

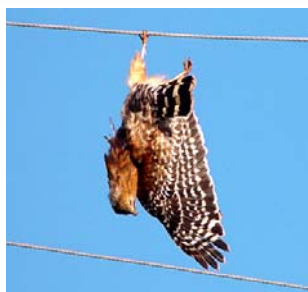
# The Foothill Quail

Yosemite Area Audubon



April 2008

## Listen to the Birds, Kris Randall, President



I've always enjoyed bird-watching because no matter where you travel, you are guaranteed to see birds. Because birds are so easily viewable and accessible—compared to other wild creatures—they serve us well as barometers of ecological conditions. Just like the “canary in the coal-mine,” birds are indicators of important changes in the environment. If we're observant and “listen” to these avian warnings, we can respond and make a difference.

The American bald eagle is a perfect example. It was estimated that in the late 1700s there were 25,000 to 75,000 nesting pairs of bald eagles in what are

now the lower 48 states. By the early 1960s these numbers had decreased drastically to fewer than 450 nesting pairs. Widespread loss of habitat, illegal shooting and contamination of the food chain by environmental pollutants such as mercury, lead and pesticides were some of the leading causes of the bald eagle's population decline.

Then, biologist and author Rachel Carson raised national awareness about rampant and indiscriminate use of dangerous chemicals such as DDT in her book “Silent Spring.” After World War II, DDT—a powerful pesticide—was used widely in agriculture to get rid of harmful, crop-consuming invertebrates, as well as elsewhere to kill pesky mosquitoes. Unfortunately, this virulent pesticide washed into waterways, contaminating a variety of life forms, including fish, the prey of bald eagles. A buildup of DDT in the bodies of bald eagles

thinned the eggshells of our national symbol and interfered with their reproduction. (This pesticide also diminished other bird populations, such as the brown pelican and the peregrine falcon.)

In 1972, the United States finally banned DDT. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was passed, but the American bald eagle had been declared an endangered species earlier, in 1967. Almost 30 years later, on July 12, 1995, the American bald eagle was taken off the federal endangered species list, and just last year, on June 28, 2007, the bald eagle was removed from the lower 48 states' List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife as well. The ban on DDT and other persistent pesticides had enabled its population to make a comeback

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### Did you know?

Did you know that birding is the number one sport in America? According to US Fish and Wildlife Service, there are currently 51.3 million birders in the United States alone, and this number continues to grow!

## Twenty-five Years of Raptor Gazing at the Golden Gate

Allen Fish



### Highlighting our May 15th program

For a quarter century, the citizen-driven Golden Gate Raptor Observatory has kept track of the biggest hawk migration in the western US each fall over the Marin Headlands. Traditional scientific tools like binoculars, traps, and radio-transmitters have allowed volunteers to count 1000 hawks a day, to band dozens a day, and to follow a hawk to Mexico.

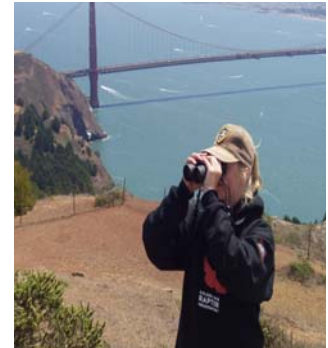
But other volunteers weren't satisfied with the traditional, and so have created innovations for raptor study at the Golden Gate:

among them, a standardized group-counting technique for "measuring" daily flights, a mechanical bird to lure hawks into traps for banding, and the first calibrations of West Nile Virus infection rates in California's wild raptors.

A dynamic result of the partnership between the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, the GGRO today makes use of 300 volunteers annually, and draws some 10,000 visitors to the Headlands each autumn. Come hear GGRO director Allen Fish chronicle both the Observatory's citizen contributions and its avian splendors. Amidst Goshawks and Golden Eagles, he'll tell tales of reverse-migrations, of a nearly-domesticated Redtail, and of a city with the highest density of nesting Cooper's Hawks ever recorded.

Director of the GGRO since its inception, Allen Fish was a Redwood City kid who practiced his own altitudinal migrations each summer to the Sierra Nevada. Schooled at UC Davis, he now teaches Raptor Biology there each winter, and consults on avian conservation issues throughout the state. He lives in Berkeley with his wife, an art librarian, and two kids who can't have dessert until they can tell a Sharpshin from a Coop.

