



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, NOVEMBER 4 7:30 PM

**The Secret Lives of Birds:
investigating the risk of nest
predation in our changing environment**

With Kathi Borgmann



Photo courtesy of Trish Rodriguez

Many bird populations across North America have declined in recent years and researchers have been busy trying to determine why. The breeding season is an especially important time for songbirds, however, producing and successfully raising young can be quite difficult and thus has a big effect on the songbird population. Join Kathi to take a step inside the secret lives of birds and look at how changes in vegetation and predator behavior affect the risk of nest predation.

Kathi recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona where she studied several factors affecting the ability of forest songbirds to successfully raise their offspring. She also studied the response of birds and mammals to habitat restoration in montane meadows and riparian areas around Lake Tahoe, CA. Kathi is now the restoration ecologist at Richardson Bay Audubon Center and is excited to be working in marine ecosystems.

Come at 7:15 pm to socialize and have some refreshments before the program!

MAS Election Recommendations

There are important state and local elections coming up November 2. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Marin Audubon is prohibited from endorsing political candidates but we can make recommendations on ballot measures within limits allowed by law.

Our first recommendation is *Get out and vote!*

YES ON 21 FOR STATE PARKS.

California's park system operates and maintains 279 parks, beaches and wilderness areas. After years of chronic underfunding, many state parks are in shambles. The diverse habitats they support are threatened by neglect and increased vandalism due to declining staff and services. Crime has doubled in state parks over the last decade.

Citizen initiatives are perhaps not the preferred way to fund the state park system,

but as a last resort citizens groups qualified Proposition 21 for the November ballot. Proposition 21 will provide reliable funding from a source outside of the dysfunctional state budget structure by adding an \$18 annual fee to vehicle registration. Proposition 21 is expected to raise \$500 million annually. In exchange for providing the parks with adequate and stable funding, there will be no day-use gate/parking fees. Out of state users would still have to pay to enter the parks. All of the fees collected will be deposited in a trust fund, where they could legally be spent only on state parks and wildlife conservation.

In Marin, Proposition 21 means you will be able to park free for day use at Tomales Bay State Park, (dependable place to see endangered spotted owls), as well as China Camp, Mt. Tamalpais, Samuel Taylor, Tomales Bay, and Olompali State Parks, all of which support native woodland and other habitats for birds. Those who visit these parks regularly will quickly see a savings. Those who don't visit state parks much now, will now have an incentive to do so.

YES ON MMWD MEASURE "S"

Measure S, sponsored by the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), requires a vote of MMWD customers before a desalination facility could be built. The ballot language specifies that "MMWD may construct a desalination facility to produce potable (drinking) water only if the voters approve that decision." MAS's support for Measure S included endorsement of a strong water conservation program. We want conservation and protection of natural resources to remain a part of MMWD's program.

Although some campaign literature put out by Measure S opponents might lead one to believe MMWD is about to go out tomorrow and build a desalination

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 26, 2010

The annual Christmas Bird Count is one of the Marin Audubon's favorite traditions. We've been conducting our count since the 1970s, as part of an international effort coordinated by the National Audubon Society. Our data is incorporated into the longest running unbroken bird survey in the world, and is important as a means to monitor the status of resident and migratory bird populations.

This year the count occurs on Sunday, December 26, rain or shine. Teams will cover the southern part of the county, from Terra Linda to Bolinas Lagoon to the Golden Gate Bridge. While we need lots of birders in the field, we also welcome feeder watchers and will include your numbers in the count as well. Whether you are going to count in the field or at a feeder, *be sure to sign up in advance.*

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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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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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Website: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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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

The Marin Audubon Board is happy to welcome new Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count Compilers Susan Kelly and Mark Forney. How fortunate we are to now have two compilers. Our count is usually scheduled on the Saturday between Christmas and New Year's Day. This is one of those odd years when Christmas and New Year's fall on Saturdays, so we have had to struggle a bit to find a suitable date that will not conflict with other counts (we discovered a past agreement with Madrone Audubon that we would not conflict with them because we share many participants). We've chosen the day after Christmas, Sunday December 26. Save the date!

Participating in a Christmas Bird Count is an important way citizens can contribute to science. Christmas Bird Counts provide the oldest nationwide data on bird populations and have been functioning for more than a century.

We'd love to have you join us.

Don't forget to give us your input on the new day (Thursday) for our Speaker Series programs. A note, phone call, email or web inquiry will all work. We will evaluate the new day after November.

We are entering on the most exciting bird time in the Bay Area – the return of the migrating waterfowl. During the summer months, the Bay seems so empty without them.

