



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, MAY 5 7:30 PM

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

The Kiwi of New Zealand is well known for laying exceptionally large eggs and breeding slowly. However this pattern seems to be common among many of New Zealand's passerines as well. In



Photo courtesy of Jim Cunningham

Rifleman

this talk, Jim will cover what he and others have discovered about the "slow lane" breeding of New Zealand's song birds and offer an explanation for this pattern. This strategy of NZ birds will be compared with what is known about the breeding strategies of Australian passerines.

Jim Cunningham received his Ph.D in Zoology from the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. The topic of his work was the breeding ecology, social organization and vocal behavior of the New Zealand Brown Creeper or Pipipi. Upon returning to the US, Jim worked for 6 years with the late Dr. Luis Baptista at the California Academy of Sciences. For the last 20 years Jim has been teaching in the Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at Dominican University of California, San Rafael. There he teaches Comparative Anatomy, Developmental Biology and a course for non-biology majors entitled "Birds and the Environment."

Come at 7:15 PM to socialize and have refreshments before the program.

MAS to Hold Annual Meeting

Join Marin Audubon on Thursday, May 5 at 7:30 pm for our Annual Meeting just prior to the Speaker's program (see adjacent Speaker Series column for information).

This is your opportunity as a Marin Audubon member to vote for five directors who each will serve three-year terms beginning in June 2011.

The slate of nominees presented by the nominating committee this year is:

- **Mariah Baird**, an attorney currently serving as our secretary;
- **Greg Block**, a financial advisor currently serving as our finance chair;
- **Robert Hinz**, a retired biochemist, who is our newsletter editor and volunteer coordinator;

- **Jo Kreider**, a retired financial officer currently serving as our treasurer; and
- **Lowell Sykes**, currently serving as Vice President, who works diligently to restore habitats at Bahia and our other properties.

Nominations can also be made from the floor, with permission of the nominee.

In addition to the election, the Annual Meeting will include a brief presentation of highlights of Marin Audubon Society's activities during the past year. The Annual Meeting business will be followed immediately by the speaker's presentation.

Voting to elect the Board of Directors is a right held by members of non-profit membership organizations. Do join us for this important event.

Mariculture Effects on Harbor Seals in Drakes Estero

By *Rick Johnson*

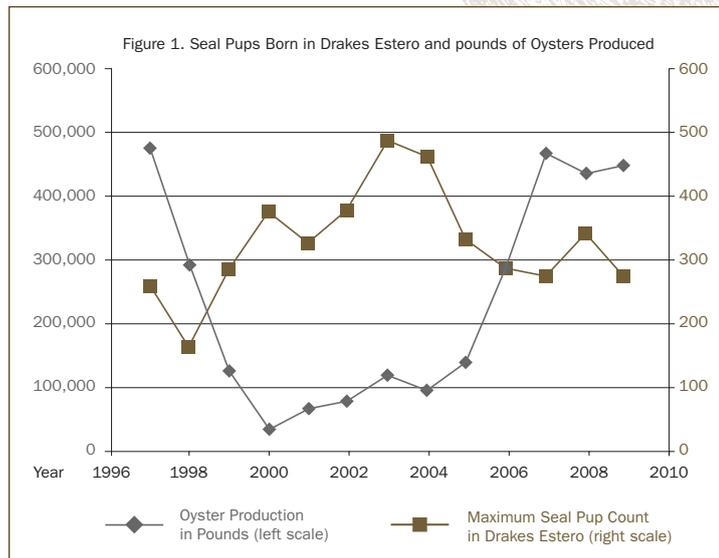
Research conducted in Drakes Estero confirms that this is an important year-round haul-out site and seasonal pupping area on Point Reyes, a coastline which supports approximately 20% of the mainland California harbor seal population during the breeding season (Allen, 1988). The population of seals using Drakes Estero swells during breeding season. Females with pups tend to

use sand bars separate from males. Seal haul-out sites in the upper and middle estero are more important to mothers and pupping seals than the haul-outs at the mouth (Allen, 1988), and the upper sites are closest to the mariculture operation.

