MDAS holds its general meetings on the first Thursday of every month. Our next meeting is Thursday, September 4. Meetings for the rest of the 2003-04 year are Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4, Jan. 15 (note date change), Feb. 5, March 4, Apr. 1, May 6, and June 3. No meetings in July or August.

If you are a new member or new to the area, let us know. We want to welcome you and tell you about our activities. All new members and visitors receive a free door prize ticket.

The MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A one-year family membership in MDAS is $25/year or $500 for lifetime membership (payable in two $250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is $20 or $30 for 2 years; membership renewal is $35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.

MDAS Board meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday evening of the month at the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd., PH. All members are welcome to attend.

Driving directions: Take Ygnacio Valley Rd. to signal light at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). Go 1 block and turn left on Heather. At Marchbanks Dr. turn right. The Garden Center is located about 200 ft. on the right.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A one-year family membership in MDAS is $25/year or $500 for lifetime membership (payable in two $250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is $20 or $30 for 2 years; membership renewal is $35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Ondina Ct., Danville, 95626. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053. Please send change of address to the editor: 4801 Shavano Peak Ct., Antioch, CA 94531.

MDAS By-Laws Revised

Last year MDAS membership approved a number of changes in our By-Laws and Constitution. During the Board’s discussion of these changes, we realized that a number of other changes were needed to update and modernize our By-Laws and Constitution. Board members Nancy Wenninger and Shirley Ellis volunteered to take that job and recently presented their recommendations to the Board. This was very difficult and time-consuming task because our chapter’s By-Laws were last revised in 1989. We thank Nancy and Shirley for their efforts.

The Board has reviewed the changes that the committee suggested and now places the revised By-Laws before the chapter membership. As required by the By-Laws, a membership quorum must vote on the proposed changes. Copies of the revised By-Laws will be available at the September General Meeting. They will be available on our website <www.diabloaudubon.com>. If you cannot attend the meetings or access the website, call Nancy Wenninger at 938-7987, leave your name and address; and she will mail a copy to you. Members will have an opportunity to ask questions about the proposed changes at either the October meeting or the one in November. The vote by the membership will occur at the November General Meeting.

Position Changes

As I wrote in my June column, Joe Frank is resigning as Treasurer although he will continue as Chapter Vice President. He wants to concentrate on environmental matters and special projects for MDAS. Thanks to Joe for his excellent financial (Continued on p. 4)

PRESIDENT’S NOTES

by Mike Williams

Naturalist Gary Bogue Will Speak at October Meeting

On October 2, we welcome our favorite nature columnist, Gary Bogue, who will speak about “Creatures of the Urban Wilderness.” Gary has a unique view of our wild neighbors that live in town and in our own backyards. Gary has endless tales to tell about all of our familiar backyard friends as well as mountains lions, wild turkeys, wild pigs, rattlesnakes, golden eagles, macaws, alligators, and cobras right in our own backyard.

For 33 years, Gary Bogue has written his daily column on pets and wildlife and environmental issues for the Contra Costa Newspapers. He also writes a nationally syndicated weekly column on pets and wildlife for the New York Times Feature Syndicate. He can also be seen on Saturdays on the Daybreak Show on KRON-TV in San Francisco where he discusses the habits of our wild backyard creatures, using live animals from the Lindsay Museum, and answers viewers’ questions on pets, wildlife, and environmental issues.

He has been a lifelong advocate for pets and wild animals living in our urban environment. He has been Executive Director of Tony La Russa’s Animal Rescue Foundation. As Director of WILD SYSTEMS Consultants, he worked with cities to develop humane solutions to wildlife problems. From 1967 to 1979, he acted as Museum Curator for Lindsay Wildlife Museum where he pioneered the development of the first wildlife rehabilitation facility in the country. As Museum Curator, Gary was responsible for rehabilitating 330 species of wild birds as well as most species of mammals and reptiles in the Western U.S. He hand-raised and rehabilitated the first and only native mountain lion ever to be successfully returned to the wild. He is considered one of the top experts in the world in the field of native wildlife care and rehabilitation. He has founded numerous wildlife rehabilitation organizations and has published four books.

Gary’s fifth book entitled, _The Raccoon Next Door: Creatures of the Urban Wilderness_, will be published in November. In his new book he examines ways in which our wild neighbors are continually adapting to our urban and suburban environments. Meet Gary Bogue on December 6 at Wild Birds Unlimited where he will be signing copies of his book.

Birding Information

Glen Zumwalt will share some of his experiences and unbelievably fastastic slides of his recent trip to Montana and Glacier National Park.

