



Dr. John Y. Takekawa

Surf Scoter

San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast and serves as the home for nearly eight million people while supporting a wide diversity of natural communities including many waterbird species. Managing for a healthy estuary and retaining its waterbird biodiversity depends on understanding and conserving the habitats and food webs that they rely upon. We'll discuss estuary challenges facing waterbirds and how we can support the best science-based conservation. We'll review challenges of fragmentation and sea-level rise facing rail populations in baylands, sediment supply and biofilm for shorebirds on mud flats, and eelgrass and herring spawns for sea ducks on shoal habitats in the shallow intertidal and subtidal waters.

Dr. John Y. Takekawa is Audubon California's Director of SF Bay Programs and a USGS Scientist Emeritus. His research has been on ecology of waterbirds with expertise in telemetry to study movement ecology. He has published more than 200 papers, and his work has included examining habitat preferences and effects of sea-level rise on waterbirds. He has a B.S. in Wildlife Science from University of Washington, M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from University of Idaho, and Ph.D. in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University.



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Is Mount Tam Healthy?



Gerry Jarocki

Mt. Tamalpais, iconic landmark and the heart of Marin's wildlands

This question was addressed by a cadre of scientists at a two-day long conference held at the end of October and sponsored by the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative, a partnership of agencies that manage lands on Mt. Tamalpais: Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California State Parks, Marin Municipal Water District, Marin County Open Space District, and the Golden Gate Parks Conservancy. Plant and wildlife biologists and other scientists presented the results of their observations, investigations and analyses.

Mt. Tamalpais is Marin County's iconic landmark. Its complex terrain, unique geology, location between the ocean, bay and inland areas combine to create a remarkably diverse array of microclimates and habitat types. Mt. Tamalpais is home to more than 1,200 species: 35 mammals, 184 species of birds, 769 plants, 11 fish, 25 amphibians and reptiles and 382 lichen and fungi. More than 60 species have been lost from Mt. Tam in the last century. How are Mt. Tam's remaining habitats, and the species they support, doing? The focus was on three vegetative habitats: oak woodlands, redwood forests and grasslands.

Oak woodlands support a rich diversity of species in an understory that can include grasses, forbs and shrubs, and fauna from mammals to insects. While the scientists ranked the condition of the mountain's oak woodlands

as "fair" they also reported that Sudden Oak Death has killed thousands of coast live and black oaks and tanoaks, physically changing the habitats, reducing wildlife food sources and increasing wildfire risk. Oak woodlands are also threatened by non-native plant invasions, particularly broom. Cotoneaster and veldt grass are becoming increasing problems. Biologists also ranked the condition of the oak woodland bird community as "fair." Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmouse, and American Kestrel appear to be healthy and so are likely finding enough food, cover and safe nest sites. The one noted exception was California Scrub-Jay (formerly Western Scrub-Jay) which was described as "experiencing modest declines perhaps due to West Nile Virus." With all of the identified stressors, we wonder how long the wildlife and habitats will remain in "fair" condition.

Old growth Redwoods, primarily at Muir Woods, are in "good" condition, while second growth Redwood forests were rated "fair" and may decrease in distribution due to climate change, i.e., to a hotter, drier climate with decreased fog, on which Redwoods depend. Among the tallest trees in the world, Coast Redwoods may live as long as 2,000 years. Their thick, tannin-laden bark protects them from insect damage and disease, and enables

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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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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

Many of us are feeling down after the election. Forces at the federal level are not expected to be friendly toward the environment. It may be difficult for funding and for strong regulation to protect natural resources to continue. Resources for addressing climate change and restoration projects are likely to be reduced or eliminated. And there are other concerns. It may be tempting to just withdraw, but withdrawing in pessimism will not make you feel any better nor will it change the political climate. We need to keep plugging away. Instead, involve yourself with other people to effect political change with an organization that is working on a cause that is important to you. Taking action on something you believe in gets you out of the gloom and will have local and perhaps broader benefits. With Marin Audubon, for example, you can join our Conservation Committee and help protect habitats at the local, state and even national levels; volunteer to work restoring habitats on our properties; or attend a field trip. One bright light was the election of new Supervisor from District 5, Dennis Rodoni, who has been a friend of natural resources.

