

The Quail

Volume 69, Number 10

November 2024

Next Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, November 7, 7 PM

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet Thursday, November 7th 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

Please note that we will not provide plastic or paper cups anymore.

You will need to bring your own reusable mug for water, punch, or tea.

However, some resusable mugs will be available at the meeting.

We appreciate your cooperation.

Agenda:

6:30 PM Doors Open 7:00 PM Announcements 7:30 PM Main Program: Birding in Namibia

Our Raffle table's success relies heavily on your fantastic donations! We're on the lookout for awesome bird-related items or anything similar, like books, art, collectables, feeders, bird boxes, and camera equipment. Basically, anything you think someone might be interested in buying raffle tickets for.

Feel free to bring your donations to our meetings. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Namibia Birds

Jerry Britten



Pied Barbet
Photo by J. Britten

Earlier this year, MDBA President Jerry Britten, his wife, and another couple embarked on a self-driving adventure to explore the vast desert country of Namibia in Southern Africa. Their three-week journey of over 1,300 miles, much of it over gravel roads, took them from lodge to lodge through magnificent desert and coastal dunes, barren plains, rocky scrubland, and flat acacia thornscrub teeming with wildlife.

While at the lodges, they enjoyed game drives, short walks, observing wildlife from waterhole hides, and relaxing. Of course, birding and photography were major focuses of the trip.

Jerry will present highlights of the many birds and other animals he photographed, and offer his perspective on the sights and sounds of this fascinating region.

When not birding or involved with MDBA activities, Jerry is a mostly-retired independent contractor/consultant in optical coatings and diffractive optic design and manufacturing. He retired from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 2016 after a 30+ year career as a chemical engineer.

President's Letter

Jerry Britten, MDBA President

The only constant is change, and big changes are coming soon to my life. My wife, Carrie, and I are moving to southeast Arizona sometime in early 2025. We plan to build an oasis there for hummingbirds and other birds that make this part of the country so special.



It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (formerly Mount Diablo Audubon Society) for one

year as Vice President, five years as President, and six years as Christmas Bird Count compiler/coordinator. I want to thank everyone on our Board who has served with me over the years—each a person of integrity, passion for our mission, and goodwill.

I will serve out the remainder of my term as President (through June 2025), though some of this time will be remote, and will also organize this year's Christmas Bird Counts. However, the Board and I are looking for volunteers to step in and maintain, and perhaps shape, the course of our path forward. If you have an interest in volunteering in any capacity, now is the time to step forward!

Thanks for reading, and get out there for the birds!

Steve Buffi, MDBA Treasurer

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously during our fiscal year 2023 - 2024 (7/1/2023 to 6/30/2024).

California Condor (\$1,000+)

Srikant Char, Donald Lewis

California Gnatcatcher (\$250 - \$999)

Paul R. Andrews, Jerald Britten, Steve Buffi and Anne Waters, Tim and Angelita Carlson, Gaston Habets, Ann and Donald Hughes, Lynn Lakso, Jane & Michael Larkin, Julia M. Starr

California Thrasher (\$100 - \$249)

Alvaro's Adventures, Gus and Gerry Argenal, Isaac Aronow, Jeanne Boyd, Carolyn E. Cogan and Diana D. Herold, Lisa Cohen, Don and Susan Couch, Nahide Craig, Ian and Karin Deas, Mike Eliot, Kent Fickett and Rebecca Beemer, Pam Giarrizzo, Janet M. Goodman, Daniel Guerra, Russell Hague, Claudia and Scott Hein, Alan and Tamara Hirata, Richard Kleker, Dave Kwinter, Maureen Lahiff, Diane and Bob Malucelli, William Maxwell, Beata Milhano, Bruce Muirhead and Denise Pare-Muirhead, Richard Nicoll, Lorraine Osborn, Ariana Rickard, Sandra S. Ritchie, Steve Schneider, Eric Schroeder, Jody Sherrard, Igor Skaredoff, Maury and Susan Stern, Gary Stevens, Del Stipe, Stephen Taylor, Gary Thompson and Carol Arnold, Roger Wilcox, Erin M. Wilson, Marilyn Wojcik