While shorebirds have been dribbling in since July, waterfowl return later. Usually the waterfowl are back by mid-November, but in some years they return earlier. Do join us on our field trips to learn how to identify these wonderful birds. We are scheduling beginning birder trips this year to enable all of our members to enjoy the challenge and joy of identifying these wonderful birds.

Drake's Estero: Update and Call for Comments

By Rick Johnson

As *Clapper Rail* readers will recall, the Federal government purchased the oyster operation at Drakes Estero in 1972 as part of the creation of Point Reyes National Seashore. In the purchase negotiations, the oyster company gained permission to continue operations until 2012. Subsequently, the California State Lands Commission transferred title of the Estero's bottom lands to the Federal Government, and Federal legislation designated that it become a wilderness. Marin Audubon Society has long supported these plans to eliminate the commercial oyster operations in 2012 in order to provide full protection to the Estero's native species and natural processes.

In 2005 the Lunnys' Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC) acquired the remaining oyster use permit knowing that it was set to expire in 2012. The new owners said that they could return a profit by 2012. Then DBOC began a PR campaign to overturn the decisions to fully protect the Estero. A key part of that PR campaign is a baseless attack on National Park Service (NPS) employees' integrity and also an attack on volunteers at the Seashore. DBOC convinced Senator Feinstein to pass a rider which allows the Dept. of Interior to grant a new lease for ten years.

This summer, the Lunnys' attorney requested that Interior give them a ten year lease – a gift worth millions. Marin Audubon Society sent a letter requesting that Secretary Salazar deny the permit request and attached a memo rebutting the false science claims of the Lunnys'

attorney. Subsequently, the Secretary and the NPS initiated a NEPA process to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement before deciding on the permit request.

In our letter to Secretary Salazar, MAS summarized science that shows that the oyster operation has negative impacts, and over a few issues of *The Clapper Rail* we will publish some of the findings. To begin, here are our comments regarding impacts on Brant.

Brant is a California species of special concern which may be displaced by disturbance of mariculture operations. "Because Brant do not dive, they can usually access Eel-grass only at low tides. Still, they tend to feed in the deepest possible areas permitted by tides and close to large tidal channels and other areas where Eel-grass biomass and protein content are higher" (Davis and Deuel, 2008, p. 82). "Drakes Estero represents an important site for overwintering and seasonally migrating shorebirds and waterfowl, with special significance as a feeding and staging site for migrating Black Brant geese. Boat travel by the mariculturists is likely to disturb and flush sea ducks, shorebirds, and other water birds" (National Research Council [NRC], 2009, p. 69). Noise is also a factor. DBOC operates motor boats in the Estero and uses percussive, pneumatic equipment to shuck oysters. Also, there often is loud radio music at the facility. A local naturalist, Rich Stallcup, noted the eelgrass meadows in the Estero are dense and lush. "At Drake's Estero, if it weren't for the motor boats [run by the

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MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, weather check and accessibility: Vicky Van Meter at 415/895-1771

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS THURSDAY MORNING WALK

November 4, December 2
8:30 AM to 12 noon
With Len Blumin

Join Len on this morning birding walk at the storage ponds on the first Thursday of each month. Many of our wintering flocks will have arrived to join the year-round residents.

LOCATION: 300 Smith Ranch Road, San Rafael. Park in the lot to the left at the end of the road. Meet at the nearby bridge.

ARROWHEAD MARSH AND SURROUNDINGS, OAKLAND

Saturday, November 6, 2010
9 AM – 12 noon
With Rusty Scalf

Arrowhead Marsh, part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, is noted for Clapper Rails, Soras and Virginia Rails. In the annual survey of this marsh by Fish and Game several years ago, the rail count was 112 Clapper, 67 Sora and 17 Virginia! Visiting this area during a rising high tide should enable us to spot quite a few. Join our leader Rusty Scalf to view this interesting marsh and adjacent shoreline. Wintering shorebirds, ducks and geese should be seen and songbirds, gulls and raptors will probably show up. For questions, contact Vicky Van Meter, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com, 415-299-2514

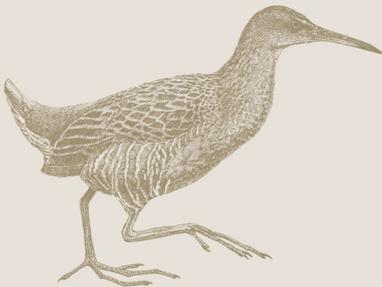
DIRECTIONS: From Marin, cross the Richmond-San Rafael bridge and take I-80 south. Continue south on I-880 to Hegenberger Rd. (goes to Oakland Airport) then go west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Dr. Turn right on Doolittle, then right on Swan Way. Turn left into the MLKRS Park and drive to the Arrowhead Marsh parking lot at end of road.

