



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: 415/388-2821

FRIDAY, APRIL 2 8 PM

Bird Singing: The Ecology of Birds' Songs and IDing Them by Ear

With Daniel Edelstein

Why do birds sing? How? When? Why does "pishing" coax birds closer into view?

A biologist, bird tour guide and bird surveyor for rare species, Daniel will answer these questions, discuss the ecology of singing birds and teach you how "song memory phrases" (mnemonic phrases) and other techniques can help you better identify bird songs in the field.

An experienced birder for 30 years, he teaches at Oakland's Merritt College and does environmental consulting. A former MAS board member, see his 200+ "song memory phrases" and "10 Top Tips For Improving Your Birding By Ear" at warblerwatch.com and warblerwatch.blogspot.com.

FRIDAY, MAY 7 8 PM

The Natural Wonders of the Range of Light

With John Muir Laws

Jack Laws has sketched, colored, researched and described, every living plant, animal, bird, fish and fungus in the Sierra Nevadas. Well, maybe not quite all, but many of them, for his Sierra Nevada guide book. He can tell you stories about them and show you beautiful pictures. His abilities have gotten him a job with the California Academy of Sciences. Come, see and hear.

USFWS Releases Draft Tidal Marsh Recovery Plan for San Francisco Bay

Release of the "Draft Recovery Plan for Tidal Marsh Ecosystems of Northern and Central California" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opens a 120-day public comment period for the second-largest tidal marsh recovery effort ever attempted in the U.S. The plan sets forth voluntary long-range strategies to help protected species regain their natural health. The plan covers marshes from Humboldt Bay to Morro Bay, with the primary focus on San Francisco Bay, including Suisun Marsh.

Six federally protected, endangered species are the direct focus of the plan – California Clapper Rail, Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, and four rare plants, two of which are found in the northern reaches of San Francisco Estuary – Suisun Thistle and Soft Birds-Beak. Eleven other imperiled species that do not have formal protection under the Endangered Species Act will also benefit, including Salt Marsh Wandering Shrew, Suisun Shrew, San Pablo Vole, three song sparrow sub-species including the San Pablo Song Sparrow, Salt Marsh Common Yellowthroat and Pacific Cordgrass.

The plan identifies primary threats to the species: Habitat loss due to urban development; agriculture; diking related to duck hunting; altered hydrology and salinity; non-native invasive species; inadequate regulatory mechanisms; disturbance; contamination; sea-level rise, due to climate change; and "risk of extinction due to vulnerability of small populations in the face of naturally occurring events."

The interim goal of the plan is to recover all endangered species so they can be down-listed from endangered to threatened. The ultimate goal is to recover all species so they can be delisted. The planning period extends over 50 years and is based on the estimated



Photo courtesy of Anne Merrifield

California Clapper Rail

time it will take for restored tidal marsh habitats to reach maturity.

Five overall actions are identified to meet the plan's goals: acquire existing and restorable tidal marsh habitats; protect, manage, restore, and monitor tidal marsh habitat; conduct range-wide species status surveys/monitoring and status reviews; conduct necessary research; and improve coordination, participation, and outreach among governments, nonprofits, et cetera. The plan also contains maps that identify areas considered critical to delisting.

The approach is a vast improvement over early recovery plans, which focused on a single species. If implemented, the current plan will benefit many more species than those directly addressed.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the committee chair

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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

Marin Audubon Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON:

Log onto www.audubon.org or contact National Audubon Society
700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003
212/979-3000

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.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

Our big news, of course, is that as of last month we are under contract to purchase the 57-acre Mira Monte property, located between the Redwood Landfill and the County airport at Gnos Field. Some of you may have even visited the site, more than ten years ago, when it was an operating oyster bar and marina. We have lots to do; raising the money for the purchase is the first need. We also are beginning to investigate possible contaminants on the property, removal of the buildings, and other matters related to the long-term protection and restoration of property's habitats.