Two of the estero's seal subsites, labeled UEN and OB, are connected to sandbars that extend far to the west in the middle estero. OB and

UEN are separated by a lateral channel. In prior decades of seal research, harbor seals hauled out along much of that lateral channel. Now, mother seals use the east third of the north side

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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
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
Field Trips	Vicky Van Meter 299-2514
Membership	Ruth Pratt 453-2989
Fundraising	Flinn Moore Rauck 892-7554
Programs	Helen Lindqvist 789-0703
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 668-1242
Nominating	Phil Peterson 898-8400
Volunteers	Bob Hinz 383-8688
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.

The Clapper Rail is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper. Edited by Bob Hinz rbrthnz@comcast.net, 383-8688; and assisted by other members of MAS. Deadline is the first of each month.

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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

Please join us for our Annual Meeting to be held at our May 5th, Speaker Series meeting, 7:30 pm at the Richardson Bay Sanctuary. The election of Board members will take place first, followed by the presentation by our speaker.

We still have a partial (one year) board term open that we would like to fill with a member interested in helping us to expand our volunteer program. We would like to involve more volunteers from local businesses and schools, for example. Partial board terms are filled by the board. This term has just one year left so it offers a good opportunity to see if you like the job. Please call Barbara Salzman (924-6057) for more information.

There are only a few days until the annual Mother's Day Barbecue. As of the newsletter deadline, there are a limited number of spaces left, so call Mary Anne Cowperthwaite (453-2216) right away to reserve a space.

The dichotomy between how domestic and wild predators are viewed continues to amaze me. Wild animals killed by predators are not noticed. Native birds and other wildlife killed by domestic cats are ignored. When a domestic cat is taken by native wildlife, however, it shows up in newspapers. There have been several such articles in recent months. The implication

seems to be to do something to stop it, such as something should be done to protect cats from coyotes. The reality is that when domestic cats roam outside, they become part of the food chain. Native predators should not be maligned because they are doing what they need to do to stay alive—catching prey. If pet owners want to assure their pets' safety, owners need to keep them indoors or in an enclosure that our native wildlife predators can't enter. Isn't it exciting that we have a healthy coyote population in the county!

The Conservation Coos Team will be conducting our annual Birdathon to benefit Marin Audubon and our wildlife protection efforts. All are welcome to sponsor our team by pledging either a specific amount or an amount per species. We usually see between 90 and 100 species in our one-day search around the county. Either let us know through the website or send us a note. It looks like this will be the last year for our Birdathon as my partner, Anne Merrifield, is retiring and moving away next fall. I'll be missing her.

Also, a reminder that this is nesting time—the worst time to do tree trimming as you may be cutting down nests that are hidden among the branches. Please wait until fall to trim your trees.

RESERVE TODAY

Mother's Day Barbecue

Sunday, May 8, 2010

Gates open: 11 am

Lunch: 12 noon – 2 pm

Volunteer Canyon

4800 Highway 1

Stinson Beach, California

This family event is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the outstanding wildlife preserve and will benefit **Marin Audubon Society** and **Audubon Canyon Ranch**. Reserve today! This is the only time Volunteer Canyon is open to the public. For more information call Mary Anne at 415/453-2216.

Reserve your spot by sending a check payable to *Marin Audubon Society* to:

Mary Anne Cowperthwaite
141 Oak Avenue
San Anselmo, CA 94960

\$20 for adults, \$10 for kids 12 and under.

Indicate your choice of quiche or chicken for each ticket. Please call 415/453-2216 if your check will not reach us by May 2.

Remember to bring utensils, cups, bowls and plates. Non-disposable preferred.

Hope to see you there!

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, May 5, 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 near McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and this walk is great for all levels of birders. 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.

