



# Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

## *The Quail*

Volume 70, Number 6

June 2025

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### June Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, June 5, 7 PM

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet Thursday, June 5 in the Camellia Room at the Gardens at Heather Farm.

**Address:**

The Camellia Room @ The Gardens at Heather Farm  
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 Area Wildlife: An Irreverent Guide*

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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## **Bay Area Wildlife: An Irreverent Guide**

Jeff Miller



Our meeting will commence with a presentation of the winners of our 2025 Members Photo Contest. MDBA Secretary Karin Deas will showcase a slideshow of the top photos from our annual contest and announce the winners across six categories.

Following this, conservationist Jeff Miller will discuss his new book, *Bay Area Wildlife: An Irreverent Guide*. This book encourages Bay Area residents to appreciate their local fauna by highlighting the locations and unique traits of the Bay Area's furry, feathered, and scaly inhabitants. Meet "screaming death parrots" (peregrine falcons), "disco slugs dressed for a P-Funk concert" (nudibranchs), and "rototillers with fur" (badgers), among many others. Jeff's vivid descriptions offer a compilation of each species' natural history and intriguing facts—for instance, did

you know beavers have vanilla-scented butts, elephant seals have the loudest recorded burps (130 decibels), only Usain Bolt can outrun a roadrunner, or that pooping whales might contribute to saving the world? Each section also provides advice on the best times, places, and methods for observing these animals. This engaging and distinctive guide to the Bay Area's most captivating animal neighbors will soon have you marveling at elk, cheering with cranes, and even serving as a crossing guard for newts. Mount Diablo critters featured in the book include gray foxes, bobcats, long-tailed weasels, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, Alameda whipsnakes, western rattlesnakes, tarantulas, and convergent ladybugs. Jeff will also discuss iconic and ecologically vital wildlife species, such as beavers, steelhead trout, condors, and black bears, that are making a comeback in our region.

Jeff Miller is an amateur naturalist, professional conservationist, and fervent wildlife advocate. He is the founder and executive director of the nonprofit Alameda Creek Alliance, a role he has held since 1997. His work there focuses on restoring steelhead trout and salmon to Alameda Creek and protecting the Bay Area's largest local watershed. As a senior conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity, he leads biodiversity protection campaigns throughout the Bay Area and California, prepares endangered species listing petitions, writes press releases, and conducts public outreach and organizing for wildlife protection issues. Over the past twenty-five years, he has been involved in conservation efforts for dozens of the most iconic imperiled wildlife species in the Bay Area, most recently securing state protections for burrowing owls. Jeff believes that loving nature is as crucial as fighting for it and acknowledging ecological destruction. He notes that people tend to care more about animals and places they have directly experienced, which is why he wrote *Bay Area Wildlife: An Irreverent Guide*—to connect readers with our regional fauna and inspire them to embark on a journey to witness the Bay Area's spectacular natural phenomena.

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## President's Letter



Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

This will be my final President's letter as I will be leaving this position at the end of June to embark on a new chapter in my life at our new home in southeast Arizona. It has been a privilege to serve Mount Diablo Bird Alliance as Vice President for one year, and then as President for five years. It has also been an honor to serve alongside the members of our Board, both past and present, for these six years. As a group, they have been exemplars of dedication and integrity, and I couldn't have asked for a better team to work with.

As of this writing, our chapter does not yet have a President for the upcoming term, July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Therefore, the Presidential duties—which are not extensive, I assure you, in case you might consider volunteering for the next term!—will be shared by members of the Board. I encourage you all to support our Vice President Ariana Rickard, Treasurer Steve Buffi, Secretary Karin Deas, and our other Board members, and to assist them and our organization in any way you can. Let's keep MDBA Strong!

In chapter news, we are initiating a project to record the main presentations from our membership meetings for future viewing on the web, beginning with the upcoming June 5th presentation. This will not be a live-stream, but rather a recording that will be available for viewing sometime after the event. So, if you are unable to attend the meeting but wish to see the presentation, please stay tuned to our website and watch for announcements regarding its availability.

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



Painted Redstart, Miller Canyon Trail, Arizona

Photo by J. Britten

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## **Birds of the Sierra Field Trips with Golden Gate Bird Alliance**

Rochelle Fortier

Golden Gate Bird Alliance is offering two field trips focusing on the Birds of the Sierra: May 29 to June 1, and June 12 to 15. The core of this adventure consists

of six half-day field trips to diverse habitats in and around Sierra Valley (Sierra and Plumas Counties, north of Truckee).

