



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13 7:30 PM

Subspecies for Birders

With Joe Morlan



Joe Morlan

Dark-eyed Junco

When we see a bird that looks different, or doesn't quite match the picture in the book, is it a different species or perhaps just a different subspecies or other type of variation? Modern field guides illustrate some distinctive subspecies, but what exactly is a subspecies? How do subspecies differ from other kinds of variation within or between species? How are these variations properly classified and why are these distinctions important? Joe Morlan will outline some of the more identifiable subspecies while providing a perspective on the subspecies concept itself in what promises to be an entertaining and informative presentation.

Joe Morlan has taught field ornithology at City College of San Francisco since 1978. He is the coauthor of "Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area" and "Birds of Northern California." He has served as Chair of the California Bird Records Committee and was the recipient of the 2010 ABA Ludlow Griscom Award for contributions to regional ornithology. His evening birding classes start 27-28 September in San Francisco. Visit <https://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/fall16.htm> for details.

Northern Spotted Owl Listed As Endangered in California

On August 27 the California Fish and Game Commission listed the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) as a state endangered species. This reflects the steady decline in the population of this species. The decline in the population at the rate of 3.8 percent annually, is up from 2.8 percent just five years ago. NSO was listed in 1990 by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened species and, as such, is subject to all of the protections of the Federal Endangered Species Act. Listing is only effective if property owners pay attention and act to protect the owl.

The Northern Spotted Owl is a forest- and woodland-dependent species. Its range extends from Washington State through Oregon with the southernmost distribution limit in Marin County. The population here is considered by some to be relatively isolated with limited gene flow indicating that it warrants special management considerations. Spotted owls in Marin are found in second-growth forests or mixed stands of old-growth and mature conifers, Douglas fir, coast redwood, bishop pine, mixed conifer hardwood, mixed evergreen hardwood as well as remnant old-growth stands of coast redwood. Closed-canopy live oak woodlands may also be used as roost sites and occasionally for nesting (Jules Evens). The multi-layered closed-canopy provides a variety of roosting opportunities and aids in thermoregulatory behavior under differing weather conditions. Nest sites occupied in previous years are commonly used again.

Free from the intense pressures of logging operations that occur in the Pacific Northwest, which is the primary reason for their



endangered status, NSOs in Marin are under different threats. Threats here come from other kinds of human activities: aural (sound) and visual disturbances, non-native species (dogs and to a lesser extent barred owls), and from habitat fragmentation and destruction. Habitat destruction results from trail building, both legal and illegal (often called social trails), and tree removal. Trails destroy vegetation and cut across intact habitat. Unauthorized trails are created by people who walk or ride across vegetation destroying the plants and who cut trees and understory. Private property owners also cut trees. Disturbance comes from human presence and noise from recreational users, including walkers, many with dogs, and bike riders, who are increasing in number as this activity grows in popularity. Even bird watchers, particularly photographers often trying to get too close, add

BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED!
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MAS is 60! Join us in celebrating this milestone at the **Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary**, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon on **Saturday, October 15, 2016** from **2 to 4 PM**. Enjoy other Marin Audubon folks, special speakers, tasty treats and beverages. Sign up at www.marinaudubon.org. Number of attendees limited so act fast!

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.

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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Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org

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

MAS's 60th Anniversary Celebration is coming up on October 15. We invite members to join us to celebrate. Directions for signing up are on page 1. In addition to tasty snacks and good company, special speakers will include: Supervisor Kate Sears whose District includes the Richardson Bay Sanctuary; Supervisor Judy Arnold who has been a huge supporter through the years in our acquiring and otherwise protecting multiple bayland properties; Dr. Martin Griffin, one of our original founders; Ann Thomas representing Marin Baylands Advocates which has been our partner organization in acquiring baylands for more than 20 years; Stuart Siegel who has designed many of our marsh restoration projects; and biologist Roger Harris who has been a longtime supporter, field trip leader and program presenter. Our messages are often about problems, threats, things going wrong and the need for comment to get changes. This will be a chance to celebrate successes. Come and meet this dazzling array of folks and help us welcome in the next 60 years. Donations are welcome to defray the costs of our party. Please send checks to P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

It is not comfortable contemplating suing an agency that, for the most part, we have supported and has supported us in our acquisition, restoration, education and conservation efforts. In the case of the Northern Spotted Owl, the County Open Space District is apparently acting on other motives, e.g., to satisfy

biker demands and to show trail progress with spending Measure A funds. One thing is clear, they should be following the precautionary approach, but they have not been. In words of our biologist, Dr. Shawn Smallwood, "In the face of high uncertainty when addressing potential impacts to a rare or precious resource such as the federally listed northern spotted owl, the Precautionary Principle would have the analyst err on the side of caution." Under the Precautionary Principle more active uses would not be introduced into NSO habitat. We will be working with the OSD to try to influence them to take a precautionary and more environmentally responsible approach to protect Northern Spotted Owls and their habitat.