We are pleased to report that Board Member Jude Stalker has stepped forward and volunteered to chair a committee (which will consist of Jude, Jo Kreider and me) to oversee the Mother's Day Barbecue. This will be a joint effort with the full Board participating to make sure that we can present this successful and fun event for our members and the public. We need volunteers to help on the day of the event and to help with preparation the day before. Contact Jude to volunteer. And do sign up early to attend the barbecue as space is limited.

Our Nominating Committee (Phil Peterson,

Jo Kreider, and Ed Nute) is working to fill our Board seats with members who support our mission, like what we do, and are willing to volunteer some of their time and skills to furthering Marin Audubon's goals and activities. To keep us functioning well, we need volunteer help with grant writing/fund raising, volunteer coordinator, and production of the *Clapper Rail*. If you are interested in helping with any of these activities, whether or not you are interested in being on the Board, please let a member of the committee know.

With the resignations of Nancy Okada and Sue Morrison (noticed on the back of last month's *Clapper Rail*) we are seeking a volunteer to help with production and layout. On behalf of the Board, I extend a sincere thank you to Nancy and Sue for their dedication and productivity getting our newsletter out to our members over the last several years. A huge thank you to Bob Hinz for volunteering as our editor.

We also are still seeking volunteers to help with hosting at Audubon Canyon Ranch on April 4, 24 and 25, May 22 and 23, June 5

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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.

MIRA MONTE - AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY

We're on our way to purchasing the 65-acre tidal marsh and upland habitat at Mira Monte on the Petaluma River at the mouth of San Antonio Creek. Our updated appraisal came in at quite a bit less than the property owner's appraisal. Because we cannot use government funds to pay more than the appraised value, we went back to the property owner with a revised offer. Fortunately, the owner accepted the lower offer and we are excited to have an agreement to purchase this special property.

We now are busy trying to raise money for the purchase. We will be submitting an application for federal funds through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration (NOAA), as well as applying to foundations and seeking donations from private and other government sources. Our purchase agreement gives us until September 30 to complete the purchase, so we don't have much time.

The property consists of tidal marsh on the north and south sides of San Antonio Creek. Twenty-five acres on the north side of the creek are part of the ancient, 2,000-acre Petaluma marsh. Acquiring the property will protect the marsh habitat for endangered species including Clapper Rail, Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse and Black Rail, as well as effectively protect the waters of the creek, which are habitat for Steelhead Trout, Chinook Salmon, Sacramento Splittail, and other native fish.

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MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, weather check and accessibility: Helen Lindqvist at 415/789-0703 or 415/306-2325 (cell)

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS THURSDAY MORNING WALK

April 1

8:30 AM to noon

With Len Blumin

Join Len on this Thursday morning birding walk at the Storage Ponds. We might still see a few of our winter visitors and most of the Neotropicals will have arrived. The birds should be in their distinctive breeding plumage!

From Highway 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 Las Gallinas Storage Ponds' parking lot. Meet the group at the bridge.

For information call Len 414/388-4990.

BOLINAS AREA BIRDING

Wednesday, April 7

8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

With Keith Hansen

Come and join Keith to explore the environs of Bolinas Lagoon – an area that Keith knows “like the back of his hand”! We shall check out the beaches for pelagic and shore birds, go up to Stinson Gulch to look for the woody ones and scope out the lagoon to see the variety of birds and other wildlife that rest-up or feed in the quiet waters.

Meet at the Stinson Beach Post Office at 8:30 a.m. (Coffee shop nearby!) Heavy rain cancels.

MOUNT BURDELL

Saturday, April 17

8 AM to 12:30 PM

With Neill Fogarty

This gem in northern Marin with its oak woodland, grassland and mixed forest is a prime nesting area for over 50 species of birds – many of which have wintered south of our border. Join us on this uphill stroll as we look and listen for many of these birds. Past trips have yielded Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bullock's Oriole, Lazuli Bunting and Western Kingbird as well as a host of other species. Wildflowers and lizards are on the “look-for” list, too!

