

THURSDAY, APRIL 9 7:30 PM

Seasons of the Sea: A Social & Natural History of the Gulf of the Farallones

With Roger Harris



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SAVE GALLINAS CREEK RIDGWAY'S RAIL HABITAT! Oppose SMART's Environmentally Damaging Path Along Gallinas Creek

SMART is planning to construct the bike/pedestrian path through the Silveira/St. Vincent's seasonal wetlands and Gallinas Creek's tidal marshes that are habitat for the endangered Ridgway's Rail. A path may sound modest, but this path would be 12 feet wide and perhaps wider depending on whether the design calls for it to be on solid fill or pilings. Some sections would be divided into two paths. Letters of opposition are needed to save this important habitat.



The proposed multi-use path along the SMART tracks would go through and destroy Ridgway's Rail habitat.

Surveys have found that the largest population of endangered Ridgway's Rails in San Pablo Bay inhabits the tidal marshes along Gallinas Creek. SMART's environmental document does not even mention that endangered species are present.

SMART's plans show the path through the marshes, even though there are upland locations for it that would not be in wetlands.

The plan to construct the path through Gallinas Creek marshes north to the Highway 37 area is revealed in a SMART environmental document *Wetlands Only Practicable Alternative* on their website. This document appears to be intended to comply with Clean Water Act Guidelines requiring alternatives analyses be prepared for non-water dependent projects proposed in wetlands. The SMART analysis, however, fails to comply with the Guidelines nor does it comply with the exception it is claiming that provides for circumstances where there actually are no other practicable alternatives, such as to correct erosion.

SMART defines the path project so narrowly

that it can only be located in their right-of-way. Of course this is baloney. They have moved the path away from the right-of-way in other places already, such as away from MAS's property at the county line, other sections in Sonoma County, and even in other sections of this segment.

To make matters worse, SMART proposes to use the marshes they created at Mira Monte as mitigation. Until now, SMART has claimed Mira Monte was purchased as mitigation for wetland impacts in North Marin and Southern Sonoma Counties. Now they are changing their mind. Our position has been and is that the Mira Monte restoration is too far from Gallinas Creek, about 11 miles, to be adequate mitigation for impacts to that creek. Marshes at Mira Monte would not serve the Gallinas Creek Rail population that would lose habitat for this path.

The path would also bring many other impacts that would further reduce habitat. It would bring people, many with dogs off leash probably running in the marsh (there would be little or no enforcement even if there are leash laws through this corridor with its different

continued on page 5



Photo courtesy of Alan D. Wilson

Tufted Puffin

One of the world's great wildlife areas lies immediately off our Marin County coast. Fully a quarter of the seabirds born in California hatch from the vast rookeries of the Farallon Islands, including the iconic Tufted Puffin and half the world's population of the Ashy Storm-Petrel.

More species of marine mammals can be seen on a day boat trip into the Gulf than practically any place else. Grey Whales migrate through and endangered Blue Whales feed in these rich waters. The largest sea turtle, the critically endangered Leatherback, frequents the Gulf on occasion as do Killer Whales and Great White Sharks.

The social history is equally fascinating. Before chicken farms were in Petaluma, seabird eggs were harvested from the islands. More recently, the islands have seen spectacular recoveries of Common Murres, Northern Fur Seals, and Northern Elephant Seals.

Roger Harris will tell us about these conservation success stories. A Certified Wildlife Biologist, he has been leading pelagic trips to the Gulf for 30 years, most recently with the Oceanic Society.

Come at 7:15 PM for refreshments. The meeting begins at 7:30 PM.

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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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Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

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

6:30 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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Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing 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 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

I'm looking forward to the Women's Hall of Fame event on March 26. I am still amazed at my great honor to have been chosen to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. I work hard but everything I have done—all the advocacy for wildlife, wetlands and other habitats, and the habitat restoration and acquisitions—could only have been accomplished with the support and involvement of the Marin Audubon Board. For baylands acquisitions, the partnership with Marin Baylands Advocates has been essential. Both of these organizations have been willing to take the risks necessary to purchase property.



