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# Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

## ***The Quail***

Volume 68, Number 8

September 2023

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### **Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, September 7, 7 PM**

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

**IMPORTANT NOTICE!** We will be conducting our September and October meetings by **Zoom**. We will be holding in-person meetings starting in November.

- 7:00 PM** Welcome and introductions
- 7:05 PM** Board Announcements
- 7:10 PM** Main Program: *Bloody Feather—Death of the Cardinal, A New Anti Bird Poaching Novel*

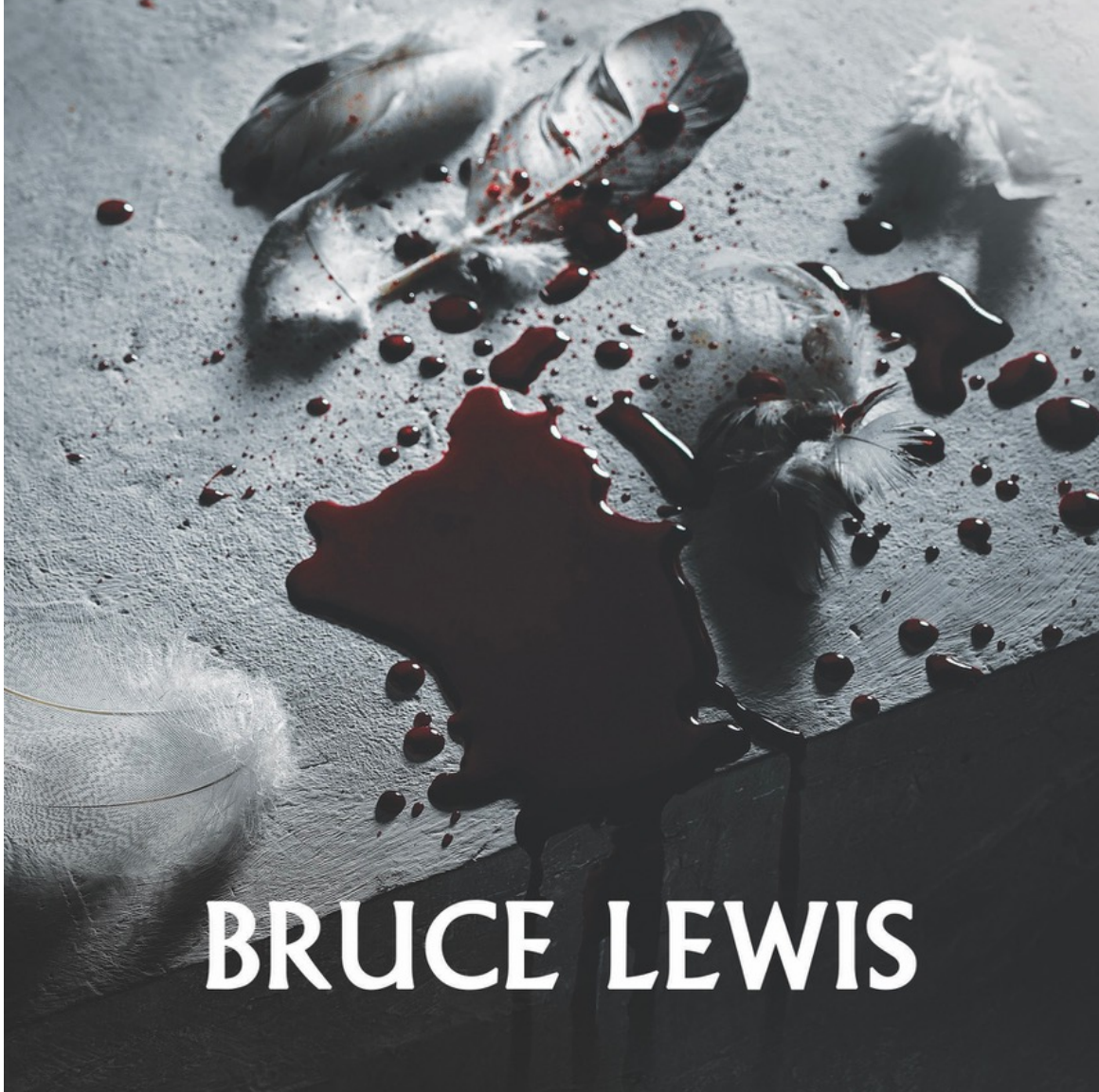
**Main Program: Bloody Feather - Death of the Cardinal, A New  
Anti Bird Poaching Novel**

Bruce Lewis

# BLOODY FEATHERS

DEATH OF THE CARDINAL

The Kim Jansen Detective Series: Book Three



# BRUCE LEWIS

Bloody Feathers

Photo by Bruce Lewis

Bruce Lewis was an award-winning crime reporter for several California daily newspapers, including the Contra Costa Times. After leaving the Times, he spent nearly a decade in corporate public relations at Kaiser Permanente and McKesson Corp, before co-founding Lewis & Summers PR (LSPR). Over 24 years, LSPR won 30 awards for excellence in communications.

