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# Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

## *The Quail*

Volume 69, Number 5

May 2024

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### Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, May 2, 7 PM

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet Thursday, May 2 in the Camellia Room at the Gardens at Heather Farm.

**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: Building a Bird-Friendly City

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### May Main Program: Building a Bird-Friendly City

Glenn Phillips

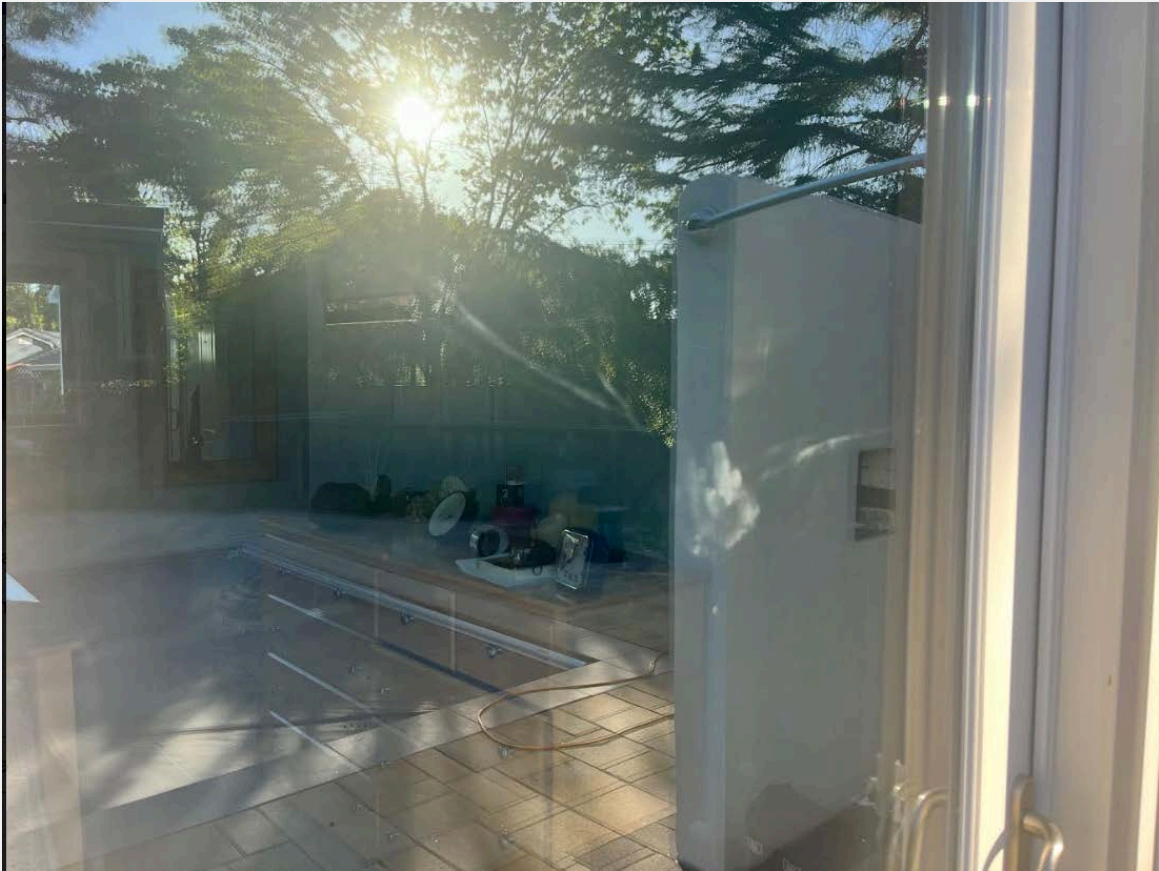


Glenn Phillips

Every year, nearly one billion birds die after colliding with glass. The Bay Area is a national leader in enacting bird-friendly ordinances to address this conservation crisis. Learn how birds perceive the world and what you can do to prevent bird collisions in your community and at home.

Glenn Phillips, Executive Director of the Golden Gate Bird Alliance, holds master's degrees in Urban Sustainability and Science Education from the City University of New York. He co-authored the American Bird Conservancy's Bird-Friendly Building

Guide and has been a dedicated advocate for bird-safe buildings since 2007.