BEGINNER BIRDING IN MARIN STARKWEATHER SHORELINE PARK, SAN RAFAEL

Sunday, November 21, 2010
9 – 11:30 AM
With Lizabeth Gluck

This will be an introduction to the most common species seen around the bay including a variety of ducks, shorebirds and egrets, as well as some songbirds such as house finches, mockingbirds and hummingbirds. This accessible and enjoyable location is flat and open. Check the weather report (be prepared for sun or fog and wind). Rain cancels the trip. Please bring binoculars and field guide if you have them. We will discuss field guides, binoculars, and birding spots. Meet at 9 AM at entrance to the park on Baypoint Village Drive in San Rafael. For questions, contact Vicky Van Meter, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com, 415-299-2514

DIRECTIONS: Exit 101 at Francisco Blvd. and take Bellam Ave. east to its end where it becomes Baypoint Village Dr. Follow this briefly and park near the deep curve in the road where there is an entrance to the park. The park has many entrances, but this one is on a deep curve after Bellam has become Baypoint Village Dr. just before it intersects with Baypoint Dr. If you reach the intersection of Baypoint Village Dr. and Baypoint Dr. you have gone 50 yards too far. Look for a blue Toyota RAV-4.



BAHIA BIRD WALK, NOVATO

Sunday, December 5, 2010
9:30 – 11:30 AM
With Lowell Sykes

Join Lowell for an easy walk to see the many birds in the newly restored lagoons, marshes and uplands of Marin Audubon's 60 acre Bahia property in Novato. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn about the work being done to restore this important area.

DIRECTIONS: Take either Hwy 101 north or Hwy 37 east to Atherton Ave in Novato. From 101 turn east on Atherton. After about 1 mile turn left onto Bugeia Lane. From Hwy 37, take the Atherton exit and go left under the highway. Proceed about 2.3 miles on Atherton then turn right on Bugeia. After about 0.5 mile Bugeia becomes Bahia Drive. Continue straight over the hill toward the marshes. Park in the cul-de-sac at the end of Bahia. The gates will be open. For questions, contact Lowell at 415-388-2821.

Drake's Estero

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mariculture interest] and blaring 'music', the waters would be teeming with grebes, loons and waterfowl particularly Brant Geese" (Stallcup, pers. comm.).

Furthermore, the presence of lines of oyster bags on the intertidal flats, and the tending of those bags, is likely to diminish the feeding and grit gathering opportunities for Brant in Drakes Estero. "Brant often feed in areas close to gritting sites which are intertidal mudflats, sandbars, or spits, where the birds ingest grit necessary for food digestion" (Davis and Deuel, op. cit.).

"Historically, Tomales Bay, Drake's Estero, and Bodega Harbor supported large wintering populations [of Brant], but since the 1950s numbers there have declined substantially" (Shuford et al., 1989). The NRC (2009) misinterpreted Point Reyes Christmas Count (CBC) data to conclude there is a rising abundance of wintering Brant in the Estero. The CBC data does not show that.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

NPS is seeking comments for "EIS Scoping" which sets the objectives and questions to be answered in the EIS document. You can state your support for protection of native species, natural processes and wilderness protection as has been planned since 1972.

In addition you should raise questions and issues that should be addressed in the EIS such as these: (1) What are the effects and risks of mariculture on native species? (2) Does mariculture alter the availability of habitat and use of intertidal habitat by shorebirds or by Brant? You may have your own concerns to add.

Submit comments by November 15. To submit electronically, enter this link, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=33043>, and click on "Open for comment."

Or submit comments by mail to Drakes Bay Oyster Company Special Use Permit EIS, Point Reyes National Seashore, 1 Bear Valley Rd, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956.

CONSERVATION

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

If you are interested in these work days please contact Bob Hinz at rbthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturday of each month.
Next: Saturday, November 6

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday of each month.
Next: Saturday, November 13 and
Wednesday, November 3
Thursday, November 11
Wednesday, November 17
Wednesday, December 1

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

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Elizabeth Bandy, Bob Bundy, Kyla Burke-Lazarus, Lance Carnes, Bob Hinz, Jo Kreider, Martha & Gerry Jarocki, Jeanice McGee, Robert C. Morena, Flinn Moore Rauck, Linda Nicoletto, Ed Nute, Barbara Salzman, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jude Vasconcellos, Sheila M Tuffanelli, Stephanie Stein, A W Stein, Vera Sprinkel, Richard H Silvey, Faun Sheridan, Marguerita Scannell, Janet Ringchop, Alan Plisskin, Robert Newcomer, Nancy Muir, Victoria Mimiaga, Sandra Levitan, Jacqueline Kientz, Dianne Kelly, Mark S John, Wendy Hannum, Ann Fogel, Natalie Clark, Jackie & Bob Cahn, Henriette Brasseur, Dean Bloomquist, Loraine Berry, Jacquelyn Berreman, Donald L Beers, Jeanne Barnacle

