



Len Blumkin

Marsh Wren

Restoration of salt ponds has been a major focus of wetland conservation in San Francisco Bay over the past two decades. In this review, we will examine the changing estuary conditions, the history and challenges of salt pond restoration, efforts to monitor changing conditions, effects on waterbirds, and the threat of climate change. We will look at predictions for waterbird numbers in managed ponds, at habitat elements that have been tested to benefit breeding and wintering shorebirds, and at the success of social attraction studies for nesting seabirds. Finally, we will discuss the direction of wetland restoration in light of the ecosystems that we now support in San Francisco Bay.

Dr. John Y. Takekawa is Operations Manager at the Suisun Resource Conservation District and a former USGS research scientist. His research has been on ecology of waterbirds with expertise in telemetry to study movement ecology. He has published more than 200 papers, and his work has included examining habitat preferences and effects of sea level rise on waterbirds.

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Settlement Reached in Marin Audubon Lawsuit Against MCOSED

We are pleased to announce that, after more than a year of negotiation, MAS has reached a settlement agreement in our suit against the Marin County Open Space District (OSD) brought to protect the threatened Northern Spotted Owl (NSO). Filing the suit was motivated by the OSD's failure to consider the impact of expected increased trail use on nesting owls and its failure to provide adequate public review under the California Environmental Quality Act. The District claimed that trail construction was covered under the Road and Trails Management Plan (RTMP) and that post-project trail use would not increase, although there was no data to support this claim.

The settlement included measures to determine and reduce user impacts on the nesting spotted owls, and ensure the public's ability to have input on projects:

1. A pilot night closure program of ten trails that are close to owl nests.

The closure covers all users and will be in effect during the typical Spotted Owl breeding season, defined as February 1 through July 31. The trails will be marked with a sign and will be listed on the Marin County Parks website www.marincounty.org/depts/pk/divisions/open-space/main/road-and-trail-conditions. Trails subject to night closures and where counters will be installed include: Fairway, Boulder Springs, Piedmont, Willis Evans, Hunt Camp, Octopus, Warner Canyon, Porcupine, Haute Lagunitas and Blue Ridge Fire Road.

2. A program to count trail users.

The District will install devices to count trail users on the same ten trails for the purposes of collecting data on compliance with night access restrictions in effect due to the night closures and for monitoring recreational use of the trails during all hours. Data will be collected for five years. The OSD will follow protocols that were



Kameron Perensovich

Northern Spotted Owl

prepared by a Marin Audubon Society biologist expert in Spotted Owls. Protocols also include manufacturer's specifications for installing the counters. The mechanical counters can detect whether passing bodies are people, bikes or horses. Reports on the surveys will be provided to MAS on an annual basis.

3. Future CEQA Action

Prior to approving any trail project after the date of this Settlement Agreement, the OSD will provide public notice and a 30-day opportunity to review and comment on any assessment of whether the environmental effects of any trail project are covered in the RTMP Program EIR or whether an Initial Study, Negative Declaration or EIR must be prepared for a trail project, except for projects that qualify for Categorical Exemption.

We trust that this negotiated settlement will *continued on page 5*

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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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.

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Website: www.marinaudubon.org

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org

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 \$500 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

More depressing news came this month from the Trump administration that has opened most of the coastal federal waters to oil drilling and ordered the Department of Interior to no longer enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The purpose of this historic treaty among many countries is to protect birds that cross international boundaries. Legal opinions vary about what Trump's action will mean. Because it is not based on a legal determination, some feel that it will have little effect on court decisions, but that is unclear.

Opening up coastal waters to oil drilling will put countless birds at risk, especially seabirds. Under this plan, millions of acres of offshore waters and sensitive ecosystems would be open to new drilling in the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Please write the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management urging it to reject this plan and keep sensitive areas protected.

One thing is clear though—these are more insults to the environment and to humanity inflicted by the current administration. Other changes in environmental policy have included weakening of both wetland regulations and EPA oversight.

There are, however, bright spots locally and regionally. There is more marsh with endangered species habitat thanks to our Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Marsh Restoration Project, and to the many generous contributors who made the acquisition and restoration happen. There is more hope for Northern Spotted Owl and other species thanks to settlement of our lawsuit against the County that will provide data on use impacts and better ensure

public input on projects.

There is also new hope for San Rafael with interest in sea level rise by the Marin Community Foundation's providing funding for our Nature-Based Adaptation grant and the Resilient by Design focus. We also have had three successful bird counts thanks to the compilers and many volunteer counters. Some results of the counts are on page 6. And, we are actively working on acquiring additional habitat.

