



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920
Information: 415/789-0703

THURSDAY, APRIL 11 7:30 PM

The Mystery of Bird Song

With David Lukas



Photo courtesy of Alan Beymer

Canyon Wren

How do birds learn to sing such beautiful songs? And why do they produce so many different types of vocalizations? David Lukas will help answer some of these questions and share his insights into the magical world of bird song—from the ways we study bird song, to the anatomy of how birds produce sounds, to some of the social behaviors that explain common bird vocalizations.

David Lukas is a California naturalist and the author of six books, including *Sierra Nevada Natural History* and *Wild Birds of California*. David grew up in Oregon but has been living in the Sierra Nevada and leading bird programs in California for 20 years. His newest book, *Bay Area Birds*, is the first comprehensive guide to the status, life history, and distribution of all the birds that occur in the Bay Area (www.lukasguides.com).

Please join us at 7:15 PM for cookies and conversation.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

THURSDAY, MAY 9 7:30 PM

The Lives of Owls – Intermediate Level

With Joe Mueller

Community Marin 2013: A Vision for Marin County



Photo courtesy of Bob Heinz

The fourth edition of *Community Marin 2013: A Vision for Marin County* with recommendations for actions to preserve and enhance Marin’s spectacular environment has been released by participating environmental organizations. Three years in the making, this 48-page document was a collaborative effort of the Marin Audubon Society, Marin Conservation League, and Marin Baylands Advocates, representatives of which participated in monthly meetings that led to the final vision. Other organizations that supported the policies included Sierra Club Marin Group, Salmon Protection and Watershed Network and San Geronimo Planning Group. The vision is intended to influence revisions to the Countywide Plan and to city and local community plans.

The document is organized to cover issue areas found in general plans: Biological Resources, Agriculture, Transportation, Housing, Public Facilities, Parks and Open Space, Community Development, and Economic Vitality. While some recommendations are the

same as previous editions, many are updated and new recommendations are included to address current conditions and impacts that were not recognized five years ago when the last version was produced.

New recommendations included are:

- To address Climate Change, develop a coordinated plan to protect public facilities and areas subject to sea level rise. Strategies should include expanding wetlands and floodplains, and avoiding or prohibiting new development in areas subject to inundation. Currently there is little coordinated planning.
- To reduce the impact of very large houses on the environment, resource use and community character, establish a maximum house size of 3,500 square feet plus an additional 500 square feet for accessory structures.

The very basis of all *Community Marin* recommendations is that natural environ-
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the appropriate Board member.

| | |
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DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. If you wish to attend please call 924-6057.

7:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month
Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only)

Marin Audubon Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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Members can receive *The Clapper Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by e-mailing joandbijou@sbcglobal.net

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$100 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Clapper Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

The news in the March 10 *IJ* that the Conservation Corps North Bay apparently under the direction of the Mill Valley Fire Department destroyed extensive mature Manzanita trees and chaparral along the Blithedale Ridge in Mill Valley is shocking and very tragic. These habitats take many decades to mature and support species that are specifically adapted to live in them. This kind of destruction has been a long time concern of MAS's due to the intense interest by fire departments in clearing understory vegetation. Now, not only has extensive habitat been lost on Blithedale Ridge but the Open Space District is left with what will be even more management problems to clear the extensive broom that will most certainly invade the cleared areas. In my view, the Open Space District should require any entity working on their property to submit a plan for approval before proceeding, and if the CCNB or any other entity is to continue to work on Open Space Lands, they should be provided with a policy statement that makes it clear no mature native plant communities are to be removed.

Spring has arrived. We can look forward to lots of breeding activity. To protect nests, postpone clearing and removal of vegetation until breeding season is over in August. Be sure you do not contribute to destroying habitat,

particularly habitat with active nests. The experience above is an extreme example of the damage that can be done by clearing vegetation in a manner that is not sensitive to protecting natural resources.