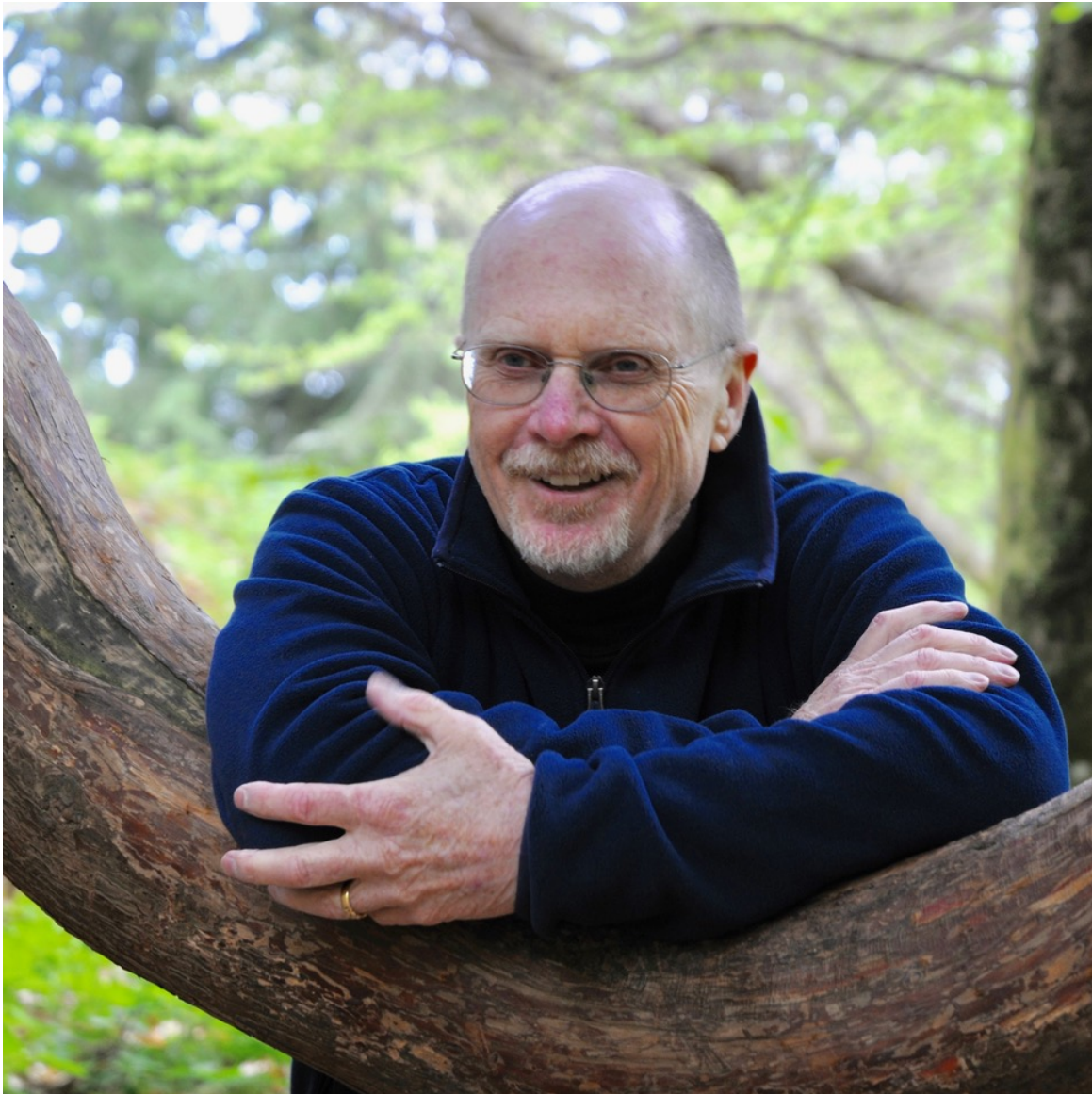
After retiring, he wrote what he thought would be his first and only novel. Three years later, he is the author of the Kim Jansen Detective Series. His debut novel, *Bloody Paws—The Plight of the Homeless Human Strays*, was the winner of a Maxy Award for best mystery novel of 2021. *Bloody Pages—Haunted by a Family Secret* (2022), deals with intergenerational violence. Book 3 in the series, *Bloody Feathers—Death of the Cardinal* (2023), focuses on exotic bird poaching and rare bird species preservation.

On Dec. 11, 2022, his publisher, Black Rose Writing, posted the first of Bruce's 10-episodes, *Death of the Stray—A Veterinarian's Revenge*, to Kindle Vella. His latest Kindle Vella short stories include "There's Mouse in My House!" and *Angel of Mercy*. He is working on a fourth novel, *Bless Me Father, For You have Sinned*.

Bruce Lewis is offering chapter members a special deal on the *Bloody Feathers* eBook so we can read it before his Sept. 7 presentation. "Reading the book ahead of time will generate lots of questions and make for a more lively discussion," said Bruce.

You can buy the ebook for \$2.99 (discounted from \$5.99) and he will contribute \$1 to the club for each sale. [Here's](#) the link.





Bruce Lewis - Hoyt Arboretum

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## Webinar Access Info:

**Topic:** MDAS Sept. 2023 Membership meeting  
**Time:** Sep 7, 2023 7:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)  
**Location:** Zoom Meeting  
**Access:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87617422544?  
pwd=Sm12aFhXazhGeHR1WHFyR3RGYXIYdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87617422544?pwd=Sm12aFhXazhGeHR1WHFyR3RGYXIYdz09)  
**Meeting ID:** 876 1742 2544  
**Passcode:** 215610



**Phone**      **One tap mobile**  
**access:**    +16694449171,,87617422544#,,,,\*215610# US  
                 +16699006833,,87617422544#,,,,\*215610# US (San Jose)

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## President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDAS President*



Welcome to another season with Mt. Diablo Audubon! I hope you have all enjoyed the summer break and are ready to get back to, or more likely just continuing on, to enjoying our birds and natural world, whether locally or elsewhere.

My big summer adventure was a 10-day rafting trip through the north slope of the Brooks Range in Arctic Alaska. It was a memorable experience, with 24-hour daylight, wind, rain and lots of sunny days too. Some mosquitos but overall not too bad. We also saw lots of Caribou and Dall Sheep and a Grizzly on the river. I was able to score a handful of lifer birds (Willow and Rock Ptarmigan, Smith's Longspur, Northern Shrike and Arctic Warbler). On day 1 we had to drag the rafts over ~1/4 mile of ice to get to a navigable channel on the river, and on day 10 we had to fill in a washout on a gravel bar runway so the bush plane could land to take us out! On both ends of this trip I stayed a couple of days in Fairbanks where I was able to see and photograph both Boreal Owl (shown below) and a pair of Northern Hawk Owls feeding voles to their fledglings. These were also lifers for me.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE!** The Camellia Room at Heather Farm Gardens, which we contracted as our meeting place for in-person meetings, has fallen behind on its remodel schedule and **so we will be conducting our September and October meetings by Zoom.** Please see the program announcement in this issue for further info. We will be holding in-person meetings starting in November, whether at this venue or somewhere else!

In other Chapter news, we still are looking for volunteers for a number of vital Board positions, including Secretary, Education Chair, and Outreach Chair. To find out more information on these positions, please visit our website [here](#) and scroll down to 'Volunteer Openings'. To express an interest in one, please contact [president@mtdiabloaudubon.org](mailto:president@mtdiabloaudubon.org). Please consider helping in one of these areas, to keep our organization strong!