The weather can range from cool to hot so dress accordingly! Bring water and any snacks you might want to carry. Please arrive before 8 a.m. as we will start wending our way up the hill at 8 a.m. sharp. The birds are more active before it heats up!

From Highway 101 in Novato, take the Atherton/San Marin exit and go west on San Marin Drive. Turn right onto San Andreas Drive (5th Street on the right), continue towards the end and park near the Marin County Open Space entrance. Heavy rain cancels but not light showers!

For information contact Neill 707/364-5173.

MINES ROAD/DEL PUERTO CANYON

Saturday and Sunday

May 1 – 2

7:30 AM to 3:30 PM

With Terry Colborn

Long recognized as one of the premier birding areas in the Bay Area to observe an array of resident species and neo-tropical migrants, the combination of Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon provides easy access to a number of different habitats. The bird list is quite impressive for this popular destination, and includes Wood Duck, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Yellow-billed Magpie, Rock and Canyon Wrens, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Hermit, Yellow and MacGillivray's Warblers, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole and Lawrence's Goldfinch, just to name a few. The elusive Greater Roadrunner is reported annually. We'll also visit Del Valle Regional Park (fee) and Frank Raines Park.

This weekend trek will start in Livermore (driving time from Marin approximately 1.5 hours) on Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m., and will conclude on Sunday afternoon at 3:30 p.m. Overnight hotel accommodations will be in Patterson, off of I-5, affording us an opportunity for an optional evening “owl prow” after dinner. Sign-ups are required, and will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Carpooling is a must as there is very limited space for vehicles to park on Mines Road. The meeting place and motel details will be given on sign-up. For this, send an email to Terry Colborn at tlcfdc@aol.com, or call him at 530/758-0689.



CONSERVATION

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Please help by sending your contribution to the Marin Baylands Fund at the Marin Community Foundation, No. 5 Hamilton Landing, Novato, CA 94949. The Marin Baylands Fund is a donor-advised fund of the Marin Baylands Advocates. Donations to this fund can only be used to facilitate the purchase of Marin baylands.

UPDATE ON CORTE MADERA MARSH ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

Good news on Corte Madera Marsh! Soon signs will be installed at the Reserve, reading “*To protect endangered species and marsh habitat dogs must be on leash*” and “*This area is closed to public access to protect endangered species and marsh habitat. Do not enter marsh.*” Further, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) wardens are expected to take some enforcement action, although we are not yet certain when. *continued on page 6*

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP – BAHIA

A *big* thank you to the Marin County Open Space District for its recent work to restore trails, created by users, to habitat. The District crew disked the levee top, planted seed and placed mulch, placed barriers, erected fencing and installed our signs informing users that the levee along the new tidal area at the base of the hills is not open to public access. Marin Audubon supplied the signs. As discussed previously in this column, this levee was planned as part of the habitat to allow unimpeded movement of wildlife between the new tidal marsh and seasonal wetlands. People using the trail are wearing away vegetation, which poses an impediment to wildlife moving between habitats.

At West Bahia, public access is provided on two trails, one along the ridge and the other lower on the hills. Thank you to all Bahia trail users for protecting the habitat for wildlife by using the hill trails. Public access is also provided on several peninsulas owned by MAS at East Bahia.

A *huge* thank you to Jude Stalker who has spent countless hours over the last two months working to revise the monitoring protocols to be usable, efficient, and effective at Bahia. Jude had such extensive and positive input that her name and MAS's now appear on the monitoring protocol, along with the San Francisco Estuary Institute and a Save the Bay biologist as co-authors. Jude has also taken on the task of implementing the monitoring protocols. Lowell Sykes has worked with Jude.

The Estuary 2100 EPA grant we received for Bahia specifically requires monitoring prior to planting, which has created a time crunch for us.