Birds we may encounter include many Sierra specialties, such as Swainson's Hawk, Sandhill Crane, White-headed and Lewis's Woodpeckers, Calliope Hummingbird, Empidonax flycatchers, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, Sage Thrasher, Cassin's Finch, MacGillivray's and Hermit Warblers, Western Tanager, Evening Grosbeak, American Dipper, Green-tailed Towhee, and Brewer's Sparrow. There may also be an optional evening excursion to listen for booming American Bitterns and winnowing Wilson's Snipes.

With the exception of Sunday morning's gradual trek from Lower to Upper Sardine Lake—involving a 200-foot elevation gain over just over half a mile on a bumpy, rocky road—most of the walking will be on hard-packed roads or trails that are level or have very gradual elevation changes. Sierra Valley is at an elevation of 4,850 feet, while Yuba Pass is at 6,700 feet.

Lodging and meals are not included in the trip fee. Trip organizers will send a more detailed itinerary and information on lodging options to those who register. The trip fee is \$400, or \$320 for Golden Gate Bird Alliance members.

A Zoom presentation introducing the area and its birds has been previously recorded. Individuals who sign up for a field trip will receive a link to view this presentation.

Links to field trip descriptions and registration: **May 29 to June 1, June 12 to June 15**

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## New Members

Rochelle Fortier, *MDBA Membership Chair*

I would like to give a warm welcome to the new members who joined in April: **Gabe Ayala**, Vacaville; **Ellen Behrens**, San Ramon; **Michael Coustier**, Clayton; **Barbara Felix**, San Ramon; **JoAnn and Tom Hoerber**, Alameda; **Lainie and Chip Johnson**, Walnut Creek; **Roman Shimoniak**, Martinez; and **Christy Smith**, Walnut Creek. I hope to see you at our next program meeting!



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## 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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## **From 50 Years Ago - The Quail, July/August 1975**

Jerry Britten, *MDBA President*

This note serves as a warning about the potential presence of invasive Monk Parakeets in nearby San Joaquin County. These birds, native to temperate and subtropical regions of South America, have become well-established in some U.S. states, such as Florida and Texas. Ownership of these birds as pets remains prohibited in California, a regulation that has been in place for 50 years.

Interestingly, there are no eBird reports of this species in San Joaquin County, and only one in Contra Costa County, observed by Albert Linkowski at the Richmond Landfill Loop in 2019, which was clearly an escapee. There appears to be a very small, lingering colony in the San Diego area; otherwise, sightings throughout the state are limited to escapees with no evidence of a persistent population. Whether their lack of success is due to human intervention or natural factors, it seems we won't be experiencing an invasion of Monk Parakeets anytime soon!

**MONK PARAKEETS** have been found "next door" in San Joaquin County and we should be alert for them here also. Originally imported as caged pets, these birds are now prohibited in California either wild or caged as they are potentially serious agricultural pests. They will also drive native birds from feeders set out for them. The Monk Parakeet has a gray crown, throat and breast, yellow belly and green back. (See Audubon, May 1974, page 49 for a picture.) If you find one of these birds, wild or caged, contact the County Dept. of Agriculture or California Fish & Game Dept.

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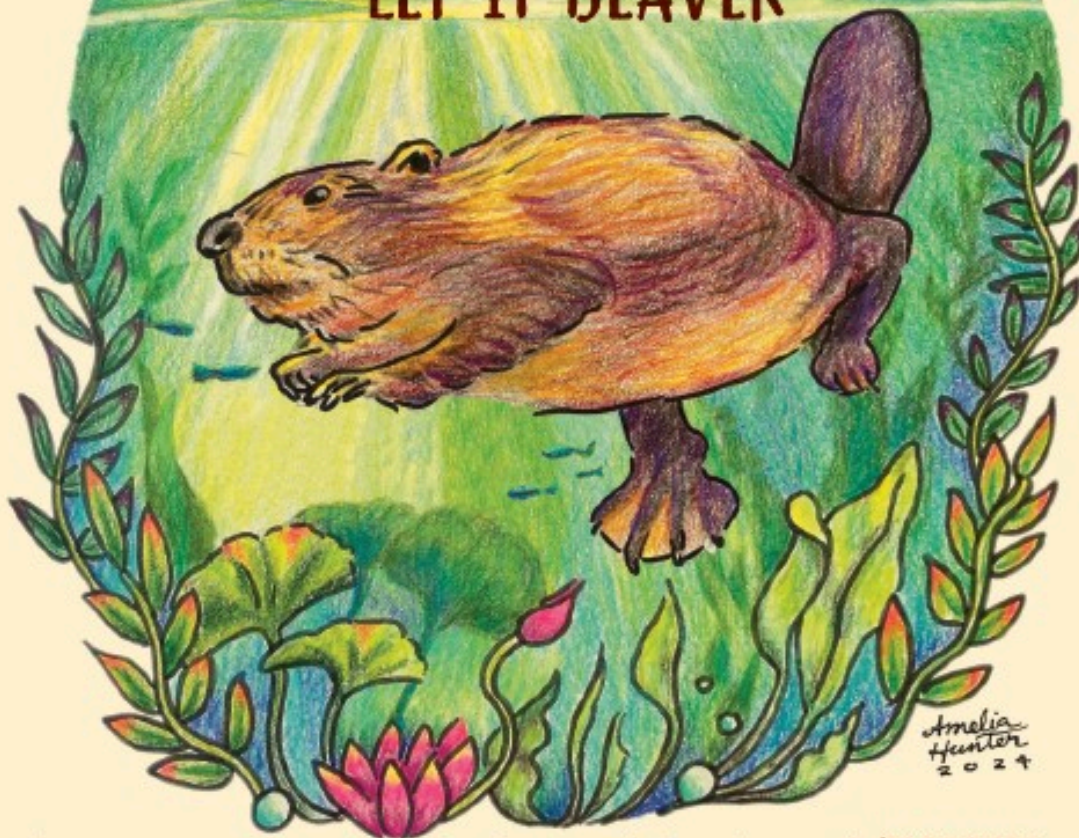
## **Beaver Festival, Saturday June 28 from 10 - 3**

