

# Mount Diablo Interpretive Association

## 2024 Annual Report



PROPOSED NEW MITCHELL CANYON VISITOR CENTER | WARE ASSOCIATES

PRESERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION

P.O. Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA, 94597-0346 • 925-927-7222 • [www.mdia.org](http://www.mdia.org)



# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

**IN 2024, THE MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION** (MDIA) celebrated its 50th Anniversary, continuing our half-century partnership with Mount Diablo State Park as the official cooperating association. Thanks to the remarkable efforts of our members, MDIA has expanded its impact in the park through trail signage, maintenance projects, and educational opportunities. We have also continued to provide interpretive services to park visitors and the general public through natural history webinars and publications. This year has seen a tremendous amount of effort poured into our endeavor to build a new Education Center in Mitchell Canyon, and we are proud to have raised \$1,000,000 on our own at the close of 2024.

## MDIA Board

**MDIA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS CURRENTLY** consists of 11 members who are responsible for overseeing operations of the organization. This year we honored Dan Fitzgerald and Stephen Smith by inducting them into our MDIA Hall of Fame—their names were added to our plaque at Mitchell Canyon. We appreciate the knowledge, experience, and dedication of our past and current board directors and are always looking for new directors who can bring a fresh outlook, insight, skill, and enthusiasm to our organization.

In addition to our board members, other dedicated volunteers at MDIA ensure our continued success. Ken Lavin, Steve Beatty, Gary Parkhurst, Judith Parker, Joan Hamilton, Wally DeYoung and Kendall Oei are all outstanding volunteers. Trisha Corey donates much of her time as our bookkeeper. And our Peregrine Team is made up of dozens of wonderful people including Staci Hobbet, Kathy Siegel, Patricia Yamshon, Rosita Harvey and Hema Shah.

## Mission

**IN 2024, MDIA CONTINUED** its mission of financial and interpretive support of Mount Diablo State Park. Merchandise sales, donations, membership contributions, employee matching funds, and grants enabled us to support a variety of projects within the park. As an all-volunteer staff, our administrative expenses are low, allowing nearly 90% of our income to be allocated to enhancing the visitor experience. Some of the many projects funded by MDIA are outlined in this report. I would like to personally thank you, our members, for continuing to support our efforts of “Preservation through Education.”

## Board Retreat

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS** held its sixth annual board retreat this year, an in-person event held at Save Mount Diablo's Curry Canyon Ranch. We set several goals for ourselves coming into 2025. Primary among these goals is the exciting project of building a brand-new visitor center at Mitchell Canyon with goals of completing architectural drawings, designing interior spaces, entering the project into the state budget, and beginning construction bidding. We also set goals of developing a new Wildflower Guide book, adding more online nature guides to our website, recruiting more volunteers and board members, and developing more content aimed at school kids.



—*Stephen Smith*  
MDIA President

We acknowledge that Mount Diablo is the ancestral home, since time immemorial, of the Wilton Rancheria, Bay Miwok, Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Northern Valley Yokuts, Muwekma, and Ohlone peoples.



## New Mitchell Canyon Education Center

**2024 WAS A HISTORIC YEAR FOR MDIA**, as we secured funding to build a new Education Center at Mitchell Canyon. MDIA was thrilled to be awarded a \$2.6 million grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in August 2024. This grant was the result of 18 months of work with the WCB. Many members of MDIA and Mount Diablo State Park (MDSP) travelled to Sacramento for the Board meeting when this was awarded.

The accompanying milestone for MDIA was that we raised over \$1 million from MDIA Board members, community members, organizations and local foundations in the last two years to support this project. A donor appreciation event was held at Heather Farms in November with about 75 attendees. Steve Smith, president MDIA, and John Ware, Ware Associates, made presentations about the state of the project. It was well received by the audience. The WCB grant along with the MDIA fundraising effort and the State Budget allocation in 23-24 of \$1 million (championed by Assembly Member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan), secures the \$4.6 million needed to proceed to the construction phase.

The architectural firm of Ware Associates is now preparing the final construction drawings to submit to the State in June 2025 in preparation for bidding the project in late 2025. Meantime, MDIA is working with MDSP to retain an exhibit planning firm in 2025. This firm will help us design the interior and exterior exhibits for the new building as well as leading us through the fabrication and installation phase.

The architectural firm of Ware Associates is now preparing the final construction drawings to submit to the State in June 2025 in preparation for bidding the project in late 2025. Meantime, MDIA is working with MDSP to retain an exhibit planning firm in 2025. This firm will help us design the interior and exterior exhibits for the new building as well as leading us through the fabrication and installation phase.