Imprint of a Mourning Dove on a sliding glass door

Photo by Glenn Phillips

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## President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

Brentwood resident and MDBA member Steve Imialek was on his usual morning walk on March 24th in the Apple Hill neighborhood when he noticed a baby Great Horned Owl had fallen from its nest. He gathered it up and brought it to the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, where it received care for three weeks. Lindsay volunteers then returned to Brentwood and placed the owl in a tree near its original nest, allowing it to reunite with its family!



Steve also discovered a Killdeer nest on nearby school grounds. He worked with the city and school to ensure the site wouldn't be mowed until the eggs hatched, which has now happened. Great work, Steve! And thank you to the volunteers at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum!



## Chapter News

We still have vacant positions for **Education, Outreach, and Hospitality Coordinators**. These can be Board positions, but don't have to be. Donating your time is the most valuable way to help keep our organization strong! Please see descriptions of these roles [here](#), and contact [info@mtdiablobirds.org](mailto:info@mtdiablobirds.org) for questions or to sign up!

Stay safe, and get out there for the birds!



Fallen Great-Horned Owlet rescued from the ground

Photo by Steve Imialek

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**Support our MDBA team in the Bay Birding Challenge!**



The Challenge is a friendly birding competition held to support and raise awareness for bird conservation in the San Francisco Bay Area. This year's event will take place on Saturday, April 27th, when several teams will compete against each other on two fronts:

1. To see the most bird species in one day, while birding across San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties.
2. To raise money in support of local birding and conservation.

This year – for the first time – the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will be fielding a team! Click the [link](#) to learn more and support our chapter's effort. We welcome your encouragement, pledges, and donations! All money raised through our team will be split evenly between our sister chapter, the Golden Gate Bird Alliance (organizers of the Challenge), and MDBA.

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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 March: **Kimberly Castillo**, Clayton; **Linda Elsaesser**, El Cerrito; **Virginia Kelley**, Concord; and **Rick Vargas**, Clayton. I hope to see you at our in-person meeting in May.



## 2024 MDBA Photo Contest Deadline Extended to May 15!

Jerry Britten

The 4th Mount Diablo Bird Alliance Photo Contest has been extended until May 15th! There's still time to submit your entries.

The contest is open to MDAS members only, except for the Youth category, which is open to anyone under 18.

This year's contest categories are:

- **Bird Beauty:** Close-up/Abstract/Focus on color, etc., not fitting into 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 especially encourage young people ages 8-17 to enter. Membership is not required. Any type of bird photo can be submitted in this category.
- **Worst Bird Photo EVER:** We KNOW you have a couple of these! Losers you still didn't delete for some reason. Extra points for humor.

There are no restrictions on where the photos were taken.

This year's contest judges are Jerry Britten, Arnold Joe, and Alan Krakauer.

This is a casual, friendly competition. No special equipment or professional skills are required (but use them if you've got them!). Pictures can be taken anywhere, on any date.

The deadline is May 15th. Winners and runners-up will be shared at the June 7th membership meeting.

Click the "2024 Photo Contest" link at the top of the [website](#) to see the Official Rules and entry link.



Winner of the 2023 Action Category  
Bald Eagles at Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

Photo by Sharon Anderson

**It's April! Earth Day, Migration, Young Life**  
**TAKE ACTION on Climate Change to Protect Them All**  
Juan Pablo Galvan, *MDBA Conservation*





### **1. Are you watching spring bird migration? Scientists are, and they're worried.**

Climate change is happening too fast for migratory birds to adapt. It's difficult enough to adjust to rapid climate shifts in one location, but what about birds that rely on three, four, or five regions throughout their lives? Flowering times are changing, dependable insect hatches are disappearing, and habitat destruction is a constant threat. What can birds do? Read more [HERE](#).

### **2. Climate change probably worries you, but are you taking action?**

Good news! The "Alarmed" – those most concerned about climate change – are the largest group in the US. The problem? Only a third of this group is actively working to solve the crisis. Are you one of them? The good news is there are ways to bridge that gap, for others and maybe for yourself. Instead of just worrying, take meaningful action this Earth Month. Learn more [HERE](#).

### **3. It's easier than ever to learn how to fight climate change AND take action.**

Don't let spring pass without joining the struggle to save our planet. If you're not actively working for change, what makes you think anyone else will? Every day of inaction increases the odds that future springs will be shorter, hotter, and drier – a bleak outlook for birds and people alike. Don't let winter turn straight into summer. Act now so your grandchildren and their children will experience the beauty of a true spring. Click [HERE](#).