Photo courtesy of Katy Zaremba

Jude Stalker

was nominated by the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership of Marin, an organization that also assists us in getting volunteers for our workdays so they know Jude well. This is a well deserved honor. We're thrilled that Jude is a volunteer for us.

We had booths at a number of festivals over the last few months: the Flyway Festival,

Congratulations to Jude Stalker for being recognized as Volunteer of the Week of February 28 for working with volunteers to restore native plant habitats on Marin Audubon Society lands. Jude

Richardson Bay Waterbird Festival, and Sausalito Herring Festival. Thanks to our volunteers who staffed our tables: Jude Stalker, Vicky Van Meter, Martha Jarocki, Katy Zaremba, Jane Medley and Helen Lindqvist. Thank you all.

It is nominating time again for membership on our Board of Directors. This year we have current Board members nominated for reelection: Jude Stalker, Ed Nute, Barbara Salzman and our newest Board Member who was appointed to serve an unexpired term, Katy Zaremba. Our elections will take place May 14 before our Speaker Series program which is MAS's Annual Meeting.

Do join us on Mother's Day at Audubon Canyon Ranch for our Annual Picnic (formerly Barbecue). This is a Marin Audubon event to benefit Audubon Canyon Ranch and Marin Audubon Society. It is a fun relaxed day in a wonderful setting of Audubon Canyon Ranch's Volunteer Canyon.

There are no more spaces left in Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris's Birdsong Class. We apologize to anyone who was too late for the sign-up. We also have great field trips. I am very pleased to announce that Jim White and Bob Battagin will be doing their "Birding in Marin" series again in the coming year. Thank you, Jim and Bob.

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY'S

Mother's Day Picnic

Sunday, May 10, 2015, 11 AM to 3 PM

Volunteer Canyon, 4800 Shoreline Hwy 1, Stinson Beach

Tickets: \$28 for Adults, \$12 for Children 12 and under. Buy online at marinaudubon.org or contact Mary Anne Cowperthwaite at 415/453-2216 or 415/521-8942



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

Happy servers: Flinn Moore-Rauck, Mariah Baird, Jo Kreider and Martha Jarocki

Don't miss this fundraiser for Marin Audubon and Audubon Canyon Ranch. Enjoy family, fun, and fabulous food in a truly spectacular nature preserve. This year ranch guides will be on hand for guided walks and nature will take care of the rest. The picnic and hikes will be at Volunteer Canyon, which is not usually open to the public, so the opportunity to visit there is special. Griffin Canyon, where the heron rookery was located, is still closed to the public.

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.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS**SAN RAFAEL**

Thursday, April 2, 2015

9 AM to 12 PM

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

On the first Thursday of each month we meet for a birding walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds just north of McInnis Park. Susan and Len are our gracious hosts. Birders of all levels are welcome. Each month the avian cast of characters will change, and we'll try to keep track of newly arriving species. 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 bird families, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books and birding etiquette. Try to bring a pair of binoculars, as well as some water. We'll be walking about 2 miles on the flat levees that surround the ponds.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then go east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch Rd., and go about 0.5 mile to the end of the road at the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. Late arrivals should easily be able to find the group. There are rest room facilities only at the parking area.

OLOMPALI STATE PARK**NOVATO****No. 12, last of the Birding in Marin Series**

Saturday, April 11, 2015

NOTE: This is the second Saturday in April, not the third.

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

The oak savannah on the north/east slopes of Mount Burdell will be alive with singing, nesting and migrating birds. We will focus on songs to locate and identify birds. We have a reasonably good chance to find the 8-10 birds needed to reach our goal of 200 species on this 12-month 'Birding in Marin' series with April's returning woodland species. Birding in Marin participants who are interested in receiving a list of the species seen during the course of our 12 field trips may request one by contacting Jane Medley at janermedley@gmail.com.

Thanks to all of you who have joined us on some of these birding walks, helping to make them enjoyable and interesting. Thanks especially to Bob Battagin, Jane Medley, Dave MacKenzie and Vicky Van Meter for all of their help.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 to the Atherton Avenue/San Marin Drive exit in Novato. Head west, crossing over Hwy 101, then turn north onto Redwood Boulevard to the park entrance on the west side of the highway. Note this is a new entrance. You can no longer enter the park directly from Hwy 101. We will meet in the large parking lot. There is an \$8 entrance fee, paid through self-registration. There is a portable toilet in the parking lot.