California Quail (\$25 - \$99)

Cheryl Abel, Joy Addiego, Alan Bade, Karel Baloun, Bennett Berke, Jackie Bobrosky, Flores Bogaert, Karalee Brune, James and Barbara Brunell, Daniel Campos, Karen Case, Inger Coble, Heather Converse, Joseph Darr, Miriam Delay-Friant, Thomas Delfosse, Lyn Diana, Donna DuBose, Tina Fletcher, Nancy J. Flood, Rochelle Fortier, Linda Garbanati, John S. Gravell, Carol Haglund, Eric and Debbie Hinzel, Randy Huey, Austin Hurst, Stephen Imialek, Donna and Richard Immel, Laury Joseph, Diana Karkiewicz, Sandra and Fred King, Ronald Kline, Donna Kramer and Scott Kramer, Dwyline Kruger, Nicholas Lane, Mona Lange, Janna Layton, Charlotte Liniger, Herb and Randi Long, Mike Loper, Claire Mailhiot, John Masek and Margaret Elgin Masek, Bryan McElderry and Diane Schreiber, Chris McGinnis, Barbara Minneman, Andrew Naegeli, Philip and Mary Neff, Sharon Noteboom, Carol Pachl, Susan Peters, Susan Pfau, Joyce Pollack, Donna Preece, Ron and Janice Reese, Kem and Sylvie Robinson, William and Lana Rocha, Ms. Alvena Rogers, Mrs. Madeline K. Salocks, Linda Parks Shinn, Judi Sierra, Caroline Stephens, Fred W. Sullivan, Willard C Taylor, Judith Thompson, Idell Weydemeyer, Kenneth Williamson, Teri and Chris Wills

California Towhee (to \$24)

Constance Diernisse, Fenna Gatty, David Hutton and Valerie Ventre-Hutton, Suzanne Lutz, Louis and Yolanda Pilastro, Ronald Rogness, Marion Rood, Kathleen Usher, Molly Weden

Every effort to accurately spell names was made. If your name or donation has not been recorded correctly or was mistakenly omitted, we offer our apologies. Please contact us, so that we can amend our records by sending an email to Steve Buffi, Treasurer, at treasurer@mtdiablobirds.org.

Membership Updates

Rochelle Fortier, MDBA Membership Chair

Welcome New Members! I want to give a warm welcome to the new members who joined in September: Qing Cai and Harmony Yu, Orinda; Mary Louise Francis, Walnut Creek; Heather and Paddy Griggs, Walnut Creek; Akhila Kolesar and Asher Gorbet, San Francisco; Margarette Laizure, Oakland; and Matt and Lauren Mahlke, Concord. I hope to see you at our next program meeting!



CBC Field Trips 2024

Jerry Britten, MDBA President



Photo by J. Britten

2024 Central Contra Costa Christmas Bird Count

Saturday December 14, from zero-dark-thirty until about 6PM

WE NEED PARTICIPANTS!

This count, sponsored by MDBA, has been a tradition since 1955! Please join us to census birds within this **count circle**. To participate, email **MDBA.CBC.Central@gmail.com** (note new email address necessitated by our name change). Feeder/Yard watchers as well as field-trip participants are needed for this fun community event that is our largest mobilization of birding talent for the year! We will go over what we saw as a group at the virtual post-count get-together at 7PM on the 14th. (Zoom link to be provided to participants).

2024 East Contra Costa County Christmas Bird Count

Wednesday December 18, from zero-dark-thirty until about 6PM

WE NEED PARTICIPANTS!

This count, sponsored by MDBA, has been in existence since 2000. Please join us to census birds within this **count circle**. To participate, email **MDBA.CBC.East@gmail.com** (note new email address necessitated by our name change). Feeder/Yard watchers as well as field-trip participants are needed for this fun community event! We will go over what we saw as a group at the virtual post-count get-together at 7PM on the 18th. (Zoom link to be provided to participants).

