



Jeffery R. Martin

Acorn Woodpecker

Woodpeckers have captured the human imagination for generations. The distant sounds of pecking, flashes of red plumage, and inevitable disappearance into the shadows of the forest evoke a sense of wonder about these extraordinary yet elusive creatures. Jeffery Martin's lecture and video explore the foraging strategies of our eight North Bay woodpecker species. Insect excavation, acorn storage, the use of sap wells and other intriguing behaviors are our focus. Jeff's video segments illustrate unique evolutionary adaptations. We examine the anatomy of feet, tail, tongue and head which enable agile vertical climbing, adept grabbing of prey, and protection from concussion and dust inhalation.

A Marin County videographer and naturalist, Martin has filmed and produced "Bahia Wildlife Habitat" and "Birds of Las Gallinas Marsh," which can be viewed on the web sites of Marin Audubon and Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District. His films, "Woodpecker Haven" and "Birds of Lake Solano and Putah Creek," are shown regularly at the Lake Solano Visitors Center. A few years ago, Jeff presented "Foraging Behavior in Large Wading Birds" for both the Marin Audubon and Golden Gate Audubon Speakers Series. In his "day job," Jeff is a clinical psychologist and associate clinical professor at UCSF School of Medicine.



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Marin Audubon Awarded Federal Grant

We are thrilled to announce that National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program approved our grant application for \$622,000. This grant will enable us to develop and implement the tidal marsh restoration plan for the Corte Madera property we just purchased. Our grant was one of six California projects and one of three in the Bay area. The other Bay Area grants were both State Coastal Conservancy projects: Living Shorelines and the South Bay Salt Ponds. Applications for these grant funds must be submitted by a state agency. The Coastal Conservancy submitted our application and will be managing our contract.



Bob Hinz

Once a dumping ground, Marin Audubon's newest property purchase now has funds for its restoration to tidal marsh with an upland of native vegetation and ultimately its addition to the adjacent Corte Madera Ecological Reserve.

OTHER RESTORATION DEVELOPMENTS

Up until now, we've been working with the limited funds we gathered through a small grant from the Fish and Wildlife Commission and donations from private individuals. We have been working to clarify how we will deal with the material that was deposited on the marsh back in the 1980s. We will hire consultants to develop a plan for investigating the current condition of the soils and how deep the material is buried. This will guide the specifics of our restoration plan. We expect to avoid the material by keeping our excavation shallow so that we do not get into the debris.

We thank Marge Macris for preparing the Initial Study for our CEQA compliance. We expect to be submitting it to the Town of Corte Madera for their review and approval after the soils tests are completed.

We've had a site visit with the Army Corps of Engineers to verify the wetland delineation we had prepared by consultants. The Corps needs to approve the boundaries of wetlands existing

on sites where development could impact the wetlands. After Corps approval, the wetlands within the approved boundary are considered jurisdictional wetlands. We were able to complete this process because donations enabled us to hire the consultants to do the preliminary boundary delineation. Our delineation passed, by the way.

We are also working to have the three parcels that currently comprise the property combined into one so that our taxes can be reduced. While as a non-profit we are exempt from property taxes, we must pay parcel taxes, i.e., the taxes that are levied by Special Districts, including schools, flood control and mosquito abatement districts. Parcel taxes are the same no matter the size of the parcel. We combine parcels whenever possible to reduce our tax burden so we can spend our limited funds on restoring habitat.

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MAS Needs You

Our Nominating Committee is still looking for a member to help us with fundraising. Call Jane Medley or Phil Peterson to find out more or to volunteer.

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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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

Marin Audubon is 60! We're pleased to announce that Marin Audubon's 60th birthday is this year. The first meeting of the Board of Marin Audubon was in 1956. We're beginning to consider how to celebrate and we welcome members to join us. Do let me know if you would like to help.

There have been other significant environmental happenings this month in addition to our birthday and our obtaining the major grant. The firing by Coastal Commissioners of Executive Director Dr. Charles Lester was a shock. We should expect the process for choosing a replacement to be a long one. Legislation authored by Assemblyman Levine intended to make it difficult to fire an executive director is on the right track. The concern is that protections for the coast could be weakened. Another environmental development was the suit brought to reduce or eliminate the number of cows grazing at Point Reyes National Seashore.

It was also announced that a measure to fund wetland restoration around the Bay through a parcel tax will be on the June ballot. The Restoration Authority agreed, after polling the public, that there is enough political support for the measure to succeed. More on this next time.

Locally, our field trips are blossoming. Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris are again offering their spring songbird class in April (see signup form on page 7). Do register early as this class fills up quickly. We also are adding field trips: special monthly trips for beginners, and children's trips led by Mark Forney. Generous contributions to our end-of-year appeal are allowing us to expand our trips.

We've had impressive volunteer help this month. Mill Valley Middle School student John Overton and his family initiated and carried out a habitat enhancement project in Mill Valley (see page 6 for description). Also, our volunteers maintained booths at many fairs this month: Herring Festival, Waterfowl Festival and the Flyway Festival. These fairs are a good way to spread information about what Marin Audubon is doing, find out what other organizations are up to, make contacts and meet folks with similar interests. Thank you to Jude Stalker, Jane Medley, Ed Nute and Martha Jarocki.