We at Marin Audubon were saddened to learn of the death of Howard Allen in February. Howie was an important part of Marin Audubon's history. He was one of the local citizens who were instrumental in saving the lands and waters that are now the Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary. He was one of the founders and a Marin Audubon board member in our early years. He continued to be supportive through the years. We greatly appreciate his contribution to our organization and remember him fondly.

If you haven't already signed up for our upcoming events – Mother's Day Barbecue and the Spring Bird Song Class given by Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris – do so right away. The Bird Class fills up quickly. Attendees at the Mother's Day BBQ not only support work of MAS and Audubon Canyon Ranch, but have a delicious lunch in Volunteer Canyon, one of the properties of ACR that is not usually open to the public. Join us for a fun day of good food with family and friends in a lovely natural setting.

Have a wonderful spring.

Community Marin

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ment – water, wetlands, wildlife, vegetative habitats – are vital to protect and enhance. Revised recommendations that are particularly important to MAS are:

- Protect, enhance and restore remaining tidal, seasonal and non-tidal marshes including adjacent transition zone habitats. Establish protective buffers that are at least 100 feet in width, preferably 300 feet.
- Natural resources should not be compromised by proposals to streamline CEQA and other environmental protection regulations.
- Cities with shorelines should amend their general plans and policies to include a Baylands Corridor that would include protection of Tam Valley and areas east of Highway 101 in North Marin.
- Approve no net increase in trail mileage beyond the current authorized mileage. Eliminate unauthorized trails unless they are environmentally superior to existing trails, in which case construction should be accompanied by the elimination of a comparable length of authorized trail.

Recommendations are also made for areas in east Marin on which major development or

change in land use is or may be proposed:

- Diked baylands north of Highway 37 (these are former tidal marsh), should be restored to tidal marsh or protected as seasonal wetlands or agricultural lands.
- St. Vincent/Silveira lands should be acquired for resource and wildlife habitat protection, restoration of Miller Creek, protection of agriculture, public health and safety.
- Canalways, an 85-acre property site along the San Rafael shoreline, should be acquired and permanently preserved as seasonal wetland habitat;
- On the Corte Madera shoreline the only privately-owned parcel (by Frank Greene and EAH) remaining along the Corte Madera shoreline should be acquired and added to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. This five-acre property is in the direct path of sea level rise and is endangered species habitat.

Over the next few months, representatives of environmental organizations will be presenting *Community Marin* to local governments throughout the county urging each jurisdiction to consider and adopt similar or stronger policies for their general plan.

The full text of *Community Marin* can be found on MAS's Web site, www.marinaudubon.org.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Vicky Van Meter, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, April 4 and May 2, 2013

9 AM to 12 noon

With Len Blumin

Beginner birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds near McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and over 100 species have been reported over the course of a year. Spring is a busy time at the ponds and provides an opportunity to study returning migrants. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. This is a great way to start learning the raptors, waterfowl, and other groups, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette. **Note: The May 2 walk at the Storage Ponds will be the last for the season.**

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 9 AM but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

MINES ROAD AND DEL PUERTO CANYON

STANISLAUS COUNTY

Saturday and Sunday

April 20-21, 2013

7:30 AM Saturday to 3 PM Sunday

With Terry Colborn

Long recognized as one of the premier springtime birding areas in the Bay Area to observe an array of resident species and Neotropical migrants, the combination of Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon provides easy access to a number of unique habitats, including oak woodland, grasslands and chaparral. The bird list is quite impressive for this popular destination, and includes **Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Yellow-billed Magpie, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Hermit, Yellow** and **MacGillivray's warblers, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, Western Tanager, Wood Duck** and **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, just to name a few. The elusive **Greater Roadrunner** is reported annually. We'll also visit Del Valle Regional Park (fee) and Frank Raines Park. This weekend trek will start in Livermore on Saturday morning at 7:30 AM, and will conclude on Sunday afternoon at 3 PM. Overnight hotel accommodations will be in the Patterson area, off of I-5, affording us an opportunity for an early Sunday morning start. There will be an optional group dinner on Saturday night.

