



# Mt. Diablo Audubon Society

## **The Quail**

Volume 67, Number 7

APRIL 2022

### **Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, April 7**

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

- 7:00 PM** Welcome and Introductions
- 7:05 PM** Board Announcements
- 7:15 PM** Main Program: *Cooperation and Conflict in the Communal World of the Acorn Woodpecker with Walt Koenig*
- 8:30 PM** Adjourn

---

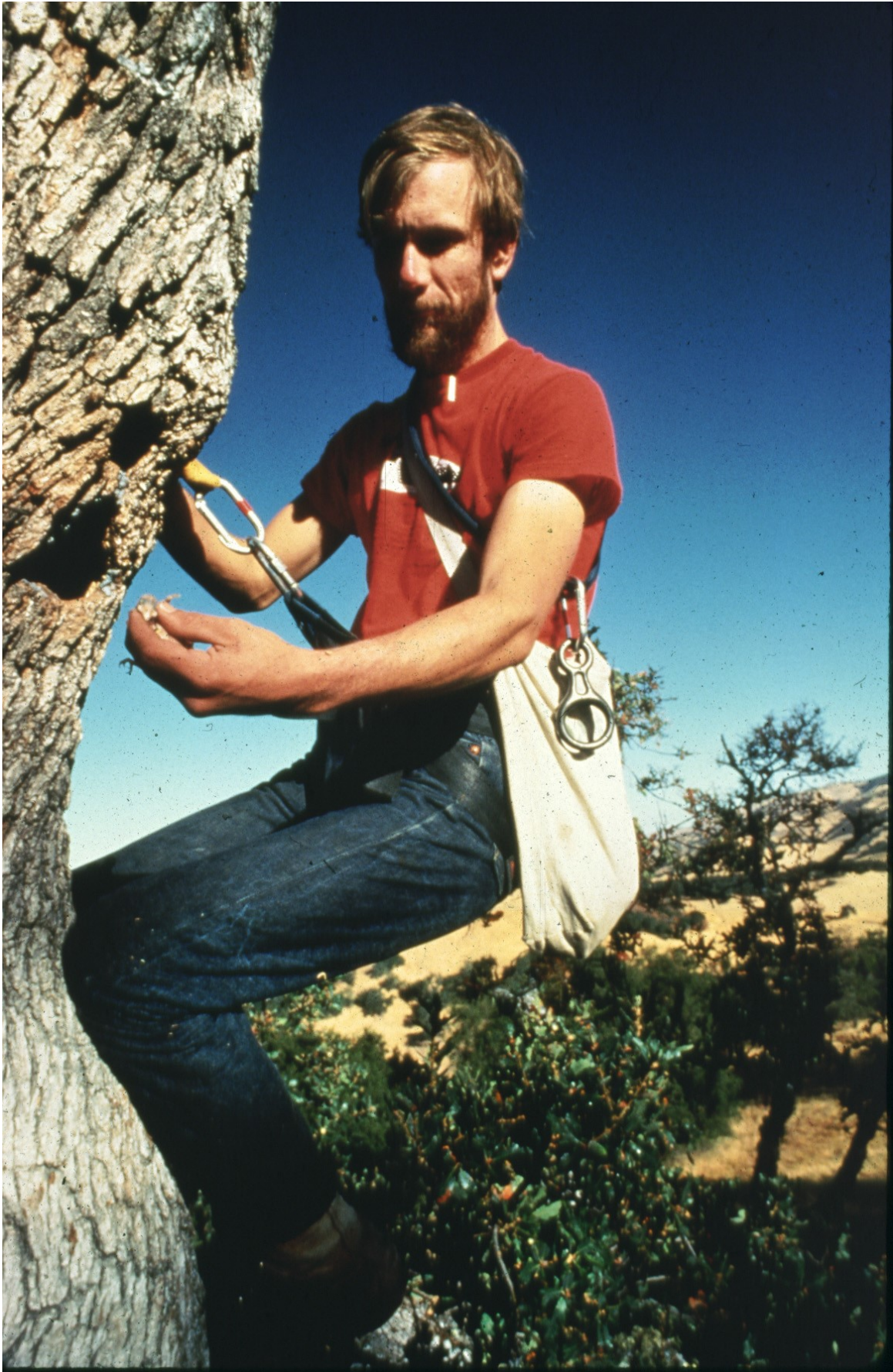
### **Main Program: *Cooperation and Conflict in the Communal World of the Acorn Woodpecker***

Walt Koenig, *Senior Scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

Acorn Woodpecker, best known for their unique habit of storing acorns by the thousands in special structures known as “granaries,” exhibit one of the most complex social systems of any bird. Family groups of this species, sometimes numbering a dozen or more birds, contain multiple breeders of both sexes, a rare phenomenon called “polygynandry,” along with young from prior years that serve

as “helpers-at-the-nest.” Based on a long-term study of this species at Hastings Natural History Reservation in Monterey County, Walt will explain some of the strikingly cooperative and diabolically competitive behaviors of this species that he and his colleagues have discovered during their 50+ year field study.

