



Photos courtesy of Rich Cimino

**Spectacled Eider**

Rich has been birding the Nome, Alaska ecosystem since 1998. In 2002 he created *Yellowbilled Tours* which features annual field trips into Nome, Barrow and Gambel, Alaska

This presentation will show the various habitats of the region and will feature photos of the typical birds found on the Nome field trips and some of the Nome specialty birds like Aleutian Tern, Bluethroat, Yellow Wagtail, Arctic Warbler, Northern Wheatear, White Wagtail, Hoary Redpoll, Rough-legged Hawk and the family of Eiders.

Rich has been birding Northern California for 47 years and for nine years he served as the conservation chair for the Ohlone Audubon Society and participated in the Altamont Pass Wind Turbine area Golden Eagle surveys. His current birding activities include compiling the Eastern Alameda County Christmas Bird Count and leading family field trips to Olompali State Park. He moved west to Marin and is now a resident of Larkspur.

Come at 7:15 PM for refreshments. The meeting begins at 7:30 PM.



# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## The Marin County Christmas Bird Counts

### Cheep Thrills CBC

The 2014 Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in northern Marin, sponsored by Marin Audubon, took place on December 18. Seventy people participated and found 158 species on count day and 7 additional species during the count week. Highlights were a **Long-tailed Duck** found in Bel Marin Keys by Jules Evens and his team; 13 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** that Peter Colasanti and Gene Hunn observed at Neil's Island in NE Marin County; a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** that Bob Battagin and his team found at Nicasio square; and 303 **Lark Sparrows** that Ed Nute's team observed on a ranch in the Hicks Valley area.

While the species count was slightly lower than in the past three years, the total number of birds was impressive. We counted about 61,000 individual birds, compared to about 38,000 in 2013, 40,000 in 2012 and 42,000 in 2011. Participants reported 8,725 **Robins**, 5,490 **Band-tailed Pigeons**, and over 12,880 ducks (of 20 species). In a heroic effort, near dusk David Sexton spent an hour counting 7,398 **American Robins** heading to their roosts, resulting in a serious case of "robin neck."

Cheep Thrills is dedicated to the memory of Rich Stallcup, who we think would have been really pleased with David Sexton's—and everyone else's—efforts.

Final results for 2014 and previous years are posted at <http://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>.

*Susan Kelly, Compiler*

### Point Reyes CBC

The 45th annual Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by Point Blue and Marin Audubon, was held on 20 December, followed by the Compilation Dinner at the Dance Palace. Owlers started as early as 4 a.m. and by early



Photos courtesy of Jocelyn Knight, Photoofacubynight.com

**Area leader Roger Harris (center) and his team (Connor Cochrane, Julian Gottfried, Collin Cochrane, Hillary Zankel) counted birds in the neighborhoods and along the shores of San Rafael during the Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count.**

morning 212 birders, organized into 27 groups, were in the field. One hundred ninety-eight species (unofficial count at this date) were seen in the count circle during that day, down from over 200 species in recent years. The weather was changeable and rain held off until late afternoon. Judging from reports at the dinner, all groups enjoyed counting birds, and the species decline was attributed by various people to the oddly warm, dry fall followed by several weeks of rain.

The total number of individual birds seen in 2014 was 95,615, a 22.4% drop from 2013. The numbers of birds of 103 species were down this count year, compared with 2013. The greatest declines were of **Greater Scaup**, followed by **Dunlin, Green-Winged Teal, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Western Gull, Least Sandpiper** and **Common Murre**, all of which were down precipitously. No **Bittern, Surfbird, Western Screech Owl, Spotted Owl, or Red Crossbill** were seen this year. However, 27 **Black Oystercatcher** were reported, compared with none in 2013. Other birds that increased in population were **Western Sandpiper, Sanderling, Brewer's Blackbird, American Robin** and **European Starling**. A rarity **LeConte's Sparrow** was spotted (at Abbott's Lagoon)—a first for

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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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Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
BAAC Repts	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

## DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. If you wish to attend please call 924-6057.

6:30 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 Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper; edited by Bob Hinz rbrthnz@comcast.net, 383-8688; assisted by other members of MAS; and designed by Studio NaCl (www.studionacl.com). Deadline is the first of each month.

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

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing 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 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

We welcome new Board member Katy Zaremba. Katy is a biologist with extensive experience with volunteers and habitat restoration gained while working for Save the Bay Association and the Invasive Spartina Project. Katy will be our Volunteer Coordinator and will work to seek more volunteers to help with our habitat restoration work. She will be filling an unexpired term. Katy lives in San Rafael with her partner and their four children.