Worth A Dam presents the 16<sup>th</sup> Beaver Festival 2025

# BEAVER FESTIVAL



LET IT BEAVER



Saturday, June 28 from 10-3  
Susana Park in Martinez, CA

WILDLIFE!  
FIVE BANDS!  
PARADE! ART!

What has the tail of a platypus, the nose of a Labrador, and the hind feet of a duck? If your answer was "a beaver," you just might be ready to join Worth A Dam's 16th annual Beaver Festival in Martinez.

This truly unique wildlife event features multiple nature exhibits, a beaver quiz with prizes, live music, a silent auction, a paint-your-own-tail project, a giant mobile fish tank, and a renowned chalk muralist. This year's focus will be on how creeks become healthier when beavers help them create a thriving ecosystem. By

playing with a "full deck" of educational trading cards, children can collect them all to learn more.

The free festival takes place on June 28th from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM in Susana Park in downtown Martinez. To exhibit or attend, please visit [Martinezbeavers.org](http://Martinezbeavers.org).

Become a Beaver Believer and discover everything this amazing animal can teach us!

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## **MDBA Trip Report**

### **North Briones, April 8**

Report by: Cheryl Abel

A pleasant walk was enjoyed by 14 birders on April 8th, along the trail on the north side of Briones Regional Park. While searching for birds, we also appreciated the numerous wildflowers lining the route. Several pairs of Western Bluebirds were observed, making them the favorite among the 33 species identified during the outing. Unfortunately, the dense brush along much of the trail meant many birds were heard but not seen.

Nevertheless, we made several interesting observations. Initially, we watched a Sharp-shinned Hawk harass and chase a Cooper's Hawk back and forth for a while. Later, a pair of Western Bluebirds and a pair of Tree Swallows vied for ownership of a nest box.

The most captivating observation involved two Common Ravens. The first raven flew to a hillside with a very large egg (perhaps a Wild Turkey egg?) in its beak. It briefly dug into the soil, deposited the egg, and covered it with some vegetation. Meanwhile, a second raven watched from a short distance away. Raven #1 then flew to a nearby signpost after burying the egg. Raven #2 subsequently flew to the hillside and began searching for the egg. We continued to observe Raven #1, anticipating it would attack Raven #2 to protect its food. However, Raven #2 located the egg and began to eat it. Raven #1 then flew back, and we expected a confrontation. Surprisingly, Raven #1 calmly began eating the egg right next to Raven #2. Clearly, they were a pair, not competitors!

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### **Mitchell Canyon, April 17**

Report by: Sandy Ritchie



Western Tanager



Hermit Thrush



California Thrasher

All Photos by Isaac Aronow

Fifteen birders began their walk in cool, gray weather, which possibly contributed to the quiet start. The wildflowers offered a nice consolation. Early highlights included two beautiful male Western Tanagers and a male Bullock's Oriole. Later in the walk, some participants sighted Calliope Hummingbirds, typically considered the top bird of the trip. An outstanding male Rufous Hummingbird perched nicely for all to see. A very cooperative California Thrasher also posed for pictures, and a Wrentit was spotted. In total, five warbler species were observed, with Yellow-rumped Warblers being the most numerous. Overall, 55 species were seen during the five-hour walk. I want to thank Viviana Wolinsky for assisting with the eBird list and Isaac Aronow for taking pictures during the walk.