This is a very popular weekend trip and often fills up very quickly. *Sign-ups are required, and are on a first-come, first-served basis.* Carpooling is a must as there is very limited space for vehicles to park on Mines Road. To sign-up and receive further details, contact Terry Colborn at www.TLCBirding.com or call him at 916/705-8991.

OLOMPALI STATE PARK FAMILY WALK, NOVATO

Sunday, May 5, 2013

10 AM to 12:30 PM

With Wendy Dreskin

Families and beginning birders are welcome to join Wendy Dreskin as we explore the lovely Olompali State Park in Novato, stopping to look at the plants, birds and other wildlife in meadow and woodland habitats. Wendy has taught nature education for children for many years and has led the popular adult education class Meandering in Marin through College of Marin since 1998. Wendy runs the Junior Bird Watcher program and created the Junior Botanist program that reaches over 300 children in the county each year. She was honored with the Terwilliger Environmental Award for her work inspiring both children and adults.

We will meet in the parking area of Olompali. Bring a hat, sunscreen, water, lunch and wear good walking shoes.

DIRECTIONS: The park is located three miles north of Novato on U.S. 101. The entrance is accessible only to southbound traffic from Highway 101. Northbound vehicles should continue north past Olompali to exit on Redwood Sanitary Landfill Road. After exiting Hwy. 101, turn left to cross the freeway and take the southbound on-ramp in order to travel south and enter the park. The park day use fee is currently \$8 per vehicle.

MONTEREY BAY PELAGIC BIRDING WEEKEND

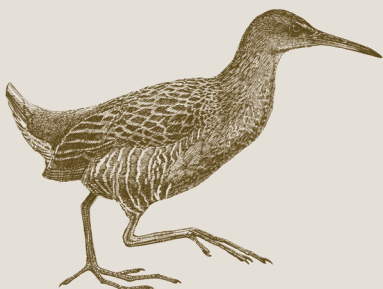
September 14-15, 2013

With Terry Colborn

Terry Colborn is leading a weekend birding trip to the Monterey Bay area, September 14-15, 2013, for Marin and Mt. Diablo Audubon Societies. This annual two-day trip to the beautiful Monterey Peninsula will feature a pelagic trip on Saturday with Monterey Seabirding (www.montereyseabirding.com) and land birding on Sunday. Monterey Seabirding uses a local skipper with over 30 years' experience. Leaders and spotters include Roger Wolfe, Dan Singer, Blake Matheson and Todd Easterla. All four are seasoned, life-long birders and have exceptional knowledge of the status and distribution of California birds.

This two-day trip is planned to coincide with the start of fall seabird migration. Over the years, the Monterey Bay/Elkhorn Slough area has produced some excellent vagrants and a nice array of fall migrants. Possible areas to be visited on Sunday include Point Pinos, Salinas River State WMA, Moss Landing, Moonglow Dairy and Elkhorn Slough. Specific locations will be determined prior to the weekend, and will be based upon up-to-date information on any rare bird sightings, weather conditions, tides, etc.

This very popular weekend pelagic trip is limited to a maximum of 25 participants. The cost is \$95 per person (Note: We're holding the price to last year's rate.). Sign-ups are being taken on a first-come, first-served-basis since March 1, 2013. Make your check payable to Terry Colborn and mail to: 1714 Magnolia Place, Davis, CA 95618. Include each participant's full name, address, cell phone number and email. Your payment in full is your reservation. Your space will be confirmed upon receipt of your check. In the event the boat trip is cancelled by Monterey Seabirding, due to weather conditions, etc., participants will receive a full refund. Meeting details and accommodations information will be sent to all participants well in advance of the trip. For questions, contact Terry at tlcgdc@aol.com, or by phone: 530/758-0689.



CONSERVATION

Marin Audubon Conservation Committee reviews critical issues related to wildlife habitats and comments to cities, agencies, and other jurisdictions. To attend, phone Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057.