We're pleased to announce that thanks to photographer David Gotz, Archivist for the Belvedere/Tiburon Landmark Society and Tiburon Town Historian, the video he recorded of the program at our 60th Anniversary Celebration is now on our website. So, those who missed the Celebration can view the presentations, or you can view them again if you like. Look on our website for directions to access the video. Thank you, David.

In addition, Roger Harris' presentation about the changes in wildlife populations over the years was so well-received that we are reprinting it in our newsletter (see page 5). Thank you, Roger, for allowing us to print it so it can be enjoyed by a wider audience. The first installment, that considers local mammals, is in this issue. It was too long for all to be printed in one issue. Of course, the full version can be found in the video along with the remarks of the five other speakers.

You are now able to easily donate your old car to Marin Audubon. We have signed up with CARS to make the experience of getting rid of your old car an easy and even enjoyable one while, at the same time, knowing that our birds and habitats will benefit. Net proceeds after the expenses of handling and processing the acquisition and sale of the donated vehicles, will come to Marin Audubon and will be

tax-deductible for you. See instructions on right.

Another opportunity to support Marin Audubon during the holidays is by making your Amazon purchases through AmazonSmile and naming Marin Audubon as the beneficiary.

You will be receiving our winter appeal letter soon. Your donation will provide needed support for our operations, speaker and field trip programs, citizen science work and it is particularly needed for our legal work on behalf of Spotted Owls. We hope you will give generously.

Our Christmas Bird Counts are also coming soon. Do sign up to join a team. It is an important way for non-scientists to contribute to science and for you to learn. Directions for signing up are on page 5 in this newsletter.

Over the holidays be sure to get out and see the migratory waterfowl and shorebirds that have now returned from their breeding grounds in full force. We are fortunate to have such an array of species in our midst every winter that are relatively easy to see and identify. We encourage you to attend one of our field trips.

Happy Holidays!

Holiday Gifts for MAS and the Birds!

- **Give a gift membership** to MAS to your loved ones. Make your gift membership through our website www.marinaudubon.org by December 21 to ensure we can get the acknowledgment of your gift to its recipient before Christmas.
- **Donate to MAS's Winter Appeal** – coming soon!
- **Donate your used car** to MAS through CARS on our website, or www.careasy.org/nonprofit/marinaudubon-society.
- **Use AmazonSmile** for your Amazon purchases and designate MAS the organization to receive your donation on our home page or <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/94-6076664>.

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, December 1, 2016

9 AM to Noon

With Susan Kelly, Bob Battagin, 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; a variety of songbirds; hawks such as Northern Harriers, White-tailed Kites, and Red-tailed Hawks; and falcons such as Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. There are often surprises such as the juvenile Bald Eagle observed by our October field trip participants. The 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.

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

FIELD CHECKLIST: If you'd like a copy of the eBird checklist for Las Gallinas, email Susan at quailfriend@yahoo.org.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about .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.

BAHIA, RUSH CREEK, AND ROWLAND AVENUE WETLANDS

Novato

No. 11, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, December 3, 2016

NOTE: To avoid CBC conflicts, this is the 1st Saturday in December, not the 3rd 8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Please meet at the foot (east end) of Bahia

Drive in Novato where Marin Audubon has completed a large restoration project. Shorebirds, ducks, herons, swallows, and rails will be reaping the benefits here for years to come. After viewing the birds and the restoration area, we intend to walk the trail along the edge of the mixed oak woodland. Next we plan to drive around to the end of Topaz Drive to view the Horseshoe Pond where some diving ducks, including a few Barrow's Goldeneyes, like to winter. During the day we will practice some bird counting to help prepare for the upcoming Christmas Bird Count season. After lunch we will take a look at two nearby areas—Rush Creek and the Rowland Avenue wetlands.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 in North Novato, take the Atherton Avenue exit east about 0.9 miles, then turn left onto Bugeia Lane, which becomes Bahia Drive. Follow it to the end where there is street parking. No restrooms available here.

ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY/SHOLLENBERGER PARK

Petaluma

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

8 AM to 1 PM

With Gene Hunn

We will start with a close look at the Ellis Creek 'Polishing Ponds' (that are "relatively clean but I wouldn't go for a swim in them"), then check the adjacent fields, the riparian corridor along Ellis Creek, and the tide flats towards the Petaluma River. Next we hike to the Shollenberger dike. The entire area is excellent for wintering waterfowl (possible Blue-winged Teal), rails (four species possible), waders, shorebirds, and sparrows. Expect to hike maybe two or three level miles.

DIRECTIONS: Going north on Hwy 101 from Marin, take the second Petaluma exit, which is Route 116 (Lakeville Highway). Go east about one mile to South McDowell Blvd. (4th traffic light) and turn right. At the curve turn right on Cypress and drive straight to the east end. Meet in the parking lot. Bring a lunch. Heavy rain cancels.

OLD SAN JOAQUIN RIVER/MOUNTAIN HOUSE SLOUGH/CLIFTON COURT FOREBAY San Joaquin, Contra Costa, & Alameda Counties

Saturday, December 10, 2016

8 AM to 1 PM

With Rich Cimino and Ohlone Audubon Society

Rich invites us to explore the ponds, river, channels, bay, grassland, and agricultural fields in THREE counties, all in ONE day! Pick up ducks, grebes, swans, shorebirds, raptors, and passerines for your county lists. Meet

at 8:00 AM at the Shell service station on Mountain House Parkway at Schulte Road in Tracy. We'll finish up after lunch at 1:00 PM. All are welcome. Contact Rich at yellowbilled-tours@gmail.com with questions.

WHAT TO BRING: Scopes, lunch, drinks, and a smile!

DIRECTIONS: The Shell station is about 30 minutes east of Castro Valley. Take Hwy 580 East, and at the 205 split, stay on Hwy 580 South toward Los Angeles. Shortly after that, take Exit 67, Mountain House Parkway/Patterson Pass Road. Turn left at the end of the ramp to go back over the freeway on Mountain House Parkway to Schulte Road. The Shell station (Subway, snacks, restrooms) will be ahead on your left.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

► Online Signups Begin Dec. 15, 2016

Departure/return at Antioch Marina

Sunday, February 5, 2017

(Super Bowl Sunday)

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' *River Dolphin* 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 *River Dolphin* 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 Swainson's Hawks, Peregrine Falcons, and Great Horned Owls. Large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, Snow, Canada and White-fronted Geese, ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines make the cruise a highlight for birders. Uncommon mammals such as beaver, river otter, and mink often add interest to the cruise. We also will learn about the history, ecology and politics of the levees and the Delta as we travel through its meandering channels.

TO SIGN UP: The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$105.

Registration and payment for this trip will begin on December 15, 2016, with a final deadline of February 1, 2017. Register at www.marinaudubon.org. Include the name, email address and contact phone number of each participant. **To assure a spot for yourself, we recommend booking your space on December 15 or soon thereafter as this is always a popular trip.** Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions the week before the trip.

CONSERVATION

MAS'S WORK TO PROTECT NORTHERN SPOTTED OWLS

The Marin County Board of Supervisors acting as the Open Space District Board, declined to extend our tolling agreement which had allowed us time to discuss and possibly come to a solution to our issues. We requested an extension when we were close to the ending date and needed further discussion, but when the county refused, we had no choice but to follow through with our only leverage, filing a petition to sue. If we had not filed at that time, we would have lost our ability to sue later, should we be unable to reach an agreement. We expect to have a case management conference in mid-December to schedule steps toward a court date.

