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Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

The Quail

Volume 71, Number 5

June 2026

June Monthly Program Meeting: Thursday, June 4, 7 PM

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will meet Thursday, June 4 in the Camellia Room at the Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94598.

Address:

The Camellia Room @ The Gardens at Heather Farm
1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Please note that MDBA no longer provides disposable cups at our meetings.

If you would like to enjoy water, punch, or tea, please bring your own cup.

We will have a few reusable cups available if you need one. We appreciate your cooperation.

June Agenda:

6:30 PM Doors Open

7:00 PM Announcements

7:15 PM Refreshments and Raffle

7:30 PM Main Program: *Gardening for Wildlife*

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 and we will try and arrange a pickup from local addresses.

Bringing Nature Home

Kathy Kramer





Photos by K. Kramer

Want to learn how to create a beautiful garden that saves water, money, time, and the planet? Join us on June 4 for an inspiring program with Kathy Kramer, who will share how to design gorgeous, water-conserving native plant gardens that are teeming with life. By creating a wildlife-friendly habitat, you can help make the world a better place for our children and grandchildren.

For nearly forty years, Ms. Kramer has developed initiatives that educate Bay Area residents about local environmental issues. Under her leadership, these programs have received local, state, and national recognition, including:

- The Department of Pesticide Regulation's Environmental Innovator Award
- The Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award
- The National Wetlands Award for Education and Outreach
- The Jefferson Award

In 2005, Ms. Kramer founded the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour, which she continues to coordinate today. Through this program, community members have made more than 225,000 visits to native plant gardens across Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Election Results for MDBA Board of Directors Officers

Rochelle Fortier, *MDBA Nominations Committee Chair*

A heartfelt thank you to all our members who participated in the annual election for our Board of Directors officers. Because the three elected individuals were

incumbents, they will seamlessly continue in their positions for the 2026–2027 term:

- **Ariana Rickard**, Vice President
- **Steve Buffi**, Treasurer
- **Karin Deas**, Secretary

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and leadership of these long-time members as they commit their time to guiding our chapter through the upcoming year!

President's Letter

Juan Pablo Galván, *MDBA Membership Chair*

Jerry Britten is no longer the President of the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance as he's now settled in his new Arizona territory. The board's decided to rotate presidential duties, so you'll hear from a different board member in each issue of **The Quail!**

This spring, the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance is taking concrete action to support bird conservation.

In addition to our usual slate of fantastic field trips and meeting presentations, the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance has endorsed Measure A, the initiative to renew Contra Costa County's Urban Limit Line.

The Urban Limit Line is one of the most effective land-use tools we have to protect vital bird habitats and open spaces, defend our neighborhoods from wildfire threats, and curb traffic congestion.

We aren't the only ones standing behind Measure A. The *East Bay Times* and nine other prominent community organizations have also endorsed it—including climate groups like 350 Contra Costa, and conservation advocates like Save Mount Diablo and the Greenbelt Alliance. Even pro-housing and pro-business groups have voiced their support!

Please vote **Yes on Contra Costa Measure A** this election cycle! You can learn more **HERE**.

New Members

Rochelle Fortier, *MDBA Membership Chair*

I would like to give a warm welcome to the new members who joined in April: **Lisa Algert**, Orinda; **Paige Hval**, Oakland; **Holly Jessop**, Benicia; **Beth Kobold**, Danville; and **Kimberly and Mark Piros**, Concord. I hope to see you at our next program meeting!



Vote Yes on Measure A: Help Climate Action & Contra Costa Birds

Juan Pablo Galván, *MDBA Conservation Chair*

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY Vote **YES** on Measure A

1. Vote YES on Contra Costa Measure A This June

Please vote **YES** on Contra Costa Measure A this June. Measure A renews the county's Urban Limit Line—a boundary beyond which urban-style development (such as commercial, industrial, and residential subdivisions) cannot expand. For the past 36 years, this has been one of our most effective land-use tools for protecting the open spaces and vital habitats that local birds depend on. Additionally, maintaining this line secures millions of dollars in regional funding for local road maintenance, and the measure includes absolutely no new taxes. Please vote Yes on A! Learn more [HERE](#).

