



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the Public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
 376 Greenwood Beach Road
 Tiburon, California 94920
 Information: 415/388-2821

FRIDAY, DEC 4 8 PM

Create Some Magic: Build a Pond for Birds, Dragonflies and other Wildlife

With Kathy Biggs

Build a pond to create a habitat to attract wildlife to your property! Learn how to accentuate the differences between wildlife ponds and ponds for exotic Koi and/or tropical plants. Kathy Biggs will show how to use native plants and special pond-building techniques to encourage, not discourage, our native fauna — including birds, dragonflies, butterflies and mammals.

A birder since the 1970s, Kathy Biggs became obsessed with dragonflies in 1996 when she built a pond for wildlife.

The author of three dragonfly titles: *Common Dragonflies of California* (recently updated and revised), *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest*, and *Dragonflies of North America, a Color and Learn Book* and CD, Kathy gives programs and workshops about dragonflies and about building ponds for wildlife throughout the West.

FRIDAY, JAN 8 8 PM

Amazing Tales of Migrating Shorebirds
 With Bob Lewis

The Bay Area is a critical habitat for many migrating shorebirds.

Bob's talk will look at some amazing shorebird migrations and how and why they do it. He'll speak on how scientists study the migration phenomena, how it fits into the shorebird's annual breeding cycle, and what this behavior looks like worldwide.

Since 1993, Bob has taught adult birding classes at Albany Adult School and the Oakland Museum.

Although retired from the Golden Gate Audubon (GGAS) Board of Directors, he remains on its education committee. A co-compiler with Dave Quady of the Oakland Christmas Bird Count, he is President of the Farallon Islands Foundation. His life list: more than 3,700 (out of the approximately 9,750 birds worldwide).

More Bikes On Marin County Open Space Trails?

By Barbara Salzman

On November 3, the Marin County Board of Supervisors held a workshop on possible solutions to ongoing conflicts with bicyclists and other users on county Open Space District (OSD) trails. About 100 people attended. To begin the meeting, staff gave an excellent presentation, including information on the current trail system and management problems. The county does not have the resources to adequately enforce trail regulations. (Only two to eight rangers patrol the legal trails. Cyclists already access more than 100 miles of legal OSD trails plus an additional 87 miles of MMWD trails.)

Testimony continued for over two hours before it was cut off, with many still wanting to speak (including me). Comments were evenly divided between cyclists wanting more access to narrow trails and others wanting to limit trail access for bikes.

Bikers said they wanted a "more challenging experience," use of single-track trails and equity with other trail users. Some thought communication would solve the problems. Several even admitted going off legal trails. Safety was the top concern expressed by non-bikers, along with protecting plants destroyed or damaged by bikes.

Each supervisor spoke. Susan Adams: set up a separate system for bikes to avoid conflict. Steve Kinsey: ensure safety for users. Charles McGlashan: move quickly to address the issue and not disenfranchise bikers. Judy Arnold: create a subcommittee to address the problem. Hal Brown: "might does not make right," an apparent reference to aggressive tactics of some bikers. The supervisors will decide how to proceed at a future meeting. Possible options: a Road and Trail Management Plan, increased enforcement, setting up a subcommittee to study the issue, and establishing separate trails.



LEN BLUMIN

Unauthorized path worn through transition habitat at Bahia

As testimony was cut off before I had a chance to speak, MAS is sending a letter saying we do not support expansion of bike use on OSD lands. These lands support endangered and other special status species and populations of fauna and flora. Bikes on trails disturb wildlife, destroy vegetation and damage habitats in other ways, such as causing erosion. For example, soil has been worn away from many China Camp trails leaving only bare rock. The eroded soil carried downhill smothers other habitats. Our first hand experience with damage caused by bikers at Bahia includes removed barriers, stolen signs, ripped out habitat restoration plants, and wearing a trail through the transition zone.

Marin citizens paid to purchase OSD lands for the purpose of protecting natural resources. The OSD is entrusted with caring for them and they should not be handed over to special interests that are damaging or destroying them.

Please write to support protecting natural habitats and wildlife on OSD lands: Supervisor Hal Brown, President, Marin County Board of Supervisors, 3501 Civic Center Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

We are getting our properties ready for the upcoming rains and need to remove invasive non-native plants such as ice plant, *Dittrichia* or stinkwort, and radish. If you are interested in these work days, or would like to be notified if additional dates are chosen later, please contact Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688.

TRIANGLE MARSH: DECEMBER 5 & JANUARY 2
 BAHIA: DECEMBER 12 & JANUARY 9



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members.

