and the highlight—a Yellow-throated Warbler—at Nunez. Nine observers; about 50 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

October 4, Richmond Shoreline from Point Isobel to Marina Bay. Overcast, outgoing tide. Most interesting sightings were a Black Oystercatcher and Black Turnstones on a sandbar, and a Clapper Rail swimming across a tidal channel. One observer; 37 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

October 11, Vic Fazio Wildlife Area. Sunny fall weather. Because of confusion about the date two observers went on different days. Best birds were White-faced Ibis, American Bittern, Marsh Wren, and Yellowthroat. About 30 species were seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Hawk Mountain, October 13. Nine members saw 47 species on a very warm day at Rodeo Lagoon and Hawk Mountain, with perfect views over San Francisco and the bay. Highlight birds included Vaux's Swift, Merlin, and three Peregrine Falcons from the top of the mountain.—*Fred Safier*

October 17, San Francisco Bay Refuge/ Coyote Hills Regional Park. High fog, clearing in afternoon. Fox Sparrows were the birds of the day. In the morning, several were singing their fall songs. At Coyote Hills, a red (eastern) form and a sooty (Pacific) form scratching side by side provided excellent comparison between the two. The eastern form is clearly larger with bright reddish brown streaking. Also interesting were the huge flock of Willets along the Bay shore and 30 White Pelicans overhead. One observer, 40 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

Abbott's Lagoon, October 27—Five members spent a pleasant but overcast day at the Pt. Reyes Headquarters area and Abbott's Lagoon. We saw 82 species. Most unusual was the facial disc of a Barn Owl lying on the beach. No one could find any other remnant of the owl. More conventionally, a Great Bittern allowed us long looks at the edge of one of the lagoons. We saw 12 species of ducks, including Hooded Merganser and, surprisingly, a flock of Common Mergansers. Six Snowy Plovers was a good number for the area. The most exciting bird of the day was on the earthquake trail near the creek where we saw a Pileated Woodpecker male working the alder trees. There were also Townsend's Warblers and Varied Thrushes nearby.—*Maury Stern*

October 31, Tilden Regional Park. Early high fog. It was the day after our first rain; and since no one else showed up, the leader chose to stay on paved or gravel trails around Jewel and Anza Lakes, rather than hike the Gorge Trail. Best bird was a Hairy Woodpecker. Three Townsend's Warblers, but no Yellow-rumps were seen. Total of 16 species seen.—*Elizabeth Dickey*

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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

Holiday Open House
Saturday, December 1
Free Refreshments
Free Gift with Each Purchase
Free Gift for the Birds
Prize Drawings
Put nature under your tree!

Winter is our favorite time of the year for backyard birdfeeding. White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches are all visiting the feeders. American Goldfinch numbers are beginning to increase.

We are always on the look out for Pine Siskins. Every year we see some in the fall for a few days. Then they are gone! Six to seven years ago thousands of this irruptive species stayed all winter. So far this season we have had only scattered sightings. They often travel with goldfinches. Both species love thistle (niger) seed and readily come to bird feeders. Please report any Siskin sightings.

Birding Optics Seminars

Saturday, December 8
Mike Williams of WBU and a member of MDAS will lead a FREE workshop on "How to Buy Birding Optics" on Sat., Dec. 8, at 10:30 a.m. at Wild Birds Unlimited. Check those crystal clear Bausch & Lomb Elite and Zeiss binoculars. Have you looked through the fantastic Swarovski Els? There will also be many other brands of binoculars and spotting scopes on display. As seating is limited, please RSVP.

Observations



by Steve Glover

The male half of the pair of **Harlequin Ducks** was seen again near Brooks Island, Richmond, on 11/1 (SG). As mentioned on occasion in this column, this pair is likely the same pair first found near here in 1991!

An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** was watched flying south over the fledgling hawk watch area at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on 10/15 (SG). This is just the fifth county record of this "eastern" buteo and the third for fall, though it is certain that quite a few more pass over completely unnoticed. A **Ferruginous Hawk** on Crow Canyon Rd. in "downtown" San Ramon on 11/1 was one of few reported in recent years from that immediate area despite the fact that they were once fairly common in winter (JH). With the recent glut of development in the adjacent Dougherty Valley, it may well be that they will soon be relegated to the status of rare migrant. A single **Peregrine Falcon**, possibly a migrant, flew east over Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on 10/26 (SG).

One of the resident **Clapper Rails** was seen once again at Meeker Slough near Richmond on 10/28 though it should be noted that they are missed at this location on most trips (LT).

Unusual in Contra Costa so late in fall were a single **Heerman's Gull** and seven **Elegant Terns** seen near Brooks Island, Richmond, on 11/1 (SG).

Another **Lewis's Woodpecker** was seen at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on 10/16, but this one was watched flying west. Since all of the Lewis's reported in last month's *Quail* were flying east, they were assumed to be migrants; but it is possible that at least this bird was lingering (SG). Three more Lewis's were watched flying east over Inspiration Point on 10/25, and another flew over to the east on 10/26, bringing the season's total to at least 13! (SG). To put this in perspective, I had seen just four of them in over ten years of birding in the county.

A **Hermit Warbler** at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, noted from 10/16-23, was a late migrant for our area and may turn out to be attempting to winter, something they are known to do on a casual basis in the county (SG). **Palm Warblers** are generally thought of as the most commonly occurring "eastern" warbler in California, but this pertains solely to the coast so that while you might be able to travel to Pt. Reyes on any given day in late fall and find five or many more of them, a single bird at Barbara and Jay Vincent Park, Richmond, on 11/3 was likely just the fourth ever recorded in Contra Costa County (CL).

The first **White-throated Sparrow** of the winter was reported from a suburban Concord yard on 10/22 (S&CH). Though we only receive four or five reports each winter from feeder-watchers in the county, it seems likely that there would probably be dozens of reports if every neighborhood had a birder or two.

A flock of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** coming to roost at the Dow Wetlands, Antioch, on the evening of 10/23 was judged to easily consist of more than 500 birds! The previous county high was about 450 birds at Holland Tract near

Knightsen on last winter's East County Christmas Bird Count (J&DB). It may be that we would find such evening roosts to be of regular occurrence in East County if only there were observers out there in the evening

Observers: Jeanne and Darryl Bonner, Steve Glover, Scott and Claudia Hein, Joel Herr, Calvin Lou, Larry Turnstall

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



A Christmas Gift No One Will Want to Return

Entertainment 2002 is the perfect Christmas gift and costs only \$30 this year for the same terrific values. They are available at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill; or at the general meeting; or on the Internet.

To order any Entertainment Book online go to <www.entertainment.com>. Then enter the city or ZIP code and the state, and follow the directions on the screen.

When you are asked to enter the group number, the number for MDAS is 175587.

The Entertainment 2002 book of savings can be a triple value during the Christmas shopping season! Buy one for all your hard-to-please friends and relatives; buy one for yourself and use the coupons toward special gifts; use your own book for a free lunch or dinner out after shopping.

Be sure to check out the new golf section and wine section.

MDAS Volunteers Help in Restoration of MacNabney Marsh

By Nancy Wenninger

McNabney Marsh holds a special place in the hearts of Contra Costa birders. Its tidal pools teem with life. For migrating waterfowl, it is an important stopover. To MDAS members, its name honors one of our and one of California's most revered environmentalists, Al McNabney. MDAS is working closely with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) to preserve and restore the marsh and the surrounding grassland.

If you look east from northbound I-680 just before the Benicia Bridge, construction has begun on the new staging area at EBRPD's Waterbird Regional Preserve/McNabney Marsh. The contractor is racing the clock to complete the new parking lot, rest room, trails, and interpretative shelter before the winter rains begin in earnest. Grading for the staging area resulted in bare slopes which have to be protected in order to prevent erosion into the adjacent sensitive marsh habitat. However, due to unexpectedly high site development costs, EBRPD had no funding left in the project budget to meet this need.

MDAS stepped into the breach. One of Al McNabney's dreams was to restore native grasses to the upland area of the marsh. Native grass seed is considerably more expensive than the more usual exotic grasses used for erosion control; the cost to seed just 1 acre was more than \$1,600. Thanks to a grant of \$750 from the Contra Costa County Clean Water Program and a pending \$750 grant from the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee, MDAS was able to fund the purchase of the seed. The seed mix, created by Conservaseed especially for the site, consists primarily of bunch-grasses which spread by rhizomes to help stabilize the slope.

Our Chapter also provided the labor. On Saturday, September 29, seventeen MDAS volunteers gathered to spread the seed. The steepness of the slope made it difficult to rake. spread the seed by hand,



A big Thank You! to the following MDAS volunteers who generously contributed their time and energy to make our workday a success: Bob Wisecarver, Brian Murphy, and Hugh Harvey (a terrific fence demolition team); Alice Holmes, Diane Bent, Cheryl and Alan Abel, Penny Walker, Lloyd West, Mike and Rita Tischler, Tom Lee, Jan Enderle, Dave Simmons, Jr., Leslie Engler, and Carol Czarnowski.

and then rake again. However, after careful training by EBRPD staff, our volunteers were up to the challenge! The seeded area has since been covered by erosion cloth in order to insure maximum germination. Now we cross our fingers and hope for a normal rainfall season.

This restoration project will benefit the fish and wildlife of Contra Costa County by preventing the erosion of soil into the adjacent productive wetland area. In

addition, birds and other species will benefit from the planting of native grasses in an area which was previously dominated by exotic annual grasses. Native grasses will also reduce the need for herbicides and more intensive maintenance regimes. If this planting is successful, we hope to be able to do additional grassland restoration at Waterbird Regional Preserve as well as plantings of native shrubs and trees for nesting and foraging.

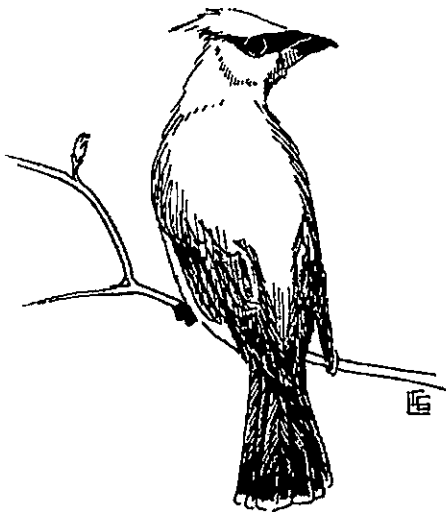
Audubon Adventures

Are you interested in teaching children to observe, understand, and appreciate birds, other wildlife, and the relationship of the human species to the natural world? Consider subscribing to, or sponsoring a classroom in Audubon Adventures. The program is targeted for grades 4-6 and any public or private classroom can enroll. Materials include 32 student newspapers for each topic; a Teacher's Resource Manual with hands-on suggestions and copy sheets; Resource Directory for Internet; CD-Rom, book and video resources; a 20-minute video on wildlife, and Internet access to National Audubon experts. The cost of Audubon Adventures is \$40 per classroom. If you want to sponsor a class or nominate a class for sponsorship, call Cecil Williams at 925-798-0303.

How to Purchase Natural Origins' Tea and Help MDAS

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

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



MDAS To Hold 47th Annual Christmas Bird Count

There is still time to sign up to participate in the 47th annual MDAS Christmas Bird Count on December 15 and the second annual East County CBC on Saturday, December 22. Both CBCs will be held *dawn to dusk, rain or shine* on those days, according to Jimm Edgar and Maury Stearn, the MDAS co-compilers and organizers of this event.

All members and guests are invited to participate. Every pair of eyes is helpful in seeing birds—you do not need to be an expert birder to participate, but you do need binoculars.

This is the 102th Christmas Bird Count. The first took place on Christmas Day, 1900, to protest the traditional bird shoot that killed every bird in sight. Today, there are counts in every state, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, and many Pacific islands. Over 45,000 volunteers will participate in about 1,700 counts this year. This is the longest running ornithological database and provides valuable data on resident and migratory bird populations. As important as all this is, it is also a great social event and a lot of fun.

You sign up by filling out the form below and sending it to Jimm Edgar at the address indicated along with \$5 (helps to pay for publication of the CBC edition of *American Birds*.) You can also sign up at the December 6 general meeting when Jimm and Maury will be the speakers.

December 15 Potluck

A potluck dinner to which everyone—Counters and non-Counters alike—is invited will follow the Central County Christmas Bird Count on December 15. That dinner will be held at a new location, Our Savior's Luthern Church, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. From Hwy 24 west, take the Pleasant Hill/Mt Diablo Blvd exit. Go south on Pleasant Hill Rd to Mt. Diablo Blvd. Turn right on Mt. Diablo Blvd. and then right again on Carol Lane.

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. Bring your own coffee cup please!

MDAS Christmas Bird Count Volunteer Form

1.) I want to participate in the 2001 MDAS Christmas Bird Count(s).

- I volunteer to help with BOTH Christmas Bird Counts on Dec. 15 and Dec. 22.
 I volunteer only for the Central County Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 15.
 I volunteer only for the East County Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 22.

2.) I will help as an observer in the following ways:

- Put me wherever you need the help.
 I would prefer a hiking area.
 I would prefer a less strenuous area.
 I will monitor a feeder or garden.

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Years of birding experience: _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

(Make \$5 checks payable to MDAS.)

Mail to: Jimm Edgar, 4614 Jacobus Ave., Oakland, CA 94618

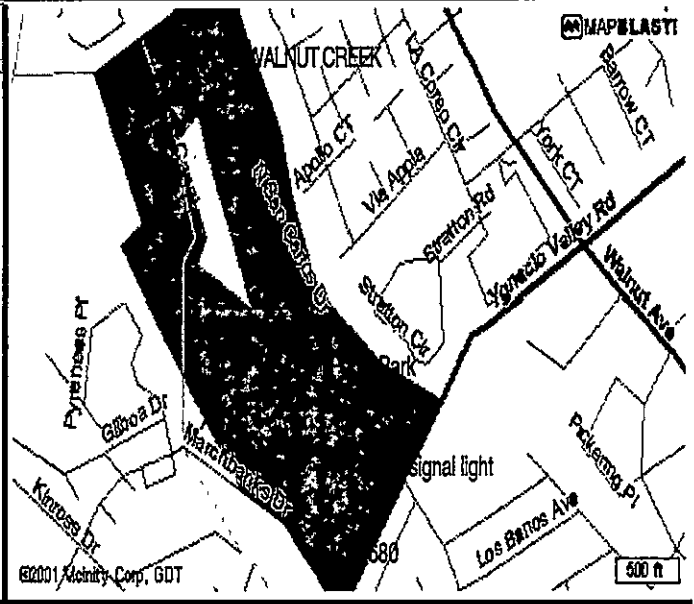
CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. Mark your calendars now so that you won't miss any of our meetings at The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1450 Marchbanks Dr, Walnut Creek: Dec. 6, Jan. 3, Feb. 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, and June 6.

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

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

Please Note: This is a combined Dec-Jan. issue of the Quail.



National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (published 10 times a year). 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. The Quail may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. To join Audubon, send a check payable to NAS to Joe Frank, Treasurer, 4765 Olive Dr., Concord, CA 94521. To subscribe to the Quail, make the check out to MDAS and mail to Joe Frank. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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An Insider's View

Marsh Enhancement Completed at Martinez Shoreline

by Nancy Wenninger,
Land Acquisition Manager
East Bay Regional Park District

A new bridge, a boardwalk, and habitat improvements along Alhambra Creek in the Martinez Regional Shoreline have recently been constructed as the result of a successful partnership between Caltrans, the City of Martinez, and the East Bay Regional Park District. Funded by Caltrans and the city at a total cost of \$4.5 million on land owned by EBRPD, this project provides significant new habitat for wildlife, flood management for the city, and an enhanced viewing experience for birders and other park visitors.

The three public agencies had separate but complementary objectives. Caltrans required wetland mitigation credits from impacts to Delta smelt habitat caused by their replacement of the Carquinez Bridge. The City of Martinez wished to provide flood hazard reduction benefits in an environmentally sensitive manner. And EBRPD wished to improve the overall habitat quality of a severely degraded marsh while maintaining recreational access opportunities in the park.

These three sets of goals were integrated to restore a shoreline severely impacted by human disturbance.

Prior to 1850, most of the shoreline was a rocky beach. From 1850 to 1870, however, hydraulic mining in the Sierras

(see Martinez Shoreline, page 2)

Feb. Program Visits the Galapagos

The enchanted islands of the Galapagos archipelago (las Islas Encantadas) are a naturalist's, birder's, and photographer's paradise. Scott and Claudia Hein will present a "tour" of the Galapagos using photographs taken during a two-week visit last July. Although their presentation will emphasize images of the unique wildlife of the Galapagos, they will also be available to answer any questions regarding their experiences on this "trip of a lifetime"

Straddling the equator 600 miles due west of the coast of Ecuador, the Galapagos are geographically and ecologically isolated islands that host a large number of plant and animal species that can be found nowhere else on earth, including 28 endemic birds and 20 endemic reptiles. Some of these species are critically endangered: the Charles Mockingbird, for example, has been reduced to an estimated population of 150 individuals restricted to a pair of small satellite islands near Floreana. Others, like the beautiful Galapagos race of the Yellow (Mangrove) Warbler, seem to pop up everywhere. Each island hosts at least a few of the famous Darwin finches, and there is usually at least one of the three Booby species (Blue-footed, Red-footed, and Nazca) somewhere nearby. The Galapagos Islands are also home to the wonderful Galapagos Penguin, which is the smallest penguin species and the only one that lives and breeds on the equator.

Perhaps due to their limited exposure to humans and other large predators, much of the wildlife of the Galapagos is very approachable and will tolerate human presence, resulting in amazing viewing and photographic opportunities. In addition, the Galapagos also serves up some outrageous wildlife spectacles like

200,000 pairs of Wedge-rumped Storm-petrels nesting on Genovesa Island, and the world's population of magnificent Waved Albatross that nest on Espanola Island.

The Heins are long-time members of MDAS and spend most of their spare time birding and photographing throughout California and the West. Recently, they have been collaborating with Save Mount Diablo to photograph the wildlife and threatened landscapes of Contra Costa County. For a preview of this presentation, you can visit the Hein's photo website at <<http://www.heinphoto.com>>.

Birding Information

Jimm Edgar, one of MDAS's expert birders, will discuss "Molts and Plumages" during the Birding Information portion of our February program. Jim will base his remarks on Sibley's new book on Bird Behavior.

Beverly Lane, the EBRPD Director who was our January speaker, donated her honorarium to the Chapter. We gratefully acknowledge the donation.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, February 7**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open

7 p.m.—Birding Information

7:25 p.m.—Business meeting

7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing

8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your cup! We're serving Natural Origins Tea too!

Martinez Shoreline

(continued from page 1)

produced massive sediment discharge which began to accumulate and gradually formed a mudflat. By the 1880s the Martinez Shoreline had expanded into the straits as a dense tule marsh.

Grain Shipping Impact

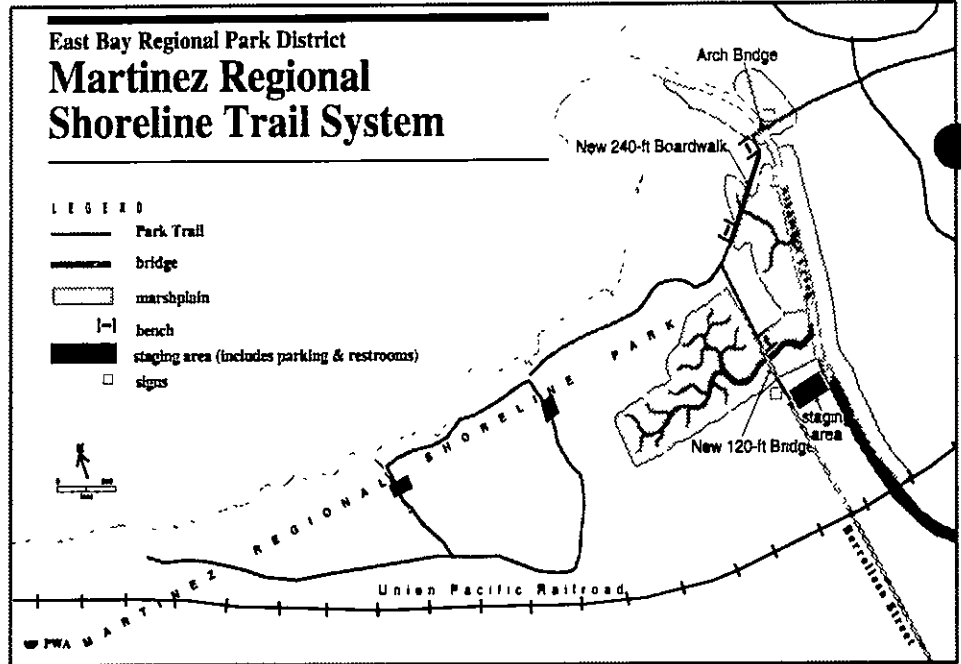
In 1876, a wharf was constructed across the marsh at the foot of modern-day Berrellesa Street, on the west bank of Alhambra Creek. This was Granger's Wharf, a grain-shipping outlet for the booming Contra Costa County grain industry. Large ships moved up and down Alhambra Creek at this time, indicating that the creek was likely dredged regularly, creating the existing upland areas directly adjacent to the creek.

As the grain industry declined in the 1880s, a population of Italian families established a local fishing community, erecting many small buildings on pilings along the creek.

Need for Marsh Restoration

Due to disturbance by these human activities (construction, fill, etc.), the project area had limited tidal channels and poor drainage and remained stagnant for long periods of time. These conditions would not support a healthy natural plant community and resulted in sparse vegetation with a large population of invasive exotic weeds. In addition, Alhambra Creek had a history of frequent flooding in downtown Martinez during the rainy winter months, particularly during concurrent high tides and peak creek flows from rainstorms.

The marsh enhancement project has resolved many of these problems. Some 30,000 cubic yards of material were removed to restore an area west of the creek to tidal action. Invasive plant species which dominated the site were removed, and desirable marsh plants such as pickleweed have begun to recover. It is hoped that this new native vegetation will provide habitat for several listed species, such as Salt Marsh Harvest Mice and Clapper and Black Rails which may



Caltrans, the City of Martinez, and the East Bay Regional Park District worked together to improve the trails and wildlife habitat and add a new bridge at the Martinez Shoreline.

eventually return to the site. In addition to widening the creek channel, the project provided new over-bank areas so that high flood flows spread out over the marsh plain. This widened creek corridor reduces flood hazards in downtown Martinez.

A final benefit to us birdwatchers is that, along with the previous expansion of Alhambra Creek's east bank, the new tidal channel attracts many waterfowl and shorebirds for excellent close-up viewing from the new boardwalk. I invite you to visit the Martinez Regional Shoreline soon. Park at the staging area at the end of Berrellesa Street for an easy walk along the trails.

Support your EBRPD!
Fund more maintenance and restoration projects in our wonderful park system.

**Vote YES on Prop K
March 5!**

The passage of Prop K will cost homeowners only \$1 a month!

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47th Annual Central County CBC Nets High Count; Rain Pelts East County CBC

by Jimm Edgar,
CBC Co-compiler

Contra Costa Count

The 47th annual central Contra Costa Christmas bird count was held on Saturday, December 15; and 78 observers in about 20 groups saw 151 species

The numbers of waterfowl seemed quite low, but that could be because there was so much water available, the normal concentrations were dispersed.

The highlights included six Chipping Sparrows seen by Denise Wight's group. Steve Glover found a Swamp Sparrow exactly where one was observed last year. Florence Bennett's group saw Eurasian Wigeon and Blue-wing Teal. An adult Bald Eagle was seen the day before the actual count day by Harry Adamson and will be noted in the "count week." A Townsend's solitaire seen at Black Diamond was also a very good bird for our count. (See "Observations," column, p. 7, for more details.) The weather on Count Day was pleasant and sunny—a beautiful day (See Table)

The potluck dinner following the Count was a big success. Alice Holmes, MDAS hospitality chair, and her crew, did an impressive job in decorating and organizing the dinner at our new location, Our Saviour's Luthern Church in Lafayette.