2. Electric Cars Are Your Best Deal

Are you in the market for a new vehicle? Used electric vehicles (EVs) are now your most affordable option [HERE](#), and gas-powered cars are no longer the cheaper bet [HERE](#). By switching to electric, you directly support the planet, protect wildlife, and join your community in the fight against human-caused climate change. If you need a new car, make your next choice an electric one!

3. Why More Rain Can Mean Drier Land

New scientific research reveals that increasingly intense rainstorms are actually leaving our planet drier **HERE** and **HERE**. Think of it this way: imagine watering a flowerbed gently for a few minutes with a watering can, and then imagine dumping that exact same volume of water all at once with a heavy bucket. While the first method keeps the flowers healthy and hydrated, the second can wash them away entirely while the water quickly runs off. Take action on climate change today—we can protect our environment only if we actively work together.

Bay Birding Challenge Report

Matt Tarlach, *MDBA Field Trip Chair*



Listening for Owls at 5AM, south of Moraga



The 2026 Devil Mountain Quail: Matt, Vicky, Steve, Chris, Elisa

Photos by M. Tarlach

The Bay Birding Challenge is a friendly annual competition and fundraiser organized by our neighboring chapter, the Golden Gate Birding Alliance (GGBA). This year, on April 25, eleven teams traversed the Bay Area from before dawn until after dusk to see who could identify the most bird species.

Our own Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) team—the Devil Mountain Quails—started the day listening for owls at 5:00 AM, before greeting the dawn at Valle Vista. The incredible habitat diversity there enabled us to record 58 species before 7:00 AM—including Great Horned and Western Screech-Owls, Wood Ducks, California Thrashers, Wrentits, and four species of swallows—giving us an early lead.

Over the remainder of the day, our team zig-zagged 240 miles in a rented hybrid minivan, birding at hotspots ranging from Bethel Island in the Delta to Ocean Beach in San Francisco, and from the Martinez shoreline down to the Diablo Range south of Livermore. Highlights included a Tufted Duck at Arrowhead Marsh, Red-breasted Mergansers at the Richmond Marina, Red-masked Parakeets at Fort Mason, a Pacific Wren in Golden Gate Park, Red-necked Phalaropes at McNabney Marsh, a flock of Horned Larks on Bethel Island, and a Yellow-billed Magpie along Mines Road.

The final bird of the day was especially memorable. An hour after sunset, in the dim, overcast twilight at a turnout off Mines Road, star DMQ rookie Chris Ortega

call-hilled an imitation of a Common Poorwill. He called out several times until a bird finally responded from deep within the dark canyon. It was our 154th species of the day, topping our previous personal best by 15!

As it turned out, 154 species earned us third place in a highly competitive 11-team field. We were thrilled with the result and hope we represented the Mount Diablo chapter well. You can view our full route and sightings on the [eBird Trip Report](#).

A huge thanks to my teammates: Vicky Atkinson, Elisa Fernandes-McDade, Steve Buffi—who recorded and submitted an incredible 32 eBird checklists throughout the day!—and Chris Ortega, who deserves special credit not only for calling in the poorwill, but for driving all the way back to Oakland to return the rented minivan after a grueling 17-hour day of birding.

Thanks also to the MDBA members who backed our team with monetary pledges. The Challenge is a fun test of our skills, but it is also a vital fundraiser. Donations are shared between our chapter and the organizing GGBA, both of which are dedicated to birds, habitat conservation, education, and community outreach in our beautiful Bay Area. It is not too late to contribute to our team campaign [HERE](#).

California Bird Atlas Big Weekend

June 4 - 7

CALIFORNIA BIRD ATLAS



BIG WEEKEND

JUNE 4-7, 2026

The California Bird Atlas Big Weekend is a four-day, statewide celebration of birds and the new California Bird Atlas. The event features dozens of field trips, community events, and a collective mission to document as many breeding species across as many regions as possible.

Join the effort and head out birding between June 4 and June 7! By noting bird breeding codes, you will contribute to this historic, first-ever organized initiative to

document breeding birds throughout California.

Whether you join a scheduled Mount Diablo Bird Alliance field trip or explore on your own, be sure to register with the Breeding Bird Atlas so you can add your data while you are out in the field.

Sign up and learn more [HERE](#).