MINES ROAD AND DEL PUERTO CANYON

Saturday, April 18, 2015

7 AM to 4:30 PM

With Terry Colborn

This year Terry will lead a one-day Mines Road trip. 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 all-day trek will start in Livermore on Saturday morning. There are a number of hotels in Livermore for those wishing to spend Friday night and thus eliminate the early Saturday morning departure from home.

This is a very popular springtime 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: tlcbirding@gmail.com, 530/312-9947; www.TLCBirding.com.

JEAN AND JOHN STARKWEATHER**SHORELINE PARK****SAN RAFAEL**

Sunday, April 19, 2015

12:30 to 3 PM

With Rich Cimino

Join guide Rich Cimino for an easy bird walk during a low tide. We will bird the shoreline of San Pablo Bay for diving ducks, grebes, peeps and gulls. We will also look for the Puget Sound variety of White-Crowned Sparrow. Bring your scope, water, snacks. We won't break for lunch, but there are restaurants nearby for lunch after our walk. Restrooms are available at the bird walk halfway mark (Target Store). Meet in the parking lot for the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park trailhead. Light rain will not stop the walk; a heavy rain will cancel.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 to the Bellam Blvd exit. Proceed to Francisco Blvd., which is the access road next to I-580. Head east (toward the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge) for about 1½ miles. You will see a Bay Cafe sign at the Bay Park Center. Turn left and continue straight to the trailhead parking area. For GPS, use the Bay Cafe address, 2165 Francisco Blvd., San Rafael.

AUDUBON CANYON RANCH'S MODINI MAYACAMAS PRESERVES HEALDSBURG

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

9 AM to early afternoon

With Rich Cimino and David Self

Audubon Canyon Ranch recently began managing this beautiful 3,300-acre preserve in the wilds of northern Sonoma County. The property features diverse habitats in a rugged landscape, including oak woodlands, pine forests, grasslands, natural springs and streams and serpentine outcrops. Rich Cimino will be our guide to the birds, and David Self, the Resource Ecologist for the Preserve and a botanist, will be with us to talk about the landscape, wildflowers and fascinating natural and human history of this property.

There are no bathrooms or facilities on the Preserve but stop at the charming Jimtown Store on Hwy. 128 just before you reach Pine Flat Road for a great breakfast or coffee and use the restroom there.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy. 101 north past Healdsburg to the Lytton Springs Rd. exit toward Alexander Valley. Turn right on Healdsburg Ave. for about 0.7 miles. Turn left on Alexander Valley Rd. for 3.8 miles to Pine Flat Road. Continue on Pine Flat Road for about 4.5 miles. Pine Flat Rd. is paved but narrow in places. We will meet at the Ferguson Spring pullout. The GPS address is 8000 Pine Flat Road. Allow at least 1½ hours from central Marin.

Carpooling: Send me an email, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com, with the subject line "Mayacamas." Include your name, phone number, town you live in, and whether you can drive or need a ride. I will email you the list and you can arrange your own carpools.