MOUNT BURDELL

Saturday, May 14, 2011
8 to 11 AM, possibly later
With Lisa Hug

Join Lisa Hug for a field trip to Mt. Burdell. Species we might see include Lark Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole and Grasshopper Sparrow amongst many other possibilities. This should be a fairly easy walk, with some uphill. Bring comfortable walking shoes, layered clothing, water and snacks. We will meet at the end of San Andreas Drive in Novato.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy. 101 in Novato take the San Marin Drive/Atherton Avenue exit. At the end of the northbound exit ramp turn left (west) on San Marin Drive. Go roughly 2 miles down the road and turn right on San Andreas Drive. Drive nearly to the end of the road and park on the street. (No restrooms available - check in Novato).

BIG ROCK/LOMA ALTA

Thursday, May 26, 2011
9:30 AM to 1 PM
(8:30 AM at the Smith Ranch Road Park and Ride lot if you are carpooling)
With Dave Herrema

The north slope of Loma Alta above Lucas Valley Road is high and dry, with great vistas. This is not the place for a lot of species, but we should see some birds you may have not seen before, such as Grasshopper, Rufous-crowned and Lark Sparrows; Horned Larks; and Lazuli Buntings. Western Meadowlarks should provide the melody. This is also a great place for raptors. All are welcome to join us for a leisurely walk of about a mile on a wide, graded road. Much of this is uphill; we return downhill over the same road. Please bring plenty of water.

DIRECTIONS: Big Rock Trailhead is about 5 miles west of Hwy. 101 on Lucas Valley Road. Parking is limited at the trailhead so we will meet for carpooling at the Park and Ride lot at the Smith Ranch Road/ Lucas Valley exit at 8:30 AM. The Park and Ride lot is just east of Hwy. 101 on Smith Ranch Road.

YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY

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

On Saturday, June 18, we will begin our bird explorations at the almost 7,000 ft elevation of the Sierra. We will meet at 7:30 AM at the Yuba Pass Sno-Park Parking Lot (also the entrance to the Yuba Pass Campground) along Hwy 49. There may still be snow on the ground this year, so dress accordingly. If lucky, we'll see species rarely found at lower elevations including Williamson's Sapsucker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Calliope Hummingbird and Mountain Chickadee.

The leaders may include a visit to S.F. State's Field Station, Bassett's Store (hummingbird feeders), Gold Lakes Road with Sand Pond Marsh boardwalk, and points between. The caravan route back to camping/lodging will be at the leaders' discretion.

On Sunday, June 19, we will meet at 6:30 AM at the same Yuba Pass Sno-Park Parking Lot. From here we will travel to the graveled Mountain Quail Road. There we will enter the Great Basin Sage and Jeffrey Pine mix where our quarry becomes the Common Nighthawk, Gray Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie, and Spotted and Green-tailed Towhees.

We plan to lunch in the Loyalton Area to search the old forest burn area for nesting Lewis's Woodpecker and Mountain Bluebird. The trip will end early enough to allow either exploration of other nearby areas or an early return home.

Lodging can be secured in Portola (Sleepy Pines - 530/832-4291), Blairsden (River Pines - 530/836-2552) and in Sierra City (e.g., Herrington's Sierra Pines Lodge - www.herringtonssierrapines.com, 800/682-9848). Also, new owners will continue providing lodging at Bassett's Station, Hwy. 49 X Gold Lake Rd. (530/862-1297, www.bassetts-station.com). Campgrounds are available at Yuba Pass, along Hwy. 49 to the West, at Plumas-Eureka State Park, and along Hwy. 89 between Truckee and Sierraville. Driving time from the Bay Area to Yuba Pass is just under 5 hours. Access is both by Hwy. 80 and Hwy. 70 (up to one hour longer).



Drakes Estero

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of the lateral channel. The current zonation is a bit like a military history map showing the oyster bag encampment to the west and middle, and the seals to the east. Is that location a natural, biological choice of the seals or does the chronic presence of oyster bags and attendant workers cause the seals to stay on the eastern end? MAS posed such a question to the National Park Service for the EIS scoping.