MARIN STREAM CONSERVATION AREA ORDINANCE PROPOSED BY COUNTY

Marin County Community Development Agency has released a draft Marin Stream Conservation Area Ordinance and initiated a process for adopting the ordinance. The ordinance would apply to all ephemeral, intermittent and perennial streams (outside of the coastal zone) identified by the Community Development Agency (CDA), formerly Marin County Planning Department.

The overall goal is to avoid siting development near streams, wherever feasible, to protect the active channel, water quality and flood control functions and associated fish and wildlife habitat values along streams. The ordinance would protect native creekside vegetation that provides foraging and nesting habitat and movement corridors for wildlife, supplies shade and food for fish, stabilizes creek banks and maintains water quality. When avoiding intrusion into the Streamside Conservation Areas (SCA's) is not feasible, the ordinance provides that such intrusion should be minimized.

Codifying policies in an ordinance is necessary to implement policies in the Countywide Plan. SCA setbacks for properties within the City-Centered Corridor as set forth in the Marin Countywide Plan are: a minimum of 100 feet from top of the bank for parcels more than 2 acres in size; 50 feet from the top of the bank for parcels from 0.5 acres to 2 acres in size and 20 feet for parcels less than 0.5 acres in size.

To gain approval for intruding into an SCA setback, an applicant would have to demonstrate the project would not adversely alter hydraulic capacity, cause a net loss of habitat acreage, value or function or degrade water quality.

Once adopted by the Supervisors, the ordinance would cover all development requiring a building or grading permit, or clearing land of any vegetation protected including heritage trees.

We have several suggestions to clarify and strengthen the ordinance: 1) Define "feasible." To ensure consistent application, there should be specific criteria that are used to assess whether or not it is feasible to avoid intrusion into SCAs. 2) Require an applicant to demonstrate that intrusion into an SCA would not result in adverse impacts to fish and wildlife species.

Past efforts to adopt stream protection policies have generated opposition from property

owners, most notably some San Geronimo Valley residents objecting to what they perceive as limiting their property rights. We urge owners fortunate to have sections of streams within their property to speak out to preserve these important habitats by supporting this ordinance.

Residents are all caretakers of the lands and their resources. Damaging even a small section of creek can adversely impact other up- and downstream segments. We reap immediate benefits when creeks are protected by being able to enjoy in our own backyard the wildlife that streams support. In addition, stream associated vegetation increases property values.

What You Can Do: Attend a hearing and speak in support of the ordinance, or write a letter or email in support. Planning Commission hearing is scheduled for May 13 and final approval by the Board of Supervisors is scheduled on June 18. All hearings are held at the Civic Center, Room 330, Board of Supervisors' Chambers.

UPDATES

BINFORD ROAD RV AND BOAT STORAGE TEMPORARY USE PERMIT

The property owner has submitted another version of this Boat and RV Storage project on Binford Road property, near Gness Field. The application is for a temporary (five-year) use permit to grade for access roads, outdoor storage pads and fencing on a 96,000-square-foot section of the larger site.

Our major problem with this temporary plan is that there would only be a five-foot buffer between the new road and the tidal areas of the Novato Canal (actually a segment of Black John Slough), and vegetation would be removed from that area for fire suppression. Black John Slough is habitat for Black Rail and Clapper Rail and both of these species depend on vegetated transition zone/buffers for protection during high tides. Why fire is a problem when the property is adjacent to tidal waters and there are no buildings is unclear.

A project that included numerous vehicle storage buildings strung out on filled lands adjacent to the Novato Canal was approved about four years ago for this property. The property owner could still build this larger project because approval of this smaller temporary project would not invalidate approvals for the larger project.