We received generous donations from many members in response to our end-of year appeal. As you may remember, we receive minimal reimbursement for memberships in National Audubon Society. It appears that donations were substantial and we are most grateful. They will enable us to continue and expand our programs to protect wildlife.

We're most pleased to welcome our new Membership Secretary, Elyse Omernick, who will be assuming the important duty of managing our membership list. Elyse is a wife and mother of two, a California native, and lives in Larkspur. She has a degree in illustration and animation, enjoys photographing wildlife, and is a new and avid birder.

Our Nominating Committee will be beginning its work to fill vacant seats on our Board. If you are interested please contact Chair, Bob Hinz. We are looking for someone who likes working with people to serve as our Volunteer Coordinator. We also have an ongoing need for volunteers, who would not be Board members, interested in helping with our efforts, particularly improving habitats.

eBIRD WORKSHOP

Richardson Bay Audubon Center Tiburon

Saturday, February 10, 2018
8:30 AM to noon
With Dan Singer

Dan Singer has agreed once again to lead this informative workshop for both eBird newcomers as well long-time contributors wanting to learn more. The workshop will offer hands-on instruction for entering data, guidance on best practices, and suggestions on how to make use of eBird data to enhance your own birding. The class will include a bird walk for collecting and entering data, both in the field and in the classroom. Much of the class will be devoted to a question and answer period where your questions and concerns can be addressed.

Be sure to bring your laptop and/or handheld device.

Our instructor, Dan Singer, is an avid eBird

user and an eBird reviewer of checklists and records for San Francisco, Marin and Sonoma Counties. Class size is limited to 15 people with advance registration required. Contact Jane Medley at janermedley@gmail.com to register. Please include your name and phone number.

The fee for this workshop will be \$5 for Marin Audubon members and \$10 for non-members, payable at the door. If you are not already a MAS member, we invite you to join at this event. We will meet in the Audubon Center classroom where the Marin Audubon monthly Speaker Series programs are held.

DIRECTIONS: *The Richardson Bay Audubon Center is at 376 Greenwood Beach Rd. Take the Tiburon Blvd. exit from Hwy 101 and drive about 0.8 mile to Greenwood Cove Rd. Turn right at the traffic light toward the Audubon Center, which is about 0.5 mile farther.*

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one-day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, snacks, water, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility, and weather check: Jane Medley, 559/760-1551, janermedley@gmail.com.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

THE PONDS AT THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD)

San Rafael

Thursday, February 1, 2018

8:30 AM to noon – **NOTE EARLY START**

With Sande and Bob Chilvers

Beginning birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas ponds. Join our skilled leaders as we search for waterfowl, waders, songbirds, raptors, and shorebirds. Wintering waterfowl provide interesting weekly sightings such as the continuing female Redhead and a pair of Hooded Mergansers.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, so come assist in our search. You don't even have to arrive on time because we spend the first 30-60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond and the group is easy to find. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about .5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There is an outhouse in the parking area for public use or you can use the bathrooms at nearby McInnis Park.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

► Trip Full – Wait List Only

Departure/return at Antioch Marina

Sunday, February 4, 2018

(Super Bowl Sunday)

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

All available spaces on this boat trip have been sold. However, there are often several cancellations prior to the trip. If you wish to be included on a waiting list for this trip, contact Jane Medley at janermedley@gmail.com. Be sure to include the name, email address, and phone number for each possible passenger.

For a complete description of this trip, consult our January *Rail*, available at www.marinaudubon.org.

FORT MASON/CRISSY FIELD

San Francisco

Sunday, February 11, 2018

8 AM to noon

With David Assman

Bird two of San Francisco's hot spots, Fort Mason and Crissy Field. Fort Mason has a variety of habitats at the northeast corner of San Francisco and has an eBird list of 106 species for February. We'll be looking for overwintering species including the White-throated Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and the Nashville Warbler. There could be four species of woodpeckers in the park. We'll also be looking for early migrants; Allen's Hummingbird shows up by February. We will scan Aquatic Park for water birds including loons, cormorants, ducks, and gulls. The morning high tide at 8:10 means we'll have a good chance of finding one of the Wandering Tattlers on the pier. Then we'll travel to Crissy Field to look for loons, ducks, and shorebirds. Crissy Field Lagoon is a hotspot on the northern shore of San Francisco. Snowy Plovers may be found in the protected area.

DIRECTIONS: Meet in front of the Fort Mason Community Garden. Enter Fort Mason at Bay and Franklin (it's at the very end of Franklin St.). There should be ample free parking. Make sure you do not park in reserved spots. Meet in front of the Community Garden (gate on the east side of the garden). Heavy rain cancels.

