



# 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

This year we have opted to try having these programs on the first THURSDAY of the month at 7:30 pm instead of 8 pm.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7 7:30 PM**

**Bird Photos Through Your Scope or Digiscoping Birds**

*With Len Blumin*

This program will introduce the subject of *Digiscoping*, which refers to taking photos using a conventional spotting scope and a simple digital camera. Len Blumin will discuss the technical aspects of photography through a scope, with an emphasis on taking photos of birds in their natural environments. Many photos will be included, along with a simple demonstration of the technique.

Len is a retired physician who now enjoys birding along with his wife Patti. He has been leading the first Thursday MAS walk at the Las Gallinas treatment ponds for the past year.

Come at 7:15 pm to socialize accompanied by refreshments and stay to enjoy this informative presentation replete with beautiful bird photos!

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4 7:30 PM**

**The Secret Lives of Birds**

*With Kathi Borgmann*

Kathi Borgmann, restoration ecologist at Audubon California and the Richardson Bay Audubon Center, will be speaking about "The secret lives of birds: investigating the risk of nest predation and our changing environment."

## Marin Audubon Society Receives Donation of Land at Norton Pond



Photo courtesy of Jay Salzman

**W**e are thrilled to report that MAS has received a donation of two parcels on Norton Avenue and around Norton Pond. This small pond is nestled in the Black Point hills on the south side of Highway 37 near the Petaluma River. When their adopted aunt passed away and left the properties to them, Richard and Eleanor Johns of San Francisco quickly recognized they were undevelopable. About half of the land is upland and the balance is pond and marsh bordering the pond. The Johnses searched out parties that might be interested in the property and found that Marin Audubon owns adjacent parcels. They then contacted us and offered to donate.

Historically, the four-acre Norton Pond was likely part of the tidal marsh system bordering the Petaluma River. In the way that many Marin ponds were formed, this one was probably created by excavating the marsh to obtain fill on which to build houses. The pond water is replenished by rain, runoff from the adjacent hills, and possibly a high water table, as it is close to the bay. The water level fluctuates seasonally and, as can be seen from the photo, is currently low. Pickleweed grows along the pond's edge. A pressing task is to get rid of the invasive ice plant.

Ponds are rare in our Mediterranean climate. This one provides foraging and resting habitat for long-legged wading birds such as herons, egrets and yellowlegs, and for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds in winter. Undoubtedly, there is nesting along its banks by such species as Black Phoebe.

With the donation of these two properties, Marin Audubon now owns four parcels around Norton Pond. We purchased the first parcel in 2004 and another in 2006. Both were tax-default sales. All of the parcels are small, less than an acre, but they bring us closer to our goal of acquiring all of the parcels around the pond to protect it as habitat. Landowners who donate properties to a nonprofit organization like MAS are not only relieved of paying property and special district taxes, but may be able to write off the value of their donation.

Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Johns, for your generous gift—a lasting legacy for the bay and wildlife and a fitting tribute to their late aunt.

IN THIS ISSUE	
President's Message	2
Field Trips	3
Conservation Report	4
Birdlog	7

## 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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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 [rbthnz@comcast.net](mailto:rbthnz@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](http://www.marinaudubon.org)  
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422  
(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

## DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$100 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Clapper Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

## MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

A warm welcome to our newest Board Member and new Field Trip Chair, Vicky Van Meter. Vicky has been active with MAS for some time helping with our stewardship program on MAS properties and on her homeowners association lands which are adjacent to MAS's Simmons Slough properties. Vicky, and her husband Dave Herrema, are frequent attendees on our field trips. Having served on our Board in the 1990s and as President from 1993 to 1995, Dave actually has an even longer history with MAS. Vicky and Dave will be working together to plan our field trips, so we get two for the price of one. They are looking forward to continuing and expanding our field trip program.