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Petaluma Marsh | 180 acres |
| 2. Bahia | 60 acres |
| 3. Simmons Slough | 144 acres |
| 4. Norton Avenue Pond | 4 parcels |
| 5. Black Point Parcels | 2 parcels |
| 6. Arroyo San Jose | 2 parcels |
| 7. Tidelands at Murphy's Rock | 34 acres |
| 8. Corte Madera Marsh | 1.8 acres |
| 9. Triangle Marsh | 31 acres |
| 10. San Clemente Creek | 4.34 acres |
| 11. Tiscornia Marsh | 20 acres |
| 12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio | 2 acres |

Capay Valley with Terry Colborn

With Terry Colborn

After a mid-week storm the skies cleared, giving way to a bright, crisp morning as thirty birders gathered in Esparto to join Terry Colborn on this annual field trip through idyllic Capay Valley in rural Yolo County, timed to coincide with the bloom of the hundreds of acres of almond orchards. At our first stop, the historic Capay Cemetery, final resting place for many of Capay Valley's early settlers and pioneer families, we found many of the usual suspects including a few **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, a pair of **Western Bluebirds**, **Acorn Woodpecker** and a beautiful male **Anna's Hummingbird** displaying from a nearby promontory. A baker's dozen **Turkey Vulture** were moving off of their roost. Several **Northern Flicker** and a **Nuttall's Woodpecker** announced their presence. Terry heard a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** drumming, which we tracked down to a nearby oak. A pair of **Hutton's Vireo** was seen chasing one another about, no doubt displaying courtship behavior. The cemetery is a known nesting site for this bird.

At the Capay Bridge, we first heard, and then saw a nice male **Phainopepla** perched on a tree-top near the road. We were able to get a scope on the bird for everyone to see its red eye and silky black crest. Views from the CR 85 bridge overlooking Cache Creek provided us with two **Violet-green Swallow** in among the several dozen **Tree Swallow**, two female **Hooded** and one **Common Merganser**. Right below us we watched as several **Lesser Goldfinch** bathed in a small pool, while a **Lincoln's Sparrow** put in a brief appearance.

On our post-lunchtime walk down CR 81 we added a number of new birds, including another **Red-breasted Sapsucker**, a singing **Bewick's Wren** and several **Oak Titmouse**, while a **Northern Harrier** flew gracefully over the green hillsides. Diane Colborn, Terry's wife, spotted a pair of **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, which



Photo courtesy of Richard Pavlek

White-tailed Kites

turned out to be a new bird for several folks. A **Cooper's Hawk** was perched briefly, as we watched a **Golden Eagle** soaring overhead. Len Blumin was able to capture a nice photo of several **Golden-crowned Sparrow** feeding on the petals of almond blossoms, something many of us hadn't seen before. We watched **Yellow-billed Magpie** checking potential nesting sites, as several pair of **Western Bluebird** and **Lesser Goldfinch** made for a nice contrast against the blooming almond trees.

We continued our birding pursuit with our last stop at the Rumsey Bridge, a site that has been pretty productive over the years. We were surprised to see a beautiful **River Otter** hauled out on the rocks just below the bridge; we watched as it soon swam upstream and out of sight. In the Gray Pines (formerly called Digger Pine) we spotted several **Great Blue Heron** on their nests in one of the very few rookeries in Yolo County. A pair of **White-tailed Kite** doing aerial courtship displays was joined by a third bird, which was soon driven off by one of the two kites; he clearly hadn't been invited to the party!

We enjoyed a great day in this wonderful little valley, and tallied 70 species for our efforts.

RESERVE TODAY

MAS/ACR Mother's Day Barbecue

Sunday, May 12, 2013

Gates open: 11 am; Lunch: 12 noon – 2 pm

Volunteer Canyon, 4800 Highway 1, Stinson Beach

We sold out again last year so don't wait. Now buy your tickets the easy way – on the MAS Web site: www.marinaudubon.org. You can also order them by sending a check payable to MAS to:

Mary Anne Cowperthwaite
141 Oak Avenue
San Anselmo, CA 94960

\$25 for adults, \$12 for kids 12 and under
Indicate your choice of quiche or chicken for each person for whom you are paying.