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Bonnie Bollengier, Ben & Frances Borok, Julia Chitwood, Carol Olwell, Jordan Rinker, Wanda Lee Smith, Jean Starkweather

Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker



SYKES RECEIVES SIERRA CLUB AWARD

Our own Lowell Sykes was recognized for his unfailing dedication to preserving and enhancing bird, marsh and baylands habitats, through creating a native plant nursery, public education and restoration projects. The Marin Group Resource Conservation award was presented at the Marin Group's Annual Dinner in October. We are pleased that Lowell's dedicated efforts to create habitat for native wildlife on our properties and on the San Pablo Refuge lands

have received broad notice. Our congratulations to Lowell for this well-deserved honor.

SIMMONS SLOUGH RESTORATION PROJECT COMPLETED

Last month, grading to restore marsh at Marin Audubon Society's 19-acre property at Olive and Atherton Avenues, was completed. In early October, Hanford ARC placed fiber coils and hydroseeded to control erosion and protect the marsh and downstream sloughs from silt that could run off the newly graded slopes once the rain begins. The hydroseeding is also the first step in restoring vegetative habitat. Seeds of native species were used; these natives will reseed and provide habitat.

This 19-acre property and the neighboring parcels were once at the edge of the Bay, but with the construction of levees along Novato Creek to dike off lands for agriculture and Highway 37, it is now at least a mile from San Pablo Bay. Early next year, the property will be transferred into the permanent ownership of Marin County Open Space District.

Elections

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plant that would put its citizens and the environment at risk; this is not the case. MMWD has not approved a desalination project. It has only approved an EIR. Many hundreds, probably thousands, of EIRs have been produced for projects that have never been built. MAS prefers conservation, however, conservation alone may not be enough to serve residents.

It is important also to note that neither MMWD nor the State of California would allow a water treatment facility to be built and used that would present the major risk to the health of citizens and to the environment that some campaign literature claims. State law requires water districts to provide water for the public that meets health standards.

Desalination is one alternative for MMWD to supply water to its customers. Another alternative that has been considered is increasing diversions from the Russian and Eel Rivers. MAS has long been concerned about the significant adverse impacts to the declining salmonid population with these diversions, and we have urged that every effort be made to discontinue diverting water from these rivers. With the information available to us now, desalination appears to be the environmentally preferable alternative to seeking more water from the Russian and Eel Rivers.

Measure S provides for a responsible process that would allow for study and analysis of new

technologies, potential environmental impacts, and costs. Desalination is used in many other parts of the world. Technologies are changing all the time. These should be investigated and studied to ensure the MMWD Board and the public has the latest information upon which to base their decision. Measure S is the responsible approach.

NO ON MEASURE T (NOT)

A group of citizens gathered a sufficient number of signatures to place Measure S on the ballot. The primary focus of the citizen initiative seems to be to thwart construction of a desalination facility. Measure S prohibits the MMWD Board from taking "any steps toward approving any contract relating to the planning or construction of any such (desalination) facility without prior approval of any such actions by a majority of the electorate of the Marin Municipal Water District..."

The language is unclear and too restrictive. Prohibiting "any steps toward" could be broadly interpreted as applying to almost any actions, including studies and analyses that are essential to MMWD's fulfilling its responsibility to its customers. Having to go to the voters every time MMWD wants to study or investigate a new desalination technology, would be a cumbersome, unnecessary and costly approach that is not in the best interest of the District's water users. It is best do the studies, have the technological and scientific information, and then vote on whether to pursue construction of a desalination plant.

Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

If you were among the birders that frequented McNear brickyard on peninsular San Rafael at sunset early this fall, you were surely mesmerized by the swirling vortex of thousands of birds of this month disappearing down the towering kiln chimney.

Dan McNear, vice president of McNear Brick and Block, reported in the *Marin Independent Journal* (9/23/10) that he has seen the birds roost there for 20 years. Similar roosts are known in California in Healdsburg to the north at the Rio Lindo School and in a chimney at the Chester Williams Building to the south in Los Angeles.

These small birds resemble flying cigars with pointed wings, torpedo-shaped aerodynamic bodies, and dazzling aerial agility. They look much like a bat with a fast erratic flight. The wings give the illusion of not always moving in unison. This is not so but appears that way from frequently banking and turning.

