



# THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

**SPEAKER SERIES**

*Free and Open to the public*

Richardson Bay Audubon Center  
376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon  
Information: 415/789-0703

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 12 7:30 PM**

**The Brazilian Pantanal:** Birds and  
Jaguars in the World's Largest Wetland  
*With Paul Donahue*



Photo courtesy of Paul Donahue

**Jaguar**

The Pantanal of southwestern Brazil is the world's largest wetland, a vast mosaic of rivers, creeks, marshes, swamps, lagoons, tall riparian forest, lower dry forest, and savanna. The area extends into extreme eastern Bolivia and extreme northern Paraguay, but the majority lies in the Brazilian states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. This much water attracts abundant wildlife, and the Pantanal is home to large numbers of wading birds and other fish-eating birds, and holds the world's densest population of jaguars, the largest cat in the Americas.

Paul Donahue, a naturalist, bird artist, photographer, environmentalist, and tree climber, has been working in South America since 1972. Most of his time has been spent in the rainforests of the western Amazon Basin doing bird survey work and tape recording bird vocalizations. Paul and his wife, Teresa Wood, have constructed two canopy walkways and dozens of canopy observation platforms to view and study the wildlife of that stratum of the rainforest. Lately, he has been researching jaguars and Zigzag Herons in the Pantanal.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9 7:30 PM**

*Subject to be announced*

## Marin Audubon Field Trips



Photo courtesy of Dave Herrera

**The spectacle of thousands of Snow Geese was enjoyed at Gray Lodge Wildlife Lodge in early December.**

The Marin Audubon Society has been sponsoring field trips for over 50 years. We plan at least three trips a month, including the Las Gallinas Ponds walk on the first Thursday of every month. For most trips there is no charge or pre-registration required, and birders of all abilities are welcome. MAS field trips are a great way to spend a day or a weekend with interesting leaders and fellow birders in beautiful locations.

The 25 participants on our annual Central Valley trip in early December visited the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area, the Feather River in Oroville, and the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. More than 3 million ducks and 1 million geese migrate to the refuges and flooded fields of the Central Valley in the fall and winter. Our leader, Bruce Deuel, is an expert on the avifauna of this area, having spent many years as a waterfowl biologist with both the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. We

found one hundred species! The weekend weather was sunny but cold, and the clear views of the Sutter Buttes provided the background for a waterfowl extravaganza. Over the weekend we had 21 species of waterfowl and enjoyed the spectacle of thousands of **Snow Geese**, including a few blue morphs, in the air and on the ponds. Bruce explained that many ducks and geese are pairing up at this time of year and pointed out groups of 4 or 5 males pursuing single females. Other highlights included rafts of **Tundra Swans**, five species of grebes, seven herons, and eight raptors. We also saw **American Bittern**, **White-faced Ibis**, and **Common** and **Barrow's Goldeneye** side-by-side on the Feather River. We had nice looks at **Sandhill Crane** in the rice fields and a **Great**  
*continued on page 2*

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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.

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
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Property Management	Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
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 (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

We are very pleased to welcome our newest Board Member, Cindy Fatura. Cindy is a relatively new arrival to Marin and she now lives in Black Point. She has a diverse background ranging from high school teacher and instructor in private educational institution and university to consultant in the high tech world. Cindy currently works for a firm that specializes in improving corporate financial and operational performance. Cindy enjoys the outdoors and is looking forward to getting more involved by joining our Board. She will be our Volunteer Coordinator.

A huge thank you to all of our generous supporters who have responded quickly to our appeal letter, and to some who even sent in a donation before the letter went out. All members should have received our appeal letter earlier in December. Your gift will help wildlife

and keep us going, providing you with exciting field trips and speakers, and keeping up on our property responsibilities. There is still time if you have not sent your gift in yet.

We are pleased to announce we have received two grants this month to support our stewardship activities: A PG&E Power Your Community Grant and a Collaborative Partnership Grant from National Audubon Society. Our appreciation to National Audubon and PG&E.

