



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, OCTOBER 11 7:30 PM

How Our Brain Identifies Birds

With Alvaro Jaramillo



Photo courtesy of Alvaro Jaramillo

Allen's Hummingbird

Most bird identification talks focus on field marks and the specifics of separating species A from species B. But few ask exactly how we identify birds? What is our brain going through in order to do this? How does our brain get tripped up during bird identification – ever encountered the “leaf bird”, the “branch bird”, or the worst one of all, “the plastic bag snowy owl?” How do experts identify birds almost without thinking, while the rest of us need to struggle? Bird identification is pretty tricky stuff but our brain is wired to short cut much of the thinking involved; the trick is training yourself to do it like a pro. And that is the aim, a lighthearted but informative explanation of how the heck they do it.

Alvaro Jaramillo was born in Chile and began birding in Canada as a youth. He is a guide (www.alvarosadventures.com), the author of *Birds of Chile*, writes the Identify Yourself column in *Bird Watcher's Digest*, recently finished part of the sparrow chapter for the *Handbook of Birds of the World*, and is writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia.

Come for cookies and conversation at 7:15 pm.

Save Habitats for Wildlife – Vote Yes on Measure A!

MAS urges you to support Measure A because of the many benefits it will have for streams, wetlands, woodlands, baylands and other habitats and the wildlife that depend on them.

Measure A is a countywide ballot initiative that will be on the November ballot. If adopted by the required two-thirds of county voters, Measure A will generate funds through a quarter-cent sales tax to help buy important wildlife habitat at risk of being developed; protect open space lands the county already owns; protect farmland; and benefit city and county parks. The measure will automatically expire in nine years.

Twenty percent of the funds raised through Measure A will be used to buy agricultural easements, 15 percent will go to cities for parks and 65 percent will go to Marin County Parks (MCP). Of the funding dedicated to MCP, 45 percent will be used to maintain existing preserves and parks and 20 percent will be



Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz

Ring Mountain Open Space

used to acquire and preserve important natural resource lands.

MAS and our partners, Marin Baylands Advocates and others, worked hard to include language in the measure to ensure that a fixed percentage of Measure A funding would be dedicated to acquiring habitats.

WHAT MEASURE A WILL DO: Protect lands at risk

Some 2,000 acres along the Bay in Marin are at risk of development because they are privately owned. Measure A will enable MCP to purchase these wetland and upland habitats and other high priority properties. Measure A probably won't yield enough money to actually buy large properties, but will be key to protecting these resources by attracting other funds that together will make the purchases possible.

Since MAS began our habitat acquisition program *continued on page 5*

We want to clarify that Marin County Parks (MCP) refers to the department that oversees both the Open Space District lands (usually lands in a relatively natural state) and parks (areas with developed uses such as playgrounds, pools) owned by the County. About a year ago, the name of Marin County Parks and Open Space was changed to Marin County Parks. The Marin County Open Space District is still a legal entity, but the county decided to combine the two purposes (parks and open space) within the department structure and change the name.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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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. If you wish to attend please call 924-6057.

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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Members can receive *The Clapper Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by e-mailing joandbijou@sbcglobal.net

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

As we head into the fall months, we have a unique opportunity to do something positive for Marin's environment – passing Measure A. Marin has not had a ballot measure to benefit open space in more than 20 years, and the funds from that one ran out 20 years ago. The Marin Community Foundation had dedicated \$10 million to purchase open space but when that was spent they did not renew that commitment. All that has been available for many years is what is allocated directly from the county budget. And that is not enough to protect habitats that are threatened because they are all in private ownership as well as to maintain the existing resources the District owns. We urge everyone to vote for Measure A, urge you to urge your friends to do so and to participate in supporting the measure by making a donation and/or volunteering to spread the word. See the feature article for more information.

We say farewell to Brooke Langston who has resigned her position as Director of the

Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary, a position she has held for the last seven years. Brooke was dedicated, efficient, and hard working. During her tenure, the Sanctuary took on the project to restore habitat at Aramburu Island, the largest of the islands just off the shoreline from Strawberry. Brooke will be taking a temporary job for the next few months and then, hopefully, moving back here to find a new challenge. We wish her well. In her place Jordan Wellwood is Acting Director at the Sanctuary.