Meeting Schedule

The next MDAS general meeting will be Thursday, October 2, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek (see map on p. 8). 6:30 p.m.—Doors open 7 p.m.—Birding Information 7:25 p.m.—Business meeting 7:40 p.m.—Social time, refreshments and door prize drawing 8:05 p.m.—Program Remember your cup!
Our birding trip in northern Ecuador arranged by High Lonesome Excursions followed a transect from the western slope of the Andes, across the high passes, and down to the eastern slope of the Rio Napo, one of the largest tributaries of the Amazon. We stayed at a variety of comfortable lodges with excellent food and wonderful staff. The lodges of the Mindo Valley on the western slope are a birder’s dream, and the world-famous Sacha Lodge on the Napo is heaven for any ecotourist.

The week of our trip, El Reventador, “The Exploder,” one of Ecuador’s many active volcanos, was blowing ash over much of the Ecuadorian highlands, including Quito, the capital and location of the main international airport. The presence of blowing ash closed the airport, forcing our group to meet in the southern city of Guayaquil a day ahead of schedule.

Upon arriving in Quito, Anna Lohde, known as the Devil’s Audubon, took us into the Tañay Valley and the Amazon. We stayed at a variety of lodges, including Bella Vista Lodge along the Rio Napo, one of the largest tributaries of the Amazon.

The next day found us on an eight-hour drive along the Loreto Road from the southern city of Guayaquil to the Rio Palenque Biosation along the way. We added a number of lowland and riverine birds: Amazilia Hummingbird, Snail Kite, Crimson-breasted Finch, and Croaking Dove to name a few.

Ours was a small, very compatible group, willing to keep working until we all made our predictions. Tony and his wife Barbara, both birding species, flitting through the trees. In the Tandayapa Valley, higher up the western slope, we stayed at Bella Vista Lodge where we visited Tony’s hummingbird feeders where we saw even more hummingbirds, some from inches away. Tony and his wife Barbara, both excellent birders and conservation activists, had located a new Cock-of-the-Rock lek where we enjoyed a dawn chorus of bizarre sounds and calls as we watched these marvelous International Orange birds from a few feet away. Near Chuchuna, we added the Plated-billed Mountain Toucan (also seen on the cover of Rockefeller and Greenfield’s Birds of Ecuador).

Our day in the Pacific lowlands along the Banos and Pedro Vicente Maldonado Roads were exceptionally productive with views of Swallow, Moss-backed, and Dusky-throated Tanagers. Other stops presented excellent views of Gray-headed Kite, Crestnut-backed Antbird, and Masked Water-Tyrant.

Papallacta Pass (14,000 feet) was the highest and lowest point. The area above the pass was covered in ash from Reventador, buffered by high winds reinforced by 36°F temperatures, and lower clouds, discouraging both us and the birds. We retraced. Just down the mountain in a pass with a clear sky, we had a show of two soaring Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles followed by the bird-of-the-trip, an incredible 30-minute view of three Andean Condors soaring overhead.

That night was spent in a mountain lodge with gourmet food and swimming pools filled by natural mineral water springs. In the morning, the garden was alive with Tyriann Metaltail hummingbirds. The morning, the garden was alive with Tyriann Metaltail hummingbirds. The next day found us on an eight-hour drive along the Loreto Road from the pass to Coca on the Rio Napo. The logging trucks on this mountain road reminded me of our northern California highway 299 of 50 years ago, an area long covered by cloud forests, countless waterfalls, and scattered farms. Good birds as always, including Fasiciated Tiger-heron, Cliff Flynctcher, flocks of Tanagers, and gardens of wild orchids.

In the river town of Coca, we spent the night at the Hotel de la Sierra, where we did see Black-mantled Tamarins and first birds of the Amazon lowlands. We boarded a boat for a two-hour boat ride down the great Rio Napo. Upon arrival at Coca Lodge, we took a 1.5-mile boardwalk through the Varezea (flood forest) and then were transported by tiny dug-out canoes to the actual lodge. The view was spectacular. (See Ecuador continued on p. 5.)
Observations
by Steve Glover

Three American White Pelicans were at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline near Rich- mond on 8/26 (AK, EBRPD). It is curious that they appear to occur regularly on this body of water.

A Clapper Rail was at Meeker Slough near Pt. Isabel, Richmond, on 8/6 (LT). This continues to be the only publicly accessible spot in the county to see this beleaguered species.

A Rudy Turnstone was reported at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline on 8/26 (AK, EBRPD). Rudys have proven to be rare but regular visitors to the portion of the county around the Albany Mudflats and the Richmond Marina, but this may be only the second record so far along the shoreline to the northeast. Another Rudy was near Pt. Isabel on 6/6 (LT).

A Semipalmated Sandpiper was reported from the Richmond Sewage Ponds on 8/24 (SL, SD). Semipalmatids are only rarely reported in Contra Costa County though they are surely present each fall, only to be overlooked amongst the hordes of Western Sandpipers.

