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# Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

## *The Quail*

Volume 69, Number 2

February 2024

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### Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, February 1, 7 PM

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet in person at our old location, [the Camellia Room at the Gardens at Heather Farms](#).

#### **Address:**

The Camellia Room @ The Gardens at Heather Farms  
1540 Marchbanks Drive Walnut Creek, CA 94598

\*As a conservation organization we encourage you to bring your own mug for coffee or tea.

#### **Agenda:**

6:30 PM Doors Open

7:00 PM Announcements

7:15 PM Refreshments and Raffle

7:30 PM Main Program: Cross-country Birding Adventure

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## February Main Program: Cross-country Birding Adventure

Robert Raffel



Photo by Stephen Klotz

Last year at this time, Robert was sleeping in his car in sub-zero temperatures in search of Snowy Owls and other birds from the far north. At our February meeting, Robert will share the highlights of his six month road trip which included birding along the Canadian border from Washington to Maine in January, birding Florida and the Texas Coast during spring migration, and then birding from Arkansas to Minnesota back to Oregon in the beginning of the breeding season. Robert has plenty of pictures of his favorite birds, including some that show identification challenges and insights he encountered along the way. Robert's presentation will also share his perspectives on birding various parts of the country, as well as considerations to take into account in planning your own trip.

Robert Raffel grew up in Pennsylvania and began birding as a teenager. In his 30s, he started birding more seriously, traveling extensively throughout the continental United States, building his life list. In his 40s and 50s, Robert took a break from birding and focused on raising his two sons. Once they could drive and no longer needed his services, Robert picked up his binoculars again and found that eBird and digital photography had completely changed birding for the better.

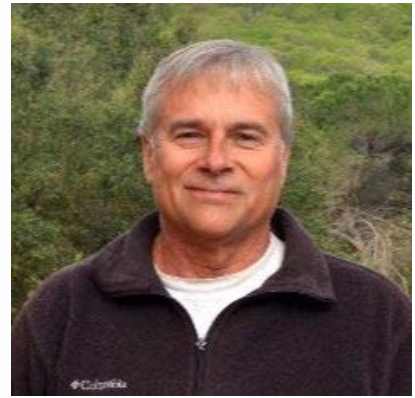


Snowy Owl

Photo by Robert Raffel

## President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*



After months of the vagabond life, bouncing between different venues and the occasional Zoom meeting, we are looking forward to settling in to the newly remodeled Camellia Room at Heather Farm Gardens to host our in-person membership meetings for the foreseeable future. Please come and check out the new digs on February 1, and listen to local member Robert Raffel present an account of his solo cross-country birding adventure.

Our 4th Photo Contest will commence February 15! Please read about it later in this issue to find out categories, rules, and entry info, and send in those photos for this fun event! The contest ends May 1, and winners will be announced at our June membership meeting.

A big Thank-You to all who have contributed to Mount Diablo Bird Alliance during our recent Fundraising Drive. It's not too late for the rest of you to contribute to help us bring programs, field trips, and support our conservation and advocacy activities. Just hit that 'DONATE' button at the top right of our website!

In Board news, we welcome Karin Deas as acting Secretary. Acting, since this is an elected position and she has been appointed until our elections in the spring. Thanks again to Carol Pachl for fulfilling this role for many years. Long-time Board Member Rosalie Howarth has resigned her Board membership, but remains active posting on our Facebook page. We are operating at a minimum level of 9 Board Members, and still need to fill Education, Outreach, and Publicity/Social Media Chair positions. If you can spare a little time and are interested in one of these, please contact us. The next in-person meeting is a great way to do this!

Stay safe, and get out there for the Birds!

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## Membership Updates

Rochelle Fortier, *MDBA Membership Chair*

**Welcome New Members!** I want to give a warm welcome to the new members who joined in November and December: **Kellie Collier**, Pleasanton; **Elisa Fernandes-McDade**, Pleasant Hill; **Nancy Fleischauer**, Martinez; **Pam Hemphill**, San Francisco; **Catherine Hoffman**, Oakland; **William Kezer**, Pleasant Hill; **Mary Levak-Cohen**,



Walnut Creek; **Sheila Raumer**, Alamo; **Nathaniel Rickard**, College Park, Maryland; **Sara Schorer**, Danville.

I hope to see you at our in-person meeting in February!

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## 2024 MDBA Photo Contest Begins Feb 14!

Jerry Britten , *MDBA President*

The 4th Mount Diablo Bird Alliance Photo Contest commences February 14, 2024. The contest is open to MDAS members only except for the Youth category which is open to anyone under the age of 18.

The categories for this year's contest are:

- **Bird Beauty:** Close-up/Abstract/Focus on Color etc not fitting into the other main categories.
- **Birds and Humans:** Urban birds, birds on structures, birds and birders, etc. (no pet birds please).
- **Birds Dining:** Self-explanatory.
- **Birds in Action:** Flying, interacting, etc.
- **Youth:** We'd especially like to encourage young people 8-17 to enter, and they need not be members. Any type of bird photo can be submitted in this category.
- **Worst Bird Photo EVER:** We KNOW you've got a couple of these! Losers you still didn't delete for some reason. Extra points for humor.

No restriction on where the photos were taken.

Judges for this year's contest are Jerry Britten, Arnold Joe and Alan Krakauer.

