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# Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

## *The Quail*

Volume 70, Number 4

April 2025

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### **April Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, April 3, 7 PM**

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet Thursday, April 3 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 reusable mugs will be available at the meeting.  
We appreciate your cooperation.

**Agenda:**

6:30 PM Doors Open

7:00 PM Announcements

7:15 PM Refreshments and Raffle

7:30 PM Main Program: Live Raptors

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. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

If you have such items but are unable to attend meetings, please contact [info@mtdiablobirds.org](mailto:info@mtdiablobirds.org) and we will try and arrange a pickup from local addresses.

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## **Birds of Prey Live Animal Presentation**

Lindsay Wildlife Experience



Lindsay  
**Wildlife**  
Experience



Explore the wonders of California's native wildlife with Lindsay Wildlife Experience. Delve into the captivating world of creatures that call our state home. From intriguing natural history specimens to interactive encounters with live animal ambassadors, this event is designed to spark your curiosity and foster a deeper appreciation for the marvels of nature. Join us for an engaging journey you won't soon forget!

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## President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

I've been very busy preparing for our upcoming move to Arizona and have barely had time for birding over the past several weeks. Therefore, for your enjoyment, I've delved into my archives to share a photo of an Urubamba Antpitta, taken in the Andes of Southern Peru last fall. This was at a location where the antpittas have become accustomed to receiving worm treats and, as a result, emerge onto the path when called. If memory serves, this one was named Pancho.



Spring festival and event season is upon us! Below is a list of events where we've been asked to host a table:

- Ruth Bancroft Garden Pollinator & Friends Day, Saturday, April 12, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Earth Day 2025 at Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden, Sunday, April 27, 12:30 PM - 4:30 PM
- Lindsay Wildlife Experience Community Day, Saturday, May 3, 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
- Clayton Pride Day, Sunday, June 1, 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM
- Martinez Beaver Festival, Saturday, June 28, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

We are always seeking volunteers to staff the table, engage with the public, assist children with the nest-box game, and share our passion for birds and nature. If you can spare an hour or two to help at any of these events, please contact

[info@mtdiablobirds.org](mailto:info@mtdiablobirds.org).

Don't forget our photo contest—it's open until May 1st. Please find information about the contest and submission instructions [here](#).

All the best, and happy birding!



Urubamba Antpitta, Peru

Photo by J. Britten

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## **Annual Election of Officers of the Board of Directors**

Alan Bade and Matt Tarlach, *Nominations Committee*

### **Ballot Coming Soon!**

Members will receive a straightforward email ballot early next month for the annual election of Board Officers for the upcoming one-year term, 2025-2026. Please cast and return your vote as soon as possible. The voting deadline will be indicated on the ballot. Kindly check your email spam folder, in case the ballot is delivered there.

Three of our current officers are standing for re-election, and as of this writing, are running unopposed:

- Ariana Rickard, Vice President

- Steve Buffi, Treasurer
- Karin Deas, Secretary

Currently, there are no nominees for **President**. Jerry Britten is retiring from this position, as he is relocating.

Nominations remain open. You can nominate yourself or another individual via the "Contact Us" button on the MDBA website at [www.mtdiablobirds.org](http://www.mtdiablobirds.org) or by emailing the election committee chairperson directly at [mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com).

**Non**-elected board positions are also available! Please contact us if you'd like to increase your involvement in our chapter in this capacity.

The election results will be announced in the June "Quail" newsletter and at the June general meeting.

All of us on the Board of Directors appreciate your continued support and participation.

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## Membership Updates

Rochelle Fortier, *MDBA Membership Chair*

**Welcome New Members!** I would like to give a warm welcome to the new members who joined in February: **Kevin Bentz and Claudia Graham**, Walnut Creek; **Vera Chrebtow**, Oakland; **Ron Halsne**, Martinez; **Bernadette Kim**, San Francisco; **Tiffany Rose**, Oakland; **Juliet Simpson**, Albany; and **Becky Valdez**, Pittsburg. I hope to see you at our next program meeting!



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## Tricolored Blackbird Survey April 18 - 20, 2025

Alan Bade



Tricolored Blackbird Colony, Los Vaqueros Backcountry

Photo by J. Britten

The statewide triennial Tricolored Blackbird Survey is scheduled for April 18, 19, and 20.