Many thank yous this month: beginning with our generous donors who contributed to purchase the property in Corte Madera and to those who contributed to MAS's end of year appeal to support our operations and keep us going. Even though we do not have paid staff or an expensive office, we do have expenses to operate. Without you all, we would not be able to accomplish what we do and would certainly not be able to consider purchasing properties. For those of you who have not yet given, it is not too late.

A huge thank you to our Christmas Bird Count compilers for taking on a daunting task of organizing groups to cover all of the count territories during what is arguably the busiest time of the year for many people, and then compiling all of the count data to get to National Audubon. Thank you: John Longstreth and Tom Gaman compilers of the Point Reyes

## Christmas Bird Counts

*continued from page 1*

the Point Reyes Count. Other unusual species included **Tropical Kingbird, Pink-footed Shearwater, Glaucous Gull, Parasitic Jaeger, Lapland Longspur, two Red-naped Sapsuckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cassin's Vireo, and Wilson's Warbler.**

The data for all 2014 count areas are presently being compiled and will be available by early February. For prior count totals by area, maps, and count details please visit [www.forestdata.com/cbc](http://www.forestdata.com/cbc) and click on the data links where the historic bird data, compiled 1970-2013, are available for download.

*Tom Gaman and John Longstreth, Compilers*

## Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count

The Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count took place on Saturday, December 27, 2014. This count has been conducted since 1975 and is one of three counts sponsored by the Marin Audubon Society. Each count circle is 15 miles in diameter and count data from over 2,600

Count, Susan Kelly compiler of the Cheep Thrills Count (Novato area south to Gallinas Creek), and Ed Nute and Bob Hinz compilers of the Southern Marin Count. Thanks also to all of the territory leaders and other who participated in these successful counts.

We want to apologize for recent delays in our newsletter publication particularly because they have been a problem for members interested in attending field trips and our Speaker Series. We will try to do better getting each issue out on time, but please do consult our website for a complete list of upcoming field trips.

As you can see from our Stewardship write up on page 6, we are busy planting and can use all the hands we can find. Do join a volunteer work day. Call Bob Hinz or Jude Stalker to find out more information, or just show up on a Work Day.

February is still an active month for migratory water birds and land birds as well. Do take advantage of their large overwintering populations before they take off for their breeding grounds. And notice what is going on in your back yard—this is a good year, as reflected by our Christmas Counts—for some species you might find in your yard: **American Robin, Varied Thrush, American Goldfinch and Band-tailed Pigeon.**

count circles are compiled by the National Audubon Society. Christmas bird counts are the longest running Citizen Science survey in the world and provide valuable information on bird populations and trends.

The South Marin count circle is centered in Corte Madera and extends from Terra Linda on the north, Marin headlands on the south, the Tiburon peninsula and Sausalito on the east and Bolinas Lagoon on the west. This circle includes exceptionally diverse habitats ranging from ocean and bay waters to marshes, uplands, chaparral, and the top of Mt. Tamalpais as well as urban development.

Marin experienced over 20" of rainfall during November and December of 2014 so there was plenty of moisture in the soil and grass was already coming up. A total of 184 different species and some 71,000 individuals were counted in the South Marin count circle.

During the morning of the count there appeared to be a herring run in Richardson Bay which attracted large rafts of ducks, gulls and cormorants. For the first time **Acorn**

*continued on page 6*

## 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.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

### LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

#### SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, February 5, 2015

9 AM to 12 PM

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

Join Susan and Len for a walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds. Birders of all levels are welcome. Winter 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. Dress for all weather and bring water. We'll be walking about 2 miles on the levees that surround the ponds. Heavy rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then go east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch Rd., and go about 0.5 mile to the end of the road at the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. Late arrivals should easily be able to find the group. There are rest room facilities only at the parking area.

### SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

#### Boat leaves and returns to the Antioch Marina

Sunday, February 8, 2015

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' *Delphinus* for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. Ronn Patterson, a Bay Area historian and naturalist, is captain of the *Delphinus* and owner of Dolphin Charters. The boat is very comfortable and the outer decks provide views over the levees of the amazing array of birds found in the Delta during the winter. This rich area hosts a wide variety of species including uncommon species such as Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and Great Horned Owl. Large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Crane, Tundra Swan, Snow, Canada and White-fronted Geese, ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines make the cruise a highlight for birders. Uncommon mammals such as beaver, river otter, coyote and mink often add interest to the cruise. We also will learn about the history, ecology and politics of the levees and the Delta as we travel through its meandering channels.