Submissions are closed on May 1, 2024.

This is a casual, friendly competition; no special equipment or professional skills required (but use 'em if you got 'em). Pictures can be taken anywhere, on any date. Deadline is May 14. Winners and runners-up will be shared at the June members' meeting and in the Quail.

Click the "2024 Photo Contest" link at the top of the website [www.mtdiablobirds.org](http://www.mtdiablobirds.org) to see official rules and entry link.

In prior years, the most common reasons photos were rejected or did not do well were:

1) File size too small! Small photos may look OK on a phone, but on a large screen do not fare well. **Please check your photo file size before submitting! Files smaller than 300 KB will be automatically rejected.**

2) Photos with signatures, watermarks etc. These will be automatically rejected.

Remember, it's just for fun! (But there are modest prizes involved...)



This photo of a Great Blue Heron about to devour a vole, by Parham Pourahmad, was the winner of the Youth Category for our 2023 contest.

## **The Good News on Climate: You Can Do Something About It! Act for Birds, People & Yourself**

Juan Pablo Galvan, *MDBA Conservation*

1. **No Surprise Here: Wind Turbines are Friendlier to Birds Than Oil & Gas!** It should shock no one, but at least now there's even more confirmation. New research shows that the impacts of oil and gas extraction cause significant bird population declines. While wind energy does impact birds, numbers killed are negligible, and definitely much less than the harmful effects of fossil fuels. Read an article about it [HERE](#), and the actual research [HERE](#). We birders get nervous when we see turbines in a place where birds fly, but remember, while there are impacts, overall, we can't compare a stubbed toe to a gunshot wound to the head.
2. **What Can You Do About Climate Change? Answer: A Lot!** The most important thing is that you do SOMETHING. Get over your excuses, accept that the bad news is just that, you can make change happen and be part of the good news, and ACT. Choose your level, whether it's habitat restoration, lobbying congress, swaying swing state voters ([HERE](#)) or getting your city to adopt climate-smart policies. Take a look at what you can do and get inspired [HERE](#).
3. **2023 Was the Hottest Year on Record.** CO2 and methane (orders of magnitude more climate-killing than CO2, but not as long-lasting) emissions also reached new highs (more [HERE](#)). Last year we got within inches of the 1.5 C threshold that governments and scientists have recognized that beyond which, we start down a hot world path we really don't want to be on. We need to stop spewing carbon pollution into the atmosphere, eat less meat, protect forests and change our own behavior. The prize? A better world for everyone and everything, in all respects. That's worth the effort and pain. A headache now is a lot better than decapitation later.

## Results of the 2023 MDBA Christmas Bird Counts

Jerry Britten, MDBA *CBC Compiler*

### Central Contra Costa County

The **68th Central Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count** was held Saturday December 16, 2023. 95 people, including 20 on a field trip at Thurgood Marshall Regional Park in conjunction with the East Bay Regional Parks District, participated on a glorious day. The total tally of species was 155, a very respectable number. It's 5 down from last year, but above our running 25-year average of 148. Two birds were added to the countdown list of birds seen in the last 25 years. In addition to the **Common Poorwills** my group saw, (not recorded in 30 years) Andrea Bennett and Christina Tarr got a **Long-Billed Curlew** at Hillcrest Park in Concord (last recorded 25 years ago). Another great highlight was the **Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker** seen by Alan Krakauer in Pleasant Hill, as well as the **Mountain Bluebird** seen by the group at Stoneman Trail in Pittsburgh. A notable miss was **White-Throated Sparrow**, which was seen on the 15th at Heather Farms but not the 16th.

Regarding Common Poorwill, it is thought to be resident in the county, but it's a nocturnal bird that inhabits rather remote chaparral areas that are generally not easily accessible after dark. However, in the last year these birds have been reliably found in a suitable habitat not far from a trailhead on the east flank of North Peak in Mount Diablo State Park, so as long as someone is willing to take a short night hike up a utility road for the count, going forward it should be possible to record it every year.

**Here** is the eBird trip report for the Central County Count.

It and trip reports for previous years are also available on our website **here** (scroll down until you see them).

These trip reports are very interesting to study. They show an interactive map of all routes covered, followed by a species list. At the far right is an icon that shows how many checklists the particular bird was on. Click on this icon to open up individual checklists, some with photos. Take particular note of the many birds that appeared on only 1 or 2 checklists. This shows the importance of covering as much territory as possible. For instance, until a few years ago we didn't cover Stoneman Trail in Pittsburg. Since we have started, it consistently produces birds that aren't seen anywhere else on the count (Horned Lark, which had not been reported for several years, for example, and Mountain Bluebird this year). Note that the trip report you see will show 154 species. That's because these trip reports do not show sensitive species,



so Black Rail, seen (rather, heard, I imagine) at MOTCO and Bay Point Regional Shoreline, is not listed.