NICASIO RESERVOIR

No. 2, Birding in Marin (BIM) Series

Saturday, February 17, 2018

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

We will meet at the backstop to the baseball field in the West Marin hamlet of Nicasio. This is Bob's home 'patch' where the riparian, open field and wooded habitats are good for a nice variety of sparrows, gleaners, and woodpeckers. Next, we'll go to nearby Nicasio Reservoir and make several stops along the shoreline. Many water bird species hang out there while raptors grace the sky, and who knows what will be flitting around in the willows and shrubs that line the shore? In the afternoon we are likely to explore along the northern shoreline of Tomales Bay. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 take the Lucas Valley Rd exit. Turn left on Lucas Valley Rd and continue approximately 10.3 miles. Keep right on Nicasio Valley Rd for 0.5 mile to the town of Nicasio. The baseball field is in the center of town. For GPS, use 1 Old Rancheria Rd, Nicasio.

CORTE MADERA MARSHES

Marta's Marsh to MAS's Restoration Site

Monday, February 19, 2018

11 AM to 2:30 PM

With Roger Harris

This trip is timed to capture the influx of wintering water birds as a high tide floods the San Francisco Bay, and the birds stream into the refuges in Corte Madera Marsh. We will take a short walk along San Clemente Creek as sandpipers and other waterbirds fly from the bay mudflats to the high tide refuge at Marta's Marsh. After the tide has risen further, we will walk to a tidal channel to look and listen for the endangered Ridgway's Rail, which is common in this marsh. We will then carpool a short way to the overlook at Corte Madera Shorebird Marsh, which can be quite spectacular in the winter with ducks, more shorebirds, and interesting possibilities for raptors. (There are no restrooms on this trip, but you will be passing the mall which comes well equipped in that department.) In addition to observing the behavior of these species, we will also address marsh processes, wetland vegetation, and coastal ecology. We will end with a visit to MAS's newly restored site with Barbara Salzman. Heavy rain cancels.

What to bring: Please wear layers, good walking shoes, and bring rain gear and binoculars. Bring water, snacks, and/or lunch. Optional items include: backpack, scope, guidebooks, camera, sunscreen, and sunhat.

DIRECTIONS: Take the Tamalpais Exit from Hwy 101 in Corte Madera and go east. Turn right on San Clemente Dr., which merges into Paradise Dr.; take the first left onto Harbor Dr.; then turn right onto Yolo and left onto Channel Dr. Meet at the north end of Channel Dr. in east Corte Madera, where the road dead-ends with the marsh.

SKAGGS ISLAND AND HUDEMAN SLOUGH Sonoma County

Saturday, February 24, 2018

8:45 AM to 3 PM

With Murray Berner

Murray Berner led trips for Napa-Solano Audubon for many years and authored the Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas. With him as our guide, we will be allowed access to Skaggs Island, generally closed to the public. The island, a former naval facility, is now part of San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, an addition of more than 3000 acres. February is peak season for raptors, including Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon and Burrowing Owl, plus dozens of kites and harriers, all of which were seen on last year's field trip. Black Rail is resident and was heard by our group last year. Songbirds flock in the former residential area, harassed by Merlin and accipiters. Allen's Hummingbird will be displaying among the eucalyptus.

We will meet at the south entrance to Skaggs Island off of Hwy 37 and travel by car across the island, stopping to bird along the way. Some birders may wish to leave when we reach the island's north gate. Interested birders may continue with the group to Hudeman Slough where we will bird on foot. Dress in layers and sturdy shoes and bring lunch and water. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 north to Hwy 37 East. At the intersection with SR 121 (Sonoma Raceway), continue straight on Hwy 37 for 3.8 miles and turn left at Skaggs Island Rd. No restrooms available.

PETALUMA RIVER BOAT TRIP

Departure/return at Petaluma

ONLINE SIGNUPS BEGIN FEBRUARY 26

Monday, April 9, 2018

9 AM to 2 PM

With Peter Colasanti

This unique excursion with Dolphin Charters will take us through a small salt water estuary off San Pablo Bay that runs about ten miles through some of the last mostly untouched salt water marshes in the Bay Area. Cruising down the Petaluma River, passengers enter a different world. We will meander past sloughs, oxbows, and marshes offering views not visible from adjacent lands. Our boat will continue into San Pablo Bay where grebes, ducks, and terns can be seen in the shallow water habitat. We will view the extensive mud flats along the edge of the bay, which often host large numbers of shorebirds as well as the raptors that feed on them. Last year's participants raved about this unexpectedly delightful trip! Once again, we have scheduled the trip at low tide to enhance our birding opportunities.