## Elections for the MDBA BOARD

Matthew Tarlach, *Field Trips Coordinator and Election Committee Chair*

All four of our incumbent elected officers have generously offered to serve another year:

President - Jerry Britten

Vice President - Ariana Rickard

Treasurer - Steve Buffi

Secretary - Karin Deas

Nominations are still open! If you would like to make a nomination for any of these four offices, you may **email** it to the Election Committee Chair or to **[info@mtdiablobirds.org](mailto:info@mtdiablobirds.org)**, or make the nomination in person at our May general meeting. Or, if you would like to join the board in a non-elected position, contact any board member to discuss what position might suit you.

Watch your email for the electronic ballot, to be sent in early May.

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## From 50 Years Ago - The Quail, May 1974

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

Here's a snippet from the March 1974 issue of *The Quail*, describing a novel method employed to increase nesting success with geese. Seems like we have the opposite problem now...

**L'EGGS ARE RECYCLED.** The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has reportedly used those little egg-shaped containers used by one brand of panty hose to productively fool Mother Nature in the form of nesting geese.

For two years now, the plastic containers filled with sand, sealed, and then traded for real eggs which are carefully placed in incubators. If the eggs are stolen without a convincing replacement the bird is likely to abandon her first choice of nest and move on. The replacement keeps the female happy with her nest until she finishes her clutch. Then technicians steal the dummies and cover the nest. Five days later, they uncover it and the bird returns to start the whole procedure again. Waterfowl production has nearly doubled with this method---at least with geese. Technicians are not sure yet whether swans will be so gullible. (Burrowing Owl, Davis Audubon Society)

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## Clayton Pride

Ariana Rickard



Rochelle Fortier and Herb Long

Ruth Bancroft Garden's Pollinator & Friends event

Join us for the Clayton Pride Parade on Sunday, June 2.

Meet us at the **Clayton Pride event!** Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will be tabling before and after the 3rd annual Clayton Pride parade on Sunday, June 2 at 10 am on Main Street in Clayton. Tabling events educate the public on our mission to protect birds, preserve habitats, and connect people to the fascinating world of birds.

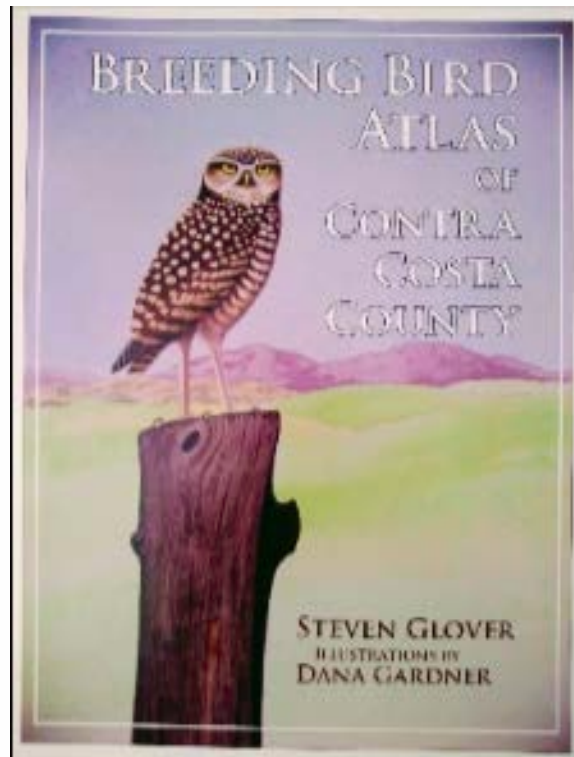
The Pride Parade symbolizes community support, acceptance, and tolerance for members of the LGBTQQIA+ community who historically and presently continue to encounter discrimination due to sexuality and gender identity. Clayton marches with pride, stands with love! Participating in community events such as the Pride Parade ensures that we are reaching out to people in our community with hopes of connecting more people to the world of birds. We are participating in the Pride event



to demonstrate our support, share that birding is for everyone, and to reach out to communities we have not engaged with in the past. We hope to see you there.

## Breeding Birds Atlas of Contra Costa County

Rochelle Fortier, *Membership Chair*



Did you know our chapter published the Breeding Bird Atlas of Contra Costa County 15 years ago? This incredible project, led by Steven Glover, was made possible by dedicated volunteers who contributed hundreds of hours over 12 years.