This nearly 40-year triennial survey is a joint effort between Audubon California, UC Davis, and government agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, to monitor the distribution and abundance of tricolors, once one of our state's most plentiful birds.

The survey was canceled during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) and Golden Gate Bird Alliance (GGBA) combined efforts in 2022. Statewide, there were 36 county coordinators and 112 participants who surveyed 894 locations in 44 counties. The best estimate of the statewide population in 2022 was 218,000, with a minimum estimate of 183,000 and a maximum estimate of 261,000 (all figures rounded to the nearest 1,000). This was an encouraging increase from the circa 177,000 estimate from the 2017 statewide survey. Part of this increase may be attributed to the discovery of 137 more (previously undocumented) colony locations in 2022 compared to the 2017 survey.

This leads to one of the best ways you can help! Tricolored Blackbirds (TRBL) breed in colonies and are currently in their prospecting and settlement phases. They are attracted to freshwater marsh habitats such as bulrushes, cattails, nettles, and willows. However, much of that habitat has been lost. Nowadays, most TRBLs and the largest colonies breed in agricultural lands, with triticale (a wheat/rye hybrid) being a favorite, especially when mixed with mustard. They also utilize large Himalayan blackberry stands for breeding. If you are birding in eastern Contra Costa and rural Alameda counties and observe colonies (large or small) of TRBLs, please post them to the EBB Sightings listserv and report them on eBird. You can also email your eBird lists to **me**. Please include a map location, if possible, and an approximate estimate of numbers. I will add them to our map of locations to be checked. The statewide coordinator sent me maps with previously documented TRBL locations. These will be checked, but these birds move around!

I am not yet sure how many volunteers will be needed to survey our current mapped locations, or how many locations may be added. If you would like to help on any of the three survey days, please let me know. I cannot guarantee that I will be able to add you to a survey team, but it will be helpful to have names of people who may be available if the need arises, especially those with some experience. I am in contact with the Alameda County coordinator, who may also need volunteers. Sites are visited mostly by vehicle and can be surveyed independently or in small groups, following a protocol established by UC Davis. There are two virtual training sessions scheduled for March 29th and April 12th, both Saturdays, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. These training sessions cover counting methods for large colonies and other important information.

For more information about Tricolored Blackbirds and the survey, please see:

- <https://tricolor.ice.ucdavis.edu/about-tricolored-blackbirds>
- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tricolored\\_Blackbird/lifehistory](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tricolored_Blackbird/lifehistory)

This survey has, in the past, identified sites in California where colonies with thousands of birds have been saved by paying farmers to delay harvest. It is one of the few community science efforts that can directly and immediately result in the saving of thousands of birds.

- <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/tricolored-blackbirds-once-faced-extinction-heres-whats-behind-their-exciting-comeback>
- <https://www.audubon.org/news/how-hundreds-volunteers-protected-californias-tricolored-blackbirds>

Funding for saving colonies on agricultural lands comes from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Audubon California, and other sources. The status of the USDA funding is currently unknown.

While Contra Costa and Alameda counties may not host the largest colonies of tricolors, we still have good habitat. MDBA is monitoring a decent-sized colony on Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) land under permit. We are helping with a statewide acoustic monitoring study and have placed a digital recorder at the CCWD site to capture the vocalizations of the breeding colony. Our small chapter is doing its part to help this iconic species!

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## From 50 Years Ago - The Quail, April 1975

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

Interesting that an official policy was announced for this – in response to the energy crisis of the mid-70's. I wonder how long this lasted...?

At the March meeting a NEW POLICY for field trips was adopted by the members. As a result of the high cost of operating our cars, passengers will in the future be expected to share the expenses of driving on field trips. We will follow the existing Sierra Club policy of passengers chipping in 2¢ per mile per person upon return to the point of origin of the trip. We will evaluate this at a future date for any changes deemed necessary.

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## GGBA 2026 Travel Program

Eric Schroeder and Dawn Lemoine, *GGBA Travel Program Coordinators*

International birding travel has rebounded this year. Our 2025 trips are fully booked, with two exceptions:

- We recently had two cancellations for our fall Bhutan trip. This is a special opportunity to join one of our most popular itineraries, which includes a visit to the renowned Crane Festival.
- We've added a second Brazil/Argentina trip for this fall. This trip offers the chance to see remarkable birds and iconic mammals, including giant river otters, giant anteaters, and jaguars. Only two spots remain.