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## **Pena Adobe/Lagoon Valley, April 30**

Report by: Mona Lange



Green Heron



Western Kingbird

Photos by Isaac Aronow

On a warm spring day, ten participants visited Pena Adobe Park and Lagoon Valley Park. A total of 41 different species were seen or heard across both locations.

Pena Adobe yielded 20 species, and we also observed the second oldest living orange tree there. Lagoon Valley contributed 37 species to our count.

Highlights from both areas included an Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Bluebird, Western Kingbird, and Bullock's Oriole. We had an excellent view of a Red-shouldered Hawk in flight, along with numerous Cliff Swallows and Red-winged Blackbirds. On the water, we spotted a lone Ring-billed Gull and a Black-necked Stilt. Other aquatic birds present were Pied-billed Grebes, Gadwalls, Mallards with ducklings, and Canada Geese with goslings—truly the joys of spring. We also enjoyed sightings of White-breasted Nuthatches, Oak Titmice, and Lesser Goldfinches. Some birds were observed gathering nesting material, while others, including a Violet-green Swallow, were bringing food to nests. A Common Raven was visible on its nest.

A special note of thanks goes to Gabe, who took the young injured bird we found on the grass to an animal shelter. Unfortunately, it was too young and injured to be

rehabilitated. We all greatly appreciated his compassionate action!

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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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## Outer Point Reyes

Saturday, May 31, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM



Point Reyes stands out as a premier birding destination in Northern California, an excellent place to discover rare species during migration—such as the Prairie Warbler pictured above (image by Beth Branthaver). The Mount Diablo Audubon Society (MDAS) aims to visit at least twice annually. On our spring trip, we hope to

observe northbound migrants as well as resident birds in their finest plumage. The precise itinerary will depend on the weather, but after exploring Drake's Beach and its adjacent lagoon, we will likely visit the lighthouse area and the "fish docks." Following a lunch break (bring your own), we may walk down the Avenue of Cypresses to the old RCA building.

Please bring water and lunch, as this area is remote. The weather here is highly variable—pack an extra warm layer and sun protection!

**Trail Rating:** Category 2 – Includes some walking through grass under trees and on paved roads with some noticeable inclines.

**Elevation change:** Approximately 100 feet

**Leader:** Matt Tarlach, ([email](#))

**Meet:** Kenneth C. Patrick Visitor Center, Drake's Beach, GPS Coordinates: 38.027828257127936, -122.96201741318059

**Directions:** Depending on your starting location, take the most convenient route to San Rafael and proceed north on US-101. From US-101, take the Lucas Valley Road exit toward Nicasio. At the reservoir, turn left. Follow the signs to Point Reyes Station, and upon reaching the town, turn left onto CA-1. After passing through town (the Bovine Bakery is a delicious option for breakfast pastries), turn right from CA-1 onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd and continue for 15 miles to Drakes Beach Road.

Due to limited parking at several locations on the Outer Point, this field trip is restricted to 12 participants. Carpooling is strongly encouraged! An optional carpool meeting point will be communicated to participants a few days prior to the event, and there is space to leave additional cars at the Drakes Beach meeting point.

Register [HERE](#).

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## Shadow Cliffs Rookeries

Tuesday, June 3rd, 7:30 AM to 10:30 AM



Every year, a few herons and cormorants nest in the tall trees within the park's riparian area. We'll observe the rookeries, hopefully catching views of chicks within their nests.

Shadow Cliffs, located in Pleasanton, can get very hot this time of year. Please dress appropriately (a broad-brimmed hat is recommended) and bring sunscreen and plenty of water. Please also factor in the potential for southbound traffic when planning your departure.

**Trail Rating:** 1 - Easy. Mostly level paths, up to 1 mile walking

**Leader:** **Elisa Fernandes-McDade**

**Meet:** Shadow Cliffs Regional Park, 2500 Stanley Blvd, Pleasanton, CA 94566

This field trip is limited to 20 participants. Register [HERE](#).

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## **Sunset Walk on the Martinez Shoreline**

Sunday, June 15th, 7:30 PM - 9 PM



We'll be taking a leisurely sunset walk around the lagoon and shoreline of Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline Park. This flat, unpaved trail meanders through a habitat mosaic of urban parkland, saltmarsh, and seashore. It's an excellent outing for beginning birders to observe a diverse mix of common Northern California species at a fairly close range. This is usually a good spot for Marsh Wren, Black-necked Stilt, and Black-crowned Night-Heron, regardless of tidal conditions.