Don Lewis has once again bought some duck stamps, which we will be re-selling to membership for our cost \$25 with 100% of the proceeds going to maintaining and expanding waterfowl habitat. The 2023- 24 Federal Duck Stamp, featuring 3 Tundra Swans in flight, can be seen [here](#). Please consider buying one or more of these beautiful stamps for this worthy

cause. They will be available starting at our first in-person membership meeting. If you want to reserve one of these, please contact Don at [donlewis2@comcast.net](mailto:donlewis2@comcast.net) or myself at [president@mtdiablobaudubon.org](mailto:president@mtdiablobaudubon.org) to do so.

Stay safe, and get out there for the Birds!



Boreal Owl, Fairbanks, Alaska

Photo by Jerry Britten

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## Membership Updates

Rochelle Fortier, *MDAS Membership Chair*

**Welcome New Members!** I want to give a warm welcome to new members who joined in May, June and July: **Martha Breed**, Walnut Creek; **Alan and Renee GoldHammer**, Orinda; **Ed Hanley**, Walnut Creek; **Rosemary Johnson**, Hercules; **Bruce Lewis**, Walnut Creek; **Nick Ortega**, Bay Point; **Deanna Rhoades**, Martinez; and **T.M. Scruggs**, Berkeley.



## **Mt. Diablo Audubon Represents at Community Events**

Jerry Britten

This past spring was a busy time for MDAS volunteers representing our organization at local community festivals and events. We had fun answering ID questions, entertaining youngsters with our 'Guess the Nest' game, and recruiting new members and just talking Birds at the following festivals in 2023:

- Pollinator & Friends Day at Ruth Bancroft Gardens – April 8
- Earth Day at Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden – April 22
- Lafayette Earth Day Festival – April 23
- Crockett Shoreline Festival – May 20
- Martinez Beaver Festival – June 24

We plan to represent at upcoming events during our 2023-2024 season as well, and we sure could use some help from an Outreach Coordinator (an open Board position) to help organize these. Of course, you can always help by just volunteering to be present at one or more of these events. If you have an interest in helping out with our Community Outreach efforts, please contact [info@mtdiabloaudubon.org](mailto:info@mtdiabloaudubon.org).





Rosita Harvey and Carol Pachi with guests at Lafayette Earth Day Festival

Photo by Jerry Britten





Rosalie Howarth with young guests at the Crockett Shoreline Festival

Photo by Matt Tarlach

## Community Sciences Update

Jerry Britten

### A Banner Year for Tricolored Blackbirds in Contra Costa County

Tricolored Blackbirds, a species nearly endemic to California, were recently listed under California's Endangered Species Act due to continuing population declines brought about by habitat loss and agricultural practices in the Central Valley (read more from Audubon CA [here](#)). The only known breeding colony in Contra Costa County in recent years is in a ~1-acre blackberry bramble in the backcountry of Los Vaqueros Watershed in eastern Contra Costa County, an area off-limits to the general public. We obtained an access permit from the Contra Costa Water District and monitored this colony in 2022 as part of the Triennial **Tricolored Blackbird Statewide Survey**. We placed an audio-recorder at the site at the request of Wendy Schackwitz, a researcher at Point Blue Conservation Science who is studying dialect differences among blackbird colonies and using the acoustic data to determine nesting cycles and behavior. This device records one minute of audio every 20 minutes continuously while it is deployed in the field. The compactness of the colony at Los Vaqueros, the extremely close proximity of the recorder to the colony, and the lack of anthropogenic noise due to its remoteness, meant that very high-quality audio data was obtained, and we were asked to again place a recorder and monitor the colony in 2023.

Due apparently to the explosion of grasshoppers and other insects brought about by the heavy rains this past winter, the Tricolored Blackbird colony at Los Vaqueros went into overdrive in 2023. A photo of the colony site is below. At the far left of the frame is seen a metal fencepost to which we attached the audio recorder. What was a dry pan at the base of the colony in 2022, became a 15-acre lake this spring, with an otter sighting to boot! The colony was active when we first visited and placed the recorder on March 24, and it continued to be active until at least July 7. It was found to be deserted on our last visit July 31 when we retrieved the recorder. For comparison, in 2022 the colony was found to be deserted by June 8.





Tricolored Blackbird Colony Site, Los Vaqueros

Photo by Jerry Britten

This protracted nesting period suggests that at least 2 and possibly 3 broods were raised this spring/summer. Analysis of the audio will pin this down. At any one time we estimate there were ~2000 breeding Tricolors at the site, which may not be a large colony by Central-Valley standards, but it is unusually large by Central Coast standards and is the largest colony reported from Contra Costa County in more than 15 years. And significantly, it appears that relative to colony size, a great many young were fledged! A couple more photos show the colony in action. The noise from so many birds was also something to experience at close quarters. A recording from my smartphone on March 31 is [here](#).



## Tricolored Blackbirds at Colony Site, Los Vaqueros

Photo by Jerry Britten

Also of interest was that, on many of our visits, two or three rattlesnakes were observed around the periphery of the blackberry patch. Possibly, more were inside the brambles. This high density strongly suggests that the snakes were preying upon the nestlings and/or roosting birds. According to Bob Meese (UC Davis retired, who leads the Tricolor Blackbird Survey Project) the only snakes confirmed to prey on Tricolors are California Kingsnakes. It would be challenging but very interesting to obtain photographic evidence to document rattlesnake predation on Tricolors.

The outcome of the breeding season statewide for Tricolors this year is unclear. Again according to Bob Meese, who has monitored the lower Sacramento valley for many years, many colonies in this area were adversely affected by late storms and cold spring weather. Colonies were established significantly later in the season than in the previous several years, and overall, a smaller number of birds bred in the lower Sacramento Valley than average.

We plan to continue monitoring this fascinating colony next year, the only known one in the county, to help contribute to the understanding and perseveration of this iconic California bird. We appreciate the accommodation shown by the Contra Costa Water District, and Los Vaqueros Watershed Superintendent Cary Richardson, for allowing access to this site and supporting our research.

### **Wood Duck Nest Box Monitoring, San Pablo and Upper San Leandro Reservoirs**

Mt. Diablo Audubon maintains and monitors a total of 32 nest boxes at San Pablo Reservoir and 18 boxes at Upper San Leandro Reservoir, under the umbrella of the **California Wood Duck Program**. The majority of these boxes are for Wood Ducks, but a few are for owls. This spring several volunteers once again braved the poison oak thickets to clean out/repair/replace these boxes and then to monitor their usage.

