



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: 415/789-0703

THURSDAY, APRIL 7 7:30 PM

Birds of Costa Rica

With Bob Stewart

Come to hear Bob Stewart report on a trip to Costa Rica in February 2011.

Although only 1/8th the size of California, Costa Rica is home to 850 species of birds and an amazing diversity of other life.



Photo courtesy of Bob Stewart

Jabiru

Many groups of tropical birds including manakins, puffbirds, barbets, woodcreepers, ovenbirds, antbirds, motmots and toucans can be found in the diverse habitats, however the most numerous species seen on a visit are flycatchers, hummingbirds and tanagers with some euphonias and honeycreepers. Come and learn about some of their interesting behaviors and roles. Amongst the photos of birds will be a smattering of butterflies, reptiles and amphibians!

Bob Stewart taught Biology for seven years before spending a decade as a biologist and educator at PRBO. After teaching for a few years at College of Marin, he became the Naturalist for Marin County where in 15 years he led over 2000 public day trips. For over 30 years he has been leading birding and natural history tours.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

THURSDAY, MAY 5 7:30 PM

Life in the Slow Lane: The breeding strategies of New Zealand passerines
With Jim Cunningham

Sad Day for Seabirds

Less publicized than the tragic loss of human life caused by Japan's earthquake and tsunami, is the catastrophic loss of many thousands of seabirds nesting on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

While the elevations of islands on which Japan's Short-tailed Albatross nest are high enough to make them relatively safe from tsunamis, the Refuge's atolls are low-lying, less than 10 meters above sea level, and therefore vulnerable to tsunami waves. Ninety-five percent of the world's population of Laysan Albatross and 64 percent of Black-footed Albatross nest on these atoll islands. Seventy-five percent of the area of the islands on which these species nest was reportedly washed over by waves.

Midway Atoll reported four waves on March 10. Estimates are that a minimum of 1000 adult and subadult Laysan Albatross and tens of thousands of Laysan Albatross chicks were lost. On the perimeter of Kure Atoll entire portions of the breeding colony of Black-footed Albatross have been washed away, and the camp manager reported chicks everywhere.

Adult birds did not fly away; they stayed with their chicks. Seabird expert Debbie Shearwater wrote "It never occurred to me that, since the adults had chicks, they would not just up, and fly away, simply because a big wave was about to mow them down. ... Losing the chicks is bad. But losing the adults is far, far more catastrophic. This will likely have a big impact on the population." In addition to the Albatross, thousands of Bonin Petrels would have been incubating eggs in their burrows and were buried alive, as would have been the cavity nesting Tristram's Storm-Petrel and Wedge-tailed Shearwater young. Thousands of dead fish were found on beaches. Impacts on Laysan Ducks and monk seals are unknown.

Fortunately, all of the refuge staff and volunteers found safety on the third floor of a building. Some of the personnel on Laysan Island were evacuated because the camp was lost. Refuge staff and volunteers have rescued

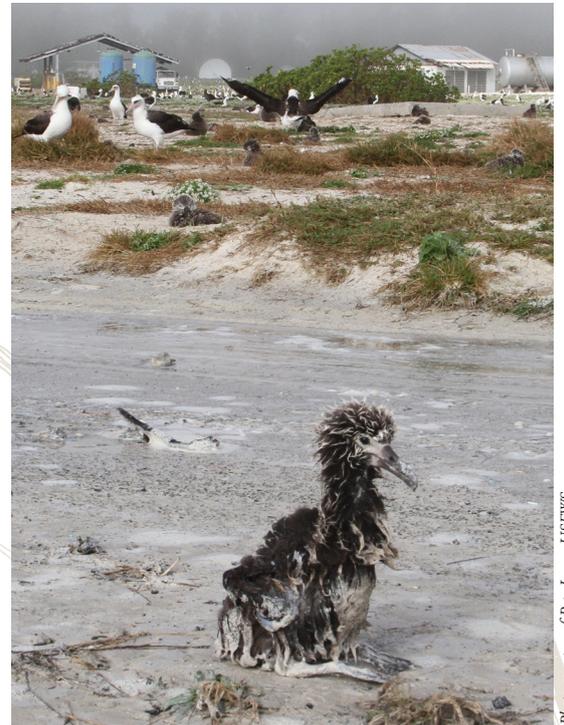


Photo courtesy of Pete Leary, USFWS

many birds stuck in piles of debris, much like human rescue teams have rescued people from the rubble of buildings, but it was impossible for them to dig out all of the birds trapped in mats of vegetation and debris. As of this writing, the damage on Laysan Island and other atolls is still being assessed.