Remember to bring utensils, cups, bowls and plates.
Non-disposable preferred.

For more information call Mary Anne, 453-2216.

Hope to see you there!

GOOD NEWS!

We have just been advised that PG&E has installed eight bird exclusion devices along Atherton Avenue, four along Olive Avenue and several on School Lane. These devices hold the wires apart so raptor wings can't touch two of them, causing them to be electrocuted. This should avoid any further incidents such as occurred several months ago when three young Red-tailed hawks were electrocuted. Thank you PG&E

CHEEP THRILLS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Final results for the 2012 Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird County are in: 161 species and 40,622 individual birds were counted by 65 volunteer counters. It sometimes takes extra time to get the final count numbers because participants can be slow getting the information to compilers. The Cheep Thrills Count covers Northeastern Marin County to San Antonio Creek.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Andersons, Gary Bardwell, Janet Barth, Mary D. Brown, Georganne Brumbaugh, John Burns, Elizabeth Caroli, Mario Castellon, Sarah J. Channell, E. H. Clock, Dalila Cunha, Patricia L. Dion, Elizabeth Douglas, Genevieve Droulers, Cristian Ellaui, Anice Flesh, Ann Fricker MD, Mark Gideon, Susan Howard, Ellen Ingram, Valerie Klung, Mary Lynn Kunkel, Mrs. Lillian Lessler, Nick Letsos, Montine E. Levin, Juliene G. Lipson, Sherrill D. Mc Connell, Laura O. Mc Intosh, Michael McCrea, Jane Medley, Nancy Merritt, Don Miller, Curtis & Nathal Thames, Joyce Ning, Kaori Okada, Suzanne Rude, Joy L. Ruppensburg, King R. Sams, Alicia A. Schl, Ellen Schiles Williams, Joan Seebach, W. R. Shoemaker, Greg Shore, Ms. Parisa Soutlani, Ms. Susan Stingle, Ms. Isabel Stirling, Dietrich Stroeh, Joel Tabachnick, Jill Templeton, Melissa Thorne, Renee D. Tombe, Kyla Tripp, Brenda Underhill, James Walsh, Werner William, Sandra Wollenberg, John Zaklikowski

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS

Helen Austin, Mark Lindberg, Jessica Muller, Margurite Mary Murphy, Redwood Psychological Association (In honor of Jeff Martin), Hans Roenau, Brittmarie Throner

THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Noah Boyd, Ty Callihan, Bob Hinz, Marcia & Marlena Skall, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes



The Conservation Corps North Bay did the heavy work in preparation for replanting the creeping wild rye beds at Bahia

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA CREEPING WILD RYE BEDS REFURBISHED

A crew from the Conservation Corps North Bay worked diligently to revitalize our creeping wild rye growing beds at Bahia. The beds have been looking a bit sad due to rodent activity, poor soil and dry weather. Under the direction of Board members Jude Stalker and Lowell Sykes, the crew dug out the soil, reserved the creeping wild rye rhizomes that were in the beds, placed hardware cloth and plastic sheeting at the bottom to keep rodents out and keep water in, then replaced the soil.

Then on our usual Stewardship Work Day on the second Saturday of the month, volunteers replanted two of the beds with creeping wild rye rhizomes. Everyone did a great job, and the beds are on their way to producing more rhizomes for coming years.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The creeping wild rye nursery beds at Bahia were redone with hired and volunteer help last month so planting for the season is done. If rainfall continues to be very low, we may try to do some watering of the winter's plantings at both Triangle Marsh and Bahia. Otherwise, we will be removing the non-native plants before they set seed. No, it isn't quite like that movie *Groundhog Day!* We see progress. Radishes and some thistles flower first and Harding grass a few weeks later. Join us on a workday. See the progress for yourself. You would make a difference.

We have the tools, gloves and snacks. We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome. Rain cancels.

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturday: April 6, May 4

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive directly across from the main Ring Mountain trailhead.