BIG ROCK/LOMA ALTA LUCAS VALLEY

Monday, May 5, 2015

8 AM to 12 PM

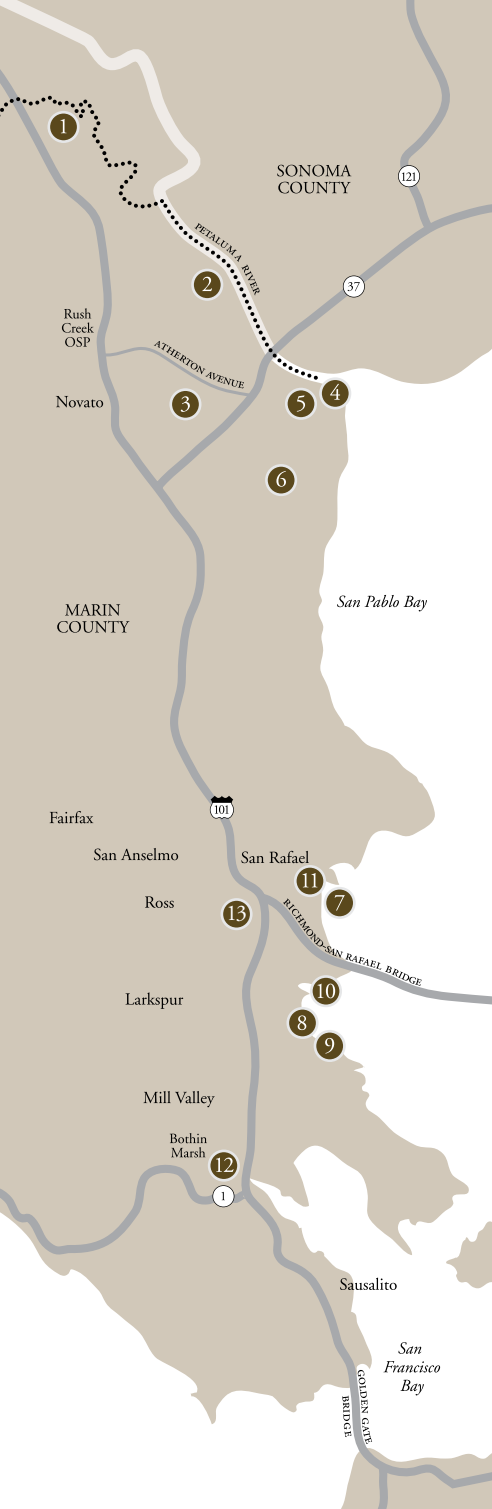
With Dave Herrema and friends

The north slope of Loma Alta above Lucas Valley Road is high and dry with great vistas. This is not the place for a lot of species, but we should see some birds you may have not seen before, such as Grasshopper, Rufous-crowned and Lark Sparrows, Horned Larks and Lazuli Buntings. Western Meadowlarks should provide the melody and Western Bluebirds are plentiful. This is also a great place for raptors. All are welcome to join us for a leisurely walk of about two miles roundtrip on a wide, graded road. Some of this is uphill. We will start early in the cool of the day but please bring a hat and plenty of water.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 to Smith Ranch/Lucas Valley Road exit; head west on Lucas Valley Rd. Big Rock Trailhead is about 5 miles west of Hwy 101 on Lucas Valley Rd. The trailhead is on top of the rise and a large solitary rock, "Big Rock", is on the right. Park on the south side of the road (turn back by making a safe turn on a driveway a bit further along on the right). Trail heads south from the starting point.

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.



CLOSE THE GAP

We're working away to provide to funding agencies the necessary information that they need to approve the final funds to purchase the Corte Madera Marsh Expansion Project. For example, they need to check surveys, contracts, and the appraisal. So, although the end is in sight, our work is not finished yet.

We'll be going before the Supervisors in April or May for a grant to help with the acquisition. We'll also be resubmitting our application for funding to the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant program. We scored high with the first application and were encouraged to reapply. We'll also be applying to the Wildlife Conservation Board for funds for the restoration. In addition, we've signed a contract with Audubon California to receive Wimberly Foundation funds for the acquisition.

Furthermore, we're in the process of getting more specific information about restoring the site, including a preliminary design which will enable us to get a better estimate of costs for the environmental review and construction.

We submitted an application to the Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission for funding for signs and planning necessary to bring our request for restoration funding to the State Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board.

In case you did not contribute earlier and want to join us in making this important acquisition and restoration happen, you can still donate. Just send your check to our Post Office Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

OTHER CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

This past month MAS submitted comments on:

The Novato General Plan revisions to the Natural Resources element. The City of Novato has been updating its General Plan, which the state requires every 10 years. We submitted comments for a City Council workshop that focused on proposed changes to the current Plan from staff and the city's advisory committee. Our comments generally supported the draft policies and programs, but we made some recommendations to clarify and strengthen them. Our recommendations included: that a buffer of 100 feet be required from the edge of streambanks and wetlands, that only wetland-dependent projects be allowed in wetlands, and for allowable projects that a 2:1 mitigation ratio be required.

