



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, FEB 5 8 PM

Wildlife Photography
With Suzi Eszterhas

Suzi is an extraordinary photographer who shares her skill with the world.

Her photos are published in books and magazines, even the covers of TIME and AFRICA. She leads instructional photography tours with names like: "Wildlife India, Botswana Predators" and "Madagascar Lemurs and Reptiles." She is also a Fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers.

You could pay to join one of her tours, or you can see her marvelous work for free, by coming on February 5.

FRIDAY, MAR 5 8 PM

Take Refuge in our Wildlife Refuges
With Giselle Block

The San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex consists of seven National Wildlife Refuges, located from the shores of San Pablo Bay south to Monterey Bay. They include tidal marsh, islands, sand dunes and other unique environments that support a rich array of wildlife. All of these refuges support endangered species populations or significant migratory and breeding bird populations.

Join Giselle Block, a biologist within the SF Bay Complex, as she takes you on a tour of these seven refuges and then zooms in on the environments and wildlife of two nearby sites – the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge and Marin Islands National Wildlife Refuge.



Ring-billed Gull

DAVID WEINSTOCK

Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count – December 26, 2009

By Harrison Karr

On a day when rain threatened more than it delivered, over 125 birders enjoyed the remarkable diversity of Marin, finding an impressive 186 different species of birdlife. If 2009 was indeed a year of change, many of our local bird species seem to have benefited. All-time high numbers were recorded for 14 species, including three woodpeckers (Downy, Nuttall's, and Northern Flicker), two nuthatches (White-breasted and Pygmy) and American Green-winged Teal. In the thirty-five year history of the Southern Marin Christmas Bird count, Brant were missed on count day on 18 occasions, and in only two of those 35 years were more than 20 Brant found. This year, 39 were recorded. Barn owls, which have suffered from loss of habitat and suitable roosting sites in much of the county, seem to be on the rebound; nine were found, almost 2-1/2 times the average count for the last ten years. American Goldfinches almost quadrupled their ten-year average.

Other highlights included an adult Bald Eagle over Sausalito, a male Harlequin Duck (only the second time for this count in the last 19 years), and the first Northern Pygmy-Owl in nine years.

Only two species – Ring-billed Gull and Glaucous-winged Gull – were recorded in all-time low numbers, and gull numbers on the CBC historically show great variation. The only species recorded for the first time on this CBC is the Eurasian Collared-Dove, which continues its remarkable westward colonization of North America.

2009 also brought change in the CBC team. Dominik Mosur, in his first year as compiler, brought new enthusiasm and energy to the team. He receives our heartfelt gratitude for stepping up to the challenge, and for exemplifying "green"



ROGER HARRIS

Birders welcomed by (left to right) Grace McMichael, Meryl Sundove, Lynn Strandberg and Mort McMichael

birding by covering the Sausalito area on bicycle! Thanks also are due to Dianne Sierra, who continues to expertly manage the formidable task of CBC data management. Roger Harris, Meryl Sundove, Josephine Kreider, Barbara Salzman, Harrison Karr, and Mary Anne Cowperthwaite also provided valuable assistance. Finally, the continued excellence of this CBC is a tribute to the skills of the area leaders, field participants, and feeder watchers.

2009 CBC data will be posted at www.MarinAudubon.org/09birdcount.htm along with historical data. For specific Southern Marin count information: <http://marinaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count-history.php>

The CBC is entirely a volunteer effort. If you are skilled with Google Earth, we would love to have your help creating new digital maps for the CBC. Please contact cbc.marinaudubon.org for information.

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: SAT. FEBRUARY 6 FROM 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

BAHIA: SAT. FEBRUARY 13 FROM 10:00 AM -1:00 PM



IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message	2
Field Trips	3
Jr Bird Watchers	4
Bird of the Month	5
Birdlog	7

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

President Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President Lowell Sykes 388-2821
Secretary Mariah Baird 456-3355
Treasurer Josephine Kreider 381-1910
Finance Chair Greg Block 479-8254
Conservation Phil Peterson 898-8400
Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Earthshare Jude Stalker 668-1242
Legal
Field Trips Helen Lindqvist 789-0703
Membership Bob Chivers 444-0875
Fundraising Richard Bohmet 331-3217
Programs Tracy Corbin 722-6592
Special Projects Jude Stalker 668-1242
Nominating Phil Peterson 898-8400
Volunteers Bob Hinz 383-8688
Property Mgt. Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity
BAAC Reps Lowell Sykes 388-2821
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.