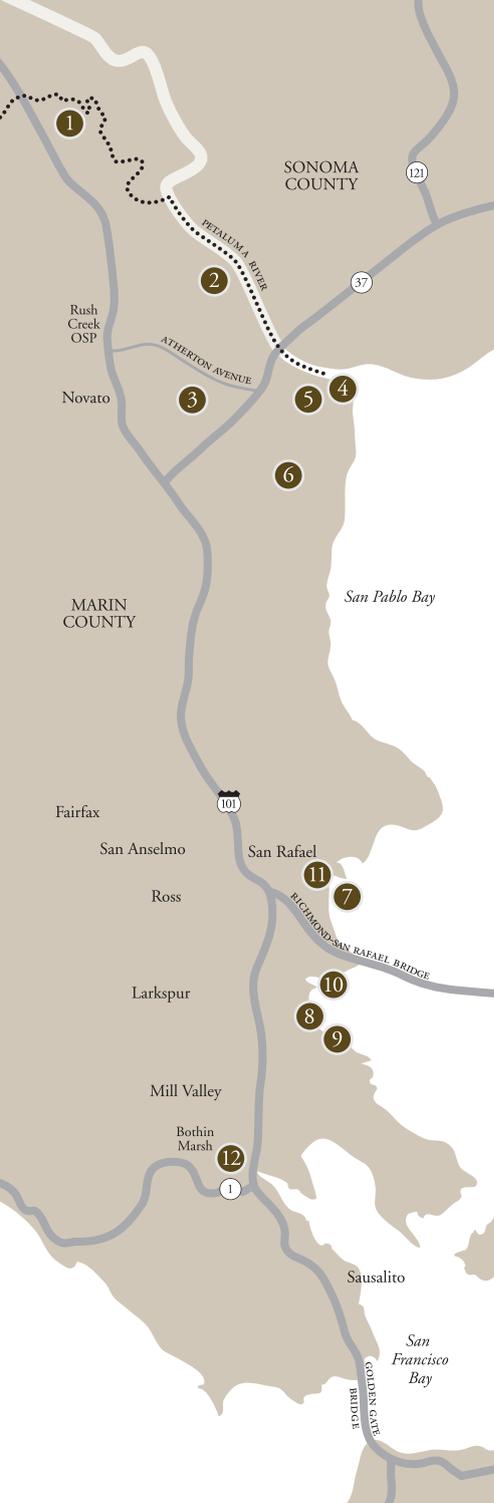
There was an unplanned experiment that suggests that mariculture may have an effect on the seal population. The previous oyster company owner operated at a high level of production in the 1980s and 1990s. They reduced oyster production in 1997 and it remained low to 2004. Then, Drakes Bay Oyster Co. purchased the operation in 2005 and began to ramp up, using a different methodology involving placing bags of oysters on the sandbars. These bags are tended periodically to turn the bags and rebag the oysters as they grow. This worker activity and bag placement may be a chronic disturbance which alters the seals use of the estero. From 2005 to 2007, DBOC expanded their footprint and eventually placed bags outside their lease area on part of the active UEN birthing/nursing site. The California Coastal Commission required them to move back as part of their permit conditions.

However, the current zonation is arbitrary and not based on an analysis of all suitable habitat that seals might use or have used in the past.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between oyster production and seal pup population in Drakes Estero. In statistical modeling of this relationship, oyster production is a far more powerful explanatory variable than either the null hypothesis (i.e. random fluctuations), visitor disturbances, or regional changes in seal populations. The data indicate a strong negative correlation but do not tell what might be the causation. The mariculture footprint and expansion with related worker activity may provide the causal explanation.

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.



ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Various bills of environmental importance have been introduced in the state legislature. Marin Audubon urges you to write in support of the legislation listed below. You should address your comments to our legislators: Assemblyman Jared Huffman for the bills introduced in the assembly (AB) and Senator Mark Leno for the senate bills (SB).

The address for senators and assemblymen is: State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95612.

AB 703 (Gordon): This bill is critical to MAS's ability to continue to own and acquire properties.