After studying Acorn Woodpeckers for his Ph.D., Walt Koenig became a Research Zoologist at Hastings Reservation, a field station located in the upper Carmel Valley run by the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at UC Berkeley, from 1982 to 2008. He subsequently was a Senior Scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, from 2008 to 2016. He retired in 2016 and returned to upper Carmel Valley, where he currently studies acorn production by California oaks, continues to contribute to the Acorn Woodpecker study, and works on perfecting his sparkling wine palate.



Walt, more years ago than he cares to remember, at an Acorn Woodpecker nest.

Photo: Galen Rowell





Two females at a communal nest.  
The bird at the hole is about to feed acorn pieces to the young.

Photo: Bruce Lyon

## Webinar Access Info:

**Date:** Thursday, April 7, 2022

**Time:** 7:00 PM–8:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

**Location:** Zoom online meeting

**Access:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83232163067?  
pwd=d2IKMjZiSW9zWkhwR2V2eC9PT1crZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83232163067?pwd=d2IKMjZiSW9zWkhwR2V2eC9PT1crZz09)

**Meeting ID:** 832 3216 3067

**Passcode:** 843453

**Phone access:** **One tap mobile**  
+16699006833,,87826809099#,,,,\*639163# US (San Jose)  
+14086380968,,87826809099#,,,,\*639163# US (San Jose)

**Dial by your location**  
+1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose)  
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)  
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)  
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)  
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 832 3216 3067  
Passcode: 843453

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kes5ZROHtA>

---

## President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDAS President*

### Featured Bird: Phainopepla

I thought I'd feature the Phainopepla in this month's newsletter, for no reason other than I was able to get a decent photo of one recently. The Phainopepla is a slim, long-tailed bird with a prominent crest and staring red eyes. The male is glossy black, with white wing patches that flash in flight but are not visible when perched. The female is dark gray with no white in the wings. They are not common in Contra Costa County – more common as you go south into desert country where they frequent oases and mesquite woodlands. Locally, they can be seen at Black Diamond Regional Preserve, but probably the best place to find one is at Clayton Community Park on the eastern edge of the community of Clayton. They are fruit-eaters, with a very strong affinity to mistletoe, so look for them perched at the top of an oak infested with this plant. They are almost impossible to see when they are in the mistletoe feeding. Listen for their **'whoip' call** which can be called a soft sound but carries remarkably far.



In **Chapter News**, we are happy to announce that Rosemary Nishikawa has taken over the Sales Manager Chair. This is an important position when we resume in-person meetings, which we will for our June meeting! Look for more details on this later. We also are very pleased to announce that Rochelle Fortier has agreed to take over for Bill Chilson as Membership Chair. Bill, a long-time member of our board, is looking forward to living abroad extensively, although he will thankfully still be around to help out on our Christmas Counts. Rochelle is set to take over in mid-April. We are still looking for someone to take over the very important Field Trip Chair to replace Hugh Harvey, who is stepping down in June. We sure would like to have a full slate of field trips planned out starting next September! Also, festivals and other events are starting to come back

after a long hiatus during the Pandemic. We need an Outreach Coordinator to help organize our organizational presence as these events. Please consider helping out in these important roles that help us engage with our membership and the larger community. Email [president@mtdiablobaudubon.org](mailto:president@mtdiablobaudubon.org) for more information.

Shortly after our next membership meeting on April, look for a ballot in your email and vote on the slate of candidates for our elected positions (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary). Also, you will be asked to vote on a change in our bylaws pertaining to the minimum number of Board members required for the Chapter to operate. It is very important to vote, as a quorum is needed to make it official, and it will only take a few seconds. Thank you in advance!

Also, be aware that we will be Zooming our April and May meetings, but meeting in-person for our June Membership meeting, Thursday June 2 from 7 to 9 PM, at the usual location, the Camellia Room at Heather Farms. It will be great to see some real faces again!

As always, stay safe and get out there for the Birds!



Phainopepla, Clayton Community Park

Photo: Jerry Britten

---

## Welcome, New Members!

Kevin McClendon, Antioch

Will McNally, Oakley

Neil Raulet, Oakland

Isabelle Reddy, Pleasanton

---

### Call for Candidates and May Ballot

Rosalie Howarth, *Nominating Committee Chair*

Nominations are open for the 2022-2023 Officer positions on the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Board of Directors.

If you would like to be a candidate for President, Vice-President, Treasurer, or Secretary for the term of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, please contact the Nominating Committee, Rosalie Howarth and Hugh Harvey, by using the Contact Us button under About Us on our website, [www.mtdiabloaudubon.org/contact-us/](http://www.mtdiabloaudubon.org/contact-us/).

A slate of candidates has been proposed that includes Jerry Britten continuing as President, Ariana Rickard continuing as Vice-President, Steve Buffi staying on in the role of Treasurer, and Carol Pachl remaining as Secretary.

Nominations and self-nominations from membership are also welcome. There are other Board positions to be filled, so be sure to reach out with the link above if you would like to get involved!

The election will be held via an email ballot to be sent to all members in early May. **The deadline to return the ballot is May 16.** The results will be announced in the June Quail and at the June 10th membership meeting.

Also on the May ballot will be amendments to the Mt. Diablo Audubon Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. These amendments propose changing the number of authorized board members from “neither less than 12 nor more than 20” to “neither less than 9 nor more than 20”. The purpose is to provide greater flexibility for the number of members on the Mt. Diablo Audubon Board of Directors. These amendments have been approved by the Board and now need to be approved by vote of the membership. [Click here](#) to read the full text of the proposed



amendments.