Albatross are long-lived birds that spend all of their lives at sea, coming to these remote islands only to nest. Reports are that one sixty-year-old female known to researchers was caring for a chick and, as a small bit of good news, that she and her chick survived.

We share the sentiment expressed by Debi Shearwater: It was a "sad day for seabirds."

More information can be found on: www.acap.aq/latest-news/ and www.fws.gov/midway/tsunami.html.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

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.

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

A warm welcome goes to new Board Member, Ruth Pratt, who has returned to our Board this month after an absence of ten years. Ruth, a biologist, served on our Board after retiring from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. She went on to work for Marin County in personnel and then in public works from which she recently retired. Ruth will be Membership Chair. Please direct all membership questions to her. Mary Nealon will continue as off-board Membership Secretary.

Marin Audubon maintains an endowment fund into which we deposit large donations (of more than \$100 that are not specified for another purpose) plus income from our investments. The purpose of the Endowment is twofold: to provide an emergency fund to allow MAS to continue functioning during periods when revenues from other sources do not provide sufficient funds to meet the current year's operating expenses; and to provide funds to be used for the protection of native wildlife and the preservation and/or enhancement of wildlife habitat primarily, but not exclusively, in Marin. We invite you to read the article on page 7 about the benefits to you and to Marin Audubon of donating stock to Marin Audubon.

Mother's Day is early this year – Sunday, May 8 – so be sure to make your reservations for the Mother's Day Barbecue early. Use the flyer that was in last month's *Clapper Rail* or get the flyer/registration form from our web site. Attending the Barbecue is a great way to honor your

mother, or if you don't have a mother around, it is a great way to spend the day with family, friends and other folks who love nature.

We have spent lots of time this month on the GGNRA Dog Plan and on trying to work out the Mira Monte purchase. We are very disappointed about about our inability to complete the purchase or negotiate an extension of the March 1 close of escrow deadline. This would have allowed us to continue to work with the agencies for funding. (See page 4 for more information).

The GGNRA's Dog Management Plan is a difficult issue for many of our members who love dogs. We appreciate that dogs are an important part of the lives of dog owners. Half of our board members have dogs and many of us who don't, love dogs. A few of our members have let us know how strongly they feel about the proposed Plan. We have been told about problem encounters with dogs on public lands. Most who have responded to us have urged that we speak out strongly for wildlife.

All but our most recent members know that our long time focus is on protecting native wildlife. Most look to us to speak out for wildlife. Our native wildlife have precious few voices to speak for them. We encourage our members to consider the habitat needs of our native species and to respond to GGNRA accordingly. We are in the process of refining our position which is described on page 5.

FEBRUARY 19 FIELD TRIP

Capay Valley

By Terry Colborn

After a stormy week the skies cleared, giving way to a bright, crisp morning as twenty-five birders gathered in Esparto to join Terry Colborn on this always-popular annual field trip through idyllic Capay Valley in rural Yolo County. As we gathered in Esparto, a pair of **Red-shouldered Hawks** cavorted overhead. Our first stop at historic Capay Cemetery was unusually quiet, no doubt due to the frosty morning. A pair of **White-tailed Kites** was actively hunting over an open field, as a few **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** began to emerge from a nearby brush pile. We scoped a pair of **Western Bluebirds** and several **Acorn Woodpeckers**. A beautiful male **Anna's Hummingbird** displayed from a nearby promontory and several **Northern**



Merlin

Flickers and a **Nuttall's Woodpecker** announced their presence.

In route to our next stop we stopped to admire the red eyes and silky black crest of a male **Phainopepla**. Views from Capay Bridge overlooking Cache Creek provided us with our
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MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Vicky Van Meter at 415/299-2514

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, April 7, 2011
8:30 AM to 12 noon
With Len Blumin

All are welcome to join Len Blumin on the first Thursday of each month for a walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds at McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and this walk is great for all levels of birders. Spring migrants will be moving through in April. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. Over 100 bird species have been reported as likely to be seen over the course of a year.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 8:30 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

RICHARDSON BAY/STRAWBERRY

Sunday, April 9, 2011
2 to 4 PM
With Bob Hinz

Shorebirds are not just for early birds; it's the tide that counts. Especially for Southern Marin folks we will see what is on the water, on the mud and in the bushes around Richardson Bay during a low rising tide. The population of shorebirds and waterbirds that winter here will be down from the peak, but many species will still be represented and may be showing their breeding colors. Others will be passing through. Some species that are more land-based will have arrived for the summer.

