



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

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

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8 7:30 PM

Birds and Natural History of Coastal Baja California

With David Wimpfheimer

The geologically isolated 800-mile-long Baja peninsula has allowed several bird and many plant species to evolve independently. The presentation will focus on the seabirds, shorebirds and other species that nest or winter along the rich estuaries and islands that are found both in the Sea of Cortez and on the ocean side of Baja California. A rich upwelling zone here provides food for one of the most diverse gatherings of fish and marine mammals on the planet. The sight of thousands of dolphins below the vermilion canyons that tumble down to

Photo courtesy of David Wimpfheimer



Black-throated sparrow

the gulf, along with images of boobies, tropicbirds, albatross, and Blue, Fin, Sperm and Gray Whales have enthralled naturalist David Wimpfheimer on over twenty journeys to this magical place.

David Wimpfheimer, a professional naturalist and guide, has taught classes and led birding excursions for many organizations for over twenty-five years. Many MAS members have benefited from his leadership and expertise.

Come at 7:15 PM to socialize and have refreshments before the program.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 12 7:30 PM

The Brazilian Pantanal: Birds and Jaguars in the World's Largest Wetland
With Paul Donahue

State of the Birds San Francisco Bay 2011



Photo courtesy of Glen Tepke, phouc.com/gepke

Least Tern population is stable.

The first ever *State of the Birds San Francisco Bay* report was released in October by PRBO Conservation Science and the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture. The report summarizes current knowledge about bird populations and trends in the Bay Area, touches on many factors that threaten bird populations and offers recommendations for protecting species.

In the overall, the report found most bird populations to be stable with some exceptions: riparian birds and two endangered species (Snowy Plover and Least Tern) populations have increased; Clapper Rail populations are still struggling; and, grassland and coastal scrub-chaparral birds are losing habitat. All habitat types support species that are at risk.

Shorebird numbers have remained stable since the 1990s, but there has been a geographic shift from the South and Central Bays to the North Bay. Baywide, Western Sandpiper appears to have declined while Willet and Least Sandpiper have increased greatly. Primary threats to shorebirds are loss of tidal flat feeding habitat, reduced populations of invertebrates that shorebirds feed upon, loss of high tide roosts and human disturbance.

Tidal marsh dependent species are stable to increasing. An exception is Song Sparrow which is decreasing in North Bay and Suisun Bay but increasing in the South Bay. Salt Marsh

Common Yellowthroat and California Black Rail are increasing. Primary threats to tidal marsh species are sea level rise, loss of habitat to urban uses, invasive plants, introduced predators and contaminants.

Heron and egret populations have dramatic variations from year to year, but are stable with an apparent slight decrease over the last five to ten years. Large between-year declines are related to heavy rainfall. Threats include disturbance of colonial nesting sites, loss and degradation of wetland feeding areas, nest predation and intense winter storms.

Diving and sea duck populations are generally stable but a few species are declining: Canvasback wintering numbers have shown a long-term decline; Scaup and Scoter are declining in the Bay and throughout North America. San Francisco Bay populations of these species represent an average of between 40 percent and 50 percent of all Scaup and Scoters counted in the Pacific Flyway. Their primary threat is reduced quality and quantity of wintering habitat including change in prey species composition due to invasive species, contaminants in the Bay, loss of herring stock, disturbance from boat traffic, oil spills, climate change and declining northern breeding habitat.

Cormorant (Brandt's and Double-crested) populations are stable. During the last 20 years, birds have returned to Alcatraz Island which they inhabited in great numbers prior to human settlement. Seabirds that nest on Alcatraz include Brandt's Cormorant and Pigeon Guillemot both of which nest nowhere else in the Bay. The largest nesting colonies of Western Gull and Black-crowned Night-Heron in the Bay are on Alcatraz.

Their populations have remained relatively constant during the last 20 years, except in 2009

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members.
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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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

We were thrilled to have had 120 volunteers from the National Charity League devote a day to help at Bahia. The group was made up of mothers and daughters who did an absolutely fantastic job removing all sorts of invasive plants on our 60 acre property (see article and photo on page 6). We are most grateful.

We hope you are gearing up for our Christmas Counts this year. This is the 34th year for our Southern Marin Count and we're excited about reinstating the Cheep Thrills Count. We hope you will join us on one or both counts. If you feel hesitant, do join us for the class being offered (see article below).