**Please check your email for your ballot in early May, vote on both provisions, and return the email ballot as soon as possible. The deadline is May 16. Every Vote Counts!**



All of us on the Board of Directors of the Mt. Diablo Audubon chapter thank you for your ongoing support and participation.

---

## **Poll On Membership Meetings For Our 2022-23 Season**

Jerry Britten, *MDAS President*

Last week, all MDAS members should have received an email containing a poll on whether next years' monthly meetings should be 100% in-person, 100% virtual, or a mix of the two. If you have already voted, Thanks! If you haven't already voted, you can do so **HERE**. There are advantages and disadvantages of either mode, but it is your organization, and you can have a say about how you want meetings to happen! The vote closes on March 30.

---

## **Fossil Fuels Warm the Planet, and Fuel War. Help End the Cycle.**

Juan Pablo Galván Martínez, *MDAS Conservation Chair*





A section of the Amazon rain forest that has been decimated by wildfires is shown near Porto Velho, Brazil. Credit: Victor Moriyama/Getty Images

**1) What Does the Ukraine War Have to do With Global Warming? A Lot (HERE).** This month the world has been engrossed with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is horrible, but it is not unique. The very countries that are trying to support Ukraine — even the US to some extent — are also financing the war through the purchase of Russia’s fossil fuels. This story has played out in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and even some parts of the US, where our addiction to fossil fuels drives conflict. The answer (HERE)? Stop being addicted (HERE). Replace fossil fuels with renewables to the maximum extent possible as quickly as possible. It only harms us if we replace one bad fuel with another drilled someplace else (HERE). The cost of NOT acting FAR outweighs the costs of action (HERE). Advocate for change in your neighborhood and with your elected officials now.

**2) Act Locally For Global Impact.** Climate change is a huge, critical issue. It can be difficult to get your head around it and see how you can make a difference. But once you stop and think about what’s going on in your community, it can be pretty easy to see how local action can help, or harm, the fight to avoid catastrophe. Is there a program to promote electric vehicles in your area? Is an infill project (surrounded by development rather than on the suburban fringe) being proposed around you? Are there plans for a solar facility that is wisely sited and mitigated that you can support (HERE)? Talk to your local governmental, community

development, or planning office to find out, or crack open the paper. People seem to want to be green, but don't want to take the steps necessary to achieve it (**HERE**). That's a problem, and it's hypocritical. Make your actions consistent with your words, and get involved.

**3) Global Experts on Global Warming Confirm, Again, It's Worse Than Ever.**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has released its sixth, and most dire, report yet on the science and consequences of climate change. It's a huge report, so check out these articles **HERE**, **HERE**, and **HERE** to get the gist. Basically, it's worse than we thought, and the world is quickly running out of time to avoid catastrophe. **THERE IS STILL A CHANCE**, but whether we take that chance is up to you, and to a much larger extent, up to the collective pressure and demands for change we make to government and fossil fuel companies. This is their fault, and ours, because we are addicted to what's causing this disaster. No one can escape this, but it is the natural world and the poorest among us that contributed to this problem the least that are paying the highest cost, and paying it right now.

**4) The Amazon is Very Close to Changing Forever (HERE).** The Amazon, sometimes called the Lungs of the Planet, is rapidly reaching a tipping point that will cause its transformation from a lush rainforest to a dry savanna. A climate helper to a climate killer. This is a disaster for millions of species, the climate, and ourselves. Make change now. Check out the green box **HERE** to find out how.

---

## **BioBlitzing in the Diablo Range**

Save Mount Diablo, *April 16 - 30*



Blue Skullcap (*Scutellaria tuberosa*)

Photo: Sean Burke

**You're invited to Save Mount Diablo's 2022 BioBlitz!** Since 2007, Save Mount Diablo has been hosting an annual BioBlitz around the Mount Diablo region. Typically, a BioBlitz is a 24-hour event, but due to COVID-19 and the scale of the SCU Lightning Complex fire footprint, we are expanding our BioBlitz into a two-week, dispersed event. Their hope is to inspire community scientists of all ages and backgrounds across the northern Diablo Range to safely explore various public, burned sites.

These BioBlitz events bring together scientists, naturalists, and volunteers to document the biodiversity present in our communities, contributing to an improved understanding of local natural resources. The BioBlitz events work as an important resource for data generation. Cataloging the plants, animals, fungi, and other living organisms found in certain locations will update past records and provide an ecological snapshot. Our investigation will provide insight into species that may need continued monitoring or direct management in the future. It may even identify new species.

For 2022, they are moving into their 2nd out of a 3-year study of the SCU

Lightning Complex fire footprint, which runs from Round Valley and Morgan Territory Regional Preserves south to Henry Coe and Pacheco Pass. The SCU Lightning Complex began in mid-August of 2020 and lasted into early October of 2020. This Complex was a series of approximately twenty fires that were broken into three zones: the Canyon Zone, the Calaveras Zone, and the Deer Zone. Altogether, this series of fires lasted forty-four days and scorched over 396,000 acres of land across five different counties in the northern Diablo Range. It's now the fourth-largest wildfire in California history.



