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Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

The Quail

Volume 70, Number 3

March 2025

March Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, March 6, 7 PM

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet Thursday, March 6 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: Bay Raptor Rescue

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!

Keep 'Em Flying - Helping Raptors Survive in the Human Environment

Craig Nikitas



Juvenile Osprey



Juvenile Cooper's Hawk



Great Horned Owl



Juvenile Peregrine Falcon



Migrant Burrowing Owl

Craig Nikitas, a retired urban planner, has dedicated over fifty years to wildlife volunteer work with raptors. His presentation will provide an overview of ten years of raptor rescue efforts, focusing on common issues requiring intervention. He will share accounts of rescues involving both common and rare local species, and discuss techniques used to assist them.

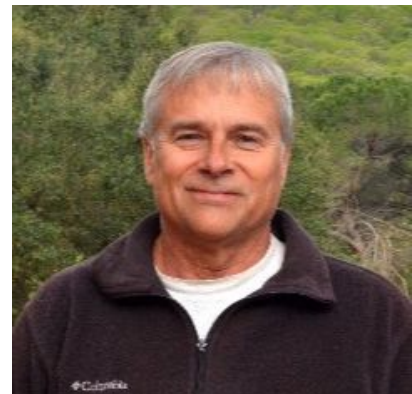
Craig's extensive experience includes caring for captive animals at the Randall Museum, Steinhart Aquarium, and the San Francisco Zoo. He has also tended to birds in rehabilitation at WildCare, and for thirty years, he participated in trapping and banding migratory and dispersive birds of prey with the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. Additionally, he has presented talks on the natural history of corvids, diurnal raptors, and owls at schools, colleges, universities, local naturalist groups, park associations, the Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival, and to professional staff at the Lindsay Wildlife Experience, CuriOdyssey, and the San Francisco and Oakland Zoos.

In 2015, Craig founded Bay Raptor Rescue to provide a free service aiding predatory birds in distress. His work is conducted under permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. His efforts encompass trapping free-flying birds trapped in buildings, netting birds grounded by illness or injury, and transporting those requiring veterinary care to local rehabilitation facilities.

President's Letter

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

After years of intermittent attempts to spot the elusive Mountain Plovers on their wintering grounds west of Rio Vista in Solano County, I finally managed to get decent views of a couple foraging relatively near the roadside in January. Another nemesis bird checked off the list!



A sincere thank you to Herb and Randi Long, and Carol Pachtl, for representing the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance at the Welcome Spring Event at the Concord Library on Saturday, March 29th. They will discuss bird nests and display some from our collection to attending families, and perhaps lead a brief birding session with the group. With the spring festival and Earth Day event season rapidly approaching, there will be numerous opportunities for volunteering at MDBA outreach activities. We welcome all members to come and share their love of birds and the

outdoors, and engage the public in our cause at these local events. Please contact info@mtdiablobirds.org to volunteer!

Also, thank you to Rosita Harvey, Matt Tarlach, and our chapter for responding to last month's "Quail" newsletter and donating three pairs of binoculars and two spotting scopes to Aves Argentina for their project monitoring endangered Black-Cowled Blackbirds. These will be personally delivered by Bob Meese, who is collaborating on this project.

Please see the announcement in this newsletter regarding our officer elections for the 2025-26 term, which begins July 1st. We still need someone to assume the President's duties! For more information, you can contact me at president@mtdiablobirds.org.

All the best, and get out there for the birds!



Mountain Plover, Solano County

Photo by J. Britten

Call for Candidates for the Board of Directors

Alan Bade and Matt Tarlach, *Nominations Committee*

The Board of Directors of the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance invites anyone interested in serving as President, Vice President, Treasurer, or Secretary to submit their names as candidates. These offices have one-year terms, with elections held via email in May. We are particularly in need of new candidates this year, as our current President, Jerry Britten, will be moving to Arizona this spring. Please email any Board member or speak with us at a meeting for more information.