The trip is limited to 25 people and costs \$95 for MAS Chapter-Supporting Members and \$120 for non-members. (Non-member price includes a 2018 MAS Chapter-Supporting Membership.) Registration and payment for the trip will begin on Monday, February 26, 2018. Register at www.marinaudubon.org. **Book your space ASAP as our boat trips often sell out quickly.** Include the name, email address, and contact phone number of each participant. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Petaluma Turning Basin and other instructions prior to the trip.

CONSERVATION

CORTE MADERA MARSH RESTORATION PROGRESS

MAS's marsh restoration in Corte Madera proceeded quickly until the rains came. By that time in early January, we had finished all but installation of the fences, completion of the access trail, minor grading and clean up. The erosion control, hydroseeding of all bare ground and placing straw wattles at the base of the mounds was completed the day before the first rainstorm. The project has two components: restoring tidal marsh by excavating fill that was placed 40-50 years ago, and creating high tide transition zone habitat.

Questions have been raised about the need for the large berm. The large berm that extends from north to south along the western boundary of the site, and the two smaller piles to the north of the CDFW parking lot, consist of soil and debris that was excavated to lower the elevation of the other half of the site to marsh. While both serve a habitat function, i.e., to buffer the adjacent marshes from adjacent uses, **the large berm is specifically designed to provide high tide transition zone and habitat for other species such as Song Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat.** Gradually subsidence and compaction will cause the berm and piles to become lower.

The hydroseed mix included four grass species: Meadow Barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*), Blue Wildrye (*Elymus glaucous*), Purple Needlegrass (*Nassella pulchra*), and Creeping Wildrye (*Elymus triticooides*). We have not tried seeding with all of these species previously, and we are looking forward to evaluating which ones have the best germination and survival rate.

Plants were grown specifically for the transition zone establishment on this site. They are being planted by Shelterbelt Builders in late January. The following species were grown for planting on this site: Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*), California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), Western Goldenrod (*Euthamia occidentalis*), Gumplant (*Grindelia stricta*), Sticky Monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), Common rush (*Juncus patens*), and two grasses in plugs: Creeping Wild Rye and Purple Needlegrass. The species were specifically chosen to provide critical high tide refugia habitat for Ridgway's Rails. They will be planted in thickets that will provide cover where the rails could hide from raptors which are frequent visitors to the marsh.

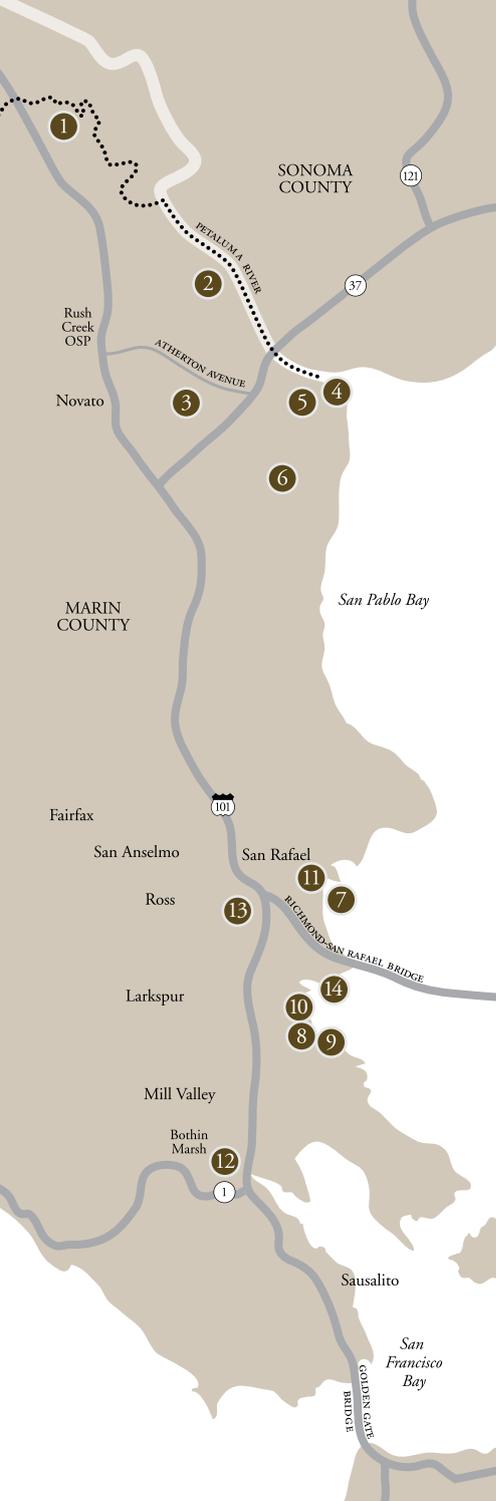
This is a project to restore marsh habitat to one of the most important marshes in the Bay. It includes an ancient marsh, i.e., one that has never been diked, with a high population of endangered Ridgway's Rails, and it is an