Renew Contra Costa's Urban Limit Line: Vote Yes on A

Protect Bird Habitat and Open Space



On the June 2026 ballot, vote **YES** to protect our open spaces and agriculture, improve wildfire safety, limit traffic congestion, and encourage housing where it makes the most sense. Vote Yes on Contra Costa County Measure A!

Our Urban Limit Line (ULL) is a vital conservation tool for the county. Because urban-style development cannot occur outside this boundary, development threats to our valuable open spaces and agricultural lands are significantly reduced.

Additionally, the county's Urban Limit Line helps keep our communities safe from fire. Most of the land outside the ULL is designated as a High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. These areas are the most likely to burn, making them the most dangerous places to build new homes.

The benefits do not stop there; the Urban Limit Line also prevents regional traffic from worsening. When development sprawls outward into far-flung areas, people are forced to drive longer distances. The more cars we force onto the road, the worse our traffic gridlock becomes.

Reflecting its broad appeal, Measure A is endorsed by the *East Bay Times* alongside a coalition of 10 diverse community groups—ranging from climate and conservation organizations to pro-housing advocates and business councils.

This election, say **YES** to protecting our open spaces and agriculture, improving wildfire safety, limiting traffic, and encouraging smart housing growth.

Learn more [HERE](#).



The Mount Diablo Bird Alliance will be tabling at the Martinez Beaver Festival—a wonderful, family-friendly event dedicated to nature and conservation—on Saturday, June 13, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

If you are interested in volunteering for a one- or two-hour shift to chat with visitors about our organization and its mission, please reach out to [Janna Layton](#).

MDBA Trip Report

Pena Adobe/Lagoon Valley, April 23



Black Phoebe



Ash-throated Flycatchers



Western Bluebird

Photos by Pam Lorenz

The group recorded 49 different bird species on a beautifully sunny spring day. An early highlight at Peña Adobe was a Cassin's Vireo, while industrious Black Phoebes were seen actively catching insects to feed a nest full of hungry chicks.

At Lagoon Valley, we observed two pairs of Green Herons flying back and forth across the water. A single Common Gallinule made an appearance, and numerous downy goslings and ducklings peppered the shoreline. Nearby, a pair of Western Bluebirds took turns entering and exiting their nest box, while feisty Western Kingbirds and Ash-throated Flycatchers darted through the canopy. We also watched an animated interaction between two brilliantly colored male Bullock's Orioles.

As a delightful surprise, two Black-tailed Deer strolled right through the picnic area toward the end of our walk. All in all, it was a highly productive and beautiful day of birding.

Brannan Island & Delta Rookery, May 1

Report by: Mona Lange



Bullock's Orioles



Barn Swallow



Great Egret

Photos by Isaac Aronow

On a warm, sunny day, 15 participants enjoyed observing 37 different bird species across two distinct locations within the park. The highlights at Brannan Island included fantastic, clear looks at Bullock's Orioles, Western Kingbirds, and Western Bluebirds. An Osprey briefly soared overhead, and a pair of White-tailed Kites delighted the group with active courtship behavior. Other notable sightings in this area included Eurasian Collared-Doves, Tree Swallows, Bushtits, American Robins, California Towhees, and a Nuttall's Woodpecker. Beyond the avian highlights, the group also observed a wild beehive nestled in a palm tree.

The rookery location was an absolute spectacle, hosting 18 different species. Double-crested Cormorants (95+) and Great Egrets (50+) were present in massive numbers, actively nesting or tending to their young. Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egrets, and Black-crowned Night-Herons were also nesting in smaller numbers, creating a flurry of activity as parents flew back and forth from the water. Western Kingbirds, Tree Swallows, Black Phoebes, and California Scrub-Jays rounded out the busy scene.

To cap off a highly productive day, the marina setting delivered one final surprise when a California sea lion made an appearance right at the end of the trip.

Checklist [HERE](#).

Bethel Island, May 7

Report by: Matt Tarlach



Image by JMLT

On Thursday, May 7, a dozen Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) members and friends enjoyed a rare opportunity to bird Hoover Ranch on Bethel Island. Inaccessible to the public for many years, this property was recently acquired by the John Muir Land Trust (JMLT), which is undertaking the long process of rehabilitating the former cattle ranch

into thriving wildlife habitat with eventual public access. While Hoover Ranch will remain closed until this restoration work is further along, JMLT generously agreed to escort our group on a special preview visit.