©2010 Marin Audubon Society

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

We are very pleased to begin 2010 with new faces at Marin Audubon. We welcome new board member Tracy Corbin who will fill a partial term and co-chair our Speaker Series with Lowell Sykes. Tracy lives in Sausalito, has project management, marketing, and database management experience at McGraw Hill and other large companies and currently works for San Francisco Bay Keeper.

We also welcome Mary Nealon, who will maintain our membership list. Originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, she and her husband recently moved to San Rafael, are in love with Marin, and she had an urge to contribute to our beautiful community. Her computer skills are impressive and we look forward to her fulfilling this important position.


Goodbye and a huge thank you to Bill Lenarz who cared for our membership list for 13 years. A long time without a break! We wish Bill the best of luck as he moves on to other interests and express our gratitude for the many volunteer hours he devoted to us. Bill was an MAS Board member prior to taking on the membership duties and he is an excellent birder.

We had a very successful Christmas Bird Count thanks to our 125 volunteers. The pouring rain did not begin until the end of the day, after most of us were finished. The 186 species tallied was 5% better than our average over the last 10 years – very impressive in the scheme of things. Thank you to all of our counters and to our new chair, Dominik Mosur, and other committee members Harrison Karr, Roger Harris, Meryl Sundove, Dianne Sierra, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, and Jo Kreider. Dominik's contribution was especially helpful in getting us new volunteers from other parts of the Bay Area.

We are looking for a volunteer to chair our Mother's Day Barbecue. This annual event has lots of volunteers who worked the event for years, and procedures to accomplish the various tasks are in place. All we need is someone to coordinate. Please contact me for more information (415/924-6057) if you are interested.

A very special thank you to members who responded to our end-of-year appeal letter. We received generous donations from many members. If you haven't sent your contribution in yet, it is not too late. You can still contribute to keep us going during the coming year. We depend on this end-of-year appeal to support our administrative overhead, our educational programs, conservation work and property management because the funds we receive from membership dues are not sufficient. Mail your check to our PO Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

We have had great success on our workdays at Bahia with volunteering MAS members, and volunteers from the Flex Program of the Center for Volunteer and Non Profit Leadership. Thanks in particular to the Flex Program coordinator Casey Flavey. On our workday in early January, volunteers planted almost 1,000 rhizomes (rootstock) of a marvelous native grass, creeping wildrye (*Leymus triticoides*), along the banks of the eastern and western peninsulas on our property at Bahia. Impressive for one day's work! We could do a lot more if you joined us.

I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season. On behalf of the MAS Board — may you all have a healthy and joyous new year, and have a chance to enjoy our wonderful and varied over-wintering migratory birds. 

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.


THREATS TO CLAPPER RAILS AND CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE HABITATS

You may think after wildlife habitat is acquired by an agency or organization that protects habitat, the land's natural resources are protected. Not necessarily so. At the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, a number of current activities and planned projects are degrading or destroying wildlife habitats, and also presenting serious threats to these natural resources.

The Corte Madera Ecological Reserve currently supports a population of 9-14 California Clapper Rails, down from 50 in 2006. The birds spend their entire lives in the marsh, foraging in mud along the sloughs and edges of marshes and among the marsh plants, nesting in the vegetation and hiding under plants from raptors above. Rails leave the marsh only during very high tides to seek protective cover on adjacent high ground. Now human activities surrounding the Reserve are interfering with the birds' use of adjacent uplands, and causing erosion and

sedimentation of the marshes.

We are discussing the problems and options for solutions with users, and are in contact with the owner of the marshes, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), as well as other area land owners.

We also are contacting the agencies with jurisdiction and will be working with them, where needed, to address the many issues of concern. Unfortunately, the DFG has minimal funds for oversight and enforcement. Anyone who would like to help, please call Barbara Salzman 415/924-6057. 

ALERT - JANUARY 30 , 2010

COSUMNES RIVER PRESERVE & SUNSET CRANE "FLY-IN" Saturday, Jan 30, 2010 9 AM to 6 PM With Terry Colborn

The duration of the Cosumnes River Preserve field trip is 9 AM to 6 PM to enable the participants to watch the spectacle of hundreds of Sandhill Cranes coming in to roost at dusk! (The finish time was omitted in last month's newsletter.)