There are also some new faces at Audubon California – Brigit McCormick, Managing Director and Jim Eggar from Mt. Diablo Audubon will be taking over from Jerry Karr of Napa-Solano Audubon as chapter representative on the Audubon California Board.

Fall is always an exciting time in the Bay Area with many shorebirds returning. We are beginning to see large flocks of geese flying over our Novato properties and soon waterfowl will be joining us also. So get out and enjoy the birds!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 10 AM – 1 PM

Walk Into History: Celebrating the Saving of Bahia

By David Herlocker

Now a part of the Rush Creek Open Space Preserve, this 200-acre ridge at the edge of the San Pablo Bay wetlands would be completely developed if not for the efforts of a number of agencies and individuals that worked tirelessly to rally community support and ultimately to raise the nearly \$16 million necessary to purchase the property. The Marin Audubon Society spearheaded this effort.

This special 40th anniversary event is a salute to their success and their continued effort to restore the adjacent wetlands. MAS President Barbara Salzman will be on hand to describe the acquisition process, and we will visit an area that is currently being restored by volunteers from the Marin Audubon Society. Supervisor Judy Arnold will be on hand to discuss the value of all of the Open Space preserves and parks that surround Novato, and to join us as we commend those who have worked so hard to secure and preserve it. Marin County Parks requests that no animals (except service



Bahia

animals) attend.

For more information, please contact David Herlocker at 415/893-9508 or DHerlocker@marincounty.org.

Meet at the end of Bahia Drive in Novato. From Highway 101 take the Atherton Avenue/San Marin Drive exit east on Atherton Avenue and turn left at Bugeia. At the "Y," Bugeia turns into Bahia; follow it to the end.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

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

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursdays, October 4,
November 1
9 AM to 12 noon (please note
new time)
With Susan Kelly and friends

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

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 9:00 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

BIRD WALK IN MARTA'S MARSH CORTE MADERA

Sunday, October 21, 2012
12 noon to 2 PM
With Meryl Sundove and
Roger Harris

Join Meryl and Roger on a bird walk in Marta's Marsh in Corte Madera. This field trip often affords a look at and a listen to the namesake of the Marin Audubon Society's newsletter, the endangered California Clapper Rail. Meryl and Roger have been studying the marsh for over twenty-five years.

Walking the levee around the marsh makes it possible to get good looks at a variety of shore and water birds. This walk is timed with the incoming tide that pushes feeding shorebirds off exposed Bay mudflats into mudflats in the marsh for closer views. Marta's Marsh is a great place to learn about marsh processes, watch shorebird behavior, and practice identifying the birds. Beginners welcome! We will have several leaders so the group can split up if need be for better views.

Depending on the weather, the levee can be damp so wear appropriate shoes, bring layers of clothes, and, of course, a bird book and binoculars (scope if you have one). There are no bathroom facilities at the marsh. Steady rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Corte Madera Paradise exit. Go east toward the Bay and then curve right going past the Highway Patrol office. At the second stop light, turn left on Harbor Drive, then right on Yolo, and left on Channel, a dead end road. Park at the end of Channel.

LAS GALLINAS CREEK WALK SAN RAFAEL

Saturday, October 27, 2012
9:30 AM to 12 noon
With Barbara Salzman, Len Blumin
and friends

Join us for a short half-day walk along Las Gallinas Creek in San Rafael. Barbara Salzman, President of Marin Audubon, will tell us about the conservation issues surrounding the proposed sports complex in this important saltmarsh and the endangered Clapper Rails that live there. We will then walk out along the trail, finding whatever is around. There is good viewing of the wetland at the end of the golf course, and the trail gives good views of the creek, where we hope we'll see some ducks. Hooded Mergansers are sometimes in the creek. High tide is around noon, so it is possible we may see Clapper Rail.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Enter McInnis Park Golf complex and continue straight on "Main Drive" into the large parking lot for the golf complex. We will meet at the trailhead leading out along the creek.