We are saddened by two recent deaths. Sylvia McLaughlin was a major force for the Bay. She was one of the founders of Save the Bay, and was instrumental in the establishment of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission more than 50 years ago. For more, see <http://blog.savesfbay.org/2016/02/sylvia-mclaughlin-a-life-of-impact>. Betsy Richardson, Marin County activist and former Board Member of Marin Audubon Society, passed away on January 28. In addition to her work with Marin Audubon, Betsy was a life-long teacher in Marin and outdoor enthusiast.

The proposed rule for dog management in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area opened for a 60-day comment period beginning on February 24 and ending on April 25, just as we go to press. Public meetings will be held on March 23 at the Bay Model and on March 30 in Mill Valley. We'll include our review in the next issue of *The Rail*. To download a copy of the Proposed Rule visit www.regulations.gov (Search NPS-2016-0002-0001).

THANK YOU \$1000+ DONORS FOR THE CORTE MADERA PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The list below includes donors to both Marin Audubon and Marin Baylands Advocates.

Anonymous, Barbara Benson, Richard Bergmann & Denise Filakosky, Susan & Howard Blair, Linda Brune, Michael & Priscilla Bull, California Alpine Club Foundation, California Coastal Conservancy, Corte Madera Beautification Committee, Corte Madera Community Foundation, John Crawford, Jim & Drusie Davis, David Eiseman, Michelle & Robert Friend Foundation, Barbara Ford, Anki & Larry Gelb, Greenbrae Improvement Club Inc., Sallie Griffith, Maureen Groper, Estate of Ken Howard, Joan & Eugene Jacks, Gardner Kent & Sarahy Williamson, Nancy Kittle, KLS Fund, Harriet Lapin, LEF Foundation, Lincoln Financial Foundation Inc., Love Family Trust, Kathy Lowrey,

Diane & Leslie Lynch, Maria Mangold, Marin Conservation League and its members, Marin County Fish & Wildlife Commission, Marin County Board of Supervisors/Open Space District, Marin Open Space Trust, Robert & Sandra Mauceli, Michelle & Robert Friend Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Russel Nelson, Warren & Marcia Nute, Pasadena Community Foundation, Thomas Peacock, Richard Plant, Joanne K. Powell, RHE Charitable Foundation, Harry Richards, Pamela Rickert & Brian Hertz, Lori H. Runnfeldt, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Mary Kent Schardt, E. C. & Shari Shute Jr., Dr. Jill Sideman, Springcreek Foundation/Glenda & Henry Corning, Charles & Jean Stewart, Town of Corte Madera, Rosemary Wakeham, Jay J. & Sigrid E. Wimberly Foundation through Audubon California

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: Vicky Van Meter, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com or co-host, Jane Medley, 559/760-1551, janermedley@gmail.com.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

San Rafael

Thursday, March 3, 2016, 9 AM to Noon
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. Early spring 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. We'll be walking about 2 miles around the ponds. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then go east on Smith Ranch Road toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch Road, and go about 0.5 miles 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.

TOLAY LAKE REGIONAL PARK

Petaluma

Tuesday, March 8, 2016, 9 AM to 3 PM
With Peter Colasanti

This 1,700-acre park, located between the Petaluma River and Sonoma Valley, includes pristine farm and grasslands, ridges, a seasonal freshwater lake that has water this year, ponds, wetlands, and many other natural resources. This area is open to the permit holders only on weekends, so with guide Peter Colasanti we'll have the place to ourselves. We will meet at the gate at the top of Cannon Lane, which is off Lakeville Highway just south of and across from Lakeville/Gilardi's/Papa's Taverna. There is a \$7/day vehicle use fee at the park, so carpool if you can. We will hike several miles to check all the available habitats. For those who wish to continue birding after lunch, we can visit the Ellis Creek ponds a few miles north. Be prepared to hike for several miles.

DIRECTIONS: The address of Papa's Taverna is 5688 Lakeville Hwy, Petaluma. From Marin take Hwy 101 north to CA-37 east toward Napa/Vallejo. Continue about 6 miles on Hwy 37 and take a left onto Lakeville Hwy. Take a right on Cannon Lane as Gilardi's comes into view on the left.

CAPAY VALLEY

Yolo County

Saturday, March 12, 2016, 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM
With Tim Fitzer

Terry Colborn, our leader on this annual trip for nearly 20 years, will be away. Tim Fitzer, assisted by Ann Burris, will lead the trip in his absence. Join Tim and Ann for a delightful day birding Yolo County's scenic Capay Valley. The almond orchards should be at peak bloom, a precursor to the valley's upcoming spring season! Birding locations will include historic Capay Cemetery, Cache Creek County Park and several popular birding locations in tranquil Capay Valley. We'll seek out Yellow-billed Magpie, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Phainopepla, Western Bluebird as well as any lingering winter birds. We also hope to see a few raptors and perhaps early spring arrivals such as Cliff, Barn, Rough-winged and Violet-green Swallow, and with luck, perhaps a warbler species or two. Past trips have produced Golden and Bald Eagle, Western Kingbird, Prairie Falcon and Lawrence's Goldfinch, but every year is

unique. We also expect to see some early spring wildflowers, as well as blooming Redbud, that very conspicuous flowering shrub along the roadside. Meet Tim and Ann at Community Park in Esparto at 8:30 AM. Participants will be encouraged to form carpools from there.

Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Tim Fitzer at 916/870-5207.

DIRECTIONS: To Esparto from Marin County, take Hwy 37 east to Vallejo then go east on I-80. Just past the Nut Tree Center in Vacaville take I-505 north for about 20 miles to the Route 16 exit; turn left (west). Esparto is located about 4 miles west on Route 16; the park is in the center of town. Driving time is about 1-1/2 hours but allow a little extra time, as there may be early morning fog.

RICHARDSON BAY/AUDUBON CENTER

Tiburon

Tuesday, March 15, 2016, 9 AM to Noon
With Bob Hinz

The big rafts of birds attracted by spawning herring will be gone but most of the winter's ducks, gulls and grebes will still be represented, and they may be in their more distinctive breeding plumage. The shorebird species of winter will still be present and might be joined by migrants. We will start with a walk through the Richardson Bay Audubon Center property to the "back beach" where with scopes we can see the eastern shores of the islands as well as the bay. Then it's off to the cove at the end of the bay where we may get close looks at a number of shorebird and waterbird species. Finally, we will walk along the path to Harbor Cove Way for a closer look at Pickleweed Island.

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

MOUNT TAMALPAIS

No. 11, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, March 19, 2016
8:30 AM to mid-afternoon
With Jim White and Bob Battagin

We will meet at 8:30 at the Bootjack parking and picnic area (Fee \$7). Restrooms are available here. We want to help support our state parks. We encourage carpooling. See the directions for suggestions on where to meet to carpool. We will be using three fee lots: Bootjack, Pantoll, and the Summit. Yes, one fee will cover all three. Mount Tamalpais is a good area to see a Pileated Woodpecker. We are hoping to find Red Crossbills and a few early spring migrants like Western Tanager, Cassin's Vireo, and Black-throated Gray or Hermit Warbler. We will take a 1.5 mile, slightly strenuous hike from Rock Springs toward Barth's Retreat to see if Marin's Townsend's Solitaire is still here. We will then take the easy walk around the Mt. Tam summit for the superb view of Marin County.

DIRECTIONS: Bootjack is on Panoramic Hwy in Mt. Tamalpais State Park, 0.3 miles east of Pantoll or about 5 miles southeast of Stinson Beach. From the Hwy 101 on the bay side take the Route 1 exit through Tam Junction. In 3.3 miles at the "Y" go to the right onto Panoramic Hwy. Parking for Bootjack is about 5 miles on the right. The Manzanita commuter parking lot under Hwy 101 would be

a good carpool place at 8 AM or the lot at the Mountain Home Inn is 15 minutes away.

JEAN & JOHN STARKWEATHER SHORELINE PARK

San Rafael

Sunday, March 20, 2016, 12:30 PM to 3 PM
With Rich Cimino

Join guide Rich Cimino for an easy bird walk during a low tide. We will bird the shoreline of San Pablo Bay for diving ducks, grebes, peeps and gulls. We will also look for the Puget Sound variety of White-crowned Sparrow. Meet in the parking lot for the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park trailhead. Heavy rain will cancel.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 to the Bellam Blvd exit. Proceed to Francisco Blvd, which is the access road next to I-580. Head east (toward the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge) for about 1-1/5 miles. You will see a Bay Cafe sign at the Bay Park Center. Turn left and continue straight to the trailhead parking area. For GPS, use the Bay Cafe address, 2165 Francisco Blvd, San Rafael.

HAMILTON WETLANDS FOR YOUNG BIRDERS

Saturday, March 26, 2016, 8:30 AM to 10 AM
With Mark Forney

Join Mark at the Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Project in Novato for a morning of birdwatching geared towards children younger than 16 **accompanied by a parent or grandparent.**

Hamilton Wetlands itself is young; tidal function was returned to the site only in April 2014. The ongoing restoration has created a great place to see a diversity of shorebirds, waterfowl, and upland birds; over 160 species of birds have already been observed. There is a wide, level, gravel walking trail that follows the west edge of the wetlands. The trail allows for easy and sometimes quite close observation of birds. The walk will focus on general attentiveness to the surrounding bird life, as well as development of observational skills and identification of birds. Bring binoculars if you have them.

DIRECTIONS: We will meet at South Hamilton Park playground at Hamilton Field in Novato. From the south on Hwy 101 take the Nave Drive/Hamilton exit, and from the north use the Ignacio Blvd exit. The South Hamilton Park parking lot is at the intersection of Hangar Avenue and Maybeck Street. From the parking lot, walk along Hangar Avenue south to its end, and you will see the playground ahead on the right.

PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK

San Benito County

Saturday, April 9, 2016, 9 AM to mid-afternoon
With Rusty Scalf

We will begin our day of birding with Rusty at the Pinnacles Visitor Center (east side of the Park) with an hour of birding in the riparian and Gray Pine forest corridor. The group will then travel to Bear Gulch where we will hike 1.7 miles one way up the steep Condor Gulch Trail for condor watching and lunch. There is a good chance of a condor sighting, possibly with the assistance of a condor tracker present in the observation area. We will be hiking through geologically rich terrain formed by rhyolite vulcanism, and geologists as well as birders are invited to join us.