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, Feb 4

8:30 AM to 12 NOON

With Len Blumin

Come join Len to check out the variety of waders and other waterbirds that are now here for our mild winter! Several raptors are always seen flying over this large marshy area, too!

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.

BAHIA: WOODS AND WETLANDS

Sunday, Feb 21

9 AM to 1 PM

With Jim White

Come to see the wealth of birdlife using the tidal wetlands of this 150 plus acres of restored bay marshes. Although the levees were breached just over a year ago, the birds utilizing this new habitat numbered 2,795 in a recent count and included White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, many species of duck, three types of sandpiper and Snowy Egret. The upland terrain of Blue Oak woodlands always produces woodpeckers too, so come join us for a leisurely stroll around this new restoration area.

Allowing a half hour to forty minutes from central or southern Marin, head north on Hwy 101 and exit east on to Atherton Ave in Novato then turn left onto Bugeia Lane that becomes Bahia Drive as it goes further east. Park and meet near the double gates at the end of Bahia.

Heavy rain cancels — phone Helen to verify 415/789-0703 or 415/306-2325 (cell).

CAPAY VALLEY

Saturday, Feb 27, 2010

With Terry Colborn

Plan to join us for a delightful day in picturesque Capay Valley. The almond orchards should be at peak bloom as the valley's harbinger of the coming spring season. We'll visit historical Capay Cemetery and several favorite birding spots along Cache Creek as it winds through idyllic Capay Valley. We'll look for Yellow-billed Magpie, Lewis' Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Phainopepla, Western Bluebirds and resident raptors, as well as any lingering wintering raptors. We also hope to see some early spring arrivals such as Barn and Violet-green Swallows, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and warbler species. Past trips have produced Golden and Bald Eagles, Western Kingbird and Prairie Falcon. We also expect to see some early spring wildflowers along with redbud, that very conspicuous flowering shrub along the roadside. Terry Colborn will meet participants at the Community Park in Esparto at 8:30 am. Participants can also carpool from there.

Directions to Esparto: take Hwy 37 east to Vallejo then go east on I-80; just past the new Nut Tree Center take I-505. Travel I-505 north for about 20 miles to the Route 16 exit and turn left (west). Esparto is located about 4 miles west on Route 16 - the park is in the center of town. Driving time is about 1½ hrs but allow a little extra time, as there may be early morning fog.

Bring lunch, liquids, dress in layers and wear sturdy footwear, as we will do a little walking. Heavy rains cancel.

For more info: call Terry at 916/705-8991 or email tlcgdc@aol.com.

MAS WORK PARTIES

TRIANGLE MARSH WORK PARTY

Saturday, Feb 6

10 AM - 1 PM

We meet the 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, Feb 13

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

BIRDS AT BAHIA

(Flyway Festival Event)

Saturday, Feb 6

8:45 AM to 12 NOON

With Daniel Edelstein

Rare blue oak woodlands border salt marsh habitat. Shallow open water and marshes provide excellent habitat for diverse assemblage of birds. Expect to see migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, diving birds, raptors and landbirds on the adjacent oak woodlands and grasslands. Learn about the newly restored tidal marsh & uplands of Bahia. All levels welcome.

Directions: From Hwy 101: take Atherton Ave exit (Novato), go east, and turn left approx. one mile later onto Bugeia Lane (which becomes Bahia Dr). At the end of Bahia Dr, turn right onto Topaz Dr and drive through neighborhood houses for approximately a mile. Turn left onto Bolero. Park at end of cul de sac.

Max. number birders: 25. Heavy rain cancels. Please call 415/668-1242 to sign up or with questions.

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 that 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.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION

MIRA MONTE ACQUISITION

We are currently in the due diligence phase of acquiring the Mira Monte property, between the County Airport at Gnos Field and the Redwood Landfill. To apply for grant monies, an updated appraisal and Phase 1 environmental assessment are required to evaluate this site's potential for possible contaminants. In early February we will get the results, as we are about to begin writing grants for acquisition funds.



JAY SALZMAN

Mira Monte wetlands

VOLUNTEER TO RESTORE HABITAT

In spite of the efforts of many, habitats continue to be degraded and destroyed by uninformed or uncaring people. If you care about our native birds, are concerned about habitat loss, and want to learn more about local birds and wildlife, join us to create and improve habitat for our native birds and wildlife. Be prepared to get your hands dirty as you plant, transplant, and remove weeds. Please call Bob Hinz for more information at 415/383-8688.