Our thanks to Bob Chilvers, who has resigned from the board, for his contribution to Marin Audubon. During his time on the Board, Bob reorganized our Membership Program, led field trips at Las Gallinas, provided legal advice and helped in other ways. His wife Sandy is a frequent contributor of

articles to *The Clapper Rail*. While Bob's work commitments have increased, we hope they will continue to participate with MAS.

We have been busy this month particularly gathering the necessary costs and schedules required by the Coastal Conservancy for our grant application for funds to purchase Mira Monte as well as participating in planning the on-site event.

Our Board is also organizing for the coming year. We are working on final approval of our budget as well as on revising our Policies and Procedures that will guide us for 2010-2011. We review and revise our P&P's and our budget at the beginning of each year.

We are also organizing for the Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count and will have a chair and count date in next month's issue of *The Clapper Rail*.

On conservation developments, the hearing on the appeal of the wind towers will be held in late October.

## AUGUST 22 FIELD TRIP

# Farallones Islands

By Vicky Van Meter

On a mild, blue-skied day twelve of us joined Marin Audubon's third annual trip to the Farallones left Sausalito at 8 AM on August 22 aboard Captain Mick Menigoz' 65-ft boat, Superfish. As in the previous two trips, David Wimpfheimer was our able naturalist and trip leader. The day started out under overcast skies as we passed the 390-foot Russian yacht "A" moored in the harbor and went out under the Golden Gate. We saw **Common Murres** and various gulls, terns and cormorants as we headed offshore. After about an hour and a half, the skies began to clear and the wind and seas picked up as the Farallones came into view. Capt. Menigoz' fish finder detected a 100-foot deep band of krill just below the surface and suddenly all around us the ocean was alive with Humpback and Blue Whales, porpoises, sea lions and, of course, birds. Highlights included **Pink-footed** and **Sooty Shearwaters**, **Black-footed Albatrosses** and probably thousands of **phalarope**, both red and red-necked. As we reached the Farallones, David pointed out the Northern Fur Seals and California Sea Lions on the island that we could smell as well as see, since we were downwind. We circled the islands under sunny skies as David explained



Tufted Puffins

the interesting biology and history of the area. Several **Tufted Puffins** were sighted near the islands, as well as pods of hundreds of juvenile sea lions leaping into the water. By mid-afternoon we began our return trip, ending with a final turn around the Russian yacht to reach the dock by 4 PM.

Peter Colasanti kindly provided the following list of birds for the day: 1 **Western Grebe**, 6 **Black-footed Albatross**, 2 **Northern Fulmar**, 7 **Pink-footed Shearwater**, 25 **Sooty Shearwater**, 5 **Ashy Storm-Petrel**, 50 **Brandt's Cormorant**, 10 **Pelagic Cormorant**, 30 **Red-necked Phalarope**, 55 **Red Phalarope**, 7 **Sabine's Gull**, 8 **Heermann's Gull**, 90 **Western Gull**, 33 **Arctic Tern**, 2 **Elegant Tern**, 50 **Common Murre**, 30 **Pigeon Guillemot**, 18 **Cassin's Auklet**, 12 **Tufted Puffin**.

## 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

October 7

8:30 AM to 12 noon

With Len Blumin

Join Len on this morning birding walk at the storage ponds. Some of our feathered fall visitors will have arrived to join the resident ones that stay all year round.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101 in San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds' parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot.

### ABBOTT'S LAGOON

Saturday, October 9

9:30 AM – 2 PM

With Daniel Edelsein

Join Daniel for the day at Abbott's Lagoon, a birder's paradise at this time of year because the amazing autumn passage of shorebirds will be joined by some other species that are just arriving to stay with us through the winter. While viewing the birds, we'll discuss their migration routes and learn why this is one of the spots in Marin County where you can often see more bird species in the autumn and winter than during the breeding season. We'll walk the 1.5 easy miles to the lower lagoon and another 0.3 mile to the ocean beach for lunch-with-a-view!