Plan now on being part of the 103rd Christmas Count in December 2002

East Contra Costa Count

This year was the second Christmas Bird Count in East Contra Costa where birds and wildlife are rapidly losing out to suburban development

The East Contra County Count was held on December 22, and we had 34 observers out on what was a very rainy day. The weather held numbers down significantly. Last year for the first year of the count, we had 140 species. This year we had 128.

Summary of MDAS Christmas Bird Count, 1988–2000

<u>Date Held</u>	<u>Total No. of Individuals Seen</u>	<u>No. of Species Observed</u>	<u>Weather Conditions</u>
1/2/88	53,742	153	cold, rainy
12/31/88	36,385	152	cold, foggy
12/30/89	33,703	158	pleasant
12/15/90	34,500	156	cold, 25 degrees
12/14/91	44,747	157	cloudy but nice
12/19/92	89,000	159	good weather
12/18/93	51,785	156	good weather
12/17/94	33,471	158	foggy
12/16/95	31,686	159	sunny, beautiful
12/21/96	30,083	144	very rainy
12/20/97	32,228	160	overcast
12/19/98	58,108	152	sunny, bright
12/18/99	70,000	157	sunny, springlike
12/16/00	58,125	151	sunny, beautiful
12/15/01	Not yet available	151	sunny, beautiful

There were some real highlights, however, including a Barn Swallow at Marsh Creek Reservoir, a Lewis' Woodpecker at Vasco caves, a Ross' goose, and, most unusual, a Brown pelican at Los Vaqueros Reservoir.

More CBC Details

To read the list of the birds observed by MDAS counters as well as the nationwide results, go to <<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>>, which has all the CBCs of all the chapters since 1900. Click on "Results of 102nd Bird Count." Then to see MDAS results, go to California, then Contra Costa. Worldwide, Christmas Bird Counts counted over 37, 000,000 birds.

MDAS Asks for Email Addresses

MDAS wants to collect the email addresses of its members. The addresses would only be used by MDAS and would not be shared with any other organization. Please send an email to Ann McGregor, our Database Coordinator, at AnnMcG@Pacbell.net.



Thanks for Your Support!

The Annual Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Fund Raiser has been very successful again this year. So far, we have raised about \$6500 which will be used for habitat restoration, education and outreach, and our other programs and activities. Thank you for your generous support

It's not too late to help with our environmental activities. Please send your tax-deductible donations as a check payable to MDAS to Joe Frank, Treasurer, Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, 4765 Olive Dr., Concord, CA 95421

Thanks also to Galaxy Press of Concord and Wild Birds Unlimited of Pleasant Hill for underwriting the cost of the fund-raising campaign.

Concord Marshes Named New Important Bird Area

In December, the Concord marshes achieved recognition as an Important Bird Area in a newly released National Audubon Society report. The report names over 200 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in California. The web address for the full downloadable report and a California IBA map is <<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/ca/IBA.htm>> (The map is excellent but is a very large file and takes a while to load but worth it.) You will need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader which is available for free at <<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>>.

The Concord IBA marshes consist of three main areas: the Martinez Regional Shoreline, McNabney Marsh/Pt. Edith, and the Concord Naval Weapons Station. The marshes lie along the southern shore of Suisun Bay with the best habitat along Waterfront Rd.

The Concord marshes qualified for IBA designation because of the high number of resident waders and rails and the presence of the endemic Suisun Song Sparrow. The Short-eared Owl is known to winter in the marshes, and California Least Tern have begun breeding adjacent to the PG&E plant in Pittsburg. Other species listed in the description include American Bittern, California Clapper Rail, Black Rail, and Peregrine Falcon. Among the MDAS members who led this important project and collected extensive data to support the nomination were Jill Hedgecock and Steve Glover.

The other 200+ IBA sites are scattered through all 58 California counties. Some of the sites are world-class refuges that support millions of birds, such as the Klamath Basin and the Salton Sea. Others are less well known yet contain truly imperiled bird habitats, such as the vernal-pool grasslands of eastern Merced County and the remnant freshwater wetlands of Bolsa de San Felipe between Gilroy and Hollister.

In addition to our Concord marshes, eight other IBAs are located around San Francisco Bay, making it an extremely

important area for endemic and migratory birds. Other local sites in the Central West area named as IBAs include the East Diablo Range, Cordell Bank, Golden Gate Park, the Farallons, Pt. Pinole, Brooks Island, and South San Francisco Bay. South San Francisco Bay has been nominated as a global IBA.

The IBA program was launched by BirdLife International in the 1980s as a way of recognizing hotspots for bird diversity around the world. Audubon began working with BirdLife on the IBA program in the 1990s. Since 1997, the National Audubon Society has been BirdLife's sole partner for the program in the U.S. California's IBA program began in 1995. Scientists reviewed 3,000 sites for potential designation.

"Every year one million birds rely on the wetlands and associated habitats of the San Francisco Bay region during their migration along the Pacific Flyway," said Audubon President John Flicker, who traveled to San Francisco to announce the IBA report. IBA recognition helps protect places that are vital to the survival of birds. A network of IBAs has been a cornerstone of Audubon's conservation activities throughout California. Over the next few years, Audubon will work with local chapters to defend these sites and to develop systems to monitor their avifauna. However, the IBA program has no power to halt the destruction of habitat or to save a particular species.

Among the goals of the IBA program are to stimulate interest in bird conservation, and increase financial and grassroots support for the protection of identified sites. IBAs are selected based on the presence of significant populations of endangered or declining species, concentrations of large numbers of breeding, migrant, or wintering birds, and the presence of significant populations of species with very limited distributions, including species which live only in the U.S. Taken together, the network of IBAs is essential for the future conservation of wild bird populations.

Calendar of Birding Events and Classes

Sandhill Crane Tours

The California Department of Fish and Game is offering Sandhill Crane tours. The two-hour evening tours focus on the dramatic flight of the cranes to their resting areas. The tours occur the second and third Saturdays, each Sunday, and on the second Thursday until February 25. Send a SASE, a note with first and second choice of date, the number in your party, and your complete address and phone number. A \$5 donation, per adult, payable to California Wildlife Foundation is requested. Mail to Crane Tours, Dept of Fish & Game, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. For information only, call 916-358-2353

Birdwatching Class

Well-known naturalist, birder, and teacher, Phil Gordon, is again offering his Natural History of California Birds Class. The 10-week meetings are on Wednesdays from January 16 to March 20 from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Pre-register at the Acalanes Adult Ed. Center, or call 1 (925) 935-0170 or just show up Rm. B5, Del Valle Campus, Tice Viley Rd., Walnut Creek. The tuition is \$65. The theme for the class is "Identification and Behavior of Winter Birds."

California Duck Days, Feb. 15-17

One of California's premier wildlife viewing festivals, California Duck Days will be held February 15-17 in Davis. The festival coincides with the Central Valley's peak migration period in the Pacific Flyway. The event features field trips, workshops, demonstrations, and a large Exposition Hall full of educational displays about wetlands and other Central Valley wildlife habitats. The headquarters for all festival activities is the Veterans Memorial Center, 203 E. 14th Street, Davis. For more information, call 800-425-5001 or 530-758-1286. The website is <<http://www.duckdays.org>>.

Great Backyard Bird Count Needs Everyone, Everywhere to Count for Birds' Sake

What Is the GBBC

Many bird species are showing population declines due to habitat loss or other human impacts. Now, people of all ages and backgrounds can help monitor bird populations, including several that are showing declines, by participating in the 5th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15-18.

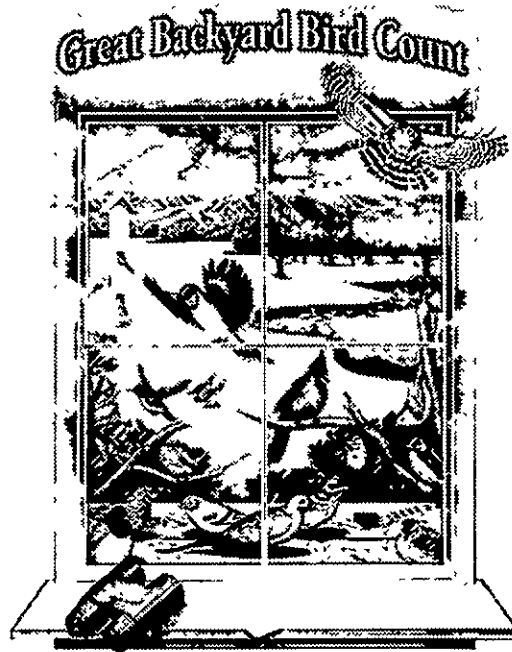
A project of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with funding provided in part by Wild Birds Unlimited and Ford Motor Company, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) combines high-tech web tools with "citizen-science" observation of birds

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

How the GBBC Began

Began in 1998, the GBBC has engaged more than 100,000 people of all ages and skill levels in the effort to keep common birds common. "We're asking everyone, everywhere in North America to take a few minutes to tell us what birds they see on any or all of the count days," says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "By tracking changes in bird distribution and abundance over time, such a vast database can serve as the S.O.S. signal for species that may be in trouble."

This is especially important for species already showing population declines such as quail, familiar in California and other parts of North America. "While most people recognize quail when they see them, few people are aware that some species are experiencing severe population declines," says Frank Gill, NAS's senior vice president for science.



Quail are flagship representatives of brush land/shrub habitat. Habitat loss and the results of some land management practices are the primary reasons for quail declines. In suburbia, cat predation of these ground-dwelling birds is also a serious concern. Visitors to the GBBC website can learn about all six North American quail species

One of the BirdSource's ultimate goals is hemisphere-wide monitoring of bird populations and the educational opportunities that go with these projects.

Because the GBBC charts findings in real time, scientists have already made connections between weather patterns and bird movements. For the last few years, American Robins have appeared farther north than typically expected, in areas where snow cover was scant or nonexistent. Such a correlation may be suggestive of global warming or other broadscale weather changes.

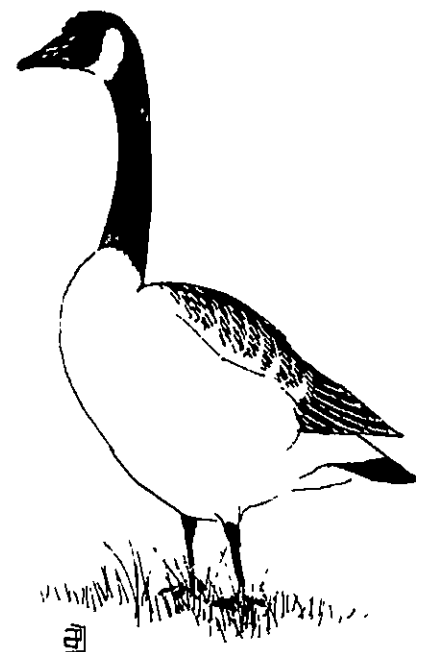
How to Participate

To participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, count the highest number of each bird species seen at one time (to ensure the birds are not counted more than once)

and keep track of the amount of time spent counting. Log on to BirdSource and click on California for a checklist of the most frequently reported birds in our state. Instructions for participating can be found at the website. There's no registration fee

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

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



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. 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.

February 6, Wednesday—Grizzly Island Refuge. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Refuge headquarters. Take I-680 north, then I-80 east to SR12. Follow SR12 through Fairfield; watch for sign to Grizzly Island Refuge on right and follow road to headquarters. Entry fee for refuge. Watch for raptors and Short-eared Owls along road; this is an outstanding area for raptors. Leader: Maury Stern 284-5980 Category 1

February 9–10, Sat. & Sun.—Weekend trip to Los Banos and Panoche Valley—Saturday we will bird Santa Fe Grade Road and the Merced Refuge; on Sunday we will bird Panoche Valley. If you plan to go on the trip, please call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Possible motels include Best Western John Jay Inn in Los Banos (809)827-0958 or (800) 528-1234 and in Santa Nella on I-5, Holiday Inn, Mission de Oro (209) 826-4444, Best Western (Pea Soup) Anderson's Inn (209) 826-5534, and Motel 6 (209) 826-6644.

February 14, Thursday—Big Break Trail. Carpool leaves from the southwest corner of the Sun Valley parking lot at 8 a.m. Meet on Jordon Lane in Oakley at 8:30 a.m. Hike along Big Break Trail between the river and Iron House Sanitary property. Take SR 4 east to Vintage Parkway in Oakley. Turn left, then right onto Walnut Meadows, and left onto Jordon Lane. Parking is on a residential cul-de-sac so carpooling is important! Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

February 20, Wednesday—Lafayette Reservoir. Meet at 8:15 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

February 23, Saturday—Tomales Bay State Park. Carpool leaves 7:30 a.m., Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd, just north of SR 24. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at Heart's Desire Beach at Tomales SP (\$5 entrance fee). 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 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. 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

February 28, Thursday—Yolo County. Carpool leaves southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot at 8 a.m. This is a car-caravan trip to a number of Yolo County sites recommended by the Sacramento Audubon Society. These are good areas for raptors and water birds; Mountain Plovers are also possible. Carpooling is essential. Call the leader if interested in participating. 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.

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

BIRDSEED SALE

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

SUET SALE

20% off all suet

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Activities at WBU

Feb. 2, 10:30 a.m.—The Native Bird Connection will bring a Barred Owl and give a program on Owls.

Feb. 13—Denise Wight's Birding Classes resume. Denise will be showing slides and covering many different birding topics during six consecutive Wednesday night classes, starting on Feb. 13 with one birdwalk to be scheduled. Cost is \$50. Call Wild Birds Unlimited for details.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is Friday–Monday, Feb. 15–18. WBU and the National Audubon Society are major sponsors of this event. You count birds in your backyard and report the results online or bring them to WBU. See p. 5 for more details on how you can participate.

Bird feeding tip: flocks of Pine Siskins and Goldfinches are being reported. The Siskins are very erratic migratory birds. Last year, for the first time in many years, we had large flocks of Siskins. This winter the numbers are down from a year ago, but ahead of previous winters. Get out the thistle feeders!

New MDAS Website

MDAS has a new website under construction. Visit <<http://www.diabloaudubon.org/test.html>> and check it out. Give your feedback to Carol Frischmann at frischma@mindspring.com. Remember that the site is under construction, and several of the options are not functional yet, but this is an opportunity for you to provide input into the appearance and approach of our new website.

Field Trip Report

Niles Canyon, December 12—Four members traveled to the Niles Canyon area. Initially the weather was chilly but we shed our coats by 10 a.m. We saw 72 species. The highlights were a male Wood Duck and a pair of Acorn Woodpeckers, which are rare on the east side of the coastal range. A Golden Eagle chased by Crows and Ravens gave a dramatic look at the size differences of these birds. We also had an Osprey fly overhead. A wonderful day —*Jimm Edgar*

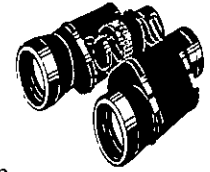
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- Direct from Natural Origins'. Call toll free 1-877-448-3832 and request that MDAS receive donation benefits when you order.
- Order online at <www.naturalorigins.com>. At checkout, indicate MDAS as the donation recipient.
- Purchase Natural Origins'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

Observations

by Steve Glover



Yet another **Brown Pelican** turned up inland; this one was at Los Vaqueros Reservoir during the Eastern Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count on 12/22 (DWim). Whether or not this is the same bird noted at Iron House and Discovery Bay earlier in the fall is anyone's guess.

An adult **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at San Pablo Reservoir on 12/21 (PM). At least 10,000 were seen at Palm Tract near Byron, where more expected, on 12/7 (SG). A **Brant** at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline 11/25 was a winter rarity for the county (DA). A male **Hooded Merganser** was at Jewel Lake in Tilden Park on 11/19 (PG). Hoodies have also returned this winter to the Moraga Country Club with three males and six females noted there on 12/9 (JC). A pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at Clifton Court Forebay near Byron 12/7 (SG). A nice tally of 93 Common Mergansers (88 females!) was at San Pablo Reservoir on 12/15 (PM).

Bald Eagles were first noted at San Pablo Reservoir in the last week of October when an adult was seen, though this bird was noted flying south and could have been a migrant. On 12/7 two adults were present. This has traditionally been the most reliable location in the county for this species (PM). Lafayette Reservoir's returning adult was noted on 12/31 (DL). Even more unusual was an adult flying south along Walnut Creek over Hwy 4 on 1/1 (DW). Three **Swainson's Hawks**, two dark-phase and one light-phase, were along Orwood Rd. near Byron on 12/7 (SG). As many as 12 **Ferruginous Hawks**, including one dark-phase, at Holland Tract near Knightsen 12/2 was a very high count for the county (SG).

At least 90 **Sandhill Cranes** were at Holland Tract near Knightsen on 12/2 (SG) but this pales in comparison to the 300+ seen there during the East Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count on 12/22

(SG,JA). Most were seen in the late afternoon heading south to roost

Vaux's Swifts are rare in the East Bay by the end of October so the 110 flying south over Skyline Blvd., Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, was certainly noteworthy (JL)

Barn Swallows are extremely rare in Contra Costa in the winter so the following records were very exciting: one at Marsh Creek Reservoir near Brentwood on 12/22 (DL and group) during the Eastern Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Count, and two at Pt. Edith near Martinez on 12/24 (DW).

What must have been an awesome spectacle was an estimated 10,000 **American Robins** be-

tween 4 and 4 40 p.m. flying over Round Top and Sibley Regional Park on 12/14 (JL).

Six **Chipping Sparrows** in Martinez during the Christmas Bird Count were amongst the few ever found in the county during winter (DW and group). The **Swamp Sparrow** found last year on private property behind Mallard Reservoir was seen again this year on the Christmas Bird Count on 12/15 (SG)

A female **Western Tanager** returned to the Markham Nature Center in Concord for its second winter, first noted on 12/10 (SG). This species is accidental in the county in winter.

Observers David Armstrong, John Ascher, Judi Cooper, Steve Glover, Phil Gordon, Don Lewis, John Luther, Pat Matthews, Denise Wight, David Wimpfheimer

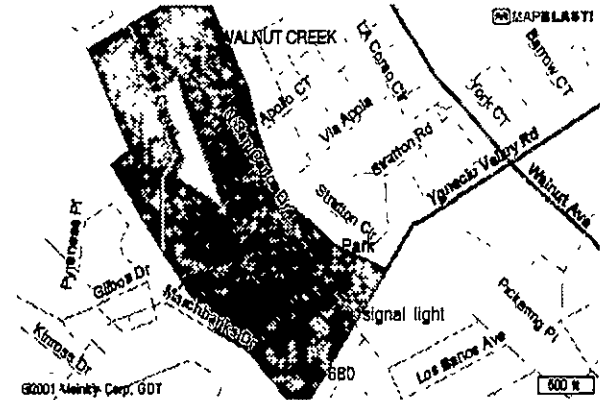
Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your phone number with your observation.
Northern CA Bird Box:
(415) 681-7422

CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. Mark your calendars now so that you won't miss any of our meetings at The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek: Feb. 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, and June 6.

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

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



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

National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (published 10 times a year). 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. The Quail may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. To join Audubon, send a check payable to NAS to Joe Frank, Treasurer, 4765 Olive Dr., Concord, CA 94521. To subscribe to the Quail, make the check out to MDAS and mail to Joe Frank. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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March 2002

Vol. 48, No. 6

Next Deadline: March 9

Birds of the Sierra Featured at March Meeting

Our March speaker is photographer Mike Danzenbaker who will be showing us his slide presentation entitled "Birds of the Sierras." Mike has published his photographs in many birding journals, including *Birding*, *Birder's World*, *Wild Bird*, *Birding World*, and *Dutch Birding* as well as in Audubon calendars, Ken Kaufmann's Guide, and Audubon Guides.

The focus of Mike's program will primarily be the areas of Yuba Pass, Yosemite National Park, and Mono Lake.

Mike said that he "photographs birds in the Sierra simply because I love it up there. It's become a pilgrimage occupying multiple weekends per year between Memorial weekend and July 4 week-

end. The abundance of montane cavity nesting birds, alpine meadow and Great Basin sagebrush birds keeps me going back."

Mike and his wife, Lee Hung, lived in Japan for two years. The photographs that he took during that time were featured in his December 2000 presentation, "Birds of Japan."

Mike's slide show, for the December 2000 meeting was outstanding. This new program promises to be equally fine.

Chilean Birding Adventure

by Hugh Harvey

MDAS Chapter members Hugh and Rosita Harvey are known for their birding skills. This month and next, the Quail features a trip report from Hugh about their recent birding adventures in Chile—editor

A male Puna Rhea with 20 or more chicks scrambling through the bushes; Southern Giant Petrels gliding majestically over the Straits of Magellan, three species of Flamingo feeding in Lago Chungara at almost 15,000 feet of elevation; the beautiful and graceful Black-headed Swans; both Flightless and Flying Steamer-ducks; the miners, canasteros, cinclodes, tyrants, ground-tyrants, tit-tyrants, shrike-tyrants, conebills, seed-eaters, yellow-finches, sierra-finches, and siskins along with the other Passerines—all these are just some of the birding highlights that Rosita and I saw during an 18-day tour of Chile this past October and November.

Many of us have made guided tours with any of the various professional birding tour companies, but probably more of us have only read and dreamed of these trips to far-off places, many with exotic-sounding names. It is this second category to which Rosita and I belonged until this past fall.

As we were already planning to visit Rosita's family in Chile for Christmas and the New Year, we thought it might be the ideal time to take an organized bird tour of the country before our extended visit. We began trying to pick a tour which would suit our needs. Using the internet, we studied a variety of choices. Chapter member Eugenia Larson had introduced us to an Eagle-Eye Tours, Inc., itinerary for Chile four or five years ago.

Although they do not go to the famous Torres del Paine National Park, they became our first choice based on price. As it turned out, our primary guide, Peter Burke, is illustrating an upcoming Chilean bird book. The author, Alvaro Jaramillo, is leading tours for a competing company, Field Guides Inc., and we crossed paths several times towards the end of our trip. *(continued on page 3)*

Birding Information

During "Birding Information," Maury Stern, longtime MDAS member and our Program chair, will update us on "Birds and the Internet." He will give pointers on using Internet sites to identify birds, birding hot spots, and birding trips and supplies.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, March 7**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open

7 p.m.—Birding Information

7:25 p.m.—Business meeting

7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing

8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your cup! We're serving Natural Origins Tea too!

Connections

Audubon-California Supports Prop 40

California has one of the world's most diverse landscapes. However, rapid urban development coupled with population growth threaten the state's animal and plant species as well as the habitats and resources that they need for survival. The California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40) will provide essential funds to help preserve California's ecosystems and habitats, and improve our ability to enjoy already-protected natural areas that are accessible to the public.

Proposition 40 is on the March 2002 ballot. It will provide \$1.275 billion for land conservation and improved air and water quality, and \$1.325 billion for the state and local parks, recreation, and historic and cultural resources

California-Audubon supports passage of Prop 40 because \$40 million from the bond is dedicated to the San Francisco Bay Conservancy Program. Additional funds for Urban Park programs are designed to help fund Audubon Nature Centers, and the Wildlife Conservation Board and Coastal Conservancy money will provide critical funding for Audubon acquisition projects. Your help is need to pass this important measure.

Help Save the Blackbirds

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing to kill by poison 2 million blackbirds a year for three years starting in the Spring 2002. APHIS, formerly known as Animal Damage Control, shoos away or kills birds and wildlife that are considered by some to be pests. Audubon opposes this proposed effort, as the poisoning threatens to kill numerous other birds, including the steeply declining populations of grassland songbirds.

As many as 40 million Red-winged Blackbirds migrate through the Dakotas in the spring and fall. During the fall

migration, the blackbirds are attracted to ripening sunflowers being grown commercially in North and South Dakota. The Department is conducting the blackbird poisoning in an effort to appease flower growers.

Between 1994 and 1999, several million blackbirds were poisoned. Audubon opposes the blackbird-poisoning program because it cannot be justified on economic or scientific grounds. With the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon blocked the practice in 2000 and 2001. Blackbirds are estimated to damage a mere 1 to 2 percent of the \$300 million annual production of sunflowers. APHIS has ignored its own research that indicates that the poisoning is ineffective in reducing even this small amount of damage.