Marin Audubon now owns more than 500 acres of habitat! This year we are focusing on restoring habitats at two sites: Bahia and Triangle Marsh.

Bahia

Revegetation of Bahia is underway as we transplant rhizomes rootstock of creeping wild rye on the western and eastern peninsulas of our property and on the transition habitat owned by the Department of Fish and Game. When we construct our new beds to grow more plants, we'll line all beds with visqueen, because last year the visqueen beds did well.

Triangle Marsh

We hold regular workdays the first Saturday of each month during which volunteers remove a variety of invasive weeds.



JUDE STALKER

Volunteers hard at work at Bahia

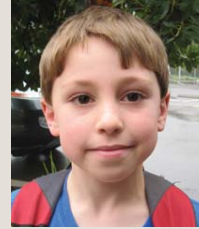
JUNIOR BIRD WATCHERS CORNER

By Wendy Dreskin

Here are our latest two Junior Bird Watchers.




Dominic Haggard is the first in his St. Rita kindergarten class to pass this school year.



Bacich student **Callaway Allen** was a first grade Junior Bird Watcher last year and now, in second grade, he continues his interest.

PHOTOS: WENDY DRESKIN

If you know an individual child or a teacher who would like to participate, please have them go to www.marinaudubon.org and click on Junior Bird Watcher.

Questions? Call Wendy at 415/457-3949. 

PETALUMA MARSH

Very Troublesome Incident With Kayakers

Our biologist monitor for the Petaluma Marsh Expansion Project site, Mary Anne Flett, witnessed a disturbing incident on her last count day. She reported: "On this flood tide period, there were hundreds to thousands of shorebirds and about that many ducks – huge rafts of Canvasback!"

At the end of her survey three kayakers came into the restored marsh area flushing nearly every bird off the marsh. The birds did not return after they flushed. One of the kayakers stayed in his kayak and dragged through the vegetation at the north east end of the marsh – very near where Mary Anne had heard Clapper Rails before. When she called out a warning, he became nasty.

This disturbing incident points out how just a few people and even non-motorized boats can have a significant impact.

The Bay Area is an essential overwintering area where migratory waterfowl and shorebirds need to rest and refuel if they are to reach their northern breeding grounds in condition to breed successfully, or even to reach their breeding grounds at all. Each time they are flushed, they have to use up energy reserves. If this experience is repeated, the birds may not have enough reserves to reproduce.

So please, kayakers, be aware of birds around you and stay far enough away so as not to cause them to flush.

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 Presedio | 2 acres |

GUESS WHO?

Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

The bird of this month is a native species, nesting in modern times almost exclusively on human-made structures, while its population has expanded and its range has extended.

Can you guess which species it is? If not, here are some more clues.

The bird of this month is one of the most social land birds in North America. It typically nests in colonies as well as roosting and flocking together in the winter. Scientists consider our bird an obligate colonial nester. Their nests are placed next to neighbors' nests forming layers of nests, sometimes consisting of 200 or more nests in the colony. Its nesting colonies are among the largest of any land bird.

Living in colonies has led to the development of some complex behavioral traits. For example, this species occasionally "parasitizes" neighboring nests both by laying eggs in their neighbors' nests and by moving eggs carried in their bills from their own nests into others. The parasitic bird waits until its neighbor is off its nest before she deposits her egg for a neighboring pair to raise. This is known as brood-parasitism or egg dumping. Parasites themselves are frequently parasitized because they more often leave their own nest unattended in search of host nests.

In a colony studied in Nebraska, as many as 22-43% of nests contained at least one parasitic egg laid by a neighbor. The parasites raise their own brood and supplement their reproduction by parasitizing others. Host parents care for parasitic young the same as their own. There is no evidence the parasitic young out-compete the host's young or that the presence of parasitic young affects the host's reproductive success. Such parasitism can increase the colony size.

Another interesting behavior, which evolved to facilitate group living, is having a sophisticated vocal system for distinguishing one's own young from the offspring of others in the colony. Young begin to vocalize about five days after hatching. The call of each chick becomes uniquely recognizable by day 15 and is consistent in structure around day 18. Calls of siblings are structurally similar.