I hope everyone has been enjoying the holiday. This is the most exciting time of year for waterbirds with the waterfowl and shorebirds overwintering. For the New Year, how about a resolution to spend more time enjoying our birds on our field trips. We have some great ones coming up.

You will hear from me again for the February issue, when I return from Antarctica.



Photo courtesy of Sharon Barnett

**A Tundra Swan seen on the Abbott's Lagoon field trip.**

## Field Trips

*continued from page 1*

**Horned Owl** during the evening flyout at Gray Lodge. A festive group dinner in Oroville on Saturday night provided time for socializing. Thanks to Bruce for an enjoyable and educational weekend.

On November 13th John and Carolyn Longstreth ably led two dozen of us across the coastal scrub to the large freshwater pond, lagoon and ocean beach at Abbott's Lagoon. It was a beautiful day at Point Reyes and we tallied 50-plus species. Highlights were a **Burrowing Owl** seen first thing from the parking lot, a **Merlin** flyby, two **American Bittern** seen near the bridge, and a dozen

**Snowy Plovers** on the beach. Four **River Otters** frolicking on the shore and in the water kept us entertained for an hour.

Mark Forney and his family led two dozen beginner birders and another 12 children on a very special walk around the Las Gallinas Ponds on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. We learned about some of the common birds, and the children practiced looking through binoculars and spotting scopes. Thanks to Mark and his family for sharing their Saturday morning with us. Since the outing proved popular, we will plan more family walks in the months to come.

Trip schedules are posted in our newsletter and on our Web site, www.marinaudubon.org. Check them out and join us. We welcome suggestions for trips and trip leaders.

## 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, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com

### LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursdays, January 5, February 2  
8:30 AM to 12 noon  
With Susan Kelly and friends

Beginner birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds near McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and over 100 species have been reported over the course of a year. Winter is a busy time at the ponds and provides an opportunity to study ducks and geese. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. This is great way to start learning the raptors, waterfowl, and other groups, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette.

**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 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.

### BOLINAS LAGOON & PINE GULCH

Saturday, January 14, 2012  
9 AM to 12 noon  
With Bob Battagin

If you like ducks (or want to learn more about them) and the possibility of finding a rare one, this is the outing for you. We will spend much of the morning birding Bolinas Lagoon with its many dabbling and diving ducks, herons, egrets, cormorants, shorebirds, and a near always present Belted Kingfisher. Time permitting, we'll park next to Warren Weber's Star Route Farm "pumpkin patch" and look for snipe and other goodies. Then a short walk will take us to the mouth of Pine Gulch Creek where the interface of fresh and salt waters draws in all sorts of birdlife. Birders of all levels welcome. Rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** Meet at the large pullout opposite the Stinson Beach Elementary School on Highway One, about 1/2 mile north of the town of Stinson Beach.

### COSUMNES RIVER PRESERVE AND SUNSET CRANE "FLY-IN"

Saturday, January 21, 2012  
8:45 AM to 6 PM  
With Terry Colborn

The Cosumnes River Preserve, managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is one of the last remnants of a once vast riparian habitat in the Sacramento Valley. This is the only river from the Sierra flowing into the Delta that isn't dammed. Situated on the eastern edge of Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, this 1,500 acre preserve of mixed oak woodlands, grasslands and wetlands hosts an array of wintering passerines and waterfowl, including numerous species of ducks, geese and Tundra Swan. The surrounding wetlands and flooded fields provide excellent refuge for many waterfowl, waders, and Sandhill Cranes. The lush oak woodlands can often yield a number of passerines and wintering raptors. Past visits have even afforded rare views of river otters.

After a morning walk of about one mile on a flat trail, we'll eat lunch on the deck at the Visitor's Center. Afterwards we'll spend some time scoping the nearby impoundments that host a significant number of waterfowl. We'll also look for shorebirds, waterfowl and the resident Peregrine Falcon. Late afternoon we'll head to Staten Island Road, a renowned area that is an evening roost for Sandhill Cranes, sometimes reaching over one thousand birds! They feed in the nearby recently harvested rice and corn fields, and "fly-in" to roost in the wetlands by late afternoon, early evening. The area often has a variety of ducks and shorebirds and may even hold a surprise or two. The sight and sound of hundreds of Sandhill Cranes coming to roost at sunset is a sight to behold.