Restrooms, water fountains, and parking are plentiful, but it may be considerably colder and breezier on the shoreline than it is inland. Please dress in layers just in case.

**Trail Rating:** Category 1 - Easy, mostly level paths, up to 1 mile walking

**Leader:** **Elisa Fernandes-McDade**

**Meet:** 87 N Court St, Martinez, CA 94553. (The first parking lot on the right on N Court St.)

**Directions:** Take the I-680 north toward Sacramento. Take Exit 56, Waterfront Rd. toward Marina Vista Rd. Turn left onto Waterfront Rd. and continue onto Marina Vista Ave. Turn right onto Ferry St. Then, turn right onto Joe DiMaggio Dr. Then, turn left onto N Court St. The meeting point is the first big parking lot on the right.

Trip is limited to 12 participants. Register [HERE](#).

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### **Pt. Pinole: Shorebirds in the Shade**

Tuesday, July 8th, 10:00 AM - 1:30 PM



We'll search for shorebirds in the shade of the fragrant eucalyptus groves that line the shores of Point Pinole Regional Park. July marks the beginning of shorebird migration, with "peeps," plovers, and other species starting to trickle back from the north. We'll scan the beach as the tide rises for shorebirds and marine ducks. The park can also yield surprises, such as the Bobolink that lingered there last fall.

The trail is narrow, dusty, and rocky in places, and there are not many spots to sit and rest along the way. A restroom and water fountain are available at the trailhead. Please bring plenty of water and sunscreen. Additionally, factor in the potential for westbound traffic when planning your departure.

**Trail Rating:** 2

**Leader:** **Elisa Fernandes-McDade**

**Meeting Point:** Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline, 5551 Giant Highway, San Pablo, CA 94806

This trip is limited to 15 participants. Register [HERE](#).

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## Lafayette Lakeside Loop

Monday, July 21, 6:30 PM - 9 PM



Unwind after a hard day's work at the beautiful Lafayette Reservoir. Tucked into the hills between the coast and interior Contra Costa County, the reservoir's forested hills are home to many pine-oak residents like Spotted Towhees, Red-shouldered Hawks, and Band-tailed Pigeons. The iconic 100-year-old, 170-foot-tall outlet tower in the center of the reservoir attracts many cormorants, and the marshes around the edge often harbor herons. We may even be lucky enough to see a flock of American White Pelicans.

We'll walk the 3-mile, paved Lafayette Reservoir Trail that circles the reservoir to see what's out there. Parking is \$2/hour or \$7/day. Please factor in northbound and eastbound traffic when planning your departure.

**Trail Rating:** 2 - Over 2 miles walking with a couple of short steep climbs

**Leader:** **Elisa Fernandes-McDade**

**Meet:** The northern end of the parking lot (closer to the boathouse) of Lafayette Reservoir, 3849 Mount Diablo Blvd, Lafayette, CA 94563

This field trip is limited to 15 participants. Register [HERE](#).

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## Bodega Bay

Saturday, August 23rd, 9 AM - 3 PM



Common Loon

Photo by Pam Lorenz

In the fresh sea air at Bodega Bay we'll stop at several points around the bay to look for shorebirds including Black Oystercatcher and Surfbird, as well as terns, gulls, cormorants, near-shore pelagics and more. Bring liquids, lunch and sunscreen.

**Hike Rating:** 1, Moderate walking

**Elevation change:** N/A

**Leaders:** **Matt Tarlach**

**Meet:** Back deck at The Tides Restaurant. Park at the restaurant and walk back to the water side. GPS: 38.3284021500329, -123.04468508653804

If you're interested in carpooling from Contra Costa County, contact the leader.

**Directions:** From Concord/Pleasant Hill, take I-680 across the Benicia Bridge, go west on I-780 toward Vallejo. In Vallejo take I-80 toward Sacramento, then exit to Route 37 west. Drive west on 37 about 15 miles to Lakeville Road, and turn right. In Petaluma, turn left on E. Washington Street and continue on Bodega Road, Valley Ford Road and SR 1 to Bodega Bay. Walk through or around The Tides Restaurant to find the group on the deck in back.

This field trip is limited to 20 participants. Register [HERE](#).

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## June Gallery & Media



### eBird Status and Trends

See the full video [HERE](#)

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### How to Bird-Watch: A Traveler's Guide

Read the article [HERE](#)

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Black Phoebe / San Diego, California, United States

Photo: **Beverly Reynolds** / Macaulay Library ML 636106838

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Barn Swallow / Alameda, California, United States

Photo: **Ed Yong** / Macaulay Library ML 635782190

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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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