DIRECTIONS: Meet in the Strawberry Point School parking lot across from the Strawberry Recreation Center. From the Tiburon Blvd. exit along Hwy. 101 drive 0.7 miles toward Tiburon. Turn right from Tiburon Blvd. to E. Strawberry Drive. The school is on the left 0.14 miles from Tiburon Blvd.

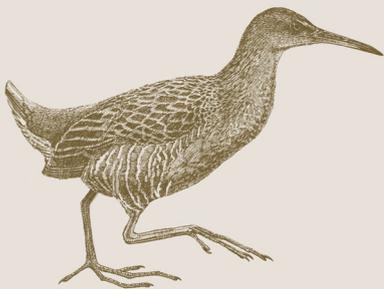
MINES ROAD/DEL PUERTO CANYON

Saturday and Sunday
April 16-17, 2011
7:30 AM in Livermore
With Terry Colborn

Long recognized as one of the premier birding areas in the Bay Area to observe an array of resident species and neo-tropical migrants, the combination of Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon provides easy access to a number of different habitats. The bird list is quite impressive for this popular destination and includes Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Yellow-billed Magpie, Rock and Canyon wrens, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Hermit, Yellow and MacGillivray's warblers, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bull-ock's Oriole, Wood Duck and Lawrence's Goldfinch, to name just a few. The elusive Greater Roadrunner is reported annually. We'll also visit Del Valle Regional Park (fee) and Frank Raines Park.

This weekend trek will start in Livermore on Saturday morning at 7:30 am, and will conclude on Sunday afternoon at 3:30 pm. Overnight hotel accommodations will be in Patterson, off of I-5, affording us an opportunity for an optional evening "owl prow" after dinner, as well as giving us a chance for an early Sunday morning start.

This is a very popular trip and often fills up early. Sign-ups are required, and are on a first-come, first-served basis. *Carpooling is a must as there is very limited space for vehicles to park on Mines Road.* To sign up and receive further details, contact Terry Colborn at: www.tlcbirding.com or call him at: 916/705-8991.



PUTAH CREEK CANYON

Thursday, April 21, 2011
9 AM
With Rich Stallcup

Rich Stallcup will lead us on a weekday field trip to Putah Creek Canyon, located about an hour northeast of Marin near Winters. This riparian corridor supports good bird diversity, including woodpeckers and migrants. We will meet at 9 AM in the large turnout at the top of Monticello Dam along Route 128. Please check the MAS web site, www.marinaudubon.org for more details and directions.

YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY

Saturday and Sunday
June 18-19, 2011
With Phil and Pat Gordon

Join us for a great weekend trip where the bird count for the two days is always over 100 species! Phil and Pat will lead the trip again this year starting early on Saturday morning. More information will be in *The Clapper Rail* next month or see the MAS web site. For questions, e-mail/phone Phil and Pat at pagpeg@aol.com (510/538-3550) or Vicky Van Meter, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com (415/299-2514).

Capay Valley Field Trip

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first-of-the-season **Spotted Sandpiper**. Three **Vesper Sparrows** in the nearby park were the first-ever seen in 20+ years of this annual trip. Sharp eyes spotted an adult **Bald Eagle** above us. A **Loggerhead Shrike** posed long enough for all to view