Black Point Community Plan As described in last month's newsletter, we suggested ways to better protect and enhance habitat for wildlife and, in anticipation of sea level rise, to better describe how the flood control system is managed. We found the draft Plan to be generally positive in its intent to protect natural resources but it could be strengthened. We suggested a "bird friendly backyard" program.

Petaluma River Boat Launch Marin County Parks has applied for its designation as a Water Trail site. We submitted comments that emphasized the presence of endangered species in adjacent tidal marshes and that signs must inform people not to land on marshes, enter sloughs or approach endangered species, migratory waterfowl or shorebirds that overwinter in the Bay Area. We also noted that the site is "already broadly accessible" and suggested that encouraging additional use is neither necessary nor desirable.

Altamont Wind Inc.'s Application to extend their permit to use old-generation turbines for another three years. Altamont Wind Inc.'s (AWI) hearing before the Alameda County Board of Supervisors was pulled from their March 10 agenda by Supervisor Valle in order to have a meeting with AWI, a labor union and Audubon California. At the rescheduled hearing on March 24, the Supervisors, on a 3-2 vote, approved the extension of AWI's permit for another three years. Based on past data, this will unnecessarily kill an estimated 1,900 birds including golden eagles and owls. AWI argued that they are being "upstaged" by bigger competitors and their 40 employees would lose their jobs. Why jobs would need to be lost by replacing old with new turbines is unclear. Audubon, led by Audubon California, is considering legal action.

The Corte Madera Inn The Town of Corte Madera has conducted several workshops, the last one featured the owner of the Corte Madera Inn explaining his project. It became clear that his proposal is a cookie-cutter design reportedly provided by Marriott. The owner thinks the Marriott design will be more lucrative, and he admitted that "there is no alternative for the pond to be kept." He says he can only get 147 rooms if the pond remains—but he needs 187. He did not present any design or data to support that claim. The message was basically that he doesn't want to keep the pond.

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
13. Cal Park	<1 acre

OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

Marin County Parks (MCP) has been busy. In its first attempt to develop an Inclusive Access Plan, MCP conducted an Open House last month. What is an Inclusive Access Plan? MCP defines it as a “plan to increase the overall equitability of access to County open space and give open space users increased flexibility in how they make use of the preserves according to their individual abilities.” In other words it would make their preserves more accessible to more people with different abilities.

Various special needs groups were invited. Folks with disabilities and seniors in particular spoke up. Input from the audience about the kinds of experiences and access they want on the preserves included that people want to feel safe, to have a natural experience, to have diverse experiences in different habitats, to have encounters with wildlife and rare plant species, and to use preserves to recover, exercise and walk their dogs. MCP will be reviewing and

upgrading its design standards for trails. Staff said they want a system of representative trails open to all people but that all trails would not be so accessible to all users. MCP staff will be scheduling a workshop in April or May.

MCP scheduled the first workshop to solicit input on proposed formal road and trail designations on Open Space preserves for late March. The meeting addressed six preserves in Region 1 in Southern Marin: Blithedale Summit, Baltimore Canyon, King Mountain, Camino Alto, Horse Hill and Alto Bowl.

Unfortunately our newsletter timing was off for us letting you know about either of the meetings above. Check the Marin County Open Space District’s website for notices of other meetings that will address other Preserves. You can also subscribe to the Open Space District’s announcements and/or the Road and Trail Management Plan web pages to receive notices of meetings.

Gallinas Creek

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jurisdictions). The increased activity means that the Rails would not be able to use the marshes adjacent to the trail. Noise, trash, possibly lights, would be additional impacts.

The tidal marshes along Gallinas Creek are, without a doubt, the most environmentally sensitive stretch of marsh along the rail line in Marin County. It is bad enough that the train is going through this marsh—the multi-use path should not.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Choose any or all of the points below or information above and put them in your own words.