The young usually leave the nest (fledge) around day 24 and are dependent on the parents for about 3 – 5 or more days after fledging. Soon after fledging the young gather with chicks of similar ages in large groups called crèches. Parents locate their young by their distinctive "begging" calls. Having recognizable calls helps the parents to find and feed their young.

Group living has prompted another kind of behavior. These birds observe each other's foraging success and learn from other colony members where food is located. They watch nearby foragers and converge on a spot where their behavior indicates a good food source.

Being in a group allows them to share information about the location of food, as they rely on a patchily distributed and ephemeral food source – flying insects. The transfer of this kind of information is unintentional.


Among the many other advantages of flocking and group living for our bird are opportunities to find mates. Another includes the opportunity to spend more time preening and feeding and less time watching for predators while in a flock. Birds on the edge of the group preen less than those closer to the center as they have to be more vigilant. The distance at which an approaching predator is detected increases with colony size.

Bathing is communal and many birds often simultaneously start and stop bathing. To bathe, our bird flies over water and briefly hits the surface while on the wing. It also drinks on the wing, dipping its small beak briefly into the water.

However, living communally also has its tribulations. Colonies can attract predators. Snakes can climb to the colony's nests because of their placement. Snakes are one of the most important predators especially in big colonies as nests, being placed up against one another, gives access to more eggs and chicks to predate upon.

Likewise, invertebrate parasites concentrate in colonies where there are more hosts available in a small area. Invertebrate parasites include an insect in the Hemiptera family that is common throughout our bird's breeding range. This type of true bug overwinters in nests and feeds on blood of both adults and nestlings. Bug populations can survive in the absence of our bird hosts for up to three years. The rate of parasitism by these bugs increases with the colony size and nest density and harms nestlings by reducing body mass, growth rates, and pre-fledging survivorship. As many as 2,500 bugs per nest have been noted in some colonies.

Colonial breeding increases opportunities for the aforementioned brood parasitism or egg dumping, as well as for promiscuity and extra-pair copulations. Our species is socially monogamous with a dedicated male-female pair tending their nest, but genetically polygamous with each member of the pair engaging in extra-pair copulations. Both sexes routinely mate with multiple members of the other sex.

Perhaps by now you think you have guessed the identity of the bird of the month. If not, here's yet another clue. The bird of the month does *not* regularly return to the mission at San Juan Capistrano. To find out more fascinating facts about this species and its true identity, please read our column next month... 

SIGNATURE GATHERING TO CREATE A CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS TRUST FUND

The California Parks Foundation has filed a proposed statewide ballot to create a stable funding source (the California State Parks Trust Fund) to protect state parks and wildlife from budget-cut funding reductions. Marin Audubon has signed on as an endorser.

The measure would establish an \$18 surcharge on vehicle license fees. The money would be put in a Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund where it could be spent only on state parks, urban river parkways, wildlife, natural lands and ocean conservation programs. Vehicles would receive free, year-round admission to all state parks.

The petition drive continues through mid-March. For more information and/or if you are interested in volunteering to collect signatures to qualify this measure for the ballot, please contact North Bay Coordinator, Ann Thomas 415/924-9559.



LYNN STRANDBERG

Roger Harris and Meryl Sundove at the Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count

WHAT A TURN OUT!

By Jude Stalker

On Saturday, January 9, 2010 we held our first planting day of the season and were delighted to have 22 volunteers show up to help our habitat restoration efforts at Bahia.


Last winter (2008-09), with the help of many great volunteers, we constructed four nursery beds on the MAS property at Bahia and transplanted a native grass, creeping wildrye (*Leymus triticoides*) from a natural local population source into these beds. Our aim was to have them multiply for use in planting this season.

MAS Board Member Lowell Sykes watered these plants religiously through the summer and fall, and boy did they multiply. (Secret: Lowell has a green thumb! – Ed.) We now have more creeping wildrye than we had even hoped for and it is all ready to be planted on the banks of the peninsulas at east Bahia.

In the world of habitat restoration, it is ideal (although not always possible) to collect, grow and transplant natives plants all from the same site. We are pleased to have accomplished this.

What a rewarding experience it was to get nearly 1,000 creeping wildrye plants into the ground, to visit with the wonderful people who came to help us, and have them know that Bahia is a bit closer to being restored back to a native habitat.

Thank you to all that participated, we couldn't have done it without you.

There will be many more opportunities to come and help us plant more Wild Rye in the next few months. Please check *The Clapper Rail* and our website www.marinaudubon.org for upcoming dates. 



