



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10 7:30 PM

Cormorants of the Bay

With Mark Rauzon and Meredith Elliott



Mark Rauzon

Double-crested Cormorant

Double-crested cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) are seabirds known to use structures as nesting habitat. The old east span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the eastern portion of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge have hosted the two largest colonies of this species in the region. However, now these colonies are declining, and structures they once nested on are either being dismantled or blocked off for maintenance activities. So it begs the question: where will the cormorants nest in the future? Come learn what our research for the past three decades tells us about the population dynamics of this resilient species.

Mark Rauzon was with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and now is a research associate with Point Blue Conservation Science and a geography professor at Laney College in Oakland. He is also an expert in the effects of invasive animals and plants on tropical islands. His book, *Isles of Amnesia*, details his experiences in island restoration.

Meredith Elliott is a Senior Scientist with Point Blue and has worked on a variety of seabird monitoring and diet projects, as well as researching zooplankton in the Greater Farallones and the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries.

Join the 2016 Audubon Christmas Bird Counts



Photo courtesy of @Jacobyn Knight Photography/knight.com

The 2014 San Rafael CBC team counting birds from the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park

This year between December 14 and January 5 will be the 117th season of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). It is the longest-running citizen science program in the world. Its long history and wide scope (there are now over 2,300 individual count circles) provide invaluable information about the long-term status of bird populations across North America. The Marin Audubon Society sponsors three counts in Marin County with hundreds of participants. Each covers a 15-mile diameter circle in which teams of volunteers, from novice to expert, count every bird they encounter during the entire day. For more information about CBCs go to www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count and/or join the CBC practice field trip (see page 3).

Everyone is encouraged to participate in one or more of Marin's three CBCs and/or any of the many others. The following is basic information about our local counts.

CHEEP THRILLS, THURSDAY DECEMBER 15

Join us for Cheep Thrills, the north Marin/south Petaluma CBC that was started in 1978,

conducted for ten years and then revived in 2011 by Marin Audubon and Rich Stallcup. As always, this count is dedicated to the memory of Rich, our great friend and teacher, who generously shared his astounding knowledge of birds, dragonflies, and all natural creatures and who also taught us the importance of striving to be what he called "good humans."

Be prepared to start out early, struggle through any kind of weather, and generally wonder why on earth we don't hold these counts in the spring or early summer. For answers, read National Audubon's "History of the Christmas Bird Count," at www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count. Don't miss the section called "What conservationists have learned through Christmas Bird Count data."

If you're thinking about participating in one of Marin Audubon's CBC's or just wondering what it's all about, join us for our annual CBC Practice Session at Las Gallinas. This year it will be held on Sunday, November 27th, at 1 pm.

For more information about Cheep Thrills, including maps, results from previous years,

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message	2
Field Trips	3
Conservation Report	5
Habitat Stewardship	6
Birdlog	7

Donate Your Vehicle! Marin Audubon now accepts donations of cars, boats, motorcycles and RVs. You can take advantage of a tax deduction while supporting our efforts to protect endangered spotted owls and other birdlife. Find out more at our website, www.marinaudubon.org/donations.php#donate_vehicle, or call 855/500-7433!

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 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 \$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

MAS been working in Marin now for 60 years and we're very proud of our accomplishments: of the learning experiences we offer; of the many development projects that were improved for wildlife and the habitats protected because of our commenting during environmental review; of the 1,000 acres we purchased in coordination with MBA; and the 500+ acres that we work so diligently to enhance as habitat for wildlife. Hundreds, maybe thousands of folks, including myself, have been introduced to the world of birds, their importance in our environment and their identification through our field trips and programs. I remember how impressed I was as a young non-birder, to meet up with someone who was able to identify a bird at just a quick glance. I was awestruck. We give folks the opportunity to learn that skill. In addition to the challenge, identifying birds increases our enjoyment of the world around us and, hopefully, our interest in protecting natural habitats for the birds. We are honored to be a voice for the protection of birds and other wildlife and we take this responsibility seriously. We are the only organization that does both acquisition and advocacy – which sometimes means opposing developments proposed on lands that we want to purchase. MAS is one of a very few non-profits, other than land trusts, that actually purchase and hold land, thereby making Marin a better place for all of us.