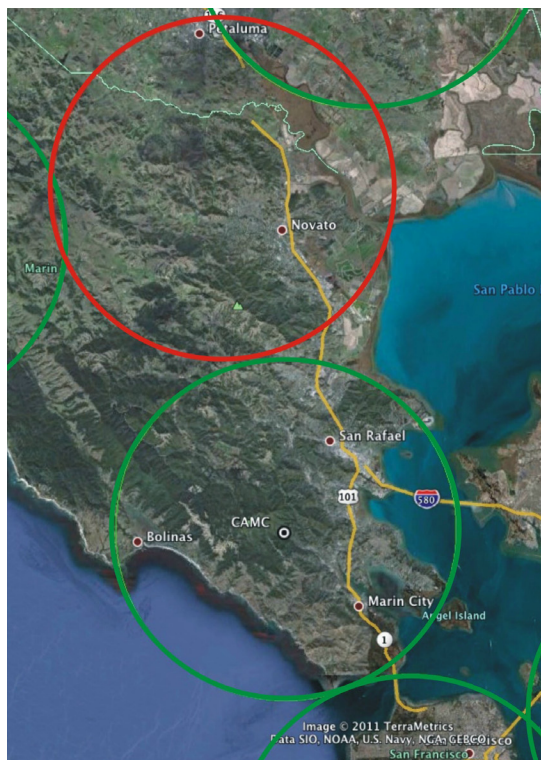
The *State of San Francisco Bay Birds* report recommends actions we can each take to help protect our native bird species. Neighbors of woodlands where there are Spotted Owl populations (this includes woodlands in the Larkspur/Kentfield area, and Samuel P. Taylor State Park) should avoid construction and loud outdoor maintenance activities, such as

tree trimming and leaf blowing, to the extent possible, particularly during nesting season. Currently, Spotted Owls are under stress from the more aggressive Barred Owl. Human presence and noise are particularly problematic in woodland habitats and adjacent to tidal marshes. Fast moving bikes are also disruptive and should avoid Spotted Owl habitats. All users of open space lands and marshes should speak softly. Voices carry outdoors more than most people realize. No further development should be approved near Spotted Owl or Clapper Rail habitat. Your sensitive behavior can help these species to survive in Marin County.

I will be off for a long trip to the Antarctic in January. I should have lots to report when I return. Look for news from other MAS volunteers in January's *The Clapper Rail*.

We hope you are enjoying the migratory waterfowl and shorebirds now that they have returned. Hope you all have a wonderful and peaceful Holiday!

Christmas Bird Counts – Volunteer Now!



You can sign up by filling out our web form at marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php or sending an e-mail to cbc@marinaudubon.org or calling Susan Kelly at (415) 497-4240 or Mark Forney at (415) 847-2837.

CHEEP THRILLS CBC – DECEMBER 15

The Cheep Thrills count circle covers the following important birding areas: Mount Burdell, Stafford Lake, Bahia, Rush Creek, Indian Valley, and some of the Nicasio Reservoir. It includes some of San Rafael, all of Novato, and a chunk of west Marin. You can see the entire circle on the map.

The Cheep Thrills compilation dinner will be held on December 15 from 5 pm to 8 pm at the Bahia Clubhouse on 3008 Topaz Dr., Novato. We'll serve vegetarian pizza and salads, and you can pay at the door (probably \$10 per person). Bring a plate, utensils, and a dessert to share. We encourage you to attend even if you don't plan to eat with us.

SOUTHERN MARIN CBC – DECEMBER 31

Can you imagine a better way to spend New Year's Eve than birding and partying afterwards with your friends? We've been conducting this count since 1975, and it's one of the top counts in the country both in the number of species seen (178 species last year) and number of participants (153 people last year). Observers

continued on page 6

We're very excited to be conducting two CBC's this year, the Cheep Thrills Count on Thursday, December 15 and the S. Marin CBC on Saturday, December 31. As always, we need plenty of help and we welcome birders of all levels. If you can't spend all day counting, please consider helping with the dinners or observing birds at your feeder for an hour or two.

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, December 1, 2011
8:30 AM to 12 noon
With Susan Kelly and friends

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

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 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 8:30 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

GRAY LODGE & SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Saturday and Sunday,
December 3 and 4, 2011
With Bruce Deuel

Join us for a winter weekend at the refuges. We'll spend most of Saturday at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area that is managed by the California Department of Fish and Game. Normally about half a million birds use this area in winter and favorable breeding years can bring more. We will walk a 2-mile loop observing birds until lunch, then hike out to the viewing platform to look for additional species. If time permits we will take a drive around part of the Sutter Buttes and then return for the evening fly-out.