You must be in good hiking shape to participate in this trip. **Each person in the group must carry plenty of water.** More details about this trip will follow on the Marin Audubon website and in our April newsletter.

CONSERVATION

MARIN CATHOLIC LIGHTED FOOTBALL FIELDS

MAS submitted comments to Marin County on this proposal by Marin Catholic High School to install and use lights to allow football and soccer games to be played at night. The application states that they expect to use the lights for 526 games. That's more days than are in a year so there would be multiple games many evenings. The tidal marsh at Hal Brown Park is adjacent to the western boundary of Marin Catholic's football field. This marsh supports a population of endangered Ridgway's Rails, and the project could adversely impact this endangered species.

In the December *Rail* we wrote about the impacts of night-lighting on birds: migrating birds are mesmerized by lights, drawn off their migratory course to circle the lights, and eventually fall to the ground exhausted and die. Use of lighted fields also will bring more people and increased noise levels which could adversely affect breeding. Rails depend on hearing mating calls to develop pair bonding.

In our comments, we asked that an Initial Study be prepared to address the potential noise and lighting impacts on endangered and other species. Issues that have been raised by others include increased traffic, light/glare, and noise impacts. The decision whether to require an Environmental Impact Report or Mitigated Negative Declaration will be based on the Initial Study.

HIGHWAY 37 UPDATE

The wheels are in motion to improve traffic conditions along Highway 37, but they are moving slowly. We hope any changes benefit the adjacent marshes and wildlife as well.

The last in a series of stakeholder meetings was held on February 3. The meetings are organized by UC Davis, with the support of a federal grant, in partnership with Caltrans. Some significant strides have been made since the last meeting in August 2015. The technical studies, including vulnerability and engineering studies and analyses, are almost complete. There is no comprehensive cost/benefit analysis or environmental assessment although there has been basic work in these areas. The stakeholder process, which has been going on for five years, is now being paused.

The vulnerability analysis identified the Marin County segment (101 to the Sonoma Creek Bridge) as the section with the lowest elevation and, therefore, most at risk of

flooding. Port Sonoma is the lowest. All of the bridges would have to be replaced as would roads' connections to the raised highway.

Designs have been developed to accommodate a 100-year projected sea level rise of 36 inches which would require a structure 15 to 17 feet high. All alternatives have four lanes, two in each direction, a 12-foot-wide public trail, and pull-off lanes on both sides. The designs have been changed since the last meeting and are now: Alternative 1 – a road on a levee; Alternative 2 – suspended causeway on concrete piers; and Alternative 3 – a structure suspended on concrete pilings.

Alternative 1 would be a single earthen levee with a median between the east and west directions. Significant quantities of fill would be required to construct the levee, but how much is not yet determined. The levee would be 206 feet wide, meaning that considerably more marsh would be covered than now.

Alternatives 2 (piers) and 3 (pilings) would be separate east and west structures with a gap between. The difference between piers and pilings is that the piers are composed of thicker slabs (the support structures are constructed of a series of slabs) than pilings. The slab supports in Alternative 2 would be thicker and deeper but fewer with more space between. With the thinner pilings of Alternative 3, more are needed and they would have to be closer together. Both Alternatives 2 and 3 would allow water to flow underneath. The benefit to marshes of having an open structure, however, was brought into question by the possibility that the existing highway/levee might need to remain to protect landward properties from flooding. There has been no survey of properties that could be flooded.

An advancement from the last meeting is that Highway 37 is now on Caltrans' project list which means it is at least eligible for funding. There are many highways on this list, however, so funding may not become available until sometime in the distant future. The next steps will include applying for transportation funds to continue planning and investigating what they call "creative" funding possibilities. The only creative funding possibility discussed was a toll road.

It was reported that federal requirements "do not allow an existing road to be converted to a toll road." So it would depend on whether Highway 37 is considered an existing or a new roadway.

NORTH-SOUTH GREENWAY — SOUTH SEGMENT

Marin County Public Works has begun a process of considering what they are calling the South Segment of the North/South Greenway Gap Closure Project. Steven Grover and Associates, consultants hired by the county, are in the process of scheduling meetings with interest groups. The environmental group met on February 4.

The proposal for the South Segment is a 12-foot-wide path on the SMART right-of-way (ROW) adjacent to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. It would begin at the south end of the pedestrian bridge over Corte Madera Creek which would be widened to 12 feet. The path would be along the Frontage Road for a short distance, make a sharp left turn through a trailer park, then a right turn onto the ROW and extend south to the narrow dirt path between Shorebird Marsh and the Golden Gate Trailer Park. This path would have to be widened which would also necessitate filling of wetlands.

The Transportation Agency of Marin (TAM) has already developed a design for the North Segment which would also begin at the pedestrian bridge on the freeway overpass and continue south on the frontage road to the pedestrian bridge over Highway 101. The reason given for not continuing south along the frontage road was that there are a lot of driveways along that stretch. It was pointed out that there are bike paths in major cities that manage to exist with many driveways, so there is undoubtedly a solution that could be used here. There are also many driveways between Corte Madera Creek and the pedestrian bridge over 101.