By all accounts, our Anniversary Celebration was a great success. We had to set up not knowing when the predicted heavy rain and winds would arrive. In the end we had an intimate party in and around Rosie's. The speakers covered a broad range of our history from our beginning, given by Marty Griffin, through our conservation, acquisition and restoration history and the challenges we will be dealing with in the future. We were pleased to have Supervisor Kate Sears

welcoming us to her Southern Marin District and speaking to the challenge of sea level rise. Supervisor Judy Arnold spoke to her involvement and help acquiring Bahia when she worked for John Burton and later acquiring Mira Monte. Ann Thomas addressed the Marin Baylands Advocates-MAS partnership acquiring baylands, and Stuart Siegel of Siegel Environmental spoke to his work designing many of our restoration projects as well as our advocacy. Roger Harris gave an interesting talk on the changing status of some species during our 60 years. We were also pleased to have a representative from Assemblyman Marc Levine's office in attendance.

You are now able to easily donate your old car to Marin Audubon. We have signed up with CARS to make the experience of getting rid of your old car an easy and even enjoyable one while, at the same time, knowing that our birds and habitats will benefit. Net proceeds after the expenses of handling and processing the acquisition and sale of the donated vehicles, will come to Marin Audubon and will be tax-deductible for you. See instructions on page 1.

Another opportunity to support Marin Audubon during the holidays is by making your Amazon purchases through AmazonSmile and naming Marin Audubon as the beneficiary.

Our Christmas Bird Counts will soon be here. All counts are held the last two weeks of December. In some years the Southern Marin count, which is traditionally held the Saturday between Christmas and New Year's Day, interferes with Christmas or New Year's. This year it is on New Year's Eve. We still hope to have a large contingent of volunteers to count for this—you can celebrate after the count dinner—and all of our Bird Counts.

Shorebirds have returned and so have many of the migratory waterfowl. Get out to see and enjoy the birds on one of our field trips.

Christmas Bird Count Season

continued from page 1

and other helpful information, visit the Cheep Thrills website at <http://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>.

To participate, contact the compiler (Susan Kelly) at cheepthrillscbc@yahoo.com.

POINT REYES, SATURDAY DECEMBER 17

The 47th Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by MAS and Point Blue, will be on Saturday December 17, 2016. The Point Reyes count was started by Rich Stallcup, Jon Winter and others in 1970. Since then, the count is

consistently in the top ten in the USA for the number of species sighted. Last year was about average with 197 species and 198 participants. There are always some unexpected finds; in 2015 participants saw Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Mountain Bluebird, Cliff Swallow, Least Flycatcher, Northern Waterthrush, and Black-headed Grosbeak—very good birds for winter.

The 27 territories within our circle are centered around Tomales Bay, stretching from Drakes Bay and Abbotts Lagoon to Walker Creek and the Chileno Valley. The Point Reyes

continued on page 5

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, November 3, 2016

9 AM to Noon

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin, and friends

The Las Gallinas ponds are the birding community's nickname for the treatment ponds and surrounding agricultural fields and tidal marsh at LGVSD's Wastewater Treatment Reclamation Project. The area includes two treated wastewater storage ponds, a freshwater pond with islands for nesting habitat, and several miles of flat levee trails. It attracts thousands of birds, including waterfowl such as ducks and geese; waders such as herons and egrets; a variety of songbirds; hawks such as Northern Harriers, White-tailed Kites, and Red-tailed Hawks; and falcons such as Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. There are often surprises such as the juvenile Bald Eagle observed by our October field trip participants. The Marin Audubon Society has cataloged over 200 species of birds within the area and eBird currently lists over 237. Let's see how many we can find!