Ecological Reserve, a state designation that has the highest level of protection. To protect these important resources from people and dogs that have been roaming disturbing wildlife and damaging the adjacent marsh and the unrestored habitat for many years, **fencing is an essential component of the project.** In fact, one of the benefits of the project is that the fencing will block off access of people and dogs to the marsh habitat, including the fully tidal marsh, the high marsh that is only inundated at higher tides, and the adjacent uplands, which are nesting and foraging habitat for the special status sub-species of Song Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat.

A chain link fence along the western boundary of the will protect the restored habitat from intrusion from the west. This is a particularly important location, where for a long time people have walked from the SMART levee trail across the filled land that MAS purchased, onto and through the Reserve's high marsh. Unless folks knew their marsh plants or went at very high tides, they may not even have known they were walking through marsh habitat. But their access wore a path through the marsh plants destroying that habitat, and their presence prevented marsh species from using it as habitat.

Access and viewing of the new marsh is provided on a path leading to an overlook adjacent to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's parking lot. A four-foot-high rustic fence between the path and the transition zone and marshes, will be a barrier and a reminder to visitors that they are to remain on the access path and overlook. The rustic fence will protect an area of the Ecological Reserve adjacent to the marsh that was restored several years ago by PG&E as mitigation for damage they caused to tidal marsh to service the Greenbrae Boardwalk. We will have an interpretive sign with illustrations as well as a sign recognizing the Conservancy and other major donors to the acquisition and restoration.

Because of the importance of the marsh and species that depend on it, wildlife monitors were on-site for much of the project construction. No Salt Marsh Harvest Mice were found, but there were multiple observations of Ridgway's Rails and their calls were detected as well. Other birds seen using the newly excavated areas were Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Least Sandpiper, Killdeer, White tailed Kite, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron, Golden Eagle, Greater Yellowlegs, Black-bellied Plover, and Long-billed Curlew. Canada Geese are eating our seeds.



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
14. Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion Site	5.2 acres

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

The upland transition zone will need regular tending, i.e., weeding out non-native plants so that they do not overrun the natives, and watering. More plants will be added next year to replace any that do not survive and to increase the vegetative habitat. In contrast to tidal marsh habitats, in which seeds are deposited with sediments by the tides and grow naturally, it takes years of waiting and tending to grow an upland transition zone to provide protective cover for wildlife. **We are looking for volunteers who can help us nurture the species we plant for habitat.** We are planning to hold a workday or two a month to help us tend this important habitat. To volunteer to join this important crew, email Barbara Salzman (bsalzman@att.net) or Martha Jarocki (marthajarocki@comcast.net).

SEA LEVEL RISE AND MAS'S TISCORNIA MARSH

Funded by MAS's **Nature-Based Sea Level Rise Adaptation grant**, our engineers, ESA, are working on draft conceptual designs for stabilizing and restoring Tiscornia Marsh and improving the levee to help protect the Canal community and provide refugia habitat. The grant was awarded by the Coastal Conservancy with funding coming from the Marin Community Foundation. Two public meetings and a field trip are part of the responsibilities of project partners, ESA, Shore Up Marin, Siegel Environmental and Marin Audubon. The purpose of this public meeting was to educate the community about sea level rise, its potential impacts to the community, and ways to help reduce sea level rise as well as to introduce the community to us and to our project.

Our first public meeting took place at the Albert Boro Community Center in the Canal area on January 25. Presenters were engineer Dane Behrens from ESA and Stuart Siegel with Siegel Environmental (SE). Former supervisor Steve Kinsey served as moderator and made informed contributions. From all accounts, the meeting was a great success. It was attended by

more than 50 folks. The audience was supportive of our work, and contributed thoughtful questions and comments. Generally the message from the presenters was that sea level rise is here, it will adversely affect the Canal area and much of San Rafael, and our Tiscornia project is a first step in helping San Rafael deal with the impacts it will have on the community. We'll provide more information on the message next month.

Resilient by Design, a competitive urban planning effort funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the Bay Area communities, has chosen the San Rafael Shoreline as a focus area, and assigned it to the BionicTeam. BionicTeam consists of many consultants, many non-local: Bionic Landscape, WXY, PennDesign, Michael Yarne, Enterprise, Moffat & Nichol, WRA, RMA, the Estuary and Oceans Science Center (formerly Romberg Tiburon Center), SFSU, BAYCAT, Studio for Urban Projects, RAD Urban and Keyser Marston Associates.