The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$105. Deadline for reserving space and making payment is February 1, 2015. This year you can register and pay online at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org). Online registration

is preferred, but to register by mail, send a check to Marin Audubon at Box 599, Mill Valley, CA, 94942. **Include the name, email address and contact phone number of each participant.** Please write "Delta Trip" on the envelope and check. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions the week before the trip.

### HAMILTON FIELD RESTORED

#### WETLANDS TOUR

##### NOVATO

Thursday, February 19, 2015

9 AM to 12 PM

With David Sexton and Dave Herrema

Last April the final levee was breached at the Hamilton Wetlands, once again connecting about a square mile of wetlands to the bay after two decades of planning and work. The wetlands were diked off from the bay at the turn of the 19th century, eliminating an important area for thousands of migrating waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway. The birds are returning. David and Dave are part of the citizen scientist team monitoring the birds. We will see the waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and other species that are now making these new wetlands their home. Christina McWhorter, nursery manager and native plant specialist, will give us a tour of the native plant nursery to learn about the new vegetation that will be part of the various zones in the wetlands.

**DIRECTIONS:** We will meet at the Skate Park parking lot at Hamilton. The address is 1200 N. Hamilton Parkway, located one block from Nave Drive. Nave Drive runs parallel to Hwy 101 on the east side. From the south on Hwy 101 take the Nave Drive/Hamilton exit and from the north use the Ignacio Blvd exit.

### LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS AND

#### MARIN CIVIC CENTER

##### No. 10, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, February 21, 2015

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

The Las Gallinas ponds are a great place for good views of many kinds of ducks and raptors. This is an easy 1.5 mile walk where many other species may be seen including Ridgway's Rails and Soras. After a lunch break we will go to the Marin Civic Center where we can study the many gulls that gather to discuss politics.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101 in northern San Rafael take the Smith Ranch Rd exit east about 1/2 mile. Turn left after crossing the RR tracks to park at the end.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Amazing Grace Music, Kathy Anderson & Conrad Knipfel, Michael D. Anderson, Mariah Baird, Henry Barner, Benevity Community Impact Fund, Michael Bilton, LaVonne Blasche, Patricia & Leonard Blumin, Andrew Bollen, Dan Brady, Gay & Tim Cain, William Carney, Terry Church, James Cleaves, Dayton Coles, A. Crawford Cooley, Mark S. Cunningham, H.A. De Groot, FNW & DS Doodha, Michelle Eaton, Sharon Farrell, Dianne Fruin, Francine Goodman, Jane Gorski, Elizabeth & John Graham, Raven Gray, Maureen Groper, Susan Hamstra, Douglas Hanford, John Harrington & Ida Baugh, Ayris Hatton, Tom Hendricks, Robert Hinz, Vivian Holley & Bryan Baker, Suzanne D. Huang, O.D., Richard Jennings, Joyce L. Johnston, Reese & Margaret Jones, Terry & Patricia Keehn, James & Joan Kelly, Catherine Kennedy, MD, Candace Key, Marilyn V. Knight, J. M. Krygier, Uta Landy & Philip Darney, William Legge, Raymond L. Lent, Jeff Levin, Judith & Harold Lichterman, Margit Liesche, Helen & William Lindqvist, Jeffrey Long, Josephine P. Maisterra, Jeffery Martin, Prem & John McMurdo, Barbara & Gerald Meral, Ken Minkoff, Gerald & Mary Edith Moore, Marianne Nannestad, Lisa & Colin Nicholls, Thomas Peacock, Sarah Perry, Joanne K. Powell, Paul Pratchenko, Flinn & John Rauck, Donald & Hope Rehlender, Barbara & Jay Salzman, King R. Sams, Rolf & Charlotte Scherman, Elizabeth Schiff, Bruce & Trudie Scott, Stuart Siegel, Madeleine and Donald Simborg, Dwight & Elaine Straub, J. Dietrich Stroeh, Brittmarie Throner, Evelyn Topper, Jeanne & Peter Tymstra, Janice Ursin-Smith, Rose & Christopher Wager, M. Paige Wallace, William Washauer, Ellen & Kenneth Weber, Warren Wertheimer, Kathryn Wilson, Lucy A. Wilson, Carolyn and A. Frederick Wood, Diane Wrona, Catherine & John Yee, Suzanne Zimmerman