LEFT OF THE FAULT – POINT REYES BIG DAY BLAST!

POINT REYES STATION
Saturday, November 3, 2012
7:30 AM to 4 or 5 PM
With Keith Hansen

Join Keith Hansen for a full, fine-feathered day of late fall birding at Point Reyes. Sometimes thought of as "too late" for fall migrants, November is often an underappreciated time for finding rare birds. We will attempt to see at least 100 species "West of the San Andreas Fault"! We will meet at 7:30 AM. We will car pool to the outer point hitting as many of the migrant traps as is possible. Time permitting we will increase the list by hitting the Teal Ponds and Hearts Desire Beach.

The day will be quick-paced as we attempt to cover as many areas and habitat types as time allows. All levels of experience are welcome as long as you know it's a day where we will be on the go, Go, GO!

Sign up is required and the number of participants will be limited. Please contact Len Blumin at lblumin@aol.com if you wish to participate. Bring a lunch and plenty of liquids. Be dressed for good, to less than good weather. Feel free to bring a scope.

DIRECTIONS: You will receive directions to the day's meeting place when you sign up through Len Blumin at lblumin@aol.com.

CYPRESS GROVE/TOM'S POINT ON TOMALES BAY

CYPRESS GROVE RESEARCH
CENTER, MARSHALL
Wednesday, November 7, 2012
9:30 AM to 2 PM
With John Kelly

John Kelly, the Director of Conservation Science for Audubon Canyon Ranch, will lead our trip to see fall waterbirds and shorebirds on Tomales Bay. This excursion will highlight a visit to the Cypress Grove Research Center of Audubon Canyon Ranch, with field observations and discussions about the identification, conservation and ecology of Tomales Bay birds. We will view waterbirds and shorebirds along the east shore of the bay, then carpool to ACR's remote Tom's Point preserve at the northern end of the bay where we will end our day.

DIRECTIONS: The Cypress Grove Research Center is on State Highway One about ½ mile north of the town of Marshall. (Marshall is 9 miles north of Point Reyes Station, or 7 miles south of Tomales.) The entry gate is on the bay side of the road and marked with the address "20545". Look for a small sign with ACR's green and white egret logo mounted on the gate pole. Enter the gate, continue in on the entry road and take the left-hand fork to the parking area. Walk down the trail at the northwest corner of the parking area to the main buildings in the lawn area. The main office is in Cabin #2.



Field Trips continued on page 7

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.

LOCAL COASTAL PLAN

We have just had a chance to do a quick initial review which indicated that support is needed to retain the 100-foot buffer for wetlands and streams, and to clarify a requirement that Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas be avoided. See the Community Development Agency's Web site for time of the hearing.

SOLAR FARM PROPOSED ADJACENT TO MAS LANDS

The owner of the property at intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues has applied to the County for a permit to install approximately 700 solar panels on 1.7 acres immediately adjacent to our properties at Olive and Atherton Avenues. The lands form a contiguous seasonal wetland habitat (dry in summer and wet in winter) with our properties. We are in the process of enhancing our properties as wildlife habitat (see page 6). The lands are diked historic baylands that were the historic edge of San Pablo Bay before levees were built for agriculture and Highway 37. The lands are currently zoned for agricultural use. The panels

would be approximately two feet off the ground and move with the sun.

MAS has many concerns about the impacts of solar panels on the Federally-funded wetland restoration project just completed on our property and on the wildlife the restoration project is intended to attract.

We are asking the Community Development Agency to require environmental review to address a number of potential impacts: flooding – these lands flood in the winter; impacts on vegetation – the panels will cover and reduce the amount of light reaching plants, resulting in reduced plant vigor and growth and reduced wildlife populations from disturbance and loss of vegetative habitat; and the potential for bird collision with the panels. Northern Harrier and Red-tailed Hawk as well as at least three White-tailed Kites hunt voles, mice and other small creatures that live on the lands. Tree swallows nest in boxes on our property and fox, coyote and deer live on or near the properties. Swallows have been known to crash into solar panels, apparently mistaking them for water.