Expanding the trail would impact the Reserve tidal marsh and the Ridgway's Rail population by direct filling of tidal marsh and/or by impacts from the increased use by cyclists, walkers, and dogs, many off-leash, particularly if there is an inadequate transition zone. Right now there is minimal use of this segment because it is essentially cut off from the southern part of the ROW by fencing that encloses an area leased by SMART for vehicle and other storage. There is not sufficient area within the 150-foot-wide ROW to construct an adequate transition zone for Rails and other species and to protect the existing marsh, accommodate the trail, and leave space for a possible train. Without an adequate area adjacent to the marsh to provide refuge

during extreme tides, rails are vulnerable to being caught by avian predators.

The need for the South Segment was questioned because it would cover the same route as the North Segment. Other issues that were raised include: the costs for developing two trails which would be excessive and unnecessary because the South Segment would be redundant, and cleaning up the debris and parked vehicles on the land sublet at the end of Industrial Way. It was pointed out that removal of this storage use can and should be accomplished without constructing a new trail.

It was the unanimous view of environmental attendees that a path adjacent to Highway 101 is the preferred alternative. It would avoid environmental impacts to the tidal marsh and its endangered Ridgway's Rail inhabitants, avoid redundancy, and save money.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Stay tuned. This is just the beginning of the design process for this segment. The consultant will be scheduling additional meetings with stakeholders, as they did for the North Segment. We'll let you know about planned meetings via this newsletter, our website, Facebook and our email list.

CORTE MADERA CREEK FLOOD CONTROL

The January 28 meeting was scheduled as a scoping meeting to receive comments on issues to be addressed in an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report on a proposed project. It turned out not to be a scoping meeting, however, because there was no project presented on which to raise issues and questions. A scoping meeting has a specific purpose in CEQA—for the lead agency to receive input on issues/questions to be addressed in an EIR for a proposed project. A number of attendees pointed out this problem. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is even more specific requiring a range of alternatives and that all be developed to the same level of detail.

The Army Corps of Engineers and County representatives discussed some concepts, but said there is yet no project. To overcome this problem, we suggested in our testimony and written comments that the Corps and Marin County work to develop a preferred project using the comments and suggestions made by many attendees to

guide preparation of a project plan. Then, after a project is defined, hold a scoping meeting during which people can raise questions and concerns about the actual project.

The meeting generated many useful comments and recommendations that should be used to guide the formation of the project plan: the project should restore hydrology, ensure fish passage, remove the fish ladder, provide riparian streamside habitat to benefit fish and other species, consider retreat including purchasing creekside properties, expand the floodplain, remove the concrete channel all or in part, and provide adequate resting pools for salmonids. Many residents of adjacent communities are looking to the project to provide flood protection.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

You can submit your views now, or wait until the next phase which will either be a scoping meeting or some other meeting. Staff of the Corps and the County promised to have many more meetings at which the public can provide input along the way.

MORE ON USER CONFLICTS ON OPEN SPACE LANDS

User conflicts on open space lands are more often than not characterized as conflicts between cyclists and other people users, walkers, dogs particularly off-leash, and horseback riders. MAS focuses on the conflicts between people uses and wildlife. The same concerns that people have about being disturbed or injured by speeding cyclists, going off trails, off-leash dogs, or loud noises, are concerns for wildlife as well. Just as people can be disturbed or hurt, as has been demonstrated by experiences in recent months, wildlife is equally at risk for disturbance, injury and even death, although the impact is not as obvious.

For people, being in open space is recreation, fun, exercise. For wildlife the habitats in the open space preserves mean life and death. Natural areas are the only places they have to live; the only places where they must find food, shelter and safe places to nest. There are no supermarkets or shelters for birds.

Most people uses affect wildlife. Our very presence often means wildlife have to move, to stop what they are doing whether it be eating, resting, or feeding young to ensure they are safe or to get away. Going off trails can be even more disturbing. It can directly

damage or destroy their shrub or grassland habitat, or destroy a nest or young.

Wildlife have a hard enough time finding food, avoiding predators and finding resting and nesting places without having to contend with the additional impacts of people recreating. Native wildlife are adapted to protect themselves from natural predators in natural habitats. Some species are frightened off by noise or sense of oncoming people. Others do not necessarily view bikes and shoe treads as lethal, but they can be. One of the most telling exposés is a collection of hundreds of photos taken by Larry Minikes showing small creatures killed on trails by bikes simply because they were



Dead small creatures on Open Space Trails



Both photos: Larry Minikes

on a trail sunning themselves.

One of the most problematic activities is trail use by mountain bikers at night. Many species including owls are active at night hunting for food, building nests and feeding young. Noisy bikers riding through habitats on- or off-trail, interfere with owl's ability to hunt because owls depend on sound to locate their prey. Night riding can also disturb the natural cycles of prey species.