Current law provides for an exemption (called a welfare exemption) from *ad valorem* taxes, that is, taxes based on the value of the property. The exemption applies to properties used for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes, as well as property used for the "preservation of nature resources, native plants or animals, biotic communities, geologic or geographic formations of scientific or educational interest, or open space lands used solely for recreation and the enjoyment of scenic beauty, and meeting other specified criteria be included in the welfare exemption." That law also provides that that the welfare exemption for all of the "natural resource" purposes becomes inoperative on January 1, 2012 and is repealed on January 1, 2013. In other words, the exemption for natural resource purposes will end on January 1, 2012 unless AB 703 is passed.

We don't see how we would be able to continue our habitat ownership and restoration program if we have to pay the additional *ad valorem* property taxes, which could be as much as \$30,000 per year. We were unaware until now that this exemption had a sunset date.

You Can Help By: Urging Assemblyman Jared Huffman to support AB 703. AB 703 would eliminate the January 1, 2012 inoperative date and the January 1, 2013 repeal date, thereby extending the welfare exemption for natural resource purposes.

The fact that hospitals, religious and scientific purposes are permanently exempt while natural resource protection purposes are not, may be a remnant of another time when the importance of natural resources was not recognized. This approach certainly is not justifiable now.

SB 588 (Evans): This bill would amend the Public Resources Code to give the Coastal Commission the discretionary authority to impose administrative civil penalties for violations of the Coastal Act. Numerous other agencies, Bay Conservation and Development Commission, State Lands Commission, State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards, to name a few, have the authority to impose administrative civil penalties for violations of applicable codes. Unless a violator is willing to cooperate and agrees to pay a fine, the only alternative the Coastal Commission has to enforce its regulations is to sue in court. In other words, the only way Commission staff can fine a violator is if the violator agrees to be fined. The irony is that violators who cooperate and agree to pay a fine are fined, whereas those who contest are not fined. Furthermore, the Commission can't argue their cases in court. Cases must be brought by the Attorney General's office. This is a slow, expensive and resource-intensive way to impose penalties, and so it is done infrequently. These circumstances are an incentive for people to violate the law.

You Can Help By: Writing Senator Mark Leno urging him to support SB 588 to improve coastal enforcement by allowing the state to address violations more efficiently at reduced cost and, more importantly, to ensure improved protections for the coast. Penalties collected would be deposited in the Coastal Act Services Fund and would be used to support the Commission's program work and reduce the cost of litigation.

AB 376 (Huffman and Fong): This bill would expand on current more limited restrictions by making it unlawful for any person to possess, sell or offer for sale, trade or distribution, a shark fin. It defines a shark fin as a raw, dried or otherwise processed detached fin or tail of a shark.

The bill provides for exceptions through a permit that could be issued for scientific, recreational or commercial purposes.

Sharks are critical to the health and balance of the ocean ecosystem. Numerous recent studies have documented significant population declines in many shark species, some by as much as 99%. Over one-third of the shark species are threatened with extinction. Sharks are particularly susceptible to overfishing because they are long-lived, have low reproductive rates

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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

Conservation

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and need many years to mature and reproduce. Demand for shark fin soup is largely believed to be the primary driver behind overfishing of sharks and their population declines. Shark finning often involves cutting off the tails and fins and throwing the fish back into the water where they die a slow death. *The New York Times* reported that every year 73 million sharks are killed for their fins.

You Can Help By: Telling Assemblyman Huffman you support AB 376.

AB 1103 (Huffman): This bill would provide flexibility for local governments in meeting the state-mandated housing needs. It would allow local governments to petition the regional governing body to apply density requirements that are based on the characteristics of a region (metropolitan, suburban or non-metropolitan), whereas now density requirements are applied uniformly. The bill also would allow jurisdictions to count conversion of existing units toward regional housing goals, which current law does not allow.

Currently, housing requirements can only be met by building new residential units. This results in perfectly fine houses being torn down to achieve the housing goals. These circumstances cause unnecessary waste with the associated loss of landfill space and increase the pressure to build the new units on undeveloped lands.

You Can Help By: Telling Assemblyman Huffman you support AB 1103.