In the fall, this month's species congregate in large groups as they prepare for their migration south. It is not uncommon for these birds to use chimneys to roost in during the night. Once a population locates a suitable chimney, they are likely to return year after year.

They congregate in communal roosts which usually are active for several weeks, allowing individuals to feed nearby and replenish body fat reserves before continuing their migration. Breeding populations of these birds migrate from southeastern Alaska, western Canada, and northwestern US through to southern Mexico, Central America, and as far as Venezuela.

Small numbers of our species are present in Marin during the breeding season so are assumed to be breeding here. Nest trees located in the California coastal strip tend to be old growth coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). The bird also nests in smaller numbers in the Sierra Nevada and Cascades in California.

They nest in hollows of trees using old woodpecker holes as well as broken or burned out areas to enter. Availability of large hollow trees for roosts and nests limits this bird's distribution. If hollow trees are not available, they sometimes nest in chimneys. This species is not easily studied, because it does not perch but is continually on the wing until it roosts in natural or constructed cavities.

Human activities have had an effect on the bird's populations. Logging of older trees and hollow snags eliminates nest and roost habitat for this species. Factors that reduce abundance

of woodpeckers may also reduce cavity availability and impact our bird. In California where the species occurs in greatest abundance in coastal redwood forests, less than 10% of the old-growth redwood forests remain. The loss of brick chimneys taken down or replaced with insulated pipe or covered with screen spark-arresters affects our species' survival. Pesticide spraying impacting aerial insects decreases food availability to our birds.

Forest management standards are important to protect nest and roost trees. To maintain such trees over time, both live and dead large-diameter hollow trees need to be maintained, as well as green trees with some indication of decay to replace those that fall or become unsuitable for nests and roosts.

Our birds are not territorial and nest singly or semi-colonally. They are monogamous with males and females both brooding eggs and feeding nestlings. Both sexes even have a brood patch, a bare area on the breast usually found only in the female in most other bird species, which allows body heat to keep the eggs warm.

Both sexes help to build their nest using small twigs, which they gathered with their feet while flying. Both sexes have seasonally enlarged salivary glands and use sticky saliva from the glands to cement the nest materials in place on the inside vertical wall of the hollow tree.

Their feet are small but strong with sharp, curved claws that help them grip vertical structures. Their tail feathers are stiff to help them balance as they cling to the vertical inside of the tree. These feathers become quite worn by the end of the season.

The adult forages for aerial insects and stores them in its pharynx to feed the young. To feed the nestlings, the adult bird regurgitates a wad called a bolus of hundreds of small insects and ballooning spiders, which often causes the floor of its mouth to visibly distend. The busy parent feeds the young a bolus on average every 18 minutes.

Like last month's bird, the White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), this month's bird is in the family Apodidae and in the order Apodiformes, which it shares with the hummingbirds (family Trochilidae). This month's bird is named after naturalist William Vaux, whose name is usually pronounced "vawks" not "voh." The well-known 19th century ornithologist John Townsend first collected the bird and named the species. Townsend himself is immortalized in the names of a warbler, ground squirrel, chipmunk, gopher, mole, vole, and rabbit. This month's bird is the

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Guess Who?