Vesper Sparrow



Northern Flicker

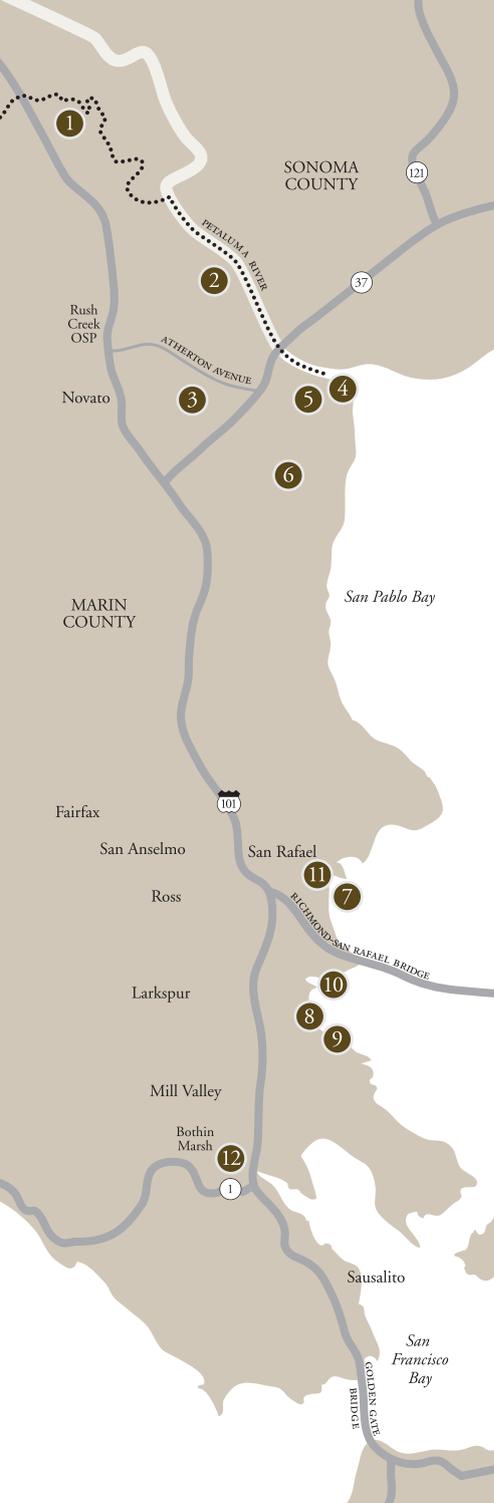
it in the scope. We moved on to County Road 81, where we parked and walked along the road with blooming almond orchards on one side and a riparian area on the other. **Western Bluebird**, **Lesser Goldfinch** and **Yellow-billed Magpie** were all present. A single oak tree yielded two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers**, a **Downy Woodpecker**, a **Northern Flicker**, three **Acorn Woodpeckers** and a **Nuttall's Woodpecker!** Near the end of the road, we glimpsed a **Cooper's Hawk** as it swooped through the orchard, chased from behind by a **Red-tailed Hawk!** A **Golden Eagle** glided along the foothills, giving everyone diagnostic views, in comparison to the **Bald Eagle** seen earlier.

As we headed back, a stunningly beautiful **Merlin**, of the nominate *columbarius* race, perched atop an oak giving us over ten minutes of scope views. A number of participants remarked they had never studied a Merlin that long in a scope. Many of us thought it was the "bird of the day." At the Rumsey Bridge we watched a **California Thrasher**. As we enjoyed our views of the beautiful Capay Valley, we watched a half-dozen **Western Bluebirds** perform aerial displays as they fed on hatching insects. We tallied 64 species for the day.

Photos courtesy of Bob Sockstad

CONSERVATION

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



SAD NEWS ABOUT MIRA MONTE

Unfortunately, the owner of the Mira Monte property has not agreed to give us an extension of the purchase agreement deadline. An extension would have enabled us to keep working with the agencies toward purchase of the property.

We have worked diligently to bring the agencies along to support and provide funding to protect permanently this important property, but the process did not move fast enough for the property owner. The economic downturn has been part of the problem. Regrettably, the owner's decision came just at the time when our political and agency support was strongest.

There is always the possibility that we may be able to purchase the property later, if the property does not sell to someone else. We are not aware that there is another buyer, so we remain hopeful.

The Mira Monte property consists of approximately 60 acres with 25 acres of ancient tidal marsh on the north side of San Antonio Creek and, on the south side of the Creek, 35 acres of tidal and diked marshes, filled land and a former island in the Bay that is now an oak-wooded hill. An oyster bar and a marina formerly operated on the site.

Our sincerest thank you to everyone who supported our efforts. Your support was important, and still may be in the future. We haven't given up on protecting this vital habitat.

CALIFORNIA'S WETLANDS NEED YOUR SUPPORT

To fill the gap left by the federal court decision (*Rapanos vs. US*) the state of California has begun a process to assume regulatory authority over some types of wetlands. In the so-called *Rapanos* decision, the courts decided that the federal government does not have jurisdiction over so-called "isolated wetlands."

The proposal is for the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards to regulate those wetlands no longer regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps would continue regulating those areas that fit its definition of wetlands, and the Regional Boards would regulate those additional areas that meet the state's definition.

California has more than 13 wetland ecological systems that occur in partial or total isolation from other water bodies. These systems, that include vernal pools and alkali sinks, no longer have any kind of regulation in California. The urgency for California to assume jurisdiction is underscored by the documented loss of these

historic resources; 91% of the state's historic wetlands have been lost, more than in any other state.

The first step in assuming regulatory jurisdiction is for the state to adopt a broader definition of wetlands. The proposed definition is more inclusive than that used by the Corps. The definition provides that an area is a wetland if under normal circumstances it is saturated by ground water or inundated for a duration sufficient to cause anaerobic conditions; exhibits hydric substrate conditions; and either lacks vegetation or is dominated by hydrophytes (plants adapted to live in wet areas). In contrast, the Corps definition requires that the substrate be soil and requires a predominance of hydrophytes.