In May, please watch for an email with "Ballot" or "Election" in the subject line. Cast your vote according to the instructions and return it as soon as possible.

A slate of candidates has been proposed by the Nominations Committee:

- [Maybe you!] --- President
- Ariana Rickard --- Vice President
- Steve Buffi --- Treasurer
- Karin Deas --- Secretary

Results will be announced in the June *Quail* newsletter and at the June general meeting.

Members interested in serving our organization in a non-elected position on the Board, a less demanding way to start, are invited to contact a current Board member for information. All of us on the Board of Directors of the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance thank you for your support and participation.

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 January: **Carol Asch**, Concord; **Abigail Hamilton**, Lafayette; **Jessica Hughes**, Castro Valley; **Kristina Krause**, Concord; **Sheila Moore**, Hayward; **Karl Smith**, New York. I hope to see you at our next program meeting!



Mount Diablo Bird Alliance 2025 Photography Contest

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*



1st Place, 2024 MDBA Photo Contest, Birds & Human Category

Wayne Narr, Galapagos Mockingbirds

It's back! To promote interest in, protection of, and preservation of birds, and to encourage nature photography and enjoyment of our natural wonders, the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) is hosting its 2025 photography competition! This is our sixth contest, and we encourage you to review past contests from previous years.

Entry Period:

- February 17, 2025 – May 1, 2025
- All submissions must be received by 11:59 PM on May 1, 2025
- Presentation/Awards: June 2025 at the June Members' Meeting

Division Categories:

ADULT: MDBA members who are 18 and over can submit **one photograph per category** in **up to three categories** below.

1. **Bird Beauty:** Close-up/Abstract/Focus on Color, etc., not fitting into the other main categories.
2. **Birds and Humans:** Urban birds, birds on structures, birds and birders, etc. (no pet birds, please).

3. **Birds in Action:** Flight, fight, or just having a bath, for example.
4. **Birds Dining:** Birds eating seeds, nectar, berries, insects, or vertebrates.
5. **Habitat:** Show us a special place that birds call home.

YOUTH: Youth under age 18 are encouraged to submit their two best photos. Membership is not required. Repeat winners of this category are asked to enter the Adult categories.

Photo Eligibility:

- Photos may depict wild birds seen anywhere in the world and may have been taken at any time in the past.
- Please do not resubmit photos previously submitted to a past MDBA photo contest.
- Photos must be saved in JPEG format, no larger than 35 MB and no smaller than 300 KB. Photos outside of these limits will be automatically disqualified. Please check your photo file size.
- Normal processing of original files is acceptable. Examples of ineligible photographs include frame stacking, stitched panoramas, or photos heavily manipulated beyond what is necessary to represent the scene as experienced by the photographer.
- Acceptable adjustments include removal of dust spots or minor distracting elements, and tasteful changes to contrast, exposure levels, sharpness, and sensor noise. Black and white conversion of color images is allowed.
- Unacceptable manipulations include wholesale removal or addition of foreground or background elements, sky replacement, or creating unnaturally dramatic images (e.g., reducing background exposure to black to isolate a bird subject). Generative AI construction of scenes or subjects is not allowed.
- Photos with borders, signatures, or watermarks will be automatically disqualified.

Entry:

- Entry is open to MDBA members. Non-members may join at www.mtdiablobirds.org.
- Entry is by **email only**; ONE PHOTO SUBMISSION PER EMAIL. If you have submissions in multiple categories, you must send separate emails. Batched emails will be returned.
- Send photos to photo-contest@mtdiablobirds.org.
- Include DIVISION_CATEGORY_YOUR LAST NAME in the subject line.
 - Example: ADULT_BIRDS IN ACTION_SMITH

- Your photo must be sent as an attachment with the following information in the body of the email:

Entry Must Include:

1. First and Last Name
2. Division (Adult, Youth): Category (which of 1-6 above)
3. Bird Species
4. Place photo was taken (as much detail as possible, but County, State, Country is sufficient)
5. Date photo was taken
6. URL of social media (optional)

Example:

Willow Smith

Adult: Birds in Action

Western bluebird

Borges Ranch, Walnut Creek, CA

1/10/2023

Receipt:

- You will receive an auto-generated response upon receipt of your email submission.
- The MDBA email is not monitored daily; please do not contact the contest administrator or judges to confirm submission. Someone will contact you if there is an issue with your submission. If you have a question, please allow three to four days for a response.