A Common Murre in the Richmond Inner Harbor on 8/15 (JL) was outdone by a juvenile Pigeon Guillemot inside the Richmond Marina from 8/14-15 (unknown observer; JL). Alcids are rare but regular visitors to the waterfront areas around Richmond, particularly in late summer and fall, with murres always being the mostly frequently reported.

A Black-chinned Hummingbird at a Lafayette feeder on 8/10 was the first for that yard (MS) despite many years of feeder-watching. Black-chins are fairly common in the Delta portion of the county but are detected only rarely in the central portion of the county.

A Yellow-billed Hummingbird at a Lafayette feeder on 8/10 was the first for that yard (MS) despite many years of feeder-watching. Black-chins are fairly common in the Delta portion of the county but are detected only rarely in the central portion of the county.

2003 Entertainment Books Are Here! Still Only $30!

Entertainment 2003 Books are as big as ever and cost only $30! Support your chapter and save up to 50% on restaurants, travel, entertainment, merchandise, services, and much more for the next 13 months. Pick up your great savings book at Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill, or at MDAS monthly meetings.

Shop on the web at entertainment.com for additional savings by way of printable coupons, the Frequent Values Program, and an easy way to order out-of-town editions—a marvelous Christmas gift. Be sure to include the MDAS code of 175857 when ordering.

October Field Trips
Elizabeth Dickey, Field Trip Chair

Field trips are open to MDAS members and nonmembers alike. You do not have to be a birding expert; only one who enjoys nature. Bring binoculars, field guides, and lunch. We have a limited number of loaner binoculars available by calling the trip leader at least 7 days in advance. Weather or the availability of leaders may require changes. Trips go in light rain or drizzle. If in doubt, call leader up to 1/2 hour before departure. Carpool time is the departure time. Carpool expense: 20 cents per mile shared among driver and riders; tolls and entry fees are shared equally by driver and riders.

Wednesday, October 29, Lafayette Reserve: Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at the top of the dam. Parking costs $4 and is prohibited at the bottom of the hill. A good place to see local birds.

Morning trip: Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 2

Field Trip Reports
Bodega Bay, August 16—17 members and guests patiently contended with unusually stubborn, low, thick fog at Bodega Bay. We were treated to very close views of Red-necked Phalaropes; and Osprey and Virginia Rail were the highlights among the 45 species seen.

Road in Davis. Refuge headquarters are on Childs Road. Meet at 9 a.m. at headquarters. Leader: Elizabeth Dickey, 254-0486 Category 1

Thursday, October 23, Arrowhead Marsh, Carpool leaves at 8 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at 9 a.m. in parking lot at upper Rodeo lagoon. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1/2 miles east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. Take US 101 south to second Sausalito exit (Alexander Ave.). At stop sign, go right u the hill. At the intersection, go right downhill. At stop sign, turn left and continue to upper la- goon. Migrating hawks and swills. At noon, there is a talk and demonstration by the Raptor Watch people. Leader: Fred Saifer, 937-2906 Category 1

Saturday, October 25, Abbott’s Lagoon. Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. from Acalanes Ave., off Pleasant Hill Rd., just north of Hwy 24. Meet at 9 a.m. at Bear Valley Visitor’s Center. Point Reyes. Alternate route to San Rafael Bridge: take Camino Pablo to El Sobrante, go 1/2 mile east on I-80 to Richmond Parkway exit; turn left and go straight through stoplight. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From I-101 north, take San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1, turn right 0.25 mile, then left onto Bear Valley Rd. Visitors’ Center is off Bear Valley. Waterfall, shorebirds, and hawks. Carry lunch and liquids. Leader: Pat MacEachern, 934-3041 Category 3

March Birding Trip to Panama
Golden Gate Audubon Society is offering an eight-day field trip to Panama. departing March 15, 2004, and visiting Canary Tower and the Panama Canal area, as well as Boquete and the cloud forest home of the Resplendent Quetzal. For more information, call Steve Margolin at 530-342-6476.

2003 CHAPTER FINANCIAL REPORT

7/1/2002–6/30/2003

REVENUES
National Audubon Society Safety Net $ 4,009.00
Grants/Contributions 8,518.21
Fundraising Events 2,303.41
Interest and Investments 1,311.89
Sales 2,070.50
Other (Natural Origins Profit Sharing) 9,610.53
Total Income $ 27,843.54

EXPENDITURES
Administration $ 4,938.77
Newsletter/Postage/Mailing 7,111.01
Education Programs & Events 20,236.96
Website, fundraising & membership 318.70
Grants/Contributions to Others (Specify) 7,400.00
Total Expenditures $14,392.44

NET INCOME $ 13,451.10

ASSETS
LIABILITIES & FUNDS BALANCES
$81,742.51 $ 79,779.93

Thank you for your support and generosity.