In the meantime, we are discussing monitoring and habitat conditions for the owls with Open Space District staff. We are pleased that they are considering increased monitoring of the impacts of recreational users and monitoring owl prey on the Giacomini and Camino Alto Preserves. We are also planning to discuss the county's CEQA procedures and try to ensure that public comment periods are provided for all CEQA documents. We hope to be able to reach agreement on a plan of action before needing to go to court.

HIGHWAY 37, A TOLL ROAD?

As we discussed last month, a toll road has been proposed for Highway 37 by United Bridge Partners (UBP) to alleviate the long-standing bad congestion and is now being considered by the State Route 37 Policy Committee, made up of elected officials from Solano, Napa, Sonoma and Marin. At its November 3 meeting, most of the committee members expressed great concern about the terrible traffic conditions on Hwy. 37 and a desire to move ahead with a mechanism, probably a Joint Powers Agreement, to consider UBP's offer to construct a toll road. UBP made it clear at their previous meeting that they want to own the land and the toll road and would pay for environmental review, designing, building, and maintaining the toll road. This would mean the state would have to relinquish to a private developer the ownership of land owned by all of the people. The ultimate design could be an environmental benefit, but since no design is yet chosen, it could just as well not be.

Marin Audubon has no position on a toll road at this time, but the fact that it is being considered should be of interest to residents of the North Bay. We all use Hwy. 37, frequently or occasionally, and the project could be detrimental to the extensive wetlands. At this time, the main concern is

that they are not telling the public anything about this proposal.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Ask your Supervisor what is going on with this proposed toll road? Tell them you want it discussed in public, possibly at a supervisor's meeting. In particular, the Marin representatives on the committee, Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Judy Arnold, should hear that, but other supervisors should as well. If you have an opinion on changing Hwy. 37 to a toll road, tell them that, also. All supervisor email addresses are similar, for example, judyarnold@marincounty.org.

MARIN COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL EXPANSION

The Marin Country Day School is proposing to construct additional buildings on its campus along Paradise Drive. One of the buildings is very close to a small creek and has decking that would extend over a creek. Three bridges are also proposed to cross the creek that flows through the property. Unfortunately, the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration fails to identify these intrusions, which would cover the creek banks, creek bed and vegetation, as impacts nor does it address the need for buffers along the creek banks. The Planning Commission approved the project and sent it on to the Town Council for approval. We are told it is on the Council agenda for December 6.

UPDATE ON ANCHOR-OUTS

Hats off to the Sausalito City Council and the County of Marin for taking firm steps to begin to address the many problems related to anchor-outs in Richardson Bay. Further surveys have found that anchor-outs are not only in Sausalito waters, many are in County waters. And the anchor-outs are increasing in number and so are the associated problems. From January 2014 to June 2016 there were 1,068 police reports in the areas of Sausalito most impacted by the anchor-out/waterfront population. During that time also, 35 people who are anchor-outs or associated with the anchor-out community were arrested 115 times for, or were suspects in, a crime or were taken into custody because they were a danger to themselves or others. And the population is growing. In 2010 there were 130 anchor-outs were on the Bay in 2016 there were 235.

The Sausalito Police Department, the Sheriff, and the Richardson Bay Regional Agency are now working together to address criminal activity. The Coast Guard, which has responded 332 times for law

enforcement, search and rescue, pollution and adrift vessels, is also participating.

An Enhanced Enforcement Plan has been adopted by the city of Sausalito to address enforcement/abatement actions against marine debris vessels (unseaworthy vessels), unattended mooring balls causing navigational hazard, and unregistered undocumented vessels upon Richardson Bay. Clearly more comprehensive coordinated actions will be needed, but this is a good start.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

We will urge the other cities of the RBRA to support and adopt this Enhanced Enforcement Plan and to be active participants in the effort. Broader efforts will be needed to clear the bay of anchor-outs but this is a good first step. We urge our members, particularly those residents of Mill Valley, Tiburon, Belvedere and Marin County to urge their Council members and Supervisor Kate Sears to support the Enhanced Enforcement Plan to clean up Richardson Bay.