**DIRECTIONS:** Allowing about an hour and a half travel time, from San Rafael follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd (SFDB) to Olema. From Stinson Beach go north on Hwy 1 to Olema. From Olema continue north on Hwy 1 (SFDB), take the second left turn (SFDB west), continue through Inverness, turn right (north) onto Pierce Point Road and keep driving until you come to the Abbott's Lagoon parking lot on the left (west) where our group will gather.

For more information contact edelstein@earthlink.net and check out his website at [www.warblerwatch.com](http://www.warblerwatch.com)



### LIMANTOUR

Friday, October 22

9 AM – 3 PM

With Rich Stallcup

Bring your scope and join Rich for a walk on Limantour Spit. We shall scope the ocean side for loons, grebes and sea ducks and check the estero side for waders, Brant and raptors. The walk will be about 4 miles round trip with some of that in sand. Rain does not cancel but may change our destination! Bring a lunch and dress in layers.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take Sir Francis Drake Blvd west and turn onto Bear Valley Rd. Continue to the Limantour Rd turn-off and drive to the first parking lot at Limantour Beach.



Photo courtesy of Jay Salzman

## Mira Monte Acquisition Update

This month we have been busy working with Marin Baylands Advocates planning the Mira Monte event and gathering information to provide the Coastal Conservancy with the information they require to take our project to their Board. They need costs and a timeline for cleaning up the site, removing buildings and restoring tidal marsh and upland habitats. We have discovered that the Department of Fish and Game actually owns lands extending north

to the site which could be used for access.

Unfortunately, we have had a bit of a set back in the funding arena. We were ranked 17 out of 42 projects submitted to the CELCP program, but there was only enough money to fund 14. There is still a chance we will get funded, if some projects don't work out. We are focusing more attention on other sources. This makes your donations to the Baylands Fund at the Marin Community Foundation even more important.

### VAUX'S SWIFT ROOST IN SAN RAFAEL

A roost for Vaux's Swifts at the McNear Brick & Block facility has recently become known to local birders. A curious birder, Rusty Scaff, spotted the chimneys a while back and realized that they could be a swift roost. One evening in mid-September he returned and was overwhelmed by "clouds of Vaux's Swifts swirling about and going down tall stacks" at the facility. The number of roosting birds has been estimated at 7,000-10,000. The decommissioned stacks are near the intersection of Point San Pedro Rd and McNear Brickyard Rd. The birds are visible from the road; access to the facility is not necessary. This seasonal phenomenon will not last long so do not delay if you plan to see the show. Check the Yahoo Group "northbaybirds" or eBird.org for updates.

### MAS RESTORATION PROJECT COMPLETED (almost)

After decades of degradation, restoration of the seasonal wetland at the Olive and Atherton intersection in unincorporated Novato is at last accomplished. The concrete and asphalt debris has finally been removed from this wetland and the marsh-upland interface has been regraded to have a more gradual slope.

Our construction contractor, Hanford ARC, worked most of August to complete the job. They removed the rubble from the marsh, placed it in several holes they dug in the upland portion of the site, and covered the rubble with soil. The slight mound created by burying the rubble will be hydroseeded and planted with native species after the first rain.

Coast Live Oaks and other native plants, including Wild Rose, Poison Oak and Creeping Wild Rye, were saved wherever possible.

This 19-acre property and the neighboring parcels are now far from San Pablo Bay, but once were at the Bay's edge. Tidal action was cut off by the construction of Highway 37 and levees along Novato Creek. Reportedly, the rubble was dumped on the marsh during a Highway 101 improvement project.

The property will be transferred into the permanent protective ownership of the Marin County Open Space District early next year, when the planting is completed.

## CONSERVATION

### MAS SUPPORTS MMWD DESALINATION BALLOT MEASURE S

MAS's board has voted to support Measure S, the ballot measure adopted by the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) to appear on the November ballot. Measure S requires a vote of MMWD customers before a desalination facility could be built. It states: "MMWD shall not approve construction, or financing for construction, of a desalination facility unless such construction is approved by a majority of the voters of MMWD voting in an election held within MMWD's service area for that purpose."