## SF BAY FLYWAY FESTIVAL

The 19th annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival hosted by the Mare Island Heritage Trust will take place February 13-15 in Vallejo. The main Flyway Festival headquarters, Building 253, 575 Connolly St., is at the former Mare Island Naval Shipyard where the Wildlife and Birding Expo includes exhibits and interactive activities offered by 75 or more non-profit, natural and historical resource agencies including Marin Audubon, self-guided walks, guided field trips, slide shows, and a live raptor show along with commercial art, birding suppliers, digital equipment and optics vendors, a fine art exhibition entitled "Bay Area Wetlands to Ridgetops," a silent auction and raffle and good food. For more information, check the website [www.sfbayflywayfestival.com](http://www.sfbayflywayfestival.com)

\$1,075K

\$860K

\$645K

\$430K

\$215K

\$0K



Close the Gap!

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS TO PURCHASE OF THE PROPERTY**

Deborah S. Ablin, Jean & George Banning, Stephen & Faith Brown, Pam & Jim Day, David & Kristine Donadio, William Donahoe & Kristin Klein, Neil Erickson, Roberta & Robert Geering, Kay Gillis, Joan Halverson, Michael & Valerie Hancock, Jennifer D. Hitchcock, Mary M. Hofmann, Else-Marie Johnson, Susan Kelly, Toni Littlejohn, Love Family Trust, Ron & Amanda Mallory, Pamela Manwaring & George Wimmer, Anthony J. Martin, Jr., Alexandra Matthews, Pete McFarland, Regina and John Milavec, Claudine Minchella, Lois & Bruce Moody, Inge Morrison, Lucienne O'Keefe, Maggie Rufo, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Jennifer C. Schriber, E. C. Shute, Jr, Dianne Sierra, Sharon M. Solomon, Jane Stevick, Roger Stoll, Lynne Rodgers for Dean Thomas, Suzanne Thornley, Marion Weeks, M. Douglas Woodring  
Richard Plant in memory of his parents, Paula J. MacNeill in memory of Vic Petreshene

**THANK YOU TO A SPECIAL DONOR**

We had a sizable donation this month from Inverness resident, Richard Plant, to help with the Close the Gap project in Corte Madera. Mr. Plant made the donation in memory of his parents Patricia and Thomas Plant, longtime residents of Marin County who passed away a few years ago. Both Plants loved nature and clearly they imparted this love to their son, who retired as a Board member of the Marin Resource Conservation District two years ago. His gift brings us closer to our fundraising goal.

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.

**CLOSE THE GAP**

**We Need Your Donation Now – More Than Ever** to close the gap of \$500,000 and purchase this critical property.

To update our funding progress: Marin Baylands Advocates has raised \$75,000 deposited in the Marin Baylands Fund at the Marin Community Foundation and in Marin Baylands Advocates account; Marin Conservation League has set up a special account into which its members have donated almost \$15,000 and made several large pledges. Donors have contributed \$97,000 to Marin Audubon. Fifteen local Foundations have also contributed almost \$77,000. We have received \$30,000 from the Wimberly Foundation through Audubon California and \$175,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Thank you to all of you—our wonderful donors. We are more than half way there—but we're still short.

We are still a ways off from the needed amount, and unfortunately we did not get the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant we were hoping for. Their only grant in San Francisco Bay went to Cullinan Ranch which is a much larger project and also is a federal project. Other California grants went to Elkhorn Slough and a project in Humboldt Bay.

We have extended our agreement deadline for purchasing the property to mid-May. And, now we will continue our fundraising to Close the Gap in our funding.

We need to purchase this property to restore the filled lands to tidal marsh habitat and remove other damaging uses to benefit the endangered Ridgway's Rails and other species. After purchase and restoration, the property will be donated to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to be added to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve.

We could lose this property forever if we don't purchase it now. Please donate generously. For each donation of \$1,000 we will display your name as a generous contributor on the project site. Thank you.

**NEW PROJECT PROPOSED FOR GREENPOINT NURSERY PROPERTY**

The latest proposal for the Balestreri property, on which the Greenpoint Nursery is located at the intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues, is for a 3,148-square-foot single family home with a 576-square-foot, two-car garage. This is the property that is bordered on two sides by Marin Audubon's Olive and

Atherton properties and on which a solar farm was proposed, and rejected by the Supervisors, last year.