Over the past few years, we've noticed attrition among our veteran route leaders. This year, we could've benefited from additional assistance. If you're comfortable leading a route next year, please let us know. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

### **High Numbers for this year (compared to previous 25 years)**

Northern Shoveler - 17473

Greater Yellowlegs - 67 (8 checklists)

California Gull - 3792

Black Phoebe - 154 (very slightly higher)

Common Raven - 121

Green-Winged Teal - 4767

American White Pelican - 118

Black-Bellied Plover - 65 (All at Marathon Refinery)

Black Rail - 4

Red-Breasted Nuthatch - 16 (double the old record)

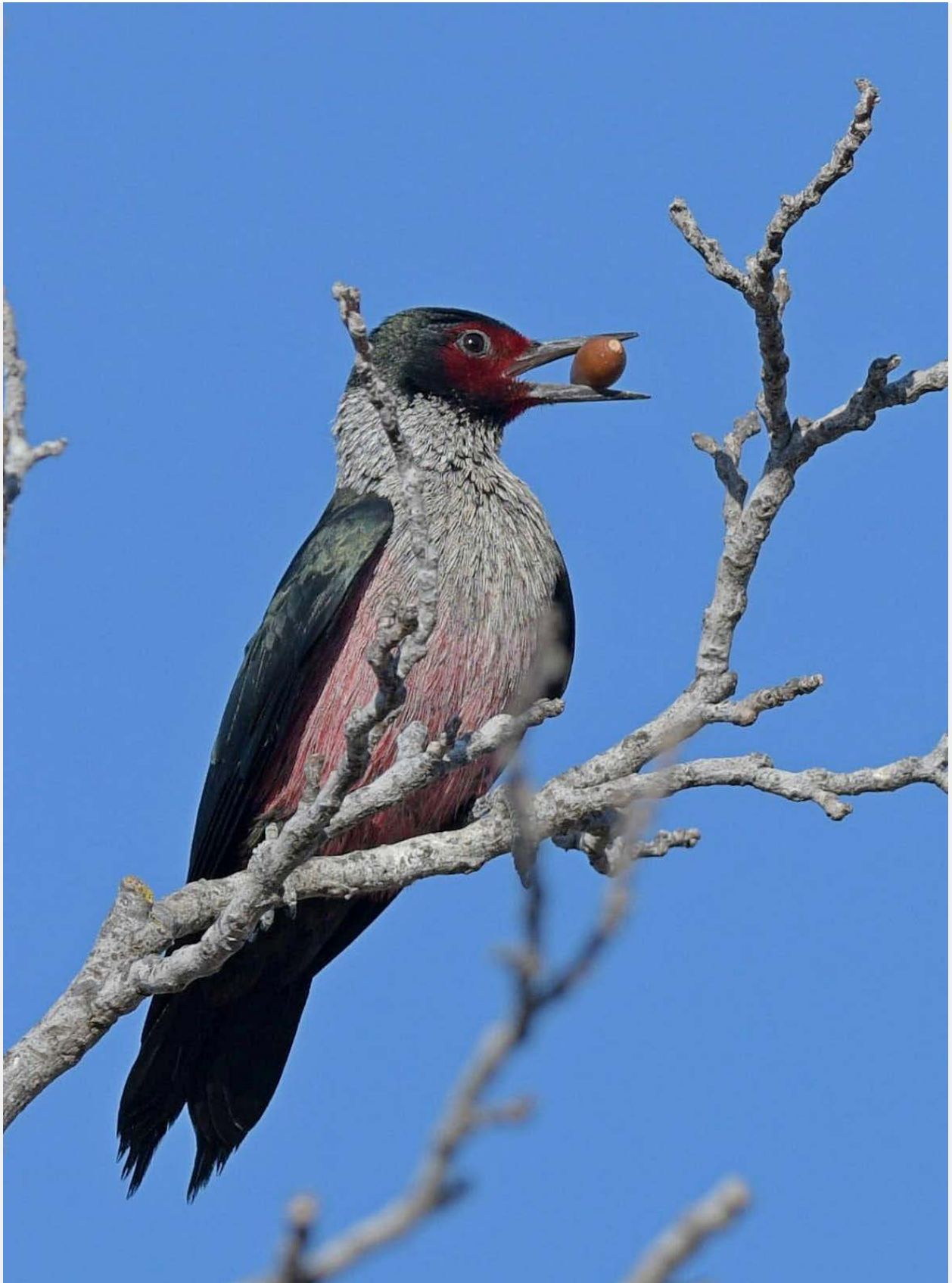
House Wren - 8

### **Low numbers for this year**

California Quail - 42

Grebes - 0 (except for pied-billed grebe)

Belted Kingfisher - 3



Lewis's woodpecker at Thurgood Marshal Regional Park during the 20233 CBC

Photo by Kevin Dixon

**Eastern Contra Costa County**

On a rainy Wednesday, December 20, 29 participants braved the conditions for the 24th annual East Contra Costa CBC. Despite the weather, we recorded 142 species, a typical count, including a first-ever sighting of a Rose-Ringed Parakeet at Creekside Park. This species is labelled as an 'exotic escapee' in California, even though it's often spotted in Southern California. The eBird trip report for this count can be found here:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/184581>.