As part of the process of adopting the new regulatory program, the lead agency, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the agency with oversight authority over Regional Boards, will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report. The SWRCB has published a Scoping Notice and Initial Study, and is seeking comments from the public for issues to be addressed in the EIR.

The more inclusive definition and the potential for the state to assume regulatory authority has brought out the pro-development, anti-wetlands folks in force, opposing state assumption and trying to place stumbling blocks in the process.

MAS has submitted comments supporting the broader wetlands definition proposed by the SWRCB and urged it move quickly to assume jurisdiction. We recommended that the program be based on a "no net loss" policy and include a requirement for a 2:1 mitigation ratio (creation of two acres of wetlands for the loss of each acre of wetlands) where wetland loss is unavoidable, and a requirement for 100-foot buffer zones around wetlands. We requested that the EIR address these provisions as being necessary for an effective wetlands regulatory program.

You Can Help By Sending comments to: Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board, State Water Resources Control Board; P.O. Box 100 Sacramento, CA 95812-2000. Subject Line – Wetland Area Protection Policy and Regulation. Please feel free to address any or all of these issues in your comments. The comment deadline is May 10, 2011.

METEOROLOGICAL TOWER APPEAL

At its March 9 meeting, the California Coastal

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

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

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Conservation

continued from page 4

Commission had no trouble finding that the five appeals of NextEra's two Meteorological Towers raised significant issues. The next step is to reschedule a *de novo* hearing to address the issues raised by the appellants. No date was set, but it will probably be some months away.

GGNRA DOG MANAGEMENT PLAN

We have been working to develop MAS's position on dog management at GGNRA. We have visited about half of the seven Marin sites as of this writing, and will be visiting the rest before submitting our final comments to GGNRA.

In accord with our mission, conservation policies and positions, MAS will recommend that all dogs be on-leash in GGNRA. National parks and recreation areas are meant to protect the natural resources for the benefit of all citizens. Uses of public lands should not be dominated by special interests, and natural resources should, at best, be only minimally impacted by recreational uses. Just as we advocate that people stay on trails to prevent damage to natural resources, dogs should be leashed and confined to designated roads/trails.

Our current recommendations on specific sites:

Fort Baker: Keep dogs off the beach area and on-leash on the Bay Trail and all other trails and Parade grounds. No dogs should be in and near Mission Blue Butterfly habitat.

Homestead Valley The existing trail is between Panoramic Highway and Lattie Lane, a neighborhood street. We recommend that dogs be on-leash only. The Plan notes that "Neighborhood connecting trails may be designated in the future" but locations are not specified. In accord with our position against the construction of new trails in Marin County, MAS recommends against establishing any new trails and that any unauthorized trails worn by people be obliterated.

Oakwood Valley This area has a trail and a fire road that begin at Tennessee Valley Rd. and parallel each other for some distance before connecting with other trails. We recommend that on-leash dogs be allowed on the fire road only; and no dogs be allowed on the trail. We see no reason to allow dogs on both of these redundant trails. GGNRA recommends a ROLA, (a regulated off-leash area) which would be fenced and gated, on the fire road. This would in effect be a dog run, a special use area for dogs. Building a fence would destroy habitat and its existence would impede wildlife moving through the area.

Based on our experience seeing people violate leash laws and other trail regulations over a period of many years in many locations, we have considerable concern about compliance

with and enforcement of, whatever combination of regulations GGNRA eventually approves. The Management Plan includes what they refer to as compliance-based management strategy. After adoption of the Management Plan, the Park Service plans a one- to three-month period of public education, followed by a one- to three-month period of monitoring for compliance. Additional educational methods, signs, brochures, meetings, etc. would be implemented. The Park Service expects compliance to improve gradually. If it does not, management would move to the next more restricting scenario, e.g., ROLAs would change to on-leash; then on-leash-requirements would be changed to no dogs. A compliance rate of 75% would be considered acceptable. This is a major concern. In effect it would be giving license to 25% of users to break the law by not complying.

Enforcement methods available to GGNRA staff include issuing warnings, writing tickets and issuing fines. Violations are handled in Federal court in San Francisco. Implementation will require significantly increased staff time (the need for eight new staff is anticipated) as well as costs.

We believe that enforcement of regulations sends the clearest message to people about what is expected of them. Clear signage should be installed immediately. At some of the Marin sites, signs are small, obscure and difficult to find. Tickets should begin to be issued once adequate signs are installed.