## 2026 GGBA Travel Program:

- Araucana Lodge in Colombia (Colombia Birdwatch): January 7-14, 2026
- The Central Andes, Colombia (Colombia Birdwatch): January 14-21, 2026
- Oaxaca, Mexico (Mark Pretti Nature Tours): January 18-28, 2026
- Minnesota Owls (Birding Ecotours): January 26-31, 2026
- India (Wild India Tours): February 1-15, 2026
- Deserts of California (Wild Latitudes): February 15-2-, 2026
- Cuba (Holbrook Travel): February 25 - March 7, 2026
- Southern Costa Rica (Crescentia Expeditions): April 19-30, 2026
- Bhutan (Langur Eco Travels): FULL, April 20 - May 6, 2026
- Warbler Grand Tour (She Flew Birding Tours): May 4-14, 2026
- Alaska (Wild Latitudes): June 8-19, 2026

### Trip Details:

We know many of you have been anticipating this one: **Cuba** with Holbrook Travel. While not a new trip (we offered it long ago), it presents a chance to see spectacular endemic birds, including the Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon, and Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest hummingbird. (And for those interested in a 1955 Ford Customline, Havana is the place to look.)

Costa Rica's remarkable avian diversity stems from its varied habitats, geographic location, topography, and climate. With over 935 bird species recorded, including seven endemic species, Costa Rica boasts one of the highest levels of bird diversity globally, all within an area smaller than West Virginia. Our **Southern Costa Rica** tour will focus on the Talamanca Mountain Range and Osa Peninsula, and also visit the intermountain valleys of San Vito and El General.

Our new **Warbler Grand Tour**, led by She Flew Birding Tours, aims to observe all 36 North American warbler species. A GGBA member who participated last year successfully saw them all, prompting us to add this trip to our lineup. Expect over 200 total species, including the rare Kirtland's Warbler in its Jack Pine habitat. (Dawn will be on the May 2025 trip and can share her experience.)

It's been two years since we first offered "**India: Lions, Tigers, Bears...and Birds!**" The trip lived up to its name, with sightings of 240 bird species and 21 mammal species. (Gir National Park in India is the only place where the Asiatic Lion still exists.) And, of course, a visit to the Taj Mahal is included.

For those new to international birding, we recommend our **Araucana Lodge** program in the western Andes of Colombia. This week-long program offers a comfortable "home base" experience, with daily excursions and returns to the

same lodging each night. Expect spectacular birds and excellent photographic opportunities.

For a more extensive Colombian experience, consider our **Central Andes** extension (also available as a standalone trip). Our itinerary focuses on the coffee-growing region of the western and central Andes, home to over a quarter of the country's endemic species.

We welcome back Mark Pretti, one of our favorite birding guides, with his popular "**Birding, Natural History, and Culture in Oaxaca, Mexico**" trip. This tour combines beautiful birds, delicious food, scenic landscapes, and Oaxacan cultural immersion.

Our inaugural "**Minnesota Owls and Winter Wonderland**" trip was so successful that we added a second one. Participants on both trips observed Long-eared, Snowy, Great Grey, Northern Hawk, and Boreal Owls—the latter being a lifer for everyone, including our guide. (Birders on the first trip also saw a Barred Owl.)

We conclude with two trips from Wild Latitudes, one of our preferred vendors. Lead guide Ivan Phillipsen will again offer **Deserts of California**, an odyssey through hotspots in the Sonoran Desert, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, and the Salton Sea. This year, the trip includes a ride on the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway into the San Jacinto Mountain wilderness. At 8,516 feet, you'll explore coniferous forests and seek out high-elevation species.

Finally, we return to **Alaska** with Wild Latitudes. This itinerary is ideal for first-time visitors and returning nature enthusiasts alike. The focus is on birding and wildlife watching (moose, grizzly bears, Dall sheep, caribou, and sea otters), with elements of geology and ecology. We'll be looking for special birds such as Horned Puffin, Willow Ptarmigan, Long-tailed Jaeger, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Bluethroat, and Arctic Warbler.