We are so thankful to everyone who shared our vision for the new Education Center, which will now become a reality.



*State Park, MDIA Board, and WCB celebrate \$2.6 million grant*



**IN 2024, MDIA CELEBRATED ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY TWICE.** Attendance was low on April 13 due to rain, but September 13 saw a warm and sunny celebration in Mitchell Canyon of MDIA's contributions to Mount Diablo State Park. Attendees included Save Mount Diablo, California State Parks, Native Bird Connections, the Peregrine Falcon Team, MDIA Board, and local wildlife. See Anniversary Cupcakes by Steve Smith and Mary Jankowski with a gentle reptile. MDIA looks forward to another 50 years of service with Mount Diablo State Park.



## Finances

**MDIA'S 2024 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PARK** included funding the following projects:

- Publishing and printing 40,000 copies of the *Mount Diablo Review* newsletter given to all park visitors and to local community organizations
- Hosting the Mountain Talks educational speaker series via webinar
- Producing our Wild Mount Diablo video series including segments on Rare Plants, Newts and Soap Root
- Funding for the Diablo Stove Restoration Team
- Supporting the Native Plant Garden
- Fundraising for a new Education Center
- Producing the new publication *Bees of Mount Diablo*

## Maintenance and Trail Signage

**SEVERAL ONGOING MAINTENANCE PROJECTS** included completion of the Diablo Stove renovation project in Rock City, refurbishing map kiosks and replacing maps, and repairing picnic tables. Work continues to keep the waterproofing in good repair up at the top of the Summit Building. A long-anticipated trail sign order was partially filled with 25 new signs replacing many dilapidated and worn signs throughout the park. Most notably was the replacement of the post and marker for Mount Olympia, a difficult job and long overdue.

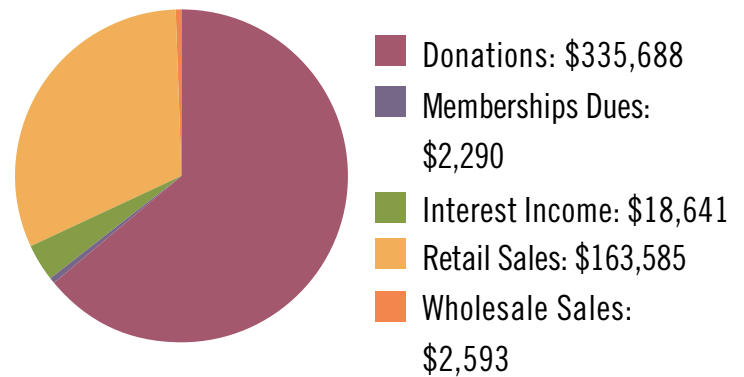
## Membership

**IN FEBRUARY 2023, MDIA APPROVED** a new membership model with two categories: Regular and Life membership. All Life members continued in this status, and all donors of \$1,000 or more were made Life members. In 2024, MDIA completed its preparation to place all memberships

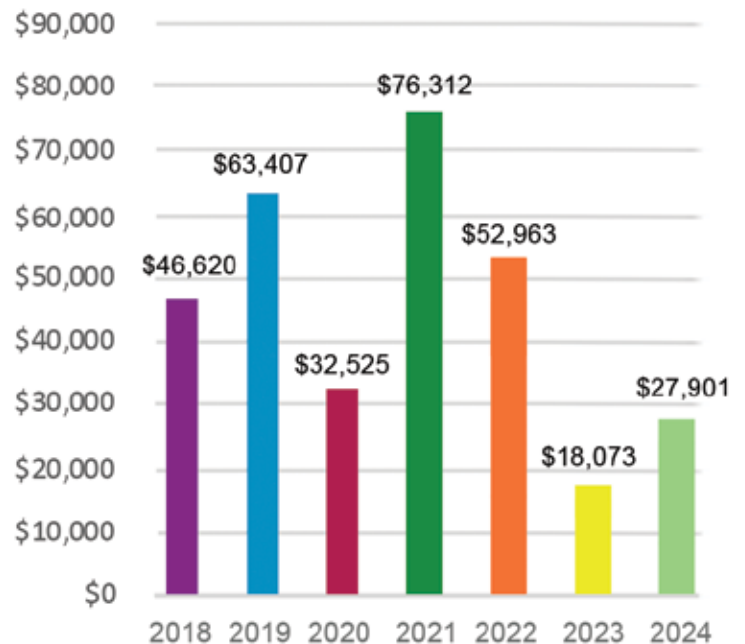
on the same calendar year. Beginning January 2025, all current members will be invited to renew, and non-members will be given the opportunity to join MDIA. Life members, now 171 in total, will be thanked for their support as well.