Grassland songbirds are in serious decline. APHIS has not shown that other bird species are not eating the poison banquets laid out for the blackbirds. In fact, 69 other bird species have been observed around the poison rice plots, including Baird's Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Bobolink.

The Blackbird poisoning is opposed by Audubon, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks, and Audubon Dakota. Send your short letter to the Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman today and urge her to end this poisoning of birds. Send your message by accessing <<http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/contact/default>> as soon as possible.

**Support your EBRPD!
Fund more maintenance and
restoration projects in our wonderful
park system.**

**Vote YES on Prop K
March 5!**

**The passage of Prop K will cost
homeowners only \$1 a month!**

This threat to blackbirds could spread to other species. An amendment to the 2002 Farm Bill would exempt APHIS from all Migratory Bird Treaty Act laws and all National Environmental Policy Act laws.

This amendment, known as the Hutchinson-Lincoln amendment, will enable APHIS to carry out programs that could ultimately allow the killing of such birds as robins, hawks, songbirds, and ducks because all oversight of their activities are eliminated. Audubon opposes this measure. Contact your two Senators and urge them to OPPOSE THE HUTCHINSON-LINCOLN APHIS AMENDMENT TO THE FARM BILL! You can reach your Senators directly by calling the Congressional Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and asking for them by name.

—from *The Audubon Advisory*, Audubon's Twice Monthly Update from Washington, D.C.

The Quail

is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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Chile Birds 2001

(continued from p 1)

Chile is a country which in many respects mirrors the West Coast of North America. With its 2600 miles stretching from about 17.5°S latitude at its northern border to almost 56°S latitude at the Beagle Channel south of Tierra del Fuego, Chile would stretch from Acapulco, Mexico, to Ketchikan, Alaska. The southern section of the country, with its islands, glaciers, and mountains, matches the Alaska Panhandle. The middle and most densely populated part of the country, from Valparaiso to Puerto Montt, corresponds to the Central Valley of California plus Oregon and Washington. The northern section of the country, as well as the southern parts of Peru, include the famous Atacama Desert. This driest place on earth is more than a match for our southern California deserts which extend well down into Mexico.

The Ocean and Mountains

The natural habitats of Chile are dominated by two major physical features, the Humboldt Current of the Pacific Ocean, and the Andes Mountains. The cold northward-flowing current cools the air masses coming from the west and the moisture falls out before the winds reach the coast; hence, the formation of the Atacama Desert in the north and the Andes Mountains running the length of the country along the eastern political border make a formidable, though not impassable barrier, physically isolating Chile from the rest of South America.

Chile Bird Species

Still, a portion of Chile's more than 430 species are common to North America. Most occur naturally, but some have been introduced. These number at least 60 species and include Pied-billed Grebe, Great and Snowy Egret, Black and Turkey Vulture, Peregrine Falcon, Common Moorhen, at least 30 shorebird species, Franklin's Gull, Rock Dove, Burrowing Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, House Sparrow, and California Quail.

The almost 60 families of birds represented roughly parallels those we see at home in North America, but there are some notable differences. Crows and jays do not appear in Chile.

In addition, there are, according to one list, nine species endemic to Chile. Many of our group were especially interested to see these birds, which included Chilean Mockingbird, Dusky Tapaculo, White-throated Tapaculo, Mustached Turca, Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet, Dusky-tailed Canastero, Chilean Seaside Cincloides, Crag Chilia, and Slender-billed Parakeet. Of this group, the only one not on our list as seen by the group is the White-throated Tapaculo. Our group heard it but only Rosita saw at the bottom of a canyon.

Sites Visited

Due to the physical shape of the country, extensive air and bus travel was required to see the various habitats. We visited the Lluta and Azapa valleys, river oases outside the city of Arica near the Peruvian border, Lago Chungara in the puna and altiplano regions of Lauca National Park in the north, the coastal region of Valparaiso and Vina del Mar, including a pelagic trip, the Yeso Valley and Cajon de Maipo at 8000-9000 feet of elevation in the central Andes southeast of Santiago, the mouth of the Bio-Bio, Chile's largest river, the southern Beech forest near Termas de Chillan, Nahuelbuta National Park and its coastal Araucaria Forest, the Patagonian steppe northeast of Punta Arenas, and the northwest corner of Isla Grande, Tierra del Fuego.

An additional factor in the distribution of the bird population of Chile is the distribution of the human population. The area from slightly north of Santiago south to and including the first island of Chiloe is something less than 1/3 of the length of the country. Yet this same area holds 87% of the population. The areas of undisturbed habitat in this part of the country are few and far between. Much of this area not under cultivation for food and dairy production has been converted to tremendous acreage of fast-growing non-native pine and eucalyptus trees.

The bird life in this central part of the country is essentially one which tolerates humans and their associated development. Though not necessarily limited to this area, it is possible to see many of the common species here. A list of these birds would include Neotropic Cormorant, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Yellow-billed Pintail, Turkey Vulture,



Variable Hawk, Chimango Caracara, American Kestrel, California Quail, Southern Lapwing, Rock Dove, Eared Dove, Chilean Flicker, Chilean Elaenia, Fire-eyed Diucon, Chilean Swallow, Blue-and-White Swallow, Southern House Wren, Austral Thrush, Chilean Mockingbird, Common Diuca-Finch, Rufous-Collared Sparrow, Austral Blackbird, Long-tailed Meadowlark, and House Sparrow.

By visiting the major birding hotspots and other areas along the way, we as a group were able to identify some 275 species. Invaluable assistance was given by two native Chilean bird experts; Enrique Couve of Punta Arenas, author of several Chilean bird books including a forthcoming comprehensive guide; and Manuel Marin of Melipilla, west of the capitol, with a Ph.D from LSU and his excellent eyes and ears, he was described by Rosita as "never wrong."

The April Quail will feature Part II of Hugh's report.

Update on Restoration of Skaggs Island

Skaggs Island has long been considered key to completing wetland restoration in the North Bay. In December several federal and state agencies approved mitigation that facilitates the transfer of 3,300 acres of the site from the Navy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Eventually, USFWS will restore tidal and seasonal wetlands at this North Bay site and manage it as part of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

In January, a private environmental restoration firm Wildlands, Inc., took the first steps in planning restoration of the remaining portion of Skaggs Island. Like the former Navy facility, the 1,090-acre Haire Ranch consists of restorable diked historic Bay wetlands. Wildlands, Inc., has entered into an acquisition purchase option with the owner of Haire Ranch. Wildlands intends to acquire the property and restore tidal and seasonal wetlands

consistent with USFWS' restoration efforts on the rest of Skaggs Island.

Wildlands, which often funds its restoration work through mitigation fees and other private contracts, plans to fund the Haire Ranch purchase option through a first-right-of-refusal contract with the San Francisco International Airport (SFO). Should SFO secure the many permits for its proposed runway reconfiguration and win voter approval of the project, it could receive mitigation credit for funding Bay wetland habitat acquisition and restoration on the Haire property. If SFO's runway project is rejected, Wildlands would seek alternative private and/or public funding to move the Haire restoration project forward.

Audubon is encouraged by Wildlands' interest in restoring wetlands habitats at Skaggs Island. Whether or not the airport

succeeds in its controversial expansion effort, Audubon hopes that Wildlands will find a way to fund the acquisition and restoration of this important habitat.

Restoration of the Haire property concurrent with USFWS' restoration of the former Navy property will obviate the need for expensive levee construction that would have been required to protect the Haire Ranch. Moreover, restoring both of these properties at the same time will create a coordinated restoration plan that should produce higher quality wildlife habitat and a more natural hydrological regime for this key North Bay site.

MDAS Asks for Email Addresses

MDAS wants to collect the email addresses of its members. The addresses would only be used by MDAS and would not be shared with any other organization. Please send an email to Ann McGregor, our Database Coordinator, at AnnMcg@Pacbell.net.

Problems with Quail Delivery?

Haven't gotten your *Quail* lately? Are you receiving duplicate copies? Is your issue going to the wrong address?

If you are having any problems with the delivery of your *Quail*, phone Ann MacGregor at 925-934-0906 or email her at AnnMcg@Pacbell.net. She will be glad to work with you on delivery issues.

Get Involved! Get Active!

MDAS has several volunteer opportunities and invite you to get involved. Next month, the Board will name a Nominations Committee to seek candidates for four officer positions, Chapter president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. If you are interested in serving on the Nominations Committee, call Mike Williams at 925-798-0303.

MDAS has two exciting programs underway working with local schools and assisted living homes. If you interested in working with children or seniors, please call Cecil Williams at 925-798-0303.

We need someone to coordinate our volunteers and head up membership drives. If you want to take on that challenging position, call Gloria Cannon at 925-753-0862.

This spring MDAS is planning a Birdathon. If you want to be a participant, either on a team or to form a team of your own, call Mike Williams at 925-798-0303.

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- **At MDAS general meetings, The Gardens at Heather Farm.** Purchase at the meeting or pick up an order form.

Birding Events and Classes

Owls of the Peninsula, March 9 and March 23

The Point Reyes Bird Observatory is offering two separate classes on owls. The first one is taught by Joe Mueller on Saturday, March 9, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The second is taught by John Klobas on Saturday, March 23, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The cost for each class is \$33. Each class will visit owl haunts and then review identification, calls, and ecology over hot drinks at headquarters. call 415-663-1200 for more information.

Wild on Wetlands, March 9–10

See California's largest wetland treasure. The Wild on Wetlands weekend, March 9–10, celebrates the grassland ecological area located in the central valley near the city of Los Banos. This 180,000-acre wetland ecosystem is home to millions of migratory waterfowl traveling along the pacific flyway and has been internationally recognized as a western hemisphere shorebird reserve and as a globally Important Bird Area by The National Audubon Society.

Whether you're an experienced birder or budding young naturalist, the wild on wetlands weekend has something for you. This community-based festival features fun and exciting wetland field trips, workshops, family and youth activities, educational displays, booths, food and the California state and grassland regional championship duck calling contest. Expect a fun filled time. Registration is \$15 for adults for the entire weekend, or just \$10 for a one day pass. The festival is free to kids 16 years and under. For more information, contact the Los Banos Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-336-6354 or visit <http://www.losbanos.com/wow.htm>. Headquarters for the event is at the Los Banos Junior High School, 1750 San Luis Street, Los Banos.

All About Raptors, March 16

The Interpretative Center will have a program on raptors on Saturday, March 16, 11 a.m. to noon in the Interpretive Center. Presented by Native Bird Connections. Great for all ages! Reservations required. Call 688-8010. There is a \$4 parking fee for CCWD rate payers.

Heron Days/Rodman Slough Walks

The Redbud Audubon is offering walks at Rodman Slough on the north end of Clear Lake where one of the area's largest heron rookeries is located. A \$5 donation is suggested. These walks are offered on March 23 and 30, April 6, 13, and 14. Walks will start at 9 a.m. from the old house at the corner of Westlake Rd and Nice-Lucerne Cut-off Road. Take the Nice-Lucerne Cut-off from either Hwy 20 or 29.

Family Nature Walk in Pittsburg, March 30

The Pittsburg Leisure Service Department is offering a free family nature walk on Saturday, March 30, from 8:30–10 a.m. Joel Summerhill and Gloria Cannon, MDAS members, will give a 30-minute presentation on local birds and animals and then lead a 1-hour exploration through Buchanan Park. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Buchanan Community Building.

Golden Trout Natural History

At this hike-in wilderness camp at 10,000 ft near Mt. Whitney, guests have an superb opportunity to learn from professional botanists, naturalists, and geologists. The Golden Trout Camp is composed of historic log cabins (some of the only structures allowed to remain inside this federally designated Wilderness Area). Guests are provided with meals, showers, and tent camps. The sessions are one-, two-, and three-week sessions, very economical. Sessions start June 30, July 7, and July 14. Reserve early—the limited space is often full by April. For brochure, call 805-688-8344. See their website at <http://www.1startists.com/gtc/>.

You might be a birder if...

You might be a birder if your neck hurts except when you're looking up.

You might be a birder if you've never seen a seagull.

You might be a birder if you think Peterson is a book.

You might be a birder if you want to see just one more warbler before lunch.

You might be a birder if, for you, the "tele" is silent in telescope, despite what your dictionary says.

You might be a birder if you think LBJ doesn't stand for Lyndon Baines Johnson.

You might be a birder if you understand why you need to see some warblers today even though you saw 31 different kinds of them yesterday.

You might be a birder if your spouse doesn't understand why you must keep a yard list, a county list, a state list, a U.S. list, a lower-48 list, a Canada list, an ABA list, a world list, and an escrow list.

You might be a birder if you can make three different words by rearranging the letters I-P-H-S.

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. 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.

March 7, Thursday, Berkeley Shoreline. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at 8.30 a.m. in the parking lot at the north end of the Emeryville Marina. Take SR 24 to 880 West, turn north onto I-80. Take Powell St. exit, turn left on Powell; go out to Emeryville Marina, park in last lot near pier. May be cold and windy. Loons, grebes, and bay ducks. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey 254-0486 Category 1

March 9, Saturday, Capey Valley. Saturday, March 10, Capey Valley. Carpool leaves Sun Valley parking lot in Concord at 7:30 a.m. This is a 225-mile car caravan trip to Yolo County. We will be going west of I-505 on SR 16 and continue north to SR 20. Possible birds are raptors, including Bald and Golden Eagles, Lewis's Woodpecker, Common Mergansers, and Canyon and Rock Wrens. Trip will go in light rain. Leader: Florence Bennett, 689-3106

March 14, Thursday, San Leandro Reservoir. Meet at 8 a.m. at Valle Vista staging area off Canyon Rd. From SR 24 west, take Orinda exit south; in Moraga, turn right onto Canyon Road. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980 Category 3

March 20, Wednesday, Shadow Cliffs Regional Park. 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 m north to El Pintado. We can by-pass freeway traffic by going east on El Cerro and making a sharp right turn onto Diablo Road. From Diablo Road, turn left onto Tassajara, which becomes Santa Rita south of I-580. From Santa Rita, turn left onto Valley Avenue and left onto Stanley Blvd. Entrance is on the right; park near the Information Kiosk. Bring lunch. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

March 23, Saturday, Black Diamond Regional Park. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at the park gate at the end of Somersville Road (park opens at 8 a.m.) 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. Meet in the second parking lot at end of the road. Woodland, chaparral, and some grassland birds. Leader: Pat MacEachern, 934-3041 Category 3

March 28, Thursday, Huckleberry Preserve. 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

News from Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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

American and Lesser Goldfinches are abundant at the feeders. For the second year in a row, flocks of Pine Siskins began to be seen in December and stayed for the winter. This irruptive species is very nomadic and is not always seen in northern California backyards. Goldfinch and Siskins love thistle and sunflower seeds and will readily use bird feeders

Dark-eyed Juncos have been quite abundant. We have also received many reports of Nuttall's woodpeckers, Oak Titmice, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees visiting peanut and suet feeders. Large flocks of American Robins have been devouring the toyon and pyracantha berries

A male Hooded Oriole was seen on Feb. 11. This is the earliest report we have ever had except for Jean Richmond's oriole that over-wintered a few years ago.

Anna's Hummingbirds have already had their first nesting of the year. After mating, the male has nothing to do with the nest building and raising of the young. The female has the complete responsibility for rearing the young. She makes a nest out of lichen, lint, and downy plant fibers and often holds it together with spider webs. The female usually lay two eggs and incubates them 14-19 days. She feeds nectar and insects to the young for 18-23 days in the nest. The young are fledged and on their own 1-2 weeks later.

Chickadees and titmice are already starting to nest. It's not too late to put out birdhouses. Both of these species, along with woodpeckers, nuthatches, bluebirds, wrens, and others will readily use nesting boxes. Birdhouses should have drainage, ventilation, and cleanouts. These elements provide a safe, secure home for the birds. Also, depending upon the species you are trying to attract, specific hole sizes and floor dimensions are required. For a free handout on the requirements for different species, come to WBU

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



Interesting geese sightings from Heather Farms Park, Walnut Creek, included a **Ross's Goose** 1/17-21 and a **Greater White-fronted Goose** on 1/31 (HH). At least 30 **Wood Ducks** at Upper San Leandro Reservoir near Moraga on 1/7 was a very high count for the county (ES) The female half of the resident pair of **Harlequin Ducks** was seen near Shimada Friendship Park, Richmond on 1/7 (DA). A female **Barrow's Golden-eye** was at the Richmond Marina on 1/7 (DA). A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** were along Grayson Creek near the intersection of Center Ave. and Contra Costa Blvd. on 1/7 (RT).

Lafayette Reservoir's wintering adult **Bald Eagle** was noted through at least 2/1 (KG,DL,DA) and a bird thought to be a young Bald Eagle was seen there on 12/21(KG). The wintering adult at San Pablo Reservoir was noted through at least 2/6 (PM). What was likely the same bird was seen near Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, 1/6 (DA). A **Ferruginous Hawk** over Mt. Wanda, Martinez, on 1/22 was unusual for that area (CA).

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was found on 1/6 at the California Hiking and Riding Trail near Crystal Ranch Dr. in Clayton (PB). Though a couple were found last winter at Round Valley, they remain very rare winter visitors in Contra Costa County. **Western Bluebirds** are virtually unknown on the Bay plain west of the



Coast Ranges in Contra Costa County, so six near the El Cerrito Park BART Station on 1/29 were certainly an unexpected sight (LT)

Most frustrating were unconfirmed reports of two spectacular wintering warblers. A report of a male **Bay-breasted Warbler** near Millie's Kitchen in Lafayette on about 1/20 was received second-hand. It

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

was reportedly seen by a visiting professor from Southern California who reported it to one of her students. Unfortunately, it was not found again despite several attempts. This would represent a first county record and an amazing winter record for Northern California. On 1/26-27 an **Ovenbird** was reported from a suburban Richmond yard but has also not yet been confirmed. This would be the first winter record for the county.

An exciting bird that was confirmed was a well-studied **Clay-colored Sparrow** visiting a Lafayette feeder from 1/6 through at least early February (AH, MS, ED, JC, SG, DW) Though there have been at least six county records of Clay-colored Sparrow for the county in recent years this is the first for winter. Two of the six wintering **Chipping Sparrows** first found on the Christmas bird count were still present at Hidden Lakes Park, Martinez, on 1/27 (DW).

Lawrence's Goldfinches are extremely rare winter visitors in Contra Costa County (just one record from the Central Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count) but one at a San Ramon feeder 1/10 to at least 1/19 was especially surprising (LE).

Observers: Cheryl Abel, Dustin Alcalá, Polly Boissevain, Judi Cooper, Elizabeth Dickey, Lauri English, Steve Glover, Ken Gustafson, Hugh Harvey, Alice Holmes, Don Lewis, Emily Serkin, Maury Stern, Rob Thomas, Larry Turnstall, Denise Wight

Be a Global Birding Pal!

Many birdwatchers are enthusiastic world travelers—have-binoculars-will-travel types. But no matter how many local guide books you stuff in your luggage, you can arrive in a strange country and not know where to go to see the most birds. Many times you may wish for a friend to go birding with or to show you those special places that only the locals know. Now there is an international internet site called Birdingpal that brings together birders using instant on-line access.

The Global Birding Pal Club is where birders find each other. The next time you travel, you can find a local birder who will show you around. You can also meet traveling birders who are interested

in your area. Going on a business trip, to a conference or on vacation? Have a bit of extra time? Don't waste it, connect with a local birder who knows the local hot spots and have a great time birding. Locate the best places to find a bird for your list and meet nice people with the same favorite pastime as yourself. A Birding Pal is not a paid guide, but someone who likes to help out of town visitors.

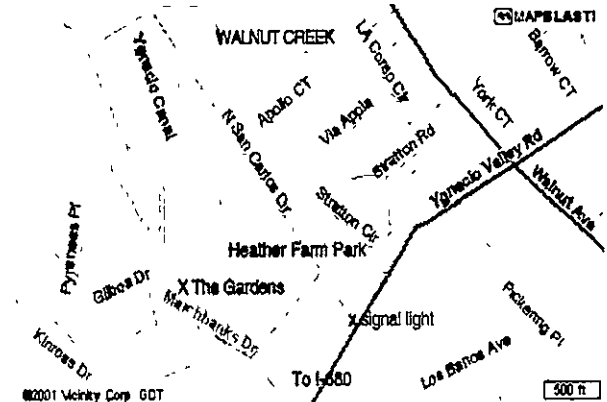
Explore this site <<http://www.birdingpal.org/>>. Click on any country on the global map and get a list of people who have signed on as birding pals. You communicate with them by email. Some of them are professional guides, but most are birders who enjoy meeting new people and sharing their love of birds.

CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. Mark your calendars now so that you won't miss any of our meetings at The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek: March 7, April 4, May 2, and June 6.

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

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



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

National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly *Audubon* magazine and the *Quail* (published 10 times a year). 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. The *Quail* may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. To join Audubon, send a check payable to NAS to Joe Frank, Treasurer, 4765 Olive Dr., Concord, CA 94521. To subscribe to the *Quail*, make the check out to MDAS and mail to Joe Frank. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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Next Deadline: April 5

MDAS Board

Considers New

Membership

Tier.

See page 3 for
details on this important
policy change.

A Passion for Butterflies

Author and butterfly expert Bob Stewart will be our guest speaker at the April general meeting. Bob will present a slide show on interesting aspects of butterfly biology with special focus on the interaction among butterflies, other insects, and plants.

Ants, for example, have played a key evolutionary role in the behavior and morphology of blues, hairstreaks, and metalmarks. In a recent study, the

Reakirt's Blue larvae were found to be attended by 13 species of ants. The ants protect the larvae from predators and, in return, receive a sugary sweet excretion from the larvae

Bob spent almost 30 years as a biologist with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, and later as a naturalist for Marin County. He now leads birding and natural history tours to Mexico, Costa Rica, Trinidad & Tobago.

He is author of *Common Butterflies of California* and *Butterflies of Arizona*. His books will be available for purchase at the general meeting.

MDAS Board Adopts New Chapter Mission Statement

The Board of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society adopted a new Mission Statement at its March 14 meeting.

"Mt. Diablo Audubon Society is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife, and habitat through conservation, education, and advocacy.

We:

- *Ensure a high degree of habitat diversity and preservation through an active role in local environmental activities and issues.*
- *Observe, collect, and report information concerning the status of birds, other wildlife, and habitat.*
- *Support community organizations with similar goals.*
- *Sponsor educational activities to promote environmental knowledge with a special focus on youth.*
- *Enhance public appreciation of the natural world with an emphasis on birds."*

The Board welcomes feedback on this new Mission Statement from MDAS members. You can provide that feedback to any Board member at the general meeting, by phone (see the list of officers and phone numbers on p. 2) or by email to the editor at gloriacannon@earthlink.net

Birding Information

One of MDAS's expert birders and former program chair for the Chapter, Denise Wight will talk about confusing bird sounds during the Birding Information portion of the April program. Denise teaches birding class, and her presentations on bird watching techniques are always enlightening and entertaining.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, April 4**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open

7 p.m.—Birding Information

7:25 p.m.—Business meeting

7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing

8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your cup! We're serving Natural Origins Tea too!

NAS Flicker Urges Funding for UN Population Control Programs

John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society, issued the following statement urging the Bush Administration to release approved funding for the United Nations Population Fund.—editor

Human population growth is one of the most pressing environmental problems facing the world. So much of the environmental degradation seen across the globe today is fallout from the human population explosion in the last 50 years

International family planning programs have been proven to slow population growth, and Audubon urges the Bush Administration to end the delay and fully release the \$34 million that Congress approved for the United Nations Population Fund. For thousands of years, birds have been one of our most important early warning systems. Birds have predicted the change of seasons, the coming of storms, the presence of land at sea and the rise of toxic levels of pollution in the food chain. Now birds are telling us something is terribly wrong with the environment

Across the United States, warblers are disappearing, as are dozens of other songbirds. Scientists say the demise of these songbirds is caused by the destruction of their habitat, brought about by rapid rates of human population growth

Many of America's songbirds spend much of the year in the tropical forests of Latin America and the Caribbean. But these forests are being cut to the ground at record rates. In Central America, more than 40 percent of the forest canopy has been destroyed in the last 30 years, as the population of the region has doubled. What's happening to birds is happening to wildlife all over the world—to the tigers in India, the elephants in Thailand, and the jaguars in Central America. Though many of the world's creatures face peril now, the real trouble lies ahead.