This year, at San Pablo Reservoir, nesting was observed in 10 of the Wood Duck boxes. Of these, 7 were successful with a total of 64 hatched eggs. The other nests were predated or abandoned. Also, an owl box contained a Western Screech Owl with three fledglings. The mother owl, as well as her mate, were banded in the same area last year, when they also raised three chicks. This year, we again banded the fledglings when they were mostly fully-grown.

At Upper San Leandro Reservoir, nesting was observed in three boxes, with a total of 31 eggs.





Left: Biologist Andrew Ford adding wood chips to a nest box

Right: A Hen Wood Duck on the nest

Photos by Jerry Britten





Banded Western Screech Owl Fledgling, June 2023

Photo by Deanna Rhodes

### **Northern Saw-Whet Owl Banding Project**

Once again, we will be banding Northern Saw-Whet Owls at the site in Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, starting in early October and ending in mid-November. We will be offering field trips again this year as well. Please see the October Quail issue for dates, times and sign-up details for these outings.

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### **From 50 Years Ago**

Jerry Britten, *MDAS President*

1973 was a busy year for the American Ornithological Union in terms of shuffling, splitting and merging species. This was summarized in the September 1973 issue of the Quail,

shown below. Fortunately nowadays, digital records and birding apps are updated immediately upon these changes and we don't have to decry the obsolescence of our printed guides!

The April 1973 issue of THE AUK, journal of the American Ornithological Union, published the 32nd supplement of the AOU Checklist. This includes all the changes which have been accepted by the AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature since the last Checklist was published in 1957. What these changes will do to life lists! As a species is divided into two new ones the list grows but on the other hand the list becomes smaller as two species are merged into one. Other species have acquired new names with no change in species status. Furthermore, we lose some favorite, familiar names and must learn new ones. At any rate, the changes are effective immediately. New guides will eventually be published but as no one knows at present when that will occur, please keep this list for future reference.

The following are changes involving merging formerly separate species into one: Great White Heron becomes GREAT BLUE HERON; Blue Goose becomes SNOW GOOSE; Common (Eurasian) Teal becomes GREEN-WINGED TEAL; Harlan's Hawk becomes RED-TAILED HAWK; Yellow-Shafted, Red-Shafted and Gilded Flicker become COMMON FLICKER; Black-Eared Bushtit becomes COMMON BUSHTIT; Bahama Honeycreeper becomes BANANAQUIT; Socorro and Olive-Backed Warblers become TROPICAL PARULA; Audubon's and Myrtle Warblers become YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER; Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles become NORTHERN ORIOLE; Ipswich Sparrow becomes SAVANNAH SPARROW; Dusky Seaside and Cape Sable Sparrows become SEASIDE SPARROW; Slate-Colored, White-Winged, Oregon and Guadalupe Juncos become DARK-EYED JUNCO; Mexican and Baird's Junco become YELLOW-EYED JUNCO.

The following are species which have been split into two separate species: CHUKAR is separated from European Rock Partridge; THAYER'S GULL is separated from Herring Gull; Traill's Flycatcher is separated into WILLOW FLY-CATCHER (fitz-bew song type) and ALDER FLYCATCHER (fee-bee-o song type); GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE is separated from Boat-Tailed Grackle.

The following have had name changes only: Fulmar becomes NORTHERN FULMAR; Pale-Footed Shearwater becomes FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER; Slender-Billed Shearwater becomes SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER; Petrels of the Hydrobatidae family become STORM-PETRELS (i.e., Leach's Petrel becomes LEACH'S STORM-PETREL); Common Egret becomes GREAT EGRET; Wood Ibis becomes WOOD STORK; Widgeon is now spelled WIGEON; Shoveler becomes NORTHERN SHOVELER; Common Scoter becomes BLACK SCOTER; Gray Sea Eagle becomes WHITE-TAILED EAGLE; Pigeon Hawk becomes MERLIN; Sparrow Hawk becomes AMERICAN KESTREL; Harlequin Quail becomes MONTEZUMA QUAIL; Upland Plover becomes UPLAND SANDPIPER; Knot becomes RED KNOT; Catbird becomes GRAY CATBIRD; Robin becomes AMERICAN ROBIN; Yellowthroat becomes COMMON YELLOWTHROAT; Parula Warbler becomes NORTHERN PARULA.

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## Global Boiling

Juan Pablo Galván Martínez, *MDAS Conservation Chair*

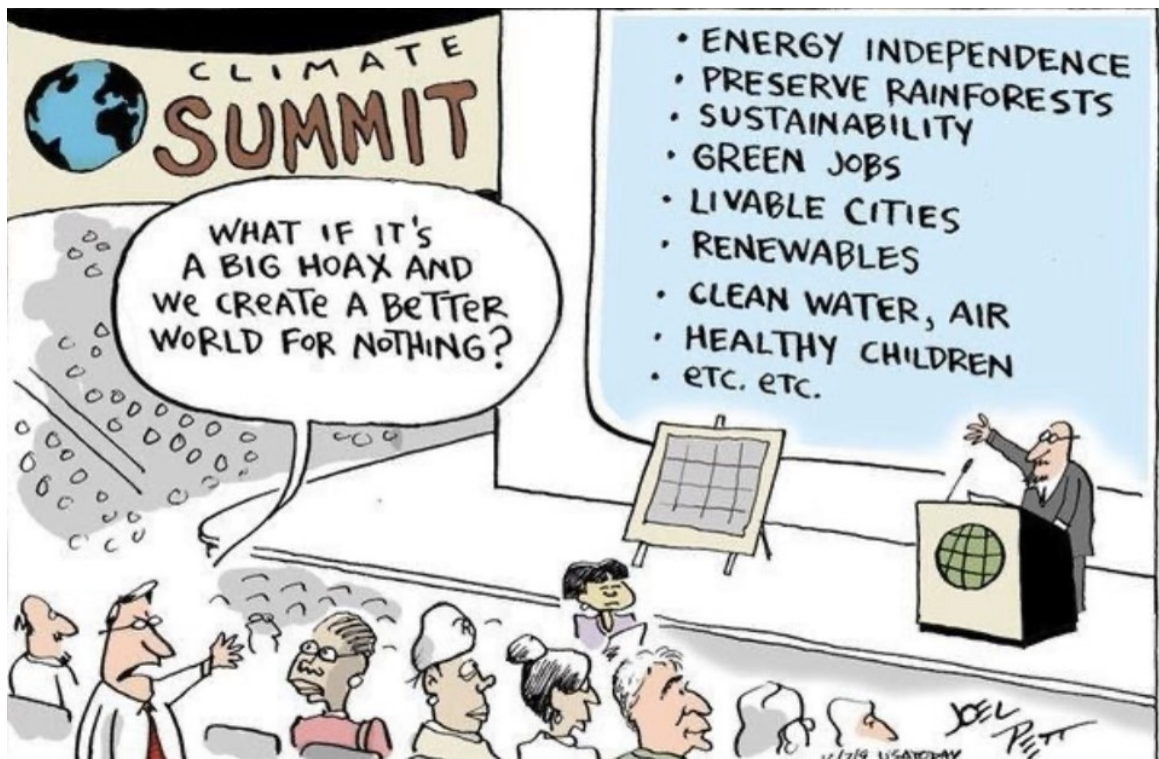
### We Are Living the Hottest Month in Recorded History