Memberships support the ongoing operations of MDIA including publications, park maintenance, contributions to the park, and webinar events, for example.

## MDIA Sources of Revenue for 2024



## Annual Contributions to the Park from MDIA 2018–2024

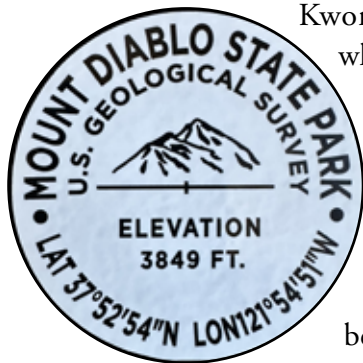




## Merchandising

**MERCHANDISING IN 2024** saw improvement in supply chain issues, but increasing inflation along with shipping costs continue to rise prompting an increase in some of our prices. Overall sales have increased 10% over the previous year and remain our main source of revenue aside from fundraising. Online sales continue to be robust in the interim, and we are able to generate revenue and share our materials with the many people who came to experience Mount Diablo and the regenerative powers of nature. Visitors to [mdia.org](http://mdia.org) can choose from a wide variety of educational, interpretive, and informational products along with a selection of apparel and souvenirs. We also added some new items like Survey Benchmark Stickers and Bees of Mount Diablo guide.

Thank you to Dan Fitzgerald, Steve Smith, and Linda Kwong, our merchandising team, who coordinate the design of new products, purchase ordering, inventory management, packaging, shipping, and delivery. Because all these operations are performed by volunteers, the financial benefit is substantial.



## Education

**MDIA PROVIDED ONGOING UPDATES** to the County Office of Education regarding our efforts towards the Mitchell Canyon Education Center project and educational opportunities for students in Contra Costa County. The County Superintendent and staff were key supporters of our application for the Wildlife Conservation Board grant. In addition, MDIA worked with Park Interpreter Sharon Peterson regarding events on the mountain like the Junior Rangers program and served as volunteers for school field trips.

## Difficulties Multiplied for Diablo Peregrines in 2024

**THE 2024 PEREGRINE NESTING SEASON** proved a disappointment, with no nesting birds in either of our monitoring zones. At the Castle Rock Cliffs (Area One or A1), our team saw two peregrines early in the season, but the male then disappeared. The female soon abandoned the area as well, and no other peregrines showed up to fill the void. Though we can't know why, we suspect that avian bird flu, a rampant infection nowadays, killed one or both the birds. Nor did the more remote Knobcone Pine (Area Two or A2) host nesting peregrines. Bird flu and human disturbance, one or both, are most likely to blame. Though A2 is officially closed to all visitors during the nesting season February 1 through July 31, on-site cameras showed many trespassers. The nesting site is above the narrowest point of the trail through this steep, rocky canyon, making it difficult for bikers to avoid the rocks entirely, causing loud scraping and banging noises, and the voices of all users are amplified by the close quarters. For more information, go to <https://www.mdia.org/peregrine-team>, scroll down to "Get in Touch With Us" and send us a note. One of our P-Team Co-Coordinator, Kathy Siegel or Patricia Yamshon, will get back with you quickly. If you're interested in volunteering with us, we will welcome you and arrange on-trail training as soon as possible.

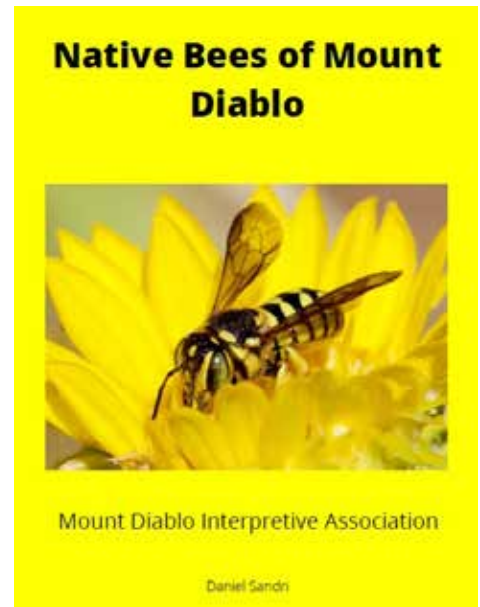


*The Castle Rock cliffs, one of two peregrine nesting areas inside Mount Diablo State Park from Diablo Foothills Regional Park (Kathy Siegel)*

## Publications

**MDIA MADE A MAJOR CHANGE TO THE MOUNT DIABLO REVIEW**, the newsletter available to all park visitors. Previously, this was an eight-page document, published twice a year. Unused copies were recycled. With the increased emphasis on digital access via the MDIA website, Facebook, and Instagram platforms, the Review is now a four-page document relevant throughout the year. The total volume of paper has been reduced by 50%, and waste has been eliminated.