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

MAS telephone: 721-4271

Marin Audubon Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. *The Clapper Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper. Edited by Nancy Okada, 987-8800, nxokada@yahoo.com; layout by Sue Morrison, and assisted by David Weinstock, and other members of MAS. Deadline is the first of each month.

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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.

Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON:

Log onto www.audubon.org or contact National Audubon Society
700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003
212/979-3000

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

Our Annual Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count is coming up on its usual day, the Saturday between Christmas and New Year's, December 26. See information on signing up on page 7 or on our website. The data collected for such citizen science surveys such as the Christmas Bird Count, is important in identifying bird population trends across the country. National Audubon used it to evaluate the effects of climate change on bird populations. Be a part of this important day! MAS also is a co-sponsor of the Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count.

You will be receiving our annual solicitation letter in early December. Please give generously to support MAS's programs and operation. We rely on this appeal to augment membership dues, which do not cover all of our programs and services, and to enable us to meet unexpected challenges. For example, it is sometimes necessary to fund an effective environmental advocate.

We are pleased to have arrived at the first anniversary of our Bahia Marsh Restoration Project and the donation of Tiscornia Marsh by Mary Tiscornia. It is fitting for us to thank Mary Tiscornia again for her generous donation. We have been considering options for enhancing the site by expanding the transition zone, but have taken no action to develop a specific plan as yet. At Bahia,

tidal marsh plants are colonizing along the edges of the lands we opened to tidal action, and returning migratory shorebirds and waterfowl are flocking to the site. While we are working diligently to restore native plants on the adjacent uplands, the marsh is evolving well on its own.

Thank you to Wendy Feltham for chairing our Birdseed Sale this year. The successful sale raised almost \$1,000, which will go to support our programs. Thank you also to special volunteers Jim White, Len Blumin, Jules Evens and Lowell Sykes who are volunteering to do bird surveys at Bahia. (See more under Stewardship – Bahia).

We are sorry the unveiling of our new website has been delayed until sometime in late November or early December. We needed more time to review content. We are sure you will be very impressed when it goes live. Thank you again to Richard Bohnet for guiding the revision effort through difficult hurdles.

It is exciting to see large numbers of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds return to our baylands. Do get out to enjoy them, and our wonderful wetlands, woodlands and other natural habitats. Join us on a field trip or go on your own.

And have the happiest of Holidays and a healthy New Year! 

CONSERVATION

By Barbara Salzman

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

GREENBRAE INTERCHANGE

The Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Greenbrae Interchange project is soliciting input on issues to be addressed (these are commonly called scoping comments).

For detailed descriptive information on the project, please see MAS website. You can visit also the TAM website www.tam.ca.gov, and click on Programs & Projects to view documents. We encourage you to submit comments or questions by the November 30 deadline.

MAS and other environmental organizations are concerned about potential long-term environmental impacts. In particular, the northbound alternative could set the stage for a segment of the Central Marin ferry-connector bike path to be located along the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Marsh.

The Greenbrae Interchange Plans show a new "path" along the old railroad right-of-way, adjacent to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. In this location, the "path" would have significant impacts on the endangered California Clapper Rail that depend on this marsh. The plans also show

the "path" continuing on a new berm between Shorebird Marsh and the trailer court, extending along the frontage road west of Shorebird Marsh and continuing east of the Village Shopping Center. At the shopping center's south end, the "path" would go over to join the existing berm adjacent to Muzzi Marsh. **Important note:** although it is called a "path", it will be 12-foot wide, paved, multi-use strip — closely resembling a paved road.

TAM is treating this bike path as separate from the interchange project, insisting that it is "functionally independent," therefore, it should not be evaluated as part of this EIR process. Our concern is that unless the interchange and bike path projects are evaluated together, opportunities could be lost to avoid impacts to endangered species by locating the path along the frontage road. Adverse impacts to the Clapper Rail and the Reserve Marsh should be avoided by locating this ferry-connector path entirely on the frontage road.

We will be submitting scoping comments requesting that our questions and concerns be addressed in the EIR. Send comments to

Continued on page 6

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. Information, weather check, and accessibility: Helen Lindqvist at 415/789-0703 or 415/306-2325 (cell).

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

Thursday, Dec 3

8:30 AM to 12 NOON

With Len Blumin

Join Len on this morning birding walk at the storage ponds. Some of our feathered fall visitors will have arrived to join the resident ones that stay all year round.

From Hwy 101 in San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to end of road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds' parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot.