Meet Terry at 8:45 AM at Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor's Center lower parking lot. Bring binoculars and scope, lunch, snacks and liquids; wear comfortable footwear and dress in layers. Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Terry at 916/705-8991, or at: [www.tlcbirding.com](http://www.tlcbirding.com).

**DIRECTIONS:** From Marin Co. take Hwy. 101, in Novato, take Hwy. 37 east to I-80 east; at Fairfield/Suisun City turn onto Hwy. 12 (southeast) and continue to Hwy. I-5, near Lodi. Go north on Hwy. I-5 approximately 13 miles to the Twin Cities Road exit. Travel 1 mile east; turn right (south) on Franklin Blvd. and drive 1.7 miles to the Cosumnes Preserve Visitor Center on your left. Travel time from Marin County is approximately 2 hrs.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE BIRDS OF LAS GALLINAS

Saturday, January 28, 2012  
9 AM to Noon  
With Len Blumin

We'll take a leisurely walk around the ponds at Las Gallinas (1-2 miles), viewing and talking about the birds that come to our area for their winter holiday. Highlights there include a great variety of ducks and geese, along with various Herons and Egrets, Grebes, Shorebirds, and members of the Hawk family. Beginners and families are welcome.

What to bring: Binoculars if you have them, and even a scope. We will have spotting scopes to share the views and field guides. Dress in layers, bring water and sunscreen. Heavy rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** See above January 5. We will meet at the parking lot of the Las Gallinas Water Storage Ponds at 9 am.

### SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

Sunday, February 5, 2012  
(FYI, Super Bowl Sunday)  
8:30 AM - 4:30 PM  
With David Wimpfheimer  
FILLED

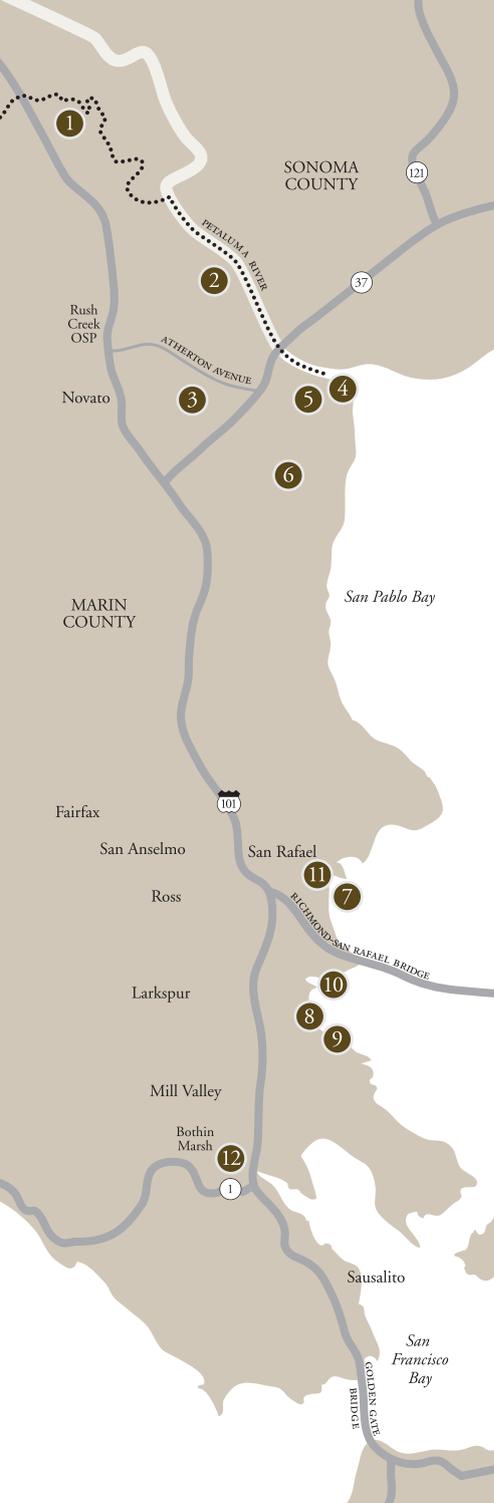
Join us for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the Delta. This area hosts a wide variety of raptors, large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Crane, Tundra Swan, geese and ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines.