Across the globe, more than a billion teenagers are entering their reproductive years—the largest cluster of teens in world history. The choices these young people make in the next decade will determine the fate of our natural world for generations to come. If birth rates remain at current levels, demographers say the

world will add more people in the next 5 years than it has in the previous 50 years. Population growth is about more than the environment, of course. It's also about the health of women, crushing unemployment and poverty rates, and rising levels of social and economic instability in the developing world. We urge President Bush to act on what is a matter of life and death for wildlife, women and children the world over. Voluntary family planning programs like those carried out by the UNFPA around the world are vital to slowing human population growth and the pace of habitat destruction.

The Quail

is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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MDAS's Mike & Cecil Williams Receive Conservation Award

by Cheryl Abel

The John Muir Memorial Association, the non-profit partner of the John Muir National Historic Site, has named the 2002 winners of the annual John Muir Conservation Award—Mt. Diablo Audubon's own Mike and Cecil Williams!

Mike and Cecil were chosen in recognition of their efforts to promote conservation and bird watching in the East Bay for many years.

Mike and Cecil will receive the award Friday, May 10, at the John Muir Memorial Association's annual dinner, a barbecue held in the orchards of the John Muir NHS.

Mt. Diablo Audubon members and other friends of Mike and Cecil are all invited to attend. A social hour begins at 5 p.m. with dinner served at 6 p.m., followed by the award presentation about 7 p.m. Tickets are \$14. For tickets and more information, call Don Harness at (925) 229-3857.

Past recipients of the award have included Gary Bogue and Seth Adams.

Gloria Cannon, Editor,
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MDAS Workday, Events & Hands-on Opportunities

Planting at McNabney Marsh in Martinez

MDAS is sponsoring a workday at McNabney Marsh Waterbird Regional Preserve near Martinez. Join us on Saturday, May 11, from 2 p.m. until 4.30 p.m.

With the help of East Bay Regional Park District staff, we'll be planting native trees and shrubs in the staging area adjacent to the parking lot and doing some clean up where necessary. Wear old clothes and bring gloves. We will also need volunteers for hot-weather watering. For more information, call Nancy Wenninger at (925) 938-7987.

Marsh Creek Watershed Awareness Day

On Saturday, May 18, in Brentwood, the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District and the Marsh Creek Watershed Planning Group are sponsoring a special program focused on the importance of protecting the Marsh Creek Watershed. Call Junko, Nancy, or Lisa at (925) 672-6522 ext. 4 for more information about time and location.

Dow Environmental Fair, Pittsburg

The Dow Environmental Fair is scheduled for Saturday, May 25, at the Dow wetlands on the Pittsburg-Antioch Highway. The public is invited to attend this free event of nature exhibits, nature walks, and family activities. Sponsored by a partnership of several environmental, municipal, and industrial organizations, the fair features the Kirker Creek "We're All Downstream" Watershed Clean-up and "River of Words" Contest. Art and poetry created by Pittsburg Unified School District students on the theme "We're All Downstream" will be displayed. Call Lisa Anich at the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District for more information at (925) 672-6522.

Vice President's Report

MDAS Board Considers New Membership Tier

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS) prides itself on outstanding programs, numerous bird walks, local conservation efforts, education and outreach, and many other activities. MDAS truly makes a difference in preserving our natural heritage. And, with your help, we will continue to do so.

The National Audubon Society, our parent organization in New York, is shifting its financial support and focus away from local Audubon chapters and toward national and statewide issues, leaving the Chapters as the focusing vehicle for local issues. While we applaud their support of these important issues, your Board of Directors is very concerned because this shift creates financial hardships at the chapter level.

Our chapter was notified last year by National Audubon Society that it is phasing out its traditional policy of sharing membership dues with the chapters. We received \$9107 from National in fiscal year 1999-2000. That was reduced to \$8535 in fiscal year 2000-2001, and to \$6758 in fiscal year 2001-2002. For the fiscal year 2003 starting this June, our dues share will be reduced to about \$4200. By 2004, it will be ZERO.

Under the new policy, Chapters must develop and generate new members in order to receive any financial support from National Audubon Society. However, if NAS or California-Audubon (the statewide organization) recruits a new member, even when that member lives within the MDAS geographical area, MDAS will receive nothing to support local programs for those new members.

In the past, our dues share paid a major portion of the publication costs of our local newsletter, the *Quail*, allowing us to raise funds for local environmental education programs, local field trips, monthly membership meetings, and local conservation efforts. To put this loss in context of the entire MDAS budget, our total forecast revenues are about \$19,000 for the entire fiscal year. The cost to publish and mail the *Quail* is over \$11,000 per year. Obviously, this is a very serious development, not only to us, but also to all Audubon Chapters.

Your Board of Directors has been very cognizant of this situation and has been working to find solutions. Some of things we have done to partially offset this loss include instituting a fund raising campaign in the fall (thanks to everyone that participated), developing a revenue sharing relationship with Natural Origins Tea, and working on grant proposals to receive additional funding. Last year we also changed from 11 issues of the *Quail* each year to 10 issues.

As a way of dealing with this financial situation, your Board is currently exploring alternative membership tiers. Under its revised membership policy, National Audubon now permits two categories of members: National Members and Chapter-Only Members. The MDAS Board is considering creating a category "Chapter-Only Membership," with modest dues. The funds raised from the implementation of Chapter-Only Memberships will enable us to continue ALL of our current activities (including the *Quail*) and, hopefully, even expand some activities. Furthermore, all of these dues will be retained for local activities. A member would have choice of being a National Member, a Mt. Diablo Member, or both.

In the May issue of the *Quail* and at the May General Meeting we will present our plan. If anyone has any specific suggestions, please contact me at (925) 798-0303.

The MDAS Board thanks you for your continued support.
Happy Birding, Mike Williams, MDAS Vice President

Chilean Birding Adventure: Part II

by Hugh Harvey

Last month the *Quail* featured Part I of Hugh and Rosita Harvey's 18-day birding trip to Chile. This issue presents a day-by-day description of the wonderful birds that they saw.—editor

Some of more unusual species that we saw include the rare and unusual Black-headed Duck, a brood parasite that lays its eggs in the nest of another duck; soaring Andean Condors in the cordillera of the Andes Mountains; black fluffy balls of the Spot-flanked Gallinule chicks; a pair of wonderful, high-altitude Diademed Sandpiper-Plovers with their two chicks; the Magellanic Plover, which feeds its young from milk much as a dove does; the Golden-spotted Ground-Dove with its beautiful golden-speckled feathers; the magnificent male Magellanic Woodpecker, almost 18" long; the Chilean Woodstar, a hummingbird only 3 1/2" long, the Gray-breasted Seedsnipe, impressing its mate by standing erect, puffing out its chest and holding out its wings.

It will be difficult to summarize 18 days in a handful of paragraphs, but I will attempt to do so.

October 27, Day 1

This was arrival day for the group, before 8 a.m., in Santiago. Because we came four days early to leave most of our things with Rosita's parents, we spent the day traveling to the capital by bus. The group visited a place above Santiago named Farallones, but they were snowed out and unable to reach the desired elevation.

October 28, Day 2

The first full day of birding at up to 8,200 feet of elevation. We visited Banos Morales and Yeso Valley well above tree line surrounded by 15,000-foot high peaks. This was our best Andean Condor day (11), also Gray-breasted Seedsnipe displaying, White-sided Hillstar, five Ground-Tyrant species, Crag Chilia, Mustached Turca, Torrent Ducks, Yellow-rumped Siskin, and Mourning Sierra-Finch.

October 29, Day 3

We flew to Concepcion, birded the Bio-Bio River mouth, and a nearby marsh. Then we continued, crossing the country by bus. We passed through the city of Chillan and continued on toward Termas de Chillan, a thermal hot spring and ski resort about 50 miles east of the city. Our sightings included Great Grebe, Peruvian Booby, Guanay Cormorant, our first Black-necked Swans, Rosy-billed Pochard, Cinereous Harrier, Bi-colored

twice, once in the late afternoon, and again at night looking for owls. Highlights were White-throated Hawk, a flock of 12 Austral Parakeets, Barn Owl and Rufous-legged Owl (both heard only), Austral Pygmy Owl, Magellanic Woodpecker, Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet, Magellanic Tapaculo, and Patagonian Sierra-Finch.

October 31, Day 5

We birded up around the ski resort and hot springs of Termas de Chillan. After lunch we drove back to Chillan, then went south 108 miles to Collipulli before turning west another 22 miles to Angol. We celebrated Halloween at dinner in our hotel on the plaza. Our good birds today were Chilean Flicker, Rufous-banded Miner, Dark-bellied Cinclodes, White-throated Treerunner feeding young at a nest hole, Fire-eyed Ducon, Great Shrike-Tyrant, Rufous-tailed Plantcutter, and Black-chinned Siskin.

November 1, Day 6

An early start took us into the Araucaria forest of Nahuelbuta National Park. We were unable to cross through the park to the coast due to wet roads and returned to Angol before driving back to Concepcion for the night. Top sightings were a Culpeo (fox) chasing a rabbit across the road in front of us, Striped Woodpecker, Black-throated Huet-Huet, Chucao Tapaculo, and Patagonian Tyrant.

November 2, Day 7

We returned to Santiago, changed planes, and flew south 1350 miles to Punta Arenas. We had wonderful views of the Cordillera, including Volcan Villarica and Volcan Osorno. We traveled by bus north of the airport and out to the Patagonian Steppe where we enjoyed some of the famous winds. Highlights were our first Lesser Rheas and Guanacos, Chilean Flamingos, Ruddy-headed Goose, Barred Upland Goose, Crested Duck, Crested Caracara, Two-banded Plover, Magellanic Plover, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Least Seedsnipe, White-rumped Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Chilean Skua, Chocolate-vented Tyrant, and a Patagonian Hognosed Skunk heading across the short-grass steppe. (continued in the May *Quail*)



Hawk, Plumbeous Rail, Chilean Pigeon, Green-backed Firecrown, Des Murs' Wiretail, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Ochre-flanked Tapaculo, Spectacled Tyrant, and Grass Wren.

October 30, Day 4

We birded the Beech forest around our hotel, and then higher up around the hot springs hotel. We also visited a side-road

MDAS Enters Last Year of Atlas Effort

by Steve Glover

MDAS is entering the fifth and last year of our effort to obtain the observational data for the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas. The job that the Atlassers has done so far has been nothing short of phenomenal!

Having said that, this is no time to relax. We are 80% of the way through this thing, and the finish is in sight. What we are looking at now is cleaning up in a few blocks and targeting a few select species that seem to be poorly represented thus far. More on this below.

Blocks in Need of Help

A few blocks are still in need of some help from those of you who have pretty much wrapped up the blocks you have been working on. If you are interested in taking one of these on, please let me know. Since this is our last year, you have to be pretty darn certain that you will be able to devote some time to them. This would mainly include some blocks in the I-680 corridor, anywhere from Martinez to San Ramon. There are also some blocks in East County that could stand some clean-up if anyone wants to drive out there. Let me know as soon as possible so I can work on getting you a map and the data for the block.

Atlas Website

I completed the data entry for the first four years of the project and sent it off to Joel Herr to add into the website maps. He has finished updating the maps on his website to include last year's data. Go to www.flyingemu.com/ccosta to check it out. While you are there, please check your block(s) for any discrepancies and let me know how it looks. Don't panic, though. Sometimes incidental species have been reported from blocks without the assignee being aware of it. I have also made a few corrections, mostly in the observed and possible categories. In some cases, I have changed "observed" to "possible."

Target Species

There are several species that I hope to target this spring and summer that seem to be underrepresented. These may include

Sharp-shinned Hawk, all of the rails, all of the owls (though Barn is in pretty good shape), Common Poorwill, and Hooded Oriole. In addition, I am contemplating several days of as many of us as possible going out on a single day for certain things. One thing I would dearly love to get is a confirmation of Pileated Woodpecker. They were consistently reported last year from Redwood Regional Park, and I would bet they nest there, though there has never been a confirmation from either county. I will check into what the best time would be and try to get a bunch of us out in that entire area for most of a day and see what we can come up with.

A Breeding Bird Atlas maps all the bird species that breed in a given geographical area. Observations for the Breeding Bird Atlas are conducted during the peak of the nesting season, March through June. Atlassers follow a consistent methodology, based on specific criteria for possible, probable, and confirmed breeding.

When the atlas is completed, we will know what birds breed in Contra Costa and where they breed; and we'll have a sense of their abundance. The atlas will set up a baseline of accurate breeding bird information in Contra Costa that will be of great value to local bird conservation.

Field Trip Reports

Los Banos and Panoche Valley, Feb. 9 and 10—Eleven birdwatchers, 84 birds, beautiful weather, great views. Two Ferruginous Hawks were in the fields next to the meeting place in Gustine. Flocks of Ibis, Snipe, many ducks and shorebirds were along Santa Fe Grade Road. Thousands of Snow geese were flying over Merced. Flocks of Sand Hill Cranes were seen flying in late in the afternoon, as well as a flock of White fronted geese. Panoche Valley had scattered flocks of Horned Larks, Mountain Bluebirds, and Lark and Savannah Sparrows.—*Pat MacEachern*

Grizzly Island Wildlife Management Area, Feb. 6—Eighteen members and guests spent a foggy morning and a more pleasant afternoon at Grizzly Island and Rush Ranch. We saw 63 species with the highlights being 17 male Tule Elk, American Bittern, 10 duck species, Sora Rail well seen, Barn Owl, and Burrowing Owl.—*Maury Stern*

Tomales Bay State Park, Feb. 23—Eight members and guests had a very slow bird day with weather varying from warm sunshine to cool winds to mild showers. The birds were the quietest we have seen in a long time with 47 species seen. Highlights were three Loons, five Grebes, Black Scoter, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, no shorebirds, Pygmy Nuthatch, Winter Wren, and Townsend's Warbler.—*Maury Stern*

East Bay Cooper's Nests

by Allen Fish
Director, Golden Gate Raptor
Observatory

Our East Bay region may have some of the highest concentrations of urban-nesting Cooper's Hawks in the United States. In 2002, the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO) is conducting a thorough Cooper's nest search of Berkeley, Albany, and surrounding areas in order to assess these numbers.

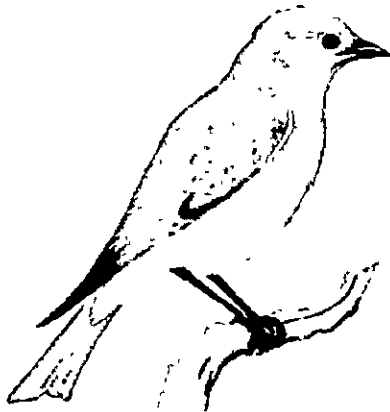
We'd like to get any reports of territorial or nesting adult Cooper's Hawks over the coming spring and summer, or any information regarding historical nest sites. Specific site information will be kept confidential although the season's results will be published in *the Pacific Raptor Report*. As with all GGRO data, knowledge gained will also be used to benefit the well-being of Cooper's Hawk populations whenever possible.

If you know of or suspect any East Bay Cooper's Hawk nest sites, or if you have questions regarding this study, please email or call Allen Fish, GGRO Director, at (415) 331-0730 or afish@ggnpa.org.

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. 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, April 4—Borges Ranch.

Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot of Borges Ranch, off Castle Rock Rd. in Walnut Creek. Leader: Maury Stern, 284-5980. Category 2

Saturday, April 6—Garin Regional

Park. Carpool leaves 7:15 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 in parking lot at end of Garin Rd. at 8 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

Thursday, April 11—Redwood

Regional Park. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd. just north of SR 24. Meet at park at 8:15 a.m. 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

Wednesday, April 17—Laurel Canyon-

Tilden 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 beginner's trip. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486. Category 2

Saturday, April 20—Pine Canyon, Mt.

Diablo State Park. Meet in parking lot at end of Castle Rock Rd. at 7:30 a.m. Hike up Pine Canyon. Be prepared to carry lunch and liquids. Spring migrants. Leader: Pat MacEachern. Category 3

Thursday, April 25—Del Puerto

Canyon. Carpool leaves at 7:45 a.m. from LaGonda Way in Danville. See Garin Regional Park field trip for directions to carpool meeting site on LaGonda and 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 by I-5 south. (Recommend stop at Westley Rest Area. There are no restroom facilities on trip until noon.) Yellow-breasted Chat, Costa's Hummingbird, and other goodies. Leader: Florence Bennett, 689-3106. 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.

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Visit Our Website at

<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

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

Chickadees, wrens, titmice, and nuthatches prefer a smaller house with a 1-1/8- to 1-1/4-inch hole size. The house should be mounted 6-10 feet up in a tree or foliage, at least 15 feet from feeders. These birds may have more than one brood each year. Bluebirds, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and swallows are larger birds and need bigger houses with larger hole sizes (1 1/2-1 9/16 inches). To attract Western Bluebirds, you need to live very near open space or grasslands.

Stop by and pick up your FREE copy of our Housing Guide. Each species has different and interesting facets to their nesting behavior. Watch for the male bluebird to feed the female and sing sweet warbled notes as he raises a quivering wing to further entice her. The male House Wren will work hard making 2 or 3 nests to attract a female. As part of courtship, he takes the female to each site to choose her favorite nest.

It's time to put out your oriole feeders. We have already received early sighting reports. Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles arrive by April, and they readily come to a nectar feeder. Early sightings have already been reported.

Black-headed Grosbeaks will be arriving soon. Their favorite food is sunflower seeds.

Observations

by Steve Glover

A flock of 50 **American White Pelicans** was along Jersey Island Rd. on 3/13 (SG).

Several **Great Blue Herons** were displaying and carrying sticks in the eucalyptus trees at the new McNabney Marsh Parking lot on 2/22 although there was no activity reported there when it was rechecked on 3/1 (RM). With the habitat at McNabney Marsh and all of the nearby eucalyptus, I have always wondered why there wasn't a heron rookery somewhere in the area. A **Snowy Egret** at Lake Anza on 2/23 was probably a very rare bird for Tilden Park (JP).

Two bright male **Eurasian Wigeons** were near McNabney Marsh at the Acme Landfill entrance on 2/23 (S&CH, L&CL). The pair of **Hooded Mergansers** in the creek in Pacheco near Pacheco Blvd and Center Ave were still present on 2/22 (RM). Five more "Hoodies" were in the creek at California and Newell in Walnut Creek on 3/16 (MP).

An **Osprey** was seen flying north over Sibley Volcanic Preserve in the Berkeley Hills on 3/16 (LT). March is a typical time for migrating Osprey in the Bay Area. A light-phase **Swainson's Hawk** was busy building a nest in an oak along Jersey Island Rd. near Bethel Island on 3/13 (SG). This site has been occupied by this species for at least the past five years.

Two **White-throated Swifts** near the end of Orwood Rd. and another eight birds nearby on Highway J-4 on 3/13 were a very rare sight in east county. For instance, in 150 trips to Piper Slough I never recorded this species once! (SG)

A flock of 30 **Violet-green Swallows** along Highway J-4 near Knightsen on 3/13 was an unusual sight on the Central Valley floor in Contra Costa County (SG). In 150 trips to Piper Slough I recorded Violet-greens only once. There appeared to be a massive movement of swallows, mostly **Cliffs** and **Barns**, on

this day with hundreds noted foraging over every pond in east county.

A **Hermit Warbler** at Inspiration Point, Tilden Park, on 3/16 may have been a very early migrant but more than likely wintered at this site as one was noted there into November. Hermit Warblers are rarely encountered in Contra Costa County in the winter (LT).

Observers: Steve Glover, Scott and Claudia Hein, Les and Cindy Lieurance, John Matheson, Marjorie Plant, John Poole, Larry Turnstall

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

MDAS Website Has New Look

The MDAS website is under construction and has already experienced a major facelift! Visit <<http://www.diabloaudubon.org/test.html>> and see the two beautiful photographs of Mt Diablo whose use has been donated by photographer Steven Joseph.

MDAS Asks for Email Addresses

MDAS wants to collect the email addresses of its members. The addresses would only be used by MDAS and would not be shared with any other organization. Please send an email to Ann McGregor, our Database Coordinator, at AnnMcG@Pacbell.net.

Problems with Quail Delivery?

Haven't gotten your *Quail* lately? Are you receiving duplicate copies? Is your issue going to the wrong address?

If you are having any problems with the delivery of your *Quail*, phone Ann MacGregor at 925-934-0906 or email her at AnnMcG@Pacbell.net. She will be glad to work with you on delivery issues.

Bay Restoration Boosted by Prop 40 Passage

Bay restoration efforts received a huge boost on March 5 when California voters went to the polls and voted in favor of Prop 40, the \$2.6-billion state park bond. More than half of Tuesday's voters (56%) agreed that California should provide essential funding to protect our air, water, parks and open space.

Under Prop 40, the Wildlife Conservation Board will receive \$300 million for land acquisition. The funds will be used to restore habitats that promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, as well as protect wildlife living in wetlands and in the delicate riparian zone along Bay Area rivers, streams, and creeks. An additional \$375 million will go towards the protection of water resources. The passage of Prop 40 is also a major victory for efforts to purchase and restore approximately 16,000 acres of industrial salt ponds from Cargill Salt in the South Bay. Until Prop 40, there was not a firm funding source for this acquisition.

Audubon is very excited that Prop 40 passed and thanks everyone who supported this unprecedented opportunity to protect and preserve our environment for this and future generations.

Earth Day 2002

Come Celebrate the Bay! The theme for Earth Day this year is "Celebrate the Bay." Over 40 organizations will be hosting a wide variety of Earth Day events. Activities include hands-on six five restoration events throughout the Bay Area—at McNabney Marsh (see story on p 3), and in San Francisco, the South Bay, Oakland, Marin and Petaluma. Bring your friends and family for a few hours of exercise, education and restoration!

To find out more and to register for Audubon's Earth Day events, check out our web site at www.AudubonSFbay.org. For a complete list of Earth Day festivals and other restoration events, please visit <www.BayAreaEarthDay.net>.

—from The Bay Bulletin, March 11, 2002, A monthly e-publication from www.AudubonSFbay.org

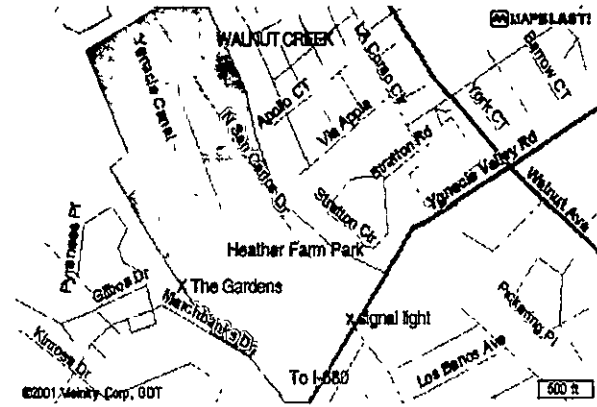
CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. Mark your calendars now so that you won't miss any of our meetings at The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek: April 4, May 2, and June 6.

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

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

End-of-the-year potluck, June 6.



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

National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (published 10 times a year). 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. The Quail may be subscribed to by non-members for \$10/year. To join Audubon, send a check payable to NAS to Joe Frank, Treasurer, 4765 Olive Dr., Concord, CA 94521. To subscribe to the Quail, make the check out to MDAS and mail to Joe Frank. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor.

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MDAS Board Changes Chapter's Membership Bylaws

By Mike Williams
MDAS Vice President

In the April issue of the *Quail*, we discussed the changes occurring at National Audubon and their impact on the local chapters. To summarize those changes, National is withdrawing all dues sharing with the chapters except for new members that we recruit in the future. The result is a loss of \$9,000 of our operating revenue starting next year.