Corte Madera Inn Recirculated EIR Released

The Town of Corte Madera has released the Recirculated EIR addressing the presence of widgeon grass in the Corte Madera Inn Pond and the Black-crowned Night-Heron roosting colony in the nearby trees. The RDEIR, which was produced by the consultant firm of LSA, says that the roost is not important because there are lots of other places the birds can go to roost. While LSA acknowledges widgeon grass is a Sensitive Natural Community according to California Department of Fish and Wildlife standards, it went on to give many reasons the pond need not be saved. The reasons are: the pond has been highly modified; is surrounded by development; widgeon grass is found in relative abundance elsewhere; and that protecting habitat at the mitigation bank "would serve to fully mitigate the potentially significant impact of eliminating the low-quality widgeon grass ... onsite." Needless to say, we strongly disagree. That the pond was allowed by its owner to degrade should not be used as justification for filling it and the proposed mitigation would be 20+ miles away and a different type of wetland.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Send your comments to the Town of Corte Madera Planning Department by January 3 at 5 PM. The Recirculated EIR is on the Town's website—see section 4, Biological Resources.

RESTORATION HARDWARE

The Town of Corte Madera has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is needed to address the potential impacts of the proposed Restoration Hardware Project. The project consists of a 46,000-square-foot retail store with a 25,000-square-foot footprint within the current parking lot of The Village Shopping Center and improvements to the 5.14-acre gravel parking lot north of the shopping center. The lot is owned by the Town and is proposed to be improved with paving, lighting, landscaping and construction of a drainage system. Restoration Hardware proposes to enter into a long-term lease agreement with the Town to use the lot for parking to compensate for the parking that would be lost by their proposed building. The Town is a co-applicant for the EIR.

The parking lot is bounded by the Shorebird

Marsh on the north, east and west. Protection of the adjacent marsh and wildlife that use it are concerns, as is the possible use of public land to benefit a private entity.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The Town is conducting a scoping comment period for the EIR. If you have questions or concerns about the project, now is the time to submit them. The EIR consultants will be obliged to address them. **Comments must be submitted** to Phil Boyle, Senior Planner, Town of Corte Madera, 300 Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera, CA 94925 by 5 PM on **Nov. 30**. The essential time to comment on the project is during environmental review when the Draft EIR is circulated. So don't worry if our newsletter does not reach you in time to make that deadline.

Celebrating Conservation Successes

Roger Harris' Presentation at the Marin Audubon Society's 60th Anniversary Celebration

Sixty years ago, when the MAS was founded, River Otters had been extirpated from Marin County. Today, nearly every one of us have enjoyed their frolicking presence.

Go to the southern part of the county to Cavallo Point and look out into the San Francisco Bay. You are almost guaranteed to see Harbor Porpoises where none existed 60 years ago.

Or visit the Marin Headlands to find Coyotes. Sixty years ago, they had been shot, poisoned, and trapped out.

In west Marin, a herd of Tule Elk thrives thanks to the introduction efforts of the National Park Service. Go to the Outer Point and look down on the beach to see a roiling and roaring mass of Northern Elephant Seals. Neither the elk nor the seals were present 60 years ago when the Marin Audubon Society was founded.

Northern Elephant Seal: Poster Child Conservation Success Story

Let's go back 134 years ago: Jesse James took a bullet in his back; P.T. Barnum was exhibiting Jumbo the Elephant; and Thomas Edison was switching on the first commercial electric plant ushering in the electric age. Over the next 40 years, the electric light bulb would replace lamps burning gas and oil rendered from whales and seals.

But back in 1882, if you were to go to the US national museum in Washington D.C. and ask the scientists there what electrification portends for the seal, they would say it was too late. By the late 1870s, the seal had been hunted to extinction for its blubber which was rendered into oil to light lamps.

But wait ... a sea captain was rumored to have seen a few seals hiding out in a remote island off the coast of Baja California. So the Smithsonian Institution mounted an expedition to find the last of the species.