The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$95. Deadline for reserving space and making payment is January 20, 2012. To register, please send the coupon on page 6 and a check for \$95 per person to Marin Audubon at Box 599, Mill Valley, CA, 94942. Please write "Delta Trip" on the envelope and check. Contact Vicky Van Meter by e-mail or phone for space availability.

**DIRECTIONS:** Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions.

# 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.



## CENTRAL MARIN FERRY CONNECTION

At an open house on November 29, the public got a chance to register their views on the final designs for this \$15 million bridge over Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (SFDB) on the east side of Highway 101. The bridge is intended to connect the new CalPark tunnel with the Larkspur Ferry Terminal. The Transportation Agency of Marin (TAM) is the lead agency for the project.

The 17-foot-high, 100-foot-long bridge would span SFDB, essentially following the alignment of the 1880 railroad trestle, leading people to an existing east-west path. A rectangular-shaped boardwalk would be constructed at the south end of the bridge extending the path over some of the last remaining tidal marsh on the fringe of Corte Madera Creek. TAM staff says this section is needed to gradually lower the path to grade in order to comply with ADA standards. Mitigation will be needed to compensate for impacts of the project on the tidal marsh. Currently, the tidal marsh at Creekside Park Marsh, recently renamed Hal Brown Marsh, is the preferred mitigation for impacts to the fringe marsh caused by placing pilings and by covering marsh vegetation under the boardwalk.

TAM was not interested in views on whether or not to build the bridge, only on the design of the bridge. There are four final designs: “Warren Truss” which has simple fencing; “Box Girder” design with more elaborate fencing and a support pillar in the middle of SFDB; “Cable-Stayed Extradosed” a design that looks something the new Bay Bridge; and a type called a “Pipe arch-Basket handle” which has an open dome design spanning the length of the bridge.

This bridge is the first of a two phase project. The second phase would extend across Corte Madera Creek and south. Somewhat on the bright side, MAS was assured by the project manager, Bill Whitney that Phase 2 would not follow the old railroad right of way, but instead would be located closer to the freeway. We have consistently opposed locating a path on the old RR right of way because its construction would require filling the marsh to widen and raise the height of the levee and its ongoing use would adversely impact the endangered Clapper Rail. Ongoing use of the right of way would be a constant disturbance to wildlife in the marsh.

TAM staff responded to the question why

people could not use the existing bridge by saying that it is too far for people to travel from the CalPark tunnel to the existing bridge. That explanation makes no sense as users would have to travel the same distance to get to the ferry from the new bridge as they would to get there from the existing bridge. We also prefer that mitigation be located closer to the site of loss at the mouth of Corte Madera Creek. TAM hopes to have the bridge open by 2014.

Register your view on the design, location and cost, and whether the bridge should be built at all: [bwhitney@tam.ca.gov](mailto:bwhitney@tam.ca.gov).

## PLANNING THE FUTURE OF HIGHWAY 37

A planning process is currently underway to develop approaches and tools to integrate environmental, economic and community interests into the analysis, planning and design for Highway 37.

Highway 37 extends between Highways 101 and 80, along the north shore of San Francisco Bay. It passes through extensive tidal and diked marsh, some of which is used for agriculture. These wetlands are habitat for endangered species and many migratory and resident species. The highway connects job centers in Marin and Solano Counties. Traffic safety issues have been a concern, and the low-elevation of the highway places it at risk of flooding with increasing frequency due to sea level rise.