Ducks and Snow Geese abound, and perhaps Sandhill Cranes will arrive in the late afternoon. At dusk great clouds of birds leave the ponds to go to the rice fields to feed (dusk = no hunters!). Then motel, dinner and get ready for Sunday's early morning walk along the Feather River in Oroville, where there will be a completely new cast of birds. From there we will caravan over to the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge arriving around noon for lunch near the visitor center. After a brief tour, we will drive around the ponds and fields that usually have new species missed elsewhere.

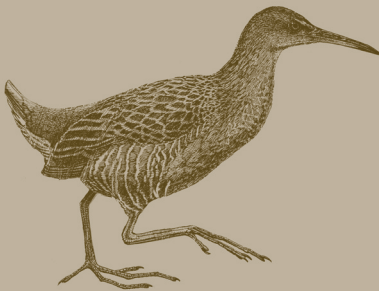
Please let me know if you plan to attend. Contact Vicky Van Meter at Vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com or 415-299-2514 (e-mail preferred). This fall, visitors to Gray Lodge must purchase a \$4.32 daily DFG pass in advance. The new system is complicated, so I will buy the passes for everyone once I have a head count. If you want to carpool, indicate if driver or rider and where you live. We will try to link you up with participants in your area so you can make your own arrangements.

Please be prepared for a bit of cold or rain. Meet at 10:30 AM Saturday at the large parking lot just beyond the small museum, well within Gray Lodge.

NOTE: Most people stay in Oroville Saturday night for an early start on Sunday for birding by the Feather River. A forecast of heavy rain will cancel.

Motels in Oroville: Villa Court Inn, 530/533-3930 (discount to MAS participants); Best Value Inn, 530/533-7070; Comfort Inn, 530/533-9673; Motel 6, 530/532-9400
Motel in Gridley: Gridley Inn, 530/846-4520

DIRECTIONS: From Marin to Gray Lodge, take I-80 to Davis, Hwy 113 north to Hwy 99 near Tudor, north to the town of Live Oak, west on Pennington Rd to the Gray Lodge entrance. Allow 3.5 hours.



WEST COAST WATER BIRDS STINSON BEACH AND BOLINAS LAGOON

Saturday, December 10, 2011
9 AM to 12 noon
With Jim White

Let's do ducks! There are around 20 species of ducks in this area of West Marin. Let's try to find them, and identify both male and females. We'll begin in Stinson Beach Park about 50 yards south of the restrooms on the high beach near the parking lot (directions below). We'll check the ocean and the sky at the beach before doing an auto tour of Bolinas Lagoon, where pullouts have good views but rather limited parking (so please carpool). We'll end with a sometimes soggy 1 mile walk on the Pine Gulch Creek trails (Marin Open Space, Bob Stewart Trail). Besides the ducks we'll look for other birds, including the many loons, grebes and shorebirds that winter here, and hopefully some raptors along the way.

DIRECTIONS: Take Highway 1 to Stinson Beach and turn into the parking lot about 100 yards north of the town center 4-way stop sign. There is ample parking here, but please carpool from here for the morning's trip, as parking is rather limited along Route 1 around the lagoon. Dress for cool breezy foggy weather, but hope for a calm sunny day in a beautiful area. Binoculars and scopes are helpful.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP Boat leaves from and returns to the Antioch Marina

Saturday, February 5, 2012
8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
With David Wimpfheimer

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' Delphinus for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. Ronn Patterson, a Bay Area historian and naturalist, is captain of the Delphinus and owner of Dolphin Charters. The boat is very comfortable and the outer decks provide views over the levees of the amazing array of birds found in the Delta during the winter. This rich area hosts a wide variety of raptors including uncommon species such as Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and Great Horned Owl. Large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Crane, Tundra Swan, Snow, Canada and White-fronted Geese, ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines make the cruise a highlight for birders. We also will learn about the history, ecology and politics of the levees and the Delta as we travel through its meandering channels.

The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$95. Deadline for reserving space and making payment is January 20, 2012. To register, please send the coupon on page 7 and a check for \$95 per person to Marin Audubon at Box 599, Mill Valley, CA, 94942. Please write "Delta Trip" on the envelope and check.

DIRECTIONS: Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions.