In addition, MDIA published a new book: *Native Bees of Mount Diablo*. Photographed and written by Board Member Dan Sandri, this is a must have reference for lovers of the natural history of Mount Diablo.



## Outreach

**MDIA CONTINUED ITS ACTIVE ROLE** in the local community through participation in the following events in which MDIA staffed booths, answered questions about the mountain, and sold MDIA merchandise: 4/7 - Sunol Wildflower days, 6/2 - Walnut Creek Art & Wine festival, 6/2 - Clayton Pride parade, 6/29 - Martinez Beaver Festival, 8/3 - Bronco Days, 10/5-6 - Clayton Oktoberfest, MDIA 50th birthday celebration, 10/19 - Diablo Multisport Connection event, and 11/20 - MCEC presentation to donors.

## Hikes

**MDIA CONDUCTED A TOTAL OF 45 HIKES** this year. These treks included an early Chaparral Spring hike, Pollinator & Wildflower walks, Common Poorwill hikes, and a "Rocks On the Move" geology hike. Additionally, we organized 12 BioBlitz monthly hikes and 17 Tarantula Walks



*Julie Braun Martin and Gary Parkhurst at Walnut Creek Festival*

during August, September, and October. We also introduced a new leader for 2 Botanical Wonder Walks, which proved to be very successful. We anticipate expanding our team of leaders next year and offering a wider range of diverse events in the future.



## Webinars

**THE YEAR 2024 WAS SIGNIFICANT** for our monthly Zoom webinars. Throughout the year, we hosted sessions on diverse topics including Bats, the Hidden Gems of Mount Diablo, the presentation of four new Wild Mount Diablo films, Rare Plants of Mount Diablo, the release of the new Guidebook to Native Bees of Mount Diablo, Western Pond Turtles, the CEMEX quarry at Mitchell Canyon, Controlled Burns on Mount Diablo, Tarantula Hawks, and Coyotes.

These webinars were delivered by subject matter experts and passionate docents. In total, we had 481 attendees across these webinars. All sessions have been posted on our website, allowing them to reach additional viewers throughout the year. We extend our gratitude to all the different presenters who generously shared their knowledge and enthusiasm for the diverse natural history of Mount Diablo.

## Website and Social Media

**FOR THE MDIA WEBSITE**, 2024 was all about the Peregrines of Mount Diablo State Park. The website has expanded its content at <https://www.mdia.org/peregrine-team> to include regular updates from our Peregrine Team regarding current nesting activity, the peregrine nesting timeline, FAQ's, links to resources, and a way to contact the Peregrine Team directly. A portion of the content is also available in Spanish: <https://www.mdia.org/articles/halcones-peregrinos-de-pine-canyon-y-el-equipo-mdia-peregrine>

Remember to follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram to receive updates from our dedicated naturalists and volunteers, upcoming events including hikes and webinars, bloom reports and more. <https://www.facebook.com/MountDiabloInterpretiveAssociation>

<https://www.instagram.com/mountdiablointerpretiveassoc>

### MDIA

Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA) is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization that supports the California Department of Parks and Recreation in maintaining and interpreting Mount Diablo State Park for its hundreds of thousands of annual visitors. MDIA works side by side with State Park staff to enhance the visitors' experience and appreciation of the park.

### 1974 MDIA Founding Members

Sam Smoker	Frank Valle-Riestra	Phil Gordon
Paul Carlson	Ed Earl	William Bland
Howard Knight	Mary Bowerman	John Werminski
Joanne Dean	Betty Zilen	Miles Standish
Beverly Clemson	Ron Edwards	

*MDIA Board of Directors*  
*Leslie Contreras, Tere Dixon,*  
*Linda Kwong, Treasurer*  
*Dan Fitzgerald, Carol Lane,*  
*Mark Brauer, Top Row:*  
*Vice President Mike Brandy,*  
*President Steve Smith,*  
*Dick Nicoll, Julie Braun Martin,*  
*Secretary Dan Sandri*