We're not saying don't go into habitats. We are saying enjoy nature thoughtfully, with sensitivity and consideration for the other creatures that need the trees, shrubs and grasslands for food and cover to stay alive. An important reason why most people enjoy going on trails is to view birds and other wildlife. When you are in natural habitats, consider yourself a visitor who must respect the natural inhabitants that cannot speak for themselves. Behave with respect and care. Stay on trails, be quiet and avoid disturbing wildlife.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Our newest plantings will benefit from the recent February rain but all the competitors are also growing rapidly. It is probably the last chance to remove Italian thistle before it blooms. An herbicidal spray made of household chemicals last month showed some promise in killing thistle and other annuals. The big tough perennial invasives like fennel and Harding grass may get a treatment by being covered with cardboard and mulch. Otherwise, we'll be uprooting weeds and mulching this winter's plantings.

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: March 5, April 2

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: March 12, April 9

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

If you would like to help, contact Katy Zaremba at 415/847-9933 or volunteercordinator@marinaudubon.org for more information.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Felix, Noam and Beatrice AuYeung, Adriano & Kira Escobar, Rick & Dee Fraites, Ariela Guerrero, Lowell Hall, Bob Hinz, John Overton family, Flinn Rauck, Sommer Schafer, Jude Stalker, Sonya Suzuki, Lowell Sykes

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Frederick Abrams, Nancy B. Altman, Tom Balogh, Carol Barber, Pamela Bartels, Trese Biagini, Richard & Dorothy Breiner, Donal Brown, Tom Budzinski, Katharine Cagney, John Chamberlin, Jenny Chrisman, Nancy & Kevin Conger, David Coyne, Nancy Curran, Kathryn Dankowski, Martin Eber, Barbara Freitas, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed, Annette Friskopp, Chris Gould, Steve Hadland, Albert Hettich, Kay, Anne Keeney Kelley, Karen Kiser, Eva Kristensen, A. T. Lynne, Sally O. Moltzen, Carol Nelson, Beulah Parker, R. T. Peacock, Daphne Petri, Keelin Pohl, Peggy Pugh, Grace Rogers, Marcy Roth, Judd Simmons, Will Spires, Russell Symon Jr., Joseph F. Terdiman, George R. Urciuoli, Lori Walsh, Amanda Webber

POINT REYES BIRDING AND NATURE FESTIVAL

APRIL 22-24, 2015

Field events will offer opportunities to see migrating seabirds, waterfowl, resident and migrant landbirds as well as seals, sea lions, tule elk, wildflowers and much more.

Keynote speakers will be Ron LeValley on Friday and Paul Bannick on Saturday.

To learn more and sign up, visit www.PointReyesBirdingFestival.org.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

VOLUNTEERS IMPROVE HABITAT AT ARROYO CORTE MADERA



Bob Hinz

John Overton digging holes for new native plants along Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio

adjacent to The Redwoods. Using the grant funds to purchase native plants, coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*) and gumplant (*Grindelia stricta*), John, with the help of his family (John Sr., Ruth, Natalie, Mary, Anne) installed the purchased plants along with sprigs cut from existing willow trees on the banks, along an approximately 300-foot-long section of the Arroyo on February 7. Quite an impressive accomplishment for a 14-year-old student at Mill Valley Middle School. We are grateful to John for his support and initiative to benefit salmonids. Shading and leaf litter from the new plants will benefit fish.

UPDATES

SIMMONS SLOUGH We hired Shelterbelt Builders to help control Harding grass at the Simmons property in Novato. In late January a crew of four dug out Harding grass and then planted 58 coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) bushes and covered the bare ground with cardboard and mulch of redwood chips. We will have them return at the end of February to do some more removal and mulching of selected areas.

Fence loss There are several gaps totaling 160 feet in the fencing along Atherton Avenue around our Simmons Slough property. One section along a bend in the road has been damaged a number of times, probably by speeders losing control. In the past, some responsible people have let us know and paid for repairs. People who caused the recent damage just drove off leaving us with the problem. It also appears that some of the fence materials (posts and wire) were stolen. We are making plans to have the fence repaired.

BAHIA We've had Shelterbelt Builders also do some additional plantings of Santa Barbara sedge (*Carex barbarae*), Baltic rush, (*Juncus balticus*) and creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*) in the seasonal wetland of the Central Peninsula, and of western ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*) on the Eastern Peninsula.

We applaud and thank John Overton Jr. for spearheading a work day at our property along Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio in Mill Valley. John obtained a grant to pursue a project to benefit native fish and he chose doing a habitat enhancement on our property adjacent to The Redwoods. Using the grant funds to purchase native plants, coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*) and gumplant (*Grindelia stricta*), John, with the help of his family (John Sr., Ruth, Natalie, Mary, Anne) installed the purchased plants along with sprigs cut from existing willow trees on the banks, along an approximately 300-foot-long section of the Arroyo on February 7. Quite an impressive accomplishment for a 14-year-old student at Mill Valley Middle School. We are grateful to John for his support and initiative to benefit salmonids. Shading and leaf litter from the new plants will benefit fish.

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

We've received monitoring reports for our two Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEP) this month.

Surveys for the data were gathered in December and January by biologists from the Watershed Nursery and Shelterbelt Builders. This is the third and last year for both projects.