The MMWD ballot measure is a countermeasure to Measure T, an initiative submitted by a group of community activists. Measure T 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...". Measure T would tie the hands of MMWD, preventing it from evaluating technologies, conducting studies, environmental analyses and planning.

We believe MMWD customers have a right to vote on construction of a desalination plant and that this will be more responsibly accomplished by the MMWD measure. Marin Audubon's support also includes endorsement of a strong water conservation program.

Both measures will be on the November 2010 ballot. The measure getting the most votes will take effect.

### GNOSS FIELD AND WHITE PELICANS

American White Pelicans are large birds that soar over wide areas. They frequent ponded wetlands in the North Bay from July through September, and perhaps into October. They nest at Pyramid Lake in Nevada. They can weigh more than 16 pounds and their prehistoric forms are impressive as they soar high in the air.

Pilots using the airport at Gness Field are concerned about possible collisions with the pelicans. Some pilots are pointing fingers at the Bahia restoration, but the pelicans rest and fish in many bodies of water near the airport and along Highway 37 and did so before Bahia was restored.

We met with representatives of the Gness Field Community Association, a pilots group, to try to address this issue. They are interested in working together but some pilots have taken a confrontational approach, calling MAS names and accusing us of wanting to close down the airport. One pilot even suggested in a letter to the IJ that "removing wetlands, marshes,

and any bird habitat near airport(s)...be an imperative."

Of course, such actions would violate many federal and state laws that were enacted to protect our nation's wetlands and wildlife, which are an important part of our natural heritage and ecosystems that support all life. In our area, removing wetlands would require filling most of the bay, as most of our airports are on or very close to the bay.

MAS provided the pilots with information about American White Pelicans and about reducing the risks. One way would be developing an alert system with help from an expert in bird strikes. Russ DeFusco, a leading authority on bird strikes, was the subject of a recent article "Clearing the Air" in *Audubon Magazine* and has advised many airports around the country on ways to reduce the collision risks, including systems to alert pilots to the presence of wildlife in their area.

We hope to continue to work with the pilots group.

### WIND ENERGY

The latest chapter on wind energy in Marin is the County Zoning Administrator's approval of permit applications by NextEra Energy Resources for 197.7-foot tall meteorological research towers on two West Marin ranches. The towers would be in place for up to five years. Their purpose is to collect data on wind power in the vicinity, or, in other words, to determine if there is enough wind in the area to make wind turbines profitable.

NextEra is one of the largest wind power companies in the country. It currently has an application to continue its current wind turbine farm that covers approximately 8,950 acres at Altamont Pass.

MAS has joined with Marin Conservation League, the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin and many individuals in appealing the Zoning Administrator's approval of the meteorological tower permit. In our appeal, we raised concerns about a number of issues that have not been adequately addressed. Essentially, there has been no environmental review. MAS's most critical concern is about the impact of the guy wires used to stabilize the towers. Guy wires are lethal to birds because birds can't see them at night, when most birds migrate, or during inclement weather. It is vital that a design not using guy wires, or using measures that will deter birds from the guy wires and tower, be evaluated for feasibility and effectiveness, and that data on bird strikes be collected and made public. So far these issues have not been adequately addressed.

*continued on page 6*

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After a summer of great progress there are still some perennial and/or late-blooming non-natives to remove including Harding grass, stinkwort and fennel. If you are interested in these work days please contact Bob Hinz at [rbthnz@comcast.net](mailto:rbthnz@comcast.net) or 415/383-8688.

#### Bahia:

Thursday, September 30  
Wednesday, October 6  
Saturday, October 9  
Thursday, October 14  
Wednesday, October 20  
Thursday, October 28

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

#### Triangle Marsh:

Saturday, October 2.