Lena Marchetti helping out



Barbara Perolini gets "hands on" experience



Tim Gatto & Raquel Paniagua plant creeping wildrye

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS DONATIONS:

Anonymous, Katherine & Philip Arnaudo, Dr. & Mrs. Donald Barbour, Robert & Jessica Batha, Bob Battagin, E. Candace Berthrong, Michael Branton, Priscilla & Michael H. Bull, Patricia & John Campbell, Lynn Carew, Michael Cass, Mary Sue Cave, Robert & Sandra Chilvers, David & Ekaterina Clevenger, Rosalind Colver, Rigdon Currie, Ken & Ann Davis, Robin & Sherry De Mandel, Nona Dennis, David & Kristine Donadio, Roger & Phyllis Duba, Ola Eikrem, Sylvia Elsesser, Richard Felton, Fred & Annette Gellert, Kay Gillis, Elizabeth & Jon Goerke, Clarice Goodall, Mr & Mrs Peter Gordon, Joan Griffin, L. Martin Griffin, Maureen Groper, Jeannette Gustafson, Rosalind Hamar, Dolores Hansen, Delia Hitz, Russell & Paula Hunt, Lee & Yvonne Jensen, Duane Johnson, Rick Johnson, Diana & Ted Jorgensen, John Kane, Terry & Patricia Keehn, Jeffrey Kimball, Andrea Krueger, Mary Lynn Kunkel, Margot Lancellotti, Clifford Lardinois, Patricia Laszewski, Laurie Cohen Fund, Martha Lee, William Legge, Barbara & Warren Levinson, Marjorie Macris, Ron & Amanda Mallory, Michael Marron, Nancy Martin, James & Lucile Masson, Jr., Morton McMichael, Prem & John McMurdo, Barbara & Gerald Meral, Patricia Merrill, Bernard Meyers, Lynn & Leonard Charles Milliman, Patricia Minor, Lois & Bruce Moody, Warren & Marcia Nute, Carol Olwell, Howard & Christa Ortman, Gary & Lynne Page, Diane Parish, Kay & Thomas Peacock, Michael Phelps, Ruth & William Pratt, Alison Quoyeser, Douglas Rigg, Roger & Dorothy Roberts, Billie J. Robertson, Henrietta Rogell, Diane Rosenberger, Nicholas Roth, Barbara Rothkrug, Patty Ruffin, Dede Sabbag, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Mary Jane Sargent, Edward Sattizahn, Rolf & Charlotte Scherman, Jage & Elizabeth Schiff, Elizabeth & Eldon Schriock, Virginia & William Schultz, Janith Steinhart, Jane Stevick, Roger Stoll, Evelyn Topper, Stephen & R.D. Turpie, Rolf & Janice Ursin-Smith, Ronald L. Vestal, Rona Weintraub, Jeff Weston, Sharon Wilkinson, Sandy Williams, Dorit Winter, Catherine & John Yee, Jamie Zank

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Bud Alderson, Richard Bohnet, John Boring, Ansel Burk, Jared Burk, Richard Derr, Christine Fong, Simone Gannage, Tim Gatto, Bob Hinz, Megan & Jubil Hirschfeld, Jo Kreider, George & Charles Lightfoot, the Marchetti family (Lou, Angela, Calla & Lena), Elliot Miller, Conner O'Sullivan, Raquel Paniagua, Barbara Perolini, Phil Peterson, Lilo Petrocchio, Flinn Moore Rauck, John Rauck, Barbara Salzman, Brian Somer, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Whitney Thornton

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Flinn Moore Rauck, John Rauck, Richard Derr, Brian Somer, Christine Fong, Simone Gannage, Conner O'Sullivan, Megan & Jubil Hirschfeld, George & Charles Lightfoot, Lilo Petrocchio

OTHER CONSERVATION NEWS ...