The scientists from the Smithsonian sailed off to Isla Guadalupe, where they found eight Northern Elephant Seals. Much to their joy, the species was not extinct!

What did they do? They shot the seals, although one got away.

Why did they shoot the seals? At the time they wrote that the species was going extinct anyway, so wouldn't it be grand and reflect on the prestige of the national museum to have skins of the last of a species.

Fortunately, modern scientists now believe anywhere from 20-100 seals were hiding out in the sea caves and coast of Isla Guadalupe to be a founding population. Those survivors began to expand at a phenomenal rate of 6% per year.

By 1922, the Mexican government passed legislation to protect the seal. Fifty years later with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, the US government also protected the seal. And today Northern Elephant Seal numbers are arguably greater than they were in pristine times ... marking a great conservation success story.

Reflecting back on this story, we can see a sea change in conservation attitudes, not only among scientists, but among the general public. We have been the beneficiaries of this transformation in conservation consciousness and, as citizen activists, protagonists in its implementation.

Installment number 1

Christmas Bird Count Reminder

Don't forget to sign up to participate in Marin's Christmas Bird Counts. See our website, www.marinaudubon.org, or last month's issue of *The Rail* for more information.

Here is a schedule for some of the Bay Area counts:

Thursday, December 15

► Cheep Thrills/Northern Marin

Sign up at <http://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>

Friday, December 16

- Eastern Alameda County

Saturday, December 17

► Point Reyes

Sign up at <http://tgaman.wixsite.com/prcbc>

Sunday, December 18

- Hayward-Fremont
- Oakland
- Santa Rosa

Monday, December 19

- Benicia
- Palo Alto

Tuesday, December 27

- San Francisco

Friday, December 30

- Sonoma Valley

Saturday, December 31

► Southern Marin

Sign up at www.marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php

Sunday, January 1

- Western Sonoma County

For more information on these and other CBCs, go to www.natureali.org/cbcs.htm.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

George Brewster & Alison Russell, Deborah Brown, John Crawford, William Gonda & Sally Sehring, Jeannette Gustafson, Nancy & Dean Hanson, Lynn Tolomeo Hunt, Peter & Bonnie Jensen, Josephine Kreider, Pacific Gas & Electric Co., PG&E Corporation Foundation (donor match), Flinn Moore Rauck, Mina Reyes, Elizabeth Richardson, Elizabeth Schiff, Brittmarie Thorner

ADDITIONAL 60TH ANNIVERSARY DONATIONS

Hanson Bridgett LLP, Lowell Sykes

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

It's that time of year when the annual cycle of plants and stewardship begins anew. The exciting aspect is that we might be planting new native plants at both Bahia and Triangle. Many seeds of non-native annual plants have germinated, but there isn't much to be gained by pulling them now. Old mustard plants might be about the only plants with flowers.

Do you know anyone who needs to earn community service hours? Our restoration projects would fit the bill. 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: 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,
January 14

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

Dave Chenoweth, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Flinn Moore Rauck, Lowell Sykes, Mark Day School (25 seventh graders in Fernanda Pernambuco's class)

MARIN AUDUBON IS ON FACEBOOK



Visit our Facebook page for interesting stories and events. Submit your own

happenings and photos. "Like us" so that more people learn of MAS.

CORTE MADERA RESTORATION

The Town of Corte Madera staff has given preliminary approval of the Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/MND), sent to the state clearing house, and has opened the 30-day public review period. You can find the IS/MND on-line and you are invited to comment. We, of course, urge comments in support of the restoration. The Corte Madera Planning Commission has scheduled a hearing on Tuesday, November 29 and it should go to the Council in early December. Corte Madera ordinances require hearings before both of these bodies. These requirements are different than in other jurisdictions for our projects, none of which has ever required a hearing before both the commission and the Council.

Our special thanks to Marjorie Macris for writing the IS/MND, to the Town and to Planning Director Adam Wolff for moving this along.