Bahia The Bahia SEP site is an approximately five-acre pond adjacent to the Sanitary District's pump station and the Petaluma River. The District had several spills into this pond which led to the SEP. The consultants found the plants along the north berm have a high survival rate and good vigor, undoubtedly due to the dedication of MAS volunteer Lowell Sykes who hand-watered the new plants. On the south berm plants survived better, and many had set seed and spread. Creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*) and western goldenrod (*Euthamia occidentalis*) were surviving better at higher elevations. Plantings at lower elevations had lower survival rates possibly due to tidal inundation as the opening to the Bay is widening, allowing more tidal waters in. There is approximately 80% survival.

Simmons Slough The Sanitary District also had spills into a section of this diked marsh, adjacent to the north of Deer Island, which enabled us to receive funding for a project. Surveying was difficult because the plants were small and there was a good amount of thatch in some areas. Total cover of native plants was 38.7% with the greatest number of native plants being Baltic rush and field sedge. This site has suffered flooding for two years, and the drought conditions for one year. It is expected that the native wetland plants will spread slowly over time and that they will gradually outcompete non-natives.



© Frank Schuenberg

Volunteer to Survey Brown Pelicans

Audubon California, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, eBird and state wildlife agencies are sponsoring a statewide Brown Pelican survey May 7 (5-7 PM). They're looking for Audubon chapter members who'd like to participate in the survey, as coordinators or observers. More details coming soon.

For more information, please visit <http://ca.audubon.org/news/audubon-network-helping-pacific-brown-pelicans>. If you would like to volunteer, please email Ariana Rickard, arickard@audubon.org.

MARIN BIRDLOG: FEBRUARY 2016

By Josiah Clark

December rains yielded green hillsides in January. Now as we ascend out of winter, longer days yield the first flowers and the first **Allen's Hummingbirds** while Anna's are already producing young. Raptors and owls are building nests with some on eggs. With the help of El Niño rains existing bodies of water became flooded. Meanwhile newly forming bodies of water create better opportunities for waterfowl and shorebirds where there were none before. With the ground wetter than it has been in years, birds of low-lying valleys seem to be hitting the coast in larger numbers.

For example, at Abbotts Lagoon on 2/5 three **Lapland Longspurs** have been more regular than usual (PC). Also out at Abbotts Lagoon, now for its second year so apparently unrelated to rainfall, Marin's first ever **Le Conte's Sparrow**, was seen back on 2/7 (MS).

Nearby on 2/8 one of several coastal wintering **Long-eared Owls** was a "tasty" sight at twilight according to the observer. It was actively hunting rodents high and dry from a fence pole at the woodland edge (DS). This bird, along with more than average numbers of **Burrowing Owls**, may have found Marin while looking for drier winter hunting grounds. Incidentally several **Northern Saw-whet Owls** also appeared to move into San Francisco about this same time.

Not far away the loyal and invaluable Audubon Canyon Ranch waterfowl counters on Tomales Bay discovered a **Brown Booby** chilling on a buoy, a rare sight there indeed—or at least it used to be rare (RH). Sea surface temps are still at least three degrees above average.

January 23 marked huge swells, winds and raging ocean conditions. With this situation came an onshore invasion of **Leach's Storm Petrels**, presumably exhausted and starved by the exceptionally harsh conditions. These small, highly pelagic tubenoses hit nearly every coastal county in NorCal, with at least two reported from Marin. Dead ones were seen in Bolinas (PP) and by the patch birders at Rodeo Lagoon (WL). A female **Long-tailed Duck** showed up on Bolinas Lagoon on 1/30, perhaps taking a respite from the rough ocean where they are more expected (PP).

Out in the eastern part of the county, herring spawned steadily along the bayshore. Though 15,000 ducks and over 50,000 gulls were present on the bay, conditions were too fleeting to really sort through them well and no rarities were reported 1/15 (JC).

A female **Summer Tanager** was seen 1/24 feeding on suet in a Corte Madera yard (MJS). Even more unexpected was a **Sage Thrasher** visiting Las Gallinas on Valentine's Day that stuck around just long enough for several to see, but not seen since.