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. Especially good for beginners, this casual walk on two miles of flat trails is fun and informative. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, and there are usually several experienced birders to assist. 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.

WHAT TO BRING: Plenty of water and snacks, binoculars and bird guide—if you have them.

FIELD CHECKLIST: If you'd like a copy of the eBird checklist for Las Gallinas, email Susan at quailfriend@yahoo.org.

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.

LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA

Sonoma County

Sunday, November 13, 2016

8:30 AM to Noon

With Lisa Hug

We will join Lisa for a leisurely 2-mile loop walk starting at the Laguna de Santa Rosa Trailhead Parking Lot. The trail is fairly flat, goes through open meadow and abuts a riparian forest along the Laguna channel and around a lovely pond. We might see

White-tailed Kites, Red-shouldered Hawks, Lincoln's Sparrows, Western Bluebirds, Pied-billed Grebes and any number of surprises

Bring binoculars, water, snacks, and layered clothing. There is a restroom available. Expect the walk to last about three and a half hours. We may explore a few other areas afterwards for people who want to continue birding.

DIRECTIONS: From Marin, take Hwy 101 North. Take Exit 488B to merge onto CA-12 toward Sebastopol. The Laguna de Santa Rosa Trailhead is on Hwy 12, about 1 mile east of Sebastopol. It is between Llano Rd and Morris St on the north side of the road.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS AND HAMILTON WETLANDS

No. 11, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, November 19, 2016

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

The Las Gallinas ponds are a great place for good views of many kinds of ducks and raptors. This is an easy 1.5-mile walk where many other species may be seen, including Ridgway's Rails and Soras. After a lunch break we will go to the Hamilton Wetlands in Novato. This extensive wetland was recently reconnected with the Bay after two decades of planning and work. The wetlands were diked for dry-land farming about 1900, cutting off an important area for thousands of migrating waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway. The birds are now returning in big numbers. We will see the waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and other species that are now making these new wetlands their home.

DIRECTIONS: We will meet at Las Gallinas. From Hwy 101, take the Smith Ranch Rd exit east toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and continue about 0.5 mile to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at the end of the road.

CORTE MADERA MARSH

Sunday, November 20, 2016

1 to 3:30 PM

With Roger Harris and Meryl Sundove

Major concentrations of shorebirds and ducks visit this marsh and the associated mudflats on their annual migrations up and down the Pacific Flyway. Many will be settling in for a winter at the marsh. Join our leaders Roger and Meryl, who have lived by this marsh for over 30 years. Marin Audubon owns three properties in this marsh complex, the recently acquired 5.2 acres beside the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, the 31-acre Triangle Marsh, and a one-acre parcel at the end of Channel Drive where we will be meeting.

We will walk along San Clemente Creek as we watch waves of sandpipers and other waterbirds fly from the bay mudflats to the high tide refuge of the marsh. Then after the

tide has risen further, we will walk to a tidal channel and perhaps see the endangered Ridgway's Rail, which is common in this marsh. Any number of raptors and ducks can be expected. In addition to hearing about the remarkable history of this wetland and observing the behavior of wildlife, we will also address coastal ecology.

Total distance walked on level but potentially muddy levees will be about a mile. Heavy rain cancels. Bring binoculars and, if you have one, a spotting scope. There are no restroom facilities in the marsh and even tall bushes are at a premium.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, take Exit 449A at Tamalpais Drive in Corte Madera. Go east 0.2 mile toward the bay then turn right at the Home Consignment Store and go 0.4 mile on San Clemente Drive. Make the first left onto Harbor Drive for 0.2 mile. Turn right onto Yolo Street for 400 feet then turn left onto Channel Drive. We will meet where the road dead ends at the marsh.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PRACTICE

Las Gallinas Storage Ponds, San Rafael

Sunday, November 27, 2016

1 to 4 PM

With Susan Kelly

If you are participating in a Christmas Bird Count, thinking about participating, or just wondering what this is all about, join Susan Kelly for a hands-on training session. Susan is the organizer and compiler of the Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count in Northern Marin.