A new appraisal has also been produced as

required by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a condition of our grant.

Help Science, Count Birds

This year the South Marin Christmas Bird Count will take place on New Year's Eve, December 31, and we need volunteers to help with the count.

Know your birds? Don't know your birds? In either case you can help with the count. Meet old friends and new birds or new friends and old birds. Dinner is served after the count where we hear reports about the day including any rare birds observed. It is a fun day and everyone is encouraged to participate.

Please sign up at www.marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php or contact the compilers, Ed Nute and Bob Hinz at smcbc.marinaudubon@gmail.com

NOVEMBER 1 FIELD TRIP

Left of the Fault: A Point Reyes Big Day With Keith Hansen

By Janet Bodle



Rich LaBaudour

Black-throated Blue Warbler, female

On November 1, we were blessed with a sunny day in Point Reyes after several days of rain. Sixteen birders led by Keith Hansen, hosted by Rich Cimino, headed to the lighthouse to view hundreds of **Common Murres**, gulls, **Surf Scoters**, and **Brown Pelicans**, while a **Peregrine Falcon** eyed us from the rocks above and a **Rock Wren** jumped around below. On to the Fish Docks we stopped at the corner to watch several **American Pipits**. We then had a good look at a female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** in the cypress stand and a **Marbled Murrelet** in the bay.

At Nunes we watched two **Great-horned Owls** snoozing, then found **Tricolored Blackbirds** and a **Burrowing Owl**. A highlight of the trip for Keith was seeing an **American**

Crow and **California Scrub-Jay**—both quite rare for the Outer Point, but for most of us, the highlight was spotting five **Pacific Golden Plovers** among many **Killdeer** and **Dunlin** at the northeast corner going to Drake's Beach.

At Drake's Beach we watched **Black Turnstones** and **Semipalmated Plovers**. In the pond we spotted a swimming **Sora** and an **Eurasian Wigeon**. Heading to Tomales Bay SP, our species count was 90, and along the road to Heart's Desire Beach we added another 16 including **Pygmy Nuthatch**, **Red-breasted Sapsucker**, and **Townsend's Warbler**.

Our final stop, across from the Inverness store, gave us a **Bald Eagle**, **Belted Kingfisher**, **Bufflehead** and a few more shorebirds to top our list off at 116 species for the day.

Thanks, Keith, for a successful Big Day!

eBird.org

Do you or did you record bird observations in a series of notebooks? Can you find all those notebooks? Make it easy on yourself and at the same time share your sightings with science. Submit observations to www.eBird.org. Learn all about eBird January 28 from Dan Singer in a special class for MAS members.

Mount Tam

continued from page 1

them to survive wildfires. Redwood forests are important habitat for threatened Northern Spotted Owl, which they report seem to be doing okay, as are the threatened steelhead trout and endangered Coho salmon that depend on Muir Wood's Redwood Creek. Other birds dependent on redwood forests, including Hermit Warblers, Audubon's

Warblers, Pacific Wrens, Pileated Woodpeckers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets, are also doing fairly well, except for Steller's Jay which they found to be in decline. Olive-sided Flycatcher is doing well on MMWD lands but is in decline on the rest of its range. Grasslands are threatened by invasive non-native grasses. The losses of grazing animals and periodic wildfires have allowed encroaching shrubs and trees to flourish. Mammals, including American Badger, and grassland-nesting birds, many of

which are declining, rely on large patches of grassland to forage and breed. Grasslands are rated as in "fair" condition, although it sounds like they should be rated lower. There is currently not enough information to determine the health of grassland birds. Only MMWD's lands have been surveyed and they are found at densities that are too low to analyze accurately. Grassland-dependent birds include Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Western Meadowlark.

Some of us wondered why there was no discussion of aquatic features, including, seeps, streams, and wetlands. The answer was that the scientists could not agree on how to define those features and they did not have sufficient information.