In the past, our dues share from National paid a major portion of the publication costs of the *Quail*, our newsletter, allowing us to raise funds for local environmental education programs, local field trips, monthly membership meetings, and local conservation efforts. To put this loss in context of the entire MDAS budget, our total forecast expenses are about \$19,000 for the entire fiscal year. The cost to publish and mail the *Quail* is over \$11,000 per year.

Under its revised membership policy, National Audubon now permits two categories of members: National Members and Chapter-Only Members. The MDAS Board is utilizing this option by proposing the creation of a category, "Chapter-Only Membership," with modest dues of \$25 a year. The funds raised from the implementation of Chapter-Only Memberships will enable us to continue ALL of our current activities (including the *Quail*) and, hopefully, even expand some activities. Furthermore, all of these dues will be retained for local activities.

The Board has decided that the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society dues will be \$25 per year starting September 1, 2002. Anyone applying before September 1 can join for only \$20 for the first year.

Members will have three membership options: National Membership, Mt. Diablo Membership, or both. It will not be necessary to be a member of National Audubon Society to be a member of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society or *vice versa*. However, to receive the *Quail* after September you must be a member of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society.

MDAS prides itself on outstanding programs, numerous birdwalks, local conservation efforts, education and outreach, and many other activities. MDAS truly makes a difference in preserving our natural heritage. And, with your help, we will continue to do so.

Please read the proposed changes in Mount Diablo Audubon Society Bylaws and Constitution (p.3) in this issue of the *Quail*. These changes will be discussed and voted on at the May 2 general meeting. Attend that meeting to cast your vote for these changes to make the continued growth and prosperity of Mt. Diablo possible.

Photographer to Speak at May Meeting

by Maury Stern

Jon Klein, a nature photographer, will show slides of natural subjects that he has photographed over the last 16 years since he was 9 years old.

Jon has recently begun to support himself with his wildlife and nature photography. He is from Willits and sells his work in Ft. Bragg and Mendocino where I saw some of it recently and invited him to speak and show slides to MDAS. He will bring work for sale. His photos are outstanding.

Birding Information

Debby Kirshen will talk on bird adaptations for flight.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, May 2**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).

6:30 p.m.—Doors open

7 p.m.—Birding Information

7:25 p.m.—Business meeting

7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing

8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your cup! We're serving Natural Origins Tea too!

June Potluck

Plan now to attend our final program of the year, our annual potluck on Thursday, June 6. Traditionally members bring a few slides (no more than 10) to share, so now is the time to start going through your photographs and pulling out the best and most interesting shots!

MDAS Speaks out on Dutch Slough Project

By Joel Summerhill

As part of our mission and responsibility, MDAS comments on projects that affect birds and wildlife habitat. One such project under consideration is the development of Dutch Slough near the city of Oakley in East County.

One of our Board Members, Joel Summerhill, who lives in East County, represented MDAS at an Oakley City Council meeting April 8. This is a summary of his remarks to the Council members.—Editor

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's mission is to conserve and restore California's ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefits of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. For that reason, MDAS supports rational, habitat-sensitive land-use practices in Contra Costa.

The 1200 acres of Dutch Slough were diked, drained, and have been used as dairy farms for decades. CALFED has reached a purchase agreement with the current property owners of Dutch Slough. CALFED plans to restore the wetlands at the Slough except for 100 acres that will be given to Oakley for community uses.

The owners are willing to sell the property for \$10 million below its appraised value in order to aid the wetlands restoration.

The City of Oakley opposes CALFED's proposal because it wants the land to be used for residential and commercial development. Members of the Oakley City Council have expressed concern about the potential loss of tax revenue if Dutch Slough is restored as wetlands.

Many studies have concluded that suburban growth does not pay for itself and that the costs of development and maintenance often exceed tax revenues.

Years ago, nearby Antioch issued multi-million-dollar bonds to pay for infrastructure needed for development. Now current residents want for relief from congested roads, crowded schools, and overburdened services. But Antioch is locked into development agreements, and it needs

continued development to pay off existing bonds.

The reasons for the costs of development exceeding revenues are intuitively obvious. New infrastructure to serve the proposed 4500 to 9800 homes in Dutch Slough would have to be built over long distances, requiring more miles of roads and sewer and water lines than would be needed if development is located closer to Oakley city center. Storm drainage and flood control measures will also drain tax revenues. More sewage treatment plants, schools, libraries, and other improvements will have to be built and maintained to serve the new, spread-out, development. More firemen and police services will be needed to cover 1200 acres of homes and businesses.

The reasons for restoring Dutch Slough as wetlands are important not only to this area of East County but also for all of California. The Delta's wetlands regularly harbor as much as 15 percent of the waterfowl on the Pacific Flyway, which is the primary bird migration corridor that extends from the southern tip of South America to Alaska. The Delta wetlands provide stopover, wintering, and breeding habitat for vast numbers of waterfowl, but development has reduced the amount of wetlands significantly. Dutch Slough offers a unique opportunity for restoration and preservation of tidal, riparian, and seasonal wetlands and upland habitat. This habitat is desperately needed.

As a restored marsh, Dutch Slough will offer excellent habitat for fish, birds, and amphibians. It will offer opportunity for scientific study as well as recreational and educational activities. Much can be learned from efforts to restore Dutch Slough as a tidal marsh. Scientists can learn how to re-introduce wildlife and plant life and how to create a functioning ecosystem. Hypotheses in hydrodynamics, salinity, temperature, and tidal conditions can be tested, providing data that serve all of California.

It can provide temporary storage of winter water—a water bank that is needed to serve all the new residents who

have moved here since the last drought in the 1980s.

As a wetlands, Dutch Slough will have significant environmental and economic value for humans and wildlife. But as sprawl, it would contribute to air and water pollution, increased traffic congestion, lower quality of life, and lost opportunity. It will mean higher costs and long-term debt for the current residents of Oakley. For these reasons, we oppose the development of Dutch Slough. We support the CALFED project. We applaud the property owners who have decided to sell this land to CALFED, thereby ensuring a legacy of nature for future generations. We urge CALFED to fund this purchase immediately.

The Quail

is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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Proposed Changes to MDAS Bylaws

Below are the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society that were passed on April 11, 2002, by the officers and Board members of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. Members will have the opportunity to ratify these changes at the next general meeting on Thursday, May 2. The revisions are shown in italics below the current text.

Article II. Purpose

The primary objective of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society is to create widespread public appreciation of the value and need for conservation of soil, water, plants and wildlife and the relation of their wise treatment and intelligent use to human progress.

Article II. Mission Statement

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society is committed to the sustainable balance of our community's people, birds, other wildlife and habitat through conservation, education and advocacy.

BYLAWS

Section 1. Any person interested in the purposes of the Society is eligible for membership.

Section 2. Classes of membership shall be the same as those maintained by the National Audubon Society. Affiliate memberships in effect prior to the date of this Constitution will be honored.

Revision: Audubon Membership will consist of two tiers of Members: National Audubon (hereinafter called "National") Members and Mt. Diablo Audubon Society (hereinafter called "Mt. Diablo") Members.

Section 3. Annual dues of membership shall be established by the National Audubon Society and shall include the following categories or other that may be set by the National Audubon Society: regular, family, student, sustaining, supporting, contributing, donor, life.

Revision: Annual dues of National membership shall be established by the National Audubon Society and shall include membership categories set by the National Audubon Society.

Annual membership dues of Mt. Diablo shall be established by the Board of Directors of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society and shall include membership categories set by the Board of Directors of Mt. Diablo.

Section 4. All classes of members shall enjoy all the rights and privileges pertaining to the members of both this and the National Audubon Society, with the exception that those paying affiliate dues do not receive national rights and privileges.

Revision: Effective ???????, membership in Mt. Diablo Audubon Society shall be limited to persons paying annual dues to Mt. Diablo. Members of only Mt. Diablo are entitled to attend and participate in all function and activities of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, and to receive the Quail newsletter. Members of only Mt. Diablo will not receive National rights and privileges.

Members of National, residing in the Mt. Diablo area, will be considered affiliate members of Mt. Diablo and are entitled to attend and participate in all function and activities of Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. Members of only National will not receive the Quail newsletter.

The Board of Directors of Mt. Diablo may establish fees, or request donations, for participating in any functions or activities of Mt. Diablo by non-members of Mt. Diablo.

Section 5. Membership dues shall be payable at the time of application and shall be effective from the date of election and, in the case of regular, family, student, sustaining, supporting, contributing and donor members, yearly thereafter. In the case of life members, dues shall be paid in full in one sum at the time of application and will be accepted as of the time of election.

Revision: Mt. Diablo membership dues shall be payable at the time of application and shall be effective from the date of election, and annually thereafter.

Section 6. Should renewal of membership dues not be paid within six months after the time they are payable, a member so in default shall forthwith be dropped from the rolls.

Revision: Should renewal of membership dues not be paid within two months after the time they are payable, a member so in default may forthwith be dropped from the rolls.

(note: changed from 6 to 2 months).

Continued on page 4

Bylaws Changes

(cont. from p. 3)

Section 7. Non-members may receive the newsletter by paying an annual subscription fee to be determined by the Board of Directors of Mt. Diablo.

Revision: (to be deleted)

Article III. Officers

Add Section 6. The Vice-President shall assist the President in the performance of duties. The Vice-President shall preside in conducting meetings of the Society in the event the President is unable to conduct a meeting in person and may be assigned special projects by the Board of Directors or the President.

Article VI. Standing Committees

Add Section 11 The Executive Director shall handle special projects such as, but not limited to, web site operation, corporate relationships, and other projects as assigned by the Board of Directors or the President, and shall have full voting rights of other Directors.

General Revision: All references to "Society" shall be changed to "Mt. Diablo."

Election of Officers for 2002-03 Slated

In accordance with the bylaws 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 2002-2003.

President Mike Williams
Vice-president Joe Frank*
Treasurer Joe Frank*
Secretary Mike Tischler
Vice-president, Conservation

Jimm Edgar (acting)

The election of officers will be held at the May 3 general meeting.

*If elected, Joe Frank will hold two offices jointly, Vice-President and Treasurer.

Volunteers Needed for McNabney Marsh Bird Survey

The McNabney Marsh Advisory Committee is requesting the Mt. Diablo Audubon to be the lead participant in a new annual breeding season bird survey to be conducted at the marsh.

On April 9, Steve Glover and Bob Wisecarver of MDAS met with Dick Bogart of the Mountain View Sanitary District (one of the Advisory Committee participants) and Mike Rugg of California Fish & Game to work out details.

Basically, the McNabney Marsh Advisory Committee wants to establish an annual breeding bird survey to cover the period from April 1 to June 15 each year.

Volunteers are needed to do a weekly or biweekly count. Volunteers will have considerable flexibility in scheduling their participation; they can select the particular day of the week that they will

survey as well as their frequency of participation and the amount of time they spend doing the survey.

A typical day survey period is expected to be 2-3 hours with volunteers moving from one location to another around the marsh. Forms will be provided to indicate species, numbers, and notes on observed nesting activity. A map will be provided to indicate the next location. The results of each month's sighting will be published in the *Quail*.

Please review your calendar. We will need all the volunteers we can get. Whether it be only once, once a month, or twice a month—your time will help us meet our goal of a meaningful survey. Please call Bob Wisecarver, who is coordinating this MDAS effort, at (925) 935-5095.

Details will be covered at the Chapter meeting May 2. Let's make Al McNabney proud of our efforts!

Thinking of a Mother's Day Gift? Think of Teas of India Just in Time for Mother's Day! \$1 off Regular Price!!

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REMEMBER—Teas of India donates 20% of the proceeds from your purchases to the Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

Chilean Birding Adventure: Part III

by Hugh Harvey

November 3, Day 8

We crossed the Strait of Magellan and the ferry captain signed and stamped a certificate for me to prove it. We drove out from the city of Porvenir into even more wind and along Bahía Inútil, or Useless Bay. We walked, rather labored, across a giant field of "Cushion Plants," a hummock-shaped plant, and finally saw our target bird, the Black-throated Finch. Other top sightings were Magellanic Penguin, Silvery Grebe, Magellanic Diving-Petrel, both King and Blue-eyed Cormorants, the white form of Upland Goose, both Flying and Flightless Steamer-ducks, and Austral Canastero, and Southern Sea Lion.

November 4, Day 9

We drove north about 80 miles to re-cross the strait to Punta Delgada, then drove to Pali-Aike National Park on the Argentine border. Here we found a most handsome Gaucho right out of the movies. Good sightings include White-tufted Grebe, a Rock Cormorant colony, Silver Teal, Rufous-chested Dotteral, Magellanic Horned Owl, Short-billed Miner, Buff-winged Cinclodes, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant, Patagonian Yellow-Finch, Argentinean Gray Fox, Commerson's Dolphin, and at our first stop right outside the bus windows, the bird we worked so hard to see the day before, the Black-throated Finch.

November 5, Day 10

One of our shortest birding days, we visited a small marsh area on the edge of the city. This spot could be the Al McNabney Marsh of Punta Arenas. It is in danger of being filled by the Coca-Cola Company. Highlights were Ashy-headed goose, Speckled Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Red-gartered and White-winged Coots, and Austral Negríto. We bade farewell to Enrique Couve and flew back to Santiago where we spent the night.

November 6, Day 11

Being joined by our second Chilean guide, Manuel Marin, we traveled by bus to the coast at Vina del Mar. Birding through coastal chaparral, we made a big stop at Laguna El Peral, a place Rosita and I call the Swans' Lake. Almost

completely surrounded by houses, and now fenced for its protection, Rosita and I first saw this bird sanctuary 11 years ago on our first trip to Chile together. Located about 12 miles south of the Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda's home at Isla Negra, the lagoon is a hot spot of marsh birds and waterfowl. We enjoyed wonderful views of Silvery, Pied-billed, White-tufted and Great Grebes, Black-necked Swans, Yellow-billed Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Red Shoveler, Wren-like Rushbird, Many-colored Rush-tyrant, and Yellow-winged Blackbird. In the coastal hills we saw a Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle dismember a rabbit, Fire-eyed Diucon, Picui Ground-Dove, and an unusual sighting of a Grison, a member of the Weasel family.

November 7, Day 12

An early departure allowed us a full morning of pelagic birding out of the port of Quintero. Among the birds that we saw were Magellanic and Humboldt Penguins, Pacific (Buller's) Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, Westland Petrel, Cape Petrel, DeFilippi's Petrel, and Pink-footed Shearwater.

November 8, Day 13

Birding our way back to Santiago by bus, we stopped in the coastal range where we only heard the White-throated Tapaculo, except for Rosita. We then stopped at the Lampa Marsh where we waded out to see the American Painted Snipe.

November 9, Day 14

After flying to the northern coastal city of Arica, we went out into the Luta and Azapa River valleys where we found a great variety of birds. Specialties of the north include Little Blue Heron, Puna Ibis, Belcher's Gull, Pacific (White-winged) Dove, Croaking Ground-Dove, the beautiful Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian Sheartail, Peruvian Elaenia, a nesting Vermilion Flycatcher, Peruvian Martin, and Peruvian Meadowlark. One of our members saw species #4400 on her life list with the Peruvian Thick-Knee.

November 10, Day 15

Our first stop of the day was south of Arica in a quebrada, a desert canyon,

where we were very lucky to find the Tamarugo Conebill. We also walked through an orchard where we saw three hard-to-find Chilean Woodstars. This small hummingbird is being crowded out by the more aggressive Peruvian Sheartail.

November 11, Day 16

One of our biggest days, we birded around the hotel early before driving up to Lauca National Park and Lago Chungara. At 14,760 feet above sea level, this lake is considered the highest lake in the world. The beautiful Volcan Parínicota, 20,800 feet, stands behind the lake. Along the way we stopped at a "bofidal," a wet area of small, grassy hummocks. Though we were removing our sweaters and jackets because of the hot sun, ice was still along many of the rivulets of water. Here we found the White-winged Diuca-Finch, Cream-winged Cinclodes, White-winged Cinclodes, and a Viscacha. This was one of the truly special days of the trip, though a number of us suffered from the combined affects of the high altitude and exhaust gas leaks in our vehicles.

November 12, Day 17

After a good night's rest, we birded around the hotel and on the edges of the town of Putre. We celebrated the birthday of one member of our group at our farewell dinner. Among the highlights were Aplomado Falcon, Willet, Andean Hillstar (a hummingbird which can perch on the ground), Grayish Miner, Blackhooded Sierra Finch, and Hooded Siskin.

November 13, Day 18

An early breakfast was followed by a quick trip to the beach area north of Arica, and the Port area. A midday flight returned us to Santiago's airport where we parted from the group. The others had various flights that evening back to the United States or Canada, while Rosita and I were just beginning our extended visit of two months with her family. Top sightings were the many Peruvian Boobies, Peruvian Pelicans, Gray Gulls, Franklin's Gulls, and Inca Terns, all seen at the Port.

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. 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, May 1, Ida Clayton Road. Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from the southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. This area is north of Calistoga in the Napa County mountains. This is a car birding trip with no meeting place in Sonoma County. The carpooling is needed due to limited parking on some roads. For information, call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Saturday, May 4—Mines Road. Because of limited parking along Mines Road, carpooling is essential. Carpools leave LaGonda Way in Danville at 7:30 a.m. Meet at LaGonda Way in Danville. From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about 1/4 m north to El Pintado. Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Lawrence's Goldfinch are possible. 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.

Thursday, May 9, Mitchell Canyon. Meet at 8 a.m. in Mitchell Canyon parking lot. There is a \$2.50 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. Usually hot! Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 3

Wednesday, May 15—South Gate, Mt. Diablo State Park. Carpool leaves 8 a.m. Mines Road field trip for directions to carpool meeting site on LaGonda and El Pintado. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in first parking lot on left after entering South Gate. Could be hot! Bring water. \$2.50 entrance fee. Sage, Rufous-crowned, and maybe Black-chinned Sparrows. Leader: Jimm Edgar, 658-2330 Category 2

Saturday, May 18, East Contra Costa County. Carpool leaves at 7 a.m. from southwest corner of Sun Valley parking lot. Or meet at 7:40 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: Joel Summerhill, 753-0862 Category 2

Wednesday, May 22, West Briones. Meet at 7:30 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 tails. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Thursday, May 30, Caswell State Park. Carpool leaves at 7:15 a.m. Mines Road field trip for directions to carpool meeting site on LaGonda and El Pintado. Caswell Memorial SP is located along the Stanislaus River near Ripon. East on I-580 and I-205, north on I-5 east again on SR 120, south on Hwy 99, take the Austin Rd. exit and go south to road's end at park entrance. Park entrance fee. Be prepared for mosquitoes and hot weather. The park's 258 acres protect riparian oak woodland and number of endangered animal species. Bank Swallows have been seen. Leader: Maury Stern, 925-284-5980 Category 2

Migratory Bird Day

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), May 11, celebrates a unique aspect of American wildlife—migratory birds. IMBD fosters an awareness of the millions of birds that migrate through the United States in the spring and fall as well as how and where they live and how they can be conserved.

These neotropical migrants reside here only for a brief time on their way to somewhere else. Almost 350 species of migratory birds spend their summers in Canada and the United States and their winters in Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Most are common birds—warblers, tanagers, thrushes, and orioles. Although many species are not in immediate danger, some are declining in numbers.

Here's some ideas on how to celebrate IMBD:

- Take a non-birder on a field trip.
- Volunteer at McNabney Marsh.
- Put up some bird feeders.
- Let CALFED and your County Supervisors know that Dutch Slough should be restored as a wetlands.

MDAS Plans Weekend Field Trip to Yuba Pass

On Saturday and Sunday, June 22-23, MDAS is sponsoring a weekend trip to Yuba Pass. Saturday will be spent birding in the Yuba Pass area for mountain birds. Sunday we will be in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Directions will be in the June *Quail*. But make motel reservations now. Closest motels are in Sierra City 18 miles down Hwy 49; choices are limited and "rustic." Herrington's Sierra Pines, (530-862-1151) is probably the best; Buckhorn Lodge (800-991-1170) has new cabins. Sierra Skies RV Park (530-862-1122) has some cabins as well as RV spaces. Sierra Chalet, 530-862-1110. There are campgrounds (vault toilets, no showers, piped water) at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Leaders will be Hugh and Rosita Harvey, 932-4715. Trip requires driving and walking, some of it over rough terrain. Last year the group saw 116 species.

Observations

by Steve Glover

American White Pelicans were noted frequently: Three were near the Pittsburg Marina on 3/19 (SG), 45 were over Jersey Island on 3/31 (JM), flocks of 6 and 16 were flying east over the Antioch waterfront on 4/2 (SG), and 6 were at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 4/9 (SG).

Two **Cattle Egrets** were along Delta Rd., Knightsen, on 4/11 (SG), but this is completely overshadowed by a belated report of 160 along Delta Rd. on 1/1 (RM).

A blue-phase **Snow Goose** was along Delta Rd. near Knightsen on 2/23 (RM). There are only about 5 previous County records. A pair of **Redheads**, always very scarce birds in the county, were at the Brentwood Sewage Ponds on Sunset Rd. on 4/11 (SG).

A migrant **Osprey** was soaring north of I-680 and Stone Valley Rd., Alamo, on 3/27 (SG). Yet another **Red-shouldered Hawk** nest was found in East County. This time it was on occupied nest on Empire Rd. south of Oakley on 4/11 (SG). As mentioned previously, this species did not nest at all in the County until the very late 70s, and they appear to be increasing in East County as well. Swainson's Hawks are also increasing in East County, but a nesting pair immediately adjacent to Hwy 4 near downtown Brentwood on 4/11 were especially daring (SG). Nineteen Swainson's at Holland Tract near Knightsen on 2/14 were probably a part of the wintering flock rather than spring migrants (RM).

Several gobbling **Wild Turkeys** at Morgan Territory Reg. Preserve on 4/4 were the furthest east yet that they have been

found in their current range expansion in the County (SG). It seems likely that they will soon occupy almost all of the wooded portions of the Contra Costa.

Western Gulls have always been thought of as rare in the Contra Costa east of about Bay Point, but in recent years there have been several sightings further east. On 3/19 there was an adult at the Antioch Marina and two more adults at the Pittsburg Marina (SG).



At least one **Rufous Hummingbird** was at the Antioch Marina on 3/19 (SG). Though they are found fairly commonly around chaparral and at feeders, they are detected less often in the Delta region.

Yet another **Lewis's Woodpecker** was found this winter, this time along Camino Diablo near Byron on 2/21 (RM). After no reports for a decade there have been several reports the past two winters.

Another belated report was of an estimated 200 **Common Ravens** on 1/1 at the Richmond Landfill (RM). This is the new County high count for this rapidly-increasing bird, and they may be more common here than anywhere in the County.

Though **Common Yellowthroats** are common residents in marshy areas of the County, they are rarely detected as migrants, so one in oak woodland at Morgan Territory Reg. Preserve on 4/4 was of interest (SG).

Observers: Steve Glover, Jeff Mohamed, Roger Muskat



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

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

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

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

Upcoming Activities

Birding Optics Workshop, Sat., May 4, 10:30 a.m.

Trying to select the right optics for local birdwatching or that next birding trip? Join us at WBU for a 45-minute workshop on "How to buy Birding Optics." There will be many brands of binoculars and scopes on display, including the Eagle Optics Ranger binoculars: water and fog proof, close focus under 6 feet, crystal clear, and a lifetime warranty. Call for reservations, as seating is limited.

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with WBU on Sat., May 11

- Serenescapes will have available many varieties of plants to attract birds and butterflies.
- Native Bird Connection will have a program with both a Peregrine and a Prairie Falcon.

Birdfeeding Tips

It's time to put out your oriole feeders. Both Hooded and Bullock's Orioles 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. These are the most spectacular birds that we can attract to our backyards during the summer. Please report all oriole sightings to WBU. We are keeping track and mapping all sightings.

Black-headed Grosbeaks are back. They usually start arriving in April and stay until August or September. These birds love sunflower seeds. They nest in our backyards and seem to return each year to reclaim the same territory.