From 50 Years Ago - The Quail, December 1974

Jerry Britten, MDBA President

Thankfully, the concern expressed in this snippet about development in the Yosemite Valley did not come to pass. Given the overuse and traffic nightmares present today, imagine what it would be with more infrastructure!

THE YOSEMITE NAT'L PARK MASTER PLAN hearings have again been postponed, perhaps to January this time. The Interior Dept. has been holding up the environmental impact report on the still-secret master plan which environmentalists fear will permit considerable construction of restaurants and hotels in the Valley.

Galindo Creek Banding Station is imminent!

Jerry Britten, MDBA President

After two years of hard work by dedicated individuals, permits from federal, state, and university agencies are now in place, authorizing a songbird banding station at the Galindo Creek Field Station on the California State University East Bay Concord Campus in southeast Concord.

This banding station, sponsored and funded by the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance in partnership with Cal State East Bay, will operate under the umbrella of the **MAPS** program (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship), managed by the **Institute for Bird Populations**. MAPS establishes protocols and guidance for a network of over 1,200 banding stations in North America.

In the greater Bay Area, there is a MAPS banding station at **Coyote Creek Field Station** near Milpitas, run by the **San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory**, and another at the **Palomarin Field Station** in Point Reyes, run by **Point Blue Conservation Science**. A banding program in our area, about midway between these two, would complement these stations and provide valuable data on bird population dynamics in the Mount Diablo ecoregion.

The Galindo Creek Field Station is a riparian area on the CSUEB campus that is rich in birdlife. It is near other protected lands such as Lime Ridge Open Space, Save Mount Diablo's Mangini Ranch property, and Mount Diablo State Park, and offers easy access. [A map showing the location of the site is **here**.]

Starting in November, we will be clearing a few trails for the installation of nets and will begin small-scale operations (1–3 outings per month) to train volunteers. A full MAPS-protocol banding activity with 10 nets will begin next spring. This is envisioned to be a long-term project extending over many years.

There are plenty of volunteer opportunities to get involved with this exciting project. No banding or handling experience is necessary, although it is welcome. Please contact the project leader, Hallie Daly, at **mountdiablomaps@gmail.com** to volunteer and get on the schedule for training. Many thanks to Hallie and to Kathy Cutting at CSUEB for making this happen!

Volunteers Needed: Wood Duck Nest Box expansion to Briones Reservoir

Jerry Britten, MDBA President

We're seeking volunteers to help install and maintain wood duck nest boxes at Briones Reservoir. We already have dozens of boxes at San Pablo and Upper San Leandro Reservoirs and are expanding the program.

This involves carrying a lightweight ladder into the woods (open and mostly flat, with some poison oak) and climbing it to install the boxes on suitable trees near the waterline. [See the photo below to get an idea of the task.] Installation will take place around February.

If you're interested in volunteering, please contact **president@mtdiablobirds.org**.



Photo by Susana de Trapaga



MDBA Secretary Karin Deas inspecting the intake gates at Clifton Court Forebay, where water from the delta is stored and ultimately sent south via the California Aqueduct.

Photo by J. Britten

Ten birding cyclists enjoyed a beautiful, windless morning in east Contra Costa County at Clifton Court Reservoir on September 21. The group cycled 11 miles round-trip, exploring a variety of habitats, including shoreline, scrub, grassland, marsh, and riparian areas.

Bird highlights included a juvenile Sabine's gull seen by the leader while waiting for the group to assemble, as well as white-faced ibis, long-billed dowitcher, canvasback, bald eagles, and a dark-morph Swainson's hawk at Eucalyptus Island. They recorded a total of 68 species.