Photo courtesy of Richard Deneck

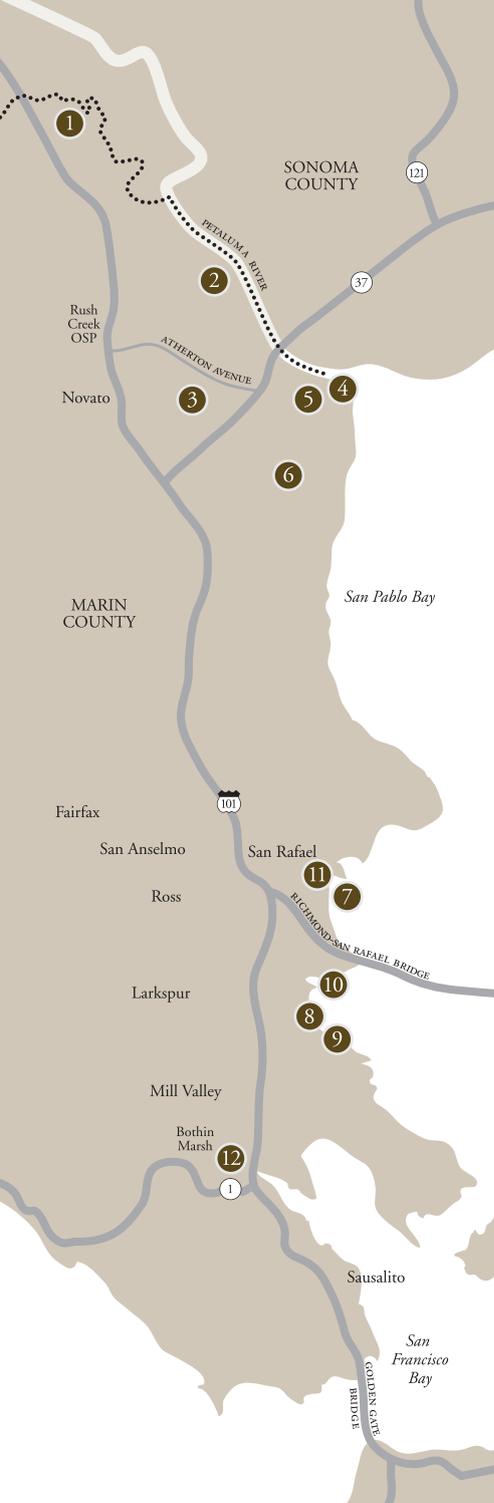
Mira Monte Update

The recent special Event at Mira Monte, the 57-acre property on the Petaluma River MAS is trying to purchase, took place on one of the hottest days of the year. But that only slowed us down a bit. The sixty or so attendees enjoyed the spectacular views of the marshes on and adjacent to the property, food, beverages, and each other's company. They visited the different habitats: wetlands, ancient tidal marsh that supports endangered species, a hill that was formerly an island with ancient oak trees – not to be seen many other places these days – and learned also about the wildlife and history of the site. Most people didn't know that Burdell Island was once the site of a hunting lodge, which burned down in the 1950s, and a brothel (presumably not at the same time).

Special guest speaker, Marin Supervisor Judy Arnold spoke about opportunities for supporting the acquisition through the Marin-Sonoma Narrows Highway 101 widening project. Our Master of Ceremonies, San Rafael City Councilman, Greg Brockbank, entertained and inspired support for the purchase of Mira Monte.

We thank Marin Baylands Advocates for putting on the event and in particular Susan Stompe, Ann Thomas, Vicki Nichols and Marge Macris for their efforts.

We're making progress toward acquiring the property. We have prepared and submitted to the Coastal Conservancy a draft budget for the demolition of buildings and restoration of wetland and upland habitats. We also are working on other aspects of the purchase and seeking the additional needed funds.



Protecting Migratory Birds

By Phil Peterson

Perhaps more than any other season, fall is the one we associate with change. The late morning sunrises, crisp breezes, and the many trees that have surrendered their leaf cover are all part of the growing body of evidence that leads us to conclude that, like it or not, winter is around the corner.

We are not alone when it comes to these observations. One only need look up in the sky to see that millions of other creatures have not just taken note of these changes, but have begun to act on them as well. Hundreds of species of birds throughout the globe are physiologically connected to the seasonal signals that we passively acknowledge. For them, the complex instinct to migrate has triggered major shifts in their behavior. Up until now most of their activities have centered on individual survival. Now, they will embark on a journey driven by the pressures of millions of years of natural selection that place greater emphasis on the fate of the species than for any one bird.

The obstacles that migrating birds can face on their journey can take many forms. Nature for one can be most uncooperative, subjecting them to extended periods of freezing weather, lack of water and food, predation and lack of resting opportunities. Also many species traverse the boundaries of several countries and

continents, each with different laws that may or may not provide protections for them as they pass through.

If impediments from nature were not enough, migratory birds must contend with a gauntlet of challenges imposed by humans in all corners of the world that further diminish their prospects for survival. Natural selection did little to prepare our avian co-habitants for the likes of broad swaths of habitat destruction in the name of progress, climate change, competition from non-native invasive species, navigational distractions from city lights, collisions with buildings, enormous populations of feral cats which are estimated to kill over one billion birds in the United States alone, the burning of forests, windmill collisions, and an endless series of oil spills on land and water.

In 1918, the United States Congress passed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the fundamental goal of which was to establish an international framework for the protection and conservation of migratory birds. Under the Act, it is unlawful to take, import, export, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird as well as their feathers, eggs, body parts and nests. While the 1918 act implements the 1916

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Christmas Bird Count

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SIGN UP NOW!

We have new compilers this year: Mark Forney and Susan Kelly. Help us by signing up early and recruiting your friends. You can sign up by email, with the website form or by contacting one of the compilers:

Email: cbc@marinaudubon.org

Web: www.marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php

Phone: Mark Forney (415) 847-2837 or Susan Kelly (415) 497-4240

Great birds are out there – help us find them!