We have been busy planting native creeping wild rye (*Leymus triticoides*) rhizomes along much of the east and west peninsulas at east Bahia and portions of the transition zones at Central Bahia with the help of volunteers and hired helpers from the Watershed Nursery. Acorns from native oaks collected on site also have been planted on the western peninsula near the grove of mature oaks. MAS hired the Watershed Nursery to do this work with mitigation funding from the Novato Sanitary District to compensate for removing oaks when they reconstructed their pump station. Trees also are being grown in the nursery for planting next year.

Planting time will be over by the time this newsletter is published, but our work will not be finished. We will move on to removing weeds and maintaining planted areas and nursery beds. We also will be constructing two additional nursery beds. The four we constructed last year were so successful that we decided to build two more. A few Wild Radish plants are already appearing, reminding us of the task ahead of us to remove them.

Our special thank you the Volunteer Center for helping get volunteers for our workdays and to all the volunteers.

TAKE ACTION

Please contact Whole Foods in San Rafael at 415/451-6333 and tell them to stop directing customer donations to support feral cat colonies.



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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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and 6, July 3 and 4. The hosts greet people, tell them about the ranch, hand out materials, etc. You can even stay overnight in one of the bungalows. Call Bob Hinz at 383-8688 to sign up.

Our apology to members who were too late to sign up for Meryl Sundove's Spring Bird Class. It filled up exceptionally quickly this year. If you were too late to reserve a space, you are welcome to attend the evening class at the Richardson Bay Sanctuary on April 29.

The cost will be \$20 which you can pay at the door. This will not include the field trips.

Don't forget that while the days are getting longer, the time is getting shorter for our overwintering water birds to remain in the Bay. Get out and enjoy them before they leave. With the coming of spring, of course, comes nesting. Look for nests first if you are planning any yard work. There can be tiny hummingbird nests at the end of branches in bushes, or larger nests hidden in newly leafed-out trees. Actually, it is safest for wildlife to schedule your pruning for after nesting is finished, in late fall and winter.

Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

While a common denizen of suburban Marin, this month's bird has been largely extirpated from its former range in the eastern U.S. The decline of our bird's eastern populations is probably due to the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*).

House Wrens destroy nests, removing eggs and nestlings of a variety of birds including our bird of this month. Expanding populations of the House Wrens in the east correlated with population declines in that area for the bird of the month. In the parts of the east and midwest, our bird was a fairly common breeder in the 1800s. Population declines began in 1920, continued through 1970, and by 1980 most of the eastern population was gone. Breeding populations of our bird are listed as endangered in Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Mississippi.

Our birds are residents in Marin, maintaining territories year-round. House Wrens are not as abundant as our bird in Marin, and some House Wrens migrate south for the winter. On the South Marin Christmas Bird Count, during the years 1975 to 2008, House Wrens averaged about four each year and were missed in some years. However, the bird of the month averaged over a 100 on the counts for those years, was never missed on a count, and never numbered under 50.

In some populations of our bird, early-season clutches were more successful in producing fledglings than those produced later in the season, which had a higher risk of egg removal by House Wrens. Many House Wrens, not being year-round residents, arrive on the breeding grounds and start nesting later than the year-round residents such as the bird of the month.

This month's small bird is a widespread resident of underbrush, scrub and thickets in open country, and suburban plantings. It seems always in motion, wagging its tail from side to side, scuttling around in undergrowth hunting for insects and spiders. It often holds its tail in a cocked posture exposing the tail's speckled white corners.

In the breeding season its bold vociferous song might puzzle listening birders, sounding at first a bit like a Song Sparrow's (*Melospiza melodia*). However, its harsh scolding calls distinguish it quickly from the Song Sparrow's softer tones.

More often heard than seen, the males of our species, like many birds, are the singers. Songs are used to define and defend territory and to attract a female and maintain pair bonds. Territorial conflicts are vocal battles on boundaries between two males of our species. When a male hears another male singing nearby, he will often stop foraging and hurry to his territorial boundary and sing and call. The intruder typically flies once challenged by the resident of the territory.