MDBA Field Trips

Matt Tarlach, MDBA Field Trip Chair



Update from the Field Trips Coordinator

MDBA mounts dozens of Field Trips throughout the year, ranging from easy, accessible strolls around our local parks to longer expeditions to more distant sites, and 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. MDBA members have priority, with member sign ups opening as soon as the trip is announced in our newsletter. Non-members are welcome 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.

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!

Out of respect for our members and community, we ask participants to take sensible precautions for everyone's health when carpooling and sharing spaces.

We always need new trip leaders! It's fun, and a meaningful contibution to our chapter's mission of education and outreach. Please contact our Field Trip Coordinator, Matt Tarlach, at mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com

If you have a favorite birding spot you'd like to share with your fellow members but would like some help leading the trip, Matt can probably pair you up with an experienced trip leader.

If you're looking for still more bird-related outings in our area, the East Bay Regional Park District holds a variety of events. Go to their Birding page **here** and click View Activities.

McNabney Marsh & MVSD

Monday, November 4, 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM



Long-billed Dowitchers

Photo by Alan Bade

In winter McNabney Marsh, aka Waterbird Regional Preserve, hosts many species of ducks, shorebirds and waterbirds. Marsh passerines and raptors might also be present.

We'll meet at the observation deck off of Arthur Road, and scan the marsh with our scopes. After that we'll move the cars a short distance and take a walk around the man-made marshes operated by Mt. View Sanitary District. Bring your scope if you have one!

This trip is very suitable for beginning birders! Binoculars are available for borrowing, just let the leader know in advance to bring an extra pair.

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

Elevation change: N/A

Leader: Matthew Tarlach, 925-482-6129

Meet: Meet at the observation deck off of Arthur Road at 8:30AM.

GPS: 38.01949443777331, -122.09610747171664

Directions: From I-680 northbound, exit at Pacheco Blvd, turn right onto Arthur Road and go under the freeway. Arthur Road will bend left. Where Arthur Road ends the paved road turns sharp left onto Mt. View Sanitary's private road. Drive about .3 mile to the gravel parking lot just before the one-lane tunnel. The observation deck is to the right (east) of the road.

Limited to 15 participants. Participants acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register **HERE**.

Introducing the Birds of Heather Farm Monday, November 11 (Veterans Day), 8AM - 10AM



White-breasted Nuthatch

Photo by Matt Tarlach

This trip is especially good for beginners!

Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek is an underrated birding spot, home to dozens of resident species. We'll hope to see some winter visitors 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.

Meeting point GPS: 37.921260813409184, -122.04358260674651

At 8:00AM 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 be scanning the lake to see which ducks and other birds might have arrived to spend the winter.

We should be done around 10:00AM. Birders of all experience levels are welcome! Bring binoculars if you have them; we'll also have a few pairs to borrow.

Trip will go on in damp weather, but significant rain or high wind cancels.

Register **HERE**.

Lodi Lake & Woodbridge Ecological Reserve

Thursday, November 14, 8:30AM - 1:30PM



Great Blue Heron

Photo by Maren Smith

We'll bird first at Lodi Lake and its riparian area alongside the Mokelumne River. Plan to see waterfowl and many bird species including Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, Herons, Warblers and Wood Duck. (We've had Varied Thrush in the past but cannot guarantee!)

From Lodi Lake we'll move on to Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, where we'll see waterfowl and other birds, including hopefully some early-arriving Sandhill Cranes. (The state requires a CDFW Lands Pass at Woodbridge Reserve, with a fee of \$5.40 per day. An annual Lands Pass is \$30.50)

Dress in layers. Bring water, snacks and lunch if so choose.

Hike Rating: 2 - Easy to moderate loop of 1.5 - 2 miles on level ground with some paved areas. A few very short off-trail lookouts with easy to moderate slope access. There are a few benches to rest on as well.

Elevation change: N/A

Leader: Mona Lange 510-414-2959

Meet: Lodi Lake parking lot (1101 W. Turner Rd) (bathroom at parking lot). Bring cash to pay the parking fee of \$5/car or \$3/car for seniors. Exact change.