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

### YES ON PROPOSITION 21 FOR STATE PARKS

Last spring, we helped to qualify for the ballot this measure to assure State Parks' funding. The real test for the State Parks initiative is coming up on November 2. Proposition 21 will enact an \$18 annual license fee which will create a stable source of funding for state parks. In exchange, California vehicles will get free day-use admission to all state parks. All the fee money would be deposited in a trust fund, where by law it could be spent only on state parks and wildlife conservation. Learn more by visiting the website [www.calparks.org/takeaction](http://www.calparks.org/takeaction).

### SEED PICKUP REMINDER

For those of you who have already ordered birdseed, the pickup date is Saturday, October 9, from 10 AM to 1 PM at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center in Tiburon, 376 Greenwood Beach Road. No seed is available before or after the pickup date. Directions and a confirmation by e-mail or in the mail will be sent. For information, call Wendy at 415/453-6577, not the Richardson Bay Center.

# Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

The bird of this month is a highly sociable, widespread species in western North America about which remarkably little is known of its life history due to its extreme aerial life style. It eats, drinks, bathes, and perhaps even mates in the air. A Eurasian relative is even thought to sleep on the wing.

Among the most accomplished of fliers, this bird can move forward at high speeds, changing direction in a split second. Built for speed, an aerodynamic body shape and long narrow wings help it sail through the air. Its ability to fly fast and maneuver well enables it to feed on “aerial plankton” — flying insects and other arthropods carried aloft by air currents.

As our bird pursues insects, it sweeps through concentrations, twisting and turning to capture prey in its mouth. Its beak is very small but its gape is wide. It sometimes catches ballooning spiders. As young spiders move away from the place they hatch, they send out strands of silk lines that the wind lifts along with the tiny spider, floating them off to new areas.

The bird of the month forages in groups or sometimes singly. The majority of feeding flocks are from five to 50 individuals although bigger flocks are seen at times. They spend their entire day on the wing foraging insects and chasing one another.

To drink our bird approaches the water surface in flight, pulls its wings back above horizontal, and dips its beak in the water. It bathes in flight, hitting the water surface with its belly, and then preens in flight afterwards.

This species does not stop and perch on a wire or branch to rest between feeding bouts as do swallows, which feed on airborne insects like our bird and sometimes forage in mixed species flocks with our species. The only time, in fact, our bird perches is inside a rocky crevice where it roosts or nests. It is not a perching (passerine) bird like swallows, which have three toes forward and one toe back (anisodactyl) as do most perching birds. Our bird has short legs and pamprodactyl feet, with the first and fourth toes capable of pivoting either forward or backward which allows it to cling to vertical surfaces like cave walls or cliffs.

Historically this month's species has nested in high cliffs and bluffs in rugged countryside. By the mid-1900s it had begun to exploit holes and crevices of human-made structures like buildings and highway overpasses for nesting and roosting. This spring we watched a pair



Photo by Peter LaTourrette/birdphotography.com

## Guess Who?

nesting in a hole high in an overhang structure at the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley.

The remoteness of areas in which our bird nests and roosts, whether human-made or natural, has made it difficult to study many breeding behaviors of this species. What is known is mostly observed during aerial displays and flights.

Observers have noted some interesting behaviors involving chasing and contact – V Displays and Courtship Falls. During a V Display, the bird being chased briefly brings both wings 45 degrees above horizontal and glides. Sometimes this behavior is preceded by a Courtship Fall. Two birds cling together and tumble downward, separating before hitting the ground. It is unknown if mating takes place during a Courtship Fall or at other times on the wing. It is known that mating does occur in the roost or nesting crevice.

The bird of this month is often heard before it is seen. Its vocalizations consist of a drawn out rattling scree and a shrill twittering. Individuals are constantly calling to each other in the air and in the roost. One behavior observed is the formation of “Screaming Parties” where a large group passes together back and forth near the roost or nesting crevice, all making high pitched vocalizations that sounds like they are screaming.