We have met with members of BionicTeam and presented our views and our long history on the San Rafael Bayfront. They are currently in the process of organizing and interviewing stakeholders of which MAS is one. MAS's history goes back 40-50 years to when Canalways was owned by a pyramid company, Holiday Magic. We were involved when a planning effort provided for protection of the tidal marsh and the MMWD marsh along the Bayfront and allowed all of the current office buildings. Our history includes the acquisition of Tiscornia Marsh and our long-time efforts to acquire and protect the 85-acre Canalways site, the undeveloped property north of the Target store. We also discussed how our projects will interact and how we will work together in the future. We expressed our concern about the urbanization of San Rafael and the BionicTeam's early submittals which were heavy on urban development along the canal. The team will be setting up a steering committee and we expressed our interest in working with the stakeholders group working on habitat protection and restoration.

Settlement Reached

continued from page 1

lead to better understanding of trail impacts on NSO as well as a more comprehensive environmental review process, and that improved protection for the owls will result.

Marin Audubon brought this suit in 2016 after the OSD approved improvements to and adoption of the Contour/Candelero trail complex as part of its designated trail system based on a Negative Declaration and immediately filed the Notice of Determination (NOD) with the state. Construction of the trail improvements began four days after the NOD was filed effectively allowing no time for public

comment. Unfortunately, we had no influence on constructing the trail improvements because the improvements were quickly completed while the negotiations were just beginning.

A second suit against the OSD was brought by MAS with the Native Plant Society and Marin Conservation League over a similar CEQA action on the Hunt Camp Trail Complex. In this case, the District also hurried approval of the CEQA compliance document without providing adequate public input, failed to adequately evaluate trail impacts on special status plants, birds and endangered fish, and began work on the trail. This suit is still in negotiation.

THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Mary B. Abbott, Deborah S. Ablin, Ted Adams, Diane Aldrich, Diane Amarillas, Thomas & Helen Anawalt, Elizabeth P. Anderson, Thomas Anderson, Joyce & David Appen, Robert Arigi, Sara Arnaud, Katherine & Philip Arnaudo, Janet Arrigotti, Annelies Atchley, Bob Atwood, Suzanne Badenhoop & Guy Lampard, Linda Bartera, Robert & Jessica Batha, Bob Battagin, Anne Baxter, Robert L. Belichick, Donald & Renate Bixby, LaVonne Blasche, Greg & Giselle Block, Dewitt Bowman, Janet Braff, Marion Brennan, Janet S. Brown, Stephen & Faith Brown, Gay & Tim Cain, Robert A. Callahan, Lois Cannady, Terry Cantrell, Catherine Capper, Steve Capper, Samuel & Ingrid Chase, Robert and Sandra Chilvers, Richard S. Cimino & Janet Bodle, Everett Clark, Collin and Jill Cochrane, Ann Cognato, Glenna Coleman, Dayton Coles, Kate & Jeffrey Colin, A. Crawford Cooley, Geri & Wayne Cooper, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, Jon R. Culbertson, Susan Cumming, Ken & Ann Davis, Paula Dawson, Claudia De Domenico, Rudolph DeMay, David & Kristine Donadio, William Donahoe & Kristin Klein, Rama & Bernard Dunayevich, Rekha Dutt, Michelle Eaton, Jane W. Evans, Karen Evans, Lawrence Fahn, Richard Felton, Deirdre Fennessy, Charles Fisher, James Fowler, Martha Frankel, Lewis Fredrickson, Barbara Freitas, Dianne Fruin, Joann S. Gabel, Richard & Luisiana Gale, Charles C. Gardiner; Roberta & Robert Geering, Kay Gillis, Scott Goldberg, Elizabeth & Jon Goerke, Rosaline Gould, Carl & Donna Gowan, Pauline Grant, Maureen Groper, Jeannette Gustafson, Mark A. Hansen, Nancy & Dean Hanson, Margaret Harrington, Erika W. Harris, James Harrison, Roger Hartman, Lisa Hauck-Loy, Alan Hayakawa, Joanne Heffelfinger, Susan Helfrey, Tom Hendricks, Robert Hinz & Barbara Benson, Vivian Holley & Bryan Baker, Suzanne D. Huang, O.D., Elizabeth Huning, Richard Jennings, Mary & Steven Johnides, Duane Johnson, Robert Johnston, Reese & Margaret Jones, Durrell Kapan, Laura Kaplanis, John Kay, Susan B. Kelly, Robert Kennis, Janet Kerby, David Kimball & Anne Taylor, Jeffrey Kimball, Nancy Kirkpatrick, Judith Klein, Jeanne Kline, Josephine Kreider, Daniel & Sarah Kushner, Sondra & Ron Lanstein, Joe Lavigne, William Legge, Peggy & Mark Lehigh, Linda Levey & Mary Hanley, Jeff Levin, Barbara & Warren Levinson, Michael H. Linvill, David & Carolyn Long, Carolyn Longstreth, Lawrence Lossing & Ann Elston,