The Foothill Quail



**If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.**

**John Quincy Adams,  
6th President of the  
United States**

## Bird Walk Results San Joaquin Experimental Station April 19, 2008

TURKEY VULTURE  
NORTHERN HARRIER  
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK  
RED-TAILED HAWK  
AMERICAN KESTREL  
CALIFORNIA QUAIL  
MOURNING DOVE  
ACORN WOODPECKER  
NUTTALLS WOODPECKER  
WESTERN KINGBIRD

ASH-THROATED FLY-CATCHER  
BLACK PHOEBE  
VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW  
SCRUB JAY  
COMMON RAVEN  
OAK TJITMOUSE  
BUSHTIT  
BEWICK'S WREN  
WESTERN BLUEBIRD

AMERICAN ROBIN  
EUROPEAN STARLING  
ORANGE-CROWNEDWARBLER  
SPOTTED TOWHEE  
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD  
HOUSE FINCH

**12 BIRDERS AND 25 SPECIES**

## Listen to the birds

(Continued from Page 1)

It's satisfying to know that when we notice changes in bird populations, we can do something about it and actually make a positive difference in the environment. The success story of the bald eagle is an encouraging one, and to witness this majestic bird surviving in our local foothills and the adjacent Central Valley is thrilling. I have recently taken part in several "raptor runs," an organized survey of wintering raptors in the Central Valley. Every two to three weeks from December through February, we drove the same 30-mile route, counting every raptor (as well as vultures, nightjars and shrikes) that we saw. Every time I participated in the "run" we saw bald eagles, and the most we counted on one day on that route were seven (we observed four in one place, two adults and two juveniles). Even with this good news on the bald eagle's rebound, we are not out of the woods. Audubon Magazine dedicated much of its July-August 2007 issue to the decline of common birds in the United States. Several program presenters at Yosemite Area Audubon programs have also commented on this decline. Noted California birder Dr. Ed Pandolfino cited in his April 2006 program the diminishing populations of horned larks and western meadowlarks among other common species. During last month's program, Sarah Stock, the Yosemite National Park ornithologist who oversees a mist-netting and banding survey of park birds, mentioned that many of these species are in decline, including a common bird—the black-headed grosbeak—a regular visitor to sunflower seed feeders in our own backyards! (The results of that banding study should be available sometime in 2010.) A number of environmental impacts are causing great harm to bird populations—global warming, habitat loss and degradation, diminishing food supplies, illegal

shooting, free-roaming house and feral cats, collisions with glass buildings and windows, pollution, plastic products and bags dumped into the oceans, wind farms, and the list goes on. Locally the drought has been having a deadly effect on plants and animals and, consequently, the food chain. According to a local raptor rehabilitator, most of the hawks she receives are surprisingly light in weight. Beneath their thick fluff of feathers, a protruding breastbone signals a starving bird. On my last two birding trips, I saw an electrocuted red-shouldered hawk, still hanging by one talon from a power line and, on a separate outing, a juvenile red-tailed hawk, dead on the side of the highway after colliding with a car. With all of these hazards and environmental changes occurring worldwide, it shouldn't be a surprise that even our most common birds are now beginning to decline.

I can't imagine a world without bird song and the comforting, feathered diversity that signals to us a healthy, balanced ecosystem. Listening to birds, and especially recognizing many species through their songs and calls, I feel a connection to the majesty and beauty of the natural world. The birds remind us that we are all connected to nature, and if we pay attention and "listen" to them, not only can we help the birds, but we can also ensure our own future.

(There is much we can do, and I listed a few of these solutions in an article in the December 2007 Foothill Quail newsletter, "Don't Take the Birds for Granted!")



**Bald Eagle Merced NWR-Kris Randall**

## Attract more birds with a mister

Lee Ekland



If you want to attract more birds to your water sources connect them to a simple drip system. You'll be surprised at how many new visitors show up. We purchased our supplies from the drip irrigation section of the hardware store and connected the tubing to a section of copper, which we shaped into a curve. Buy brass fittings because the plastic ones wear out quickly. If you don't want to make your own drip system most wild bird specialty stores carry them. In addition to Robins our birdbaths attract Hermit Thrushes, Red and White-breasted Nuthatches, House and Cassin's Finches, Mourning Doves, Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Lesser Goldfinches, Bushtits, Dark-eyed Juncos, Steller's and Scrub Jays, Anna's Hummingbirds, Western Screech Owls and an occasional Gray Fox. Good birding! Lee Ekland

## Conservation Corner By Joseph Frank

### TOYOTA and AUDUBON

What do one of the world's largest auto manufacturers and Audubon have in common?

You may say nothing and normally you would be right. However following a number of years of discussions the two giants in their respective fields are announcing some exciting plans called "Together Green" that will be a tremendous benefit to the environment and potentially to our birds. Together Green is a major initiative of Audubon, funded by a generous grant from Toyota, whose goals are:

- Nurture Conservation Leaders
- Achieve Conservation Results
- Engage millions of Americans in conservation action.