In another behavior, termed the Silent Dread, the whole flying flock stops calling and silently flies quickly away from the site. This is thought to be an avoidance response to aerial predators like a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) or a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).

*continued on page 7*

## THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP

### VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Bob Bundy, Lance Carnes, Robert Hinz, Jerry Jarocki, Martha Jarocki, Jo Kreider, Prem McMurdo, Flinn Moore Rauck, Linda Niccoletto, Barbara Salzman, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Corinne Abell, Cindy Andersen, James Baird, Dorelle Ball, Dhiraj Bamola, Rosemary Barlow, Pamela Becker, Cathy V. Benediktsson, Carnell Y. Betette, Henri Blok, Debra Butler, Mary L. Byrnes, Carla Carriveau, Monika Carver, Jeanne Castro, Jim Coda, Micheline Cote, Christiane Crncich, William Crocker, Arianne Dar, Robert Evans, David Ferguson, Manuel Ferreira, Marsha Fine, Jerome Freedman, Gordon Gellner, Richard & Susan Goldwasser, Sallie Griffith, Juanita Hagemann, Lillian Hanahan, Mayme Harris, Elliot A. Hayne, Ron Henderson, Kimiko Higashi, Hazel Hill, Charlene Hollander, Brett Hopper, Imogene Ilderton, Mercedes Irwin, Wendy Kahn, Mary Kent Scott, M. Key, Kristin Klein, Olivia Koeppel, Lewis Likover, Libby Lill, Patricia J. Lowrie, Cameron Maddux, Irene Mariani, Mary Miller, Patricia Murphy, George Nilsen, Carrie O'Neill, Lissa Ochoa, Catherine Orman, Jean Pacelli, David Perotti, Sarah & Michael Petrik, Susan Plotnick, Joanne Pugh, Audrey Pulis, Melissa Purcell, Graham Quinn, Silvia N. Ramos, Shakti Rose, Anne Sagendorph, Patricia R. Salber, Dan Schlager, Mary F. Schmale, Barbara Schnell, John Sergeant, M. K. Stanton, Martha Stettner, Joanne Trifuso, Mike & B.J. Vanhorn, Max Vibert, Yvonne Vicino, Jean Victor, Kristen Vyas, Gertrude West, Sally Wynhoff, John & Catherine Yee, Vivian H. Young, Freda Zuckerman, Lesley Zwilling

### MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE

#### FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Joyce and David Appen, Keith Bancroft, Roger and Phyllis Duba, Harry and Elaine Hicks, Colleen Lenihan, Warren and Marcia Nute, Elisabeth Rothenberger, Barbara and Jay Salzman, Marion Weeks

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

We accomplished a lot this summer with the help of our dedicated volunteers including the Project ReGeneration program kids from the Conservation Corps North Bay. We took a brief break by not scheduling other work during August, however, when stinkweed or stinkwort began appearing, we couldn't delay. We scheduled a few mid-week workdays, hired Watershed Nursery workers and cleaned it out of the Sanitary District property and off of the west peninsula at Bahia. Stinkweed (*Dittrichia graveolens*) is a highly invasive plant that just began to show up in the Bay Area several years ago. It has unusual patterns of growing when most plants are in their decline, the late summer/fall, and if pulled when there is an immature seedhead, the seed will continue to mature.

Now we're gearing up for fall and winter planting and weeding. We've scheduled mid-week work days for alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays at Bahia and will continue the first Saturday of the month work day at Triangle

and second Saturday work day at Bahia.

Please see the schedule on page 4.

Hopefully we will get early rains and be able to begin planting in late 2010. We plan to finish planting the rhizomes on the Bahia peninsulas and we will also plant on our upland and marsh at the newly restored property at Olive and Atherton.