Mt. Diablo Fairy Lantern



Mt. Diablo Sunflower

Photos: Sean Burke

They've been examining the effects of the SCU fires in "**Diablo Range Revealed**" a series of posts, videos, and photo galleries by Joan Hamilton. In 2021, they've partnered with the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) for their Fire Followers Campaign to study post-fire effects and ecological regeneration on the northern Diablo Range. With the CNPS, Save Mount Diablo was able to upload over 2,500 observations within 2 weeks onto the SCU Lightning Complex iNaturalist project. Most of the 2,500 observations are native species, some of which have not been seen in the region for decades. Save Mount Diablo is continuing this partnership with CNPS for our 2022 BioBlitz to further add to the overall understanding of natural fire recovery and the evolutionary dependency of fire in the landscape on the Diablo Range.

For the 2022 BioBlitz, participants are encouraged to visit public locations within the SCU Lightning Complex fire footprint on their own time (in compliance with county and state COVID-19 guidelines) within a two-week period from Saturday, April 16th to Saturday, April 30th. Find a list of parks, learn more, and register on the **BioBlitz webpage!**



## MDAS Field Trips

Hugh Harvey, *MDAS Field Trip Chair*



Mt. Diablo Audubon Society field trips are back. There are some changes from the way we used to do things, however. First, there will be a sign-up process for each field trip, accessible on our website [HERE](#). By signing up, you will be acknowledging the **MDAS Liability Waiver**. Second, some of the trips may require limited participation due to traffic/parking limitations. The sign-up process will allow us to manage this.

The biggest change to previous years is that, due to safety concerns brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 situation, MDAS will no longer organize or meet up at staging areas for carpooling. Participants are encouraged to arrange their own carpools with people they are comfortable traveling with, but must expect to provide their own transportation to meet at the trip destination. This is the main reason why participation may be limited on some excursions. Some historical destinations will be abandoned for now, as well, due to traffic/parking considerations.

As usual, the field trips will be ranked according to difficulty:

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

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

**Category 3:** Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

---

## MDAS Field Trips

You can view and print a complete list of planned MDAS field trips for the 2022 season [HERE](#).

Upcoming field trips include:

|                       |                                    |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Tues, April 5</b>  | <b>North Briones Regional Park</b> | Cheryl Abel      |
| <b>Tues, April 12</b> | <b>Black Diamond Mines</b>         | Hugh Harvey      |
| <b>Tues, April 19</b> | <b>Pine Canyon</b>                 | Tracy Farrington |
| <b>Mon, April 25</b>  | <b>Del Puerto Canyon</b>           | Beth Branthaver  |
| <b>Thur, April 28</b> | <b>Mitchell Canyon</b>             | Sandy Ritchie    |

---

### North Briones Regional Park

**Tuesday, April 5, 8:30 AM to noon**

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

We will walk up a trail to some higher parts of Briones Regional Park. Wildflowers, spring birds, and poison oak are along shaded trails. A continuation through grasslands to Sincich Lagoons makes this walk about 3 miles round trip. Bring liquids.

**Rating:** Category 3 — Long, uphill walk followed by a return

**Elevation change:** 300+ feet

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

**Meet:** Upper parking lot Briones Road

**Directions:** Just west of the intersection of Reliez Valley and Alhambra Valley Roads, turn south and start uphill on Briones road. It is a narrow, winding road. Drive as far as you can to a turn-around/parking area.

This trip is limited to 12 participants. Register for this event [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

---

### Black Diamond Mines

**Tuesday, April 12, 8 AM to 1 PM**

**Leader: Hugh Harvey, 925-935-2979**

A serious walk up through the Canyon Wren habitat. Other woodland and grassland birds are possible. Tricky footing through the wren's rocky habitat, and no guarantees on finding it. Some spring flowers may still be in bloom. Bring liquids and lunch.

**Rating:** Category 3 — Hot, difficult uphill trail

**Elevation change:** 600 feet

**Leader:** Hugh Harvey, 925-935-2979

**Meet:** Black Diamond Mines parking lot at top of Somersville Road.

**Directions;** Exit Hwy 4 at Somersville Road in Antioch. Drive south, enter the park gate and drive uphill to the last parking lot.

This trip is limited to 15 participants. Register for this event [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

---

## **Pine Canyon**

**Tuesday, April 19, 8 AM to 1 PM**

**Leader Tracy Farrington, 925-788-6223**

Pine Canyon, which includes the Castle Rock EBRPD recreational area, and the Diablo Foothills Regional Park just beyond, provides rich habitat and resources for spring migrants passing through, as well as for many returning and nesting summer residents.

We should expect to find nesting pairs of Bullock's Orioles and House Wrens. Warbling Vireos, along with their cousins, the Cassin's Vireo, nest within the canyon. Rufous-crowned Sparrows are to be found, and if we're lucky, Lazuli Bunting. We'll look (and listen) for Black-headed Grosbeaks and Western Tanagers. Western Wood-Pewees and Pacific-slope Flycatchers pass through. We might get lucky with an Olive-sided Flycatcher. And the warblers: breeding plumage Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, Wilson's, Yellow, Nashville, MacGillivray's, Hermit, Orange-crowned, and Townsend's.