Our spring 2026 Bhutan trip is full, but please express your interest in future Bhutan trips, as we are considering another fall trip in 2026 and have requested dates for 2027.

We are also planning to add trips for the latter half of 2026, including potential tours to Hawaii and Tasmania, Australia. Please email us with your interest in these or other destinations.

Find complete trip details at [goldengatebirdalliance.org](https://goldengatebirdalliance.org).

Email us at [travelprogram@goldengatebirds.org](mailto:travelprogram@goldengatebirds.org).

## **The Quail Newsletter Archives**

Rochelle Fortier, *MDBA Membership Chair*

Have you ever wondered about the events and projects our chapter has accomplished? If so, browse through the archived Quail newsletters at the **Quail Newsletter Archive**.

The archive begins with the November 1954 newsletter. From the start, our chapter was an active and determined group, holding regular meetings, field trips, and Christmas Bird Counts. The archive spans from 1954 to 2023. Please note: newsletters for 2024 and 2025 are available at **Current Newsletters**.

## **Wood Duck Boxes installed at Briones Reservoir**

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*



Volunteers Julie Woodruff, Andrew Ford and Jerry Lahr installing a nest box at Briones Reservoir

Photo by J. Britten

We have broadened the scope of this project to encompass Briones Reservoir, in addition to Upper San Leandro and San Pablo reservoirs. On March 1, 2025, Julie

Woodruff, Andrew Ford, Jerry Lahr, and Jerry Britten installed six Wood Duck boxes and one Screech Owl box on the south side of the reservoir, near the Oursan Trailhead. Alan Bade crafted the Wood Duck boxes, while the owl box, a new, old-stock item, was of unknown origin. This brings our total to approximately 50 boxes in the field, distributed across these three bodies of water. These boxes are cleaned, cleared of squirrels and mice, and monitored during the nesting season, from late February through mid-May. We are still seeking volunteers to assist with this effort.

Please note that the shoreline habitat in these areas is ideal for poison oak, which grows prolifically. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact [president@mtdiablobirds.org](mailto:president@mtdiablobirds.org). It is always a rewarding experience to find ducks and owls nesting, and we now possess the necessary permits to band both species.



Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden Invites You To...

CELEBRATE  
**Earth Day  
In the Garden**  
Sunday, April 27, 2025  
12:30-4:30 PM

- Enjoy an afternoon in the Garden with fun activities for kids and adults
- Hear from local experts on topics such as composting, soil - water quality and conservation, climate change, wildlife habitat, garden pollinators, and gardening with native plants
- Take a free tour of the garden led by U. C. Master Gardener, Monika Olsen
- Bring your smartphone for fun, educational citizen science in the Garden
- Talk with local sustainable organizations

**PHIG**  
Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden  
Exhibitors include:

PHIG is located across from Pleasant Hill Middle School and Pleasant Oaks Park at 1 Santa Barbara Road  
R.L.V. 925-482-4672  
<http://phig.info>  
[phinstructionalgarden@gmail.com](mailto:phinstructionalgarden@gmail.com)

## Home Care for Birds Needed

Lindsay Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital, located in Walnut Creek, treats over 4,000 native California wildlife patients annually, representing an average of 175 different species. Over two-thirds of these patients are avian, ranging from hummingbirds to eagles. While our hospital shift recruitment is largely complete

for this season, we may conduct supplemental recruitment later in the year to fill any remaining vacancies. We currently have numerous volunteer opportunities for home care, where patients whose medical needs have been addressed continue their recovery in a suitable environment within a volunteer's home. Most home care is provided by volunteers who have joined specialized teams, such as those caring for hummingbirds, towhees, jays, crows, songbirds, insectivores, raptors, and herptiles, among others. For more information, please visit the Lindsay Wildlife [website](#) or email [hospitalrecruiting@lindsaywildlife.org](mailto:hospitalrecruiting@lindsaywildlife.org).

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# Join us for a nature walk!

**March 29, 8:30 - 10**

- Family-Friendly
- Moderate Hike
- Learn about the history, geology, ecology, plants and animals of Lime Ridge.