CBC COMPILATION DINNER

The dinner will be held from 5:30 to 8:30 pm at the Strawberry Recreation Center, and will cost \$12 per person. *Reservations and advance payment are required to be served a dinner, and the deadline for payment is December 10.* We encourage you to attend even if you aren't purchasing a dinner.

How to Reserve a Dinner: Mail your check to Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, 141 Oak Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960. Please include the following information: Name(s) of the individuals you are paying for, a contact email

and mailing address, and phone number. Time: 5:30 (Doors will open at 5 pm).

Location: The dinner will be held at the Strawberry Recreation Center, at 118 East Strawberry Drive in Mill Valley.

Dessert potluck: In keeping with our dessert potluck tradition, we encourage everyone to bring something sweet to share. Thank you!

Bird of the Month

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Vaux's Swift, *Chaetura vauxi*. The genus name is from Greek and means "bristle tail."

Special thanks to the management and staff of McNear Brick and Block for allowing evening access to their property to birders. This historic facility was built in 1868. Fortunately for the swifts, the kiln chimneys were retired from production in the early 1960s. See their web site (www.mcnear.com/about-us/about-McNear.html) for a photograph of the brickyard in 1885 with sailing ships moored off of it in the Bay.

See www.vauxhappening.org for information on studies of Vaux's Swift migration roost sites.

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	162 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	2 parcels
5. Black Point Parcels	2 parcels
6. Arroyo San Jose	2 parcels
7. Tidelands at Murphy's Rock	34 acres
8. Corte Madera Marsh	1.8 acres
9. Triangle Marsh	31 acres
10. San Clemente Creek	4.34 acres
11. Tiscornia Marsh	20 acres
12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio	2 acres

MARIN BIRDLOG – SEPTEMBER 2010

By Rich Stallcup

With northwest breezes prevailing, incidental fog and overcast disallowing a buildup of ideal conditions, major fallouts did not happen during September 2010. Many rare birds were found by Marin's excellent field-ornithologists but that wasn't because of meteorological events, it was because it *is* September!

Fifteen **White-faced Ibis** blew around Rodeo Lagoon 9/6 (WL) and the usual flurry of **White-fronted Goose** sightings began 9/28 (m.ob). The apparently mated-pair of **Harlequin Ducks** continue to delight birders near the Fish Docks, O.P. and have since May. The first arrival **Hooded Merganser** was at San Geronimo 9/28 (BB), early by two weeks.

Up to two **Baird's Sandpipers** at the Rush Creek wetlands, Novato 9/2 to 9/10 (RS,IS) and one **Semipalmated Sandpiper** there (9/3 (RS) were about it for those two species. The decline in records is not about a decline in populations but is caused by degraded shorebird habitat at Abbott's Lagoon and Horseshoe Pond, PRNS.

DIURNAL RAPTORS – Due to road construction, the annual GGRO surveys were disrupted and the database for 2010 will be flagged. Still the excellent volunteers have made basic records. The first of 15 **Ferruginous Hawks** appeared 9/14; the first of 32 **Broad-winged Hawks** appeared 9/20; the first of three **Prairie Falcons** 9/22 and the first of two **Swainson's Hawks** 9/23. The more frequent raptors were censused in (artificially) reduced numbers as were passing non-hawk landbird migrants (AF). We are lucky to have GGRO in Marin County and everyone should support their fine work (RS)

A **Pygmy Owl**, sparsely distributed in Marin, was along lower Limantour Road, PRNS 9/28 (HC,RS). A huge brick chimney at McNear's in San Rafael was "discovered" as a roost site for low thousands of migrating **Vaux's Swifts** (m.ob). Workers at the site have been noticing the temporary occupations for decades. Another chimney in Healdsburg, Sonoma County serves the same purpose as shelter. Five **Black Swifts** passed Hawk Hill 9/26 (GGRO).

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was reported from Tomales Point 9/24 (DW), two were high on Mt. Tamalpais 9/29 (AK,JC) and others passing Marin Headlands were counted by GGRO, including four on 9/26. A **Nighthawk** at Muir Beach 9/10 (DMc) might have been either western species on that date. There was vireo identity confusion (not the birds ... the humans) on the O.P. mid-month. Here is what was for sure: A **Yellow-green Vireo** at the Fish Docks 9/19 (RS,HC,m.ob), a **Red-eyed Vireo** at Nunes 9/20 (S<,SFBBO) and a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Stinson Beach 9/29-9/30 (m.ob).