Bring water and snacks. This should be a wonderful springtime field trip.

**Rating:** Category 2 — Moderate with creek crossings

**Elevation change:** 150-200 feet

**Leader:** Tracy Farrington, 925-788-6223

**Meet:** Diablo Foothills Regional Park trailhead parking lot

**Directions:** From Ygnacio Valley Road, drive south on either Walnut Avenue or Oak Grove Road to the traffic circle. Continue south on Castle Rock Road, pass Northgate High School, then drive to the end of the road.

This field trip is limited to 20 participants. Register for this event [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

---

### **Del Puerto Canyon**

**Monday, April 25, 9 AM to 4 PM**

**Leader: Beth Branthaver, 510-502-4869**

This is an all-day trip requiring an early start to meet at the lower end of Del Puerto Canyon Road near Patterson off I-5. We will drive through the canyon, starting in grasslands, then riparian, chaparral, and oak savanna habitats. Many spring birds are possible, including Canyon Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, and maybe a Roadrunner. It is usually hot, so bring plenty of liquids and lunch. If you have a radio, that will be handy.

**Rating:** Category 1 — Easy

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leader:** Beth Branthaver, 510-502-4869

**Meet:** Del Puerto Canyon Road from Diablo Grande Parkway exit near Patterson

**Directions:** Go over Altamont Pass and turn south on I-5. Stop at the Larry Combs Rest Area near Westley, as there are no facilities on our trip until our lunch stop. Exit at Diablo Grande Parkway/Sperry Road and turn right. Del Puerto Canyon Road is several hundred yards from the exit; wait around the bend for the group to gather.

This field trip is limited to 20 participants. Register for this [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

---

### **Mitchell Canyon**

**Thursday, April 28, 8 AM to 1 PM**

**Leader: Sandy Ritchie, 925-685-8048**

We will walk into Mitchell Canyon on the lower slopes of Mount Diablo State Park. Many spring birds are possible here, warblers, hummingbirds, flycatchers, gnatcatchers, and more. Spring flowers should still be blooming.

**Rating:** Category 3 — Hot, dusty trail, 3+ miles



**Elevation change:** up to 400 feet

**Leader:** Sandy Ritchie, 925-685-8048

**Meet:** Mitchell Canyon parking lot

**Directions:** From Ygnacio Valley Road in Concord, turn south on Clayton Road. Turn right onto Mitchell Canyon Road and drive past the quarry to end. A \$6 parking fee is required.

This field trip is limited to 15 participants. Register for this event [HERE](#). Participants must acknowledge the [MDAS Liability Waiver](#) (available during registration).

---

### Other Birding Opportunities:



Lawrence's Goldfinch, Black Diamond Mines

Photo: Alan Bade/[Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology \(ML425874151\)](#)

This month is the height of migration with lots of birds arriving or passing through. Go anyplace you want to see the spectacle of spring!

---

### Field Trip Reports

Los Banos and Panoche Valley, February 26 - 27

Hugh Harvey, *Trip Leader*

The Central Valley of California used to be covered in marshy areas; we are told that about only 10% of the wetlands are still extant. It is hard to imagine what it was when driving along with the dirt Santa Fe Grade Road. What a place it is. We do our trip there in late February to avoid hunting season, as there is still an abundance of wintering waterfowl, raptors, and other birds.

So it was for our participants over a weekend of birding. After meeting in Gustine, we caravanned south along Santa Fe Grade Road, stopping often to scope the ducks, shorebirds, and waders. We had at least 12 species of waterfowl during the drive, including Blue-winged Teal. The raptors included numerous Red-tailed and Northern Harrier, as well as a less-than-adult Bald Eagle. This bird had a white head, but a dark tail and some white spots on the back. It was also very far away, but clearly visible through a scope. Numerous Great Horned Owls were seen, including one active nest.



Great Horned Owl

Photo: Jane and Kevin Matthewman

The visitor center for San Luis NWR is closed during the pandemic, but we parked there for a pleasant lunch. Each participant catered their own. We finished



Saturday with the spectacle of 1000s of birds at Merced National Wildlife Refuge, seen from the two viewing platforms as well as the auto tour route. These birds were primarily Snow and Ross's Geese, and Sandhill Cranes. There were plenty of ducks, too, as well as other birds. One would think there is no end to the population of Northern Shovelers and Coots. We also saw a Common Yellowthroat and a Fox Sparrow, both near the farther viewing platform.

After an overnight stay in Los Banos, we continued south toward Little Panoche Road west of I-5. This road eventually goes over Shotgun Pass and into the Panoche Valley. We stopped at Little Panoche Dam, which has never had very much water, then drove slowly looking for sparrows and other birds. A Cassin's Kingbird was found by some in the group, along with a Loggerhead Shrike. Lark Sparrows were seen between much larger groups of White-crowned Sparrows.

We drove up the BLM road into the Panoche Hills and found what was quite possibly the bird of the day, an American Badger. This Badger was not interested in anything except taking some sun and napping, presumably. We were out of our cars looking at it until we finally left. While there we also found some Horned Larks. Mostly the road seemed to have very few birds, as did our stop at the top. We had lunch here, and during this time Herb Long found us a distant Sage Thrasher.