We will meet at Las Gallinas at the picnic tables by Pond 1. We'll spend about 30 minutes talking about the process. The talk will cover: 1) how we divide the count circle into areas and cover each area with a team of 2 to 12, each with an experienced leader; 2) how we record all birds seen and/or heard on the field form (One person in each group is responsible for this and also must keep track of time spent birding while walking, driving around, riding a bike, or any other method they use.); and 3) how to estimate the number of birds in large flocks such as robins, blackbirds, crows, geese, and ducks.

We will then walk around the pond and count the birds, recording them on the Cheep Thrills field form; each person will receive a copy. If we have time, we may go into an area with trees and try counting the small birds there. Please bring binoculars, water, snacks, and a pen or pencil to record the birds you count.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, take the Smith Ranch Rd exit east toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and continue about 0.5 mile to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at the end of the road.

SEE CHILDREN'S FIELD TRIP ON PAGE 7

CONSERVATION

RICHARDSON BAY ANCHOR OUTS

In the most recent effort to address the Richardson Bay anchor-outs, the Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) hired former San Rafael City Manager Rod Gould as Interim Executive Director to prepare an independent assessment of the current situation and make recommendations.

In his historical review Mr. Gould reports that the Richardson Bay Special Area Plan “declares all of Richardson’s Bay as subject to the public trust, that private residential uses are not an approved public trust use, prohibits mooring for more than 72 hours without a permit,” and concludes that “All anchor-outs should be removed from Richardson Bay.” This prohibition on residential use is echoed in State law (McAteer-Petris Act) and the San Francisco Bay Plan, but has never been adequately enforced for lack of community interest, policy consensus, and resources. Mr. Gould’s description of the historical responsibilities and authorities of the RBRA is exactly what MAS has been saying and what was adopted 30 years ago by each participating jurisdiction and by the RBRA as part of its establishment.

Mr. Gould makes five recommendations:

- Abate marine debris as defined by the State Harbors and Navigation code. New state laws provide for an expedited process to remove vessels or any part of a vessel that is unseaworthy.
- Intensify the ongoing effort to ensure that all vessels on Richardson Bay have current registration. Many are not registered. Regulators need to know how to communicate with vessels for safety and accountability.
- Remove unattended mooring balls and other equipment. These devices have been illegally placed, pose navigation and safety hazards and environmental risks.
- Abate businesses, including renting illegal mooring balls, dinghies or outboard motors and second hand vessels and others, that are illegally operating on the Bay.
- Delay further discussion on dealing with residential use on the Bay until the RBRA strengthens its capacity to enforce laws and regulations having to do with residential habitation on the Bay. Mr. Gould points out that dealing with residential use will require increased capacity and major civic involvement.

At the September RBRA meeting, the members (representatives of the five southern Marin cities and the county) voted to endorse Mr. Gould’s recommendations, but it is still unclear how they will proceed. While the

city of Sausalito, to their credit, has increased its enforcement efforts, they are interested in leaving the RBRA because the burden of enforcement falls primarily on Sausalito. The RBRA is not doing enough to address the problems. Further, three of the RBRA members expressed support for mooring fields (residential anchor-outs could tie up to one or more large mooring buoys), as a way to deal with the problem. This would violate the public trust, the Joint Powers Agreement that established the RBRA and ordinances of all of the cities.

Marin Audubon will continue to attempt to pressure the cities and county to carry out their responsibilities under the Special Area Plan and Joint Powers Agreement and their own ordinances. We will be working with Audubon California which has a grant from the Moore Foundation to address Bay problems including the anchor-outs at Richardson Bay.