GRAY LODGE & SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Saturday & Sunday, Dec 5 & 6 With Bruce Deuel

Motels:

OROVILLE

Villa Court Inn, 530/533-3930

(discount to MAS participants)

Best Value Inn: 530/533-7070

Comfort Inn: 530/533-9673

Motel 6: 530/532-9400

GRIDLEY

Gridley Inn: 530/846-4520

Pacific Motel: 530/846-4580

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

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

Both refuges charge entry fees, and please be prepared for a bit of cold or rain. Meet at 10:30 AM Saturday at the large parking lot just beyond the small museum, well within Gray Lodge. From Marin to Gray Lodge, take I-80 to Davis, Hwy 113 north to Hwy 99 near Tudor, north to the town of Live Oak, west on Pennington Road to the Gray Lodge entrance. Allow 3.5 hours. Note: Most people stay in Oroville Saturday night for an early start on Sunday for birding by the Feather River. A forecast of heavy rain will cancel. For further information on the trip or motels contact: helen_lindqvist@yahoo.com. Please let Helen know by Nov 30, if you are planning to join us!

MAS WORK PARTIES

TRIANGLE MARSH WORK PARTY

Saturday, Dec 5, Jan 2

10 AM - 1 PM

First Saturday of each month. Bring your weed clippers, gardening gloves and weed wrenches/pullers for a day of fun. For details call Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688.

BAHIA WORK PARTY

Saturday, Dec 12, Jan 9

10 AM - 1 PM

The Bahia work days will be the second Saturday of each month. Please call Bob Hinz for details and directions at 415/383-8688.

NON-AUDUBON EVENTS

BRUCE BAJEMA MEMORIAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY AT LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS Thursday mornings 8:30 AM

The Bruce Bajema Memorial Bird Watching Society is an informal group, formed to carry on the tradition of birding enthusiasm Bruce Bajema was known for when he led walks at Las Gallinas Storage Ponds. Please join them on Thursdays when there are no Marin Audubon sponsored walks. Walks start at 8:30 AM on Thursday mornings, weather permitting. Please bring water, sun protection and comfortable shoes. Look for us in the parking lot or near the bridge. For further information, email Brucewalks@gmail.com.

ACR ANNUAL TOMALES BAY BIRD COUNTS SHOREBIRD COUNT DAYS:

Dec 7

11:30 AM to 1 PM

Dec 21

9:30 AM to 11 AM

WATERBIRD COUNT DAYS:

Dec 19

9 AM to 4 PM*

*Note: data from this count

contribute to the Point Reyes

Christmas Bird Count

Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR), a leader in conservation science, habitat protection and restoration and hands-on environmental education programs, is seeking experienced birders to volunteer as observers for its annual winter shorebird and waterbird counts on Tomales Bay.

Volunteers (with advanced skills in the identification of shorebirds and waterbirds) work with ACR biologists to estimate the size of wintering populations. Shorebirds counts are conducted by telescopes from designated spots along the Tomales Bay shore and waterbird counts rely on binoculars to observe birds from boats along the length of the bay.

Upcoming 2010 Shorebird Count Dates: Jan. 18 (9:30-11 AM); Feb. 1 (9:45-11:15 AM); Feb. 15 (9:45-11:15 AM).

Upcoming 2010 Waterbird Count Dates: Jan. 16 (9 AM-4 PM); Jan. 30 (9 AM-4 PM); Feb. 13 (9 AM-4 PM).

For more information, call 415/868-9244, email acr@egret.org or visit www.egret.org.