Over the next five years Together Green hopes to implement a series of national conservation initiatives that support the goals and promote issues and needs of a more widespread involvement in the finding of solutions to our most pressing environmental challenges.

There are two major programs within Forever Green, namely the Innovation Grants Program and the Conservation Leadership Program.

The Conservation Leadership Program is a 16 month fellowship program directed at achieving conservation results through leadership.

In 2008 up to 40 Fellows will be selected to participate in a 16 month long Leadership program. About half will be from the National Audubon Network and half from organizations outside of Audubon. Selectees will be individuals interested in learning

across diverse disciplines and working with others to achieve results as well as working with other conservation groups and those interested in furthering conservation issues. They will be expected to have strong leadership skills and a willingness and ability to build and complete Conservation Action projects. Backgrounds will include education, communications, policy, science, research and business.

#### The Innovation Grants Program

This program will fund dozens of on-the-ground projects each year that employ creative approaches and engage diverse communities to help achieve measurable land, water and/or energy conservation results. Grant requirements will broaden project participation and promote innovation by uniting Audubon's national network with environmental and community partners. National Audubon Society will make one year grants that range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 for projects that:

- Conserve or restore habitat and protect species, improve water quality or quantity, and reduce the threat of Global Warming.
- Engage new and diverse audiences in conservation action.
- Inspire and use innovative approaches and technologies to engage people and achieve conservation results.
- Build the capacity of conservation professionals within the Audubon network and beyond.

This program is open to all members of the Audubon network as well as to independent Audubon entities that wish to form a cooperative arrangement with National Audubon for this purpose.

For further information discuss this with a YAAS director or see the National Audubon website at:

<http://web1.audubon.org/news/pressRelease.php?id=400>



### Western Field Ornithologists

Kris,

I am on the board of **Western Field Ornithologists (WFO)** and think that the Mariposa Audubon members would be interested in knowing about the upcoming WFO meeting in San Mateo.

If you are interested in birds, birding and would like a chance to interact with some of North America's most respected experts, this is the meeting for you. WFO is a unique organization that seamlessly blends birding with ornithology. WFO meetings are only occasionally held in Northern California. So, if your interest in birds goes beyond just adding another tick to your list, don't miss this one. There will be field trips visiting most of the San Francisco Bay Area's hotspots. Workshops will cover topics like sketching birds and using GPS in the field.

Al Jaramillo will lead an ecological transect of the San Mateo Peninsula. Scientific sessions will give you a glimpse into the most current ornithological research and expert ID panels will educate and amaze.

Ed Pandolfino

**Event: Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) Annual Meeting**  
**When: October 9-12, 2008**  
**Location: San Mateo Marriot, San Mateo, CA**  
**More info and to register: <http://www.wfo-cbrc.org/>**

### Yosemite Area Audubon Officers 2007- 08

PRESIDENT	Kris Randal
SECRETARY	Betty Boykin
TREASURER	Laura Lee
PROGRAMS	Len McKenzie
CONSERVATION	Joe Frank
TRIPS	Lowell Young
HOSPITALITY	Sharon Dickinson
MEMBERSHIP	Shirley Schmelzer
NEWSLETTER	Joe Frank

### Membership Chairperson

**Shirley Schmelzer**  
4512 Varian Road  
Mariposa, CA 95338

Check our website

[http://mariposa.yosemite.net/  
audubon](http://mariposa.yosemite.net/audubon)

## Calendar

### May 2008

**May 8, 2008 (Thursday)**

**Pot Luck: May pot luck Nancy and Michael Havermann, 209-742-7729**

**Program 7:00 p.m.** Allen Fish, Director of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory will present his exciting program on the raptor tracking, banding and telemetry program. Allen has some really great pictures from the Hawk Hill site in San Francisco. You don't want to miss this one. Call (209) 742-5579 for more information.

**MAY 10, 2008 (Saturday) NOTE CHANGE IN DATE**

### Field Trip

Yosemite Area Audubon Society birding trip to Yosemite Valley and Forest. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Midpines County Park on Hwy. 140 to carpool. Suitable for beginners, public welcome, free (park pass or \$20 entrance fee required to enter park). Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch and beverages. Call (209) 742-5579 for more information. [Note: This replaces the trip originally scheduled for May 17.]

Call (209) 742-5579 for additional information about either the program or the birding trip.

Yosemite Area Audubon Society monthly meetings are held the second Thursday of each month October through May at 7 p.m. Public welcome.

Mariposa Methodist Church  
Parish Hall  
6th St., Mariposa (between Hwy. 140 and Bullion St.)  
Mariposa CA.