## American Badger

Photo: Herb and Randi Long

Most of us continued on over the pass, where only once in over thirty years of birding have we seen Chukars. We kept our streak alive, though after exiting the pass we did see a Golden Eagle and a Prairie Falcon. In the valley itself, we had a spectacular Rough-legged Hawk and several Ferruginous Hawks. We also found more Cassin's Kingbirds and a sizeable number of Tricolored Blackbirds. They are quite raucous, unlike their melodic cousins, the Red-winged Blackbird.

Our day finished enjoying ice cream and drinks at the hospitable Panoche Inn. While we missed on Mountain Bluebirds and Roadrunners, when we completed our checklist there it totaled 88 bird species seen or heard. That did not count our bird of the day Badger.

---

### **Contra Loma Regional Park/Reservoir, March 2**

Paul Schorr, *Trip Leader*

On a beautiful spring-like day, with temperatures ranging from the low fifties to mid-seventies, 11 birding enthusiasts joined to see and/or hear as many birds as possible. With a total of 62 birds seen or heard, they were not disappointed. The hillsides surrounding the reservoir were luxuriantly covered with spring grasses and pockets of wildflowers.





A pocket of Golden Poppies

Photo: Randy Huey

Avian highlights included seven raptor species: Osprey; White-tailed Kite; Sharp-shinned, Red-shouldered, and Red-tailed Hawks; American Kestrel, and Merlin. The Osprey was actively fishing, but we did not observe that it had any success. On the other hand, the Merlin was successful, but we could not determine what it was feeding on. Other notable sightings included both Common and Hooded Mergansers, five sparrow species (Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, White-crowned and Golden-crowned), a heard Sora, and an active House Wren. A male Common Yellowthroat provided beautiful sustained views, offering a special Kodak moment for several participants.



American White Pelicans

Photo: Randy Huey

An interesting event occurred when the trout-planting truck arrived and the driver backed down the boat ramp to dump its cargo of rainbow trout into the reservoir. Quickly, a flotilla of fifteen or more American White Pelicans, accompanied by a group of Double-crested Cormorants, immediately recognized the truck and moved close to the boat ramp to partake in some easy foraging. However, the driver had other ideas and was able to scare them away so that the trout could be safely dispersed. Smart birds!

---

## **Moorhen and McNabney Marshes, March 8**

Randy Huey, *Trip Leader*

Fourteen MDAS birders spent a beautiful Tuesday morning at Moorhen and McNabney marshes identifying a total of 57 bird species. We spent most of the morning at Moorhen Marsh on the property of the Mt. View Sanitation District in Martinez, California. A Green Heron was sighted as soon as we began walking the bridge across the first of two large ponds. It was also seen at several other



locations during the morning.



Green Heron

Photo: Randy Huey

Tree swallow nesting boxes were installed on posts in several locations around the ponds, and we saw several Tree Swallows flying over the ponds.





Tree Swallow

Photo: Isaac Aronow

One of the day's more comical moments involved observation of a large pond turtle on a small island in one of the ponds. Randy set up his spotting scope to get a close-up shot of the turtle and was confused when the turtle kept moving out of the field of view, only to discover that it wasn't the turtle moving but the Island. As it turns out, the several "islands" in the ponds are actually floating mats of vegetation. Some Double-crested Cormorants were seen in trees and airing out their wings on logs.







Double-crested Cormorants

Photos: Randy Huey

Later in the morning, we spotted a Common Gallinule coming out of the shoreline vegetation, and the cries of a Northern Mockingbird were occasionally heard, in addition to seeing a Yellow-rumped Warbler, Bushtit, California Towhee, and a Pied-billed Grebe.



Common Gallinule

Photo: Randy Huey

The second part of the morning was spent birding from the viewing platform at McNabney Marsh. Sightings were plentiful of water birds and ducks, including White Pelicans, Mute Swan, Black-necked Stilts, Avocets, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teals, and other ducks. A Red-tailed Hawk was also seen.



White Pelican



Canada Goose

Photos: Randy Huey

---

## Lake Lagunitas, March 23

Hugh Harvey, *Trip Leader*

Birds and wildflowers greeted twelve birders on our trip to the Marin Municipal Water District property. The traffic was bad trying to drive there, but our time birding and enjoying such a beautiful day was well worth it. Acorn Woodpeckers were everywhere, Juncos were seen in multiple places, Hooded Mergansers were seen in both Lake Bon Tempe and Lake Lagunitas. Blooming Hound's Tongue and some Shooting Stars were in bloom, along with the Douglas Iris. We even saw a Muskrat swimming across the lake, but the bird of the day was a female Pileated Woodpecker. She was on a power pole when first seen, but moved to a large tree where she hammered on the side facing us. Paul and Nancy Schorr stayed behind and saw both her and her male partner. Thirty-eight bird species were identified for the day.





Pileated Woodpecker

Photo: Isaac Aronow

---

## Events

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

### **A Worldwide Collaboration to Track Bird Migration**

April 14, 2022



BIRDY HOUR SPEAKER SERIES

# MOTUS: A WORLDWIDE COLLABORATION TO TRACK BIRD MIGRATION

by Amie MacDonald

Thursday, April 14, 2022 • 6:00pm Pacific • Free Virtual Event



The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is an international collaborative research network that uses automated radio telemetry to track birds, bats, and insects. Join us for an overview of how Motus works, highlights from various research projects that have used Motus, and current and developing initiatives. New research projects, new technological developments, expansion into western North America, and regional collaboration efforts will be included. Ultimately, Motus is about community science – combining our efforts for conservation!