Update on Drakes Estero EIS

By Rick Johnson

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Drake's Bay Oyster Company (DBOC) Special use Permit was delayed to allow a National Academy of Sciences committee "to assess the scientific information, analysis, and conclusions presented in (it)...". The prepublication version of this NAS study was released online on August 30 and can be read at: www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13461&page=1. Here are some of the NAS conclusions:

Wetlands

The DEIS concludes that the impact of DBOC activities including buildings and structures, boating operations, and mariculture practices, on wetlands will be moderate adverse, a conclusion that the NAS committee finds to be reasonable and is associated with a moderate level of uncertainty.

Birds

The committee finds that the DEIS conclusion that alternative A [Wilderness] would have a beneficial impact, because habitat would improve for foraging and migratory birds, is valid and scientifically sound. "For alternative B

[DBOC mariculture], the conclusion that this alternative would result in long-term moderate adverse impacts on birds and bird habitat, because noise disturbances from DBOC motorboats and the displacement of natural habitat by shellfish racks and bags "would be clearly detectable and could appreciably affect natural processes," is scientifically sound according to current literature, but it has not been demonstrated in systems like those in Drakes Estero.

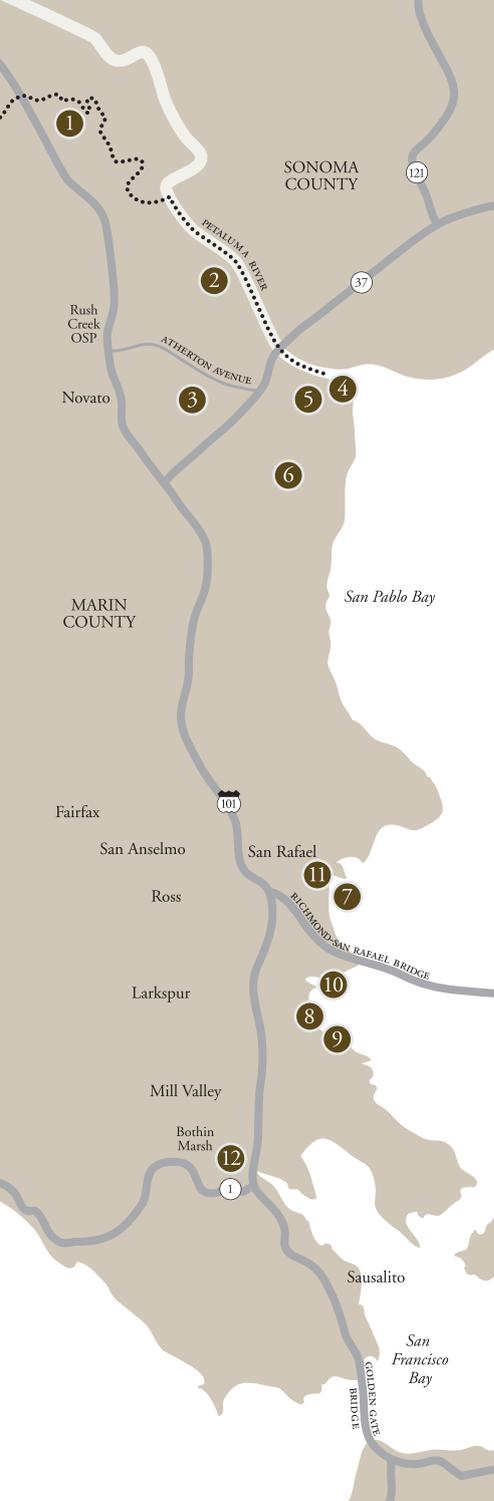
Harbor Seals

The committee finds the suggestion that the extension of the DBOC lease (alternatives B, C, and D) will have moderate adverse impacts on harbor seals to be consistent with the peer reviewed literature and reasonable, given current general understanding of the potential impacts of chronic and cumulative disturbance on pinnipeds and other wildlife populations.