The application complies with county's zoning for the property which allows for one single family house. The new house would be located south of the nursery; the nursery would remain.

The plans call for a mix of native and non-native plants, including turf grass. Actually no species on the plant list are natives. The only species that could be considered native is California Redwood that was planted on the property some years ago but is not indigenous to the Novato area. Redwoods prefer a moister, cooler climate than exists in Novato. The plan proposes to dig up some of the Redwoods and replant them elsewhere on-site. The extensive use of non-native plants means more water use and the use of fertilizer and herbicides is likely. We would like to see all native plants used.

Also, we are concerned that the runoff/drainage from the rain and plant watering not impact the wetlands on our property. The plan simply indicates the drainage would be directed to the street.

The comment period was short and ended on January 15.

**STATUS OF GNOSS FIELD EXPANSION PROJECT**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has informed Marin County Public Works staff that they are requiring the county to redo the aviation forecast for Gness Field, the Marin County Airport south of Redwood Landfill and Northwest of Bahia. Redoing the aviation forecast means that the county must revisit and revise accordingly: the number of aircraft that use the Gness Field runway; identify the critical aircraft, i.e. the type of aircraft that use the runway for 500 takeoffs and landings; and identify the specifications for the critical aircraft to use the runway at all times, i.e. the length of runway needed by the critical aircraft, if fully loaded, and other variables such as temperature, and weather conditions.

The FAA will not finalize the federal environmental review (Environmental Impact Statement) until the above analysis is completed. It is likely to take months to complete the analysis. This means, at minimum, that any further public hearing on the project will be considerably delayed. The Supervisors will be discussing the FAA letter at their meeting on January 27.

It is very possible that the required

reevaluation will result in a changed project that would shorten the runway length. This change would mean reduced environmental impacts, particularly reduced loss of wetlands.

Gnoss Field is the County Airport located just south of Redwood Landfill and northwest of Bahia. The current project would lengthen the runway 1,100 feet to the northwest and construct new levees and drainage ditches to accommodate the extension. The stated purpose of the expansion project has been to allow airplanes that use the airport currently to use it under all weather conditions. Now during hot weather they must take off with a lighter load because warm air is thinner and provides less lift so fully loaded planes need a longer runway to accommodate that condition by reaching a higher takeoff speed.

MAS is concerned about the wetlands that would be filled to extend the runway and reconstruct levees, whether this loss is really necessary, and if it is, where and how it would be mitigated. The potential for increased airplane traffic is also a concern as low flying planes disturb birds on the Bahia and Rush Creek wetlands.

Public concern has been expressed that the expansion will allow for use of larger planes which would also mean more plane takeoffs and landings, and about the aircraft noise over Bahia and other nearby residential developments.

#### HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Review the environmental and other related documents and reports on the Marin County Gnoss Field website, [gnossfieldeis-eir.com](http://gnossfieldeis-eir.com).

Submit comments, written or email, to Marin County Department of Public Works, Eric Steger at [e.steger@marincounty.org](mailto:e.steger@marincounty.org).

#### NEW ROAD TO NOWHERE

Have you noticed the new access road at the landfill? It's adjacent to and parallel to Highway 101 just south of the Redwood Landfill access road. The road was built on seasonal wetlands which were filled to raise it out of the floodplain. It extends about a quarter mile and then ends in a turn-around. The road is paved and elevated so you can't drive off into the adjacent field. The only place that is accessible from the new access road is the existing gravel road to Mira Monte which will not be needed once the marsh restoration takes place. It is truly a road to nowhere—what a waste of taxpayers' money!

#### SUPPORT WILDLIFE, BUY A DUCK STAMP

Duck stamps are more than just a stamp with a pretty picture of a duck. The duck stamp program is one of the most successful

conservation programs in history. Every duck stamp purchased benefits wildlife and people. For just \$25 you will get a beautiful collectible stamp featuring a native duck painted by a talented artist, the winner of an annual contest to choose the image. Most post offices sell duck stamps.

This year, the price of the duck stamps is being raised from \$15 to \$25 in order to restore purchasing power that has been lost since 1991, when the price of a stamp was last raised.

Hunters first advocated for the duck stamp program that saved much of America's wildlife from devastation in the midst of the dust bowl and the Great Depression.

Since its creation in 1934 with the passage of the Duck Stamp Act, the program has allowed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase more than six million acres of habitat for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System. But rising land prices have gradually eroded the Service's ability to protect important habitat through acquisition. The Service estimates that with the funds raised with the increase, they will be able to protect an additional 17,000 acres of habitat every year.