MAS POSITION ON GGNRA DOG MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members of the MAS Board have completed our site visits to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area trails under consideration for dog use management. Our position is that on-leash dogs be allowed on roads and parking lots only. We do not support dogs on narrow trails and, as mentioned in last month's newsletter, we oppose the use of ROLAs (regulated off-leash areas).

Allowing dogs on roads and parking lots only is consistent with regulations in all of the other national parks and recreation areas in the nation, so new regulations would not set a precedent for weakening protections in other areas. This is a position that can be clearly presented to the public and is easily understood and enforced. Most importantly, it is also the safest for wildlife and for other people users of the park.

Regarding specific areas, we support the preferred Alternative D which allows leashed dogs in the parking lot and picnic area at Stinson Beach. Similarly at Muir Beach we support allowing dogs in the parking and

picnic areas. In accord with our standing trail policy, we do not support construction of a new trail that is proposed by GGNRA in a yet-undefined location.

At the Marin Headlands allow leashed dogs on paved areas but not on the beach. We think fencing, similar to that at the Muir Beach parking lot, should still be installed across the entrance to Rodeo Lagoon to keep people out. The fencing is low and has a gap at the bottom which allows wildlife to pass through or over.

Finally, at Fort Baker we recommend leashed dogs only on the Bay Trail, wherever it is on existing paved roads. The Bay Trail is poorly marked at Fort Baker.

One thing we noticed is that signs at GGNRA vary from site to site and are often unclear. GGNRA should design and erect uniform signs for all trails that clearly explain park regulations.

As reported last month, the comment deadline has been extended to May 29. Comments should go to: Frank Dean, General Superintendent, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Fort Mason, Building 201, San Francisco, CA 94123.

MARIN COUNTY ROADS AND TRAILS

In late March the Marin County Open Space District held the second meeting in the planned series designed to engage the public in the planning and decision process for use of the Open Space lands.

The meeting began with four speakers, environmental writer John Hart; long-time Open Space District Board Member Al Boro; former Open Space District Director Pierre Joske; and author, runner and historian Barry Spitz. Each presented his view of the events and motivations that led to establishment of the district in the 1960s. There was apparently no consideration of protecting natural resources for their own sake as habitat, for wildlife protection or for any active uses. The motivation was largely focused on protecting the landscape for its beauty, as community separators, and on protecting lands from development threats such as the plan to develop West Marin including building numerous freeways. It seems that the recognition of the importance of protecting natural habitats for wildlife and for the other benefits they provide either came later or was the motivation of only a few.

Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker



VOLUNTEERS AT BAHIA

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Bud Alderson, Shayne Decent, Sianna Decent, Daniel Farbman, Bob Hinz, Gio Lievano, Charles Lightfoot, Mary Mader, Linda Nicoletto, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Mark Toepfer

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Ann C. Adams, Vida Akhzar, Peg Atherton, Katherine Barrengos, Wendy Barsh, Kelly Berry, Nina Buchbinder, F. B. Bunting, Donna Cameron, John Comstock, Agnes V. Der Hoeven, Jane Ellis, Bonnie Felix, Pamela Foley, Julie Fonseca, Jean Gallagher, Susan Gentry, Shirley & Jefferson Graves, Karen Guerry, Gabe Hammon, Duane Johnson, Amy Kalish, G. Kampmeyer, Michelle Kemp, Lauren Kowal, Alberta Lesko, Roverta Likover, Lawrence McCullough, Sonia McKenna, Barbara Miller, Michale J. Morrissey, Corinna Neustaetter, John Owens, Anne Pearl, Linda Peltzman, Susan Penberthy, Corrado Petruzzella, Jay Rice, Rebecca Rishell, Claire Rivard, Maggie Rufo, James & Joan Runyeon, Joanne Salz, Monika H. Schane, Nancy Slenkin, Ronnie M. Stern, Livia Stone, Peta Swidler, Teru Taketa, Jean Trombla, Donna Williams, Carolyn & Frederick Wood

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Walter & Betty Benson, Daniel & Lee Drake, Steven J. Edelson Irrevocable Trust, Joyce L. Johnston, PG&E Corporation Foundation (matching donation), Santa Venetia Neighborhood Assn., Maria & Rick Johnson, Peter & Marie Sullivan