Invasive Species Risks

A reasonable case is made in the DEIS that by increasing numbers of nonindigenous bivalves (Pacific oyster and Manila clam), the risk of

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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	4 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

Vote Yes on Measure A

continued from page 1

thirteen years ago, we have saved more than a thousand acres from development. The Marin County Open Space District contributed to most of our large purchases, including Triangle Marsh, Bahia and properties at Olive and Atherton Avenues in Novato. The amounts the county contributed, while not huge, were critical to those acquisitions because they sent the message to potential funders that preserving these lands was important, and encouraged additional donations that made the acquisitions possible. This partnership will continue buying threatened habitats if Measure A passes. If not, many of these baylands could be lost to development.

Protect natural resources on lands the District already owns.

Measure A will enable MCP not only to acquire additional open space, but also take better care of what it already owns. Measure A funding will help MCP maintain the natural resources in its care in many ways, such as repairing damaged trails, correcting erosion, closing unauthorized trails, providing better enforcement, removing invasive plants, improving stream crossings to protect water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat on all of its lands. If Measure A doesn't pass, any neglected natural resources won't be improved or better protected, they will get worse.

Increase environmental awareness and stewardship.

Measure A will help MCP continue environmental educational programs like the field trips offered by naturalist David Herlocker that many people including birders so enjoy. Measure A also will help fund volunteer programs to improve trails and wildlife habitats.

Funds will stay in the county and can only be used for the purposes identified.

The money from Measure A cannot be taken away by the state or the county to make up for deficits elsewhere. Measure A creates a citizen oversight committee that will review and report on how Measure A monies are used. The committee will conduct business in public, allowing citizens full opportunity to exercise its vigilance role.

Some have argued that county funds are needed for purposes other than open space, such as roads, affordable housing and the elderly. Protecting wildlife and open space contributes to the natural beauty of the county and the health and quality of life for residents of all ages and income levels. Voters in neighboring Bay Area counties have successfully passed open space measures.

Protect lands to benefit people.

We all benefit from healthy ecosystems because they produce clean air and water. Many people enjoy park and open space lands for recreation.

Others are happy viewing natural lands from afar or just knowing that native habitats are there for the species that depend on them. For example, we would have fewer Pileated Woodpeckers, Spotted Owls, Wrentits and California Clapper Rails if MCP did not own the woodlands, chaparral and tidal marsh habitats that support them.

MCP lands help us be healthier and happier people. Being in nature lifts our spirits!

How You Can Help

If you enjoy birding, hiking, running or taking a walk on MCP lands, or if you just want the satisfaction of knowing you are helping maintain habitats for birds and other wildlife, you need to:

1. Vote "YES" Measure A

2. Contribute The Campaign for Measure A needs financial help to get the message to voters. You can contribute at www.yesmarinparksopenspace.com, or by using the remit envelope enclosed in this newsletter. MAS has made a financial contribution to the campaign.

3. Volunteer Hand out information about the measure at markets or other venues. Sign up at the Web site above.

Most importantly – Vote "YES" on Measure A!

And if you don't get out on county open space, you should start right away!

OCTOBER 9 FIELD TRIP

Shollenberger Park and Ellis Creek With Peter Colasanti

With Peter Colasanti and Dave Herrema

Good weather, birds and company came together as the always informative and entertaining Peter Colasanti led us around these popular Petaluma birding sites. We started at the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility where we had good looks at **Common Gallinule** (back from taxonomic hiatus as mere Moorhen), a short serenade by a **Sora**, and brief encounters with **Great-tailed Grackle** and **Peregrine Falcon**. On our return walk, we could see a throng of birders on the south dike of Shollenberger Park, so we headed there to see the **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**. This bird was the highlight, eclipsing three **Pacific Golden Plovers** and a perched **White-tailed Kite** in juvenile plumage. The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper nests in the Siberian Arctic and migrates far south to Australia and New Zealand. The juvenile we saw obviously took a wrong turn. It was a life bird for most of us, but what's exciting for the birder is often not good news for the bird. One wonders where this wayward migrant will end up. With many raptors, waterfowl and shorebirds, we recorded 73 species for the day.