Lesser Goldfinch will continue to visit your thistle feeders through out the spring and summer. The males are now in their full breeding colors—beautiful lemon yellow breasts, dark green or black back and white wing patches.

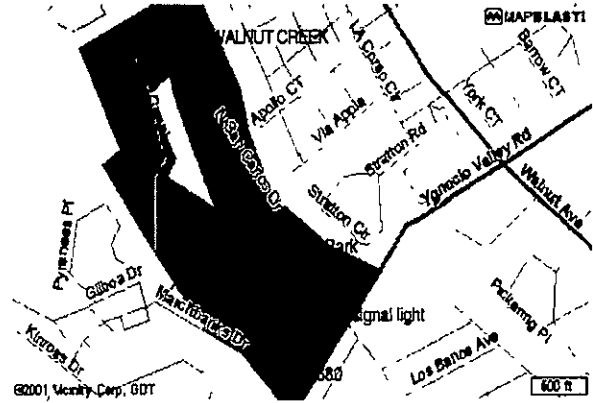
CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. Our meetings are at The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek. The remaining meetings are May 2 and June 6.

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

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

June 6—End-of-the-year potluck. All are invited. Details will be in June Quail.



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

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 934-0906. National Audubon Society membership includes the bimonthly Audubon magazine and the Quail (published 10 times a year) Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years Seniors and students only \$15; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join Audubon, send a check payable to NAS to Joe Frank, Treasurer, 4765 Olive Dr., Concord, CA 94521. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send exchange bulletins for MDAS to the editor, 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.

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Next Deadline: June 7

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Mike Williams

Your Board of Directors is very pleased with the almost unanimous support of MDAS members to the new Chapter-only membership plan that has been discussed in recent issues of the *Quail* and at the general meetings.

The successful implementation of this plan will provide for the financial security of our chapter for years to come. A few highlights of the plan are:

- Chapter dues are only \$25 a year per household. As one MDAS member said, "That's only about \$2 per month, or about one visit to Starbucks." If you join before September, the cost is even lower—\$20.
- All dues are retained locally for use by our MDAS Chapter, instead of being retained by National Audubon for expenses and projects identified in New York City.
- No longer must you belong to National Audubon to be considered an Audubon member. You can belong just to MDAS.
- To receive the *Quail*, you must be a Chapter member.
- Remember with your dues, we will be able to continue
 - Publishing ten issues of the *Quail*.
 - Holding ten general meetings a year with interesting speakers.
 - Supporting local environmental activities.
 - Distributing Audubon Adventures to teachers and students (in the last 12 months, MDAS has provided Audubon Adventures to 70 teachers).
- Offering all our birdwalks.

Hope to see you at the June Potluck.
Happy birding this summer,
Mike Williams

Potluck Slated for June Meeting

MDAS will hold its annual end-of-the-year potluck on Thursday, June 6, at the Heather Farms Garden Center. (See p. 8 for directions.) The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. Members should bring a dish—salad, casserole, entree, 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.

Dinner will be followed by a short business meeting. Then we will be entertained by the ever-popular, member-provided slide program. Bring ten or fewer slides of your birding adventures.

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 for

an evening of birding, slides, and an array of delicious dishes.

There will be no general meeting in July or August. The next general meeting is Thursday, September 5, at the Gardens at Heather Farms.

MDAS Officers Elected

MDAS elected officers at its May 2 general meeting.

Mike Williams was elected MDAS President; Joe Frank as both Vice President and Treasurer; and Mike Tischler Secretary. The newly elected officers will begin serving their one-year term of office in September. Thank you for leading our Chapter during challenging times!

MDAS Dues Are Due

MDAS Adopts New Chapter-only Membership Category

By very large majority, MDAS members voted at the May general meeting to institute the new membership category, Chapter-Only Member. Members also voted to adopt local dues of \$25 a year per household.

All National Audubon Society members who want to continue to receive the *Quail* and support the activities of the Mt Diablo Audubon Chapter must send their dues check to Anne McGregor, membership chairperson. This issue of the *Quail* includes a membership application form (p. 7) to include with your dues check. Additional applications are available by calling Ann at 968-1677 or at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill. Applications will also be available at all general meetings.

As discussed in the two previous issues of the *Quail*, National is withdrawing all dues sharing with the chapters except for new members that we recruit in the future. The result is a loss of \$9,000 of our annual operating revenue starting next year.

The creation of a category, "Chapter-Only Membership" with dues of \$25 a year will enable MDAS to continue its activities. ALL of these dues will stay in your chapter.

Connections**Sometimes the Birds Win****California Condors Produce Historic Offspring**

For the first time in 18 years, a condor egg laid in the wild has been hatched in the wild. The egg was hatched in a nest in the rugged back country of the Los Padres National Forest in California's Ventura County. Both parents were reared in captivity at the Los Angeles Zoo and the San Diego Wild Animal Park, and then released into the wild at the age of one by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1995.

"It's very exciting," said Mike Barth, USFWS's supervisory wildlife biologist for condor recovery efforts in southern California. "The significance of this hatching for the condor program is so much greater than the event itself."

For two months, the condor pair shared incubation duties, spending up to a week on the egg at any one time.

A video camera allowed Dr. Allen Mee of the Zoological Society of San Diego to watch the historic hatching. "The female, R8, went into the cave at around midday," Mee said. "The male, W0, was sitting on the already cracked egg. She stared at her mate for a while, waiting for him to leave, but he just stared back. Then she nudged him off the egg, pushing her head under his tail."

"In attempting to incubate the egg, she inadvertently crushed the egg shell, exposing the chick," continued Mee. "For several hours she was restless and appeared confused, trying to incubate both the chick and the egg pieces. Eventually she settled down on the newborn chick. It was just incredible."

Since the hatching, W0 and R8 have been excellent parents, feeding and caring for the chick in textbook fashion. Observers will be cautiously optimistic until this chick fully develops.

Four other condor nest sites have been observed this year—two more in California and two in the Grand Canyon in Arizona. The number of breeding pairs

is increasing every year; and with every attempt at breeding, the condor pairs gain valuable experience.

There are 63 condors now living in the wild in California and Arizona, 18 in field pens ready for release, and 104 in captivity at the Los Angeles Zoo, San Diego Wild Animal Park, and the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. Seven more captive-bred juveniles will be released in the Sespe Wilderness Area in Ventura County this spring.

The goal of the California Condor Recovery Plan is to establish two geographically separate populations, one in California and the other in Arizona, each with 150 birds and at least 15 breeding pairs.

Whooping Cranes Return to Wisconsin Unaided

Five whooping cranes that were taught to migrate by following an ultralight aircraft made their way back to Wisconsin on their own in April.

The cranes, part of an experimental flock of cranes reintroduced to the wild last year by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, returned to central Wisconsin after a 10-day migration of about 1,175 miles from Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Florida. The cranes are part of an attempt to establish a second migratory flock of North America's largest and most endangered cranes.

The return north is the cranes' first unassisted migration, and they were guided only by their natural instincts.

Last October eight young whooping cranes left Wisconsin led by an ultralight aircraft piloted by a member of Operation Migration, Inc. Following the ultralight, the cranes made a 50-day, 1,228-mile migration through seven states on their way to new wintering grounds in Florida. During the migration, one was electrocuted by power lines, and

bobcats killed another two near their roosting area during the winter.

The five remaining whooping cranes made the trip to Wisconsin much more quickly than many expected. While this is not uncommon for the existing wild whooping cranes, it was cause for excitement for the study's project members.

Up to 20 crane chicks that hatched at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland will be trained this year to join the new Wisconsin flock. The sole wild flock, made up of about 120 birds, now winters at Aransas NWR in Texas, where a disaster, like a major storm or an oil spill, could wipe out the entire population in the wild.

The Quail

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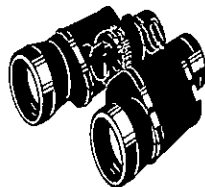
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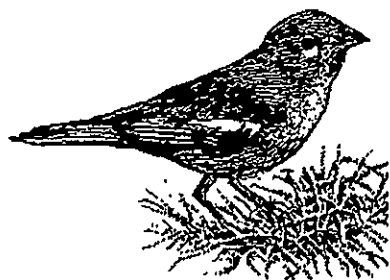
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Observations

by Steve Glover



Cattle Egret sightings included a flock of 35 on Delta Rd. on 4/21 (JS,GC) and 25 near there on 4/30 (SG). A **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was an unusual visitor to the Little Farm at Tilden Park on 4/20 (JP)



Northern Parula

A nesting pair of **Sharp-shinned Hawks** on 5/8 at Morgan Territory Regional Preserve on the eastern flank of Mt. Diablo was just the second confirmation of nesting for the Breeding Bird Atlas project (SG). A nesting pair of **Swainson's Hawks** near Brentwood on 4/21 were in the tenth block in which they have been confirmed during the atlas project (JS,GC)

Least Terns have apparently returned once again to the area around the Albany Crescent, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, beginning with a report of eight birds there on 4/23 (DA).

Though **Costa's Hummingbirds** are surely annual in the county during the spring they are still recorded only infrequently at best, so a male in Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park (MDSP), on 4/22 was more than noteworthy (DW) Another or the same Costa's was reported there again on 4/28 (BM).

A **Dusky Flycatcher** at Morgan Territory Regional Preserve 5/8 was a rarity for the county although it seems certain that small numbers go undetected here each spring (SG). We received a second-hand report of a pair of nesting **Say's Phoebes** with fledglings on the north flank of Mt. Diablo near Clayton in mid-

April (fide Malcolm Sproul). This is just the second for the Breeding Bird Atlas project and is now the most northerly pair known to breed in California!

A high concentration of 21 migrant **Swainson's Thrushes** at Morgan Territory Regional Preserve on 5/8 was a very high count for Contra Costa County (SG).

The highlight of the spring thus far was certainly the male **Northern Parula** found 4/22 in Mitchell Canyon, MDSP (DW). "Eastern" warblers are usually found locally in late May and early June, and for whatever reason very few of these vagrants have ever been found on Mt. Diablo.

Seven male **Tricolored Blackbirds** flying southeast over the lower Olympia Trail at MDSP on 4/20 were a rarity for the park (SG). These birds are well known for flying long distances away from the breeding colony to forage, and it is anyone's guess where they might be nesting.

This has been a fine spring for **Lawrence's Goldfinches** throughout the interior of Northern California. Local sightings include 6-7 birds at Lime Ridge Open Space near Walnut Creek on 4/28 (MS) and a female carrying nest material at Pine Pond, M.D.S.P., on 5/3 (KH). This is the seventh block in which they have been confirmed during the Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Observers: Dustin Alcalá, Gloria Cannon, Steve Glover, Kevin Hintsá, Bruce Mast, John Poole, Maury Stern, Joel Summerhill, Dennis Wolff

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

Results of the 2002 Great Backyard Bird Count

Birders across the United States and Canada spotted a total of 505 species of birds in the four days between February 15 and 18 in the 2002 Great Backyard Bird Count, according to the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Rare and unusual sightings include a Gyrfalcon, a powerful falcon from the Arctic, spotted in Massachusetts. A Great Spotted Woodpecker from Asia was seen in Alaska; and a Broad-Billed Hummingbird was seen in Georgia—a first for the state.

Close to 50,000 checklists were submitted for a total of almost 5 million individual birds counted from across the United States and Canada, with every state and province reporting in

Families, individuals, classrooms, and Scout troops reported on the birds they saw in their backyards, schoolyards, local parks, or right out the office window. Reports were submitted over the Internet, at <<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>> and compiled almost immediately, for all to view in the form of tables and animated maps.

Bird count participants once again reported Sandhill Cranes along the length of their eastern migration route. Sightings appeared within a clear band running from Florida to Michigan on the map for the species. Possibly due to the mild winter weather, more cranes were reported along the northern end of the route than during the 2001 count.

Red-winged Blackbirds were reported in greater numbers than previously seen in the Northeast and around the Great Lakes.

Out here, Evening Grosbeaks were nearly absent from California, where they had been reported in large flocks in 2001.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a valuable tool for tracking the continent-wide wanderings of winter species.

Volunteers Needed for Marsh Breeding Bird Survey

In the *May Quail*, a call went out for volunteers to participate in a new annual breeding season bird survey at McNabney Marsh. Thanks to those who responded, the survey is off to a great beginning.

Volunteers have spotted Canada Geese, Avocets, Silts, and Pied-billed Grebes. Thirty-five Canada Geese chicks were counted and seven Grebe chicks.

The McNabney Marsh Advisory Committee has established this annual breeding bird survey to cover the period from April 1 to June 15 each year.

Volunteers are doing a biweekly count. Volunteers have considerable flexibility in scheduling their participation; they can select the particular day of the week that they will survey as well as their frequency of participation and the amount of time they spend doing the survey.

How to Purchase Natural Origins' Tea and Help MDAS

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

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

A typical day survey period is about 2-3 hours with volunteers moving from one location to another around the marsh. Volunteers complete forms, indicating species, numbers, and notes on observed nesting activity. A map indicates the next location.

Please review your calendar. Volunteers are still needed to complete the survey. Whether it be only once, once a month, or twice a month—your time will help us meet our goal of a meaningful survey. Please call Bob Wisecarver, who is coordinating this MDAS effort, at (925) 935-5095.

Oldest Known Bird Clocks 5 Million Miles and Nests Again

LONDON, England—One of the world's oldest living wild birds, a female Manx Shearwater, is marking its golden jubilee by preparing to breed again.

The Manx Shearwater—a far-flying, gull-like seabird—was probably born in 1952 and is thought to have clocked up about 5 million miles in the air.

First ringed by ornithologists in 1957, it was re-discovered on April 4 this year in a colony of several thousand others on Bardsey, an island off the Llyn peninsula in north Wales.

The shearwater had just returned from its South American wintering grounds and was preparing to breed when it was netted, as part of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) national bird-ringing scheme.

Graham Appleton, the BTO's fund-raising manager, told CNN it was the fourth time the bird had been netted and released—the other occasions were May 22, 1957; July 8, 1961, and April 16, 1977.

British bird expert Chris Mead told Reuters: "The only way you can tell a bird's age is by ringing it; and we know about all the other birds, so we can say it is the oldest. It would not be uncommon to find birds aged between 15 or 20 years in a colony of shearwaters, but 50 years is absolutely remarkable."

Appleton told CNN: "Not only is this bird considerably older than you would expect, it is still breeding. As long as they are still going, they produce young. Birds don't really have old age."



This photograph of a Manx Shearwater was taken in Monterey Bay in October 1996. It was accepted as authentication by the California Rare Bird Committee.

Given its known age and its winter migration cycle, which takes in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, the bird has traveled 500,000 miles, or the equivalent of a return trip to the Moon, over its lifetime. When feeding flights are taken into account, it has probably covered a total of 5 million miles.

The Manx shearwater has a black back and wings with a white belly. At about 14 inches long, it is slightly larger than a pigeon. Up to 90 percent of the world's Manx shearwater population breed in Britain.

According to the Guinness Book of Animal Records, the highest ever reported age of a bird is an unconfirmed 82 years for a male Siberian White Crane called Wolf that died in 1988 at the International Crane Center in Wisconsin.

Experts are convinced that there are more venerable individuals still to be identified. Some, particularly in the parrot family, are thought to have hatched at the end of the 19th century.

Field Trip Reports

Tuesday, March 14, Upper San Leandro Reservoir—Twelve members spent a lovely morning at the reservoir, accompanied by a very energetic German Shorthair Pointer of unknown ownership. We saw 51 species. Highlights were many Wood Ducks, Common Mergansers, Common Snipe, Red-breasted Nuthatch pair at a nest hole, and Brown Creeper.—*Maury Stern*

Thursday, April 4, Borges Ranch—Twelve members and guests had an interesting day in overcast conditions with temperatures in the high 50s. The day began with a bobcat hanging around the meeting area for about 10 minutes. We saw 42 species with 40 of those seen before lunch. Highlights were Western Kingbird; Western Bluebird (made especially beautiful with the lighting conditions); Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow seen near each other and providing a fine comparison; Lark Sparrow in crisp breeding colors; and a sparkling male Purple Finch. After lunch, four of us climbed a high hill where there was an active Golden Eagle nest. There we saw the female on the nest and a male nearby.—*Maury Stern*

Saturday April 6, Garin Regional Park—It was a gray, mild day, with occasional sun—enough sun to pick out the highlight bird, a brilliant Rufous Hummingbird with a coppery gorget, which we watched for a long time. Other birds included Bullock's Oriole, an Empid that we decided not to decide about, warblers, flycatchers, and other spring birds. Four members saw 53 species in all.—*Fred Safier*

Saturday, April 22, Castle Rock/Pine Canyon—Ten birdwatchers saw approximately 60 species. Warbling and Cassin's Vireos, Blue Gray Gnatcatchers, Lazuli Buntings, Black-headed Grosbeak, and four pairs of Lawrence's Goldfinches made this a great day!—*Pat MacEachern*

April 25, Del Puerto Canyon—An enthusiastic group of 16 birders were great at spotting birds on this nice day. Highlights included Costa's Hummer; Blue Grosbeak; Great Horned Owl with

one young one; Lewis' Woodpecker; Lawrence's Goldfinch; Rock, Canyon, and House Wrens; Green Heron; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Tri-colored Blackbird; and Phainopeplas. Species total was 62.—*Florence Bennett*

Saturday, May 4, Mines Road—Breakfast with Bullock's Oriole and Cassin's Vireo, brunch with Bald Eagle and Caspian Tern; lunch in sunshine by a brook with Lawrence's Goldfinch and MacGillivray's Warbler (and not just the usual glimpse, but 15 minutes with the warbler in plain view in a close bush)—that's just a sample of Mines Road in early May. Five members saw 75 species, including also Phainopepla, Lazuli Bunting, Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, and Lewis' Woodpecker.—*Fred Safier*

Protection for Nesting Birds

Even when nesting birds make a mess around houses and buildings, it is illegal to harm them, warns the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Native birds, such as warblers, swallows, and hummingbirds, are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Even birds that do not always migrate, such as robins and wrens and woodpeckers, are protected under the Act.

The Act prohibits destruction of nests with eggs or young, or possession of migratory bird parts. Violations carry maximum penalties of \$15,000 and/or six months in jail.

It is not a violation, however, to prevent the birds from constructing their nests; and non-native birds, such as starlings and house sparrows, are not protected under the Act.

Anne Badgley, director of the USFWS Pacific Region, said: "Sometimes people wash down a nest and don't pay attention to the site for a week or so, only to find the nest has been reconstructed and has eggs in it. Once the nest has eggs, it is protected, and its destruction or removal is illegal." *Continued on p. 6*

MDAS Asks for Email Addresses

MDAS is collecting the email addresses of its members to add to its database. The addresses would be used only by MDAS for environmental alerts or possible newsletter distribution in the future and would not be shared with any other organization. Please send an email to Ann McGregor, our Membership Chair, at AnnMcG@Pacbell.net

Dan Taylor Moves On

Dan Taylor, who has been Executive Director of Audubon California for the past six years, has accepted the position of Vice President for State Programs at National Audubon.

Under Dan's leadership, the budget and staff of the California program have expanded, a strategic plan has been developed, and major conservation and education initiatives are underway. Dan is taking the lessons he has learned in California to other state offices.

We wish Dan much continued success in his new position.

A search for the next Executive Director is underway. The search committee consists of Les Corey (acting interim director), Glenn Olsen, and Judy Rapp Smith, National Audubon staff members; Robert Stephens, Chair of the State Board of Directors; and Alan Harper and Karen Messer, State Board of Directors. The executive search firm of Crow-Innes has been retained to screen candidates.

Audubon Camps

The 2002 Audubon Camp season is quickly approaching. This summer, Audubon will offer adult/youth camps in Maine, Minnesota, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. For detailed information, please visit the website at www.audubon.org/educate/cw/ or call toll free 866-4AUDUBON.

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. 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, June 1, 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. 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. Be prepared for variable weather. **Leader:** Pat MacEachern, 934-3041 Category 2

Thursday, June 6—Annadel State Park.

Carpool leaves at 7 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 Interstate-680, west on I-780 to Vallejo. Go 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., and 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

Saturday and Sunday, June 22-23,

Yuba Pass. Saturday at Yuba Pass for mountain birds; Sunday in Sierra Valley for basin birds. Fastest route: take I-80 to Hwy 89 at Truckee. Go north on Hwy 89 to Hwy 49. Yuba Pass campground (which is the meeting spot Saturday morning) is at the top of the pass. Sierra City—18 miles down Hwy 49—is the closest town and has the following motels/hotels/B&Bs. Herrington's Sierra Pines (530-862-1151); Buckhorn Lodge (800-991-1170); Busch & Heringlake Country Inn (530-862-1501); Sierra Buttes Inn (530-862-1300); Yuba River Inn (530-862-1122). Sierra Skies RV Park

(530-862-1166) has some cabins as well as RV spaces. The website at <<http://www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html>> has a complete listing for the surrounding area. There are campgrounds (vault toilets, no showers, piped water) at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Because weekends usually attract birders from all over California, reserve your lodging now. For more information, call Hugh and Rosita Harvey, 932-4715. Category 2

The next MDAS field trips will be published in the September *Quail*.

Difficulty of field trip:

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

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

Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Nesting Birds Protected

continued from p. 5

An active nest—one with eggs or young—may be removed only under a special permit issued by the USFWS. These permits are issued only if the USFWS determines that a nest poses a hazard to human health or safety.

More information about migratory birds is available at: <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/homepg.html> — Environmental News Service, April 23, <http://ens-news.com/ens/apr2002/2002L-04-22-09.html>

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Visit Our Website at

<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

- Birdseed & Suet Sale (6/5-6/23). Stock up for the summer!
- Saturday, 6/8, Native Bird Connections will be presenting programs with live birds.

Birdfeeding Tips

- Make 2-3 quarts of nectar at one time. Rinse out and refill your feeders every 3-5 days to prevent mold. Keep the rest of the nectar in the refrigerator. You'll have minimal problems with mold. A ratio of 5 parts water to one part sugar is suitable if you are feeding both hummers and orioles. If you are only feeding hummers, you can use a 4:1 ratio.
- Please report all oriole and grosbeak sightings to WBU because we track the locations.
- Last year Lesser Goldfinches continued to visit feeders throughout the summer. Keep those thistle feeders full.

We are receiving reports of Lazuli Buntings visiting bird feeders in Moraga, Martinez, and Pleasant Hill. Last year we had about ten backyard sightings. The beautiful male has a bright sky blue head and back, reddish breast, and a white belly. The female is grayish brown above and light below, with a buffy wash on her breast. Please report any sightings to us. In Arizona and other areas, it is very common to see them at feeders. Birds can be very opportunistic in searching out new feeding sources. Perhaps these sightings portend a change in the feeding habits of the local Buntings?



MDAS Initiates Membership Drive

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society has initiated a Chapter-Only membership drive (see story and President's Notes on p. 1.) We need YOU to help us continue the work of our Chapter.

A word to our fellow members of the National Audubon Society (NAS). MDAS remains a dedicated NAS Chapter. However, many NAS members are unaware that NAS has implemented a new policy that eliminates dues sharing with its local chapters. When you send your annual NAS dues to the national office, MDAS will receive nothing after this year.

MDAS cannot cover the cost of printing and mailing the *Quail*, much less assist with any of our local goals without assessing Chapter membership dues.

If you would like to support the MDAS mission directly, we encourage you to

consider a Chapter membership. Many members join both, so that their contributions can help address both local and national goals.

Annual membership in MDAS provides.

- Subscription to ten issues of the *Quail*, the newsletter of MDAS, which contains information and announcements on field trips, programs, local issues, and bird sightings.
- Ten monthly membership meetings with guest speakers on a variety of topics from Avocets to Zonotrichia and offer an opportunity to share your interest in birds with others.
- Birding field trips for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- Opportunities to volunteer for a variety of community-based projects.
- A voice that is heard by decisionmakers on local environmental and conservation issues.

- Most of all, the satisfaction of supporting YOUR MDAS Chapter.