- The proposed project would result in significant and unnecessary loss of tidal marsh that is endangered species habitat and would further diminish the usability of remaining marsh habitat nearby. Seasonal wetlands would also be impacted.
- The wetland loss must be avoided by moving the path to uplands, as SMART has done in other sections.
- It is not necessary for the path be located in the right-of-way. There are alternative locations that would avoid wetland impacts including existing streets, areas near Highway 101, and between Highway 101 and the rail line.

To view the document, Google "SMART." Go to the bottom of their home page, click on "Documents" and then click on "Environmental Documents."

Send your comments to SMART and Caltrans, as well as the regulatory agencies listed below, so they are aware of objections early in their review process. SMART identified March 15 as the comment deadline, however, that was not a deadline set by any regulatory agency. SMART needs permits from the regulatory agencies to construct this path. The agencies have not begun

their review but you can let them know of your interest now:

Paul Klassen, Pathway Project Manager, SMART
5401 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 200
Petaluma, CA 94954
pklassen@sonomamarintrain.org

Tom Holstein, Associate Environmental Planner
Caltrans Office of Local Assistance, District 4
111 Grand Avenue
Oakland, CA 94623
tom.holstein@dot.ca.gov

Xavier Fernandez
Regional Water Quality Control Board
1515 Clay Street, 14th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Bryan Matsumoto, Regulatory
Army Corps of Engineers
1455 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Tim Dodson
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
P.O. Box 47
Yountville, CA 94599

Ryan Olah & Joseph Terry
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Endangered Species
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

THANK YOU TO DONORS TO ACQUIRE THE CORTE MADERA PROPERTY

Linda Bartera, Greenbrae Improvement Club, Inc., Mike Moser, Ruth & William Pratt, Dr. Jill Sideman, Rosemary Wakeham

THANK YOU TO DONORS TO SUPPORT MAS OPERATIONS

Phyllis V. Akers, Anonymous, Collin Cochrane, Susan Connelly, Leslie Ellison, Susan Hayes, Robert Johnston, William Lary, Mark Lindberg, Susan Mackenzie, Claudine Minchella, Mike Moser, Anne Murphy, Margaret Murphy, PG&E Corporation Foundation (employee match), Purple Lady/Barbara J. Meislin Fund, Redwood Psychological Assn. (In honor of Dr. Jeff Martin), Christine A. Rice, Smith Ranch Marketing Associates (In memory of Noel Andrews), United Healthcare Group, Charles M. Vadalabene

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Aileen Berg, Barbara Bonthien, Ava J. Brumbaum, Patricia M. Burbank, The Child, Mary Debyl, Eve Erdmann, Lisa Faibish, Alice Flaherty, Robert J Flynn, Isabel Folkers, Judy Frumkin, Greenbrae Improvement Club, Marcia Hahn, Doug R. Howell, Randi Kerlan, Michael Knibbs, Glenna E. Letsinger, Margaret Murphy, Jody Newman, Kirsten Nielsen, Lennart Olsson, Elizabeth Onesto, Kathleen Peters, Michael Pollock, Lynda Roberts, Bruce J. Sams, Wilma M. Schmidt, Susan & David Schwartz, Smith Ranch Marketing Associates, Ariel Spilsbury, Karen M. Torney, Bettina Voelk, Priscilla Wanat, Anne Williams

‘BIRDING IN MARIN’ TO CONTINUE

Thank you to Jim White and Bob Battagin for their generosity in leading their Birding in Marin series. The April Olompali walk will be the last of 12 monthly trips that have taken us on a seasonal tour of Marin County birding hotspots. Thanks also to Jane Medley and Dave MacKenzie who helped with these trips.

The good news is that Jim and Bob and have offered to lead this series again! The first trip of the new series will be on May 16th to Muir Woods, Redwood Creek and Muir Beach. Check the MAS website for more information.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

Monitoring

In compliance with our BCDC and Army Corps of Engineers permits for the tidal marsh restoration project, Phase 1 of which MAS completed in 2008 and Phase 2 which was completed in 2013, we've completed two monitoring events to evaluate the progress of the marsh. Phase 2 was the excavation of several breaches in the West Bahia bayland.

These have not been monitored yet. The monitoring so far has found that the site is progressing generally as expected.