Drakes Estero

continued from page 4

their establishment in Drakes Estero also increases. The committee agrees that the establishment of new species due to DBOC mariculture would constitute an adverse impact given the guidance in National Park Service Management Policies 2006 for "maintenance and restoration of natural native ecosystems, including the eradication of exotic species."

Climate Change

NAS expresses concern about the potential influence of climate change on DBOC operations and their associated impacts over the next 10 years. Geographic ranges of warm water marine species are already extending poleward, a trend that could exacerbate problems associated with invasive species, including increasing the potential for establishment of populations of the nonnative Pacific oyster in Drakes Estero.

Water quality and public health

The NAS report has gross errors in its water quality section and we'll hold off summarizing that to see if the final report is corrected. The NAS study panel did not consider public health risks such as *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a bacterium that can cause serious illness. As of August 10, three illnesses in California have been linked to DBOC shellfish products.

Confirmation

The NAS report confirmed that there is a reasonable basis for the impact concerns which MAS has reported in *The Clapper Rail* and in MAS comments to NPS and the NAS committee.

VAUX'S SWIFTS IN EASTERN SAN RAFAEL

In early October there is still time to see as many as 8,000 to 9,000 Vaux's swifts enter the chimneys at McNear Brick & Block (McNear Brickyard Rd. off Point San Pedro Rd. east of Peacock Dr.) to roost for the night. They are assembling a half hour before sunset and begin entering the chimneys 15 to 20 minutes later.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

It's the old story: Harding grass, *Dittrichia* (stinkwort) and fennel are the invasive plants that are useful late summer/early fall targets. *Dittrichia* is an annual and we have seen that a thorough job of removing it one year means a big drop in its population next year. Harding grass has produced its seeds by October, but it's a perennial so digging out the big clumps this year means fewer clumps and fewer seeds next year. And fennel ... salad anyone?! Join us on a workday. We are making progress. You would make a difference.

We have the tools, gloves and snacks. We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: October 6, November 1

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: October 13

Meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Dr. near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

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

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Hollis Batterman, William Cameron, Muriel Carrison, Margaret Council, Cherryl Daughdrill, Anne Fritz, Dianne Fruin, Sonya E. Gambera, Morgan Genelly, David Green, Keith Jensen, Sally C. Karste, Robert H. Kustel, Colleen Mullin, Jeanette Nelson, Mary O'Brien, Derek C. Parmenter, Jessie W. Peterson, John Pieraccini, Cathy Schuster, Gail S. Stark, Barbara Wein, David Werdegar, Marisa Why

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS

Janet & Louis Baesel, BankServ (In honor of M. Fournier), Greg & Giselle Block, Georgia H. Couderc, Ken Howard, Richard Jennings, Lois Lane, Clifford Lardinois, Mark Lindberg, Nancy Murphy, Marian N. Parmenter, Elisabeth Rothenberger, Ann Roughton, Virginia & John Shaffer, Ruth M. Voorhees, Donna Williams

THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Susanne Dyby, Phil, Robbie, Katherine and Max Gutierrez, Bob Hinz, Mike Linville; Flinn Moore Rauck, Sara Sanchez; Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes



Photo courtesy of Barbara Salzman

Moving soil to enhance habitat on MAS's Simmons Slough property

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION

MAS's and the Natural Resource Conservation Service's project to enhance wildlife habitat at our property at Olive and Atherton Avenues in unincorporated Novato will be largely finished by the end of September.

The project will increase habitat diversity for wildlife by constructing deeper ponds and new islands, and revegetating the wetland and uplands.

To allow more water to pond for a longer period of time, we lowered the elevation in four areas and created six habitat islands in three of the ponds to provide safer areas for nesting and loafing. The islands will be raised one foot above the normal winter water level and be vegetated with native grasses and shrubs to provide cover for waterfowl. The excavated material was placed to form two mounds. Seeds of native wetland plants were spread on the lowered areas and upland grass seeds were scattered on the mounds and islands. Both areas were covered with straw mulch. The seeds will germinate when the rains come. Later in the rainy season

we'll plant more shrubs and rhizomes.