1. **It's Official:** July Was Earth's Hottest Month on Record. The phrase "Hawaiian Paradise" now has a terrible new meaning. In 2018 the Camp Fire burned through the town of Paradise east of Chico, and killed 85 people. The death toll on the Hawaiian island of Maui stands at just under 60 at the moment ([HERE](#)), but it could rise. Spain, Greece, and much of Europe, is burning. Water off the coast of

Florida was literally near boiling. Heat waves are killing people in India, while in Vermont its floods. This is only the beginning. This is not a new normal. It is a new ABnormal that humans have caused and inflicted upon ourselves. It is a CHOICE whether we make massive change now to eventually curb and reverse damage, or continue as we have and leave a world spiraling into flames for your children and grandchildren. Think we'll be ok with AC? Birds and crops don't have air conditioning, and as blackouts become more common with a strained energy grid in the face of constant heat waves, neither will we.

2. **There is Good News Too.** India has decreased emissions by a third over the last decade and a half ([HERE](#)). With the change in government, Brazil's Amazon deforestation has gone down ([HERE](#)). And locally, Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery is starting a food waste compost program that everyone serviced by them can be a part of. Reducing food waste and its associated emissions via composting (and widespread plant-based diets) is a huge climate win ([HERE](#)). Contra Costa County has also come out with a report on how to pull more carbon out of the atmosphere and into soil and vegetation by composting, restoring habitat, and many other practices ([HERE](#)). All this news is fantastic, and it must be accelerated, by a lot. MUCH more must be done. Lobby your local grocery chains, work places, schools, event centers, and cities to avoid buying Brazilian beef (a main driver of Amazon deforestation that is shipped to the US). Let your state and federal representatives know you care about this, as a matter of survival.
3. **Take Action.** Want to know what actions to prioritize to make the most difference in maintaining a climate we can live, and be happy, in? Want to base your actions on science and not just opinion? Look [HERE](#), take action, and get your community involved.





## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee

Herb Long

Children attending the summer camp at Monument Crisis Center in Concord in July enjoyed a presentation on raptors by Jenny Papka of Native Bird Connections. Jenny's presentation was made possible by Mount Diablo Audubon who sponsored it. Jenny brought along four volunteers in addition to a Peregrine Falcon, Swainson's Hawk, Eurasian Owl, and a Pygmy Owl.

Campers ages 6 through 15 were truly engaged with Jenny's program. Then the campers participated in an activity about bird beaks led by Mount Diablo members, Herb and Randi Long. There was excitement and interest among the campers as they gathered different types of "food" with different tools representing the diversity of bird beaks.

The program at Monument Crisis is one of the ways the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee of Mount Diablo Audubon is doing outreach as our chapter seeks to bring an appreciation of birds to a wider community. The three, monthly Saturday morning events at the Concord Library arranged by Mount Diablo Audubon member, Karin Deas, which began for families in May has opened up the world of birding to a number of families and individuals.



## Events

Alan Bade



Common Poorwill

Photo by Alan Bade

## Coastal Cleanup Day Events

Coastal Cleanup Day ([HERE](#)) is California's largest annual volunteer event, offering enthusiastic volunteers many opportunities in September! Volunteers all over the state and indeed the world, collect trash in our waterways, marshes, beaches and public

lands before it washes into the ocean. Millions of pounds of trash and plastic have been collected. The Coastal Commission's website has a map ([HERE](#)) that makes it easy to find an event near you.

Our local Contra Costa Resource Conservation District is hosting two events, information and Eventbrite signups are [here](#). One is at McNabney Marsh on Sunday, Sept 10th. McNabney Marsh/Waterbird Way is a traditional MDAS field trip destination and this year's trip is on November 22nd. Members helped to rebuild nesting platforms at McNabney in 2020, see this article in the *April 2020 Quail* ([HERE](#)). Another CCRCD cleanup is on Saturday, Sept 16th in the Upper Sand Creek Basin of the Marsh Creek watershed.

More Coastal Cleanup Day events can be found on your city's Community Service Day. On Saturday, Sept 23rd in Pleasant Hill, the Ellinwood section of Walnut Creek will be cleaned, though this event is not yet open for registration. This will be the second year this creek section will be cleaned, by the request of Pleasant Hill's Maintenance Dept. Last year we nearly filled a 20 yard dumpster! Check your city's community service day webpage for events local to you.

### **Contra Costa Watershed Symposium**

On Thursday, October 23rd the Contra Costa Watershed Forum will host the 2023 Contra Costa County Creek and Watershed Symposium. This event brings together state and local agencies, local nonprofits, community volunteer groups, and members of the public to discuss and plan for the health of our watersheds. More information and eventbrite signups are [here](#). MDAS is helping to sponsor this event and will be hosting an informational table. If you'd like to help with this tabling event, please contact Alan Bade at [communityscience@mtdiabloaudubon.org](mailto:communityscience@mtdiabloaudubon.org).

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## **MDAS Trip Report**

Matt Tarlach, *MDAS Field Trip Chair*

On Saturday June 3, ten birders enjoyed a day on Point Reyes that was unusually pleasant, weather-wise. It was sunny nearly all day, with temps in the upper 60s and very little wind. Such balmy conditions are actually not ideal for birding at the Point--the fog-laden, chilling breezes that often sweep the open hills cause migrating birds to hunker down in the scattered clumps of cypress, almost waiting for birders to spot them. When conditions are most pleasant for human visitors, they're also good for flying, and migrants alight on the Point only briefly while en route to more fertile pastures. We did hit one jackpot: a rare



Yellow-throated Vireo that we saw and heard singing near the Fish Docks. From nearby we had nice views of a beautiful Pacific Loon down in the bay. Both birds were lifers for several members of our group.