If you have a bit of time to contribute and want to join an exciting organization that takes action, contact Phil Peterson (415/828-4780) to find out more about joining our Board. We have two positions open. See page 5 for details.

Do take advantage of an unusual and spectacular phenomenon currently taking place at McNear Brick and Block along Point San Pedro Road in San Rafael. Go out to see the tens of thousands Vaux's Swifts funnel into the tall chimneys to spend the night. This awesome ritual usually continues through October with peak numbers in late September and early October. As many as 30,000 birds an evening have been observed usually beginning 30-60 minutes before sunset.

Northern Spotted Owl

continued from page 1

to the disruption. Young spotted owls, not yet skilled fliers, can land on the ground and are vulnerable to attack by loose dogs.

In Marin, NSOs are found on federal lands, PRNSS and GGNRA, on MMWD lands, State Parks and Marin County Open Space District (OSD) lands. There is also the perhaps unusual phenomenon of having nest trees very close to, or even on, private property. Home repair or construction activity has caused owls to abandon nests. There are proposals currently in Ross to remove a nest tree and in Larkspur to remove an ancient redwood.

As far as we are aware, most of the public agencies that own land in Marin manage NSOs and their habitats with care and caution. The Marin OSD, as part of their effort to establish a defined trail system, has been planning to include unsanctioned social trails, even those rarely used, without adequately considering the impacts on NSO. Some of these trails threaten NSOs and their habitat directly because they

are immediately adjacent to nest trees and/or cut through and fragment NSO habitat. Unauthorized trails are often narrow and some very steep, gullied and unsafe, and many are little-used. Designating them as system trails means they might be made wider and safer with more even surfaces, will have improved trailheads, and will be publicized on the OSD and other websites. All of this will attract more users into the spotted owl's forest habitats. Some use will be at night when the owls are active. The OSD allows night riding and recommends that bright lights be used for night riding.

Listing as endangered can be an important step in recovering NSO, but ONLY if private and public owners and regulators of NSO habitat act to protect the species, its nesting and foraging lands. When planning for endangered species, caution should be followed. Management decisions should be based on providing maximum protection for endangered and other special status species, not special interest groups such as cyclists. Otherwise, in our view, the Marin population is headed for a decline.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one-day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, snacks, water, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Jane Medley, 559/760-1551, janermedley@gmail.com.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

THE PONDS AT THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD)

San Rafael

Thursday, October 6, 2016

9 AM to Noon

With David Sexton, Susan Kelly, and friends

The Las Gallinas ponds are the birding community's nickname for the treatment ponds and surrounding agricultural fields and tidal marsh at LGVSD's Wastewater Treatment Reclamation Project. The area includes two treated wastewater storage ponds, a freshwater pond with islands for nesting habitat, and several miles of flat levee trails. It attracts thousands of birds, including waterfowl such as ducks and geese; waders such as herons and egrets; songbirds such as blackbirds, wrens, sparrows and finches; hawks such as Northern Harriers, White-tailed Kites and Red-tailed Hawks; and falcons such as Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. Marin Audubon Society has cataloged over 200 species of birds within the area and eBird currently lists over 237. Let's see how many we can find!

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. Especially good for beginners, this casual walk on two miles of flat trails is fun and informative. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, and there are usually several experienced birders to assist. You don't even have to arrive on time because we spend the first 30-60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond and the group is easy to find.

LGVSD provides these trails for public access and as part of the 500-mile San Francisco Bay Trail (see baytrail.org). For more about the LGVSD reclamation area, visit www.lgvsd.org/facilities/reclamation.

WHAT TO BRING: Plenty of water and snacks. Binoculars and bird guide—if you have them.