We've negotiated with Gillenwater Engineering to do a third monitoring that will include measuring water levels, sedimentation levels, erosion of the breaches and revegetation. Marsh restoration, after filling or diking, is a gradual process that normally involves eroding of breaches due to the flowing of tidal waters in and out and the deposition of sediments that raise the level of the mudflats.

When tidal waters are diked off from marshes, ground subsides. It takes some time for the mudflats to rise high enough for the seeds of marsh plants, that are deposited along with sediments, to germinate and grow. The length of time it takes for marshes to restore naturally varies depending on a number of factors including the amount of sediment in the water and how much the land has subsided. Monitoring is important to document progress, catch possible problems and add to the fund of knowledge about marsh restoration.

Volunteer Work Days

There are two volunteer groups scheduled to work at Bahia in the next few months. A group of students from Marin Montessori Junior High School worked in mid-March and a group from PG&E is scheduled for April.

Ongoing Vandalism

Vandals continue to break fences, destroy native vegetation and move logs to get to the berm surrounding a former decant pond used for disposal of material dredged from the Bahia Homeowners channel. This area is located near the trailhead to the County's Bahia property. Our project left the berm in place and designed the landward habitat, which had been raised



Photos courtesy of Jude Stalker

On the second Saturday of March some of the Bahia volunteers planted gum plant, *Grindelia*, a native marsh plant that grows near the high tide line

with the dredged material, as seasonal wetlands. In spite of the fact that there are two other trails going in the same direction, users continue to destroy habitat to get their way and walk on the berm. Very discouraging.

Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District

(MSMVCD) reports that the two species of salt marsh mosquitoes have been found breeding together this year, a circumstance they have never seen before, and because of this they have needed to spray earlier. They spray both at the seasonal pond at Bahia and at the Simmons diked wetlands. These are the species that transmit West Nile Virus.

The MSMVCD is seeking approval on a mail-in ballot measure to tax residents of the counties for the vector services they provide. Although the amount designated for MAS's properties is small, it is an addition to the tax bill we must pay. We have been advised we cannot be exempted.

SIMMONS SLOUGH

Shelterbelt Builders planted the last of the native plants we ordered from The Watershed Nursery for planting this year. We also had our annual visit from our NRCS staff during which we visited both the south and north sections of the property. All went well.

TRIANGLE MARSH

A group from the Marin Country Day School is coming to work at Triangle in early April. After nearly four rainless weeks volunteers on the first Saturday of March watered many of this winter's plantings. They also continued to clear Harding grass in areas where we would like to plant native species next winter.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Thanks to a generous end-of-season donation from The Watershed Nursery, planting season will go an extra month. We will be doing a little more planting in April, and we will need to follow up with extra care through the summer. We must not, however, ignore the blooming non-native plants such as radish and thistle. Removing them saves soil moisture for the "good guys."

Act locally and join us on a workday. 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.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: April 4, May 2

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: April 11, May 9

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

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

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Josef Alavi, Gabriela Bello, Breana Biggi, Greg Brown, Dave Chenoweth, Laurie Etheridge, Jeff & Kevin Gill, Bob Hinz, Steve Maddox, Nic McKim, Steve & Cole Parker, Mack Parlamis, Flinn Rauck, Eliza Ross, Ben Rousseau, Caroline Spence, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Zander Taaffe, Harrison Turner, Lacey Winthorne, Katy Zaremba, Ali Canter's Habitat Restoration class from Marin Montessori

THANK YOU WATERSHED NURSERY

The Marin Audubon Society thanks The Watershed Nursery in Richmond for donating native plants some of which we have already put into the ground at Bahia. The Watershed Nursery supplies many of the native plants for our restorations and offers hundreds of California natives.

MAS NEEDS

We are in need of someone to help make our newsletter better by taking photos at some of the sites that are the subjects of our conservation articles. Call Barbara Salzman if you are interested.

MARIN BIRDLOG: FEBRUARY - MARCH 2015

By Josiah Clark

Brown Boobies have been observed almost continuously along the coast from San Mateo to Marin all winter with Chimney Rock being one of their favorite spots. Three individuals were seen at once there on 2/19 (RC), a mega rarity in the county until just last year. It is the warm water that is bringing boobies from the south, with no end in sight, along with larger numbers of wintering **Heermann's Gulls**, **Brown Pelicans** and even **Elegant Tern**. The warm sea surface temperatures are also linked, of course, to this warm, dry weather we have been having.