The goal of the study is to conduct a multi-functional and multi-agency collaborative study on design concepts for Highway 37. The project is funded by a Federal grant from the Transportation Research Board obtained by UC Davis Road Ecology Center and Caltrans. The study is looking at ways to ensure that transportation planning for Highway 37 is based on stewardship principles in meeting the challenge of building a replacement highway in this extremely sensitive environmental area. The timeline for the study extends for another year.

The collaborative approach being used for the Highway 37 study is modeled on similar projects on the East Coast. A group of stakeholders with a broad range of interests is convened to meet with the project team to discuss concerns, impacts to the environment and benefits to the surrounding community, and to identify alternative designs. Stakeholders represent broad interests including transportation, natural resource protection, agencies, organizations, agriculture and the general community to develop a vision and

## 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

concepts for Hwy. 37. One hundred fifty people are on the mailing list, but most don't attend meetings.

MAS has participated in two of the five meetings that have been held. Options that have been identified so far include retaining the existing highway; armoring and raising the existing highway on fill; elevating the highway on a causeway; and realigning the highway with other roads away from the Bay edge. In other words using Highway 80 and other existing roads to access the same areas. Any new highway constructed, regardless of the design, would be four lanes wide. A suggestion made at the most recent meeting was for a road/bridge that would be built by a private company and be operated as a private/toll road. This approach has recently been used in Virginia.

Seeking input from commuters, UC Davis

**Highway 37 passes through extensive tidal and diked marsh ... these wetlands are habitat for endangered species and many migratory and resident species.**

plans to mail surveys to residents at both ends of Highway 37. They will be asking about travel preferences, interests and concerns. A random sample of Novato residents will receive the survey. So, come the New Year, Novato members should watch your mail for a copy of the survey.

#### **SAND MINING IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY**

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for a new 10-year sand extraction permit in Central Bay, Suisun and the Delta has been revised and recirculated for public comment. Several changed circumstances necessitated the revisions and recirculation: the boundaries had to be changed because some of the Central Bay parcels were found to be owned by the Federal government; the baseline condition for sand removal was changed to the average of the last five years of mining because the annual quantities mined change; and additional information on sediment transport and project alternatives needed to be included.

The applicants are Hanson Marine and Jerico Products Central Bay. The Central Bay dredge sites are between Belvedere and Angel Island, between Angel Island and Alcatraz, and between those two islands and Sausalito.

Overall, the applicants propose a net increase of about 613,350 cubic yards per year over the baseline volume of 1,426,650 cubic

yards of sand mined per year. Sand mining has been occurring in the Bay for at least 70 years. Construction-grade sand is mined for roads and other building projects. The sand excavation must occur on lands owned by the State Lands Commission.

The Revised Draft describes a number of adverse impacts to biological resources. Operational measures are recommended as mitigation which is primarily restricting the timing of the dredging episodes. These restrictions are not sufficient to reduce significant adverse impacts to listed endangered species. Affected species include Green Sturgeon, Chinook Salmon, Delta Smelt, and Longfin Smelt. Additional mitigation suggested for Delta and Longfin Smelt habitat would take place in the Delta at the Liberty Island Mitigation Bank. The Revised Draft EIR evaluates the impact on benthic habitat, infauna, epifauna and foraging habitat as being less than significant because the holes in the bay bottom left by the removal of the sand would only last for a "few" years or up to 10 years. The loss, or significant disruption, of habitat for bottom dwelling species such as Dungeness Crab resulting from the huge holes left in the Bay floor, is not addressed.

The cumulative impact analysis states that the project would result in significant unavoidable impacts on Longfin and Delta Smelt that are cumulative in nature. Although the DEIR analysis found that the project would not be the primary cause of the decline of these endangered species, it concluded that the project would contribute to their decline. Water diversions, other habitat modifications and pollution were the other causes. The impact, therefore, "is considered both significant and unavoidable, both individually and cumulatively".