FIELD CHECKLIST: Click [HERE](#) for an field checklist for LGVSD (data from eBird, current as of 8/15/16) or go to <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B5u4vu7JITepbDgwZTkyVWNhQmc>. Once the list appears, click the "download" icon in the upper right corner of your screen (a down arrow with a line drawn under it) and the PDF file will be saved to your computer.

DIRECTIONS: Exit Hwy 101 at Smith Ranch Rd and drive east on Smith Ranch Rd, toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about 0.5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There is an outhouse in the parking area for public use or you can use the bathrooms at nearby McInnis Park.

ABBOTTS LAGOON

No. 10, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, October 8, 2016

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Please join Jim and Bob in exploring Abbotts Lagoon in the Point Reyes National Seashore. Plan to meet by 8:30 AM in the parking lot on Pierce Point Road. Fall migration south

along the Pacific coast brings many birds to this place: ducks and geese, shorebirds, raptors, even sparrows and pipits. Tufted Duck, Greater White-fronted Goose, Baird's Sandpiper, Ferruginous Hawk, Clay-colored Sparrow and American Pipit are a few of the birds that we may find. We will get a look at this migration and many of the birds that stay for the winter. This should be an excellent field trip and will be good exercise.

DIRECTIONS: Allow about an hour and a half travel time from San Rafael. Follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd (SFDB) to Olema. If traveling from Stinson Beach, go north on Hwy 1 to Olema. From Olema continue north on Hwy 1 and take the second left turn on SFDB. Continue through Inverness, turn right (north) onto Pierce Point Rd and drive until you come to the Abbotts Lagoon parking lot on the left (west) where our group will gather.

COAST TRAIL & FIRE LANE TRAIL

Point Reyes National Seashore

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

8:30 AM to 12:30 PM

With Todd Plummer

Join Todd for a looped birding hike along the Coast Trail and Fire Lane Trail in Point Reyes National Seashore. The hike covers about 5 miles up and over a scrub-covered hill, through Douglas fir and bishop pine stands, along a canyon edge and statuesque rock formations to the shore. Then return along the riparian corridor of the flat Coast Trail. Signs of jackrabbits, foxes, and bobcats abound. We might see migrant warblers and raptors, grebes, scoters, loons and other seabirds, and sandpipers below the mile-long bluff hike. We may encounter a variety of sparrows and wrens, possibly owls and marsh birds. You may even catch a glimpse of a garter snake near the upland spring. Todd will focus on bird vocalizations to aid in IDs and will definitely be checking out flowers and butterflies along the way. We will take our time, including a break for snacks.

DIRECTIONS: Take Limantour Rd from Bear Valley Rd and follow signs to the Clem Miller Environmental Education Center. We will depart by foot at 8:30 AM from the parking lot near the Environmental Ed. Center (marked as the Laguna Trailhead on the national seashore map). We will return to our cars around 12:30 PM.

MIDDLE HARBOR SHORELINE PARK

Port of Oakland

Monday, October 17, 2016

10 AM to 2 PM

With Rusty Scalf

Join Rusty in this unique setting for a truly urban birding experience! This birding hotspot right in the midst of the Port of Oakland is a great place to study shorebirds in good light with the Bay Bridge and San Francisco skyline in the background. Waterbirds present may include diving ducks, grebes, and terns.

We will be walking on level, paved paths with some travel on sandy areas. Bring a snack and water as we shall be there during

lunch. Restrooms are available in the parking area. If you arrive late due to traffic, you should be able to find us birding along the shoreline.

DIRECTIONS: Middle Harbor Shoreline Park is located at the end of 7th St. For navigation technology or Google Maps, use 2777 Middle Harbor Rd, Oakland, CA 94607. This address is important as there is a second entrance half a mile away, which can be confusing.

NICASIO RESERVOIR

Thursday, October 20, 2016

9 AM to noon

With Bob Battagin & Adam Donkin

In recent years the September through October shorebird/raptor migration window at Nicasio Reservoir has yielded 15 raptor species and 20 shorebird species, many of which we hope to observe on this field trip. We will meet at the backstop to the baseball field in Nicasio. We will start with a meander around the very small but birdy town of Nicasio, and then head to nearby Nicasio Reservoir to look for resident and migrant waterbirds and raptors.

DIRECTIONS: The baseball field is in the center of Nicasio on Nicasio Valley Rd. Nicasio can be reached by taking the Lucas Valley Rd exit from Hwy 101 to the end and then turning right on Nicasio Valley Rd. Those coming from the south can take Nicasio Valley Rd through Fairfax and San Geronimo. For GPS, the address of the Rancho Nicasio Restaurant across from the ball field is 1 Old Rancheria Rd, Nicasio.