With the help of our new fund-raising chair, Flinn Moore Rauck, we have begun to apply for grants. We need funds to continue engineering and biological monitoring as required by our permits. We had several years monitoring funds from the Coastal Conservancy, but these grants have run out and will not be renewed. The agencies expect us to get the funds elsewhere. We also need to purchase more tools to accommodate larger groups and we need a secure container in which to store our tools.

Thank you again to Conservation Corps Project ReGeneration program volunteers.

## Conservation

*continued from page 4*

### WATER TRAIL EIR RE-RELEASED

The Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the San Francisco Bay Water Trail has been significantly revised and re-released as a Draft by the Coastal Conservancy. There also is a new group of consultant-preparers. No explanation was given for this unusual action. The document takes an entirely different approach from the first draft.

The DEIR identifies 28 potential launch sites in Marin County, more than in any other county around the bay. Eight are along the Sausalito waterfront, six in Richardson Bay, five along Corte Madera Creek, six in San Rafael and three to the north.

Unlike the earlier draft, this document claims that all of the potential adverse impacts to biological resources, tidal marsh, endangered species, marine mammals, and rafting waterfowl, will be adequately mitigated through an educational program consisting of signs, brochures, and a Web site which, it assumes, would reduce impacts to "less-than-significant". No data is presented to support this claim. The draft mentions training for docents, rental companies, park staff, and others who "may" be working at trailheads, but there is no requirement that a docent program be established. Research in Santa Barbara and elsewhere has demonstrated that the only education that really works is person-to-person contact.

Implementation of any educational programs would be left to the owners of the launch sites. We cannot see how this would comply with the CEQA requirement that mitigation be "feasible and effective." The DEIR admits that the lead agency, the Coastal Conservancy, can't control the property owners. Rather, the approach seems to be one of hoping and trusting.

Some examples of DEIR statements: "it is likely educational benefits...would counteract potential impacts to rafting water birds" and "public outreach is expected to sensitize users to disturbance issues". In reality, people ignore signs. Closing trails is mentioned as a general possibility, but not in relation to protecting any special status species like the endangered Clapper Rail.

Nowhere in the draft report is the need for enforcement addressed.

While undoubtedly there would be benefits to having signs and educational programs, these measures are simply insufficient to ensure that the potential impacts of increased public use would be effectively mitigated. It only takes a few boaters, for example, to disturb overwintering or migrating waterfowl that are resting on the bay or to destroy vegetative habitat for Clapper Rails by hauling small crafts onto a marsh.

We have urged the Conservancy to ensure the proposed mitigation measures are implemented and that an enforcement program also be developed and implemented.



### 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 – AUGUST 2010

By Rich Stallcup

With just three exceptions, bird sightings reported this August in Marin were within the range of normal rarity or annual predictability.

Three alternate (breeding) plumaged **Red-necked Grebes** on Drake's Bay 8/20 (AD,RS) had recently arrived and the timing was as usual. A female **Black Scoter** with **Surf Scoters** on Drake's Bay 8/19 (NB) had summered there as had a mated *pair* of **Harlequin Ducks** at Mirounga Beach the same day (NB,RS) and 8/21 (MS). Both species are very rare here during the summer. The Harlequins were no doubt the same ones I mentioned in the last issue in courtship display 6/1. It appears they did not leave for nesting along some wild river. Other unseasonable ducks were three female **Buffleheads** and a basic **Hooded Merganser** at lower Abbott's Lagoon 8/21 (MS).