Long-eared Owl

Len Blamin

THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Mary B. Abbott, Deborah S. Ablin, Phyllis V. Akers, Diane Aldrich, Winifred & Harry Allen Foundation, Julia Althoff, Thomas & Helen Anawalt, Elizabeth P. Anderson, Michael D. Anderson, Thomas Anderson, Katherine & Phillip Arnaudo, Janet Arrigotti, Katharine Ballinger MD, Robert & Jessica Batha, David L. Berry, Mark Bewsher, Peter & Lenora Black, Susan & Howard Blair, Shirley & Andrew L. Bogardus, Ben & Frances Borok, Dewitt Bowman, Marion Brennan, William Broder, Deborah Brown, Janet S. Brown, Stephen & Faith Brown, Priscilla and Michael H. Bull, James & Merrie Callinan, Patricia Campbell, William Carney, Mario & Juanita Castellon, Robert Cline, Dayton Coles, Ruth M. Collins, Geri & Wayne Cooper, MaryAnne Cowperthwaite, Jon R. Culbertson, Jean Z. Dakota, Idajane Dalpino, Thomas Delebo, Nona Dennis, David & Kristine Donadio, Bette F. Durham, Michelle Eaton, Brett Elebash, Richard Felton, Denise Filakosky, Fischer Family Fund, Ann & Mason Flemming, Ruth & Gary Friedman, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed, Betty Gandel, Kay Gillis (bequest), Ruth B. Goldstein, Francine Goodman, Jane Gorski, Carl & Donna Gowan, Elizabeth & John Graham, Joy Graustark, Raven Gray, Marge Gregg, Maureen Groper, Madelon & Gerald Halpern, Joan Halverson, Douglas Hanford, Richard J. Havel, Totton & Joanne Heffelfinger, Tom Hendricks, Robert Hinz, Suzanne D. Huang O.D., Lynn Tolomeo Hunt, Duane Johnson, Diana & Ted Jorgensen, Kaiser Community Giving (Matching gift), John Kane, Susan B. Kelly, Catherine Kennedy MD, Randi Kerlan, David C. Kimball, Judith & Harold Lichterman, Lincoln Financial Foundation, Inc. (Matching gift), Jackie Littee, Toni Littlejohn, David & Carolyn Long, Jeffrey Long, Carolyn & John Longstreth, Kathy Lowrey, David MacKenzie, Marjorie Macris, Connie & Chris Mancebo, Pamela Manwaring & George Wimmer, Helene B. Marsh, Morton McMichael, Barbara & Gerald Meral, Anne Miller, Claudine Minchella, Patricia Minor, Lois & Bruce Moody, Jean Moore, William & Laura Moseley, Marianne Nannestad, Steve & Ruth Nash, Lisa & Colin Nichols, Carland & William Nicholson, Linda Nicoletto, Frank & Lois Noonan, Lucienne O'Keefe, Kathy O'Sullivan, Judith & John Obedzinski, Ann Ocheltree, J. Morrow Otis, Lois & Warren Patton, Thomas Peacock, Phil Peterson, Stacey Pogorzelski, Douglas H. Pringle, Flinn & John Rauck, Bill Remick, Walter & Joan Rentsch, Paula M. Riley, Susan & John Ristow, Richard K. Robbins, Billie J. Robertson, Diane Rosenberger, Hermina Rosskopf & Richard Scott, Georg Roth, Barbara Rozen, Carla Ruff, King R. Sams, Sanguinetti Family Trust, Christine Sansom, Santa Venetia Neighborhood Assn., Rolf & Charlotte Scherman, Elizabeth Schiff, Sonja D. Schmid, Stuart & Carol Schneider, Elizabeth & Eldon Schriock, Carol B. Schwartz, Madeleine & Donald Simborg, Richard Stern, Jane Stevick, Helen L. Stoddard, Evelyn Topper, Sheila M. Tuffanelli, Cydney & John Tune, Jeanne & Peter Tymstra, Valorie Van Dahl, Kathryn VanDyke, Charles J. Vogelheim, Rose & Christopher Wager, Marion Weeks, Christina M. Welter, Warren Wertheimer, Kerstan Williams, Lucy A. Wilson, Robert Wilson, Carolyn & A. Frederick Wood, Emese Wood, M. Douglas Woodring, Charles & Lynne Worth, Diane Wrona, Catherine & John Yee, Carolyn Zwicker

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Observers and Acronyms **DS:** Dave Shuford, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **MJS:** Maryjane Shramn, **MS:** Mark Stevenson, **RH:** Roger Harshaw, **PC:** Peter Colasanti, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **WL:** William Legge

Spring Birds and Their Songs, April 28, 30 & May 7

Join the *Spring Birds and Their Songs* class and tune into the varied chorus of birds nesting in the Bay Area. Sign up early as this class fills quickly.

Naturalist **Meryl Sundove** and wildlife biologist **Roger Harris** teach the class for beginning and intermediate bird watchers who want to use calls and songs to help find and identify birds. **Jean Schulz**, an experienced birding-by-ear birder, will be assisting.

The class consists of an evening classroom presentation with slides and recorded bird songs on Thursday, **April 28**, from 7-9 pm, at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center. Then early morning field trips on Saturday, **April 30** and a second on Saturday, **May 7**, are designed to get us outdoors practicing what we learned in class. The May 7th dawn chorus field trip starts a few minutes before dawn. If you have never experienced the spring dawn chorus, you are in for a treat.

For information, contact Meryl Sundove at 415/927-4115 or msundove@comcast.net.

FEE: \$75 non-Audubon members
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TO REGISTER: Send this form and a check made out to "Marin Audubon Society" to:
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- April 9 **Stewardship Day:** Bahia
- April 9 **Field Trip:** Pinnacles National Park
With Rusty Scaup
- April 13-19 **Godwit Days,** Arcata
www.godwitdays.org
- April 22-24 **Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival**
www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org
- April 22-24 **Owens Lake Bird Festival**
Lone Pine, CA
www.friendsoftheinyo.org/foiD7/owenslakefestival

Check website for updates and details

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SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

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*. 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 because all of your chapter-supporting dues stay with MAS.

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.

JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and chapters. With this joint membership, you 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: MAS, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.**

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

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