Winners:

- A panel of three judges, plus contest administrators, will determine winners in each category.
- Judges are ineligible to enter.
- The panel will select the top three to five photos (including the winner) to be shown via slideshow at the June 2025 MDBA membership meeting.
- Winners in each category will receive a prize. No entrant may win more than one prize.
- Winning photographs will also be featured on MDBA social media sites, in *The Quail*, and on our website, mtdiablobirds.org.

Important Considerations:

- **Ethical Bird Photography:** In the spirit of appreciating without disturbing or harming birds, MDBA advocates for ethical bird photography. Examples include not getting close to nests or nesting birds and chicks, not using a flash, especially when photographing nocturnal birds, not baiting, and no drones.
- MDBA reserves the right to disqualify photos that violate ethical guidelines.
- By entering, photographers:
 1. Represent that they are the sole and exclusive author and owner of the photograph.
 2. Irrevocably grant the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual license to use the photograph in any manner.

From 50 Years Ago - The Quail, March 1975

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

This marks the beginning of the Brown Pelican's gradual recovery along the California Coast. Once listed as an endangered species in 1970, it was delisted in 2009. By 2021, over 12,000 nesting pairs were recorded on Anacapa Island. Currently, their population fluctuates in accordance with the cycles of their primary food source, anchovies.

The BROWN PELICAN which suffered a dramatic decline in the 1950's and 60's now appears to be raising young with increasing success. The discontinued use of DDT and other persistent pesticides is thought to be primarily responsible for fledgling success of the past few years. After virtually no hatchlings in recent years, in 1973 some 34 young hatched on the Anacapa Islands, last year there were 305. There has been a similar favorable trend in other birds whose soft-shelled eggs had not been hatching.

Nature Walk with the Friends of Lime Ridge

Saturday, March 29, 8:30 AM - 10 AM

Lime Ridge, the grassy hillside that extends along the east side of the Diablo Valley, offers a fascinating combination of diverse habitat, unique geology, and rich local history.

The Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) will assist Friends of Lime Ridge in leading a nature walk there. A naturalist with extensive knowledge of local lore will introduce attendees to the area and its plant life, while an MDBA member will highlight the bird species present. Though somewhat under-birded, potential sightings include Western Bluebirds, White-tailed Kites, and American Kestrels. This walk will cover approximately one mile along dirt trails, with some inclines and declines. In March, expect potentially muddy patches.

Please park at the Lime Ridge parking lot located at 3701 Treat Boulevard, and walk approximately 150 yards up the right-hand trail (roughly north from the lot) to meet at the Community Building at 8:30 AM.

Please RSVP to Friends of Lime Ridge at rgraydon79@gmail.com to provide an accurate headcount.

Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival

April 25 - 27



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POINT REYES BIRDING & NATURE FESTIVAL APRIL 25-27TH, 2025

Early bird member registration begins
Saturday, February 22 at 10 am.