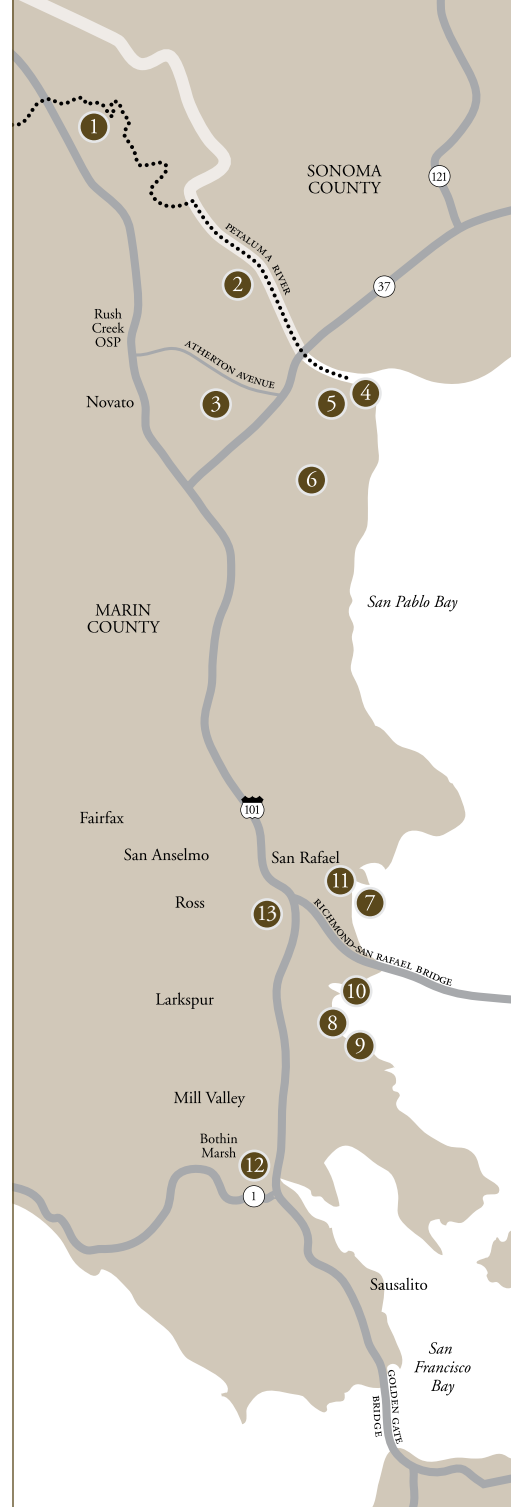
More than protecting habitat and wildlife, the wetlands and uplands purchased with duck stamp monies provide natural protection against flooding and storm surges, filter pollutants from water used for drinking, help improve air quality and support thousands of jobs linked to recreation and tourism. The habitats purchased through Duck Stamp funding are accessible to everyone for all sorts of recreational activities including hiking, photography, and birding. A valid duck stamp will gain you free admission to scores of refuges that charge admission.

The Duck Stamp program helps ensure that wildlife and wild places will survive for future generations to use and enjoy. So go to your local post office and buy a duck stamp today!

#### BAY BIRDS AFFECTED BY LETHAL 'GOO'

At press time, the news media for days have been reporting that hundreds of birds on and along the Bay, initially from Alameda to Hayward, are being contaminated with a still unidentified goopy substance. It is not a petroleum product. The birds' feathers become matted and the birds become hypothermic and unable to recover without rescue. Most of the affected birds are diving birds but some shorebirds have also been contaminated.

Rescued birds are being stabilized and cleaned by International Bird Rescue. For details and to volunteer see their blog <http://blog.bird-rescue.org>. They estimate that it costs \$6,000 to \$8,000 per day to care for the birds. Donations from the public and support by volunteers are essential to the effort.



#### MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	144 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
13. Cal Park	<1 acre

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### BAHIA

January and February are the ideal months to plant. January volunteers planted wetland plants at the Central Peninsula, and they plan to do the same next month. We also plan to plant thickets on the Western Peninsula using the template that was developed by The Watershed Nursery for the problem soils at the Eastern Peninsula: installing DriWater, placing mulch and amending the clay soil. DriWater is a commercial product that consists of a cellulose gel encased in a tube that releases water by biochemical action as the surrounding soil dries. On the Eastern Peninsula, the thickets and marsh are doing fine, except for the loose dogs that their owners allow to roam through the habitats.