The Atlas, published in 2009, offers a wealth of information on the 161 bird species that breed in Contra Costa County. For each species, you'll find:

- Current and historical status
- Life history details
- Conservation concerns
- Range maps
- 56 beautiful illustrations by Dana Gardner

### How to Access the Atlas

1. **Free PDF Download:** Get your copy [HERE](#).
2. **Purchase at an In-Person Meeting:** \$20 (cash or check)

3. **Purchase Online:** \$18.31 (includes shipping and taxes) via PayPal or credit/debit card. Order [HERE](#); the Atlas will be mailed to you.
4. **Purchase by Mail:** Send an \$18.31 check payable to Mount Diablo Bird Alliance. Please note "For Atlas" and mail to: Steve Buffi, Treasurer, 1564 Pyrenees Place, Walnut Creek, CA 94598.

## New Barn Owl Box Installed at Heather Farm Park



The New Box installed, 2024



*Bob Wisecarver (Left), with Brian Murphy and Gary Bogue, install a Barn Owl nesting box at Heather Farm in Walnut Creek, January 2007.*

The Original Box, 2007

Through a partnership with MDBA, the California Bluebird Recovery Program, and the city of Walnut Creek, a brand-new Barn Owl box has been installed at the top of the open field in Heather Farm Park, between the Equestrian Center and the Community Gardens.

Lafayette Senior Girl Scout Daphne Dale of Troop 30902, a freshman at Acalanes High School, designed and built the innovative box with help from MDBA member and expert woodworker Mike Tischler. They first built a prototype based on various owl box

designs, then modified it for additional ventilation and heat protection – a necessity given our changing climate.

Daphne's mentor, Georgette Howington of CBRP, worked with Walnut Creek City Parks Manager Brad Griffing. The Heather Farm maintenance team located and donated a stout 15-foot metal pole, attached the box, and erected it close to where a previous replacement owl box had stood since 2019. The original – and very successful – box was installed by MDBA members Bob Wisecarver, Brian Murphy, and journalist Gary Bogue in 2007 (see photo). It was taken down during the construction of the Community Gardens. Unfortunately, the replacement box attracted only squirrels and the wooden post had become wobbly.

The new box will be monitored by MDBA member Rosita Harvey.

Said Daphne: "I feel connected to owls because I hear them in my neighborhood. I was excited to build and install a new and improved owl box for Heather Farm Park. I knew I would be making a positive impact on my community, and I enjoyed learning new skills and working with people who share my interests!"

Daphne will present a PowerPoint overview of her project at the May 2nd MDBA program meeting.

Now, tell all the Barn Owl couples you know!



Daphne & Mike at work

Finished Box

## MDAS Trip Report

Valle Vista

Ted Robertson





Female Northern Flicker

Photos by Issac Aronow



## Valle Vista Immature Bald Eagle

Photo by Jim Rowland

On March 18th, seventeen birders met at EBMUD's Valle Vista staging area near Moraga. They birded the first mile of the Rocky Ridge Trail, paralleling the northern arm of the Upper San Leandro Reservoir. The diverse habitats and sunny weather resulted in an impressive 61 species sighted for the day! See the complete species list and photos by Isaac Aronow and Becky Matsubara on [eBird](#).

Highlights included:

- Seven Wood Ducks hiding in the reservoir vegetation.
- Two Wilson's Snipes spotted on a small path leading to a spit in the reservoir.
- Two Spotted Sandpipers.
- A juvenile Bald Eagle that has frequented this area of the reservoir for at least two months (see photo below from a previous January birding trip).
- Three American Kestrels.
- An early-season Warbling Vireo.
- Three swallow species: Barn, Tree, and Violet-green.
- A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.
- A White-tailed Kite.

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### North Briones

Cheryl Abel



House Wren



Orange-crowned Warbler





Western Skink

All Photos by Issac Aronow

On April 9, 12 participants enjoyed a lovely walk to the Sindicich Lagoons and back country at Briones Regional Park, admiring a variety of wildflowers along the route. In the oak woodlands, bird highlights included numerous Pine Siskins, a great view of a singing Orange-crowned Warbler, and a glimpse of a Townsend's Warbler. At the uppermost Sindicich Lagoon, one lucky birder spotted an elusive Sora; moments later, the rest of the group heard its distinctive call. A pair of Lark Sparrows was observed in the grasslands. In total, 50 species of birds were seen or heard. Other interesting fauna spotted during the walk included a young Western Skink with its bright blue tail and a Dusky-footed Woodrat nestled deep in a shrub.

Ebird trip [report](#).