The DEIR acknowledges that "The No Project Alternative could avoid most of the significant impacts" but it rejects that alternative because it would "require the Bay Area construction industry to acquire sand from other, likely more distant sources, with consequent increases in air emissions ... ." Instead, the DEIR chose the Reduced Project Alternative, which would lower the quantity of sand mined to 1,346, 267 cubic yards per year, which is 694,000 cubic yards fewer than is proposed.

Because of the significant adverse impacts to Bay resources, MAS recommends that the No Project Alternative be approved. There are other alternatives for construction material that do not require extensive trucking and, more importantly, damaging Bay resources. One such alternative is crushing concrete.

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#### **MARIN AUDUBON IS THANKFUL FOR THE FOLLOWING GRANTS:**

Audubon Collaborative Grant to fund removal of Harding grass at Triangle Marsh, Power Your Community Grant from PG&E

#### **MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:**

Deborah Ablin, Joyce & David Applen, Katherine & Philip Arnaudo, Mariah Baird, Dr. and Mrs. Donald Barbour, Robert & Jessica Batha, Mark & Beverly Birnbaum, Greg & Giselle Block, Joan Boessenecker, Ben & Frances Borok, Neil Brandt, Cahill Family Fund, John A. Charckon, Mary Anne & James Cowperthwaite, Frank Cox, John Crawford, Wendy and William Dreskin, Daniel Druckerman, Audrey Earl, Fischer Family Fund, Barbara Ford, Lewis Fredrickson, Michael Freeman M.D., Richard Gale, Jim Gonsman & Carol Burgoa, Ron & Belle Guelden, Jeannette Gustafson, Sheila Hershon, Delia Hitz, Frederick & Patricia Holden, Susana Ives, Joe & Barbara Kirkbride, Nancy Kling, Josephine Kreider, J.M. Krygier, Daniel Kushner, William Lary, Barbara & Warren Levinson, Mark Lindberg, Thomas & Irene Lopez, Kathy Lowrey, Robin Mabrey, Robert J. Marine in memory of Erving Wegscheider, Don McCarthy, Marilyn McGovern, Morton McMichael, Prem & John McMurdo, Regina & John Milavec, Ken Minkoff, Gerald Moore, Linda Nicoletto, Ann Ocheltree, Sharon Osberg, Olivia Perreault in memory of Erving Wegscheider, Phil Peterson, Stacey Pogorzelski, Jeanne Price, Walter & Joan Rentsch, Elizabeth Richardson, George Ridout, Susan & John Ristow, Andrina Ruzick, Stuart & Carol Schneider, Carol B. Schwartz, SF Estuary Project/ABAG, Elizabeth Simmons, Jean Starkweather, Biz & Livia Stone Foundation, Thomas L. Stratton, Peter & Marie Sullivan, Meryl Sundove, Phyllis M. Teplitz, Bruce & Phyllis Thompson, Joan Vaughan, Glenna Violette, Elizabeth & Martin Wiskemann, Jamie Zank

#### **THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS:**

Cristine Albert; Kate Bartschat; Vera, Risa & Chaz Deferrari; Bob Hinz; Kevin Johnston; Prem McMurdo; Linda Nicoletto; Jude Stalker; Lowell Sykes

#### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:**

Gregg Berman, Marion Brennan, Cynthia Clark, Deanne Donnellan, Cynthia Fatura, Janet Freeburg, Roger Freeburg, Jana Haehl, Kenneth A. Hoffman, Barbara Hollis, Elizabeth Kinnear, Ted Mackay, Robert J. Marine, Terry & Denny Norton, Olivia Perreault, Barbara A. Purdy, Marie Rice, Dennis & Judith Rodoni, Ember C. Sadin, Sharie Shute, Amy Skewes-Cox, Biz & Livia Stone Foundation, Scott & Wendy Thorpe, Diane Tillotson, Gail Trimble, Benjamin Wallacker, Frances Weigel, Mitchell Yee

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Early rains have not been followed by average rainfall through mid-December, but we have been planting, nevertheless. Radishes and some thistles are beginning another season of invasive annual non-natives. By removing them early in the season, we expect their numbers will be greatly diminished in the following year. We have the tools and gloves. We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome.