Register/Questions:  
rgraydon79@gmail.com



Follow our Friends of Lime  
Ridge Facebook Page



**WHERE:** Meet at the Community Building Above 3701  
Treat Blvd. Parking Lot

Sponsored by Friends of Lime Ridge and Mt. Diablo Bird Alliance

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## **MDBA Trip Report**

**East Contra Costa County, February 19**

Report by: Mona Lange



Golden-crowned Sparrow



Spotted Towhee



White-tailed Kite

Photos by M. Lange

On Wednesday, February 19th, nine people joined our trip to Eastern Contra Costa County, where we spotted a total of 56 species across two locations. At Big Break Regional Shoreline, we enjoyed a wonderful view of a White-tailed Kite "kiting," while another was perched nearby atop a tree. We also observed American White Pelicans, three Northern Harriers, Downy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Great Blue Herons, and Great Egrets. Several Spotted Towhees sang for us in various areas. Hundreds of American Coots, three Common Gallinules, and a Canvasback were present on the water, along with other waterfowl. We recorded 45 species at this location.

The mostly sunny morning transitioned to cloudy and misty conditions as we moved to the Ironhouse Sanitary District. There, we saw Black-necked Stilts, American Wigeons, an American Kestrel (feeding), a handsome dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk, and numerous Song Sparrows, among others. Notably, a Golden-crowned Sparrow exhibited an unusual appearance due to yellow pollen on its face, momentarily causing confusion and prompting some to wonder if it was a rare species.

Light rain eventually shortened our visit, but the trip was still enjoyed by all.

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## **Bodega Bay, February 22**

Report by: Maureen Lahiff



California Scrub Jay

Photo by Renate Johnson



Common Loon

Photo by Pam Lorenz



Brandt's Cormorant

Photo by Warren Regelman



Bald Eagle



American Kestrel

Photos by W. Regelman



Red-breasted Merganser

Photo by Isaac Aronow

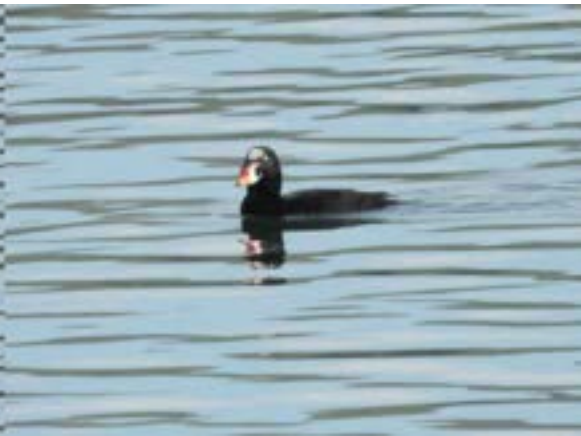


Ruddy Turnstone

Photo by W. Regelman



Eared Grebe



Surf Scoter

Photos by W. Regelman

February 22, 2025, began foggy and overcast, with intermittent fog throughout the day. Nevertheless, our sixteen participants enjoyed birding in light winds at the often-breezy Bodega Head.

The most commonly observed loon was the Common Loon, including individuals nearly fully molted into their alternate (breeding) plumage, displaying dark heads and black-and-white checkerboard patterns on their backs. However, the Bird of the Day was a single Yellow-billed Loon, a regional rarity, spotted from the end of the Spud Point fishing pier. This bird, though still in non-breeding plumage, stood out among the Common Loons with its lighter face, warm brown (rather than charcoal) back, and, of course, its large, ivory-tinted bill.

Across seven birding stops, from Tides Wharf to Bodega Head, we recorded a total of 57 species, including hundreds of Brant, sea geese that overwinter here due to Bodega Bay's extensive eelgrass beds, their preferred food source. Other birds seen in significant numbers included Surf Scoters, Horned and Eared Grebes, Common Goldeneyes, and Red-breasted Mergansers. At Porto Bodega, we observed a Belted Kingfisher perched on a piling.

Additional highlights included two Ruddy Turnstones (likely a breeding pair) also at Porto Bodega; a Red-necked Grebe scoped between the harbor entrance jetties; a Bald Eagle that flew in and perched atop a large cypress near Spud Point; and, offering a contrast to the large seabirds, a colorful, active Nashville Warbler glimpsed in the thickets below Diekmann's Store. California Sea Lions were seen at very close range.