**Notable finds were:**

Varied Thrush - first time in a few years

Lesser Yellowlegs

Mountain Bluebird - not at Los Vaqueros but Briones Road off of Deer Valley Road

Band-Tailed Pigeon - 4th year for the count

Violet-Green Swallow - also 4th year

Red-breasted nuthatch also 4th year

Hooded Oriole – at Holland Tract, 3rd year

**Notable Misses:**

White-Tailed Kite - first time ever

Burrowing Owl - any sane owl would be in its burrow this day

Prairie Falcon

Greater Scaup – seen the next day however, at Clifton Court Forebay

**High Numbers for this year:**

Cackling Goose - 14280 about 8x the previous record

Northern Pintail - 2682

Lesser Scaup - 1831

Snowy Egret - 98

Tree Swallow - 1459 , 3x the old record

Red-Breasted Nuthatch - 3

European Starling - 17836, most from a big flock on Sandmound Road near Bethel Island. Old record about 10K

**Low Numbers for this year:**

Eared Grebe - 4 (average is 77)

Red-Tailed Hawk - 38 (average is 122)

Belted Kingfisher - 3 (average is 14)

Loggerhead Shrike - 20 (average is 59)

Oak Titmouse - 10 (average is 50)

White-Breasted Nuthatch - 9 (average is 38)

Rock Wren - 4 (average is 15)

Mark your calendars for **next year's counts!**

**Central County – Saturday December 14, 2024**

**Eastern County – Wednesday December 18, 2024**

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## **From 50 Years Ago - *The Quail*, January 1974**

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

Our regularly scheduled meeting January 3 conflicts with the film at Diablo Valley College. It was felt by the Board that our members would like to see this film and therefore cancelled our meeting. We will meet for a no-host dinner at 6:30 at the Copper Penny Restaurant in the southeast corner of the Sun Valley Center parking area near the freeway; then, following dinner, adjourn to the college to view the film. Any business which must be conducted will be taken care of at the potluck on December 29.

The Audubon Wildlife film, "Malheur: Marsh, Meadow & Mountain" by James D. Hammond, sounds very exciting. Malheur National Refuge in Oregon contains perhaps the largest variety of birds and mammals of any national refuge.

Mr. Hammond spent 5 years filming the abundant wildlife there, and scenes of Trumpeter Swans and Pronghorn Antelope are complimented with a look at the rich human history of the land. As usual, the film will be presented without charge at the Diablo Valley College gym at 8 p.m.

Interestingly, back in the day the normal monthly membership meetings were sometimes canceled in favor of free Audubon Wildlife Film showings at the local Community College.



## **Attention Birding/Nature Experts! Wild Birds Unlimited is Looking for Speakers!**

Greetings from your local Wild Birds Unlimited. As many of you may know, we moved our store location and now that we're settled (and our sign is finally up) we want to work on our educational calendar for 2024. If you are an expert on a particular species of bird or other wildlife animal, can offer tips on bird watching or give a tutorial on binoculars or an interesting topic we're not thinking of, please reach out to Susan at [pleasanthillwbu@gmail.com](mailto:pleasanthillwbu@gmail.com).

If you know of or have recommendations of naturalists, authors, photographers, bee keepers or Master Gardeners we should reach out to, that is helpful as well. We would appreciate an engaging talk about subjects that are educational and inspiring. We are interested in talks that are 45 minutes to an hour with an opportunity for attendees to ask some questions at the end of the program. Most likely the talk times will be 8:30/9:00am or between 5-6pm on a weekend day. We are pleased to offer a store gift card or stipend for the speaker's time. We look forward to hearing from you and we hope you'll attend once we have the talks scheduled. Happy Birding!



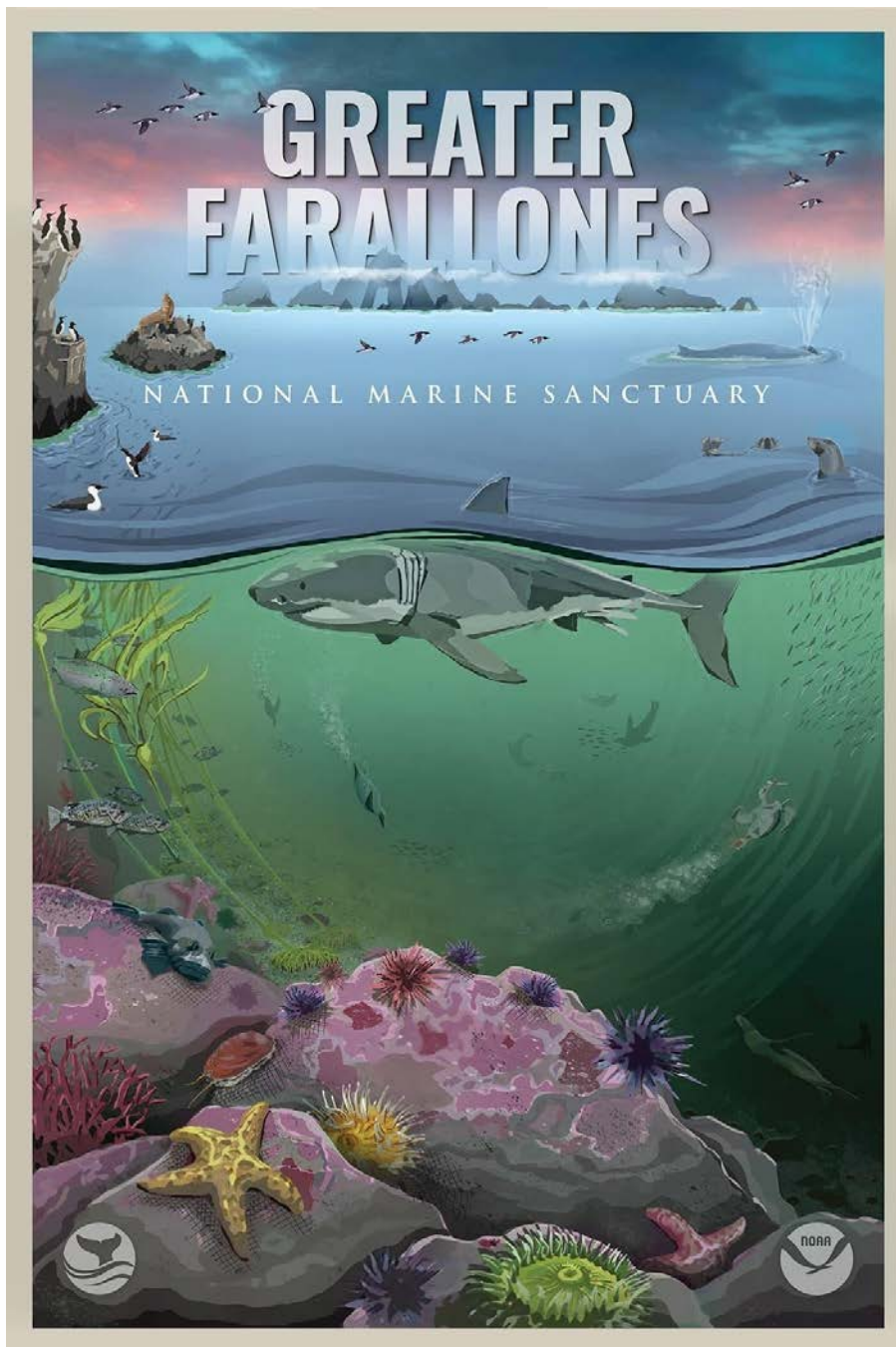
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## **Beach Watch Volunteers Needed!**