Walking across the ranch and along the levee bordering Piper Slough, we recorded 52 species in just a couple of hours. Highlights included several brilliant Western Tanagers and Bullock's Orioles, with pairs of each species interacting in lively springtime fashion; Long-billed Dowitchers and a Black-necked Stilt foraging in a ranch pond; the beautiful songs of multiple Yellow and Wilson's Warblers; and Swainson's Hawks soaring overhead. It is exciting to picture how ecologically rich this property will become as JMLT's rehabilitation plans proceed.

You can view our complete species list on the [eBird Trip Report](#).

NOTE: Outside of special access opportunities, Hoover Ranch and the levee road along Piper Slough remain strictly closed to the general public. PLEASE respect all posted signs and closed gates.

To learn more about the John Muir Land Trust, get on their mailing list for future special events, or support their vital local conservation work, visit the [JMLT Website](#).

MDBA Field Trip Announcements

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.

Search for the Silky Flycatcher

Sunday, June 7, 7:30 AM - 10:00 AM



Phainopeplas are the only representatives of the Silky-flycatcher family regularly found in the United States. In Contra Costa County, they are most frequently

spotted east of Mount Diablo during the winter, though summer brings small, localized populations to select open spaces.

We will explore Lime Ridge Open Space early in the day to search for Phainopeplas before the summer heat sets in. Be sure to keep an eye out for clumps of mistletoe in the oak trees, as these berries are a favorite food source for these striking, crested birds. We will also have a great chance to see other seasonal summer arrivals, including the Ash-throated Flycatcher, the Western Kingbird, and multiple swallow species.

Important Safety Note: Water, sunscreen, and sun-protective clothing are absolute musts for this hike. Even by late morning, temperatures at Lime Ridge can become quite warm.

Trail Rating: 3 – Dry, hilly, potentially hot, and over one mile walking.

Leader: Elisa Fernandes-McDade, elisa.fernandesmcdade@gmail.com

Meet At: 5150 Montecito Dr, Concord, CA 94521. There are multiple access points along Lime Ridge. We'll meet at the parking lot just off Ygnacio Valley Road.

Directions: (Northbound) Take I-680 north. Take Exit 44 for Rudgear Rd and continue on South Broadway for 1 mile. Take a right onto Newell Ave and be prepared to take the next left in 300 ft onto Newell Hill Pl. Turn left onto San Miguel Dr. Be prepared to take the next right in 300ft onto Sierra Dr. In half a mile, turn left onto Walnut Blvd and continue for another half mile before turning left onto Ygnacio Valley Blvd. Continue for 5 miles. Turn right onto Montecito Dr. The destination will be on your right just after the intersection.

GPS: 37.94668064840542, -121.99249383706143

This outing is limited to 15 people. Register [HERE](#).

Least Terns and Hayward Shoreline

Wednesday, July 1, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM (with possible extension)



Photo by Lisa Tanner

We will be joining a public event hosted by the East Bay Regional Park District: a naturalist-led walk to the California Least Tern colony at the Hayward Regional Shoreline. This is a rare opportunity to be escorted behind the protective fencing and get closer to the nesting colony than is usually permitted. After the public event concludes at 11:00 AM, our group will bird a second location along the Alameda County bayshore, which will be determined on-site depending on local conditions.

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) members, please sign up using the RSVP link below so we can keep track of attendance, coordinate potential carpooling, and update you on the second leg of the trip. If you only wish to attend the EBRPD portion of the walk, it is free and open to the public. More event information can be found [HERE](#).

Hike Rating: 2, Moderate. Over a mile walking on flat levee trails.

Elevation change: N/A

Leader: Matt Tarlach, mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com

Meet: Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center.

GPS: 37.623494087391975, -122.13715190919702

Directions: Take the best route from your location toward the San Mateo Bridge.

From Hwy 92 West---*before reaching the bridge*---Take Exit 24 for Clawiter Road. At the exit, continue straight onto Breakwater Road. 0.2 miles beyond the exit you'll need to make a left to stay on Breakwater Road. Continue to the Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center.

MDBA members sign up [HERE](#).