LEFT OF THE FAULT: POINT REYES

BIG DAY BLAST

Point Reyes Station

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

7:30 AM to 4 or 5 PM

With Keith Hansen

Join renowned bird artist Keith Hansen for a full, fine-feathered day of fall birding at Point Reyes. Sometimes thought of as "too late" for fall migrants, November is often an under-appreciated time for finding rare birds. We will attempt to see at least 100 species "west of the San Andreas Fault"! We will meet in Point Reyes Station and car-pool to the Outer Point hitting as many of the migrant traps as is possible. Time permitting we'll increase the list by hitting the Teal Ponds, Heart's Desire Beach, and maybe Bear Valley and Five Brooks.

This is an all-day trip that is not for the faint of heart or those just looking for a leisurely bird walk. Bring a lunch and plenty of liquids. Be dressed for good, to less than good weather. Feel free to bring a scope. Only a big storm will cause us to cancel.

There is no charge for this trip but sign up is required, as the number of participants is limited. Contact Rich Cimino from 9 AM Monday, October 10 to Friday, October 26 if you wish to sign up. Email Rich at yellowbilledtours@gmail.com or call him at 925/353-0266. After 5 PM October 26 the trip slots will be filled and the participants notified. Any vacant slots after that will be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis.

MAS EFFORTS TO PROTECT NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

As reported in last month's *Rail*, alarmed by proposals for designating narrow human- or animal-made trails as system trails, MAS contracted with the law firm of Roseau and Drury to represent us and file a law suit, if necessary, to protect this species. Dr. Shawn Smallwood has also been engaged as our biological consultant.

Dr. Smallwood's review of the OSD's Negative Declaration for the Fairway Trail system (consists of Fairway and Valle Vista trails) in the Camino Alto Preserve, identified a number of deficiencies in the analysis of potential impacts to the Northern Spotted Owl. The assessment was confined to the nest tree only, but a nest is more than a structure built or used by birds. Nesting is the "ability and accessibility of prey needed to produce young from a nest and the ability to return in following years to nest again." He reported that it is likely the NSOs in the Camino Alto Preserve currently have to expend considerable energy to travel broadly to forage because the forest patch where the nest and the Fairview trails are located is too small to support a pair, and it is bounded by neighborhoods and fire roads which limit foraging. Additional energetic costs would be needed to survive following the habitat loss and other impacts from trail expansion and subsequent increased recreational use. They would have to fly further to hunt. Startle reactions to the increased number of human visitors would be more frequent. Impacts on its primary prey species, Dusky Woodrat, are also a concern. Abandonment of nests and nest sites could result.

New and expanded trails within the Camino Alto Preserve are likely to attract more use. Habitat fragmentation and loss would increase. A number of other trails are also being considered and constructed in the Camino Alto Preserve including the Valle Vista, Octopus and Middagh Trails as well as others. None of these other trails, the designation of which would likely adversely impact NSO and their nest sites, have been addressed together in terms of habitat loss and impacts on wildlife. There has been no cumulative impact analysis, nor has there been any attempt, as far as we can see, to avoid impacts to the owls.

We were pleased that the county has revised the Negative Declaration to remove the Fairway trail from being designated as a

system trail at this time. They are proceeding with improvements to the Valle Vista trail, the other trail in the Camino Alto Preserve that is close to the Fairway trails. We would have preferred that neither of these trails be designated as system trails. We expect this may just be a delay—the OSD may be back wanting to make the Fairway Trail a designated trail.

GIACOMINI PRESERVE

Although the location may be different, some of the habitats are similar to those in the Camino Alto Preserve and the issues are the same, but the process was even more egregious at Giacomini. Although this Preserve has nesting Spotted Owls and the habitat is larger, less developed and more diverse, there was no opportunity for public comment. You may recall from last month that the county issued an Initial Study, in which it claimed there were there no potential impacts, filed the necessary paperwork (a Notice of Determination) with the state, and then began work five days later. The proposal to systematize trails in the Giacomini Preserve currently focuses on the Contour Trail complex (which includes Contour, Vista Hamaca, Wiggler and Sinaloa Trails). There was no appeal process and the only recourse was to go to court which we stated we would do. In response, the county offered a tolling agreement; they would not designate the trail as a system trail during the tolling agreement. We will use this time to try and work out a course of action that will better protect the owls.