- 50+ Field events with Bay Area naturalists in Marin & Sonoma Counties.
- Friday Fauna Forum with Audubon Canyon Ranch's Living with Lions Project and The California White Shark Project.
- Saturday Social & Keynote Benefit with Keith Hansen in Conversation with Amy Tan on Backyard Birds.
- Free Sunday Family Day with live bird ambassadors, art and activities, Cute Coffee Radio, and more!
- Plus festival swag, sponsorship, scholarship & volunteer opportunities



(415) 663-9312



Visit our Linktree or
pointreyesbirdingfestival.org

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 is located across from Pleasant Hill Middle School and Pleasant Oaks Park at 1 Santa Barbara Road

<http://phig.info>



R.S.V.P. 925-482-6670 phinstructionalgarden@gmail.com

MDBA Trip Report

Las Gallinas, Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek, January 18

Report by: Sandy Ritchie

It was a pleasure to finally return to Las Gallinas after construction had limited on-site parking since 2020. Under overcast skies, the temperatures were decidedly chilly at the start of our morning. We observed a diverse selection of 13 duck species, including a "teal trifecta." The main island in the first pond was teeming with adult and juvenile Black-crowned Night-Herons. Four species of swallows kept the airspace above the ponds remarkably active. In addition to Tree Swallows, we spotted a few Violet-green Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, and a Barn Swallow. A highlight of the morning was a leucistic Yellow-rumped Warbler. Much of the bird's brown back was replaced with brilliant white patches, making it quite striking. Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroats entertained us along the pond margins as we walked.

Shollenberger Park boasted more ducks, Black-necked Stilts, and American Avocets on the lake than we observed last year, which was a welcome sight. A good variety of shorebirds were also present in the marshy area. We concluded our trip at Ellis Creek, hoping to see an American Bittern. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful again this year. However, the highlights were a Peregrine Falcon and several Wilson's Snipes, which Rosita Harvey spotted just as we were returning to the parking lot.

In total, we recorded 77 species across the three locations.

Lake Merritt/Arrowhead Marsh High Tide, January 29

Report by: Sandy Ritchie

We experienced a cool day for our outing. At Lake Merritt, sharp-eyed participants identified six different gull species, including two Iceland Gulls. Among the eight duck species observed, three Red-breasted Mergansers were present. The female Tufted Duck, recently reported at Lake Merritt, was not seen. Similarly, we did not spot a Barrow's Goldeneye this year. A pleasant sighting of a flock of approximately thirty Cedar Waxwings was enjoyed by some members of the group.

The high tide at Arrowhead Marsh was not as elevated as on previous trips, resulting in only one Ridgway's Rail being spotted and a Sora being heard. A scoped view of a Brant was a welcome addition, as was the discovery of a Blue-winged Teal in the channel off the parking lot. The pier, often frequented by shorebirds, is now closed during high tide months. The stated purpose is to provide a resting place for the birds, away from the tidal waters. While this is a commendable initiative, it does hinder the observation of rail activity along the shoreline bordering the trail. It's apparent that some individuals have begun leaving the designated trail and venturing to the water's edge in hopes of spotting the rails, a practice previously discouraged to minimize stress on the birds. Our group also searched for the resident Nelson's Sparrow. Some participants caught glimpses of the bird, and a particularly clear scoped view was obtained. We received a tip from a local observer about a Burrowing Owl on mound 3. As we departed Arrowhead, we pulled off the road to investigate. The owl was located and observed by the first three vehicles, but a ranger subsequently requested that we move on.

At Garretson Point, we did not encounter any new duck species, but with the aid of scopes, we were able to increase our shorebird tally by scanning the distant shoreline. It was a pleasure to observe a small group of Black Oystercatchers. The rainwater pond was dry this year.

In total, 73 species were recorded for the day.

Cosumnes Preserve, February 12

Trip report by leader: Mona Lange



Green-winged Teal



Western Meadowlark

Photos by Pam Lorenz



Gadwalls



Greater white-fronted Geese

Photos by Bill Kezer



Teamwork



Greater Yellowlegs

Photos by Bill Kezer

On February 12th, a group of twelve birders ventured out to the Delta. The day began quite cold but gradually warmed up and remained mostly sunny. We identified a total of 69 different bird species across the three locations we visited.