West Marin Big Day

With Keith Hansen

By Rich Cimino

Twenty-five birders assembled in a timely fashion in Point Reyes Station. The trip leader was Keith Hansen, well-known wildlife artist, naturalist, and enthusiastic and knowledgeable birder. The weather was most favorable for birders, which on Point Reyes may not be the best weather for seeing migrants or vagrants. We finished the day, however, with 105 species, with warblers making an appearance in our last hour of birding in Tomales Bay State Park. Keith's tutorials were of particular interest. Keith took the time to review three species of blackbirds side by side on the Spaletta Ranch: Brewer's, Tri-colored and Red-winged. A cooperative, posing **Willow Flycatcher** at the Fish Docks led to an interesting overview of the Flycatcher family. Back on the Spaletta Plateau, Keith explained the differences between **Northern Rough-winged** and **Bank Swallow** in flight, with additional commentary on **Violet-green** and **Tree Swallow**. Then we moved on to the gulls and terns on Drake's Beach. At 4 pm we had 94 species – six more to settle in at 100 species. Keith led the contingent on to Tomales Bay State Park – Heart's Desire Beach along the lower road beyond the ranger station. Within an hour and with the help of nine **Bushtit** (gotta love the Bushtits!), we had awesome views of **Wrentit**, **Brown Creeper**, **Hutton's Vireo**, **Townsend's Warbler**, **Hermit Warbler** and a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** or two. Of course birding has a social component. At 5 pm we all agreed that a glass of wine was the perfect way to end a Big Day, so off we went to enjoy time with the wine gods and a half dozen **Band-tailed Pigeon** for a closing flyover.

CONSERVATION

ROAD AND TRAILS WORKSHOP

The fourth Road and Trails Plan Workshop was held on October 29. Defining areas from which trails should be removed because of environmental damage or other impacts, trails that can remain, and new connections that are recommended on the 235 miles of trails and roads the county owns and manages were the major goals of this workshop.

Attendees of the meeting were asked to mark their trail preferences on maps showing the mapped Vegetation Zones: Legacy Zone for pristine areas with high resource value (such as endangered species); Restoration Zones (natural habitat zones); Enhancement Zone (lands that need enhancement), and Urban Interface Zones and information that was provided at the last Workshop.

My comments were to remove trails, wherever possible, through Legacy Areas (some are fire roads that cannot be removed), to remove redundant trails particularly in lands with endangered species, particularly Northern Spotted Owl and California Clapper Rails, and on or near our properties, particularly Bahia and Triangle marshes.

The next steps include developing a range of alternatives, analyzing the alternatives and preparing a draft Road and Trails Management Plan and EIR with public review and comment.

COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDAS

- **December 1** From 10 am to 5 pm, a special meeting is scheduled on the *Local Coastal Plan* (LCP) to discuss *Natural Resources*. MAS is concerned that the wetland policies are weak and could contribute to the loss of wetlands because they allow inadequate wetland buffers and mitigations for filling wetlands; tree protections are deficient; impacts of trails are not recognized and mariculture is actually encouraged on Federal parklands, where the county does not even have jurisdiction. See the October edition of *The Clapper Rail* for more detailed discussion of the LCP policies.
- **December 12** Hearing date for the *Grady Ranch Precise Development Plan* and Draft Supplement to the 1996 Master Plan and Environmental Impact Report proposed on the 239-acre Grady Ranch. This is the primary phase of a plan that was approved by the Supervisors in 1996 on these properties owned by Lucasfilm. Changes in the project have required preparation of a Supplemental EIR. The project proposes a 270,000 square foot digital technology-based film production studio with appurtenant elements including offices, wine tasting room, screening rooms, dressing rooms, overnight guest suites with parking etc., two emergency access roads, two rainwater storage and one 400,000 gallon tank, a new bridge over a

tributary to Miller Creek, a 900 square foot greenhouse and a realignment of Miller Creek. Modifications to Miller Creek tributaries are designed to "improve fish passage," and native vegetation would be planted along the creek. We are in the process of reviewing the plan and evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of the proposed mitigation. If you miss the hearing, you must submit written comments by December 13.

- **December 19** First public hearing on the *Golden Gate Baptist Seminary development proposal* on the Tiburon Peninsula. The project proponents seek to subdivide existing parcels into 93 separate parcels on Seminary Point, Seminary Knoll, and Seminary Vista East and West, and to build 93 residential units. Not all of the residential units would be on separate lots. The Seminary appears to be proposing to develop lands that their current Master Plan commits to preserve as open space. Many trees would have to be cut down, although it appears most would be non-native Monterey pine and cypress.

The Planning Commission meets in the Commission Chamber which is adjacent to the Supervisors' meeting room on the third floor of the Civic Center. Call the Community Development Department to verify the scheduled dates and times. Written comments must be hand-delivered or sent by US mail to the Community Development Agency, 3501 Civic Center Drive, San Rafael, CA 94901.