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: April 13

Meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Dr. near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

If you would like to help, please contact Bob Hinz at rbthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

FEBRUARY 20 FIELD TRIP

Bahia Blue Oak Forest and Wetland Restoration Walk with David Herlocker

By Vicky Van Meter and Dede Sabbag

About a dozen of us joined Marin County Parks naturalist David Herlocker on a walk through the blue oak woodlands of Bahia in northern Novato. The sky was bright blue and the grasses on the hillside were vivid emerald. The shooting stars were in bloom and David explained how these wildflowers are "buzz pollinated." Bumblebees grab onto the flower and vibrate to dislodge the pollen. A pair of **Anna's Hummingbirds** was engaged in courtship display. The blue oak woodlands of Bahia and the associated diked baylands and salt marshes were saved from development by a coalition of environmental and civic groups, spearheaded by Marin Audubon. Over 6,000 oaks and important habitat would have been lost. David explained that the blue oaks are actually Oregon x Valley x Blue Oak hybrids. Bahia has the only blue oak forest in California that extends downslope to the bay, creating a unique ecological system of plants and animals.

Ruby-crowned Kinglets, White-breasted Nuthatches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Bewick's Wren, Oak Titmouse, American Goldfinch, Bushtits, Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Flicker, California and Spotted Towhee and others were heard and spotted. Many of the resident birds, such as the Bushtits and the cavity nesting White-Breasted Nuthatches, are early nesters, timing their nesting cycle before the arrival of migrants that compete for nesting sites and food resources.

We enjoyed watching a pair of **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** and a group of **Acorn Woodpeckers**. We saw **Red-breasted Sapsuckers**, which winter in the area, and spotted their characteristic



Oak Titmouse

holes in the tree bark. A brilliantly colored **Red-shouldered Hawk** flew low overhead several times and a **Northern Harrier** flew over the marsh.

After our walk we travelled to the western end of Bahia to see the restoration project underway. Phase 2 of the project is converting a large pond to tidal marsh. We enjoyed the vista of the marshes and the thousands of new plants that will eventually cover the upland areas. Here we saw **Western Bluebirds, Say's Phoebe** and **Western Meadowlarks**. Among the birds on the water were **Ruddy Ducks, American Avocets, Canvasbacks, American Wigeon**, one **Eurasian Wigeon**, and **Forster's Terns**. The count for the enjoyable day was about 40 species.

CEQA Works Update

CEQA Works, the new coalition to promote a strong California Environmental Quality Act had its first, and very successful, Advocacy Day and press conference in Sacramento in March. Our new senator for Marin, Noreen Evens (author of two pro-CEQA omnibus bills), was a featured speaker along with labor, health, environmental justice and tribal leaders. After the press event, members of the coalition visited key legislative offices.

There is nothing new to report on the twenty-six bills that have been introduced. There will be more after hearings begin on April 1.

In the meantime, **you can help by:**

Submitting letters to editors of your local newspapers explaining the importance and promoting the strength of this important environmental law. Points to emphasize include:

- The push to weaken CEQA is coming from developers and polluting industries.
- Adding loopholes to exempt development

projects and major pollution industries from environmental review is not in the interests of California citizens.

- The California Environmental Quality Act allows concerned citizens to hold industry and private interests accountable when public agencies fail to do so. This is what the law intended – it is not an abuse.
- Changing the law so that only “standards” of agencies apply, would limit the public’s ability to have meaningful input to control destructive development and protect resources in their local community and would not allow for a comprehensive analysis of impacts.

Finding out more about and joining CEQA Works at www.ceqaworks.org/take-action/

Making a financial donation for CEQA Works through the Planning and Conservation League Foundation.

Outdoor Cats – Single Greatest Source of Human-Caused Bird and Mammal Mortality

A new study based on review of more than 90 previous studies reports that outdoor cat-caused bird mortality is now estimated to be 1.4 to 3.7 billion and mammal mortality estimated at 6.9 to 20.7 billion individuals – far exceeding any previous US figure for cats.