Yellow Throated Vireo and Townsend's Warbler

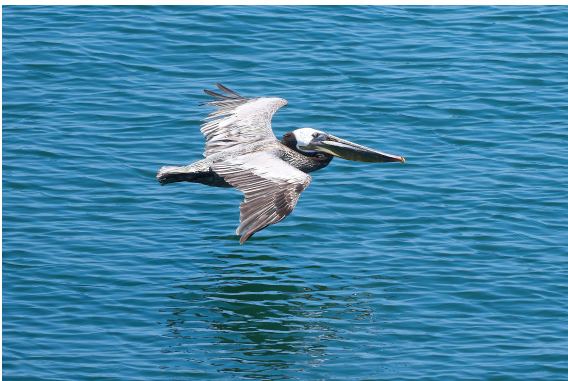
Photo by Alex & Beata Milhano

Above the Lighthouse we enjoyed extended views of a preening Peregrine Falcon, seen in a scope at fairly close range. Not far away a cute little Rock Wren was perched on the cliffside, singing his heart out. Down closer to the surf were thousands of Common Murre, Brown Pelicans, all three local varieties of cormorant and a few Pigeon Guillemot. The Napa-Solano chapter was out on the Point too, and our groups pointed out some good birds to each other. Napa-Solano leader Mark Stephenson found a lovely, late Varied Thrush near one of the historic ranches.

To cap the day, as our caravan pulled away from Drake's Beach on the way home we paused to admire a Great Horned Owl perched placidly on a fence post, in the middle of the afternoon. Including birds seen along the road our group tallied fifty species, and one beautiful day.

eBird for Lighthouse area: [Click here](#)

eBird for Fish Docks: [Click here](#)



Left: Brown Pelican

Right: Rock Wren



Photo by Alex & Beata Milhano



Great Horned Owl

Photo by Isaac Aronow

## MDAS Field Trips

Matt Tarlach, *MDAS Field Trip Chair*



MDAS mounts dozens of Field Trips throughout the year, ranging from strolls in our local parks to all-day expeditions to premier habitats around Northern California, on excursions that vary in physical challenge from car-based outings to vigorous hikes. On each field trip, one or more leaders strives to guide us to the best locations, in the best

season...but the actual bird-spotting is really a team effort. *Come birding with us!*

You can see the birds we've recorded on our field trips since transitioning to electronic records, [HERE](#).

To ensure trips are not overcrowded, pre-registration through Eventbrite is required. Signups generally open when the trips are announced in our newsletter, the *Quail*, but are open to non-members too. Registration closes 48 hours before the trip so leaders can know how many to expect. If you won't be able to attend a trip that you've signed up for, please cancel via Eventbrite *as early as possible* to open that spot up for someone else!

Field trips are ranked according to difficulty:

Trail Rating 1: Easy - little or no walking, smooth paths.

Trail Rating 2: Moderate - 1 mile or more, possibly some rough terrain.

Trail Rating 3: Difficult - extensive walking on rough terrain.

Out of respect for our members and community, we continue to ask participants to take sensible precautions for everyone's health. MDAS events do not require carpooling, though participants are of course free to make their own arrangements. Carpooling is a fun way to share the day with a fellow birder, and is helpful in reducing the burden our travel puts on the environment—and often helps with parking, too.

Leading a field trip is a fun way to serve our chapter's mission, while sharing a day out in nature with other enthusiasts! If you'd like to introduce us to a new hotspot, or take over a trip to one of our regular spots that's in need of a new leader, please contact our Field Trip Coordinator: Matt Tarlach, [mdasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:mdasfieldtrips@gmail.com). He might be able to pair you up with an experienced leader who can show you the ropes.

**Upcoming field trips include:**

**Jewel Lake, Tilden Park**

**Thursday, August 31, 7:30 AM - 11 AM**



Our traditional first field trip of fall - a short walk along Wildcat Creek and around Jewel Lake in Tilden Park. Possible highlights include fall warblers, Red-Breasted and Pygmy Nuthatch, Pacific Wren and maybe a Varied Thrush.

This trip is suitable for beginners. Bring binoculars if you have them, or if you need to borrow a pair contact the leader beforehand so he knows to bring them.

**Hike Rating:** 2, Moderate. About 2 miles walking on flat trails.

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leader:** Matt Tarlach, 925 482 6129

**Meet:** Parking lot at the end of Central Park Drive in Tilden Regional Park.

**Directions:** Highway 24 to Fish Ranch Road. Go up the hill 0.7mi and turn Right on Grizzly Peak Blvd. Follow Grizzly Peak for 4.1mi. Turn Right on Muir, then after just 100 yards turn Left on Park Hills. Watch for signs to "Little Farm" which is near the meeting point. Continue 0.3 miles, then turn Left on Central Park Rd. Continue about 1 mile to the meeting point in the parking lot.

This hike is limited to 15 participants. All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants must acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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**Mt. Wanda, John Muir NHS, Martinez**

**Saturday, September 16, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM**





This hike is especially for beginning birders!

We'll walk through oak woodlands and oak savannah habitats, climbing uphill on a rutted fire road with one steep section. Then we'll walk a single track trail back to the fire road, about 2.5 miles total. We should have excellent views of acorn woodpeckers, likely views of red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks, towhees, and oak titmouse. Mt. Wanda is part of the John Muir NHS, and this walk is hosted jointly by Mt. Diablo Audubon and the National Park Service.

MDAS has binoculars to loan for use on our trips! If you need binos just tell the trip leaders beforehand, so they know to bring an extra pair.

**Hike Rating:** 3, Vigorous (by birding standards). About 2.5 miles walking on fire roads and single track trails with substantial elevation gain.

**Elevation change:** 475 feet

**Leader:** Cheryl Abel, 925-957-6229

**Meet:** Parking lot for the Mt. Wanda Trailhead, intersection of Alhambra Ave and Franklin Canyon Rd in Martinez.

**Directions:** From Hwy 4 westbound take the Alhambra Ave. exit in Martinez. Turn left back under Hwy 4. Franklin Canyon Rd. is the next right, parking lot immediately on the left side of Franklin Canyon Rd. Bring water and binoculars.