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### **Orinda Connector Trail**

Ted Robertson



2nd year Immature Bald Eagle



Wilson's Warbler



Red-tailed Hawk



American White Pelicans

All Photos by Issac Aronow

On April 15th, thirteen birders met at EBMUD's Orinda Connector Trail staging area, just north of Orinda. They birded the first mile of the Bear Creek Trail towards the base of the Briones Reservoir Dam. The diverse habitats yielded 40 species for the day. See the complete species list on [eBird](#).

Highlights included:

- A second-year immature Bald Eagle
- American White Pelicans flying overhead
- Three Warbling Vireos
- Close-up views of four Tree Swallows visiting nest boxes
- Great looks at two singing Common Yellowthroats

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## **Black Diamond Mines**

Matt Tarlach





Lark Sparrow

Photo by Vicky Atkinson



Black Diamond Mines is a fascinating place, rich in both history and natural sights. On April 11th, seven adventurous birders climbed a steep trail behind one of the old mine entrances, venturing into the habitat of the Canyon Wren. Several hundred feet up, we first heard one



singing. A minute later, we found it perched high on a sandstone cliff, close enough to see its characteristic features clearly through binoculars.

Descending by a less steep, wildflower-lined route, we heard a falcon calling. Soon, our ace spotter Susana located the bird on its nest, tucked into a shallow cave in a distant cliff. Thanks to Walter, who'd lugged his spotting scope and tripod all this way, we all enjoyed clear, though distant, views of the bird. It turned out to be a Prairie Falcon, a less common sighting than the Peregrines many of us are more familiar with.

Other notable highlights included Violet-green Swallows, a male Northern Harrier, and over a dozen Wilson's Warblers heard singing along our route – though we never managed to spot one! At lunchtime, near the ranger station, we added a few grassland species, including a charismatic Lark Sparrow. Overall, our group tallied 3.5 miles walked, 500 feet of elevation climbed, and 46 species of birds identified by sight or sound.

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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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## West Briones Regional Park

Thursday, May 9, 8AM - 1PM



Lazuli Bunting

Photo by Beth Branthaver

A visit to the west entrance of Briones Regional Park in the spring offers views of spring wildflowers and spring birds. Lazuli Buntings are often present, along with flycatchers, vireos, and many other species. Bring water and snacks. It might be warm by mid-day.

**Rating:** Category 2 - moderate hiking over dirt and gravel trails with mild slopes.

**Elevation change:** 200 feet

**Leaders:** Matt Tarlach & Cheryl Abel - [MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com)

**Meet:** Bear Creek Staging Area parking lot

**Directions:** From SR 24 in Orinda, drive north on Camino Pablo about 2.25 miles, turn right on Bear Creek Road, continue for 4.5 miles to park entrance. Drive to farthest parking lot on the right.

This field trip is limited to 20 participants. Participants must acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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### East Contra Costa County

Monday, May 20, 7AM - 11AM



Note the early starting time: we start this trip early as the location can become very hot by mid-day. We will walk part of the Marsh Creek Trail, and then visit Piper Slough



north of Bethel Island. Other locations are possible. Target birds include: Blue Grosbeak, Hooded Oriole, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Swainson's Hawk, Yellow-billed Magpie and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Bring lunch, snacks and water.

**Trail Rating:** Category 2—moderate hiking on mostly level trails

**Elevation change:** N/A

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

**Meet:** Marsh Creek Trailhead on Cypress Road, Oakley

**Directions:** Go north on I-680, exit Highway 4 toward Stockton/Pittsburg, take right Exit 30 toward CA-160/Sacramento/Rio Vista (just past Hillcrest Avenue exit; do NOT continue straight on Highway 4). Take exit 1-A East 18th/Main Street, turn right at the bottom of the exit onto Main Street and drive through Oakley for about 4 miles, turn left onto Cypress Road. Make a U-turn at Picasso Drive, the stoplight after the railroad tracks.

This field trip is limited to 20 participants. Participants must acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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### **Outer Point Reyes**

**Saturday, June 1, 8:30AM - 3PM**



Prairie Warbler

Photo by Beth Branthaver

Point Reyes is one of the premiere birding locations in Northern California, a great spot to find rarities during migration---like the Prairie Warbler pictured above (image by Beth Branthaver). MDBA tries to visit at least twice a year. On our late-spring trip we hope to see northbound migrants as well as resident birds in their best plumage. The exact itinerary will depend on weather, but we'll probably visit the lighthouse overlook, and the "fish docks" area. After lunch we may walk down the "Avenue of Cypresses" to the old RCA building.