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HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Five hundred native grasses were transplanted at Bahia and five hundred more at Triangle Marsh. That will probably finish the season's planting at those locations. Now we will do our best to get them established by stopping the 'weeds' from outgrowing them. Italian thistle, an annual, might be large enough to remove, but there is a list of non-native perennials or somewhat perennial species that are due for digging out, such as mustard and bristly ox-tongue. A little mulching would be good, too.

Act locally and join us on a workday. Witness restoration firsthand and be a part of it.

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

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: February 3, March 3

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

Bahia, Novato:

Monthly workdays are continuing but on a more irregular schedule. If you would like to help, please contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Laurie Gong, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Lowell Sykes, Stefan Williams

VISIT THE 22ND ANNUAL FLYWAY FESTIVAL

When: February 9-11

Where: Building 221, 880 Walnut Ave. Mare Island, Vallejo

What: Field trips, optics, outdoor gear, art, more

For a complete schedule of events go to www.sfbayflywayfestival.com/San_Francisco_Bay_Flyway_Festival_2018/Schedule.html

GET A SCHEDULE OF MAS EVENTS BY EMAIL

Subscribe to Marin Audubon's online mailing list to receive one email per month on the first day of the month listing field trips, workshops, and the speaker series presentation for the month. To subscribe, go to MAS's home page, www.marinaudubon.org, click the SUBSCRIBE button on the right side.

Mixed Results for Marin's Christmas Bird Counts

The National Audubon Society has sponsored Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) for 118 years and they now cover most of the US as well as in many other countries. Each CBC covers a circle 15 miles in diameter. Three counts are sponsored by the Marin Audubon Society. Count results are sent to the National Audubon Society and provide valuable information on bird populations and trends. This is the longest running Citizen Science survey in the world.

CHEEP THRILLS

What a difference a little sunshine makes! After courageously counting every bird the Cheep Thrills counters could find during a torrential, all-day downpour last year, this year the sun rewarded the counters with over 43,000 birds, more than twice that of last year's 21,426. Bill Jones (Lucas Valley) was thrilled as the count in his area went from 18 species to 50. Jim White's group at Rush Creek had a rainy best of 75 species last year. His counters had 109 species this year to just beat out Jules Evens team's total of 108 species at Black Point.

With around 70 participants, the Rich Stallcup Cheep Thrills CBC, centered on Mt Burdell, got back to normal with 160 species and 43,922 birds. Bob Battagin (Nicasio) helped boost the final count with the solo observations of **Wood Ducks, Redhead, Clarks's Grebe, and Green Heron**. Heather Cameron's group (Bahia) provided the views of **Snow and Ross's Goose, Lesser Scaup, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, and Violet-green Swallow**. Jules Evens (Black Point) brought home the rails with 4 **Black** and 7 **Virginia Rails**. Peter Colasanti (Lakeville) provided the only **Bonaparte's Gulls** with 8, and Ed Nute's group added a **Rock Wren** to the count.

While uncommon birds are fun, the real winners of the CBC were the common birds. Every bird is important and counted. After the drought years and then a record rainfall wash-out in 2017, it was a relief to see a good count of our common backyard birds. There were 167 **California Quail**, 1,316 **Band-tailed Pigeons**, 234 **Anna's Hummingbirds**, 505 **Killdeer**, 759 **Ring-billed Gulls**, and 1,194 **California Gulls**. There were 127 **Northern Flickers**, 68 of them counted on Mt. Burdell. **Peregrine Falcons** were double digits for the first time, with a total of 10 observed. The most plentiful bird was the **European Starling** with 4,170.

The count dinner, organized by compiler Susan Kelly, was happily attended by most of the counters. There was a lot of excitement for

the first of the three Marin County CBCs and the pizzas served by Ghiringhelli's were great.

POINT REYES

More than 200 birders fanned out to scan the beaches, waterways, ranches and parklands of the Point Reyes Peninsula and parts of Marin County east of Tomales Bay on December 16. The Point Reyes count circle is centered near Shell Beach in Tomales Bay State Park. It extends from North Beach on the west side to Nicasio Reservoir on the east, and almost to Valley Ford on the north.