We have now visited the site of the nests with our biologist to determine potential impacts and measures to protect NSO from these impacts. Several of the trails proposed to be added to the system are very near NSO nests.

The OSD is proceeding at an unnecessarily fast pace to designate trails. This contributes to the failure to assess specific and cumulative impacts adequately, to not following its own policies to protect special status species, and to an unclear and insufficient process for public input. All trails in a preserve that are being considered for designation as part of the system should be subject to review of potential environmental impacts and a cumulative impact analysis of all of the contemplated trails in one region together. Impacts often are revealed to be far greater when analyzed cumulatively than when analyzing each individual project. The

public must have the ability to comment on all trails designations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Tell Acting Parks Director Max Korten (mkorten@marincounty.org), Supervisor Kate Sears (ksears@marincounty.org), Damon Connolly (dconnolly@marincounty.org) and Steve Kinsey (skinsey@marincounty.org) that you want Northern Spotted Owls and their habitats protected on Open Space District lands, and that social trails near NSO nests should not be added to the system. Other messages are: adequate environmental assessment of the habitat conditions for NSO and the potential adverse impacts of proposed trails. The OSD should SLOW DOWN to allow adequate assessment of possible adverse impacts and review of compliance with policies developed to protect these owls and other wildlife. In accord with the OSD's Strategic Plan policy 3, a strategy to protect special status species should be prepared before any more trails are proposed for designation in NSO habitat.

REGION 3 WORKSHOP

There is evidence of a change in approach, as reflected in the way this public workshop was conducted by the OSD as compared to the first two workshops. At the Region 3 (Loma Alta, Loma Verde, Pacheco Valle, Ignacio Valley and Indian Valley) workshop held in August, the OSD staff made an effort to inform the interested public about the proposed trails in advance so others, besides bikers, knew about the trails under consideration.

Compared to Regions 1 and 2, there were relatively few changes recommended in this preserve. Eventual designation and conversion to multiuse system trails were recommended for Ponti Fire Road (Pacheco Valle), Pebble Beach Fire Road (Loma Verde) and the Pacheco Pond Fire Road (Indian Valley). Most of the existing trails not proposed to be designated would remain as they are until some future time when they are budgeted for decommissioning.

Most importantly, the approach, while still trying to provide for all users, has more emphasis on protecting habitat for special status species. NSO habitat in this preserve is not being considered for designation as

part of the trail system, and badger habitat is also being avoided. Some unofficial trails that are steep, dangerous and unsustainable are proposed for closing.

While there are sound reasons for the trail closures, some bikers continue to press to keep open steep and unsafe trails.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Tell Supervisors Connolly and Arnold, in whose districts this preserve is located, and Acting Director Max Korten (email on page 4) that the OSD proposal for system trails protects wildlife and provides public trails for all users. Do not bend to the insatiable demands of a few bikers.

SHOULD HIGHWAY 37 BE A TOLL ROAD?

This question is being debated by a committee of elected officials from Sonoma, Napa, Solano and Marin Counties and of agency representatives because of a proposal by United Bridge Partners (UBP), a private company that has already developed a similar toll road in Virginia and is currently constructing another. The third meeting to discuss how or whether to move forward with considering the proposal by UBP was held in early September.

UBP proposes to own, fund, build, and operate the now-public Highway 37 as a four-lane toll road with bike/pedestrian paths that would extend from Sears Point to Mare Island. The proposed design is still unclear. Three designs were prepared by Caltrans and others with federal funding in a two-year process managed by UC Davis. One design was on a raised levee, and two on some type of pilings that would allow water to flow underneath, which would be an environmental benefit.

Marin is represented by Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Judy Arnold, neither of whom was in attendance at the last meeting in September. Novato is not represented, although as Councilwoman Pat Eklund commented from the audience, the proposal would impact Novato streets. Concerns were expressed about not informing the public.

UBP is making many promises: to pay for all next and future steps, land easements, costs of documents necessary for Caltrans to give up power over the roadway, all connecting structures to existing roads, dedicated bike and pedestrian pathways, berms, levees and culverts; they would take all risks, fund all studies, assessments and environmental review documents, and ongoing maintenance, would establish an environmental trust fund, provide transponders for low income users and cap fares

for low income users.