Observers: Sharon DeCray, East Bay Regional Parks District, Alan Kaplan, Stephen Long, John Luther, Maury Stern, Larry Turnstall

Please send observations to Steve Glover, 6526 Conestoga Lane, Dublin 94568, or call (925) 828-7793. Please include your phone number with your observation.

Northern CA Bird Box: (415) 681-7422
Swainson’s Hawk

Surely one of the highlights of the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas project was the surprising find that Swainson’s Hawks have been seen relatively frequently in the East County area in recent years. Although Swainson’s Hawks are often associated with open habitats such as agricultural fields and meadows, they have been seen in the coniferous forests of the Diablo Range, where they are typically found in the spring and summer months. This discovery is significant because it indicates that Swainson’s Hawks may be using the Diablo Range as a breeding area, which had not been previously documented.

We have had a few Swainson’s Hawks in the past, but this year, we have had them almost every day. They are quite vocal and can be heard calling from a distance. We have observed them perching in the tops of trees and flying over the forest. They are very distinctive with their white heads and red bodies.

We have also seen them hunting for insects and small vertebrates, such as lizards and rodents. They are excellent aerial hunters and are capable of catching small birds in flight. We have even seen them catch small birds on the wing and swallow them whole.

We are excited to see more of these birds in the future and look forward to continuing to monitor their presence in the area.

Transcendent Tangers

Grace Calveras

Trip

by Steve Glover

Profile of a Buteo

by Steve Glover

Swainson’s Hawk

(Buteo swainsoni)

Many thanks to Alice Holmes for all her hospitality work for the last few years. She will continue her great work in her new job as Program Chair.

Hospitality work for the last few years. She will continue her great work in her new job as Program Chair.

President’s Notes

continued from p. 1

stewardship for the last few years. He has done a very good job and leaves the MDAS treasury in the best shape it has ever been. Patrick King has volunteered to become MDAS Treasurer. Patrick has a finance degree and M.B.A in addition to taking almost every accounting class possible. Professionally, his various job titles have included accountant, cost accountant, financial analyst (corporate), financial controller, and manager of a corporate financial planning and analysis department. We are very fortunate to have Patrick join our Board of Directors. As pursuant to the MDAS By-Laws, the membership is required to vote to approve Patrick King as treasurer. This vote will take place at the October General Meeting.

I would also like to introduce the new 
Hospitality “triumvirate”: Gerry Argenal, Ellen Beans, and Chelle Palmaffy. They will be organizing the refreshments at our General Meetings, coordinating the parking lot and just emerging from the heavy forest. My brother was leading the way, and Lois was right behind him when I arrived. I could see some movement in the lower branches, but the others hadn’t gotten a good enough look to ID them.

We only had to wait a few seconds before the birds revealed themselves; and we were treated to what was, for me, the most elegant and spectacular moment of the entire trip. The four birds, two males and a female, began to interact among the lower branches of this huge coniferous tree. They were at the bottom tier but still a good 15 feet above the ground, and it was difficult to tell if they were foraging or courting or just having a good time. But whatever their motivation, they persisted out in the open—sometimes just a head and shoulders, but often completely revealed.

This was deep forest with afternoon shadows and an aging afternoon sun shining on them, and the contrasts in colors and hues were stunning, almost unimaginable. I had to walk down the path to see the case at my side and instantly knew I had a decision to make. Then looking at one of the males sitting in the sunlight, I knew that there was something magical about this moment. I wasn’t going to squander the moment trying to get on a bird in a colorless viewfinder to get a picture of the same quality. There are times—and this was surely one of them—when we realize the vividness of what was before us. I just knew that I would never convey the magic, and even memory would fail to reproduce with any lasting authenticity. This was an experience of the moment.

There is much of the treasure of birding that is fleeting—moments that are sometimes realized can’t be captured or preserved and cannot be possessed but must simply be experienced in all their magnificent elusive beauty. The moment and the birds would soon be gone, but now it was here, and I wasn’t going to miss it. As I could not adequately describe the panoply of colors that stood in sharp relief before me, I also knew that when it was over I had to be satisfied with the simple fact that I had seen it, that it had occurred, and it was one of the defining moments of beauty that occasionally grace our lives.

We’ve all had these transcendent, special moments in the field and almost always, one of their features seems to be its brief duration. Five seconds on a great bird is enough to satisfy the soul. Yet it was not so here. Not only were we privileged to capture the vividness of what was before me, but I also had the good fortune to see them in the wild, and I knew I would never con-