FARALLONES TRIP - WHALE OF A TIME

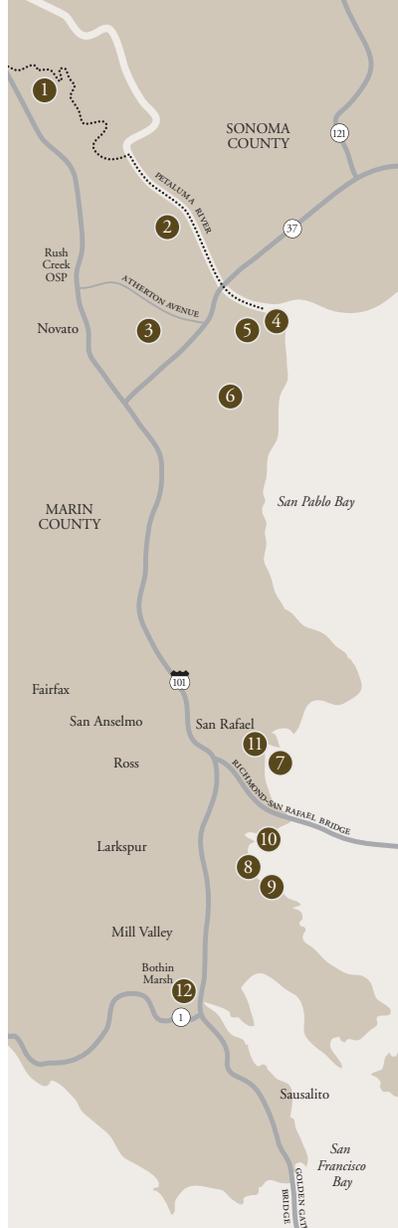
By Helen Lindqvist

Our trip to the Farallones this year was set for August 30 but high winds and choppy seas forecast for that day caused us to postpone it to September 20. On that morning 45 participants along with our leader David Wimpfheimer, clambered onto Mick Menigoz's large boat 'Superfish' and headed out of the bay under conditions of partial sun, a light breeze and lingering fog.

Long-distance viewing of birds was difficult with the persistent fog but some flew close — including a Black-footed Albatross and we had a good look at a large Sunfish lolling at the sea surface. The islands themselves were shrouded in fog but we still managed to see a few birds including Tufted Puffin and auklets. Heading out past the islands to the continental

shelf we located several pods of Humpback Whales and slowed down to watch their activities. Whales are such an impressive sight from the deck of a boat!

To check on the wealth of wildlife that uses and surrounds the Farallon Islands, go to the website www.calacademy.org/webcams/farallones. The California Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science have teamed up to launch a live-streaming web camera, mounted on the top of the lighthouse. This will be used to observe breeding bird colonies and seal and sea lion colonies, to monitor ocean conditions and the off-shore activity of birds, whales and possibly even great white sharks. 



A Special Thanks

A big thank you to the John E. and Helen K. Cahill Fund for a donation to be used for operating support. This very generous gift will pay for our first property tax bills due in December.

PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

Thanks to many volunteers, we were able to remove all of the highly invasive stinkwort (*Dittrichia*) from not only our property at Bahia, but from the adjacent Novato Sanitary District property, where its large population threatened our property because the seeds could have infected our lands. We appreciate their cooperation.

We have also erected additional signs and temporary fencing to better delineate lands reserved for habitat and lands open to public access.

A crew from Cooper Crane and Rigging has repaired the weir to the seasonal wetland at West Bahia. A section of the underground culvert had floated up and caused a coupling to crack and leak, allowing water to flow out rather than being retained in the seasonal wetland. This year we look forward to the seasonal pond retaining water from the winter rains.

We are beginning our bird monitoring, which is required by several of our regulatory permits for the marsh construction. Our thanks to Jim White, Len Blumin, Jules Evens and Lowell Sykes for volunteering to do bird surveys. The survey protocol was developed by avian-biologist Jules Evens. He will also be preparing an annual analysis of the data. During our site-visit to set up the protocol on November 4, the amount of bird use was very exciting. Hundreds of waterfowl, shorebirds, and many raptors were using the areas restored to tidal action.

TRIANGLE MARSH

Bob Hinz continues with his volunteer workday clearing invasive plants from the transition zone adjacent to this marsh.



First anniversary of Tiscornia Marsh dedication

JUNIOR BIRD WATCHERS CORNER

By Wendy Dreskin

Our kindergarten, first and second grade Junior Bird Watchers have been listening to CDs of bird calls. Here are some of the things they heard (which may help you identify these birds!):

- *The Great-gray Owl* sounds like a giant walking in an echoing hallway, a ghost, or blowing on hot pasta
- *The Pygmy Owl* sounds like practicing one note on the flute
- *The Screech Owl* sounds like Santa laughing
- *The Pintail Duck* sounds like a baby with hiccups, a rusty motor, turning a stuck doorknob
- *The Green-winged Teal* sounds like a wet sneaker on the kitchen floor, a car with squeaky brakes, or a dog being taken to the vet
- *The Northern Shovelers* sound like a clock, knocking on a door, pecking wood, bubbles popping, the clip-clop of horses hoofs, walking with tap shoes or a heart beat
- *The Gadwall* sounds like sawing wood, a truck backing up, the wrong answer on a video game or an old fashioned horn
- *The European Widgeon* sounds like people on a roller coaster, someone going down a slide saying "whee", a siren or someone jumping off a cliff
- *The American Widgeon* sounds like a dog's squeaky toy or a tricycle that needs oil

Holiday gift for all ages? I'd recommend *Bird Songs 250 North American Birds in Song* by Les Beletsky, featuring audio from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

This book gives a page of information for each bird, and then you can push a button to hear the song or call. Great for kids and adult beginning-intermediate birders



MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Petaluma Marsh | 180 acres |
| 2. Bahia | 60 acres |
| 3. Simmons Slough | 162 acres |
| 4. Norton Avenue Pond | 2 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 |

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Phyllis Barry, Mark Lindberg, Phillip Nonneman, E Lynn Perry

IN MEMORY OF DAVIDA BERGSTROM:

Marilyn Schmitz

THANKS TO OUR BAHIA VOLUNTEERS:

Richard Derr, Flinn Moore Rauck & John Rauck, Bud Alderson, Brian Somers, Jesus Majia, Prem McMurdo, Christine Fong, Richard Bohnet

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Flinn Moore Rauck, John Rauck, Bob Hinz, Simone Gannage (MAS Intern), Linda Nicoletto, Phil Peterson, Barbara Salzman, Mariah Baird, Jo Kreider, Lowell Sykes, Ed Nute, Richard Bohnet, Jude Stalker

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Sally Berger, Juliane Brand, Stephen & Faith Brown, Marilyn Cornett, Rowland Fellows, Eileen Frost, Alan Goldfien, Marian Hardman, Sheila Hershon, Douglas Mickey, Bettye Hudson Morosin, Otis Morrow, Ruth Stotter Shreve, Robert Sichen, Alice Palmer Thomas

Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

The bird of the month's "bill will hold more than his belican." OK, you guessed it, the pelican. Indeed as famously observed, the Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) is a "wonderful bird." But did you know that the poem quoted above, *The Pelican*, was penned by Dixon Lanier Merritt and not by Ogden Nash?

This seabird is a strong flier with a 7-foot wingspan. Such an enormous wingspan puts the Brown Pelican into the range of the wingspans of the Bald (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Like the eagles, the Brown Pelican is efficient at soaring. All three species characteristically form "kettles," where the birds catch a rising thermal air current and then spiral up to gain altitude.

The Brown Pelican is a gregarious bird. Flocks often fly in lines, slowly rising and falling in a wave pattern or V formation, alternately flapping and gliding just above the water's surface. The follow-the-leader flight behavior is a means of optimizing aerial efficiency. The lead bird breaks the wind with the followers taking advantage of the air slick behind it, similar to the way human bicycle racers bunch up in a line behind the lead cyclist.

Flying high above the ocean an individual Brown Pelican sights its prey from a height as great as 60 feet, then makes a spectacular head first plunge, stretching and streamlining its body as it dives to enter the water with great force. Air sacs on the ventral surface of its body provide necessary cushioning upon impact. Opening its huge bill, fish are trapped inside an expandable pouch along with a gallon or two of water. Popping quickly back to the surface, the pelican drains the water out leaving the fish inside. With a toss of its head, the pelican swallows its meal. However, contrary to the above mentioned poem, it is not true that "he can take in his beak food enough for a week." Brown Pelicans are vulnerable to variations in food availability. It is believed that in California they once fed heavily on Pacific sardines (*Sardinops sagex*). Sardine stocks however crashed due to over-fishing by humans. Steinbeck's celebrated Cannery Row in Monterey was once a thriving fish processing facility before it was abandoned to later become a trendy tourist destination.

Now Brown Pelicans specialize on northern anchovies (*Engraulis mordax*). Anchovy populations are subject to substantial annual variation, which in turn affects reproductive success of pelicans. In years of low anchovy abundance, such as this year, Brown Pelicans experience widespread reproductive failure.

Brown Pelicans frequently forage over schools of fish in mixed flocks with other species of seabirds. The pelicans may be the catalyst for such mixed species flock formations as their conspicuous plunge-diving behavior attracts other seabirds to the area. Humans can also be made aware of fish schools by watching the pelicans' behavior. While draining its pouch, prior to swallowing prey, the pelican can be vulnerable to kleptoparasitism (parasitism by theft) from other birds like gulls. It is not uncommon to see a gull sitting near or even on top of a Brown Pelican, looking for an opportunity to steal a fish. Individual Heermann's Gulls (*Larus heermanni*) in particular specialize in kleptoparasitizing Brown Pelicans.

Besides being a great tool to catch fish, a pelican's gular pouch is a thermoregulatory feature. If the bird is too hot it can flutter its pouch, exposing the highly vascularized (well supplied with blood vessels) skin to the cooler air to shed excess body heat.