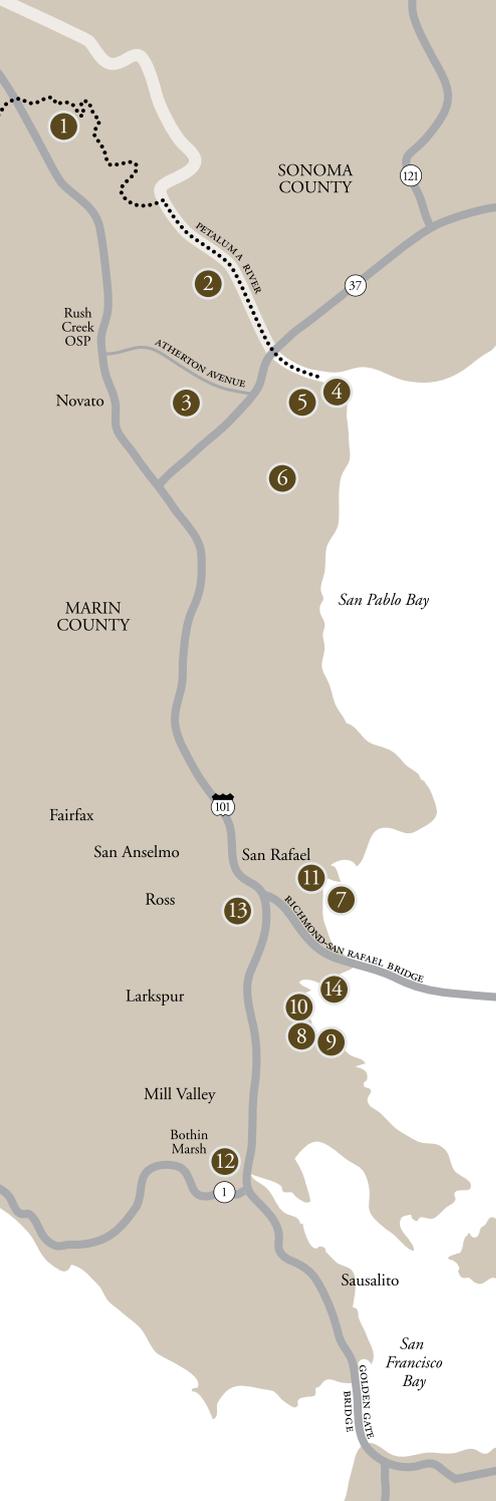
SPOTTED OWL PROTECTION UPDATE

We have been working on formulating our request to Marin County Open Space District within our tolling agreement. We are focusing on strategies of research to gain information about the prey, behavior and impacts of trail use on Northern Spotted Owls. We would expect the data gained in research that is undertaken to then be used to inform management decisions in Northern Spotted Owl habitat. Our tolling agreement ended October 25.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ON MARIN COUNTY PUBLIC LANDS

As reported in last month’s *Rail*, the Marin County Parks Commission held a hearing on the adoption of the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan and on the Plan itself. There was strong support from environmental groups and there were a few individuals who opposed any use of herbicide. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the Board of Supervisors, acting as the Open Space District Board, adopt the plan. The Open Space District Board did not vote on the Plan as scheduled at their October 18 meeting. They delayed voting to address comments from the audience that the EIR did not include a no-herbicide alternative.

The Marin Municipal Water District has just begun environmental review for its vegetation management plan which they call Biodiversity, Fire and Vegetation Management Plan (BFNMP). The process will begin with a scoping session which is an opportunity for the public to ask questions they want addressed in the EIR that will be prepared.



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

MMWD's Plan is heavily focused on addressing fire and particularly on creating fuel breaks. The clearing of vegetation to create fuel breaks not only destroys native habitats but invites broom infestations. Because MMWD bowed to pressures from some folks who do not want any pesticide use, their property has rapidly expanding broom coverage and rising costs to address the overwhelming problem of increasing infestations of invasive species. In addition, we are concerned because, similar to the Open Space District's Plan, the BVVMP does not consider wildlife as an integral component of ecosystems. There is little discussion and or information about the many species of birds and other wildlife that depend on district lands, their critical role in the habitats, and how to ensure that sufficient habitat is protected to support their survival. We will be asking that these concerns be addressed in the EIR.