While none of the high-end rare wood warblers were found, the following mid-levelers were: **Black-and-White Warblers** ♂ at Nunes, O.P. 9/13 (SC), the Fish Docks, O.P. 9/14-9/19 (m.ob) and along the Laguna Trail near Rodeo Lagoon 9/26 (WL) and 9/27 (PRBO). Amazing was the fact that only two **American Redstarts** turned up and that they were both adult males. One was on the O.P. 9/13 (SC) and the other at the Lighthouse Trees 9/28 (RROS,HC). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Mendoza, O.P. 9/5 (TG,RC) – another – at Muir Beach 9/6 (JW) and a third at Pine Gulch Creek, Bolinas 9/15 (KH). The only **Magnolia Warbler** was a hatch-year male at the Fish Docks 9/15 (RS,NB) and a **Blackpoll Warbler** was at the Point Reyes RCA Station the same day (RS). A **Palm Warbler** was found at the Fish Docks 9/25 by the PRBO "Drake's Beach Sanderlings" Youth Team and another in the Marin Headlands 9/26 (JM). A "drab" **Canada Warbler** was at Pine Gulch 9/10 (KH+) and another was on the O.P. during the last week of the month but I don't know the observers or date.

A **Gray Catbird** was mousing through the Point Reyes Lighthouse trees 9/10 which was about the tenth for the O.P., and a 2010 model **Orchard Oriole** was at Nunes 9/14 (RS). Of 195 **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** tallied by GGRO, 90 passed on 9/9.

At Las Gallinas, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was reported 9/20 (DE) and a **Lark Bunting** was near Chimney Rock, O.P. mid-month. Only two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were located, one at Pine Gulch 9/9 (m.ob) and a well-photographed hatch-year male at San Rafael 9/28 to 10/4 at least (SS).

It has been several years since September has issued a truly "boom" fallout of migrants along the coast at Marin County and climate change, even if slight, may be responsible.

Observers and Acronyms **BB:** Bob Battagin, **MB:** Mark Butler, **HC:** Heather Cameron, **SC:** Scott Carey, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **RC:** Renee Cormier, **DE:** Edelstein, Jules Evens, **AF:** Allen Fish, Deborah Fitzpatrick, **TG:** Tom Gardali, **GGRO:** Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, **KH:** Keith Hansen, Roger Harshaw, Harrison Karr, John Kelly, **AK:** Andy Kleinhesselink, **WL:** William Legge, **M.OB:** many observers, **DMc:** Dave McKenzie, **JM:** Joe Morlan, **NB:** Native Birds birding group, **OP:** Outer Point Reyes, **PRNS:** Point Reyes National Seashore, **RROS:** Redwood Region Ornithological Society, Mary Anne Rotella, Maggie Rufo, **IS:** Ivan Samuels, **SFBBO:** San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, **SS:** Sandy Slichter, **RS:** Rich Stallcup, **S+LT:** Scott & Linda Terrill, **JW:** Jim White, Kerry Wilcox **DW:** David Wimpfheimer.

Migratory Birds

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Convention between the U.S. and Great Britain (signing on behalf of Canada), later amendments implemented treaties between the U.S. and Mexico (1936), the U.S. and Japan (1972) and the U.S. and former Soviet Union (1976). Under the most recent revision (2009) of the Convention, the term "migratory bird" includes just over 1000 species of birds. Although the original intent of the Act more than likely had to do with protecting the economic interests of hunting and eating game birds than it did with pure wildlife conservation, the outcome is fortunately the same.

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, authority is given to the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish annual hunting seasons. In doing so, the Service sets parameters called frameworks (opening and closing dates, daily limits, season length) within which states must select their hunting seasons. These determinations are to be made only after extensive biological review of population levels, reproduction rates and "due regard to the zones of temperature and to the distribution, abundance, economic value, breeding habits, and times of migratory flight". Any state can be more restrictive but not more liberal than the federal framework.

Individuals who are convicted of misdemeanor violations of the Act may be fined up to \$15,000 and imprisoned for up to 6 months. Felony convictions may result in fines of up to \$50,000 and up to two years imprisonment.

Like the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is an important tool for protecting wildlife. We should remain vigilant in guarding these Acts, be prepared to come to their defense, and use them to protect wildlife when danger threatens. Membership in Marin Audubon is one sure way to stay involved and keep informed of the many local threats to wildlife.



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The success of Marin Audubon Society's work depends greatly on its chapter members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from the NAS. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational Speakers Series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*. Chapter members also have the opportunity to support and participate in the acquisition, restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat which will be protected in perpetuity. Our members help us shape our agenda and carry out our goals and mission.

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

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

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Membership in Marin Audubon Society does not include membership in National Audubon Society. For more information about and/or to join the NAS, visit to audubon.org or contact National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212/979-3000.

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