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

The Beach Watch program at the Greater Farallones Association is looking for volunteers to survey beaches within the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (which involves coastal bird ID!). If MDBA members are interested in becoming Beach Watch volunteers, below is the link for more information and schedule of upcoming training for the Beach Watch program.

<https://beachwatch.farallones.org/get-involved/>



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## MDAS Trip Report

### Big Break - Ironhouse Trip Report

Randy Huey & Mona Lange





Say's Phoebe

Photo by Randy Huey

About nine MDBA birders traveled to East Contra Costa County for our winter visit to Big Break Regional Shoreline and Ironhouse Sanitation District. It was a cold and cloudy day, but great for birding. Overall, we identified 35 different species of birds at Big Break. Highlights included: Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Lincoln's Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

After Big Break, we drove over to Ironhouse Sanitation District where we observed 21 different bird species. Some of our highlights included: Tundra Swan, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Long-billed Dowitcher, Double-crested Cormorant, Black-crowned Night Heron, American Kestrel, Tree Swallow, Bushtit, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

All in all, a great day of birding.

## **American Canyon Trip Report**

Randy Huey



Green Winged Teal

Photo by Jim Ulrick



Willet, Black-bellied Plover, Wilson's Snipe

Photos by Pam Lorenz

About 20 MDAS birders traveled to American Canyon for our winter visit to Wetlands Edge Park. It was a cool and clear day, and we spent a little over four hours covering about two and a half miles of wetlands and wooded trails. Overall, we identified 75 different species of birds. Highlights included: Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, Clark's Grebe, Sora, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Black-bellied Plover, Marbled Godwit, Wilson's Snipe, Black-crowned Night Heron, White-tailed Kite, Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Merlin, Western Meadowlark, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

### **Putah Creek Trip Report**



Phainopepla and Golden Eagle

Photos by Dan Fitzgerald



Common Goldeneye, Photo by Isaac Aronow

Hooded Merganser, Photo by Pam Loenz



Barrow's Goldeneye

Photo by Pam Lorez

21 MDBA members and one guest rang in the New Year with a whopping 63 species seen and/or heard on the Lake Solano/Putah Creek Field Trip on January 3, 2024. Highlights included a variety of raptors including a flyover Osprey, Cooper's Hawk, a White-tailed Kite devouring its prey on a distant tree perch, and a soaring Golden Eagle that caused quite a bit of racket from the Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks.

We also had a variety of woodpeckers including a Downy and a Red-breasted Sapsucker, but struck out on the usually-seen Lewis's Woodpeckers. The Phainopepla came through, however, with their soft whistle calls and clear views of both males and females who were joined by a flock of Cedar Waxwings, all enjoying the mistletoe crop. We had quick views of two Golden-crowned Kinglets in a tree near the parking lot boat launch and an Orange-crowned Warbler in the campground.

On or near the water, we saw Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, plentiful Greater Yellowlegs and Common Gallinules, a shy Sora, and the regal-looking Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. At the Canyon Creek Resort, some of us extended the field trip to locate a Barrow's Goldeneye couple, and were able to compare the markings and colors against a Common Goldeneye couple there, too.

EBird [checklist](#), [checklist](#), [checklist](#)

## **Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh Trip Report**

Sandy Ritchie

Our MDBA group enjoyed nice weather for our annual high tide field trip. Lake Merritt had more activity on the water than we've seen for the last few years. Although there were no surprises, we saw a good selection of grebes, ducks, gulls and both species of pelicans. There was also a good selection of song birds in the park trees.