Dogs, lovable companions as they may be, are non-native predators in our natural habitats. They elicit an escape reaction in most wildlife (except perhaps large predators) interrupting feeding, foraging or whatever they are doing; they trample and destroy vegetation and leave droppings and their foreign scents. Keeping dogs on-leash does not prevent all of these impacts, but it provides the best protection for native wildlife and habitats, except in limited areas adjacent to trails that dogs can reach on the six-foot leashes that are allowed. Even dog owners on our Board admit that few if any dogs can be depended upon to be under voice control given certain circumstances, such as the presence of coyotes or deer.

Leashed dogs are safest for wildlife and also for other people users, as well as for the dogs themselves. GGNRA reports that people have been attacked by dogs in various locations and, at Crissy field alone, 45 dogs have been hit by cars.

You Can Help By Sending comments to: Frank Dean, General Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Fort Mason, Building 201, San Francisco, CA 94123; or online: parkplanning.nps.gov/dogplan by the April 14 deadline.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

The annual election of members of the Board of Directors for the Marin Audubon Society will take place at the May 5, 2011 Speakers Series meeting which will also be our Annual Meeting. The nominating committee has submitted the following nominees for election by our members:

Mariah Baird
Greg Block
Bob Hinz
Josephine Kreider
Lowell Sykes

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Christine & Lyla Albert, Gary Birnbaum, Kyla Burke, Ben Burlock, Leslie Burlock, Matt Carlston, Shayne Decent, Sianna Decent, John DeDonatis, Daniel Farbman, Megan Harvey, Philip Harvey, Bob Hinz, Jeff Johnson, Jeanice McGee, Kate Preece, Mady Preece, Rich Preece, Isaac Preston, Hengameh Rafei, Jane Sedonaen, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Adam Tilone, Mark Toepfer

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Claudia Zani, Alison Wright, Kate Wilcox, Elizabeth Voorhees, Tyler Villareal, Jan Van, Doris J. Solberg, Nelda Soderblom, Karen Shepherd, Nanette Schneiderman, Jan W. Schiller, John E. Sanford, Susan Quater, Anoosh Mizany, Kathleen Magnuson, Marty Komitopoulos, Donald Gaynor Kaufman, Ralph Kalinowski, Dolores O. Jones, Claire Johnston, John W. Johnson, Leslie Harlib, Dorothy Gallyot, Irmgard Gabrenya, Dora Ford, Sandy Fish, Barbara Dunn, Alice Detweiler, Ruth Dell, Jean Marie Day, Tony Dawson, Joanne H. Dallara, Marlene Cox, Frank R. Coulon, Lizetter & Duane Collins, Beverly Cherner, Tim Chatard, Jim Gonsman & Carol Burgoa, Natalie Bradley, Julie Boes, Jody Becker

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Ben & Frances Borok, Pamela Bouchard, Tessa & Fred Cherniss, Earth Share of California, Leslie Elison & Nancy Helmers, John Harrington & Ida Baugh, Mark Lindberg, Marianne Nannestad, Robert & Susan Rosenberg

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

As reported in the *Marin Independent Journal* on March 21, vandals have sprayed the berm between the seasonal wetland and the area restored to tidal action, with an herbicide. The area is a short distance north of Bahia Drive and the Open Space District's trailhead. There is now a strip of brown, dead grass all along the berm and double wide in one section, along an up to a quarter-mile section that extends around a seasonal wetland. It is not known what substance was used, nor how toxic it was and perhaps still is.

We see no other way to interpret this except as a hostile act of vandalism. Signs mark the area as habitat and, some months ago, the Open Space District erected fencing that blocks the areas not intended for access. Yet the berm is still accessible. People can and do walk around or go over the fencing to get to the berm as is evidenced by an unvegetated path leading to the berm and the path worn by users trampling the vegetation.

So there was no reason for this violent act at all, except that someone wasn't satisfied with existing trails. Someone went to a lot of effort and some expense to buy herbicide and spray an almost one-quarter mile length of berm. Did they just want a wider trail? Are they disgruntled about not having free access to this narrow levee?

The sense of entitlement and self-centeredness of some people is sometimes shocking. That someone would have taken it upon themselves to destroy vegetation on property not owned by them is outrageous. This action is just the same

as the person who went onto county property and cut down trees, except this is worse because some of the plants are native plants, and many were specifically planted to provide wildlife habitat.