Thank you to everyone for your enthusiasm and excellent questions, and special thanks to Bill Kezer and Matt Tarlach for maintaining eBird lists. Additionally, gratitude to Matt and Pam for bringing and sharing their scopes.

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## **Contra Costa County City Parks, February 26**

Trip report by leaders: Randi and Herb Long

The day began with twelve birders exploring the natural pond at Heather Farm. Though relatively quiet with few ducks, we tallied thirty-four species. Rosita Harvey highlighted an Anna's hummingbird nest, occupied by the bird, in a tree by the man-made pond, a site previously used by hummingbirds. We were also delighted to witness bushtits constructing a nest. Our next destination was the Markham Arboretum in Concord (twenty-seven species). A hovering kite was among our initial sightings, a testament to the area's suitability for raptors (Cooper's hawk, red-shouldered hawk, and red-tailed hawk), woodpeckers, and bluebirds. The arboretum resonated with birdsong. We are grateful for this beautiful arboretum, conveniently located just ten minutes from Heather Farm.

Subsequently, we proceeded to a neighborhood pond on Turtle Creek Road (sixteen species), where Matt Tarlach identified a female hooded merganser. We then drove to another pond along Turtle Creek and observed a male hooded merganser. Rosita once again spotted a hummingbird building a nest. She alerted the gardeners to the nesting site, as they were trimming trees, requesting they avoid a specific branch chosen by the bird. The three gardeners used binoculars and scopes to observe the bird more closely, expressing their excitement. We departed the area assured that the hummingbird's nest was secure.

A video by Warren Regelman documenting the Anna's hummingbird nest construction is available [here](#).

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### **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 contribution to our chapter's mission of education and outreach. Please contact our Field Trip Coordinator, Matt Tarlach, at [mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto: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.

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## **North Briones**

Tuesday, April 8, 8:30 AM - Noon



Red-tailed Hawk

Photo by Isaac Aronow

This walk begins in oak woodlands with lots of spring wildflowers and birds. We then continue up through grasslands, ending at Sindicich Lagoons. We return the way we came, with about 3 miles round trip over hilly trails. Bring liquids & a snack if you like.

**Hike rating:** Category 3 - uphill climb

**Elevation change:** 300+ feet

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

**Meet:** Parking area at the north entrance of Briones Regional Park.

**Directions:** Take Briones Road south off Alhambra Valley Road and drive up this narrow, winding road. Park at the end.

The field trip is limited to 15 participants. Participants must acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver.

Register [HERE](#).

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## Black Diamond Mines

Thursday, April 10, 8 AM - 1 PM



Canyon Wren

Photo by Vicky Atkinson

This trip includes a steep climb up a rocky trail with an elevation gain of several hundred feet. Why make the climb? Because the location offers the best chance in our MDBA territory to see and hear Canyon Wrens! Footing can be tricky---be advised!

There is no guarantee on finding the wrens, but we will certainly see many other birds. California Thrasher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Phainopepla are often seen here though again, nothing is certain. At the worst we will share an adventure in a beautiful and historically interesting location. Be sure to bring enough water, and lunch.

**Hike rating:** Category 3, difficult uphill trail, potentially hot.

**Elevation change:** 600 feet, steep in places.

**Leader:** Matt Tarlach, [MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com)

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

**Directions:** Exit Hwy 4 at Somersville Road in Antioch. Drive south, enter the park gate and drive about 1 mile uphill to the last parking lot at the road's end.

This trip is limited to 12 participants.

Register [HERE](#).

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## Mitchell Canyon

Thursday, April 17, 8 AM - 1 PM



Wilson's Warbler

Photo by Jerry Britten

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 will be blooming.

**Trail Rating:** Category 3. 3+ miles on a potentially hot, dusty trail.

**Elevation change:** up to 400 feet

**Leader:** Sandy Ritchie, (925) 381-2514

**Meet:** Mitchell Canyon parking lot, Clayton

**Directions:** From Ygnacio Valley Road in Concord, turn south on Clayton Road. Turn right onto Mitchell Canyon Road and drive past the quarry to the end. Unless you have a State Parks pass, a \$6 parking fee is required---bring exact bills.