Arrowhead Marsh is our high tide event for viewing rail species that are usually pushed out of the vegetation with the rising water. This year, the tide was not as high so that might be the reason we had few sightings of our target birds. Some of our group did have sightings of Ridgway's Rails and a Sora, but others had to be satisfied with hearing their calls. There were several other target species that had been reported for Arrowhead, and we did a pretty good job of finding them. This list included White-winged Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-throated Loon and Nelson's Sparrow. The sparrow provided very good opportunities for all of our group with cameras.

Sadly, at Garretson Point, the rainwater pond was dry this year. We did see a good collection of shorebirds on distant sandbars, thanks to some in our group that brought and shared their scopes...thank you for that. In total, we had 78 species at the different locations.

## **Lodi Lake Trip Report**

Mona Lange



Green Heron

Photo by Randy Huey

13 participants ventured out despite the threat of rain, which thankfully held off for most of our trip. We counted a total of 76 species between the Lodi Lake and Woodbridge areas. Highlights at Lodi Lake wilderness were nine Wood Ducks and a hungry Green Heron. We also had a Townsend's Warbler and many Ruby Crowned Kinglets. There were many Blacktailed Deer relaxing in the park. One beginning birder from Lodi was now anxious to go

out and get a pair of binoculars!

From Lodi Lake we moved on to Woodbridge Road, where we counted about 150 sandhill cranes along various stops. It was great to see three Wilson's Snipes foraging too. The usual waterfowl of Pintails, Shovelers, Killdeer, Black-necked Stilts and White-faced Ibis to name a few. Four participants saw a Yellow Billed Magpie before we arrived at Lodi Lake. Very thrilling! Trip led by Mona Lange.

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## MDAS Field Trips

Matt Tarlach, *MDBA Field Trip Chair*



MDAS mounts dozens of Field Trips throughout the year, ranging from easy, accessible strolls around our local parks to longer outings, including some vigorous hikes. On each field trip, one or more leaders guides our group to the best hotspots, in the best season... but the bird-spotting is really a team effort. *Come birding with us!*

You can see the field trip checklists we've recorded since transitioning to electronic records [here](#).

To ensure that trips are not overcrowded, pre-registration through Eventbrite is required. MDAS members have priority with member sign ups opening as soon as the trip is



announced in our newsletter. Non-members are welcome on our trips too! Registration opens to the public a week before the trip.

All registration closes *2 days 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!

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.

Field trips are ranked according to difficulty:

**Trail Rating 1: Easy.** Little walking, under 1 mile, on smooth paths.

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

**Trail Rating 3: Challenging.** Extensive walking and climbing on rough terrain!

We always need new trip leaders! Please contact our field trip coordinator, **Matt Tarlach**. If you'd like some guidance in leading trips, he might be able to pair you up with an experienced leader who can show you the ropes.

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### Walnut Creek City Parks

Wednesday, February 7, 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM



European Starling

Photo by Matt Davis

Starting in Heather Farm Park, we will walk around the large, mostly natural pond, birding along the way. We will visit one or two other parks within the city, to be determined the day of the trip.

This is a great trip for beginners!

**Rating:** Category 2-Moderate

**Elevation change:** N/A at Heather Farm, perhaps some climbing later at Borges Ranch.

**Leader:** Randi and Herb Long, [hrlong13@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hrlong13@sbcglobal.net)

**Meet:** Wooden railing at the natural pond (not the one surrounded with concrete.)

**Directions:** Turn into the park on North San Carlos Drive from Ygnacio Valley Road. This is east of John Muir Hospital - the intersection has a Shell and a Chevron gas station. Drive past the community building to the stop sign and turn left into the parking lot. The wooden railing is straight ahead.

This field trip is limited to 10 participants.

Sign up [HERE](#)

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## Grizzly Island and Rush Ranch

Monday, February 19, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM



Tundra Swans

Grizzly Island provides habitat for more than 200 species of birds and is home to a variety of threatened or endangered wildlife and plants. Our trip will begin at the Refuge Headquarters and continue for about 7 ½ miles along Grizzly Island Road, which is unpaved and runs through the middle of the Wildlife Area.

Since this trip will involve a car caravan through the wildlife preserve, with limited roadside parking pulloffs, we need to limit the size of our group to no more than 5 vehicles. Accordingly, carpooling to the preserve is encouraged. In the event we arrive at the meeting point with more than 5 vehicles we will need to share cars from that point. There is parking available at the meeting point.

Some things you may need for our outing at Grizzly Island: binoculars, drinking water, sun block, insect repellent, warm jacket, and appropriate footwear. Also, bring lunch and drinks.

**Leader:** Randy Huey, 925-518-8439

**Hike Rating:** Category 1-Easy

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Meet:** **Wildlife Refuge Headquarters**, 2548 Grizzly Island Road, Suisun, CA 94585

**Directions:** From Central Contra Costa County, take I-680 N toward Sacramento. Take Highway 12 off-ramp east toward Rio Vista. Turn onto Grizzly Island Road, at the stoplight at Sunset Shopping Center. Hill Slough Wildlife Area is on both sides of Grizzly Island Road from Highway 12 to the first one-lane bridge. The Grizzly Island Complex Headquarters is 9.5 miles further on Grizzly Island Road.