Glen Tipton, gtipton@plaza.com

Black-vented Shearwater

Another seabird that has been recorded in unprecedented numbers this season near shore in our region is the **Black-vented Shearwater**, rarely seen from shore in Marin. On 3/9 a mega feeding frenzy off Rodeo Beach dominated by 80,000 **Common Murres** hosted up to twenty of these highly pelagic tubenoses usually seen in fall and rarely observed by March (WL).

The GGNRA hosted other interesting birds in west Marin with the first ever recorded **American Dipper** for Muir Woods on 3/2 (MM). A **Common Poorwill** in Tennessee Valley follows a long tradition of their sparse presence there and elsewhere in the grasslands of the county. This one was calling near the parking lot on 2/20. Typically one used to be reported sitting on the cement path at night; this is the first calling one I have heard of. Could they breed here?

The big show stopper county rare bird for the month was surely the continuing **Black Vulture** in Bolinas that showed up in February and was last reported 3/8 (SO). After eluding most northbay birders for over a year, it finally settled down in Bolinas. It was often seen hanging out by the big **Turkey Vulture** roost, which is appropriately situated right above the Bolinas Cemetery.



Photo courtesy of Len Blamin

Black Vulture

Observers and Acronyms RC: Roy Carlson, BF: Betsy Finn, MM: Mia Monroe, WL: William Legge, MP: Matt Perry, SO: Sherri Oster

Novato Scout Builds Bird Boxes for Simmons Slough

By Vicky Van Meter

Michael Blofeld, 16, a member of Novato Boy Scout Troop 42, built 14 tree swallow nest boxes and donated them to Marin Audubon as a community service project for his Eagle Scout rank requirement. Michael says he chose this project because his sister volunteers on Audubon projects and he felt nest boxes would benefit local wildlife in Simmons Slough near where he lives. Michael planned the project and provided the leadership for the 12 scouts who helped him assemble the boxes. Local stores donated the materials. Michael says he spent 120 hours on the project.

Marin Audubon maintains 45 nest boxes in the 144-acre Simmons Slough property. Our tireless board member, Lowell Sykes, built and installed the original boxes many years ago. [Editor's note: Vicky Van Meter and Dave Herrema now maintain and monitor MAS's nest boxes at our



Photo courtesy of Tim Blofeld

Michael Blofeld's Eagle Scout project produced 14 tree swallow nest boxes for MAS's Simmons Slough property in Novato.

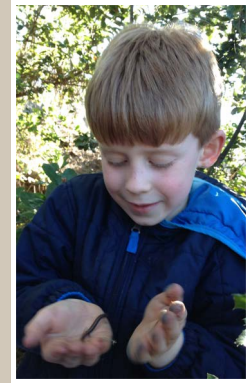
Simmons Slough property.]

Every year volunteers clean the boxes so they are ready for the spring nesting season, which is now underway. Thank you, Michael, for your contribution.

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. When National Audubon 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 website at www.marinaudubon.org, or contact Wendy at 415/457-3949.



Mati Settles is a kindergarten student at Mark Day School. While birding on a recent trip to Hawaii he was excited to see a Nene, an endangered species.



Xavier Senini is a kindergarten student at Mark Day School. His most exciting sighting so far is a White Pelican.



The Rail

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SAVE THE DATE

- May 2 **Stewardship Day**, Triangle Marsh
- May 2-3 **Heron Days on Clear Lake**
www.redbudaudubon.org
- May 5 **Field Trip:** Big Rock/Loma Alta
With Dave Herrema and friends
- May 7 **Field Trip:** Las Gallinas
- May 9 **Stewardship Day**, Bahia
- May 12 **Field Trip:** San Francisco Birding
Hot Spots
With Alan Hopkins
- May 19 **Field Trip:** Santa Rosa Ninth
St. Egret/Heron Rookery

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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 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 website 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**.

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