Evolutionary theory suggests that attributes of a species, including their behaviors, have evolved to help individuals reproduce successfully and leave as many surviving offspring as possible. Territories are essential for successful reproduction because they contain quality nest sites and food. So the bird defends its territory strongly from intruders that might usurp necessary resources that would allow it to survive and produce offspring. Using songs to settle disputes helps this month's species to resolve conflicts without risk of injuries that might impair its fitness and ability to successfully fledge healthy young.

Males of this month's bird learn their songs from neighboring territory holders, rather than from their fathers. Male fledglings begin making soft jumbles of adult phrases as they establish territories following their dispersal from their natal area. The period of song learning extends from when they disperse at about 30 days after hatching, till they acquire a territory at about 60 days. Song repertoire is established by late November of the year in which they hatched and is retained for life.

Our bird's song differs geographically. In essence, they have regional dialects. An individual generally has a fairly large repertoire of nine to 22 songs. They repeat each song 20 to 50 times before singing another song

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MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS DONATIONS:

Greg & Giselle Block, Daniel & Lee Drake, Mark Lindberg, Philip Mann, Carolyn W. McNamara, Carol Peltz

MEMORIAL GIFTS

IN MEMORY OF NOEL C. THONEY
Barbara Ford

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Bud Alderson; Conner Hansen; Aaron, Kristen, Tessa, Kade & Zane Roeder; Matt, Patti & Megan Twain; Jones, Jocelyn & Lillian Wong; Bobbie, Brian, Jessica, Nathaniel, Adrian & Joseph Torrez; Bob, Rhonda, Brenda, Danny & Mick Watts; Eme Villegus; Tyler Pilliken; Anschel Burk; Jared Burk; Deb Ablin; Linda Nicoletto; Bob Hinz; Lowell Sykes; Jude Stalker; Barbara Salzman

TREE REMOVAL AT HAWK HILL

Unfortunately, the March 9 article in the *Marin Independent Journal* on the planned removal of trees at Hawk Hill may convey the erroneous impression that Marin Audubon Society is opposed to removal of the trees. This is not the case.

Monterey Pines are not native to Marin County and are being removed to provide habitat for an endangered species, the Mission Blue Butterfly. The Marin Headlands are an important movement corridor for raptors but, as stated by Lowell Sykes, "the raptors would fly over the area." It is highly unlikely that one group of trees along the Pacific Flyway would impact migratory bird patterns as indicated by the article. MAS supports protection of native habitats for native wildlife. We do not take positions based on whether or not birding opportunities are altered.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The planting season has come to a close at Bahia with creeping ryegrass planted along hundreds of yards of the levees. Now at Bahia and Triangle Marsh our efforts shift to control of invasive non-native plants such as wild radish, thistles and French broom. Join us for one of the workdays listed below. To be placed on our email notification list or for more information, call Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688 or email rbrthnz@comcast.net. Your help is important. Please check the MAS Web site for additional dates.

Triangle Marsh

Saturday, April 3, 10 AM – 1 PM

Bahia

Saturday, April 10, 10 AM – 1 PM

Sunday, April 25, 10 AM – 1 PM

MAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Mother's Day Barbecue

Contact Jude Stalker at 415/668-1242 or jude23jeff@aol.com

Fund raising/grant writing, or Production for newsletter, or Volunteer coordinator

Contact Jo Kreider at 415/381-1910 or Phil Peterson 415/898-8400

Greeters at Audubon Canyon Ranch

Contact Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688 or rbrthnz@comcast.net

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.

DRAFT REPORT RELEASED

continued from page 1

The plan's broader scope includes a wider range of habitat types needed to support the species of concern. It recognizes, for example, that ecotones, or transition zones just upland from tidal marshes, are essential components of tidal marsh habitat. It further recommends management actions to reduce human disturbance to tidal marshes and species from recreation and other activities. We will urge, however, that some changes be made that we believe are important to improve the plan's effectiveness:

The maps are incomplete. Because the plan covers a long (50 year) planning period, it is imperative that it identifies the broadest potential sites for future acquisition and restoration. What may seem impossible today may not be in 10 or 20 years. Who would have thought 20 years ago that we would have purchased and protected Bahia?