Several adaptations allow the pelican to survive in an ocean environment. A third eyelid or nictitating membrane acts as goggles to

protect its eyes as it dives from on high. Living much of its life in the ocean, it can drink salt water. Ingested salt is excreted by paired salt glands located in shallow depressions behind the eyes. Ducts from the glands open into a narrow cavity behind the external nares (nostrils). Clear, salty fluid then runs down the bill and drips off the tip ridding its body of excess salt. Yet the Brown Pelican is unable to remain on the water for long periods without becoming waterlogged. So it must return to land to roost at night and loaf during the day after foraging to dry off completely.

The male pelican selects the nest site, and the female builds the nest using materials gathered by the male. Brown Pelicans nest on the ground or in trees. They usually nest in a colony, which provides safety in numbers . . . more eyes to look out for predators. They do not nest in Bay Area. The birds we see here mostly nest to the south in the Channel Islands, especially Anacapa Island, and migrate north in the post-breeding season.

Unlike many other birds, pelicans do not develop brood patches, which are bare areas on the chest to warm their eggs and chicks. Parent pelicans incubate their eggs under the webs of their large webbed feet. Also unlike most other seabirds, pelican chicks are altricial, born with naked pink bodies. They lie prone in the nest unable to hold their head upright at first. The chicks are ectothermic ("cold blooded") on hatching, gradually becoming endothermic ("warm blooded") as their body mass increases and they grow insulating down feathers. Both adults brood the young, taking turns for about three weeks. Fledging occurs in about eleven to twelve weeks.

Brown Pelicans take about five years to reach adulthood and start to breed. Immature Brown Pelicans can be told by their brown heads and white belly during the first year. The adult's upperparts are gray to gray-brown with a darker belly. Adults molt head and neck feathers to produce three distinct plumages during the annual cycle: head is pale yellow and neck white in the post breeding season; head yellow and neck dark brown just prior to onset of breeding; and head white and neck brown during nesting. Male and female adult Brown Pelicans look alike although the male has a slightly larger bill and is somewhat heavier.

Brown Pelicans can live to be thirty years old. Despite its longevity, the Brown Pelican nearly disappeared from North America between the late 1950s and early 1970s. The primary cause was pesticides entering the marine food web. DDT impaired reproduction by causing birds to lay thin shelled eggs that broke under the weight of incubating parents. Pelicans served as a "canary in the mine" alerting humans to the dangers of this pesticide in the environment.

In 1970, Brown Pelicans were placed on the federal endangered species list. This, among other contributors, led to a ban on the use of DDT in the U.S. in 1972. Reproduction soon improved and overall pelican numbers continue to rise although not without fluctuations. Breeding colonies along the Pacific coast were particularly hard hit, and the western subspecies is still federally listed. The eastern population is considered to have recovered and has been delisted.

Post Script: In February 2009 the California Fish and Game Commission voted to remove the Brown Pelican from the state endangered species list. On November 11, 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced its delisting from the federal list. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar pronounced the species fully recovered on both the west and east coasts. 



TRISH GARNEY

Brown Pelican

WHY DO WE HAVE A CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

By Phil Peterson

Chances are if you ask Marin Audubon members why they belong to such an organization, you will get more than one answer. Many of course are drawn to the fascinating field trips and programs that are a staple of our organization. But what else is there to being a member when you're not glued to a pair of binoculars?

What many of our members are all too familiar with is the work that must be done in order to protect and preserve our natural habitats for wildlife and human enjoyment.

Maybe you have had the experience of driving or walking past a favorite spot only to be disappointed at the sight of bulldozers and "progress" at work. Maybe you shook your head and lamented about the inevitability of it all. If you have, then it is time to learn more about Marin Audubon's Conservation Committee.

WHAT WE DO

The Conservation Committee meets monthly and is open to all Audubon members. Here you will have the opportunity to learn about and weigh in on local, regional, state and federal matters that relate to the conservation of natural resources.

The Committee reviews development proposals and documents that have the potential to impact habitats, collects ideas and opinions, presents guest speakers, solicits legal advice and provides written and public comment at the appropriate times. In addition, the committee makes recommendations to the board of directors on potential acquisition sites and policies.

An indispensable part of conservation is understanding the process that typically accompanies public decision making. To be an effective participant, it is important to be familiar with such things as public hearings, scoping sessions, EIR's, General Plans, zoning ordinances, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), environmental agencies and numerous other public entities.

Over the years, the Conservation Committee has brought together people with a broad range of interests, professions and expertise on a variety of issues. As a member, your voice will be added to an organization that has become an effective means of protecting habitat for native species.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The Conservation Committee meets one evening each month. If you are interested, give one of our co-chairs (Phil Peterson 898-8400 and Barbara Salzman 924-6057) a call or email us for times and locations of our next meeting. 