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HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Radishes, one of the earliest to bloom non-native invasives, were hit hard last month by workers at both Bahia and Triangle Marsh. Thistles are the next invasive plant in the season's series of blooming 'baddies.' They are already blooming and will be a big target, but not the only target, of our stewardship effort in May. We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Bahia, Novato:

Wednesday, May 4
Thursday, May 12
Second Saturday, May 14
Wednesday, May 18
Thursday, May 26
Fourth Saturday, May 28
Wednesday, June 1

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, May 7

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!

eBIRD.ORG

Do you or did you record bird observations in a series of notebooks? Can you find all those notebooks? Can you find the details of those unusual species you saw back when? What did you see in Monte Verde, Costa Rica? Make it easy on yourself and at the same time share your sightings with science. Submit observations to eBird.org.



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

For nearly two years, the Center for Volunteer and Non-profit Leadership has been recruiting volunteers for MAS's monthly work days at Bahia. This is one of those groups.

BAHIA

The County Agricultural Commissioner's office has initiated an investigation into the herbicide spraying along the berm at Bahia. We welcome their investigation. Hopefully, it will result in finding the guilty party. It is a public health as well as an environmental hazard for private citizens to go around spraying unknown toxic substances on lands owned by others. If anyone has any information about the person who sprayed the berm at Bahia, please contact Graham Good in the Agricultural Commissioner's office, 499-6700.

The rain and warm weather have brought on an explosion of weeds. We have hired the Conservation Corps North Bay for two days removing wild radish and Harding grass along the peninsulas we own. We are pleased to have had a large group of volunteers through the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership (CVNL) also helping to remove radish and

Australian bentgrass, which has invaded some of the seasonal wetlands. Our thanks to Jude Stalker for hosting the groups from the CVNL.

We are still having week-day work days – please join us!!

SIMMONS SLOUGH

Some months back, we completed the plan to enhance the 140 acre property we own at Olive and Atherton Avenues. Now the necessary paperwork has been completed with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to begin the construction project. We still have some work to do to prepare a plan to control invasive plants and to apply for permits. The enhancement plan includes deepening existing seasonal wetland ponds, creating islands within the ponds, and revegetating with native plants. We will be working toward completing the enhancement project this summer.

Conservation

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In the second half of the meeting, participants were divided into small groups for a role reversal exercise. We were asked to provide our views on a continuum of most protective of habitat to least protective. The group to which Phil Peterson and I were assigned had representatives of both bikers, hikers, horseback riders and environmentalists; most were supportive of protecting natural resources. It is too early for a report on the combined outcome of the groups.

In a related matter, the Board of Supervisors

voted to provide additional funding for the 680 trail, which has been exempted from the road and trail planning process. Phil Peterson, representing MAS, was one of two persons who spoke and the only one speaking against the expenditure. Phil emphasized that enforcement and other county interests will suffer because this trail has become so expensive that funds had to be taken from the general fund to keep it going. It is our impression that there are many organizations that object to this extravagant trail, but they have just given up in disgust. The estimated cost of the 680 trail is now at \$620,000.

MARIN BIRDLOG – MARCH 2011

By Rich Stallcup

As has been the case for the past few years March 2011 was rainy! but that didn't slow Marin's intrepid birders from finding the unusual. Several rarish ducks were found and returning spring migrants were on time or early.

Eighteen **Black** and five **White-winged Scoters** on the o.p. 3/18 (NB) were good numbers for recent times. Both species were more numerous in the 1990s and before. A female **Long-tailed Duck** just past the surf off Rodeo Beach 3/5 (WL) was the only one reported in March as was a male **Harlequin Duck** at Loch Lomond 3/21+ (JM). The male **Tufted Duck** at Stafford Lake remained through the month to the delight of many birders (m.ob).