Shorebirds in the Shade

Sunday, August 2, 8:00 AM - 11:30 AM



Greater Yellowlegs

Photo by Bill Kezer

We'll search for shorebirds in the shade of the fragrant eucalyptus groves that line the shores of Point Pinole Regional Park. Shorebird migration is getting underway at this time of year, with peeps, plovers, and more starting to trickle in from the

north. We'll scan the beach as the tide rises for shorebirds and marine ducks. Point Pinole can also yield surprises, like the Bobolink that lingered there in 2024.

The trail is narrow, dusty, and rocky at points. There are not many places to sit and rest along the way. There is a bathroom and water fountain at the trailhead. Bring plenty of water and sunscreen.

Leader: Elisa Fernandes-McDade, elisa.fernandesmcdade@gmail.com

Rating: 2 - Generally flat but over a mile walking.

Elevation change: NA

Meet: Atlas Road parking lot, map address 3000 Atlas Road, in Point Pinole Regional Shoreline, Richmond.

GPS: 37.999968, -122.356301

Directions: From Central Contra Costa, head west on Highway 4. Then, take exit 1B to merge onto I-80 West toward San Francisco. After about 4 miles, take exit 20 toward I-580 W. After about half a mile, merge onto Richmond Parkway. After about a mile, take a right onto Atlas Road and keep driving straight, passing through the park gate, until you reach the unpaved parking lot on your right at the end of the road.

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

Bodega Bay

Saturday, August 22, 9 AM - 3 PM



Common Loon

Photo by Pam Lorenz

While enjoying the fresh sea air, we will stop at several vantage points around Bodega Bay to scan for coastal birds. Our target species include shorebirds like Black Oystercatchers and Surfbirds, as well as various terns, gulls, cormorants, and nearshore pelagic species.

Please remember to bring plenty of water, a picnic lunch, and sunscreen for the day.

Hike Rating: 1, Moderate walking at several car stops.

Elevation change: N/A

Leaders: Matt Tarlach, mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com

Meet: Meet at the back deck at The Tides Restaurant. Park at the restaurant and walk back to the water side.

GPS: 38.3284021500329, -123.04468508653804

Directions: From Concord/Walnut Creek, 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 15 participants. Non-MDBA members are welcome, with pre-registration.

Register [HERE](#).

Jewel Lake, Berkeley

Thursday, September 3, 7:30 AM - 11:00 AM



Wilson's Warbler

Photo by Jerry Britten

We will walk along Wildcat Creek and around Jewel Lake in Tilden Regional Park, hoping to find migrating fall warblers, Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, and, with a little luck, a secretive Pacific Wren.

This trip is highly suitable for beginning birders. Please bring binoculars if you have them; if you need to borrow a pair, contact the trip leader beforehand so they can bring extra equipment. People who are interested in the birds but are not members of MDBA are welcome to join us. Please be sure to pre-register.

Trail Rating: 2, Moderate. About 1.5 miles walking on easy, mostly flat paved and gravel trails.

Elevation Change: NA

Leader: Matt Tarlach, mdbafieldtrips@gmail.com

Meet: Parking lot at the end of Central Park Drive in Tilden Regional Park.

Directions: From central Contra Costa County, take Highway 24 west to the Fish Ranch Road exit. Turn right and follow Fish Ranch Road up the hill for 0.7 miles.

Turn right onto Grizzly Peak Boulevard and follow the winding road for 4.1 miles. Turn right onto Muir Way, then make an immediate left onto Park Hills Road. When the road forks, stay to the right to remain on Park Hills Road. Watch for signs directing you toward "Little Farm," which is located near our meeting point.

Park Hills Road ends at an unusual intersection with Wildcat Canyon Road. Turn right onto Wildcat Canyon Road, then make an **immediate left** onto Central Park Drive. Continue for about 1 mile on Central Park Drive until you reach the parking lot at the very end, which is our designated meeting point.

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

June Gallery & Media



Bird Migration in Your Backyard

See the full video [HERE](#)

App-Driven Birding Attracts Flocks of Enthusiasts to Colombia



Read the article [HERE](#)



Forster's Tern / Huntington Central Park - East
Orange, California, United States

Photo: [David Ornellas](#) / [Macaulay Library ML 657427187](#)



Purple Finch / Beckwourth Ranger District
Plumas, California, United States

Photo: [Prineet Anand](#) / [Macaulay Library ML 657687833](#)

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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Mailing address:

P.O. Box 53
Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

Email address:

info@mtdiablobirds.org

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance

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