CONSERVATION

Continued from page 2

Melanie Brent, Office Chief, Office of Environmental Analysis, Caltrans District 4, and P.O. Box 23660, Oakland, CA 94623-0660.

HAMILTON'S TODD ROAD REVISIONS

Thank you City of Novato for revising the Hamilton Wetlands Access Road Plan to support and include the recommendations of the Todd Road Working Group. Novato had earlier ignored the Working Group comments, but changed its recommendations to the recommendations of the Working Group. The recommendations adopted by the council now include: removing an old, abandoned bridge to restore the stream bank as mitigation for building a new bridge over Pacheco Creek; a commitment to remove the road in 20 years, after the wetland construction is completed; locating mitigation for the unavoidable loss of wetlands immediately adjacent to the site; and replacing native trees removed (to build a bridge over the stream bank) with native trees on a 3:1 basis.

As reported previously in *The Clapper Rail*, the city's Negative Declaration/Initial Study completely ignored recommendations of the council-appointed Working Group that met regularly and deliberated for more than a year.

The City of Novato and the Coastal Conservancy will be seeking federal funds to implement the Todd Road project along with the mitigation measures.

GOOD THINGS AHEAD FOR CREEKSIDE PARK CLAPPER RAILS

Marin County Parks, which manages this remnant marsh at Creekside Park across from Marin General Hospital in Greenbrae, has initiated a Habitat Restoration Project that promises to improve the habitat for the marsh's Clapper Rail population.

The plan includes planting native plants to improve the refuge habitat of the transition zone along the western side of the marsh, removing a section of trail (a second trail leads through the same general area), and erecting barriers to discourage people and dogs from entering the marsh. This work (along with removing non-native cordgrass by the Invasive Spartina Project and the Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed) will greatly improve the habitat value of this remnant of a once more extensive tidal marsh system that extended along the banks of the tidal reach of Corte Madera Creek. Our thanks to Parks Director Steve Petterle.

We also have urged that the southern boundary of the marsh, near Corte Madera Creek, be included in the planning. It is frequently used as upland refuge by rails and would benefit from more native plants. 



RICHARD BOHNET

Western Wood-Pewee

MARIN BIRDLOG - OCTOBER 2009

By Rich Stallcup

After a relatively quiet September, October 2009 was a great time for birders and unusual birds in Marin. Periods of calm were scattered throughout the month allowing misguided migrants to overfly the coast at night and return to clumps of trees on headlands and other attractive refueling spots close to the sea.

IN NEAR CHECKLIST ORDER:

A juvenile **American Golden Plover** at Spaletta on the O.P. 10/1 (RS,NB) was the only one reported. This species is far less frequent here than the Pacific Golden Plover. Six **Elegant Terns** at Bolinas 10/30 (RS,NB) were amazingly late especially following a fall of few anchovies.

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** on the O.P. 10/9 to 10/14 (MB,MR, mo.b) was the first there in six years and is the only one as yet for Marin in 2009.

By far the rarest landbird of the fall, a **Great-crested Flycatcher** was on the O.P. 10/9 (MB,MR) and was correctly identified in spite of opposition from other birders. October is *the* best month here for the presence of **Tropical Kingbirds**. At least four were admired on the O.P. at scattered localities throughout the month (m.ob) and one was at Point Reyes Station 10/10 (PW). A **Dusky Flycatcher** at the RCA Station 10/1 (RS,NB) and a **Hammond's** 10/14 (KH) at the O.P. Lighthouse trees were the only extralimital *Empidonax*.

Five **Tennessee Warblers** were more than expected in recent years. Two were on the O.P. (MB,MR), two in Bolinas for a total of three this fall (KH) and one was seen in the Marin Headlands 10/10 (SB). A **Yellow-throated Warbler** (D.d.albilora) was on the O.P. 10/11 (NS), a **Palm** there 10/9 (RS,m.ob), a ♂ **Cape May** 10/12 (NS,NP), a **Magnolia** 10/6 (BB) and a female **Black-throated Blue** 10/8 (CL,LL). A **Canada Warbler** at Junior (KH) was the only eastern *Wilsonia*. No rare vireos were found here in October making a fall total of no rare vireos.

A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at the Lighthouse trees O.P. 10/8 (CL,LL). Three **Clay-colored Sparrows** at those same trees 10/7 (RS,NB) plus two others on the O.P. and one in Bolinas 10/14 to 10/26

(KH) was a strong showing but were the only odd *Spizellas*. A young **Rusty Blackbird** wading in a rain puddle was at the Nunes Ranch O.P. 10/12 (RS) but was soon absorbed into a flock of 2000 Tricolored Blackbirds.