At Westgate Landing Regional Park, numerous Snow Geese flew overhead, and we observed Cackling Geese among the Canada Geese, along with Sandhill Cranes.

The highlight of the day for many occurred at the Cosumnes River Preserve, where we spotted two Pacific Golden-Plovers, which were a "life bird" for several participants. We also observed many White-fronted Geese, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, and Long-billed Dowitchers on the water. Northern Harriers, American Pipits, White-tailed Kites, Western Bluebirds, and Marsh Wrens were also among the 48 species documented at Cosumnes.

Venturing down Woodbridge Road, we encountered many of the same waterfowl species, along with Wilson's Snipe and numerous Killdeer in the muddy fields. Good numbers of Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, and Great Blue Herons were present along the canal, as well as a few Belted Kingfishers, Meadowlarks, and American Kestrels. We passed a farm raising free-range White Guinea fowl, which provided an interesting sight. We enjoyed a very productive day!

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

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.

Moorhen + McNabney Marshes

Saturday, March 15, 8:30 AM - Noon

and

Wednesday, March 19, 8:30 AM - Noon



Black-crowned Night Herons

Photo by Isaac Aronow

Two exciting trips this month! The Mt. View Sanitary District (MVSD) has offered MDBA special access for a Saturday visit. Both trips are open to the public and

are perfect for beginning birders. Binoculars are available to borrow; simply email the trip leader in advance to request a pair.

Created by MVSD in 1974, Moorhen Marsh was the first wetland on the West Coast to utilize treated wastewater as its primary water source. Today, this 21-acre constructed wetland provides critical habitat for wildlife. Native species that rely on Moorhen Marsh include the western pond turtle, the North American river otter, and numerous bird species. Directly across the freeway, McNabney Marsh (also known as Waterbird Regional Preserve) hosts a variety of ducks, shorebirds, and waterbirds during the winter months.

We will meet at the observation deck near the south end of McNabney Marsh, off Arthur Road, and scan the area with spotting scopes. Afterward, we will drive a short distance to the MVSD facility and enjoy a walk around the cleverly designed Moorhen Marsh.

Hike rating: 1 - Easy. Under 1 mile on flat terrain. Unpaved paths can get muddy after rain.

Elevation change: N/A

Leader: Matthew Tarlach, MDBAFieldtrips@gmail.com

Meet: Meet at the observation deck off of Arthur Road at 8:30 AM. There's plenty of parking.

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 through a gate into Mt. View Sanitary's private access 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.

This field trip is free and open to the public, with prior registration required. Limited to 15 participants. Participants will need to click to acknowledge the MDBA liability waiver. Anyone entering Moorhen Marsh will need to sign the MVSD liability waiver also, to be provided on site.

Register [HERE](#) for Saturday 3/15 and [HERE](#) for Wednesday 3/19.

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](#).

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

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](#).

March Gallery & Media



The video thumbnail features a dark green background. In the top left corner, the Cornell Lab Birds of the World logo is displayed. The main text on the left reads: 'Descubriendo la historia natural de algunas aves rapaces de bosque poco conocidas en el Neotrópico'. A large red play button icon is centered over the text. On the right, a photograph shows a man in a light blue shirt holding a large, dark eagle. Below the photo, the text reads: 'Featuring Tomás Rivas Fuenzalida Black-and-chestnut Eagle (© Américo Vilte)'.

Little Known Forest Raptors in the Neotropics

See the full video [HERE](#)



Birds of Paradise Glow on Mating Parade

Read the article [HERE](#)

Photo: Lars Petersson/ [Macaulay Library ML 205959521](#)



Costa's Hummingbird/ Tuolumne, California, United States

Photo: **Sherry Pratt / Macaulay Library ML 630569634**



Violet-green Swallow / San Joaquin Marsh & Wildlife Sanctuary, Irvine, California,

United States

Photo: **Jeff Bray / Macaulay Library ML 630681065**

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Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

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