This field trip is limited to 15 participants. Participants must acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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## **Mitchell Canyon II**

Tuesday, April 22, 8 AM to 2 PM

We will walk up 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 may still be blooming.

Bring a lunch too, if you'd like to sit down and eat with the group at the end of the trip.

**Trail Rating:** Category 3. 3+ miles on a potentially hot, dusty trail. It is an out-and-back so anyone who gets too hot or tired can head back early.

**Elevation change:** close to 400 feet

**Leader:** Ted Robertson, 925-899-1872

**Meet:** Mitchell Canyon parking lot, Clayton.

**Directions:** From Ygnacio Valley Road in Concord, turn south on Clayton Road. Turn right onto Mitchell Canyon Road and drive past the quarry to the end. Unless you have a State Parks pass, a \$6 parking fee is required---bring exact bills.

This field trip is limited to **10** participants.

Register [HERE](#).

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## **Del Puerto Canyon**

Tuesday, April 22



### Western Kingbird

Photo by Isaac Aronow

As we drive along Del Puerto Canyon, on the east side of the Diablo Range, we'll be looking for Canyon Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, Greater Roadrunner, and other goodies. It can get very warm!

Bring lunch and plenty of liquids as this trip takes us further from conveniences than most of our outings.

**Trail Rating:** 1 - This is mostly a car trip, with several easy walks.

**Leader:** Steve Buffi (925) 200-4555

**Directions:** Carpool/caravan leaves at 7:30 AM from Sycamore Valley Road Park and Ride lot.

OR meet on Del Puerto Canyon Road at 9 AM. West of I-5 at Patterson Exit (Diablo Grande Parkway and Sperry Road) off I-5 (56 miles from Sycamore Valley Road). Take I-580 east to I-5 south.

Note that the Larry Combs Rest Area near Westley, our first stop in past years, is closed. If services are needed, try the Love's Travel Stop in Patterson just off I-5. There are no other facilities on this trip until our lunch stop. There is no limit on this trip. Carpooling from Sycamore Valley is recommended.

Register [HERE](#).

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## Pine Canyon

Monday, April 28, 8 AM to 1 PM



Townsend's Warbler

Photo by Jerry Britten

This field trip is especially good for beginning birders!

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. Warbling Vireos, along with their cousins, the Cassin's Vireo, nest within the canyon. We can also hope to find Bullock's Orioles and House Wrens. We'll look (and listen) for Black-headed Grosbeaks and Western Tanagers. And the warblers: Wilson's, Yellow, MacGillivray's, Orange-crowned, and Townsend's.

Bring water and snacks, or lunch, as there are shady picnic tables in the park.

**Trail Rating:** Category 2–3 Mostly wide dirt trail with some short climbs. There are multiple creek crossings, with difficulty depending on recent weather.

**Elevation change:** 200 feet

**Leader:** Ted Robertson, 925-899-1872

**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 18 participants. Participants must acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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## Lagoon Valley and Pena Adobe

Wednesday, April 30, 9 AM to 1:30 PM



Brown Creeper

Photo by Mona Lange

We will first bird at Pena Adobe Park, located off I-80 just west of Vacaville. Pena Adobe is a historic park with well established trees, including an orange tree planted as early as the 1860s. Birds we've seen here include Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush and Black-headed Grosbeak.

After exploring Pena Adobe, we will drive to Lagoon Valley Park. There is a \$5 parking fee here, and note the kiosk only takes either exact cash---no change given---or debit/credit card. Birds seen at Lagoon Valley have included Western Bluebird, Cliff Swallow, Bullock's Oriole and Western Kingbird. If the lake level is low, there is a good chance for Wilson's Snipe and Greater Yellow-legs. Bufflehead and American Wigeon are often among the waterbirds on the lake.

**Trail Rating:** 1 - Easy. Mostly level paths.

**Leader:** Mona Lange, 510-414-2959

**Meet:** Pena Adobe Park, off I-80 between Fairfield and Vacaville.

**Directions:** Take 680 to 80 East towards Sacramento. Take Exit 51B, Pena Adobe Road. DO NOT take the Lagoon Valley Road exit. After the stop sign, proceed straight veering to the LEFT onto Pena Adobe Road. Meet at the restroom building. Address is 4699 Pena Adobe Road, Vacaville, CA.