Are the UBP promises too good to be true? Is this really in the public interest? What are the safeguards? These and other questions will be debated in the coming months. Toward the end of the meeting, it was reported that it is possible for the project to move up as a Caltrans priority if there is political pressure.

ACTION ALERT! SUPERVISORS TO ADOPT VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Marin County Vegetation Management Plan is scheduled for the first hearing by the Marin County Board of Supervisors, acting as the Open Space District Board of Directors, on October 4 and for adoption on October 18. Both meetings will be in the morning; check the agenda the week before.

The Supervisors need to hear from their constituents that you support the Open Space District's using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to control invasive weeds in order to efficiently and effectively curb the invasive non-native plants from overwhelming native OSD habitats and to prevent their spread to neighboring habitats.

NOTE: IPM programs use all appropriate pest management strategies and use herbicides only when needed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Email or write your supervisor: jarnold@marincounty.org; dconnolley@marincounty.org; skinsey@marincounty.org; krice@marincounty.org; ksears@marincounty.org or Board of Supervisors, 3501 Civic Center Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903. Search for your supervisorial district boundaries on the Supervisors' website.

Board Members Needed

If you like birds and local habitats and want to help Marin Audubon in our efforts to protect them and to educate others about them, MAS needs you.

Our long-time Secretary and our Volunteer Coordinator need to retire.

SECRETARY Duties include taking minutes at our monthly Board meetings.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR Duties include organizing volunteers to help with our habitat stewardship work on our properties.

Please call or email Barbara Salzman for more information, bsalzman@att.net.

Volunteer of the Year, Bob Hinz



Bob Hinz

Bob Hinz has been named MAS's Volunteer of the Year, an award that is long overdue. Bob is critical to the Marin Audubon's successes. He is the editor of our newsletter. To get it out on time requires not only lots of editing but often requires nagging contributors to be on time and stay within word limits. He is responsible, in large part, for the success of the upland transition zone habitat at Triangle Marsh. He is in charge of the First Saturday Volunteer Work Days at Triangle at which he guides and oversees work done by volunteer groups small and large, and young and old. The transformation of this area into transition zone covered with flourishing native plants, is largely a result of Bob's tending. He waters, pulls weeds and plants on and between workdays.

In addition, Bob is a regular attendee at our Property Management Committee meetings, where we plan our habitat enhancement activities, and at our Conservation Committee Meetings where we tackle conservation issues. And more often than not when there is a Conservation site visit or follow up meeting, Bob is there supporting wildlife and habitat. He is co-chairman of the Southern Marin Christmas Count (along with Ed Nute). Bob also manages to lead field trips for MAS and fits in volunteering at the Richardson Bay Center and Sanctuary doing bird surveys in Richardson Bay.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Rain is not likely until the end of October so we might be doing some watering one last time. Stinkweed (*Dittrichia graveolens*), an annual will be blooming this month and its tiny yellow flowers will help us in looking for the very last of its plants at both Bahia and Triangle. It's not too late to pull another late blooming invasive, *Salsola soda* (Russian thistle).

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 Saturday: October 1

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: October 8

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

If you would like to help, contact Jude Stalker at 415/680-6291 or volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org for more information and to be sure you can be informed about possible changes.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Dave Chenoweth, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Ed Nute, Barbara Salzman, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION

Donna M. Cameron, Elaine & Robert Drude, Raven & Jennifer Gray, Richard Jennings, Lisa & Colin Nicholls, Warren and Marcia Nute, PG&E Corporation Foundation (donor match), Joanne K. Powell, Larry & Lynda Scheibel, Jeanne & Peter Tymstra

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PETALUMA

A group of four dedicated volunteers from our Board spent a few hours this month pulling *Dittrichia*. This relatively new invasive can be seen in recent years blooming in early autumn, when all other plants are drying up and appears to be thriving along highways. We have been pulling it for four years now, and our work is paying off. There is much less than other years.

BAHIA

On the regular second Saturday workday a small volunteer crew pulled *Dittrichia* and star thistle.

TRIANGLE MARSH

On our first Saturday of September stewardship day, volunteers watered some of the newest plantings and pulled *Dittrichia* (stinkweed). There wasn't much *Dittrichia* but it is proving difficult to find the very last plants each year. Those seed a small patch that grows the next year. Unfortunately, we had to spend too much time picking up a large amount of trash and debris which we found after Maggiora &

Ghilotti finished work on the sewer main project along Paradise Drive.