JOIN THE KING TIDES INITIATIVE

King Tides are extreme high tides that occur when the gravitational pulls of the sun and the moon are in alignment. King tides can show us how higher sea levels that are predicted with climate change may affect our communities.

The US EPA is sponsoring a King Tides Initiative to encourage people to take photos documenting the impacts of these unusual events. Last year photos taken during King Tide events documented impacts to private homes, public property and wildlife habitat across the state.

How you can help:

- Head to the coast or bay and take photos of the next King Tide
- Share your photos with the community — send to the EPA*
- Learn more about sea level rise, the King Tide Initiative and how you can participate — go to californiakingtides.org
Next King Tides: December 23 and 24, 2011; January 20-22, 2012.

*We'd love to have copies of your photos also. Just send them at 'Contact Us' on our Web site, marinaudubon.org.

State of the Birds report

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when there was a complete nesting failure (likely due to a low anchovy population throughout the California coast.). "I" beams and ledges on the Richmond and Bay Bridges serve as nesting platforms for Double-crested Cormorant. Their population has varied but has remained relatively stable over the last 26 years except, in 2009 when the anchovy population crashed. The primary threat to these island-nesting species is human disturbance (tourism and boating) which can cause adults to leave the nests; that leaves nestlings vulnerable to predation. Lack of food, loss of nest sites on human-created structures on the Richmond and Bay Bridges and Alcatraz, disturbance by public tourism, contaminants, and climate change also present threats. Upland habitats include coastal scrub-

The major colony of Least Terns on Alameda Island has increased by almost 10 percent since 1984 and appears to have stabilized.

chaparral, coniferous forests, grasslands, oak woodlands and riparian habitats. Stream restoration has increased dramatically and is the apparent reason for the estimated 20 percent increase in riparian birds. Redwood forest and oak woodland birds appear stable. Coastal scrub habitat, however, has declined by 27 percent and grassland habitats by over 45 percent. The National State of the Birds Report 2011 found similar declines for upland species. The primary threats to upland birds are habitat loss and degradation due to land-use changes, invasion of non-native species and climate change. A lack of appreciation for the value of chaparral and grassland habitat also contributes to their loss. These habitats are often thought of as eyesores or fire hazards leading to a "clear the brush" approach.

Endangered California Clapper Rail populations are decreasing due to invasive Spartina. Their population hit a low point in the 1990s due to predation by non-native red fox. The rail's future still remains tenuous. Threats include predators (rats and red fox), invasive Spartina, pollution, public access in or near tidal marsh habitats, and rising sea level which will drown tidal marshes.

Western Snowy Plover numbers have decreased from historic highs but more recently are showing an increasing trend in the South Bay. Threats

include predators, habitat loss, disturbance from public use and rising sea level.

The major colony of Least Terns on Alameda Island has increased by almost 10 percent since 1984 and appears to have stabilized in the last decade. Threats include avian predators, encroaching vegetation, low flying aircraft, loss of prey species, contaminants and potential development of the Alameda Air Station.

The primary Bay Area population of Northern Spotted Owl is in Marin County where they nest in both mature old-growth and second-growth forests of Douglas fir, coast redwood and other evergreen hardwood trees. Reproductive success appears to be generally high, but survival data, which may be more important to the overall numbers, are lacking. The Bay Area population is thought to be stable, but thorough monitoring is not available. The primary threat is competition for food and space with the more aggressive Barred Owls. Other threats include rat poison, loss of tanoaks to sudden oak death, loss of forest due to development, and human activities. Noise disturbance from tree trimming and other yard maintenance and construction can disturb owls during nesting and prevent them from feeding young. Genetic isolation is also a concern.

The report gives a brief review of habitat success stories, a number of which are in or close to Marin: Carl's Marsh, formerly a 14-acre fallow field at the mouth of the Petaluma River that was opened to tidal action in 1994 and is now a lush tidal marsh; West Marin Island, now a protected breeding site for herons and egrets off the San Rafael shoreline; Chileno Creek that now supports 33 bird species thanks to Mike and Sally Gale who restored the creek running through their West Marin ranch; Alcatraz where seabirds and other nesting species are once again thriving as a result of management to protect nesting birds (although they may be at risk due to recommendations of the GGNRA Management Plan); and Sonoma Baylands, an early restoration project just across the Petaluma River south of Highway 37 that now supports large numbers of shorebirds.