Priority areas for acquisition and restoration identified in Marin County are incomplete. Sections of Gallinas Creek, which, according to several recent surveys, have highest population of endangered Clapper Rails in the North Bay, are not included, nor are important sections of Bahia.

CONSERVATION

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To speed up the process, we will assist the DFG by purchasing the signs. We will continue to work with the Golden Gate Bridge District to protect the 72 acres they own adjacent to the Reserve, and with the town of Corte Madera to support habitat and wildlife protection.

WIND ENERGY ORDINANCE CONSIDERED

The draft Wind Energy Conversion System (WECS) ordinance is now scheduled for another hearing on April 26. MAS has submitted comments on the most recent draft ordinance. The draft ordinance relies on the "California Guidelines for Reducing Impacts to Birds and Bats from Wind Energy Development," a report developed in 2007 by a committee representing wildlife agencies and agencies involved with wind energy.

The proposed Marin ordinance appears to differ in some respects from the approved guidelines and it is unclear how or whether they would be followed:

The only focus in Central San Francisco Bay in Marin County is the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Marsh. While the Reserve Marsh habitat is indeed vital, marshes in San Rafael and Mill Valley also should be included.

Although implementing the plan is largely voluntary, it will be an important guide for environmental groups, agencies, and governments to use in reviewing proposed developments. We will encourage developers to use the plan to guide their projects. It also will be useful in advocating protection of tidal marsh resources and in seeking grant funds to implement provisions of the plan.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can help by submitting comments on the plan. The USFWS has scheduled a long comment period to encourage public input. The deadline for comments is June 10, 2010. We urge you to read the plan and advocate to include the broadest range of habitats and actions. Submit comments to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Endangered Species
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

You can access the plan online and see USFWS notices for public hearings at: www.fws.gov/sacramento.

- The guidelines recommend one to two years of pre-construction bird/bat surveys. It is unclear whether any pre-construction surveys would be required. Only studies are required. It is not clear that studies would include surveys.
- The guidelines are clear that compliance with CEQA, which focuses on endangered species, is required, but this would not offer enough protection. The guidelines are clear that impacts to endangered species must be considered, as should laws protecting raptors and other species. Specifically, WECS must be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Acts.
- There is no provision for post-construction monitoring or mitigation, though the guidelines recommend both. Although the ordinance recommends limiting operation and decommissioning, it is unclear how the need for such actions would be determined if no post-monitoring is required. The ordinance does not state the circumstances that would require decommissioning.

MARIN BIRDLOG – FEBRUARY 2010

By Rich Stallcup

Just as we've said here, each year at this time, January and February are the worst months for birders and birds at this latitude along the coast. Still, there is a grand abundance, compared to most other temperate regions on the planet.

Extreme weather (like 30-inches of rain) definitely gets waterbirds moving around and Herring Runs cause thousands to congregate and feast. Rare birds are always part of the fun but for some (few) of us, regular species in unexpected places are even more interesting.

Brandt's Cormorants are common in salt water along Marin County's perimeter, but one seen at Nicasio Reservoir 2/14 (PP) may be the first natural occurrence in the "interior." (Two together at Stafford Lake had been released there by a rehab group [not Wildcare]).

Two pairs of **Redheads** 2/19 off Tiburon (RS) were skittish and may have arrived recently from an active hunting area.

Long-tailed Ducks (Oldsquaws) are rare but regular December through February often at Herring Runs. A female at Limantour (estero side) 2/7 (MB,MR) may have been the same bird found there on the Christmas Bird Count and *possibly* the same found at Richardson's Bay 2/18 (LB). A young male on the Marin side of the Petaluma "River" at the Highway 37 bridge 2/24 (RS) had to be different.