**Date:** Thursday, April 14, 2022  
**Time:** 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
**Location:** Zoom online meeting  
**Presenter:** Amie MacDonald  
**Sponsor:** **San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory**



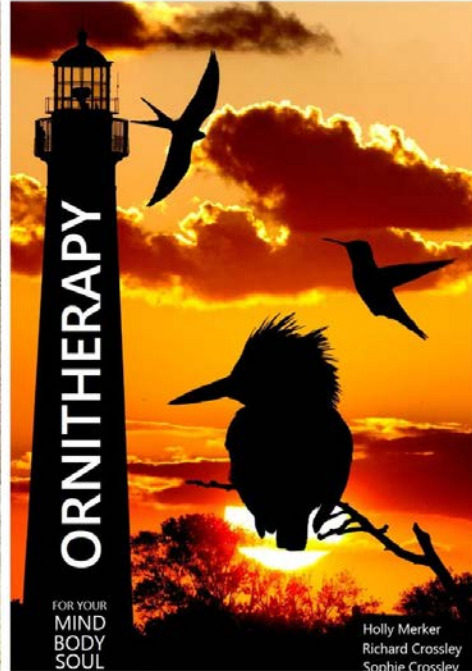
**Cost:** Free

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

---

## **SCVAS Speaker Series: Holly Merker**

April 20, 2022



**Holly is a cancer survivor who credits Ornithotherapy in helping save her life.** Holly used mindful birdwatching - Ornithotherapy - as a powerful tool in fighting cancer. She credits Ornithotherapy as a frontline weapon in her arsenal of tools in restoring and maintaining good health, both mentally and physically. During the cancer treatment and recovery, Holly spent time watching birds in order to detach from the emotional and physical crisis that comes with a cancer diagnosis. Watching birds grounded her and gave her a renewed perspective on life and survival. She believes that anyone can benefit from Ornithotherapy if they are open to it, and she's made it her life mission to bring this wellness regimen to you.

A strong believer in giving back to her community and ultimately to birds, Holly serves or has served on the Boards of Directors for **Hawk Mountain Sanctuary**, **Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology**, the **Delaware Ornithological Society**, and is a Founding Member and Co-Chair of the annual **Frontiers in Ornithology: A Symposium for Youth**. She is passionate about connecting the next generation to birds and nature and fostering conservation leaders through youth development and birding programs. One of her favorite projects has been helping run a bird club at the elementary school near her home. Holly spends any extra time she can find studying anything with wings, contributing to citizen

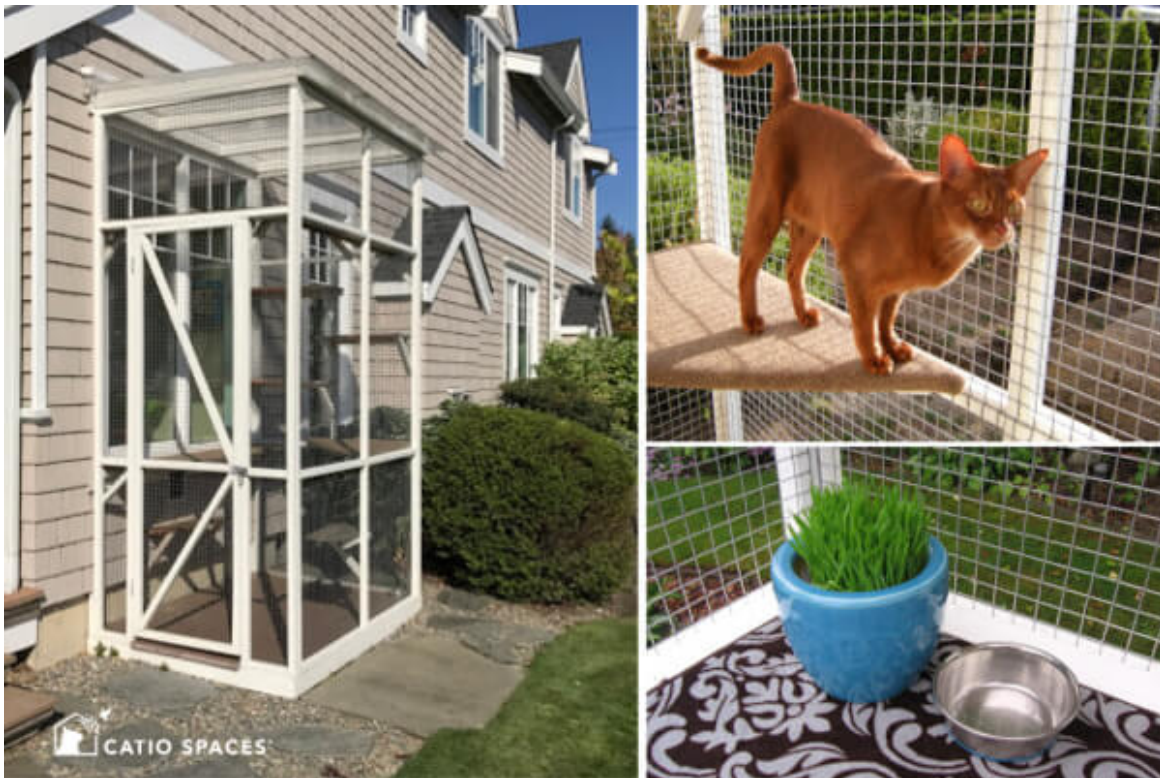
science, exploring new music, antiques, and spending time with her friends and family. She currently resides in the Philadelphia suburbs