Recommendations to protect birds and their habitats include: increased funding for science; acquisition and restoration of remaining open space lands for habitat; prohibiting development on wetlands and lands adjacent to wetlands; limiting human access where values of tidal marsh and other sensitive habitats would be compromised; adopting and implementing regulations governing dogs and cats to protect endangered species; locating new boat launches away from sensitive habitats and supporting educational programs to help the public appreciate and value birds and the ecology of San Francisco Bay.

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Janet Allen, Earth Share of California, Sylvia Elsesser, Michael & Valerie Hancock, Giles & Elise Mead Foundation, PG&E Corporation Foundation (Matching Donation of R. Jennings), Jane Piel, Reliance Fund (MCF – operating support)

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

National Charity League (Betsy Alperin; Mary Baker; Leslie, Shaya & Brittany Barry; Kim & Mel Blue; Kirsten & Caroline Brockman; Morgan Buckley; Gisella & Carla Cardamone; Suzanne & Courtney Carswell; Susan Elliot & Sarah Christensen; Johnna Coats & Anna Garman; Adriene Coffey; Alex & Payne Cowley; Elena Daly; Anne & Maggie Doyle; Cindy & Katherine Daifotis; Patty, Jackie & Isabel Flax; Suzanne, Allison & Natalie Galuszka; Jenifer & Natalie Hartwell; Nancy & Jamie Hecht; Karen Henry & Gita Isola-Henry; Gloria & Alexandra Hood; Suzanne Jack & Elizabeth Jack-Schimmel; Katie Jarman; Sydney & Claire Joyner; Noreen & Isabelle Kashefi; Nicole & Shaelyn Kennedy; Danielle Kisseberth; Kris & Kelly Klein; Ally Klionsky; Joan & Alexandra Korngut; Hope & Maddie Kragh; Jackie & Nicole Long; Kim & Cassidy Lynch; Jill & Eliza Mantz; Lisa & Casey Mathews; Julie McMillan & Katie Baughman; Nancy, Cate & Maddie Neukranz; Cathy & Natalie Peterson; Karin & Lizzie Reeves; Eliza & Kira Rosenban; Sydney Soofer; Mansau, Kiana & Madeleine Tsau; Julie & Alyssa Urban; Katie & Julia Walter; Lucie Wells; Vicki, Gina & Ali Welisch; Ellie Zimmer and all the other NCL volunteers)

THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Cristina Albert, Bob Hinz, Jeff Johnson, Ashley Kelly, John Martin, Prem McMurdo, Linda Nicoletto, Ed Nute, Phil Peterson, Flinn Moore Rauck, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vicky Van Meter

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Heather Amato, Patricia Barrett, Brian S. Bean, Ann-Elise Blaisdell, Margaret E. Celani, Elaine Enjman, Sarah Fordney, Lisa Gordon, Shirley M. Grath, Frank Greene, Catherine A. Hosmer, Monika Kaplan, Ray A. Kelch, Linda Kramer, Justine Leinen, Robert & Leslie Minton, Barbara Madrid, Michelle Manzer, Jennifer McNealey, Tim Mossteller, Heather Murr, Janet O'Brien, Megan Pheif, Wendy Reichardt, Philip Sanderson, Greg Smith, Sofia Sokolowski, Elizabeth Swearingen, Terrence Vail

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP



Photo courtesy of Barbara Saleman

Lowell Sykes using our new mower.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Although planting will be underway in December, invasive non-native plants will continue to be a problem in other areas. So, in addition to planting, we will continue to remove invasive plants to allow the natives to grow and multiply. We have the tools and gloves. We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome to transform the landscape with us.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: December 3,
January 7

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: December 10
Thursdays: December 8, 22
Wednesday: December 14

We will meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Drive near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

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

COMMENT DEADLINES EXTENDED TO DECEMBER 9

The deadlines for comments on both the GGNRA Management Plan and the Drakes Bay Special Use Permit EIS in Point Reyes National Seashore have been extended to December 9. The Management Plan addresses potential changes, including development and habitat restorations, on GGNRA properties in Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. MAS urges you to comment on the Drake's Bay EIS in support of Alternative A which would end oyster production as scheduled on November 30, 2012. Three other alternatives propose 10 year extensions with varying production levels. MAS's preferred alternative for GGNRA lands in Marin county is Alternative 2 because it emphasizes natural resource preservation. For details on MAS's positions and where to send comments see the September and November issues of *The Clapper Rail*, found on the MAS Web site.

We are planning our major planting at Bahia and Simmons Slough to occur in mid-December. We are scheduled with the Conservation Corps North Bay for December 12 through 22.