Another excellent find, an apparent **Canvasback x Redhead** hybrid on the bay just NE of Loch Lomond 3/19 (HK), continued through 3/21 and was thoroughly documented in pictures. The genus *Aythya* including both species of this combination plus scaup, Tufted and Ring-necked Ducks are not always particular about mating with their own kind and crosses between all six of these species are known.

Swainson's Hawks are an annual occurrence in Marin in March or April in tiny numbers. On 3/30, one was seen in the Marin Headlands (HB,TB,NW). **Merlins** are scarce but present in the county from mid-September through mid-April. On 3/31, one repeatedly made passes on panic-stricken Cliff Swallows at the bridge by the parking lot at Las Gallinas. For those of us ON the bridge, this was the closest and wildest Merlin encounter ever.



Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

Canvasback X Redhead



Photo courtesy of Richard Ravek

Caspian Tern

The adult **Laughing Gull** that sometimes hung out with up to 400 Ring-billed Gulls at the Marin Civic Center was present on-and-off through March 27 (m.ob) (AK, JC), the last time anyone looked. Tiny pelagic birds (those that would never willingly go to land except to breed) are seldom seen from shore or onshore, so an adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** with other gulls at the mouth of Pine Gulch Creek, Bolinas Lagoon 3/27 (BB) was a nice surprise. Average first-arrival date for **Caspian Terns** in Marin is March 14, so one at Limantour 3/16 (MR,MB) was right on time.

In the San Anselmo hills, an adult male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** 3/3 (AB) was the second reported in the county in 2011. The other was an individual that successfully wintered at Olompali State Park.

SPRING ARRIVALS

Rufous Hummingbirds are most often seen here on high ridges or peaks from February into April but very few find their way to lowland feeders. Two males appeared in far-east Novato, one 3/18 to 3/22 and a second 3/29 and 3/30 (HC). They don't stay long but because they are highly pugnacious, the local Anna's and Allen's are temporarily terrorized. A female Rufous at radish blossoms was identified at Las Gallinas 3/31 (RS). Thirteen **Evening Grosbeaks** at Olema 3/30 (JM) were remnants of the strong winter appearance of this irruptive species. Most years there are none and when some are present they are usually in flocks (up to 45) and feed on the seeds of box elder and non-native maples.

Rough-winged Swallows returned to the Highway 101 bridge over Rush Creek in Novato 3/12 (RS) and **Cliff Swallows** followed four days later. **Wilson's Warblers** were singing on territories by 3/6, **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** about the same time, and **Warbling Vireos** by 3/25. These are just a few examples of migrants returning from the south on time or just a little early.

Observers Liska Arata, Bob Battagin, Tim Behr, Allyn Bissell, Len & Patty Blumin, Herb Brandt, Mark Butler, Heather Cameron, Scott Carey, Josiah Clark, Iris Clearwater, Renee Cormier, Jules Evens, Mark Forney, Keith Hansen, Harrison Karr, Andy Kleinhesselink, William Legge, Joy Mander, Jeff Miller, m.ob – many observers, Native Birds group, Bill Noble, Libby Porzig, o.p. – outer Point Reyes, PRBO Conservation Science, Don Reinburg, Mary Anne Rotella, Maggie Rufo, Rich Stallcup, Nick Whelan, Kerry Wilcox.

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.



Hana Moore, David Melby, Sophia Congdon, and Alexandra Beaurang are all kindergartners at Bacich Elementary School in Kentfield.

Hana likes the Great Blue Heron best "because he's so handsome!"

David would like to see a Bald Eagle some day.

Alexandra loves swans because they are her favorite color. She's happy to be a Junior Bird Watcher "because my brother Pierre is one."

Sophia's favorite bird is the Snowy Egret.



Julien Belzer and Brooks Allen are first graders at Bacich Elementary School.

Brooks is happy to be a Junior Birder Watcher because his big brother Callaway is! Brooks' favorite bird is the American Robin because he loves its colorful breast.



THE Clapper Rail

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- June 2 **Speaker Series**
To be announced
- June 18-19 **Field Trip**
Yuba Pass and Sierra Valley
With Phil and Pat Gordon

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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.

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