As part of the Bahia tidal marsh restoration project, this area was designed to be upland transition zone, buffer and movement corridor for wildlife, to enable them to move freely between the newly restored marsh and the seasonal wetland. The berm was lowered and narrowed, the seasonal wetland graded and planted, and lots of volunteers helped to plant natives along the berm. The property itself was purchased with public and private funds from many sources for the specific purpose of restoring tidal marsh habitat and providing public access. Ample public access is provided by two trails through the hills that connect with Rush Creek Open Space Area that together provide for about ten miles of trails. A lower trail along the base of the hills at Bahia was moved by the Open Space District several years ago because people were complaining it was wet in the rainy season. Yet someone is not satisfied with all of this. Completely disregarding the habitat detriments for wildlife, they destroyed plants and transformed vegetated habitat into a wide expanse so they could use it in the way they want.

If anyone saw someone spraying this area or has any information about this action, please let us know. You can respond through our web site or to me (Barbara Salzman) at 415/924-6057.



SPRAYED BERM AT BAHIA

Photo courtesy of Jude Suller

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Before they produce seeds, we will remove some of our early season invasive non-native annual plants. Radishes and various thistles are the two most abundant at both Triangle Marsh and Bahia. The planting season is over. We usually work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Bahia, Novato:

- Wednesday, April 6
- Second Saturday, April 9
- Thursday, April 14
- Wednesday, April 20
- Thursday, April 28
- Wednesday, May 4

We will meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Drive near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

- First Saturday, April 2
- Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive directly across from the main Ring Mountain trailhead.

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

MAS GOING GREENER

Help Marin Audubon Society save trees and save money! Sign up to receive *The Clapper Rail* by e-mail now. It's in color, too!

Send an e-mail to Mary Nealon, our MAS Membership Secretary, with your name and contact information at marisolvan@yahoo.com. Thank you!

Conservation

continued from page 5

LARKSPUR REVISES ITS GENERAL PLAN

Residents and others interested in protecting Corte Madera Creek and woodland habitats in Larkspur should pay attention to the city's current effort to revise its General Plan. An advisory committee has been established and will be meeting regularly. It is expected the natural resource section of the Plan will be addressed in a few months.

Larkspur has important habitats within or adjacent to its boundaries, and the city needs to hear that it is important to protect them. Tidal marsh habitats exist along the south bank of Corte Madera Creek from Bon Air Road to the college; the north creek bank from Bon Air Road to the bike path; and the Ferry Terminal area and adjacent marsh. The Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, the large tidal marsh on the south side of the mouth of the creek while not in the city limits would be impacted by development in Larkspur. Corte Madera Creek and its

remaining tidal marshes are important habitats for the endangered California Clapper Rail, and the creek itself is habitat for Steelhead Trout, a special status fish species, that spawn upstream.

Other important habitats in and near Larkspur include Larkspur Creek, a tributary of Corte Madera Creek that extends down Madrone Canyon, and open space lands in Baltimore Canyon that are habitat for the endangered Northern Spotted Owl.

Protecting the remaining habitat is particularly important because most of the extensive tidal marshes that historically bordered the creek have been filled and developed. Marshes once extended to the base of the Greenbrae and Larkspur hills. The remaining marsh remnants and fringes along the creek should be protected, as should undeveloped or minimally developed lands adjacent to the marshes, which are needed as buffers and flood areas where marshes can expand with sea level rise.

Check the City of Larkspur's web site for dates of the CAC meetings.

MARIN BIRDLOG – FEBRUARY 2011

By Rich Stallcup

Most years I lament that February is the worst month for birders along the northern California coast. Except for departing gulls and diving ducks and arriving *Selasphorus* hummingbirds and *Tachycineta* swallows, there is little motion. Rare birds found earlier in the winter are showing signs of heavy wear from being looked at too often.

In 2011, things were better than in other years and several “new” rarities were found.

As usual, a few “**Valley geese**” were scattered around like two young **Ross’s** and five **Greater White-fronteds** at Las Gallinas 1/14 (NB). Other small flocks of “White-fronts” were seen around Mill Valley (JD,MFLS).

Duck discoveries were excellent with a male **Tufted Duck** at Stafford Lake 2/5 through the end of the month (RS, m.ob) and a “new” female **King Eider**, this one on the ocean side at the end of the Chimney Rock trail 2/19, 2/20 (MB, MR). The bird seen in January on Tomales Bay was a youngster – the one at Chimney Rock, an adult. Also at Chimney Rock (O.P.) were a male and a female **Harlequin Ducks** 2/20 (MD) and an **Oldsquaw (Long-tailed)** was on Drake’s Bay off the Fish Docks 2/19, 2/20 (MD).

Another good February find was an adult Laughing Gull at the Marin Civic Center duck pond 2/6 (FH *et.al*) and through 2/25 at least. This is the seventh Marin County record.