Directions: Hwy 4 East toward Antioch/Rio Vista. Go over Antioch bridge (toll). At stop light make RIGHT onto Hwy 12 toward Lodi. Stay on 12 East past interstate 5. About 2 miles past I-5 make a LEFT on DeVries Rd (the light after the RR tracks.) Carefully and safely watch for Yellow-billed Magpies in the area. At the second stop sign make a RIGHT onto W. Turner Rd. When in town, stay in the left lane. After crossing the RR tracks start looking for the Lake entrance on your LEFT. (On the other side of the Do Not Enter Sign.)

This trip is limited to 12 participants. Rain cancels.

Register **HERE**.

Palo Alto Baylands/ Charleston Slough

Saturday, November 16, 8:30AM - 2PM



American Avocets

Photo by Maren Smith

We see a variety of birds on the water on this trip that is only about a 55 minute drive from Walnut Creek. It is exciting to be on the largest tract of undisturbed marshland remaining in the San Francisco Bay. Locations include Charleston Slough, Shoreline Lake, Palo Alto Baylands, and Redwood Shores.

Hike Rating: 1-Easy

Distance: We do some walking on flat terrain but drive from one location to the next.

Elevation change: Minor

Leaders: Herb and Randi Long, 925-948-5113

Meet: Meet at entrance to Palo Alto Baylands on Terminal Boulevard in Mountain View at

8:30 AM.

Directions: If using Google maps, enter "Terminal Boulevard Mountain View, CA." Take I-680 South 24 miles to Exit 12 for Mission Boulevard /State Route 262 (second Mission Blvd exit so that you head west on Mission Blvd). Keep right at the fork; follow signs for Mission Blvd West and merge onto CA-262 South/Mission Blvd. Continue through two traffic lights and take I-880 ramp South. In 3 miles, use the right two lanes to take CA-237 toward Mountain View. Connect to US-101 North toward San Francisco. Once on US-101 North, take Exit 400C for San Antonio Road. Turn right on San Antonio. Continue for about 0.4 mile and turn right onto Terminal Road and park. Entrance toPalo Alto Baylands is on the left. There is a bathroom at the entrance.

Drive time is about 1 hour + 5 minutes from Walnut Creek / Danville.

Bring lunch!

Register **HERE**.

Poorwill Quest!

Thursday, November 21, 6PM - 7:30PM



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.

Hike Rating: Category 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. Register **HERE**.

Meeker Slough
Wednesday December 4, 10AM - 1:30PM



Black Bellied Plover
Photo by Pam Lorenz

Meeker Slough is a wetland area in Richmond, on the coast of San Francisco Bay. We'll look for shorebirds, ducks, herons, and coastal passerines during the incoming tide. The walk is mostly on a paved and level trail. If time permits, we will also drive a few miles to check out Vincent Park and the Richmond Marina (Inner Harbor Basin). Please bring a spotting scope if you own one, I will bring two scopes if someone can carry one of them. I have a few loaner binoculars I can bring---if contacted ahead of time.

Dress in layers. Bring water, snacks and lunch if so choose.

Hike Rating: 1 - Easy Elevation change: N/A Leader: Ted Robertson, 925-899-1872

Meet: Parking Circle at the end of Bayside Drive, Richmond Trailhead

GPS: 37.911705, -122.338982

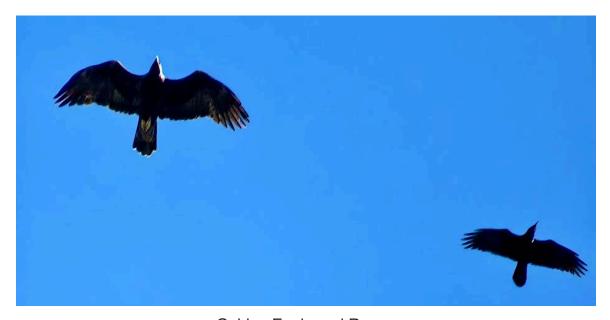
Directions: Take Hwy 580 to Richmond and take Exit 10A for S. 23rd St/Marina Bay Pkwy. Head west onto Marina Bay Pkwy. In about 1 mile, turn left onto Bayside Drive. Park at or near the parking circle at the end of Bayside Dr. Trailhead is at the parking circle.