Remember all MDAS membership dues fund our local projects and events.

The cost of membership is \$25 a year per household (one person, a couple, or an entire family pays only \$25 annually.) All memberships and donations are tax deductible.

Take advantage of our introductory offer: join before September and pay only \$20. This ensures that you will continue to receive the *Quail* without an interruption in delivery.

VIST US ONLINE:

<http://www.diabloaudubon.com>

MDAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

_____ Please enroll me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 annually.

_____ Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

_____ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 annually.

_____ For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive the *Audubon Magazine* (6 bi-monthly issues).

_____ I'm enclosing a donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone with area code: _____

E-mail _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to: MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:

Ann McGregor, Membership Chair
400 Oneida Ct.
Danville, CA 94526-6264

CALENDAR

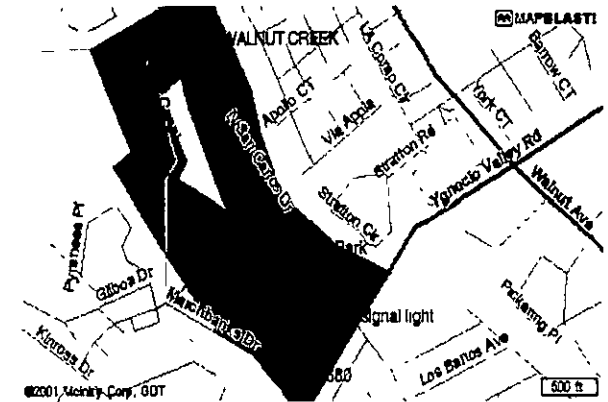
MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month except July and August when there are no meetings. Our potluck is June 6. The first fall meeting is Thursday, September 5.

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

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

MDAS Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary!

See the July-August *Quail* for more details about the big Anniversary Celebration



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

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

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July-August 2002

Vol. 48, No. 10

Next Deadline: August 7

Statement to the Walnut Creek City Council

by Hugh Harvey

Editor's Note: Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek has long been a favorite birding site for MDAS members. Over the years, the once-wild habitat has declined as the park has been developed to serve the needs of a growing community. However, a small portion remains relatively untouched. The City of Walnut Creek is considering restoration of this remaining habitat. MDAS members Hugh and Rosita Harvey are participating in a citizens' task force. Hugh presented the following statement of MDAS's position to the City Council.

The Board of Directors of Mount Diablo Audubon Society is very much in favor of habitat protection and restoration in Heather Farm Park. Being an urban park in a suburban, and increasingly urban area, Heather Farm is an attraction to hundreds of people daily. Because of its location, Heather Farm has also been used by over 120 species of birds; at least 21 of which are known to nest and breed within the park.

Though a noticeable decline of some species has been noted over the last 20 years, we at Mount Diablo Audubon Society think this is a perfect opportunity to restore and preserve this area. We would hope that the hillsides of Heather Farm could once again support the native plants needed in a habitat used by Bullock's Orioles, Western Bluebirds, and Pacific-slope Flycatchers. We would hope that the large ponds of Heather Farm could once again be a winter home to such waterfowl as Horned Grebes, (See p. 3, Heather Farm Park)

Support Your MDAS Chapter— Pay Your Chapter Dues

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society has initiated a Chapter-Only membership drive and assessed \$25 a year dues. We need YOU to help us continue the work of our Chapter.

MDAS remains a dedicated National Audubon Society (NAS) Chapter, but NAS has implemented a new policy that threatens the future of many local chapters. In the past, when a member paid his or her dues to NAS, NAS shared those dues with the chapter. This dues-sharing arrangement allowed chapters to have newsletters, organize field trips, and hold meetings. Last year, the NAS Board adopted a new policy that eliminates dues sharing with its local chapters.

When you send your annual NAS dues to the national office, MDAS will receive nothing after this year.

MDAS cannot cover the cost of printing and mailing the *Quail*, much less assist with any of our local goals without assessing Chapter-only membership dues.

If you would like to support the MDAS mission directly, we encourage you to consider a Chapter membership. Many members are joining both MDAS and NAS, so that their contributions can help address both local and national goals.

For more information and the Chapter-Only Member application, see p. 7

MDAS to Celebrate Its 50th Anniversary!

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society will celebrate its 50th anniversary in October. To mark the event, MDAS is planning a grand party for its October 3 meeting, according to Alice Holmes, chairwoman of the anniversary committee. The event will feature special refreshments; a trip down 50 years of birding, conservation, and educational outreach in our community; visits by past chapter presidents; exciting door prizes; and a special guest speaker.

If you have old photos of birding trips or MDAS events or would like to volunteer on the anniversary committee, please call Alice at 925-938-1581.



Alice promises a memorable evening! Mark your calendars for Thursday, October 3, and come celebrate this significant achievement with your friends at MDAS!

No Summer Meetings

There will be no general meeting in July or August. The next general meeting is Thursday, September 5, at the Gardens at Heather Farms.

The anniversary celebration will be the following month, October 3.

Volunteers Take Next Step at McNabney Marsh

by Nancy Wenninger

On Saturday, May 21, MDAS volunteers teamed up with East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) staff and wildlife volunteers to plant native trees and shrubs in the new staging area at Waterbird Regional Preserve (McNabney Marsh) near Martinez.

Under the watchful eye and expert instruction of EBRPD naturalist Dave Riensche (AKA "Doc Quack"), volunteers learned the proper way to plant oaks and California buckeyes, coffeeberries, flowering currants and black sage. Fortunately, EBRPD staff had already dug the planting holes using an auger. However, there was still plenty of work to do, enlarging the holes, creating the proper soil mix, watering the plants in, and adding a stake and tubex for each plant. (A tubex



Volunteers relax at Waterbird Park after a workday of native planting trees and shrubs.



exposure to wind and sun. Late spring is not the optimum time to plant natives—it is better to plant in fall to give the root system a rainy season to develop before the stress of summer. But even under optimum conditions, natives have to be watered during the dry season until they become established.

In short, to make our hard work pay off, those trees have to be watered until the rainy season. We need you! We are organizing a team of volunteers to water once a month from now until October. If you are interested in helping with the watering efforts, please call me, Nancy Wenninger, at (925) 938-7987.

is a tall, narrow plastic cylinder designed to protect the young plants from the harsh elements and to reduce evaporation.)

We were proud of the results: a line of shrubs and young trees that we could envision as tall, mature plants and trees providing habitat for birds and needed shade for the parking area.

The staging area at Waterbird is a harsh environment for plants with plenty of



The *Quail* is published 10 times a year by the Mt Diablo Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education

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Vice President: & Treasurer:
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Secretary: Mike Tischler, 689-5552
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Programs: Maury Stern, 284-5980
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Shown at left are some of the MDAS volunteers who have been doing the first annual breeding season bird survey at McNabney Marsh. The McNabney Marsh Advisory Committee has established this annual breeding bird survey to cover the period from April 1 to June 15.

Orinda Schools Receives National Environmental Award

Thanks to help by volunteers, including MDAS's Cecil Williams and Barbara Vaughn, the Orinda School District received a national environmental award for its outdoor learning labs and programs promoting awareness of habitats. MDAS members attended a ceremony on May 25 when the National Wildlife Federation recognized the Orinda School District as the first in the nation to win a habitat protection certification for all its elementary schools.

Among the speakers was Gary Bogue who entertained the crowd with his unique brand of humor but also on the serious side emphasized the importance of urban and suburban relationships with wildlife. He said the Wagner Ranch program was the most incredible team effort he'd ever seen—much of it done with volunteer time and money.

The NWF representative grew up in Orinda and said, after being exposed to such programs, he had become excited about wildlife and made it his career. Familiar faces from MDAS included Mike and Cecil Williams, who brought

Kiwi, their Blue-fronted Amazon parrot; Diana Granados of Native Bird Connections with a beautiful barred owl; and Barbara Vaughn, who had done a spring bird census in the nature area. Over 50 species have been observed on the Wagner Ranch site.



MDAS volunteers helped the Orinda School District with its outdoor classrooms like the 28-acre Wagner Ranch School nature area (above). The National Wildlife Federation recognized the Orinda School District for its innovative use of natural habitat.

Heather Farm Park

(cont. from p. 1)

Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes, and American Wigeons.

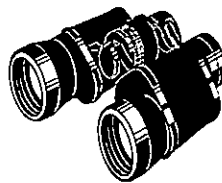
The value of this habitat to bird life can be measured by the numbers of species no longer found here as the natural and undeveloped areas have been encroached upon and degraded. The educational value of such a habitat, to the many casual visitors as well as to organized school groups, is incalculable.

For over 30 years volunteers from Mount Diablo Audubon Society have counted the bird population of Heather Farm as part of a nationwide annual Christmas Bird Count. For the last 5 years volunteers have also canvassed Heather Farm as part of the Contra Costa County Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society has links to many conservation groups both nationally and locally. These would include but not be limited to National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Mount Diablo Interpretive Association and Save Mount Diablo. We shall continue to use these links as well as our local membership and volunteers to maintain an interest and participation in the restoration and preservation of natural habitat in Heather Farm Park.

Observations

by Steve Glover



Flocks of **American White Pelicans** included 70 over Sibley Regional Preserve on 5/16 (MR), 31 over the water north of Carquinez Straits Regional Park on 5/25 (SG), 30 over Mitchell Canyon 5/26 (NN), and 30 over I-680 in San Ramon on 6/12. Small numbers were present at McNabney Marsh throughout the spring (m. ob.). A single **Pelagic Cormorant** on a nest on 5/25 at West Brothers Island near Richmond was the first nesting confirmation for the Atlas project (SG). At least 13 pairs nested here in 1995.

Seven **Cattle Egrets** on 5/22 along Delta Rd. near Knightsen were unusually late for the county (SG). A single **White-faced Ibis** on private property near Richmond on 5/26 was the first for West County (RS,BL). Seven more flying west over Knightsen in East County on 5/14 were more expected (SG)

Single **Ospreys** were at Piper Slough, Bethel Island, 5/14-23 (SG,LC), Holland Tract near Knightsen on 5/22 (SG), and Marsh Creek Reservoir on 6/2 (SG). The latter bird, which was in heavy molt, was particularly late. A flock of 63 **Swainson's Hawks** on 6/2 along Herdlyn Rd. south of Clifton Court Forebay was a magnificent sight. These birds, mostly immatures (non-breeders?), were in a field still being plowed (SG).

Common Moorhens with precocial young near Richmond on 5/26 were a rare find for West County (RS,BL)

Two **Wilson's Phalaropes**, always elusive in the county, were at the Byron Sewage Ponds at the east end of Camino Diablo near Byron on 6/2 (SG).

Twenty **Least Terns** were at the Albany Crescent near Richmond on 5/25, but we have not yet received any reports of nesting (DA)

The east end of Camino Diablo near Byron continues to be the best place in the county to find **Lesser Nighthawks** with a high of 15 there on the evening of 5/30 (DW,DF). A nice find there on the same

night was a **Short-eared Owl**, a very rare and local nester in the county which remains unconfirmed during the Atlas project (DW,DF).

A female **Costa's Hummingbird** was reported from South Gate Rd., Mt. Diablo State Park, on the late date of 5/23 (LC). Though this species nests in chaparral in southeastern Alameda County, they have never even been suspected of nesting in Contra Costa.

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Los Vaqueros Res. on 6/7 was unfortunately most likely a very late migrant rather than a nester (SG).

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was on the late side on 6/1 in Mitchell Canyon (JW). Single **Willow Flycatchers**, rare but annual in the county in spring, were near Juniper Campground, Mt. Diablo, on 5/25 (DA), at the north end of Los Vaqueros Reservoir on 6/7 (SG) and at the north end of Bear Creek Rd. on 6/8 (SG).

A pair of **Brown Creepers** with three fledglings were in the eucalyptus grove at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline on 5/26 (RS). This is our first nesting confirmation for West County.

A pair of food-toting **Canyon Wrens** in the Nortonville portion of Black Diamond Mines on 6/15 was the first breeding confirmation for the Atlas project and probably only the second ever for the county (SG).

Completely unexpected, particularly in terms of location, was a breeding confirmation of **Cedar Waxwing**. On 6/4 an adult and a still-fuzzy fledgling were found in suburban Concord at Markham Nature Area on Cowell Rd. (SG). Though there are two nest records from Alameda County, this was a first for Contra Costa.

Most unusual was a singing **Yellow-breasted Chat** in lower Mitchell Canyon on the late date of 6/1 (JW).

Up to 4 singing **Black-chinned Sparrows** were along the Black Pt. Trail, Mt. Diablo, 5/25 to at least 6/1 (DW,JW).

This appears to be a new location for this species. At least two singing males were reported at the traditional site below the South Gate kiosk beginning in early May (m. ob.) At least 6 singing **Grasshopper Sparrows** were at Bishop Ranch Regional Park near San Ramon on 5/29 (SG).

Blue Grosbeaks were detected yet again away from their traditional Central Valley haunts. This spring there was a singing male on Morgan Territory Rd. not too far north of the Alameda Co. line on 5/31 and another singing male near the south end of Lawrence Rd. near Blackhawk on 6/12 (SG). The second bird would be especially late for a migrant. Perhaps this species is rare but regular on the periphery of the Diablo Range. A singing male **Indigo Bunting** was along Johnson Rd. southeast of Blackhawk on 6/12, but it is unclear if this was a migrant or a potential nester (SG).

A female **Great-tailed Grackle** with two fledglings at McNabney Marsh on 6/8 represented just the second nesting confirmation for the county (H&RH). There have been at least two pairs present here all spring.

Lawrence's Goldfinches were far more widespread this spring than is typical with breeding confirmations coming from San Pablo Res., Bear Creek Rd., Upper San Leandro Res., and Bollinger Canyon Rd. near Las Trampas Regional Park (m. ob.). They were also detected frequently around Mt. Diablo, Black Diamond Mines, and Los Vaqueros Res.

Observers: David Armstrong, Les Chibana, Dorthy Furseth, Steve Glover, Hugh and Rosita Harvey, Bob Lewis, Nick Newton, Mark Rauzon, Rusty Scaff, Denise Wight, Jay Withgott

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

August Field Trips

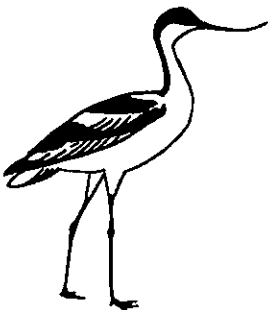
Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

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.

No MDAS field trips are scheduled for July.

Saturday, August 3, San Mateo Coast.
Carpool leaves 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 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. Call Elizabeth Dickey for more information. Category 2

Saturday, August 17, 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 gas station. Shorebirds, rails, waterbirds, migrants. Call Elizabeth Dickey, for more 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.

Spring Birding in Maine

by Martha H. Breed

I spent the week of May 26-June 1 at the WARBLERS AND WILDFLOWERS FESTIVAL at Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor, Maine. There were many events led by local naturalists to show us the incredible variety of birds that migrate through and that nest in this area.

The week-long festival offered more events than one could attend. Among my choices were:

- Warblers and waterfalls: birding in the maple-birch-oak woodland (with sightings of American Redstarts, Blue-Capped Vireo, Cedar Waxwing, and Downy Woodpecker) and into the spruce-fir-hemlock forest (for Black-Capped Chickadee, Hermit Thrush, and Ovenbird).
- Birds of Otter Cliffs: many warblers.
- Birds of Schooner Head: rafts of Common Eiders on the water, and Cliff Swallows flying in and out of rocky cliff crevices.
- A visit to the Birdsacre Bird Sanctuary, an owl and raptor rehab center in nearby Ellsworth.
- MV SeaVenture boat tour to see Bald Eagles nesting on offshore islands in Frenchman Bay and the cliff nests of Black Guillemots. A highlight of our trip was watching a pair of Peregrine Falcons flying over the water chasing a songbird. On the third swipe for it in

How to Purchase Natural Origins' Tea

Natural Origins' provides 20% of its sales to MDAS when customers designate MDAS as their donation recipient. Here's how:

- Order direct from Natural Origins'. Call toll free 1-877-448-3832 and request that MDAS receive donation benefits when you order.
- Order online at <www.naturalorigins.com>. At checkout, indicate MDAS as the donation recipient.
- Purchase Natural Origins' tea at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill (925-798-0303). MDAS receives an automatic credit of 20% of all tea sales.
- At MDAS general meetings,

the air, the female Peregrine snatched the little bird and flew off with it clutched in her talons, the smaller male falcon flying along with her.

- Sunset cruise and lobster bake (more birds including Common Loon and three species of gulls).

Two life zones in the Bar Harbor/Acadia National Park area bring in a variety of birds: the Eastern mixed woodland of maples, birches, oaks and aspens and the Northern boreal forest of spruce, balsam fir, hemlock, and pine.

Acadia's undulating landscape is the product of thousands of years of sculpting by glacial ice. The ice scoured away older rock, revealing the granite beneath. Mt Desert Island is a region with many glacier-carved ponds and lakes. The Bar Harbor area is not only rich in birdlife, it is a very beautiful place!

For more information, visit <www.warblersandwildflowers.com> or <info@warblersandwildflowers.com> for upcoming Festival info. See <www.mainebirding.net> for Michael Good who conducts nature tours year round as Down East Nature Tours. <www.svboat.tours.com> for Capt Winston Shaw who has been studying the Bald Eagle population for years.

Penguins in Africa? Just Jackasses

by Hugh Harvey

The most famous black-and-white members of the animal kingdom in Africa have to be the Zebras, but the coast of Southern Africa is also the home of a much smaller black-and-white member of the animal kingdom—the African Penguin, *Spheniscus demersus*. One hundred years ago, the population numbered 15 million penguins. Now, due to egg harvesting, oil spills, and other forms of predation, the population of some 150,000 birds is listed as vulnerable in the International Red Data Book.

While sailing aboard a container-ship recently, I had the great fortune to visit Cape Town, South Africa, for the first time. A three-day port stay in that wonderful city meant that I would be granted an unusual free afternoon. Cape Town is the only port I have ever visited where the company hires drivers to chauffeur crew members.

Taking advantage of this, the ship's electrician, Mike, and I had our driver, Gamat, take us to the Indian Ocean side of the Cape Peninsula. Mike wanted to swim at a nearby beach, while I wanted to visit the famous penguin colony near Simon's Town. After dropping Mike in Muizenberg, Gamat and I continued south along the heavily developed coastline of False Bay, which resembles our own Monterey Bay. The day was absolutely beautiful with a brilliant sky and ocean, and the temperature in the high 70s. We drove with the windows down trying to take advantage of the cooling ocean breeze.

Boulders Beach, part of Cape Peninsula National Park, is located just below a residential area. Twenty years ago, two breeding pairs of the penguins moved to this beach. Finally fenced and now well protected, the colony has grown to some 3000 residents. A series of raised boardwalks provide the closest possible access.

Standing just over 2 feet tall and weighing about 6 pounds, the African Penguin looks much like any other penguin. Almost entirely black and white, they have a patch of bare pink skin that extends from the top of the eye to the beak.



photo by Johan Kloppers

Their faces are mostly black, and their fronts are mostly white. A thin black line circles the breast, starting at one wing, going up to the bottom of the throat, and ending at the other wing. The breast has a variable number of small, random black spots. The wings are held out a bit from their sides, and the feet are unusually heavy looking for a bird so small.

The breeding season started in February, and by the end of April, many adults in this colony were sitting on eggs. The nests varied from simple scrapes to nearly complete burrows. Occasionally, one penguin would rise up, reposition the egg or eggs, and then settle back into the

nest. The few chicks I saw were fuzzy, soot-colored balls. They are not the cutest baby birds I have ever seen.

Shortly after our arrival, I learned why these birds were formerly named Jackass Penguins. I heard a loud EEEEE-HAAAW, but there were no donkeys in sight. Several species of penguin in South America make the same or a similar sound. As this is the only breeding penguin in Africa, it was renamed African Penguin.

Though African Penguins are marine birds, they do spend a lot of time on land. The incubation period is 38-41 days, shared by both adults, and the chicks are fed at the nest for about 11 weeks. The nests are not too far from the water; and for flightless birds, they seemed agile enough while walking on the beach. A few did take to the water while I was there. Their favorite foods are pilchards, anchovies, and squid. The young are fed by regurgitation.

For me, the opportunity to visit this colony was a once in a lifetime occasion. For more information visit: <http://www.simonstown.co> and http://www.southafrica-travel.net/westcape/cape_04.htm



At the June potluck Hugh Harvey (second from left) discusses the many delicious options with his wife Rosita (right) and fellow MDAS members.

May Field Trip Reports

Wednesday, May 15, Mt. Diablo— Three members joined us today for the annual field trip up the South Gate entrance of Mt. Diablo. It was as nice a weather day as one could hope for and fairly good day of birding. We spent about an hour birding from the entrance gate and walking down the road. Reports of good sparrow sightings had come from this location; and sure enough, we got excellent looks at two singing Black-chinned sparrows! It was a life bird for two of the people on the trip. We also saw Sage there and numerous Lazuli buntings. As the day grew warm, the birds got quieter; but

we did see Gnatcatchers as well six species of raptors.—*Jimm Edgar.*

Saturday, May 18, East Contra Costa County— Eight birders enjoyed an excellent day of birding in East County with 62 species. Among the species that we saw were Blue Grosbeaks, Swainson's Hawk on the nest, Yellow-billed Magpie, Wilson's Phalarope, and Black-chinned Hummingbird. Thanks to Michael Painter, Manager of the Ironhouse Sanitation District, we were able to view ponds on the District's property where a pair of big-footed American Avocet chicks entertained us. Michael has invited us back in the fall

during migration. We saw nine adult Burrowing Owls—two of them were guarding four chicks clearly visible at the entrance to their burrow.—*Joel Summerhill*

Thursday, May 30, Caswell Memorial State Park— Eight members and guests saw 46 bird species on a very hot day in the Central Valley. The Caswell Mem SP is a remnant of the extensive riparian area along the Stanislaus River and has luxuriant growth of Valley Oaks, Cottonwoods, Sycamores and willows. Highlights included many Swainson's Hawks in different plumages, male Wood Duck, five flycatcher species, and huge numbers of House Wrens.—*Maury Stern*

Dues Are Due Now

MDAS Membership Drive Continues

Annual membership in MDAS provides:

- Subscription to ten issues of the *Quail*, the newsletter of MDAS, which contains information and announcements on field trips, programs, local issues, and bird sightings.
- Ten monthly membership meetings with guest speakers on a variety of topics from Avocets to Zonotrichia and offer an opportunity to share your interest in birds with others.
- Birding field trips for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels.

- Opportunities to volunteer for a variety of community-based projects.
- A voice that is heard by decisionmakers on local environmental and conservation issues.
- Most of all, the satisfaction of supporting YOUR MDAS Chapter.

Remember all MDAS membership dues fund our local projects and events.

The cost of membership is \$25 a year per household (one person, a couple, or

an entire family pays only \$25 annually.) All memberships and donations are tax deductible.

Take advantage of our introductory offer: join before September and pay only \$20. This ensures that you will continue to receive the *Quail* without an interruption in delivery.

VIST US ONLINE:
<http://www.diabloaudubon.com>

MDAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

____ Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 annually.

____ Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.

____ Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 annually.

____ For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive the *Audubon Magazine* (6 bi-monthly issues).

____ I'm enclosing a donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone with area code: _____ Email _____

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to: MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:
Ann McGregor, Membership Chair
400 Oneida Ct
Danville, CA 94526-6264

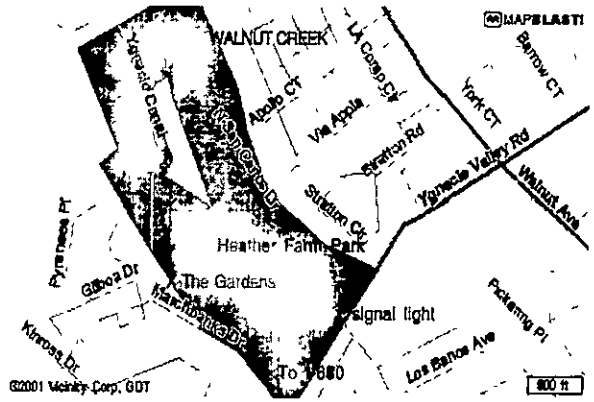
CALENDAR

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, September 5

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

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

MDAS will celebrate its 50th Anniversary at the October 3 meeting!