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

#### Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: January 7, February 4

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

#### Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: January 14

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

If you would like to help, please contact Bob Hinz at [rbrthnz@comcast.net](mailto:rbrthnz@comcast.net) or 415/383-8688.

### SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP FEBRUARY 5, 2012

Complete the coupon, enclose check made out to "MAS," write "Delta Trip" on the envelope and the check and mail to:

Marin Audubon Society  
Box 599  
Mill Valley, CA, 94942

#### Name(s) of participants:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Amount Enclosed:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address to receive directions and details:

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number in case of last-minute cancellation:

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

This month Lowell Sykes managed to get rid of more than 40 huge bags of invasive plants we had removed from Bahia. He loaded them up and took them to Redwood landfill all by himself.

We also wish to thank Prem McMurdo for the donation of plants native to the area of Novato where Bahia is located. Prem, a regular volunteer at Bahia, grows native plants in her garden and

has brought a number of them to Bahia for planting. Thank you, Prem, for your time and donation of native plants.

The Conservation corps will be planting during the week of December 12 at both Bahia and Olive Avenue property. We had hoped for more rain before planting but that does not appear to be in the cards.

## Conservation

*continued from page 5*

The comment period did not allow sufficient time to call for comments in *The Clapper Rail*.

### GNOSS FIELD EXPANSION PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The County of Marin and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have released two environmental documents for the expansion of the Marin County Airport at Gness Field. Because Federal money is involved, both the Federal Environmental Impact Statement and the State Environmental Impact Report have been produced. The Federal and state requirements for environmental review are slightly different requiring production of an EIS and an EIR. Gness Field Airport is located just north of Novato and the Rush Creek marsh.

Four alternatives are presented: A, the No Project Alternative would continue current conditions which is a 3,300 foot long runway; B, the preferred project, would extend the runway to the north for a total of 4,400 feet; C would lengthen the runway to the southeast for a total length of 4,400 feet; and D would extend the runway to the southeast by 240 feet and to the northwest by 860 feet for a total of 4,400 feet.

A joint public (Board of Supervisors and FAA) hearing will be held on January 10. The deadline for written comments is February 6. You can find the DEIS and DEIR at [www.gnessfieldeis-eir.com](http://www.gnessfieldeis-eir.com).

We have just begun to review the document and will have more information in February's *The Clapper Rail*.

### SUPERVISORS CHANGE THEIR MINDS ON WEST MARIN METEOROLOGICAL TOWERS

Thanks to a law suit brought by West Marin activists, including Louise Gregg, Susie Schlessinger and Helen Korowitz, the proposal to build two meteorological towers on two West Marin ranches has been withdrawn. The intent of the legal action was to require that an EIR be prepared for construction of these 197-foot-tall towers. NextEra, a \$21 billion company based in Florida, got its way with

the supervisors, who dismissed environmental concerns, overturned a planning commission decision to require an EIR and approved the project last year. But rather than going to court now, the supervisors capitulated and NextEra withdrew their proposal. Our hats off to the citizens who pursued this issue into the courts.

### BALLAST WATER STANDARDS PROPOSED BY EPA

At least 300 exotic species have colonized San Francisco Bay since 1850 with the majority of recent invasions arriving in ballast water from ships, according to the Center for Research on Aquatic Bioinvasions' (CRAB) Andrew Cohen.

Responding to recent court decisions, the US EPA has recently proposed standards based on shipboard treatment. According to Cohen, the data from the EPA's Ballast Water Advisory Committee suggests that onshore treatment would be more effective at killing or removing organisms in ballast water, and the shipboard treatment systems were the weakest of the alternatives being considered.

On December 8, 2011 the EPA initiated

More than 300 exotic species have colonized San Francisco Bay since 1850 ... the majority of recent invasions arriving in ballast water from ships.

a Draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, (NPDES) General Permit for Dischargers incidental to the Normal Operation of a Vessel. The comment period ends on February 21, 2012. Public hearings are scheduled for various locations around the country, but none in the Bay Area. They would hold one here if they hear sufficient interest from the public.