CORTE MADERA: HIGGINS BOAT DOCK

An Initial Study and Negative Declaration to build a non-motorized boat launch into Corte Madera Creek (along Lucky Drive across from Redwood High School) is being circulated. Covering 480 sq. ft. of the creek (plus a transition ramp over 90 sq. ft.), the proposed dock will cover 360 sq. ft. more of the creek than the previous dock – three-times larger than the dock removed five years ago. As mitigation, the Town of Corte Madera proposes a sign discussing the importance of clean water – since dock use is only for non-motorized vehicles. **Signs are not acceptable mitigation for wetland and creek impacts and are not even in compliance with the Town's own policies.**

LUCAS VALLEY ROAD: GRADY RANCH PRECISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The county's notice seeking comments on the proposed new Lucasfilm facility on the Grady Ranch, states changes now require a Supplemental EIR, since the original plan submission 17 years ago. We agree and asked that potential impacts to the stream, wetlands, and other habitats be addressed in the new document.

MILL VALLEY: TENNESSEE VALLEY/MANZANITA CONNECTOR TRAIL

At press time, this item went before the Bay Conservation Development Commission (BCDC) board. We support the trail's current alignment (along Coyote Creek, from the Hwy 1 bridge to the Mill Valley-Sausalito trail). For mitigation we asked the next upstream segment (a boardwalk) be located closer to Hwy 1 and the current pedestrian bridge be removed (a new one will be installed). 

MARIN BIRDLOG - DECEMBER 2009

By Rich Stallcup

Naturally, most rare birds found in December come from the early side of the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) period. In 2009, Marin County counts were: Point Reyes Peninsula 12/19 and Southern Marin 12/26 and here are some of the highlights:

On the **POINT REYES PENINSULA CBC** there were at least five different **Bald Eagles**, three **Prairie Falcons** and two **Oldsquaws**. A **Short-billed Dowitcher** (possibly the most over-reported species on CBCs) and eleven **Red Knots** were reported (JC,DM) as seen from a kayak at the Walker River Delta, Tomales Bay. A young male **Tufted Duck** was at the southeast corner of lower Abbott's Lagoon (AK), the first in several years.

Unusual landbirds and/or good numbers for more resident species were a **Townsend's x Hermit Warbler** hybrid and a **Black-and-white Warbler** near the Point Reyes Caltrans maintenance yard (RS,HC), a **Northern Waterthrush** in Inverness (TE,m.ob), a **Red-naped Sapsucker** (returned for the second year) at Point Reyes Seashore Headquarters (IS), *eight Pileated Woodpeckers* and *five Rock Wrens*.

The **SOUTHERN MARIN CBC** produced a **Bald Eagle**, a **Harlequin Duck** at Loch Lomond, **Spotted, Northern Pygmy** and **Short-eared Owls** (and four more common owls), a **Nashville Warbler** and several **Swamp Sparrows**.

Collateral observations from both CBCs included four species of snakes and five of salamanders, five butterflies and even a dragonfly. It's good to count in California.

Outside the CBC period, some special reports were: 28 **Wilson's Snipe** (JM) in the Pumpkin Patch on Gospel Flat (that's a lot of snipe, but over 200 at one pond at Ellis Creek Wildlife Area, southern Sonoma County in December was astonishing); 450 **Violet-green Swallows**

with only 30 **Tree Swallows** 12/6 at the Vintage Oaks mitigation site (RS,HC). Usually, if there are *any* swallows here mid-winter, they are Trees... perhaps we will be seeing the other species lingering longer in the fall, arriving earlier in the "spring" or simply overwintering because warmer climates equal more insects. A ♀ **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** 12/14 in Corte Madera (NW) was a good find. Did you know Rose-breasted Grosbeak records in California in winter exceed those of Black-headed Grosbeaks! On 12/21 a gray **Fox Sparrow**, probably *Passerella iliaca megarhyncha*, stopped for a meal in Novato while "just passin' through" (RS). Normally, Fox sparrows visiting the lowlands of coastal California are of brown taxa but a few gray ones winter on high, serpentine ridges with chamise chaparral.

If the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Taxonomy and Nomenclature asks you what the common names for Fox Sparrow groups should be, please say Brown, Gray and Red ... not sooty (an allusion to gray) for the brown ones, slate-colored (inviting confusion with that race of junco) for the gray ones, and stick with red. Thank you!