The early rains have encouraged us to plant earlier than we usually do. We are trusting that

CBC

continued from page 2

in this CBC saw the most Hermit Thrushes (304) and Varied Thrushes (427) of any count in the United States.

This circle, officially named CAMC, is the southern circle on the map and covers these areas: Bolinas Lagoon, Audubon Canyon, Stinson Beach, Muir Beach, Fort Cronkhite, Muir Woods, Tennessee Valley, Sausalito, Tiburon, Ring Mountain, Mill Valley, Corte Madera, Larkspur, Alpine Lake, Bon Tempe, Phoenix Lake, Rock Springs, Fairfax, and some sections of San Rafael, including Terra Linda.

The S. Marin CBC compilation dinner will be held on December 31 from 5:30 to 8:30 pm at the Tamalpais Valley Community Center, 203 Marin Avenue, Mill Valley. Dinner will be vegetarian, with vegetarian lasagna, salad, and bread. If you plan to purchase a dinner, you must reserve and pay in advance. Make your check for \$14 per person payable to "Marin Audubon Society" and mail it by December 20th to Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, 141 Oak Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960. Please include the following information: Name(s) of the individuals you are paying for, contact e-mail and mailing addresses, and phone number. Please bring your own plate, cup, cutlery, and napkin and a dessert to share. We encourage you to attend the event even if you aren't purchasing a dinner.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WORKSHOP

CBC compilers Mark Forney and Susan Kelly will be conducting an informational workshop for CBC volunteers at 10 am on Saturday, December 3 at Richardson Bay Audubon Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road in Tiburon. It will include an indoor presentation/discussion

the rain won't stop. So far so good.

We welcome volunteers, in addition to the Conservation Corps North Bay, to help us get the maximum amount of weeds removed and plants planted. There is much to do. We will be planting native oaks, *Baccharis*, toyon and willow at Simmons Slough.

Lowell Sykes has been making good use of our new mower, made possible by a donation from the California Alpine Club Foundation, to mow lots of cocklebur and thistle.

Call Bob Hinz (383-8688) to let us know you are interested and to find out the specific dates on which we will be working and where.

and an optional outdoor walk where we'll practice identifying common birds. Both new and experienced volunteers are welcome. If you plan to stay for the outdoor walk, we suggest you bring a lunch.



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

Big Day for Bahia

By Jude Stalker

On Sunday October 23rd, we were blessed with the generous help of 121 volunteers from the National Charity League, Inc., Marin County chapter. This group of mothers and daughters arrived armed with enthusiasm and ready to work.

They did an incredible job of removing ice plant, stinkwort and fennel from Eastern Bahia and all seemed to be having a good time while doing it.

This partnership was set up by the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership (CVNL). Volunteers from CVNL and MAS pitched in to help keep things running smoothly.

A big thanks to everyone involved with such a successful event. We could not accomplish the good habitat restoration work that we do with out the help of so many wonderful people.

MARIN BIRDLOG – OCTOBER 2011

By Rich Stallcup

In 2011, climatic conditions are off a couple of clicks and for the first time in anybody's memory more unusual bird sightings were reported in October than in September. Instead of relentless northwest winds there were periods of calm with sun, reminding some of Indian summer.

A pair of **Harlequin Ducks** found near the Fish Docks 10/2 by the PRBO-Leica Youth Team was seen occasionally by others throughout the month as was a female **Long-tailed Duck**, in the same place (JE).

Several single **White-faced Ibis** were seen near the coast such as near Point Reyes Station (JE, BB) and on the Bolinas Mesa 10/22 (LS). A **Caspian Tern** off Rodeo Beach 10/23 was late, but over 1000 **Elegant Terns** at Bolinas through the end of the month was unprecedented. Most years all Elegants are gone by the end of September.

Pigeon Guillemots (mostly hatch-year birds) stayed in Drake's Bay almost a month longer than I can remember. Often we have trouble finding one or we miss the species altogether in the last week of September on our annual PRBO Birdathon. This fall I counted eighteen of them from one spot at the Fish Docks on October 26th (RS).

HAWKS AND SWIFTS

Ever vigilant GGRO observers report that sightings of **Broad-winged Hawks** have so far exceeded those of **Red-shouldered Hawks** this fall, but instead of exclaiming on the high number of Broad-wings, the question was, where are all the Red-shoulders? (AF)

Fewer **American Kestrels** and relatively more **Merlins** are being recorded in recent seasons and causes remain obscure (GGRO).

On one fine day in mid-October over forty **Black Swifts** flashed south over the headlands quickly on their way to the tropics. Travelling swifts have no time for milling around!