This hike is limited to 15 participants. All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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## Vaux's Swifts at McNear Brickyard

Wednesday, September 20, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM



Vaux's Swifts

Photo via Wikicommons

Vaux's Swifts migrate south along the Pacific Americas Flyway each fall, and one of their few known stopping points in Northern California is McNear Brick and Block in San Rafael. At sunset on many September and October evenings, as many as 20,000 swifts mass and fly into the decommissioned brickyard chimneys to spend the night. It's an unforgettable sight!

Although this trip is timed for the height of the swifts' migration, based on past years' counts the number of swifts can vary greatly from night to night, and can range from a few hundred to thousands. Like everything else in birding, there are no guarantees!

Spotting scopes are helpful, to better view the action around the chimney mouths. Photographers will be challenged as sunset nears (7:10 pm on the night of our field trip). Given the time of day, it is OK to bring snacks as well as water. However, this is a birding event, not a picnic, so please don't bring an elaborate spread. There are no restroom facilities on site.

**Hike Rating:** 1 - Stationary. People who find a portable stool or lawn chair helpful can bring one.

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leader:** Maureen Lahiff, [MLahiff@aol.com](mailto:MLahiff@aol.com), 510.484.6529

**Meeting point and Directions** will be sent by email before the trip. Carpooling is strongly encouraged since there is very little parking.

To respect both the swifts and the McNear property owners, this trip is limited to 20 participants. All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration). Register [HERE](#).

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## Raptor Migration @ Hawk Hill

Saturday, September 23, 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM



Sharp-shinned Hawk

Photo by Jerry Britten

Hawk Hill in the Marin Headlands is one of the best spots in the entire US to see raptors during the fall migration! We'll also have stunning views of the Golden Gate, San Francisco, and the Pacific Ocean.

We'll meet at the parking lot at Hawk Hill at 10:30am. From there it's a short walk up a fairly steep but well-graded trail to the observation area at the top of the hill. We'll station ourselves there to watch for hawks, falcons, eagles and vultures migrating down from the north, and using the thermals to gain altitude before they glide south over the Golden Gate on their southerly migration. Sometimes they're high in the sky, though often these spectacular predators zoom and circle right at eye level.

For more info on the migration check out the GGRO website, [here](#).

Weather is very changeable on this hill overlooking the Golden Gate, so dress in layers. We will be stationary for some time, so bring a lawn chair if you like. Also a hat, water, comfortable walking shoes, sunglasses, sunscreen and a snack. This is a birding expedition though, not a picnic, so please no elaborate spreads.



Peak hawk-spotting doesn't begin until around 11AM, sometimes later if the morning is foggy. We'll plan to arrive at Hawk Hill at 10:30 to find parking and get organized. If you're a little late, we'll be up the Hill...but be advised parking gets tight before mid-day. Birders who'd like to start earlier might bird Rodeo Lagoon north of Hawk Hill, or other sites in the Marin Headlands. Leader may email participants about an optional early meeting point a day or two before the trip.

**Leader:** Matt Tarlach, [mtar925@gmail.com](mailto:mtar925@gmail.com), 925-482-6129

**Meet:** Hawk Hill Parking Lot on Conzelman Rd

**Directions:** Input 'Hawk Hill Conzelman Rd' into Gmaps

All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration). Register [HERE](#).

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## Outer Point Reyes

**Saturday, September 30, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM**



Prairie Warbler

Photo by Beth Branthaver

Outer Point Reyes is a wonderful place for fall migrants, many of them Eastern passerine vagrants. You never know who'll turn up sightings in past years have included Blackburnians and Blackpolls; Chestnut-sided, Connecticut, Black-and-white, Magnolia, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and Black-throated Blues...and that's just the warblers. We've also seen Yellow-green, Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos, Orchard Orioles, Ovenbirds, American Redstarts, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Peregrine Falcons, and Broad-winged Hawks.

To be clear, we don't see all---or even most!---of these species every year. Not even one is guaranteed. But we can hope! The chance to see migrants is very much dependent on the weather: an absence of winds from the northwest and an overcast night sky helps to hold these land birds at the Outer Point. More reliable are the waterbirds: we usually have Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, Cormorants, and Loons.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In the past this trip has met at Bear Valley. This year we'll try meeting at the Drake's Beach visitor center, closer to the hotspots on the Outer Point. At Drake's Beach we'll combine cars, as parking on the Outer Point is extremely limited. MDAS does not require carpooling on our trips but in this case it's very helpful, so if you're comfortable sharing a car please come prepared to do so. Or carpool all the way from home with a friend or two!

Weather is highly changeable even on a good day, so bring layers and be prepared for damp wind. Storm Warning cancels. Bring lunch and plenty of water, as the Outer Point is a remote area with no conveniences. If you need to borrow binoculars, please advise the leader before the trip so they can bring an extra pair. If you have a scope of your own to bring it can be useful for sea-watching.

**Hike Rating:** Category 2 - Moderate. Two planned walks of ~1 mile on paved, hilly roads; plus short walks over tricky terrain at a few optional stops.

**Elevation change:** A few well-graded climbs on paved roads, none over about 100 feet.

**Leaders:** Matt Tarlach, [mtar925@gmail.com](mailto:mtar925@gmail.com), 925-482-6129

**Meet:** 8:30am at Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center, **Drake's Beach**. Leader will park not far from the picnic tables behind the visitor center.

This trip is limited to 15 participants. All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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**Birding by Bike at Clifton Court Forebay**

**Saturday, October 7, 7:30 AM - 1:30 PM**



Photo by Jerry Britten

Have a bicycle, e-bike or scooter, and like to bird? Join MDAS at Clifton Court Reservoir in eastern Contra Costa County, where we will do an out-and-back biking/birding trip of approximately 10 miles on a flat, paved levee road, to see a myriad of bird species. Those who are equipped for it can also navigate a series of well-maintained gravel levee roads to avoid taking the same route back.

Clifton Court Forebay is an enormous reservoir that collects Delta water and sends it south through the Delta-Mendota canal. The reservoir itself can hold staggering numbers of waterfowl and gulls, and the surrounding habitat of slough, marshland, grassland, scrub and riparian woods is very productive. It is not uncommon to record 60-80 species of birds in a single outing, and the place is a magnet for rarities, especially in fall. There are also excellent chances to see river otters, coyotes, resident sea lions and even a beaver if we're lucky.

Trip is approximately 5 hours, although participants can turn back at any time. There is plenty of free parking at the Forebay, but no restroom facilities or potable water. Must be able to transport your bike/scooter to the site. It can be windy out there, but is pleasant most of the time. We will monitor the forecast, gale-force winds will cancel.