Funding and project oversight came from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) which holds an easement on the properties. We would like to express our appreciation to the NRCS, a Federal agency that provided funding and much appreciated oversight for the construction and planting, and to Hanford ARC that did a fabulous job on project construction. The native grass seed and mulch were purchased from Hedgerow Farms. Thank you also to Redwood Landfill that provided mulch made from woodshavings.

The project site consists of two parcels owned by Marin Audubon Society. Marin Audubon was able to purchase the property seven years ago because the Marin County Open Space District made an initial contribution, which was soon followed by a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, the largest donor. Other contributions came from private donors. The second parcel, adjacent to Olive Avenue, was donated to MAS by the developers of the Olive Ridge Housing Development.

Remembering Ken Howard

Marin Audubon has recently received a bequest from the estate of Ken Howard and for this we are most grateful.

Ken was a member of the Marin Audubon Board of Directors from 1977 to 1984. He was an excellent birder and may have been even better at identifying plants. After going off the Board he continued his friendship with many of us and his support of Marin Audubon by helping out at the Mother's Day Barbecue and with other activities. He moved along to focus on plants, which are stationary and easier to see.

Everyone who knew Ken loved him. He was charming, kind, smart, and had a sharp wit. He

was great fun to be around. His cheery greeting always lightened your spirits. He spent his last years at The Redwoods in Mill Valley after his partner died and he moved from their house in Sausalito.

Thank you, Ken, for remembering us in your will. We will be placing his generous bequest in our endowment fund where it will support our bird habitat protection efforts and our organization.

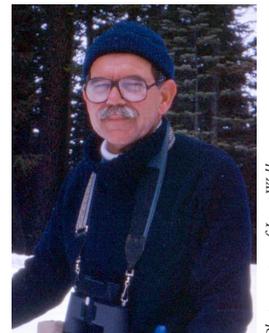


Photo courtesy of Janet Walker

By Rich Stallcup



Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, gepke-photos.com

Baird's Sandpiper



Photo courtesy of Len Blamin

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

While August is the month of departure for many species and individuals that nest here, rare and vagrant migrants are scarce compared to their abundance in September.

A **Hooded Merganser** reported from Nicasio Reservoir 8/19 (BB) was at least eight weeks early for normal arrivals and may have been displaced from some Sierran lake by fire. The only other August HOME was at Abbott's Lagoon in 1999. It looked singed and sooty.

Baird's Sandpipers pass through here annually in small numbers in August and early September. All are on their first southbound journey to the southern cone of South America. In spring, on the way back to their high-Arctic nesting territories, they go a different route... up through the Rocky Mountain states. Pectoral Sandpipers do the same. Isn't that all rather strange?

At least six Baird's paused at Nicasio Reservoir this fall (BB, m.ob) and two at the Rush Creek Wetlands (RS).

Another **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at the Wildlife Gallery in Bolinas 8/18 (KH). While we would see one every couple of years on the O.P., their history of recent presence is proving to be a more regular passage.

A male **Rose-breasted x Black-headed Grosbeak** hybrid was carefully studied at Five Brooks 8/26 (AD, RS, m.ob). This is a rather frequent combination (especially in the center of the continent). I (RS) watched a male RBGR and a female BHGR fledge chicks in Inverness, and a hybrid male was banded and photographed at Muddy Hollow (PRBO).

Two **Indigo Buntings** were located, both in Bolinas. One youngster hung around the Wildlife Gallery for several days (KH), and an adult male was identified at its single sighting 8/26 (RD).

Six hundred **Tricolored Blackbirds** arrived on the O.P. between 8/22 and 8/25 (HC, RS). There had been only four previous to the influx. The Marin County history with TCBB is complex, but I will detail it all in my next book. Thank You!