RAPTORS

Bald Eagles continue to thrive in Marin and were seen at Bolinas, "The Lakes," Nicasio Reservoir and Tomales Bay (m.ob). A juvenile **Swainson's Hawk** flew by Hawk Hill 10/1 (GGRO) and may well have been the same bird that stayed at the O.P. most of the last week of September. GGRO recorded sightings of 33 **Broad-winged Hawks** in October which is close to the average in recent years. One hatch-year **Northern Goshawk** passed "the hill" 10/29 (SB,GGRO) which is really cool!

In a category apart from the rest, a **Long-toed Stint** was found and identified resting in stranded kelp on the ocean side of Limantour Beach 10/24 (RS,SL,GFNMS). It was thoroughly documented on film, on digital stills and video through the morning of 10/26 (MB,MR,KH,m.ob) when it flew to the estero side where thousands of waders forage the tidal flats. Some have questioned the I.D. Apparently they are unfamiliar with the abundant Least Sandpiper.

OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS

WW-Will Wilson, **PW**-Peter White, **NW**-Nick Whelan, **M&JW**-Mary & John Westlake, **JT**-Jason Thompson, **NS**-Noah Strycker, **RS**-Rich Stallcup, **CS**-Cyndy Shafer, **MR**-Mary Anne Rotella, **DR**-Don Reinburg, **PRBO**-Point Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science, **PRBO BT**-PRBO BAT Team, **NP**-Natalia Penuela, **O.P.**-Outer Point Reyes, **NK**-Ninja Kinglets, **NB**-Native Birds Field Group, **DM**-Dominik Moser, **SL**-Shannon Lyday, **LL**-Les Lieurance, **CL**-Cindy Lieurance, **SK**-Sarah Klobas, **LH**-Lisa Hug, **KH**-Keith Hansen, **GFNMS**-Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Beachwatch Volunteers, **GGRO**-Golden Gate Rap  bservatory, **MB**-Mark Butler, **SB**-Steve

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2009

Are you a "less experienced, but interested" Bird Watcher? We need you!

Great rare birds are out there — help us find them, and along the way, identify and count all the more common ones too!!

Please join us for a day of fun and birding on the annual CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Teams will cover the whole southern part of the county, from Terra Linda to Bolinas Lagoon to the Golden Gate Bridge. We need lots of good birders in the field!! If you would like to stay at home that day and count birds that appear at your feeders, we can include your numbers in the count as well.

Whether you are going to count in the field or at a feeder, please sign up in advance by email to cbc@marinaudubon.org, or visit the signup form at marinaudubon.org. The count occurs on Saturday, December 26, rain or shine. At the compilation dinner at the end of the day, hear about the species the other teams have seen.

HAPPY BIRDING!

Join us at our COMPILATION DINNER following the Christmas Bird Count. Whether you reserve a dinner or bring your own, everyone on the count is encouraged to come to the evening compilation.

The dinner will be held after the count from 5:30 - 8:30 PM (doors open at 5 PM) at the Tamalpais Valley Community Center, Mill Valley. **Reservations required** for the catered dinner (pasta, green salad, garlic bread, coffee or tea). Cost: \$12. Please pay at the door.

To keep with our dessert pot-luck tradition, we encourage everyone to bring something sweet to share.

BE "GREEN": In order to minimize waste, please bring your own plate, cup, cutlery and napkin. Thank you!

DIRECTIONS:

Take Stinson Beach exit, which turns into Shoreline. Follow around the bend to Tennessee Valley Road (at the fruit stand) and turn left. Go 1/4 mile to Marin Avenue and turn right, then make an immediate left into the Center parking lot.

TO RESERVE A DINNER:

Email jcowper993@aol.com or mail your NAME(s), EMAIL and MAILING ADDRESS and PHONE NUMBER to Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, 141 Oak Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960. Questions? Call Mary Anne at 415/453-2216. 



THE Clapper Rail

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Point Reyes Birding Festival — April 23 - 25, 2010

Plan now to attend the first-ever Point Reyes Birding Festival. Point Reyes and the West Marin area are home to one of the most diverse bird populations in North America. April is a great time to see and hear breeding birds, and to admire shore birds and waterfowl (and many other species) on their way north. Top bird experts such as David Wimpfheimer, Keith Hansen, and Jules Evens will lead participants on trips to discover the best birding sites in the region. Displays and exhibits will expand your bird knowledge, and you can stay at one of the dozens of charming bed and breakfast or other lodging establishments. The event will also feature other walks to see the West Marin natural world — including the famous wildflower displays, butterflies, and more! More information at <http://www.eacmarin.org>.

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