### BAHIA SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT (SEP)

On January 19 and 20, twenty volunteers and a crew of six from Shelterbelt Builders planted 1,000 creeping wild rye (*Elymus triticoides*) and 38 goldenrod (*Euthamia occidentalis*) plants around the tidal pond MAS owns at Bahia. They removed all of the tubes we used for DriWater on the plants we planted several years ago because they are now mature enough to survive on their own. We ordered additional plants to supplement those we installed several years ago. Other species that we ordered from The Watershed Nursery: Coyote Bush, (*Baccharis pilularis*) and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), will be planted later. This project is being implemented at MAS's Bahia pond using SEP funding we received from the Novato Sanitary District through a program of the State Water Resources Control Board.

Volunteers came from several local high schools and were recruited through the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership.

### Simmons SEP

Initially, it looked as though we might not be able to plant this year at the Simmons property adjacent to Deer Island. However, with our lack of rain, the flood waters are subsiding by late January. In December the wetland was attracting diving ducks, in late January it is being used by dabblers. Unless we have additional heavy rains

### Christmas Bird Counts

*continued from page 2*

**Woodpeckers** were found in the Tiburon count area. Some rarities included a **California Thrasher** in the Muir Woods count area and a **Western Tanager** was found in San Rafael. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** and a **Nashville Warbler** were found in the Bolinas area.



Photos courtesy of Jude Stalker

### Volunteer Breana Biggi and other volunteers planted creeping wild rye at Bahia on the second Saturday of January

it looks like we will be able to plant along the edges and on higher ground soon, and later on lower sections of the site. Mother Nature or is it climate change make it difficult sometimes—we have to deal with too much water, then drought, now too much water again.

### Simmons North

Our dedicated volunteer, Lowell Sykes, planted 15 *Baccharis pilularis* on the mound at the Simmons North section. These mounds were created several years ago with material excavated to create deeper areas to retain water longer as habitat. This enhancement project was funded by the National Resource Conservation Service. We also ordered some wetland plants which we want to plant as soon as the water subsides. Right now that area is flooded also, but it does not hold water as long as the south end of that property.

### Triangle Marsh

On January's volunteer day, a crew of six volunteers rescued and replanted native *Baccharis pilularis* plants from almost certain unpleasant fate where they were growing near Paradise Drive. They dug up the plants and transplanted them in the habitat at the east end of the berm where there are fewer native plants growing. In the course of the planting, the volunteers also removed weeds. What great work!

A **Cassin's Vireo** in the Phoenix Lake area and **Swainson's Thrush** in Bolinas were both new species for the count and rare anywhere in the country in winter. Also a **Lewis's Woodpecker** was a new species for the count.

For the first time in many years no **Ridgway's Rails** (formerly named Clapper Rails) were found in the count circle.

*Ed Nute and Bob Hinz, Compilers*

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The season's planting is probably finished at Triangle Marsh, but there may still be some to do at Bahia. We will be mulching the new plants if necessary and eliminating the competition. Harding grass is growing vigorously and fennel is starting, but the California natives like monkeyflower and coastal sage are also being rejuvenated by the December rain.

Act locally and join us on a workday. 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: February 7, March 7

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

#### Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: February 14, March 14

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

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

### THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Gabriela Bello, Breana Biggi, Lily Broadhead, Bob Bundy, Dave Chenoweth, Nicholas Decker, Cameron Gregory, Zofie Haulena, Bob Hinz, Flinn Rauck, Eliza Ross, Judi & Kimi Rossi, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vicky Van, Gabe Whooley, Katy Zaremba

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jeffrey L. Anderson, Robert Atwood, Teresa Black, Ryleigh-Hailey Brownridge, Andrea Celone Perce, Doug Cook, Pam & Jim Day, Sarah Devlin, Neil Erickson, Judith Flanders, Marynoel Hendren, Ed Hibler, Jennifer Hitchcock, Stephanie Hopkins, Charles Little, Tim Loucks, Jane Lybecker, Alexandra Matthews, Cristi McCabe, Alex Merritt, Dorothy & Robert Moy, Myra Natter, Connor Oharabaker, Alison & Keith Pinto, Margit Schnell, Steven Sicher, Suzanne Thornley, Julie Walker, Paige Wallace

# MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2014 – JANUARY 2015

By Josiah Clark

Winter brings both opportunities and challenges for birds. The long awaited rains in December may have drenched land birds but it created new feeding opportunities for water birds. It has also given the seed producing plants a good start, which will hopefully mean stronger numbers of wintering sparrows for next year's CBC counters. Meanwhile frugivorous robins and thrushes appear more common this year, likely in response to difficulty finding food to the north.