Bring water and lunch as this area is remote.

**Rating:** Category 2 - some walking through grass under trees, and on paved roads with fairly significant grade and on paved roads.

**Elevation change:** 100 feet

**Leaders:** Matt Tarlach - [MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com)

**Meet:** Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center, Drake's Beach

1 Drakes Beach Road  
Inverness, CA 94937

GPS: 38.027828257127936, -122.96201741318059

**Directions:** Depending on your starting point, take the best route to San Rafael and go North on US 101. From 101, take Lucas Valley Road to Nicasio. At the reservoir turn left. Follow signs to Point Reyes Station, and when you get to town turn left onto US-1. After passing through town (the Bovine Bakery is a tasty stop for breakfast

pastries), turn right from US-1 onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd and follow it for 15 miles to Drakes Beach Road.

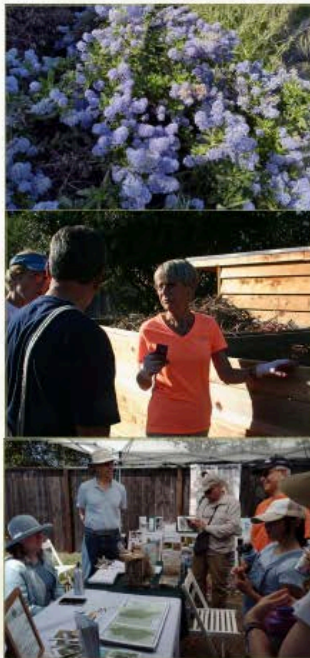
Due to limited parking at several stops on the Outer Point, this field trip is limited to 12 participants. Sharing a car is helpful! There's room to leave extra cars at the Drakes Beach meeting point.

Register [HERE](#).

## Earth Day Celebration

**Free Garden Tour, Exhibits, Talks, Fun for Everyone!**

**Sunday, April 28, 2024—12:30-4:30 PM**



Learn About, How to—

- . Provide for pollinators
- . Supply wildlife habitat
  - . Use Native Plants
- . Compost, Improve Soil
  - . Conserve water
- . Sustain your community
  - . Healthy gardening
  - . Garden Tour

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/earth-day-2024-free-fun-family-friendly-educational-tickets-833927518657?aff=oddtcreator>

### Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden

Living Landscape: A California Habitats Garden

email: [phigarden@gmail.com](mailto:phigarden@gmail.com)

P.O. Box 23454, Pleasant Hill, CA. 94523; Voicemail (925) 482-6670

At Pleasant Hill Education Center

1 Santa Barbara Road, Pleasant Hill

Across from Pleasant Hill Middle School



*Donations are greatly appreciated—PHIG is a NonProfit 501(c)(3) organization*



# Bay Area Butterfly Festival



Presentations  
Workshops  
Demonstrations  
Food & Drink  
Music  
Vendors  
Arts and Crafts

## Presented By

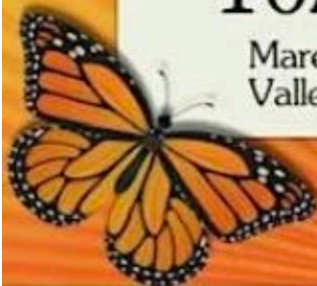
The Vallejo People's Garden,  
The Monarch Milkweed  
Project, & Solano Resource  
Conservation District & Contra  
Costa Resource Conservation  
District

MAY

19

10AM

Mare Island  
Vallejo, CA





## WORTH A DAM

*15th Annual*

# BEAVER FESTIVAL

Saturday, June 29, 2024  
Susana Park  
Estudillo & Susana St.  
Martinez, CA  
10am - 3pm

[www.MartinezBeavers.org](http://www.MartinezBeavers.org)

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May Gallery & Media





## Avian Phylogeny

See the full video [HERE](#)

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San Francisco is teeming with crows.  
Here's why the bird population has flourished.  
Read the article [HERE](#).

Photo: Henry Burton/ [Macaulay Library ML 51777001](#)

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Anna's Hummingbird/ Los Angeles, California, United States

Photo: **Tobin Brown** / Macaulay Library ML 617760654

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Western Bluebird/ Santa Clara, California, United States

Photo: **Joan Tisdale** / Macaulay Library ML 617592654

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**Mount Diablo Bird Alliance**

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