The trip is limited to 15 participants.

Sign up [HERE](#)

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**Introducing the Birds of Heather Farm**

**Wednesday, February 21, 8:30 AM - 10:30 AM**



White Breasted Nuthatch

Photo by Matt Tarlach

Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek is an underrated birding spot, home to dozens of resident species and attracting many migrants as well! We'll meet at the overlook of the Natural Lake, west of North San Carlos Drive about 100 yards beyond the community center. A casual walk for birders of all experience levels, and especially beginners!

At 8:30AM an experienced birder or two will be on hand to demonstrate how to properly use binoculars, and to discuss birding guidebooks and apps. We'll begin scanning the lake too, to see which ducks and other birds might be in town for the winter. When we're good and ready, we'll set off on a walk around the lake and adjacent Nature Area---an easy stroll of about half a mile on mostly level, accessible trails. Along the way we'll hope to see and hear sparrow, finch, woodpecker and warbler, along with nuthatch and dove. Wrens, thrushes, herons, and raptors are often found here too---though in birding, as in life, nothing is guaranteed! Our guides will explain what features on the birds to look for, to tell one from the other.

We should be done around 10:30. Birders of all experience levels are welcome! Binoculars will be available to borrow for those who need them. Trip will go on in gray weather, but rain or high wind cancels.

Free event, with pre-registration requested.

Sign up [HERE](#).

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**Bodega Bay**

**Saturday, February 24, 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM**



Western Grebe

Why do we go all the way to Bodega Bay? To see loons close up – the Common, Pacific, and Red-throated species are all likely. To see Brant. To see Double-crested, Brandt's and Pelagic cormorants side-by-side to strengthen your ID skills. This is a great place for birders of all levels and birders new to the Bay Area.

Due to the tide times, we'll start at 9:30AM at **Bodega Head** - *NOT* our previous meeting point at the Tides restaurant. You might still want to make a rest stop at the Tides before continuing out to the Head, where there are only park-style pit toilets.

After birding Bodega Head we'll work our way back along the western shore of Bodega Bay, with stops including the "Hole in the Head," Campbell Cove, and Porto Bodega Marina. Somewhere along the way we'll pause for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon we may continue to Doran Beach Road on the east side of the harbor. There's a \$7 parking fee at Doran Regional Park.

Be prepared for variable weather. Bring lunch, snacks, and liquids. There is a chemical toilet "porta-potty" at Porto Bodega Marina, pit toilets above the Hole in the Head, and restrooms with flush toilets at Doran Beach. For a comfort stop near the end of the drive out stop at Tides Wharf and Restaurant (on the shore side opposite the Inn at the Tides, 800 Highway 1), though the snack bar will probably be closed.

**Hike Rating:** 1 - Easy, with little elevation change

**Leader:** Maureen Lahiff, [MLahiff@aol.com](mailto:MLahiff@aol.com), 510-484-6529

**Meet:** Bodega Head, GPS: 38.30356934, -123.06467926

**Directions:** Take US 101 north to Petaluma. Exit at Washington and head SW. Washington becomes Bodega Ave, which becomes Petaluma-Valley Ford Rd, which eventually merges into CA Hwy 1. Take Hwy 1 to Bodega Bay. Just past "downtown" Bodega Bay turn left on Eastshore Road, and follow it down to Bay Flat Road and turn right. Bay Flat Road becomes the Westshore Road. Follow the Westshore Road all the way to the end, up the hill past Campbell Cove to the large parking lot. From Walnut Creek, it's about a 2 hour drive.

This field trip is limited to 20.

Sign up [HERE](#).

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*New Trip - A Poorwill Quest!*

Thursday, February 29, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



Common Poorwill

Photo by Jerry Britten

Hike up a fire road on the east face of North Peak in Mount Diablo State Park to see Common Poorwills as they forage for moths along the fire roads through the chaparral. They will be detected by their eyeshine from our lights.

This is a nocturnal hike. It is Trail Category 3 because, although only 2 miles round-trip, the road is quite steep and there is a stream crossing near the trailhead with the possibility of getting wet feet. Bring layers, wellington-type boots that can be stashed in the bushes after the stream crossing for normal hiking wear, and a flashlight/headlamp. Expect to be in the field for ~1.5 hrs.

**Trail Rating:** 3 --- Strenuous. Read trip details!

**Elevation change:** Substantial, steep in places, and we will be descending after dark.

**Leader:** Jerry Britten

**Meet:** GPS 37°53'58.7"N 121°52'24.5"W

**Directions:** From Clayton drive east on Marsh Creek Road. Turn right on Morgan Territory Road and go about out 1500', to a turnout on the right.

This field trip is limited to 5 Participants max, due to limited parking and the need for quiet.

Sign up [HERE](#).

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### Contra Loma Regional Park

Wednesday, March 6, 8:30 AM - 1:00 PM



American White Pelican

Photo by Jerry Britten

We will be birding the reservoir, Loma Island and surrounding grassland areas. Expected species include waterfowl, woodland, riparian/marsh, shore and grassland birds. Dress appropriately, bring lunch and drinks. This is a good trip for beginners!