This trip is limited to 20 participants. Rain cancels.

Register **HERE**.

Lynch Canyon Open Space Preserve

Saturday, December 7, 10AM - 2PM



Golden Eagle and Raven
Photo by Isaac Aronow

Lynch Canyon Open Space, an asset of the Solano County Land Trust, is a fantastic place for raptors in the winter! It's also home to grassland species, and waterbirds on the reservoir.

The trails are wide and firmly packed but unpaved. Participants will be able to choose between two routes: A loop of about 2.5 miles around Lynch Reservoir, with some gentle elevation gain; or a longer loop of about 3.25 miles with a longer, steeper climb (14% grade at one stretch). Co-leaders will be present to accompany along either route. On both routes we'll stop frequently to look for raptors, and to scope the reservoir.

Lynch Canyon is still a working ranch so we can expect to encounter free-ranging cattle. Some of the trails are part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, and we may encounter bicyclists, e-bikes, and equestrians.

Please bring \$6 (exact bills) for the off-season parking fee. Bring ample water (none is available on site) and sun protection. There is almost no shade on the trails.

There is a pit toilet at the parking lot. Solano County Land Trust asks us to bring our own hand sanitizer.

Bring snacks or lunch. On the longer loop, there are picnic tables.

Hike Rating: 2 (longer route is 3) Elevation change on the longer loop trail option is approximately 500 feet.

Meeting place: Parking lot for Lynch Canyon Open Space

Leaders: Susana de Trapaga, 510.333.2693 and Maureen Lahiff, 510.484.6529

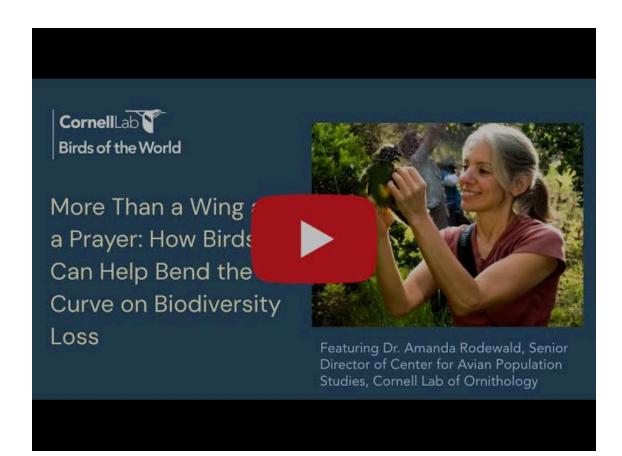
Directions: Take I-80 east to exit 36, American Canyon Road/Hiddenbrook Pkwy. At the stop sign at the end of the exit ramp, turn right and then immediately left onto McGary Road, which runs alongside the freeway. After about 1.7 miles, turn left onto Lynch Road, pass under I-80, and drive all the way to the parking lot.

Heavy rain cancels the trip. We'll send an email if we're cancelling, or if weather looks iffy.

For more information about Lynch Canyon Open Space, please check here.

Register **HERE**.

November Gallery & Media



How Birds Can Help Bend the Curve on Biodiversity

See the full video **HERE**



Study Reveals Bird-Migration Mystery

Read the article **HERE**

Photo: Alfons Lawen / Macaulay Library ML 625189810



Broad-billed Hummingbird / Pacific Grove, Monterey, California, United States
Photo: Mark Chappell / Macaulay Library ML 625017370



California Quail / Marin, California, United States
Photo: Joshua Hogan / Macaulay Library ML 625141089

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Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

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