A young **American Golden Plover** at Nicasio Reservoir 8/27 (TB) was flushed out later in the day. Always a nice surprise, this is the third record for *that* lake. What do they find appealing at that lake? It would be alarming if there were *no Semipalmated Sandpipers* seen in Marin in August and 2010 produced three: one at Rush Creek 8/8 (RS), one at Corte Madera 8/10 (DM,JC), and one at Abbott's 8/21 (MR,MB). All these were youngsters. A juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** 8/21 at the Teal Pond, Tomales Point (MB,MR) was on the early side, but an adult at Bolinas mid-month (*fide* KH) was timely for its age group. Only two **Baird's Sandpipers** were found, one at Abbott's and one at Rodeo Beach 8/15 (WL). Habitat preferred by this species has degraded in recent years especially at Point Reyes National Seashore. A **Solitary Sandpiper** at Nicasio 8/19 (BB) could not be refound 8/20. Ten **Lesser Yellowlegs** with 50 **Greater Yellowlegs** were at the Rush Creek Wetlands 8/8 (RS) reaffirming their strong (but brief) presence here in the fall. Like Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs are very scarce here during spring migration.

**Avocets** are migrants on Marin's ocean coast whereas many are permanent residents on the bay side. Except for a winter flock at Bolinas Lagoon that doesn't arrive until the last week of September, the species is seldom seen. One at Rodeo Lagoon on 8/15 (WL) and four at Horseshoe Pond the same day (MB, MR) were just passing through.

Recently, a hummingbird enigma hovered over coastal Marin. An adult female **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was identified at a Bolinas feeder 8/9 (KH) and was seen by many for a few days. It was the third at Keith's gallery. There are only about 12 for all of California ever. Astoundingly, a juvenile was attending the same feeder 8/24 (KH, m.ob) and was present the next day until the fog cleared. A third individual this August showed-up on nearby Southeast Farallon Island

8/29 (PRBO). YES, they are hard to identify without close scrutiny, but where is the closest population source? Conjecture on this whole matter swirls.

Orioles are generally early to depart after nesting here. The last members of a **Hooded Oriole** family left east Novato 8/11 ... only one migrant from somewhere else was seen later.

A **Northern Waterthrush** was at Muir Beach mid-August (JW) and another in Bolinas 8/23 (KH).

Here comes September, THE most exciting month for birders (and possibly birds) at our latitude! Bring it on!

**Observers and Acronyms** AD: Alcatraz Docents, BB: Bob Battagin, TB: Tony Briggs, MB: Mark Butler, HC: Heather Cameron, JC: Josiah Clark, JE: Jules Evens, KH: Keith Hansen, WL: William Legge, DM: Deborah Maier, DM: Dominik Mosur, M.OB: many observers, NB: Native Birds birding group, PRBO: PRBO Conservation Science, MR: Mary Anne Rotella, MRu: Maggie Rufo, MS: Maurauding Skuas birding group, RS: Rich Stallcup, JW: Jim White, KW: Kerry Wilcox.

## Bird of the Month

*continued from page 5*

Superficially our bird resembles a swallow but hummingbirds are their closest relatives. Both hummingbirds (family Trochilidae) and our bird of the month (family Apodidae) are in the order Apodiformes. Both hummingbirds and our bird have small weak feet and legs. "Apod" means "without feet." These two families are considered closely related primarily because both families share similar wing structures related to their ability to move their wings rapidly. Both can go into a torpor state during bouts of hunger or very cold periods.

The scientific name of our species is *Aeronautes saxatalis*. *Aer* means air and *nautes* means a sailor and *saxatilis* means "rock-dweller." This is an excellent name for the White-throated Swift, which is like a little sailor sailing the air and roosting and nesting in rocky crevices.

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



**Dylann Cullinane** is a kindergartener at St. Rita's in Fairfax. She likes mallards and Canada geese.

### Grace Rielly,

a second grader at St. Rita's in Fairfax, would like to see an Allen's hummingbird. She was learning about cedar waxwings the day she passed her Junior Bird Watcher test.



**Kathleen Tringali** is a second grader at St. Rita's in Fairfax. Kathleen's favorite bird is the mourning dove "because I like its song even though it sounds sad. Like Grace, she was learning about cedar waxwings the day she passed her Junior Bird Watcher test.



# THE Clapper Rail

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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 Web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to [marinaudubon.org](http://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](http://audubon.org) or contact National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212/979-3000.

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