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE RESTORATION SITE

We have finally received the fully executed grant agreement from the Coastal Conservancy which allows us to bill for our grant funds. We now will be able to prepare design and engineering drawings for restoring marsh habitat on MAS's 5.2 acres together with an approximately one-acre section of the Reserve itself. Our consultant, Stuart Siegel of Siegel Environmental will be developing more detailed design drawings that we need both to apply for permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and to construct the project. Our CEQA Negative Declaration has been submitted to the Town of Corte Madera and it is expected to be released for a 30 day review period later this month.

SEPTEMBER 6 FIELD TRIP

Bodega Bay with Lisa Hug

By Bob Atwood

In celebration of World Shorebird Day, we spent the day birding Bodega Bay with trip leader Lisa Hug on Tuesday September 6th. We observed sixty-six species, of which seventeen were shorebirds.

Shorebirds have lost much of their historic habitat due to human impacts. This is evidenced locally with all the diked and filled portions of the San Francisco Bay, Central Valley and Delta. As the World Shorebird Day website states, about half of shorebirds in the world are in decline.

We started the trip at the Rail Ponds then worked our way westward stopping at Gaffney Point, Owl Canyon, Bodega Head, and Hole in the Head. There were over fifty **Common Murres** off of Bodega Head, and Lisa informed us that they have been nesting up the coast at Goat Rock. On the rocks below Bodega Head there were two dark juvenile gulls close together. We were shown how to differentiate between the **California Gull** with a dark bill with a pink base and the **Western Gull** with an all-dark bill.

While our group was stopped by the side of the road at Gaffney Point, we saw several **Short-billed Dowitchers**. Being able to differentiate between Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers has long confounded many birders. In this instance it was possible to visually



Len Blumkin

Black Turnstone

determine the correct ID. As Lisa explained, at this time of year juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers are arriving in the area. Though variable, the juveniles can have distinctive "Tiger bars" on their tertial feathers. The Short-billed Dowitcher also has a distinctive three-note call.

After Gaffney Point our group headed to Doran Beach. We walked out to the point to hopefully see some uncommon birds at the jetty located at the entrance to Bodega Bay. As luck would have it, Peter Colasanti was already there scoping the rocks. He waved us over and treated us with a good view of a **Wandering Tattler**. Our group then found several **Surf-birds** and **Black Turnstones**.

MARIN BIRDLOG: AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2016

By Josiah Clark

Though the calendar still marked summer, the birds and plants were clearly saying it is fall, and the early onset of cool weather brings hope for a cool wet winter. With breeding season long behind us the days are noticeably shorter triggering migrants to flow south in mass.

One major milestone of the fall migration that many of us can relate to is the return of the first **Golden-crowned Sparrow**. That has already happened this year, when on 9/9 one appeared with **White-crowned Sparrows** at a feeder in San Rafael. The observer noted this was the earliest return he could remember (RA). Not far away on 9/2 at Hawk Hill, raptor migrants included a **Prairie Falcon** and an early **Ferruginous Hawk** (GGRO).

At Outer Point Reyes vagrant seekers did not have to wait for September. They were right on the scene with the onset of the classic south winds and marine layer that carry their quarry by late August. Rare hummingbirds in our region are rare, and on 8/28 a bird eventually determined to be a **Costa's Hummingbird** was probably the rarest bird in the county for the period (PC). Other more noteworthy vagrants to the Outer Point among the many so far have included a **Blackburnian Warbler** on 8/29 (RH) and more recently a **Canada Warbler** on 9/9 (MB,HC). More expected vagrants to the lighthouse and isolated trees at the ranches

included one or more of these: **American Redstart**, **Tennessee Warbler**, **Chestnut-sided Warbler**.

Meanwhile nearby over the waters of Drakes Bay, a swarming biomass of anchovies, squid and other ocean forage fueled feeding frenzies of epic proportions as reported with the presence of over 1,000 **Brown Pelicans** and an estimated 20,000 **Sooty Shearwaters**, some **Pink-footed Shearwaters** and at least one **Common Tern**. Good descriptions and humble reports of an apparent rare **Manx Shearwater** in the mix sounded promising (JW, NA).

Rock Wrens in Marin are an uncommon find anywhere away from the Outer Point, so one found at the Loch Lomond Jetty on 8/31 in San Rafael was quite noteworthy for that area (JW). Also



Len Blum

Rock Wren

noteworthy from eastern Marin, on 8/27 were 11 **Wilson's Phalaropes** at the masterfully sculpted Hamilton restoration project (BN).