We urge you to request a public hearing in the San Francisco Bay Area by submitting comments to <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/vessels/vgpermit.cfm>, or download the Federal Register notice at [www.gpo.gov:80/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-08/pdf/2011-31576.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov:80/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-08/pdf/2011-31576.pdf).

# MARIN BIRDLOG – NOVEMBER 2011

By Rich Stallcup

November was dry and mild as evidenced in part by the virtual lack of “diving duck” arrivals by the end of the month. With fall migration pretty much over, Marin’s persistent field ornithologists had to dig harder to unearth rarities and that they did!

The only pelagic trip to Cordell Bank during the month was on 11/19. Birding and cetacean searching was very slow except for a first flying-plumage **Short-tailed Albatross** (DS). This magnificent species, thought to be extinct after World War Two (no, our war was not the cause) has made a slow but highly encouraging comeback following rigid protection of its few nesting sites. The return of the Short-tailed Albatross is a conservation coup.



Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

**Sage Thrasher**

*zaboria*) is wintering at the Wildlife Gallery in Bolinas (KH), and two gray ones are at a feeder in far-east Novato (HC). Gray Fox Sparrows (probably *Pi. altivagans*) are slimly encountered during the winter in chamise chaparral on serpentine soils along ridges of Mount Tamalpais but not on the flatlands. Two **Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrows** and a **Swamp Sparrow** were at Shield’s Marsh, Inverness on the high tide of 11/28 (MR, MB). Finally, a well-described **Snow Bunting** on the ocean beach of Abbott’s Lagoon 11/6 (SD) could not be relocated.

## MAMMALS

A **Western Mastiff Bat**, beaten up by crows in San Rafael, was brought to Wildcare at the end of the month (CD). It is a beautiful, gentle, huge mammal. While they are known to occur in the Sutter Buttes, this is the first record for Marin County (DP).

**Bottle-nosed Dolphins** that have been surfing the San Mateo and San Francisco County coasts (and bullying Harbor Porpoises) for several years are now part of Marin’s fauna. Sightings north to Stinson Beach are not infrequent.

**OBSERVERS:** **NA:** Noah Arthur, **BB:** Bob Battagin, Len and Patti Blumin, **MB:** Mark Butler, **HC:** Heather Cameron, **SD:** Stuart Davidson, **CD:** Cindy Dicke, Mary Anne Flett, Jules Evens, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **WL:** William Legge, **m.ob:** many observers, Jeff Miller, O.P – Outer Point Reyes, **DP:** Dixie Pierson, PRBO Conservation Science, **MR:** Mary Anne Rotella, Maggie Rufo, **DS:** Dan Singer, Rich Stallcup, Amy Trainer, Jim White, Hilary Winslow.

## 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](http://marinaudubon.org), or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



**Jack Runyan** and **Casper Wilson** are both kindergarten students at Bacich Elementary School. Jack’s favorite bird is the Western Scrub Jay because it is blue and he likes blue. Casper’s wish is to see a Bald Eagle catching a fish!



**Berit Pigott** and **Roxanne Grethman** are students at Bacich Elementary School. Berit’s favorite bird is the male House Finch because it is so colorful! Roxanne’s favorite bird is the Western Bluebird, and the bird she’d like to get to see is a female House Finch.



**Kiana Collins** and **Samantha Lefkowitz** are students at Bacich Elementary School. Kiana and Samantha want to see a Bald Eagle.



# THE Clapper Rail

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- February 10-12 **San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival**  
[www.sfbayflywayfestival.com](http://www.sfbayflywayfestival.com)  
Mare Island
- February 17-19 **Klamath Falls Winter Wings Festival**  
[www.winterwingsfest.org](http://www.winterwingsfest.org)
- March 1-4 **San Diego Birding Festival**  
[www.sandiegoaudubon.org](http://www.sandiegoaudubon.org)  
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## SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter supporting members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. 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 supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors, relatives to join us, too.

You can also join or make a donation on our web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to [marinaudubon.org](http://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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