## 2024 Donations – We Thank You!

### \$100,000

William Kerr Foundation

### \$20,000 - 30,000

John Van Heertum  
The McCabe Walls Family  
Foundation  
Anonymous

### \$10,000 - 15,000

Chris Valle-Riestra  
CEMEX Materials LLC  
Anastasia and Randall  
Hobbet  
Catherine and Richard Nicoll  
Terese and Doyle Dixon  
Carol Lane  
Gale and John Vocke

### \$5,000 - 6,000

Robert and Cynthia Brittain  
Mike and Sue Brandy  
Wallace DeYoung

### \$1,000 - 2,500

Elizabeth Hudson and George  
Doddington  
The McLin Family Foundation  
John and Tena Gallagher  
H&L Partners  
John Villalpando  
Mark Blair  
Spencer Fulweiler  
Daniel Schaefer  
Jeff & Julie Martin  
Andrew Naegeli  
Pam Kershner  
Philip Reed  
Robert Simmons  
Joan Hamilton  
Karl Schindhelm  
Mornette McShane  
Robert Slyker  
Judith Sweet  
Sharon Landwehr  
Rotary Club of Danville/  
Sycamore Vly Community  
Foundation

### \$500 - 999

David A Knapp  
Jake VanAkkeren  
Jennifer Kellar  
Stephen Smith  
Susan England  
AJ Mueller  
Vineeth Chitturi  
Gene Schulting  
Burt Bogardus  
Linda J Thurston  
Sue Donecker  
Shawn Mehaffey  
Janet Colello  
Paul Greer  
Thomas R. O'Brien  
Walnut Creek Garden Club  
Jeanne Thomas  
Rex and Janet Takahashi  
Jean Fiske  
Stan Wong

### \$100 - 499

Shawn Richardson  
Marni Berendsen  
Doug VanEmmerik  
Elizabeth Schwabauer  
Paul Cardinet  
Anonymous  
Linda Jacobs  
Philip R. Matthews  
Roger & Elizabeth Goldberg  
Jan and Tom Jones  
Kathleen James  
Michael Sweeney  
Diablo Foothills District Garden  
Club  
Abigail J Bornstein  
Nicholas Sharrock  
Danville Alamo Garden Club  
Arti Kirch  
Bernie Wolf  
David & Anne Manchester  
Claudia Cohan  
Nancy and Kyomi Glover  
Beth Tibbits

Greg Bartow  
Anonymous  
Mark Saliman  
Kelly Burmeister  
Paul Yamshon  
Clayton Worsdell  
Stephanie Jones  
Maren and Jerry Smith  
Dave Wiltzius  
Craig Olson  
Jon Maienschein  
Clayton Valley Garden Club  
Kara Douglas  
Kendall Oei  
East Bay Nature  
Paul Jordan  
James and Evelyn BERG  
Jane and Joe Thibedeau  
Heyden Family  
Mark Curtis  
Claude Benedix  
Barbara Bigby  
Lynn Mackey  
Karen Amos  
David Mackesey  
Judith Sherwood  
Marielle J Boortz  
Bob & Rosemarie Scrosati  
Michael Fischer  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Suzanne Ragsdale  
Ruth Ann Pearsons  
Lynn Kelly  
Harry York  
Sandra Leich  
Aline Soules  
Anne Taylor  
Bennett Berke  
Bill Karieva  
Melissa Allen  
Suzanne Renaghan  
Kenn Wilson

### \$5 - 99

Patricia Kale

Ted Trambley  
Anonymous  
Jill franklin  
Peter Rafter  
Karen Mitchoff  
Judith & Charles Parker  
Chris & Teri Wills  
Steven Nakazono  
John Keibel  
Rochelle Fortier  
Contra Costa Hills Club  
David Grapshi  
Heather Mills  
Megan Sandri  
Carrie Miller  
Joan Duffield  
Mel and Tim Comay  
Anonymous  
Carolyn Balling  
Linda and Tom Petrich  
Jennifer Roe  
Rosanne Carey  
Carly Owens  
Lauren Militello  
Robert Savre  
Kay Batts  
Roz Westil  
Chris Chastain  
Brett Strader  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Mike Palmer  
Anonymous  
Ann Lehr  
Muriel Holzer  
Hans Bogdanos  
Ken Lavin  
Walter Conrad  
Carole Leadem  
Karl Ruddy  
Maria Ley  
Robert Singer  
Susan D'Alcamo  
Jonas Bar-on



MDIA was established in 1974 as a nonprofit organization that is organized and operated exclusively for charitable purposes, with exempt status under IRS Section 501(c)(3), Federal Tax ID 23-7444529.