Clear skies and chilly weather were ideal for spotting raptors, including **Bald and Golden Eagles**, three falcon species, and a single **Rough-legged Hawk** at Tom's Point on Tomales Bay. **Burrowing Owls** were seen on at least 7 areas. By early afternoon counters off the coast and on Tomales Bay were forced ashore by winds—but not before the Tomales Bay team led by John Kelly and Emiko Condeso of Audubon Canyon Ranch recorded good numbers of **Double-crested** and **Brandt's Cormorants** and 6,735 **Bufflehead**, the highest number of any species on the entire count.

In general, numbers of individual birds were lower than average on many areas, as was the total number of species, 190. The historic average is about 195. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** numbers were high this year. Other highlights included **Red Knots** and a **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow**, seen by Josiah Clark's team at Walker Creek, and a rare **Red-naped Sapsucker** seen by Heather Cameron and Jim White at Inverness Park, and a **Black Vulture** that Seth Bunnell spotted on Mount Vision.

Around sundown, birders repaired to Toby's Feed Barn to share stories, fill out their tally sheets and enjoy a buffet dinner presented by caterer Pam Ferrari. Thanks go to co-organizers Todd Plummer; George, Dorcy and Sandy Curth; Robin Blaney and Susan Ives; and to all who volunteered for year's count and dinner. Deep bows to Chris Giacomini for making the post-count gathering at Toby's a warm success.

SOUTHERN MARIN

On Saturday, December 30th about 120 volunteers and team leaders scoured the circle centered on Mill Valley and extending from the Marin Headlands to Terra Linda and from the Tiburon Peninsula to Bolinas. The habitats are very diverse and include portions of the bay and ocean outside the Gate, Bolinas Lagoon to the top of Mt. Tamalpais as well as urban and suburban areas of East Marin. Baykeepers

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MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2017

By Noah Arthur



J.J. Harrison

Pacific Golden-Plover



Dawn Beattie

Nelson's Sparrow



Cheep Short

Swainson's Thrush

December is Christmas Bird Count season, the beginning of deep winter when birders across Marin join forces to census our avifauna, and when many of our rarest birds are found.

The first rarity of the month was a **Pacific Golden-plover** at Limantour Beach on the 8th (DS).

On the Cheep Thrills CBC on the 14th, two **Swamp Sparrows** showed themselves at Atherton Ave. (JC).

The Pt. Reyes CBC on the 16th also turned up some good birds, including a **Nelson's Sparrow** at Walker Creek (BT) and two **Lapland Longspurs** at Abbotts Lagoon (NA). Many teams found good numbers of **Red Crossbills**, part of the continent-wide winter finch invasion that seemed to peter out early elsewhere but continue into midwinter on the West Coast. However, overall this was a very unproductive year for rarities on this and other Christmas counts. I can't help but wonder if we are finally seeing the effects of overall bird population decline on the frequency of rarity occurrences.

Surely one of the oddest discoveries of the month was a **Swainson's Thrush** captured by the Palomarin banding team at Pine Gulch near Bolinas on the 21st (DH). Winter Swainson's Thrushes are often tentatively reported but rarely confirmed, and this furnished only the 3rd December capture of the species by the Palomarin banders.

A somewhat less unusual but still unseasonable find was a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Las Gallinas on the 24th (DM).

Another **Nelson's Sparrow** was found at the Hamilton Bay Trail on the 24th (LC). Continuing this season's parade of **Harris's Sparrows** on the California coast was an immature found on Mt. Tamalpais on Christmas morning (RA).

Observers and Acronyms **BT:** Brian Turner, **DH:** Diana Humple, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **DS:** David Seton, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **RA:** R.J. Adams

Marin Christmas Bird Counts

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generously provided a boat for counting birds in San Francisco Bay.

The tentative totals of 177 observed species and approximately 53,575 individuals counted were below the 43-year averages of 182 species and about 91,000 birds. Some birds that we normally see were not found. The herring runs in the bay were late so the masses of cormorants and gulls were absent.

Red-tailed Hawks and **Common Ravens** were seen in every area, but 22 species were

recorded in only one area. **Ruddy Duck** was the most abundant species with 3891 individuals, its highest count since 1985. Only four **Brown Pelicans** were observed; that is the lowest since the mid-80s. **Canvasbacks** hit a historic low of only 25. Some interesting birds found were several flocks of **Red Crossbills** on Mt. Tam, a lone **Cackling Goose** in downtown Tiburon, and a **Townsend's Solitaire** for Rock Springs. The Bolinas area had several unusual birds: a **Eurasian Green-winged Teal**, three **Rhinoceros Auklets**, **Barn Swallows**, a **Violet-green Swallow** and a **Nashville Warbler**.

THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS

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