In Marin, the Christmas Bird Count season brings more birders into the field than any other. These counts are not only surveys of the local bird populations; they also help to acquaint newer birders with what is expected. For seasoned Christmas Bird Counters even the rarities start to become expected.



Glen Topke, gtopke@placsc.com

**LeConte's Sparrow**

(BB, HC, KH, TP, RT). Remote and rarely birded, upper Walker Creek held the count's only **Rough-legged Hawk** (RF), and its delta the count's apparent final holdout **Red Knot** (AK, JC).

The South Marin Count on December 28 sent hardy hikers to locations such as Barth's Retreat, where 2 **Townsend's Solitaires** were found at their favorite spot in the county (DS). The only **Snowy Plover** for the count was sleuthed out among the many beachgoers at Sea Drift (DK). Among the 159 species noted by Bolinas counters were many noteworthy ones, but none more so than a wintering **Swainson's Thrush**. The bird was photographed and constitutes one of the few winter records for the state (PP).

Observers and Acronyms **AK:** Andy Kleinhesselink, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **DK:** Durrell Kapan, **DS:** David Sexton, **HC:** Heather Cameron, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **KS:** Ken Schneider, **MD:** Mark Dettling, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **RC:** Rene Cormier, **RF:** Rob Furrow, **RT:** Ryan Terrill, **TP:** Todd Plummer, **WD:** Wendy Dreskin

## Bay Area Audubon Council Report

Bay Area Audubon Chapter representatives met on January 10 for the most recent quarterly meeting with Audubon California. We met new Chapter representative on the Audubon California Board Wendy Schackwitz, new Audubon California staff Ariana Richert, Chapter Network Manager, and Juan Altamirano, Legislation Director. We heard updates about Audubon's priority areas (climate change and at-risk species, **Tricolored Blackbird**, **Snowy Plover**, and **Scoters**) and proposed new San Francisco Bay Important Bird Areas in northeast San Pablo Bay and along the eastern edge of the South Bay both of which are areas where Scoters, which are experiencing a significant population decline, congregate in winter. Guest speaker, Orien Richmond, of the US Fish and Wildlife

Service explained the Service's mid-winter waterbird surveys and the difficulties they are having keeping these important counts going. Finally, an update on Altamont Pass wind turbines—one of the largest wind turbine companies (Altamont Wind Inc.) has applied to Alameda County to extend operations of its current turbines in spite of previous agreements to stop them. This would mean continued operation of old turbines killing more birds. Audubon California is organizing opposition. Robin Leong of Napa-Solano Audubon announced the breaching of the dikes at Cullinan Ranch that occurred on January 6, the culmination of 20 years of effort to save this large property from a massive development and restore it to marsh.

## 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. When National Audubon 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 [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org), or contact Wendy at 415/457-3949.



**Abigail Willian** is a first grader at Bacich Elementary School. She would like to see a Western Bluebird which is one of the ten first grade birds she studied.



**Kate Wentzell** is a kindergarten student at St. Rita's School. She passed the Junior Bird Watcher test at First Grade Level, learning 20 birds. She loves the Cedar Waxwings that come to feed on berries in her yard. She says that once she found a dead one and got to spread its wings and examine the beautiful feathers up close.



# The Rail

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## SAVE THE DATE

- February 13-15 **SF Bay Flyway Festival**  
Mare Island, Vallejo  
[www.sfbayflywayfestival.com](http://www.sfbayflywayfestival.com)
- March 5 **Field Trip: Las Gallinas**
- March 7 **Field Trip: Capay Valley**  
With Terry Colborn
- March 7 **Stewardship Day**, Triangle Marsh
- March 14 **Stewardship Day**, Bahia
- March 14 **Field Trip: Tolay Lake**  
With Gene Hunn
- March 21 **Field Trip: Nicasio Reservoir**  
With Jim White and Bob Battagin

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## SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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 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 website using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org).

## JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and the chapter. With this joint membership, you will receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits, however, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. We will receive, however, a portion of any new memberships that are generated by MAS, the local chapter. So we request that you send all checks for new National memberships to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

For NAS membership renewals, send your check directly to NAS.

## Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

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