Two hybrid ducks were found (American x Asian Green-winged Teal combos don't count) and their parentages were probably determined. One, a **Green-winged Teal x Northern Pintail** was at the "The Waldo" in mid-February (PP,JE,DD) and a **Common Goldeneye x Bufflehead** was on Richardson's Bay 2/17 and 2/18 (KW,JW,DMc).

Common Moorhens are erratic in their Marin distribution. Even so, one at Phoenix Lake 2/10 (BL) was totally unexpected.

Of five Peregrines seen on the "inner" Point Reyes 2/24 (RS), one at Drake's Bay Oysters was a young **F.p. tundrius**.

Four hundred **Brant** were on the west arm of Schooner Bay that day ... if there were no power boats and constant, blaring "music," there would be thousands all winter feasting on the vast eel grass forests there. It is a shame that some humans would deny the *wilderness* designation there when so few precious opportunities exist on the planet.

Barred Owls continue at Muir Woods (m.ob) and may have displaced the Spotted Owls there. Another Barred (Don says, "... to hoot or not to hoot") was at Point Reyes Station 2/11 (JE) and we have heard hybrids thereabouts for awhile. In Humboldt County, colleagues watched a Barred Owl kill and begin to eat a Spotted Owl. We are witnessing a true hostile takeover.

On 2/18, **White-throated Swifts** were seen beneath the Highway 101 bridge over Rush Creek in Novato (JE). It is likely some of the birds that have nested the past two summers, also torpor there during cold winter periods and emerge to forage only when it gets warm. They enter the concrete structure through breather vents.

A **Hutton's Vireo** at Fish Docks 2/9 (NB) and a **Northern Mockingbird** 2/24 just past the mile marker 37-44 (RS), both on outer Point Reyes in winter, were unprecedented. Both occur on the O.P. in fall (2 or 3 each total), but what are they doing out there in the gnarly weather, in February?

Finally, a **Townsend's Solitaire** "in the same place one has been for the past seven winters" 2/1-2/3 (DMc,JL,LS) was at Barth's Retreat, Mount Tamalpais.

March gets better with large numbers of birds in motion getting stoked about migration for propagation. Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Warbling Vireos and Wilson's Warblers will be singing everywhere in acceptable habitat by the end of the month.

Observers and Acronyms: SA: Sarah Acosta, BB: Bob Battagin, LB: Len & Patti Blumin, MB: Mark Butler, HC: Heather Cameron, DD: Dave DeSante, JE: Jules Evens, KH: Keith Hansen, BL: Bill Lenarz, JL: John Luther, M.OB: many observers, DMc: Dave McKenzie, DM: Dominik Mosur, NB: Native Birds Group, PRBO: Point Reyes Conservation Science, PP: Peter Pyle, DR: Don Reinberg, MR: Mary Anne Rotella, RS: Rich Stallcup, LS: Lang Stevenson, JW: Jim White, KW: Kerry Wilcox, MW: Missy Wipf.



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Townsend's Solitaire

BIRD OF THE MONTH *continued from page 5*

from their repertoire.

Our bird is an opportunistic cavity nester using a variety of sites: natural or woodpecker cavities, nest boxes, exposed shelves in buildings, old shoes left out, discarded cardboard boxes and baskets, and old cow skulls. The material used in the nest depends on the location and what is available. In late February we saw this month's bird carrying old decomposed leaves into a nest box mounted to a tree in our yard.

Size and color of our bird varies across its range. This is generally related to moisture and latitude. Birds in more humid climates have darker plumage and those in more northern latitudes are larger. Birds in the southwestern region are paler with longer tails. There are sixteen subspecies recognized by the American Ornithological Union.



Photo courtesy of Minette Layne

Bewick's Wren

Our bird is a wren, first described and given its English name in 1821 by none other than J.J. Audubon. It is named for Audubon's friend, Thomas Bewick, a British engraver. The Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) is one of five wren species that nests in Marin. Can you name the others?



THE Clapper Rail

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