Central Marin is not known for its shore birding, but a **Solitary Sandpiper** found familiar company with the **Wood Ducks** and Muskrat at the pond on the San Geronimo Golf Course back on 8/26 (BB).

Shorebirds at Abbotts Lagoon have been hit and miss this year, but on 8/22 a **Lesser Yellowlegs** and four **Baird's Sandpipers** (ML) were a good consolation for the departed **Pectoral Sandpiper** that was present the day before. Alas the much-chased **Bar-tailed Godwit** in Bolinas appeared to have flown the coop, with the last report on 8/16 (MS). Thank you to the folks at Sea Drift for allowing access to so many visitors who came to see this rare bird.

Observers and Acronyms **BB**: Bigfoot Bob Battagin, **BN**: Bill Noble, **GGRO**: Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, **HC**: Heather Cameron, **JW**: Jim White, **MB**: Mark Butler, **ML**: Matt Lau, **MS**: Mark Stephenson, **NA**: Noah Arthur, **RA**: Richard Ackley, **PC**: Peter Colasanti, **RH**: Roger Harshaw



K. Lee, wikimedia.com

Costa's Hummingbird

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. If you would like more information, contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



Xander Mann is a home schooler. He passed the Junior Bird Watcher test at 3rd grade level. He would very much like to see a Western Tanager!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Florence Adams, Mrs. Frank Adamson, Birgitta Akesson, Willim Babine, Ray Bard, Andria Benner, Robin Bentel, Claude Bishop, Thora Blaine, Dorothy Bray, Andrea Bruno, Gary Burke, Jean Burns, Derek Cavin, Linda Chaffee, John Ciardelli, Sean Clyne, Laurel Conklin, Lynda Cornejo, Geoffrey Cutler, Louise O. Dahl, Bernard Dunayevich, Kathleen Earley, Dana Edsall, Andres Edwards, Sarah Ellsworth, Aaron P. Ferguson, Sharon Fitzgerald, Heather Flynn, Cathian Ford, K. Foster, Katharina E. Ganapathi, Cynthia Germain, Michael Griffin, Katherine Halland, Lynn Hoerle, David Holbrooke, Kurt Huget, David & Janet James, Marlene Keller, Robert Kennis, Jim Kinberger, Ben Kinney, Jennette Leal, Jan Lee, Barbra Leigh, Jim Lesser, Walter T. Mallory, Theresa Maloney, Jason Manviller, Christy McGill, Jerrald Moore, Matthew Murphy, Honey & Jed Nachman, Ilson New, Julie Nicholas, Maxine Nilsen, Linda Novy, Helena & Danny O'Shea, Alice Palmer Thomas, Richard Ponzio, Basia Randolph, Maude Revenko, Edmond Robertson, Megan A. Rohr, Carol Savio, Janet Schoder, Gunnar Skog, Lisa Smith, Lucie L. Smith, SolarCraft, Patricia Sonntag, Robert N. Sottimano, Lawrence Stern, Judy Stewart, June Strunk, William Thomas, Richard Vacha, Jaclyn M. Vernacchia, Lorraine Voskanian, Isabelle Wang, Renee Ward, Harlow E. Weisshaar, Carol Whitnah, Roy Wickland, J. G. Wilson M.D., Linda Wohlrabe, Margaret Wood, Susan & Mark Zaslav



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- Nov. 1 **Field Trip:** Big Day Blast
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With Keith Hansen
- Nov. 3 **Field Trip:** Las Gallinas
With Susan Kelly & Len Blumin
- Nov. 4-6 **Sandhill Crane Festival**
Lodi, www.cranefestival.com
- Nov. 4-6 **Audubon California Assembly**
Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite
- Nov. 13 **Field Trip:** Laguna de Santa Rosa
With Lisa Hug
- Nov. 17-20 **Central Valley Birding Symposium**
Stockton, www.cvbsreg.org
- Nov. 19 **Field Trip:** Las Gallinas/
Hamilton Wetlands
With Jim White & Bob Battagin
- Nov. 20 **Field Trip:** Corte Madera Marsh
With Roger Harris & Meryl Sundove

Check website for updates and details

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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. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Rail*. 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 because all of your chapter-supporting dues stay with MAS.

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.

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