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

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

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Next Deadline: September 7

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Mike Williams

Welcome back! I hope you had a fun summer and found some Life Birds! My wife Cecil and I were in Charlotte, NC, for a meeting when we saw something amazing. We spotted a (flying?) squirrel that had climbed up 21 stories on the outside of the hotel. Suddenly, it jumped or fell, and we were sick. But amazingly, it had glided to a 3-foot-high shrub. By the time we got to the shrub, the squirrel had already jumped out and climbed up a tree.

Later in the summer, we went to Portal, AZ, to look again for that Rail that we talked about last year. No success, though.

The MDAS Board of Directors has been busy this summer. We have held several meetings, planning and strategizing for the new year. We are excited about the list of programs that will be presented to you. We will be having some live birds (courtesy of Native Bird Connections) at some of our meetings. What else will the new year bring? Many birdwalks, weekend outings, Christmas Bird Count, Backyard Bird Count, Birdathon, and much, much more.

We are also extremely pleased with the initial response to our Chapter-only Membership Drive. We have received many sign-ups and expect that trend to continue. Remember, if you want to continue to receive the *Quail*, you must join MDAS as a Chapter-Only member. An application is included on p. 7. You will receive many benefits such as being kept up to date on what's going on in Contra Costa birding circles, MDAS programs and birdwalks, and local environmental projects. All of your Chapter-only dues are retained locally and used locally.

September Taxonomy Talk Opens 2002 Programs

Our September 5 meeting will feature a discussion of bird taxonomy by Dr. Carla Cicero, Curatorial and Research Associate at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at UC Berkeley.

Avian taxonomy is still refining our understanding of the relationships of populations of birds into families and species. Such studies in the past few years have yielded additional instances in which two (or more) populations traditionally treated as distinct species should be considered only a single species. For example, once considered two separate species, the myrtle and Audubon's warblers became the yellow-rumped warbler after researchers determined the warblers belonged to the same species.

Dr. Cicero will be discussing the basis for decisions made by the American Ornithological Union regarding taxonomic changes (splits, lumps, etc.) with emphasis on the kinds of data on which those changes are based, with specific recent examples.

Dr. Cicero received her BS in Wildlife Biology at UC Berkeley in 1981, and her Ph.D. at Berkeley in 1993. As Curatorial and Research Associate at the Zoology Museum, Dr. Cicero works on the curation of the bird and genetic resource collections. She also conducts research on geographic variation and systematics of birds, with an emphasis on western North America. Her Ph.D. thesis was on geographic variation in the Plain Titmouse complex, and her research led to the splitting of this species into the Oak and Juniper titmouse. She has been a member of the AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (i.e., the "Check-list Committee") since 1998.

Birding Information

For Birding Information, Diana Granados of Native Bird Connection will bring a live Barn Owl. Diana will explain the hunting methods and characteristics of this wonderful species.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be **Thursday, September 5**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8).
6:30 p.m.—Doors open
7 p.m.—Birding Information
7:25 p.m.—Business meeting
7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing
8:05 p.m.—Program

Remember your cup! We're serving Natural Origins Tea too!

*We're
Celebrating
MDAS's 50 Years
of Birding and
Conservation!*

see page 3 for details

Connections**Murrelets Revealed; EPA Spares Birds****Murrelets Give Up Nesting Secrets**

Humboldt County, California, July 26, 2002 (ENS)—Marbled Murrelets are unusual among seabirds because they are often solitary or found in groups of two or three instead of the large social groups of many seabirds. Except when nesting and raising young, Marbled Murrelets spend their entire life on the ocean. They nest far inland, flying to old growth forests to nest on high branches of redwood and Douglas fir trees.

In 1992, the Marbled Murrelet was listed as a federally threatened species in California, Oregon, and Washington because of the loss of nesting habitat in old growth forests. In California, the bird is state listed as endangered.

Until the 1970s, no one had ever found a Marbled Murrelet nest. Only a few such nests had ever been seen in California. Last year, scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey and Humboldt State University began a three-year study to find out where the Marbled Murrelet nests.

Scientists captured Marbled Murrelets as they slept on the ocean's surface and attached radio transmitters. The birds were also weighed and measured, and a blood sample collected before they were released.

After a bird was released, the radio signals led researchers to the nest. The nest were often located 200 feet above the ground. Radio tracking these birds will provide essential information on the movements, timing of nesting, and habitat of this secretive bird, and how human disturbances may be affecting the species' nesting areas.

Of the five murrelet nests examined in the first year, three were believed to be successful in producing and raising young. Forty-four more murrelets were tracked this year.

"One of our goals is to provide land managers of Redwood National and State

Parks, as well as nearby landowners, with factual information that will enable them to make sound management decisions to help conserve this federally threatened species," said Richard Golightly, a professor in the wildlife department at Humboldt State University. "We hope to identify factors that may contribute to successful reproduction and future generations of marbled murrelets." —Environmental News Service, July 29

EPA Reverses Decision on Use of Bird-Killing Pesticide

Audubon and our partners in conservation—with tremendous help from thousands of Audubon supporters—convinced the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to dramatically change course and deny the use of 4,500 pounds of granular carbofuran on rice fields in Louisiana.

Rice farmers in Louisiana had requested authorization to apply more than two tons of this bird-killing pesticide to 10,000 acres of rice fields in southwest Louisiana. Granular carbofuran is one of the world's most potent bird-killing pesticides. One tiny granule can kill a songbird.

Had the pesticide been applied to rice fields in Louisiana, hundreds of bird species would have been threatened, with wading birds and neotropical migrant shorebirds, like the Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher, at the highest risk.

EPA initially intended to grant an "emergency use" application of the pesticide but was forced by Audubon and our partners in conservation to open a five-day public comment period. During this very brief comment period, EPA received more than 5,000 public comments, including over 3,800 letters from Audubon supporters, urging them to deny any further use of carbofuran.

On July 25, EPA responded by stopping use of the bird-killing pesticide.



The *Quail*
is published 10 times a year by the
Mt Diablo Audubon Society,
a nonprofit organization
dedicated to habitat conservation and
environmental education

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Field Trips: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486
Membership: Ann McGregor, 968-1677
Publicity: Jill Hedgecock, 256-8270
Hospitality: Alice Holmes, 938-1581
Education: Cecil Williams, 376-1631
Access: Beverly Hawley, 947-0479
Chapter Development: Joel Summerhill,
753-0862
Hands-On Conservation:
Nancy Wenninger, 938-7987
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(510) 658-2330

Gloria Cannon, Editor,
(925) 753-0862, P.O. Box 8367,
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McNabney Marsh Nesting Season Survey Results

by Bob Wisecarver*

Thanks to the many volunteers, the first annual McNabney Marsh survey was carried off with ease. We trust that California Fish and Game will be happy with the results and appreciative of our efforts.

Our old pros, Steve Glover, Jean Richmond, and Rosita Harvey, carried most of the load, but those with one or more trips to their credit were Beth Lucas, Mary Lou Lucar, Dorothy Furseth, Scott Coskin, Emily Wyro, Dick Bogart, and Donna Klein I believe that there were several others who didn't get on the sign-in sheet and even more who called in offering to help but who were not needed. All in all, it was a great showing of support for the project.

Standout birds of the survey were the Canada Geese and Mallards. The Canada

Geese had close to 200 birds on the marsh at one time with 56 young counted.

Mallards had 75 pairs with 48 broods counted. Most interesting item was being able to observe the Pied Billed Grebe (5 pairs) eggs and chicks on their elevated mound nests. One chick would leave the nest, circle it in the water, and then come back to get warm; and another would then repeat the process.

One last item: Hugh Harvey, Brian Murphy and I are now carrying out a watering program for the plants in the marsh parking lot. We could use your help. Call me at 935-5095 to volunteer for this.

*with help from Ann McGregor

Retirement Home Goes for the Birds

An assisted living retirement home in Pleasant Hill has been the first retirement home in the state to be designated as a "backyard wildlife habitat" by the National Wildlife Federation. Chateau III

qualified for the designation because its landscaping, fountains, and bird feeders provide the essential habitat elements—food, water, shelter, and nesting sites.

MDAS's own Cecil Williams helped Chateau III achieve the designation. She is excited that the management of the retirement home saw the value of attracting birds. "The birds bring the residents outside where they can enjoy nature. The residents love to watch the birds at the feeders and at fountains," she said.

At a July reception celebrating this achievement, Cecil gave a slide presentation to introduce the residents to 23 common bird and animals species that might visit or live in the Chateau habitat.

The National Wildlife Federation began its certification program in 1973. Since then, 33,000 sites, including schools, businesses, and community sites, have been designated as backyard habitats. The Orinda School District was certified by NWF in June. (from the *Contra Costa Times*, July 29)

You're Invited to the MDAS 50th Anniversary Celebration!

On October 3 at 7 p.m., the Mount Diablo Audubon Society will celebrate its 50th anniversary. You are invited to this special evening for dessert, champagne, and punch in the Camellia Room of the Gardens at Heather Farm.

Share our pride as we recall 50 years of binding adventure, innovative conservation projects, and education outreach. Celebrate with us as we remember special people who have contributed so much to our organization and as we look back at our past and forward to our future. We will reminisce about years of birding activity through pictures, slides, and tales.

The evening guarantees laughter, tears, nostalgic visits with old friends, and wonderful food. Please come.

*—Mike Williams
MDAS President*

RSVP—To help us plan appropriately, let us know if you will join us for the October 3 celebration. Please phone or email Alice Holmes at (925) 938-1581 or email <greenheron1@msn.com>. Thank you.



Observations

by Steve Glover

A female **Common Goldeneye** at Clifton Court Forebay near Bryon on 7/7 was apparently attempting to summer, a rare occurrence but something that has occurred at this site in the past (DW,DF)

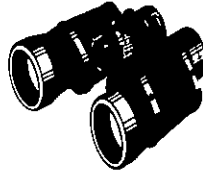
Reports of **Wild Turkeys** away from known locations continue to trickle in. On 6/17 one was found off of Arlington Rd. in El Cerrito (SS) and on 6/27 one was at Sibley Regional Preserve east of Oakland (ME). It seems only a matter of time until they occupy the entirety of the coast ranges in the county.

An outstanding find was an adult **Black Skimmer** at Martinez Regional Shoreline on 7/12 (RT). All previous county records were from the Richmond/Brooks Island area. This bird may well have been a post-breeding dispersant from breeding sites in South San Francisco Bay, but it could also be a non-breeder or even a breeder from an undiscovered location

A **White-winged Dove** at the Mt View Sanitary District on 8/3 was apparently only the second ever found in Contra Costa County (JRo). The first was at an El Cerrito feeder from 1/28-2/8/1966. One of two Alameda County records was present at Hayward Regional Shoreline from 8/2-3/1993.

Surely one of the highlights of the atlas project was the confirmation of **Long-eared Owl**, the first ever for Contra Costa County. On 7/8 three fledglings were found along Pinehurst Rd. west of Moraga (BR). On 6/23 a Long-eared Owl call was heard along Morgan Territory Rd. that was thought to have been the alarm call of an adult at the nest but this could not be confirmed (SG). Although the status of owls in the county is rather poorly understood, this is particularly true for Long-eared Owl.

An immature **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at a Martinez feeder 6/29—at least 7/7 was only the second seen there in 18 years (DW). Sporadic sightings from central county over the years have led to speculation that they are actually nesting though this has never been proven. The



closest known nest-sites are in the Delta region.

A **Say's Phoebe** along Morgan Territory Rd. in extreme southern Contra Costa County on 6/22 was unseasonal and likely breeding on a farm building somewhere in the vicinity (SG). During the atlas project, we have confirmations from Blackhawk and Clayton.

An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a Lafayette feeder 6/27-7/1 added yet another summer record for Contra Costa County (MS). Interestingly, this is apparently at least the fourth record for that same neighborhood as Harry Adamson has sighted them in his yard three times in the past 55 years!

Two adult and five immature **Great-tailed Grackles** were at McNabney Marsh near Martinez on 7/6 (RM). It is thought that at least two pairs nested there this summer.

Observers: Mike Ezekiel, Dorthy Furseth, Steve Glover, Bob Richmond, John Robinson, Stanley Scher, Maury Stern, Rob Thomas, Denise Wight

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

MDAS Asks for Email Addresses

MDAS is collecting the email addresses of its members to add to its database. The addresses would be used only by MDAS for environmental alerts or possible newsletter distribution in the future and would not be shared with any other organization. Please send an email to Ann McGregor, our Membership Chair, at AnnMcg@Pacbell.net

A Letter from Hugh

August 7, 2002

Dear Friends at Audubon,
The mountains were so peaceful at Yuba Pass June 22-23. Rosita and I did not want to return home. But her work called, World Cup Soccer had yet to be completed, and remodeling the downstairs of our house ultimately occupied most of July.

As many of you know, I suffered a life-threatening medical emergency on July 29. My heart stopped beating in the Cath Lab at John Muir Hospital. That I am writing this letter at all is just short of miraculous. I had the presence of mind to ask for help while I sat at a table outside the Oakville Grocery in Walnut Creek.

It is overwhelming to contemplate the love, affection and prayers with which our circle of friends has supported Rosita and myself during these times. I need a lot of rest. Much pondering and many considerations face us in our future together. Still, I have been assured that the poor faculties with which I was born and my sense of humor should be fully recovered.

Rosita and I owe many thanks to many people for their help. If we overlook you in giving personal thanks, please forgive us. We are not ignoring or forgetting you. We are coping with our future. Thank you all very much

Those who attended the June Potluck will recall how I teased them with the end of my Chilean slide show. I remind everyone that we never truly know when is the end. I am one of those fortunate few who have been granted a second beginning. Thank you all very much for your love and prayers

Hugh B. Harvey

We of us in MDAS wish a speedy recovery to Hugh, his dad, and Lloyd West. Lloyd, who greets you at the door and runs our raffle, is recovering from open-heart surgery. We want to see all of you back at our meetings soon!
—the editor

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 11, 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 14, 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 m 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. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information Category 1.

Thursday, September 19, 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 m north to El Pintado. Or meet at 8:45 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. Call Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486, for information Category 2

Wednesday, September 25, Pt. Pinole. Carpool leaves 7:15 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy. 24. Meet at parking lot at the entrance from Richmond Parkway. Take San Pablo Dam Rd to El Sobrante. Going north on I-580/80, Richmond Parkway. Exit on Giant Rd from parkway; follow signs to the park. Bay shore and marsh areas. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2.

Saturday, September 28, 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: Joel Summerhill, 925-753-0862 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.

New Volunteer Position Open

If you are energetic and a people person, MDAS has a newly created and important volunteer opportunity available as our Fundraising Chair.

This vital position will be a Board position and will put you in contact with your fellow birders as well as corporations and local business people.

If you are interested in trying your fundraising skills, contact Mike Williams at 798-0303.

Tools of the Trade Sought

Do you have a pair of antique binoculars? A really old birding scope? Early bird guides? For the 50th Anniversary celebration, Cecil Williams and Alice Holmes are organizing a "Tools of the Trade" display on that evening. They are also seeking old bird journals and other interesting birding paraphernalia. If you are willing to display your treasures at the event, call Cecil at (925)798-0303 or Alice at (925)938-1581.

How to Purchase Natural Origins' Tea

Our good friends at Natural Origins' Tea have extended their generous offer to share 20% of their sales to MDAS when their customers designate MDAS as their donation recipient. Support MDAS through your purchase of their excellent India teas. Here's how:

- Order direct from Natural Origins'. Call toll free 1-877-448-3832 and request that MDAS receive donation benefits when you order.
- Order online at <www.naturalorigins.com>. At checkout, indicate MDAS as the donation recipient.
- Purchase Natural Origins' tea at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill (925-798-0303). MDAS receives an automatic credit of 20% of all tea sales.
- At MDAS general meetings.

News from

Wild Birds Unlimited

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

Visit Our Website at

<<http://www.wbupleasanthill.com>>

As we all know, birds are very subject to predation from cats, especially during nesting season. Some estimate that over 1 million birds a day are attacked by cats. Cats are also subject to predation from coyotes and other animals, cars, and are exposed to disease. Cats are safer indoors. But it is very difficult to convince people of the danger to birds that cats represent, as evidenced by this recent article in Gary Bogue's column in the *Contra Costa Times*.

Dear Gary:

Barney has a terrible problem with a scrub jay. This jay watches him from a tree, and as soon as Barney goes out, the jay nose-dives him and squawks loudly. The bird isn't scared of us, either. My cat has lost confidence and seems very depressed over this

I tried squirting the hose at the bird, even tried throwing rocks. We don't want to kill this bird, but it is driving me crazy, too. I don't think Animal Control will help: "A bird after a cat?" (I realize perhaps at one time, Barney may have killed one of his friends.) Any ideas? — Nancy in Livermore

Dear Nancy:

You and Barney will be fine. All a 4-ounce ball of fluff can do is scream naughty jay words at you. You've already guessed the problem. Barney either caught and killed the jay's mate or a baby, or the jay has a nearby nest and is making sure your cat doesn't even think about messing with it. Your cat kills birds. If you won't keep him inside, the least you can do is let the bird defend itself. Barney isn't depressed. He's just concentrating on grabbing the jay if it swoops too close. Stay out of it and the jay will eventually calm down and back off. I wouldn't call Animal Control, unless you want to give them a good laugh to brighten their day. (reprinted with permission)

NAS News

Audubon Magazine Begins Quarterly Publication

In August, the National Audubon Society announced that its award-winning *Audubon* magazine will now be published quarterly—March, June, September, and December—instead of six times a year as previous. Members/subscribers will receive the same number of issues remaining on their membership record over a longer period of time. The expiration date on the label affixed to the September issue of *Audubon* reflects the new extended membership expiration date.

New Audubon-California Director Named

Gerald Secundy of Pasadena, CA, has been named the new Executive Director of Audubon California. The state office of Audubon California has been relocated to Los Angeles.

Secundy is at present the president of his own consulting firm, GDS Consulting. A graduate of Harvard and Columbia Law School, Secundy was a former attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice. He was an oil company executive with Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) for 28 years, serving as manager and vice president in several capacities, including 4 years as president of the ARCO subsidiary, Four Corners Pipe Line, until his retirement.

An avid outdoorsman, Secundy serves on the boards of three environmental coalitions, including the Planning and Conservation League Foundation, the California Council for Environmental & Economic Balance, and the California Environmental Dialogue

The Planning and Conservation League is a nonprofit, statewide alliance of nearly 10,000 citizens and more than 120 conservation organizations united to protect wildlife and restore the quality of California's environment through legislative and administrative action.

Secundy is the former chair of the California Council for Environmental & Economic Balance (CCEEB), a coalition of California business, labor, and public policy leaders who work together to advance collaborative strategies for a sound economy and a healthy environment. CCEEB was created over 20 years ago by the late Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown. According to the CCEEB website at <<http://www.cceeb.org/>>, CCEEB is the only statewide private, nonprofit, nonpartisan association to represent the interests of both industry and labor. CCEEB takes great pride in its ability to achieve results by bringing creative and effective solutions to the forefront of policy debate. CCEEB's membership includes virtually every major business sector, every major organized labor group, and leaders from key public and civic organizations.

According to its website (<http://www.cedlnk.org/>), the mission of the California Environmental Dialogue (CED) is to engage California business, corporate, environmental, and government leaders collaboratively to produce timely and improved environmental protection, while reducing costs to business, government, and society. By engaging in a formal dialogue, CED builds relationships and trust, which allow its members to pursue public and private policies leading to enhanced environmental outcomes and economic efficiencies.

Gerald Secundy serves on some of the same environmental/economic coalitions as Lee Moldaver, Vice Chairman of the California Audubon Society. Like Secundy, Lee Moldaver is also a consultant; he is a partner with H.B. & Associates, a management consulting firm specializing in strategic planning and internal marketing for technology companies.

We welcome Gerald Secundy to Audubon California.

Annual Turkey Vulture Festival at the Kern River Preserve

The Turkey Vulture—a large, black bird with a brilliant red head—is one of the avian kingdom's most successful and ubiquitous subjects. From Friday, Sept. 27, through Sunday, Sept. 30, the annual Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival will take place in Weldon, Kern County, California, to celebrate the flyover of thousands of these impressive birds during their southern migration.

The Turkey Vulture Festival is timed to correspond with one of the finest

weekends for observing fall migration in the state of California.

The vulture migration is a stirring sight with more than 20,000 Turkey Vultures counted last year, and the festival offers fun opportunities for the whole family, including a vulture count, hawk watches, bird banding, children's activities and educational presentations.

View the complete Vulture Festival program at <<http://www.valleywild.org/tvfest.htm>>.

Birding Classes Scheduled

Alice Hoch is continuing her birding field classes for beginning and advanced birders. Alice teaches her class in the field, and the class meets at a different site each week

The classes are on six Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. They begin Sept. 10 and end Oct. 15. Class size is limited, so register before Sept. 5.

Be prepared to birdwatch at the first class meeting. To find out where the first site is, to register, and/or to get for more information, call the Fremont Adult School at 791-5841 or Alice Hoch at 657-0475. Alice has been teaching birding for 27 years.

Pay Your Dues—Keep the Quail Coming

MDAS Membership Drive Continues

Annual membership in MDAS provides.

- Subscription to ten issues of the *Quail*, the newsletter of MDAS, which contains information and announcements on field trips, programs, local issues, and bird sightings
- Ten monthly membership meetings with guest speakers on a variety of topics from Avocets to Zonotrichia and an opportunity to share your interest in birds with others.
- Birding field trips for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- Opportunities to volunteer for a variety of community-based projects.
- A voice that is heard by decisionmakers on local environmental and conservation issues
- Most of all, the satisfaction of supporting YOUR MDAS Chapter.

Remember all MDAS membership dues fund our local projects and events.

The cost of membership is \$25 a year per household (one person, a couple, or an entire family pays only \$25 annually.) All memberships and donations are tax deductible.

Join now to ensure that you will continue to receive the *Quail* without an interruption in delivery.

VIST US ONLINE:
<http://www.diabloaudubon.com>

MDAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Please enroll my family and me as a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society for \$25 annually.
- Please enroll me as a lifetime member for \$500. Payment can be made in two annual payments of \$250 each.
- Please enroll the individual/family listed below as a gift membership for \$25 annually.
- For an additional \$20 (new NAS members only) or \$35 (returning members), please enroll me in the National Audubon Society to receive the *Audubon Magazine* (4 quarterly issues).
- I'm encosing a donation of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone with area code: _____ Email _____

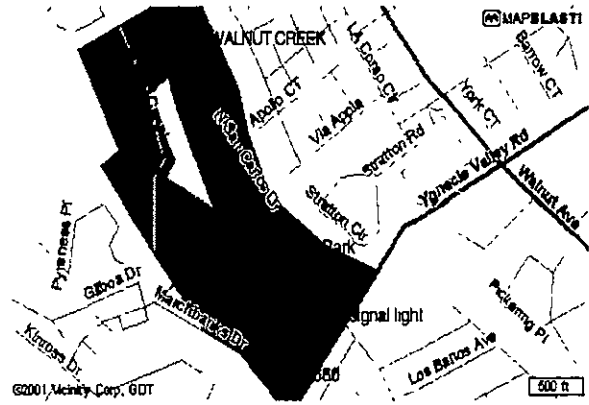
Please make your tax-deductible check payable to: MT. DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail with this application to:
Ann McGregor, Membership Chair
400 Oneida Ct.
Danville, CA 94526-6264

MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, September 5. Meetings for the rest of the 2002-03 year are Oct. 3, Nov. 6, Dec. 5, Jan. 2, Feb. 6, March 6, Apr. 3, May 1, and June 5. No meetings in July or August.

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

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

MDAS will celebrate its 50th Anniversary at the October 3 meeting!



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

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

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