**Trail Rating:** 1 - Easy

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leader:** Mona Lange

**Meet:** Contra Loma Regional Park--Channel Point Parking Lot

**Directions:** From Hwy. 4 in Antioch, go south on Lone Tree Way. Continue south to Golf Course Road and turn right. Continue on Golf Course Road to Frederickson Lane, turn right and continue into the park and the entry kiosk. Fee required at kiosk. Turn left and park in the first lot on the right, Channel Point Parking Lot.

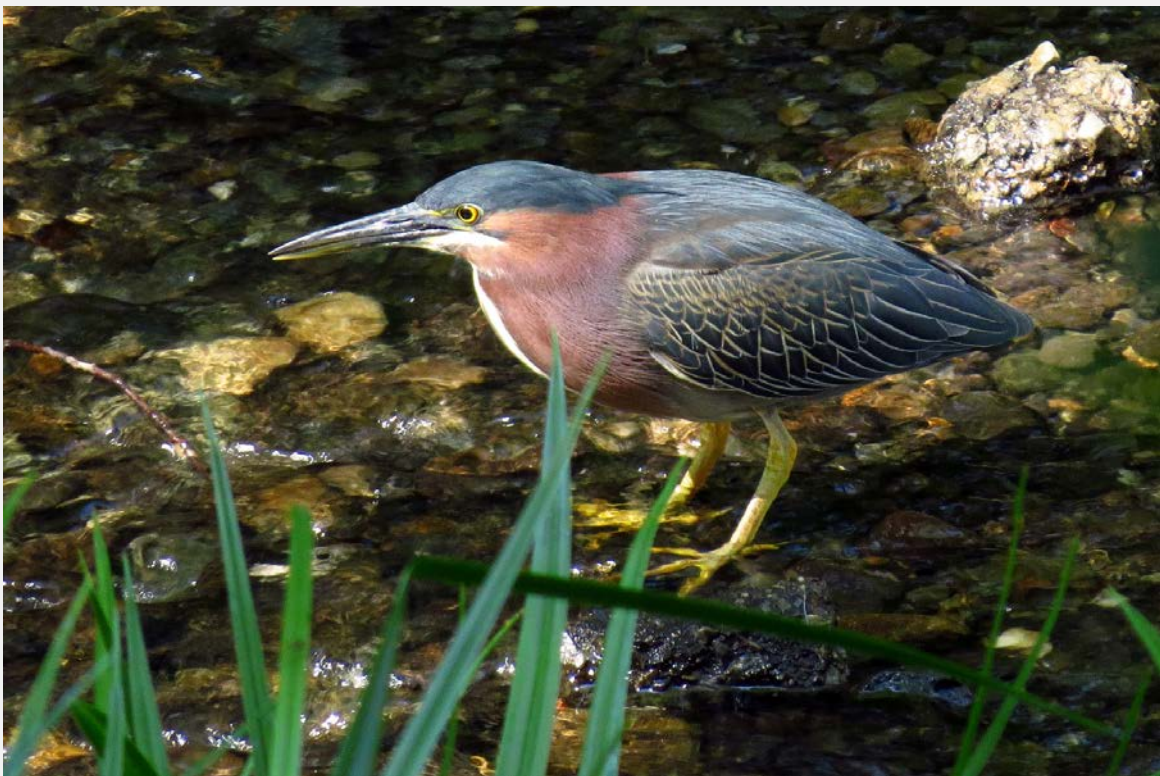
This field trip is limited to 15 participants.

Sign up [HERE](#).

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### **Mt. View Sanitary - McNabney Marsh**

**Monday, March 11, 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM**



Green Heron

Photo by Matt Tarlach

We'll begin by scanning McNabney Marsh from the viewing platform, then head over to Moorhen Marsh at Mt. View Sanitary District --- one of the first water treatment facilities in the US to be developed as bird habitat. We expect to see a variety of waterbirds at these locations, from grebes and ducks to waders and peeps. Marsh passerines and raptors might also be present. This trip is great for beginners!



**Hike Rating:** 1 - Easy. Under 1 mile on flat terrain. Unpaved paths, potentially muddy.

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leader:** Sandy Ritchie & Matt Tarlach

**Meet:** Wooden observation deck overlooking McNabney Marsh, east of I-680, at 8:30 AM.

**Directions:** Exit from I-680 southbound at Arthur Road, turn left and go under the freeway. Exit I-680 northbound at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway.

Arthur Road will turn left. At .4 miles turn sharp left onto Mt. View Sanitary's private road. Follow the road through the entry gate, with the freeway to your left and the marsh to your right, until you arrive at the gravel parking lot by the observation deck.

Limited to 15 participants.

Sign up [HERE](#).

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## February Gallery & Media



January 2024 MDBA Meeting

See the full video [HERE](#)



## **Prosperous Communities, Sustainable Forests**

See the full video [HERE](#)

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## **Why Mister Grouse Is the Friendliest Bird in the Forest**

Read the article [HERE](#).

Photo: Marya Moosman/ [Macaulay Library ML 44139401](#)

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Dark-eyed Junco / Oxford Lagoon, Los Angeles, California, United States

Photo: [Robert Hamilton](#) / [Macaulay Library ML 49112631](#)

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Cedar Waxwing/ Union, Oregon, United States

Photo: [Russ Morgan](#) / [Macaulay Library ML 257647631](#)

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