**Date:** Wednesday, April 20, 2022  
**Time:** 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
**Location:** Zoom online meeting  
**Presenter:** Holly Merker  
**Sponsor:** **Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society**  
**Cost:** Free  
**Registration:** [Click here to register online](#)

---

### **“Catio” Protect Cats, Birds, and Wildlife**

April 21, 2022



Example of a DIY “Haven” Catio

Photo: Catio Spaces

Catios, outdoor cat enclosures, keep cats safe, healthy, and happy and help protect birds and wildlife. From small and simple to large and luxurious, catios solve the indoor/outdoor cat dilemma by providing additional territory and enrichment. Cynthia Chomos, catio designer and founder of Catio Spaces, will share the many ways you can create a visually

appealing catio for your home and garden. Learn location considerations, building tips, resources, and get inspired to create a catio both you and your cat will enjoy!

Cynthia Chomos is passionate about design, nature, and cats. As the “go-to” catio expert and founder of Catio Spaces, she helps solve the indoor/outdoor cat dilemma to keep cats, birds, and wildlife safe while enjoying the enrichment of the outdoors. Cynthia is a founding organizer of the Seattle Catio Tour and resides in Seattle with her beloved tabby Serena (who has four catios!) and serves as her Chief Feline Officer and quality assurance expert.

**Date:** Thursday, April 21, 2022  
**Time:** 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
**Location:** Zoom online meeting  
**Presenter:** Cynthia Chomos  
**Sponsor:** **Golden Gate Audubon Society**  
**Cost:** Free  
**Registration:** **[Click here to register online](#)**

---

### **13th Annual Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival**

April 21 - 24, 2022

**The Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC) will be hosting the 13th Annual Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival April 21st - 24th, 2022.**

This annual fundraising event celebrates spring bird and wildlife migrations along the Pacific Flyway in Marin and Sonoma counties with proceeds benefiting our nonprofit mission to protect and sustain the unique lands, waters, and biodiversity of West Marin (coastal Marin County). There is something for everyone in your *brood*, with trips and activities for



a variety of ages and experience levels.

**Point Reyes National Seashore provides the main backdrop for our festival,** where the Pacific Flyway, Pacific Ocean, and other influences provide an ideal location for birding and wildlife viewing. In fact, Point Reyes and the surrounding area has been **named the National Audubon's Society's #1 birding hotspot for multiple years, where 54%+ of all North American bird species have been seen and recorded.** In addition, during April, California's Mediterranean climate allows us to see wintering and breeding birds overlapping along this coastal hotspot. However, birds are not the only thing you'll see. Whether you are a field event discovering whales, elk, or wildflowers, your time in between may have you coming across a plethora of wildlife including deer, fox, skunk, raccoons, otters, river otters, and more! Be sure to keep an eye out, and drive slow!

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Date:</b>         | Thursday, April 21 to Sunday 24, 2022                  |
| <b>Location:</b>     | Virtual and in-person at Point Reyes National Seashore |
| <b>Presenter:</b>    | <b>Environmental Action Committee of West Marin</b>    |
| <b>Cost:</b>         | About \$3 (Varying tickets prices)                     |
| <b>Registration:</b> | <b><a href="#">Click here to register online</a></b>   |

---

## **April Gallery & Media**



## Keeping San Francisco Bay in 2022



### MDAS March 4 Monthly Program Meeting:

*Sejal Choksi-Chugh, Executive Director of San Francisco Baykeeper, discussed the state of the Bay and the major issues Baykeeper is tackling.*

View the virtual meeting [HERE](#).



### Hargila

*From the Cornell Lab of Ornithology—A wildlife photographer travels to India intent on documenting the rarest stork on earth but soon discovers a conservation hero and her inspiring efforts to rally a community to save it.*

Watch the video [HERE](#).



### **Taking Birdwatching to the Extreme**

*What does it take to break a world record in the birdwatching world?  
Watch the video [HERE](#).*

---



### **Why Do Birds Flock Together?**

*In a single flock, you can find many species of birds,  
but how are these different birds able to get along?  
Read the article [HERE](#).*

Photo by Andrew A. Lincoln (@alincoln\_photo)

---





Ridgway's Rail at Dotson Family Marsh

Photo: Becky Matsubara/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab ([ML300048991](#))

---



Lewis's Woodpecker at Los Vaqueros Reservoir

Photo: Becky Matsubara/Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab ([ML404928051](#))

---

*Copyright © 2021 Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, All rights reserved.*

**Mailing address:**  
P.O. Box 53



Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

**Email address:**

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

**Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Leadership**

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can **[update your preferences](#)** or **[unsubscribe from this list](#)**.

---

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society · P.O. Box 53 · Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053 · USA