Four **Barn Swallows** with Tree and Violet-green Swallows at Las Gallinas 1/14 (NB) is something new we have now come to expect. Barn Swallows winter mostly in the southern cone of South America and before about 1985, the species was barely known in North America between October and March.

And OK! Here comes spring migration ... wildlife once again on the move.

Observers Audubon Canyon Ranch, Bob Battagin, Mark Butler, Heather Cameron, Josiah Clark, Matthew Dodder, Jack Dineen, Jules Evens, Mary Farr, Deborah Fitzpatrick Floyd Hayse, Andy Kleinhesselink, Margareta Luff, Deborah Maier, Native Birds, O.P. – outer Point Reyes (beyond mile marker 37.44), PRBO Conservation Science, Don Reinburg, Mary Anne Rotella, Maggie Rufo, Rich Stallcup, Lang Stevenson.

Got Stock?

Did you know that donating appreciated stock or mutual funds to the Marin Audubon Society (MAS) can provide you significant additional tax benefits above and beyond those available for donating cash? These benefits include:

→ **An immediate tax deduction** to the extent allowed by law for the fair market value of the stocks or mutual funds on the date of your donation

→ **Avoidance of all capital gains taxes** on appreciated securities

MAS is not required to pay capital gains taxes, so your donated securities result in a win-win for all parties, except the IRS. Here is how it works:

1. You transfer your appreciated stocks or mutual funds to MAS using a simple process, with our help if needed.
2. MAS sells the securities and deposits the proceeds into our Endowment.

3. Your donated proceeds are reinvested in a diversified portfolio within the MAS Endowment to help provide the annual funding we need to continue our mission.

The following example illustrates how the “double tax benefit” available for donations of appreciated stock and mutual funds saves you money and leverages your donation to the Marin Audubon Society.

Note: A donor who pays California state income taxes would likely receive additional tax benefits that would further reduce their net cost for making the donation.

If you have questions about donating stock or mutual funds, or if you would like our help transferring shares, please contact our Finance Committee Chair, Greg Block at 415/717-6453.

	Cash Donation	Stock / Mutual Fund Donation
Donation to Marin Audubon Society	\$10,000	\$10,000 (donor's cost basis of \$1,000)
Donor's federal income tax deduction	\$10,000	\$10,000
Federal income tax savings at 36%	\$3,600	\$3,600
Capital gains tax savings at 15%	\$0	\$1,350
Donor's after-tax cost for a \$10,000 gift	\$6,400	\$5,050

Assumptions: Donor's Federal Income Tax bracket is 36% and the Capital Gains Tax rate is 15%.

Junior Bird Watchers

By Wendy Dreskin

Junior Bird Watchers is an in-school program designed to teach elementary school children to identify birds in their neighborhoods. The program was developed by National Audubon Society (NAS). When NAS discontinued the program, Marin Audubon assumed sponsorship and Wendy Dreskin continues as the instructor, conducting the program in classrooms at several elementary schools. If you would like more information, please visit “Junior Birdwatchers” under the “Birds” tab on our web site at marinaudubon.org, or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



Trevor Leopold reached 75 birds with a trip to Limantour where he spotted and identified a surf scoter, snowy plovers, a hooded merganser, and, on the road on the way home, his first great horned owl!



Ava Ziegler and **Charlie Mills** are both in kindergarten at Bacich Elementary School. Ava's favorite bird is a swan “because it's so beautiful.”

Charlie's favorite is a great blue heron “because I see it so often it's like a friend.”



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SAVE THE DATE

- April 14-20 **Godwit Days Festival**
Arcata, 800/908-WING (9464)
godwitdays.com
- April 29-May 2 **Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival**
pointreyesbirdingfestival.org
- May 5 **Speaker Series**
Life in the Slow Lane:
The breeding strategies of
New Zealand passerines
With Jim Cunningham
- May 8 **MAS/ACR Mother's Day BBQ**
Gates open at 11 AM
Lunch from 12 noon to 2 PM

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SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*, which you will receive as a MAS member. To better ensure we can continue our programs on the local level, MAS offers a separate chapter membership. Your membership in MAS will help us protect local habitats, resident and migratory birds and provide you with educational and enjoyable programs as well.

If you are not already a chapter member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors, relatives to join us, too.

You can also join or make a donation on our web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to marinaudubon.org.

JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and the chapter. With this joint membership, you will receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits, however, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. We will receive, however, a portion of any new memberships that are generated by MAS, the local chapter. So we request that you send all checks for new National memberships to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

For NAS membership renewals, send your check directly to NAS.

Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**. For more information, please contact Ruth Pratt, Membership Chair at 415/453-2989.

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