The only unusual shorebird was a female **Ruff** on Schooner Bay 10/26 (RS).

A young male **Costa's Hummingbird** at Bolinas 10/4 to 10/9 was the eighth species of hummingbird documented at the feeders behind Keith Hansen's Wildlife Gallery. We wonder if any other place in California has equaled this diversity. On 10/28 a **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, *the fourth one there this fall*, appeared at the gallery.

Still in Bolinas but at the PRBO Palomarin Field Station, a female **Broad-billed Hummingbird** was caught, banded, photographed and released. This was only Marin's second record of the species; the first, a blazing male was at the excellent feeding station of Margarita Luff in Bahia.

A **Philadelphia Vireo** found in the New Willows, O.P. 10/15 (MB, MR) stayed through 10/25 to the delight of many birders. Another "Philly" was caught, photographed and released at Muir Beach by PRBO banders.

Rare wood warblers were generally scarce but a few caused people to move around. Three **Blackpoll Warblers** were reported, the most unusual was foraging in ornamental trees outside the Flower Power Gift Shop in Point Reyes Station's financial district 10/8 (CB). A young male **Blackburnian Warbler** and a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** were in the pines at Hawk Hill in the Marin Headlands 10/7 (BS) and another Chestnut-sided was at the Fish Docks 10/15 to 10/19 (RS, m.ob). Most cooperative was the bright yellow young male **Prairie Warbler** at the Fish Docks 10/23 (MB, MR) that stayed and was admired daily throughout at least 10/30 (m-ob). Five or six **Palm Warblers**, most on the O.P., were below the usual number.

At least one **Red-throated Pipit** was with its American cousins at Spaletta Plateau, O.P. 10/26 (RS).

A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** found in the "Oven" in the Point Reyes Lighthouse Trees 10/16 (RS, HC) was seen through the seventeenth by many experienced birders. There are fewer than twenty records of this thrush for all of California, all-time ... but four have been in (and under) this same tree!

The only **Tropical Kingbird** I heard about in Marin this October was at the Fish Docks 10/16, though one was said (by someone) to have been at Drake's Beach a few days earlier.

Always a good time around here was an **Indigo Bunting** at the Fish Docks 10/18 (ES).

A **Nelson's** (sharp-tailed) **Sparrow** was caught, photographed and released at the Pine Gulch Creek mouth 10/26 by PRBO banders. A **Swamp Sparrow** was also banded there that day, and six or seven other Swamps were tracked-down. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was flocking with a *Zonotrichia* flock that included two **White-throated Sparrows** on the O.P. 10/26 (RS), and another Clay-colored favored the deck and gardens of the PRBO Palomarin Field Station 10/28 – 10/31 (SJ, PRBO) and, (of course) was caught and banded. Other White-throated Sparrows were reported, mostly from feeders in civilized Marin including *six* together late in the month (NW). The Marin record is twelve together at Jack Dineen's place in Inverness.

The only for sure longspurs were one **Chestnut-collared** and one **Lapland Longspur** with pipits in a plowed field near the Abbott's Lagoon Trailhead 10/30 (HC, RS) and after (m-ob, JM).

Looking ahead (or back as you read this), will November be the new October?

OBSERVERS: Scott Anderson, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **CB:** Courtney Beuchart, Len and Patti Blumin, **MB:** Mark Butler, **HC:** Heather Cameron, Renee Cormier, **JE:** Jules Evans, Mary Anne Flett, **AF:** Allen Fish, **GGRO:** Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, **KH:** Keith Hansen, Jill Harley, **SJ:** Scott Jennings, Susan Kelly, **WL:** William Legge, Bill Lenarz, **JM:** Jeff Miller, Dominik Mosur, **M.OB:** many observers, Claire Peaslee, **OP:** outer Point Reyes (milepost 37.44 on), **PRPO:** PRBO Conservation Science, Don Reinberg, **MR:** Mary Anne Rotella, Maggie Rufo, **RS:** Rich Stallcup, **LS:** Lynne Stenzel, **ES:** Emilie Strauss, **BS:** Brian Sullivan, **NW:** Nick Whelan, Hilary Winslow.

Elegant Tern



Photo courtesy of Glen Topke, pbosc.com/teptke

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Info: ptreyescbc@gmail.com
- December 31 **Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count**
- January 21 **Cosumnes River Preserve Crane "Fly-in"**
With Terry Colborn
- February 5 **Sacramento Delta Boat Trip**
See Field Trips, page 3

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The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter 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 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 marinaudubon.org.

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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.

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