OBSERVERS and ACRONYMS

Missy Wipf, Hilary Winslow, **NW**-Nick Whelan, Janice Tweedy, **RS**-Rich Stallcup, Dave Shuford, **IS**-Ivan Samuels, Maggie Rufo, Jennifer Roth, Mary Anne Rotella, Don Reinberg, Point Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science, Melissa Pitkin, **DM**-Dominik Mosur, **JM**-Jeff Miller, **m.ob**-many observers, John Longstreth, **WL**-William Legge, **AK**-Andy Kleinhesselink, John Kelly, Harrison Karr, Oliver James, Diana Humple, **AH**-Alan Hopkins, Deborah Fitzpatrick, **JE**-Jules Evens, **TE**-Todd Easterla, Cindy Dickey, **DD**-Dave De Sante, **JC**-Josiah Clark, **CBC**-Christmas Bird Count, **HC**-Heather Cameron, Mark Butler, Len & Patti Blumin, **BB**-Bob Battagin, **SA**-Scott Anderson. 

JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT FEBRUARY 12-16

Help scientists track changes in bird populations and distribution by participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count (Feb. 12 - 16), sponsored by National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Count at any location you choose —your backyard, your favorite marsh or woodland — for as long as you like during the four-day period, even for as little as 15 minutes.

This is also a great way for younger Junior Bird Watchers to start participating in citizen science, since it's less rigorous than the all-day Christmas Bird Count.

For instructions on how to participate, forms for submitting your data, and checklists to use in the field go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc.


Happy birding! 

MARIN AUDUBON LAUNCHES A NEW WEBSITE



Effective December 30, 2009 Marin Audubon launched a totally new website. The site is designed to be easy to use, professional in appearance, and full of information about birds, other wildlife and their habitat in Marin County. You can learn about upcoming Field Trips and Speaker Series, seek volunteer opportunities, renew your membership, donate to MAS or contact one of our board members to answer your questions.

Our newsletter, *The Clapper Rail*, is now available on our website in color (including some past issues). Reading *The Clapper Rail* on our website saves printing and postage costs, so if you wish to discontinue receiving it by mail, please email: chilvers-law@comcast.net. You will then not receive it by mail, but are encouraged to view it on our website.

Please visit the site and browse to your heart's content. We hope you find this site helpful, educational and fun. If you have any difficulty using the site or you see errors, please report them to Richard Bohnet at rbohnet@earthlink.net. 



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Box 599 | MILL VALLEY, CA 94942-0599

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME VALUE

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN RAFAEL, CA
PERMIT NO. 87

SAVE THE DATE

Feb 5-7 The Flyway Festival (Vallejo)
For information: www.sfbayflywayfestival.com. FREE

April 23-25 Point Reyes Birding Festival
More information at <http://www.eacmarin.org>

Printed on 100% recycled paper

The success of Marin Audubon Society's work depends greatly on its Chapter members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from the NAS. The Marin Audubon Society relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservancy advocacy, birding field trips, educational Speakers Series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*. Chapter members also have the opportunity to support and participate in the acquisition, restoration and

enhancement of open space in and around Marin County, which will remain undeveloped habitat and open space in perpetuity. Our members' ideas, values and resources help us shape our agenda and carry out our goals and mission. We are confident you will find that being a Marin Audubon Society Chapter Member is worthwhile.

If you are not already a Chapter member, please consider joining the Marin Audubon Society, and urge your friends, neighbors and relatives to join us too.

Join Marin Audubon Society

USE THIS FORM TO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY.

\$1,000 BENEFACTOR \$100 SUSTAINING \$25 BASIC
 \$500 PATRON \$50 SPONSOR AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL _____ TELEPHONE _____

Your membership will provide significant support to our conservation, education, and acquisition programs and include a subscription to *The Clapper Rail*. Your payment will be tax deductible. **Make sure you know when your membership expires! It's the date located to the upper right of your address. Send address corrections to the address below.**

Please make check payable to Marin Audubon Society and mail with this coupon to:

Membership Secretary
Marin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 599
Mill Valley, CA 94942-0599

Now Use Your Credit Card To Join Or Donate To Marin Audubon Society

To use "JustGive", a convenient secure, online donation program, go to MAS's web site www.marinaudubon.org, click on "donate now" and follow the easy instructions. Or if you prefer, send this form to: **Marin Audubon Society**, Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942-0599. Just fill in the information below and mail to us.

PAYMENT AMOUNT \$ _____

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION MASTER CARD VISA

NAME _____

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRATION DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____

NOTE: We do not give your name to other organizations.

Membership in Marin Audubon does not include membership in National Audubon. Do not send a National Audubon renewal to Marin Audubon. New National Audubon memberships may be sent to MAS, but renewals should be made by mailing check to:

National Audubon Society
700 Broadway
New York, NY 10003