The study, authored by Dr. Peter Marries and Scott Loss, research scientists at Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and Tom Will from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Migratory Birds and published in the research journal *Nature Communication*, offers the most comprehensive analysis of the issue of outdoor cat predation.

According to Dr. George Fenwick, president of American Bird Conservancy, “The very high credibility of this study (it employed scientifically rigorous standards for data inclusion) should finally put to rest the misguided notions that outdoor cats represent some harmless new component of the natural environment. The carnage that outdoor cats inflict is staggering and can no longer be ignored and dismissed.”

The magnitude of the mortality may exceed all other direct sources of anthropogenic bird and mammal mortality combined. Other sources of bird mortality include collisions with windows, buildings, communication towers and vehicle and pesticide poisoning. No estimates of any other anthropogenic (human-caused) mortality source approach the bird mortality



Photo courtesy of Debi Shearwater

House cat with an American Coot

this study calculated for cat predation.

It is clear that projects such as Trap-Neuter-Return programs are not stopping the carnage and are potentially harmful to wildlife. Yet they are implemented throughout the US without regard to harmful effects to native species.

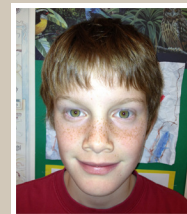
The majority of birds and 75-100% of mammals preyed upon by cats are native species. Each of our native species plays an integral role in our native ecosystems. By allowing the cat mortality to continue, we are altering the very ecosystem we as humans depend on. The message is **keep your cats indoors** – and join the American Birding Conservancy in their **Cats Indoors program**.

For more information go to www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html.

Junior Bird Watchers

By Wendy Dreskin

Junior Bird Watchers is an in-school program designed to teach elementary school children to identify birds in their neighborhoods. The program was developed by National Audubon Society (NAS). When NAS discontinued the program, Marin Audubon assumed sponsorship and Wendy Dreskin continues as the instructor, conducting the program in classrooms at several elementary schools. If you would like more information, please visit “Junior Birdwatchers” under the “Birds” tab on our web site at marinaudubon.org, or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



Parker Fritts is in 4th grade at Ross School. “I really like the time my friend, T.D., and I saw a Hooded Oriole in my backyard. We got out the binoculars and watched it fly around my pear tree, then fly up to a privet tree, ripe with berries, and start to eat.”

Tarek Elliott-Diab is also in 4th grade at Ross School. Tarek says “I like to bird watch because you get to see the bird’s behavior and what it is doing then, and it won’t fly away if you’re far away. That’s why I usually use binoculars to look at it closely.”



Casper Wilson is in first grade at Bacich School. “I really want to see a Western Bluebird because I like the orange on the chest, and because I’ve seen a Red-winged Blackbird and an American Coot and the other first grade birds.”

Berit Pigott is in first grade at Bacich School, too. Berit says her favorite bird is the Western Scrub Jay because it’s so beautiful.



THE Clapper Rail

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- April 13 **Stewardship Day**
Bahia
- April 26-28 **Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival**
www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org/site/
- May 12 **Mother's Day Barbecue**
Audubon Canyon Ranch
- May 18 **Field Trip: Big Rock**
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SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter supporting members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*, which you will receive as a MAS member. To better ensure we can continue our programs on the local level, MAS offers a separate chapter membership. Your membership in MAS will help us protect local habitats, resident and migratory birds and provide you with educational and enjoyable programs as well.

If you are not already a chapter supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors, relatives to join us, too.

You can also join or make a donation on our Web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to www.marinaudubon.org.

JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and the chapter. With this joint membership, you will receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits, however, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. We will receive, however, a portion of any new memberships that are generated by MAS, the local chapter. So we request that you send all checks for new National memberships to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

For NAS membership renewals, send your check directly to NAS.

Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**. For more information, please contact Ruth Pratt, Membership Chair at 415/453-2989.

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