This field trip is limited to 12 participants. Participants must acknowledge the MDBA Liability Waiver (available during registration).

Register [HERE](#).

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## East Contra Costa

Thursday, May 8, 8 AM to 1 PM



Western Kingbird

Photo by Mona Lange

We will meet at Big Break/Delta Science Center. After birding there we'll drive to Marsh Creek Trail and, if time permits, Bethel Island. These locations are usually good for waterfowl, raptors and some passerines not easily found elsewhere in the county. It may get hot by mid-day. This trip is appropriate for birders of all experience levels.

**Hike Rating:** 1-Easy

**Elevation change:** N/A

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

**Meet:** Big Break parking lot in Oakley at 9 AM

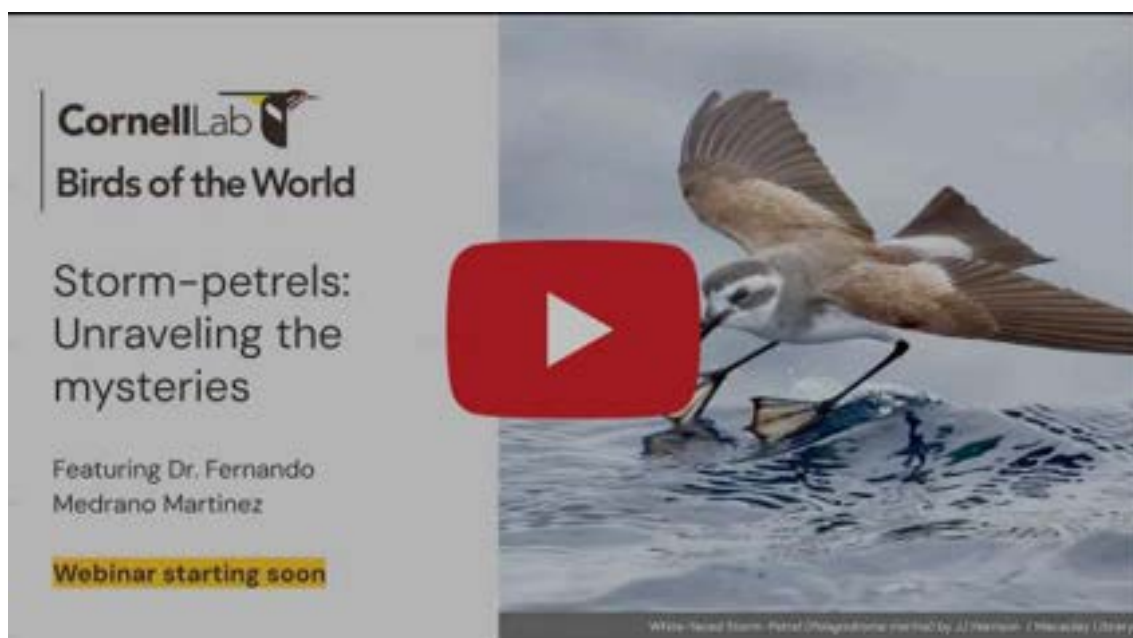
**Directions:** Take Highway 4 east toward Stockton/Pittsburg, after Antioch take right Exit 30 toward CA-160/Sacramento/Rio Vista. Take Exit 1A, East 18th/Main Street, turn right at the bottom of the exit onto Main Street, proceed east a little over 1 mile, then turn left onto Big Break Road. Turn right into Big Break Regional Shoreline/Delta Science Center, just past the last houses.

This field trip is limited to 20 participants.

Register [HERE](#).

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## April Gallery & Media



### Storm-petrels: Unraveling the mysteries

See the full video [HERE](#)

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**Orange Alert: What Caused the Colors on This Snowy Owl?**

Read the article [HERE](#)

Photo: Trevor Churchill/ [Macaulay Library ML 632227194](#)

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Brandt's Cormorant / San Diego, California, United States

Photo: [Luke Seitz](#) / Macaulay Library ML 50618381

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Vermilion Flycatcher / Santa Clara, California, United States

Photo: [Russ Pettit](#) / Macaulay Library ML 632272258

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If you'd like to stay in touch more than once a month, sign up for our private email **discussion group!**

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