Observers Scott Anderson, Bob Battagin, Mark Butler, Heather Cameron, Ann Dewart, Ryan DiGuadio, Keith Hansen, m.ob – many observers, O.P. – outer Point Reyes, PRBO Conservation Science, Mary Anne Rotella, Rich Stallcup, Missy Wipf

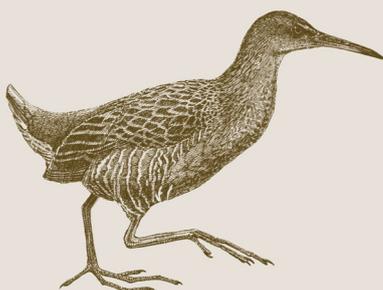
MAS FIELD TRIPS *Continued from page 3*

**ABBOTT'S LAGOON
POINT REYES NATIONAL PARK**
Sunday, November 11
9:30 AM to 2:00 PM
With Carolyn and John Longstreth

Abbott's Lagoon is well-known as a birding hotspot due to its variety of habitats, including coastal scrub, freshwater ponds and wetlands, brackish lagoon, dunes, sandy shoreline and open ocean. We can expect to see waterfowl, herons, raptors, wintering shorebirds, loons, grebes and possibly a few late migrating landbirds. With luck, we might find Virginia Rail, Sora or American Bittern on the upper pond, river otters on the lower lagoon or alcids beyond the surf. If the adjacent farm field is freshly plowed, there could be some interesting species there as well. We'll walk the 1.5 easy miles to the lower lagoon and another 0.3 mile to the ocean beach.

John and Carolyn have been birding for over 30 years. John, who ran an Audubon Center in Connecticut, is the co-compiler of the Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count and a skilled nature photographer. Carolyn has helped organize the Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival for the past 3 years and created two CDs on local birdsong.

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.*



**Junior
Bird Watchers**

By Wendy Dreskin

These quotes are from Alison Quoyeser's 4th grade class at Ross School. Everyone in class became a Junior Bird Watcher in June 2012.

For more information, visit "Junior Birdwatchers" under the "Birds" tab at marinaudubon.org, or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.

"I liked becoming a Junior Birdwatcher because ..."

Skyler Carey It is interesting to study birds. At first I thought, "What is this going to help us learn?" But now I see birds everywhere! Looking at and observing birds is just one of the great things of life.

Ellie Abrams When I'm on hikes or outdoors with my parents they ask me the name of the bird they see and I get to answer it.

Kallen Aley I got to study 50 birds and learn their names and facts about them.

Pierce Ashworth I like to learn about amazing things that birds do and what they look like. I'm glad we had a chance to become Junior Birdwatchers this year because it feels good to be in a group that's good at something and learn about cool new birds.

Olivia Brekhuis-Lavinsky It is something to be proud of.

Luc Burkhart Now I am aware of and can identify many birds by their calls.

Stanley Gaither My favorite bird is the peregrine falcon because it jumps off skyscrapers to catch its prey at 100 mph and it looks awesome. I would most like to see the peregrine falcon in action!

Jacob Grujic I could not identify any birds and now I can identify fifty birds!

Emma Haggett I love watching birds and identifying them. My favorite Marin Audubon bird is the cedar waxwing because in reminds me of a bandit and it eats berries. I like berries!

Jordan Price Birds are very interesting creatures. I'm glad we had a chance to become Junior Birdwatchers this year because prior to this I knew nothing about birds.

Elaina Sherman It seems as if I always notice the birds. Before I didn't even notice the birds. Not only do I notice the birds, I am able to tell what they are. I'm very happy I became a Junior Birdwatcher because now I am able to identify birds in the blink of an eye.

Tyler Slauch I thought it was very fun. Now everywhere I go, I can identify almost every bird I see. The most exciting bird I learned about was the cedar waxwing. I thought that bird was mind-blowing!

Lola Torresi When I walk around the block and I hear or see a bird, I can say... "Oh! That's a Swainson's thrush!" or "Ooh, a western tanager!"



THE Clapper Rail

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www.godwitdays.org/index.html
- November 2-4 **Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival**
Lodi, 800/581-6150
<http://cranefestival.com>
- November 15-18 **16th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium**
Stockton, www.cvbs.org
- December 1-2 **Field Trip: Gray Lodge**
With Bruce Deuel

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

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

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

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