What is anticipated with climate change? Models suggest that mixed hardwood and redwood forests are likely to decrease, while some oaks, Sargent cypress and Douglas fir, may be more resilient. Some species, such as deer fern, have disappeared from Mt. Tam. Temperatures are expected to increase between 2.5 and 6 degrees Fahrenheit; rainfall models predict 25% more to 25% less rainfall. Higher temperatures could produce drought-like conditions even if rainfall increases.

Some of us also questioned why no attention was paid to impacts of recreational use on the mountain. Only climate, disease, and invasive species were considered impacts significant enough to address. We hope, and urged, that One Mt. Tam focuses on monitoring and analysis of the impacts of the different recreational uses. It is not a matter of which impact is worse, which is often the approach taken. The cumulative nature of all the impacts must also be considered. Our plants and wildlife have to deal with all of the stressors at the same time. They do not have the luxury of dealing with them in isolation.

For more information about Mt. Tam's resources, about One Mt. Tam and how to get involved visit: onetam.org/peak-health.

MARIN BIRDLOG: OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2016

By Josiah Clark

With shorter, colder days most southbound migrants make haste to get to their wintering grounds. Here in Marin, all the winter birds are in place and the species around today are ones we can expect on the rapidly approaching Christmas Bird Counts. We have had better than average rainfall so far this fall, larger than average surf conditions and some hotter than average days making for an interesting mix of conditions that has brought us some interesting birds.

Vagrant chasers at Point Reyes refused to give up the season without some serious looking in the final quarter. Along with the more expected

Palm Warblers and less numerous than usual vagrant **Blackpoll Warblers**, noteworthy birds from the lighthouse and ranches during the last part of October included at least two **Black-throated Blue Warblers** that hung around a bit, a **Summer Tanager** and, most rare and noteworthy, a **Yellow-green Vireo** found on 10/14 (NA). A **Sage Thrasher** on 11/2 was among the last vagrant songbirds found at the outer point this fall (DM). While most birders hang around the trees at the Outer Point, some walked the vast open fields, and one was rewarded by an **American Golden**

Plover mixed with three **Pacific Golden Plovers** at Drake's Corners, a favorite spot for rare birds of open country (MS).

Other vagrant songbirds of note found away from Outer Point Reyes included another **Yellow-green Vireo** at the Bolinas Mesa 10/30 and a late **Magnolia Warbler** caught by Point Blue banders at Muir Beach on 11/1.

Over on the east side of the county a **Redhead** at Las Gallinas 10/19 and a **Barrow's Goldeneye** on 11/9 at Bahia were rare ducks that appeared to arrive after the first big rains (DE). Not far away, Shorebird Marsh in Corte Madera remained a happening spot through the month, with **Red Phalarope** and **Blue-winged Teal** as highlights.

A fly-over **Ferruginous Hawk** for this site was nothing to sneeze at either (WL).

Surely the rarest bird last month for the county was a **Lesser Sand Plover** (formerly Mongolian Plover), found at the beach near Abbotts Lagoon by the local Snowy Plover Ecologist who has now found two of the rarest shorebirds (the other being last year's Purple Sandpiper) in Marin 10/18 (ML). This bird was chase-worthy and eventually seen by dozens of observers. As often happens, one rare bird turns up another, and a **Laughing Gull** was also seen there flying down the beach mixed in with the local gulls (LK).



Black-throated Blue Warbler, male

Glen Tepke, gtepk@pbasc.com



Sage Thrasher

Glen Tepke, gtepk@pbasc.com

Observers and Acronyms **DE:** Daniel Edelstein, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **MD:** Mark Dettling, **LK:** Lucas Kerling, **ML:** Matt Lau, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **WL:** William Legge



The Rail

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- January 21 Richardson Bay Audubon Center
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- January 21 Winter Bird Festival, Galt CA
<http://www.ci.galt.ca.us/index.aspx?page=495>
- January 28 **Class:** eBird: Submitting/
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With Dan Singer
- February 5 **Field Trip:** Sacramento Delta
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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.

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