Meet at the parking lot at the end of Clifton Court Road (left turn from highway J4 approximately 2 miles southeast of Byron) at 7:30 AM. Bring layers, sunscreen, water and a snack or lunch for when we get back to the cars.

**Leader:** Jerry Britten

**Meeting Point GPS:** 37.8378308046695, -121.59322207166935



This trip is limited to 15 participants. All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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## **Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary/Crab Cove, Alameda**

**Saturday, October 21, 1 PM - 5 PM**



Long-billed Curlew and American Godwits

Photo by Maren Smith

The millions of shorebirds that winter on San Francisco Bay make it a state and global Important Bird Area. It is part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and is also designated as a Wetland of International Importance under UNESCO's Ramsar Convention.

We'll start at the viewing platform at Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary, which is at the southeast end of Shoreline Drive in Alameda, walk along the shoreline to another viewing platform, and then drive to the Crab Cove Visitor Center area. We'll be walking short distances on level, mostly paved paths, so this trip is accessible for birders with mobility limitations. Bring water and sun protection. Spotting scopes welcome and appreciated.

Restrooms and water are available at the intersection of Shoreline Drive and Park Street (about 0.2 miles walk from the Elsie Roemer viewing platform) and at the Crab Cove Visitors Center.

**Hike Rating:** 1, Easy. Short walks on level paths. (This trip is Accessible.)

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leader:** Maureen Lahiff, [MLahiff@aol.com](mailto:MLahiff@aol.com), 510.484.6529

**Meet:** Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary viewing platform near intersection of Broadway and Shore Line Drive in Alameda. Parking on Broadway and streets off Broadway is the best bet.

This trip is limited to 18 participants. All Field Trips are first-registered, first-served. Participants acknowledge the MDAS Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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## Other Birding Opportunities

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

### Common Poorwill Twilight Hike

Friday, August 25, 7 PM - 10:30 PM



Bill Stagnaro, CalPhoto

We'll start the evening at Mitchell Canyon listening for bird calls. As twilight approaches we plan to be in the upper portion of White Canyon looking for bats flying low overhead. Next comes the sounds of the Common Poorwill & Owls. The returning walk in the dark may turn up some interesting wildlife! Bring flashlight, binoculars, liquids, and hiking poles if you use them. Please dress for the weather. Hike is about 3 miles round trip, with some elevation gain.

**Leader(s):** Denise Wight and Leslie Contreras

**Location:** Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, 96 Mitchell Canyon Road, Clayton, CA

**Reservations required:** [blkittiwake@yahoo.com](mailto:blkittiwake@yahoo.com)

We ask that participants not vaccinated against Covid 19 please wear a mask. Please register with the leader. Limited to 15 participants.

**Date:** Friday, August 25, 2023

**Time:** 7 PM - 10:30 PM

**Location:** Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, 96 Mitchell Canyon Road, Clayton, CA

**Cost:** \$6 per vehicle/Seniors \$5 (exact change required) or pay on the Yodel app



**Registration:**                      [Click here to register](#)

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**Nature Walk 8: Birds, Butterflies and Blooms**

**Wednesday, August 30, 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM**



Join naturalist Dan Fitzgerald for a nature walk in the Mitchell Canyon area. We will be looking for birds, butterflies, and some late Summer blooms. Bring water, snacks, and binoculars if you have them. The walk is about 3 miles with some elevation gain.

**Leader(s):** Daniel Fitzgerald, Naturalist

**Location:** Meet in front of the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center (96 Mitchell Canyon Road, Clayton )

**Contact for information / reservations:** [onesuperhiker@aol.com](mailto:onesuperhiker@aol.com)

We ask participants who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 to please wear a mask. Limited to 15 participants.

**Date:**                                      Wednesday, August 30, 2023

**Time:**                                      8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

**Location:** Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, 96 Mitchell Canyon Road, Clayton, CA

**Cost:** \$6 per vehicle/Seniors \$5 (exact change required) or pay on the Yodel app

**Registration:** [Click here to register](#)

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**Outdoors in East Palo Alto: Bird Walk at Ravenswood Preserve**  
**Saturday, September 16, 8:30 AM - 10:30 AM**



Join Grassroots Ecology, Climate Resilient Communities, and San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory for a bird walk along the East Palo Alto marsh. No prior birding experience is required. Attendees will learn how to use binoculars, and we will discuss the importance of birds in our ecosystems. Participants can expect a flat, paved 2 mile walk from Cooley Landing to Bay Trail, out and back.

Visit Grassroots Ecology's [Ravenswood Preserve](#) page to learn more about the ecosystem and accessibility considerations.

**Date:** Saturday, September 16, 2023

**Time:** 8:30 AM - 10:30 AM

**Location:** Cooley Landing Education Center, 2100 Bay Road, East Palo Alto, CA 94303

**Cost:** Free

**Registration:** [Click here to register](#)

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## Bird Walk-Coyote Point County Park

Wednesday, September 20, 8 AM - 11 AM



With the large variety of habitats at Coyote Point, we should be able to see quite a number of species. Restrooms are available.

**Leader:** Donna Pomeroy, [dpom@comcast.net](mailto:dpom@comcast.net).

**Directions:** Exit Peninsula Ave. from US 101 and follow the signs to the park (1701 Coyote Point Drive), then continue to follow signs to the yacht club parking after you enter the park. AQI over 150 or rain, cancels.

**Date:** Wednesday, September 20, 2023  
**Time:** 8 AM - 11 AM  
**Location:** Coyote Point Recreation Area, San Mateo, CA 94401  
**Cost:** \$6 admission charge or free for seniors  
**Registration:** [Click here to register](#)

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## September Gallery & Media





## How The Dutch Managed To Save The Spoonbill

See the full video [HERE](#)

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There's a Birding Group for Everyone

"This week's challenge for new birders: Try joining a group for an outing, or go birding with at least one new person."

Read the article [HERE](#).

Photo: Brad Imhoff / [Macaulay Library ML 234247081](#)

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California Scrub-Jay / Ladner Harbour Park, Metro Vancouver, British Columbia,  
Canada

Photo: Ilya Povalyaev / [Macaulay Library ML 285578111](#)

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Vaux's Swift / Tualatin River NWR, Washington, Oregon  
Photo: **Robert Lockett / Macaulay Library ML599640581**

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**Mailing address:**

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

**Email address:**

**[info@mtdiabloaudubon.org](mailto:info@mtdiabloaudubon.org)**

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