SOLAR ARRAY IN BAYLANDS?

Burdell Air Partners LLC, is proposing to install 3,600 solar photovoltaic panels on six acres adjacent to the east of the Gness Field County Airport runway. According to the County's description, the proposed panels would be ground-mounted and, when tilted, would be 14 feet in height. The panels would be supported on steel framing structures and cable bracing to which individual panels would be mounted. Energy produced would be delivered to Marin Clean Energy.

This application was submitted just as we are going to press. It is not yet known when environmental review will begin and whether it will go to the Planning Marin County Commission for a decision. Our concerns would be about impacts to baylands and wildlife.

FIELD LIGHTING PROPOSED AT TWO HIGH SCHOOLS

Marin Catholic has returned with an environmental assessment and various other studies to bolster their proposal to install night lighting in their football/soccer fields. They hired the environmental consulting firm, WRA, to assess the potential impacts and recommend measures to mitigate possible impacts to the endangered Ridgway's Rail population in the adjacent Creekside/Hal Brown Park marsh.

The WRA Assessment acknowledges potential impacts to special status species and other wildlife from the increased lights and noise. In our opinion, the measures

WRA suggests would have minimal benefits and would do little to mitigate impacts of night lighting. They suggest that initial testing occur between September 1 and January 1; this would not mitigate any impacts. They also suggest two other measures that appear to be part of the project anyway: that games be on a fixed schedule as proposed by the project; and that the lighting be designed not to increase illumination in the marsh beyond the level already anticipated as a result of the main lighting array. They suggest shades, directional lighting and lower-height fixtures but their effectiveness is unknown. The Marin County Planning Commission will hear the project but no date has been set.

San Marin High School is also proposing night lighting. This school is near a creek but not wetlands. The Initial Study prepared for that project claims there would be no impact to local species and only identifies possible impacts to migrating birds from the illumination. To demonstrate that there would be no adverse impacts from the San Marin lights, they cite many other illuminated fields in the Bay Area that do not report impacts to migrating birds.

SALTON SEA

Concerns about the future of the Salton Sea are increasing as the Imperial Irrigation District's requirement to release Colorado River water to compensate for water transfers to San Diego, will terminate in 2018. Unless an agreement is reached that will protect the Salton Sea, water flowing to the Sea will be reduced by 40% and the water body will shrink by 60%, exposing 45,000 acres of lakebed. Habitat will be eliminated or decline for the more than 300 species that depend on its mudflats, marshes and lake waters. Massive dust storms will also result and cause human health problems.

For more than a century the Salton Sea has served as a major nesting, wintering and migration stopover area for millions of birds. Actually there was aquatic habitat in this area long before the Salton Sea was created. The Sea sits in the basin that once held Lake Cahuilla, a much larger water body that was part of the Colorado River system, and other associated wetlands. In addition to Colorado River water, the water level is replenished by runoff from the farmland.

Tilapia thrive in the deeper waters providing essential food for White Pelican, Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant and Caspian Tern. Up to 90% of the Eared Grebes, 50% of Ruddy Ducks and 30%

of American White Pelican are supported by the lake waters during winter in North America. Mudflats and shorelines are essential for thousands of shorebirds. Salton Sea is a stopover on migration for Eared Grebe, Ruddy Duck, Snowy Plover, Western Sandpiper, White Pelican and White-faced Ibis. These birds overwinter farther south, stop to replenish at the Salton Sea and then continue migration in surprisingly divergent directions, some continuing north while others follow different routes to the east.

Audubon California is part of a coalition working with local, state and federal agencies to hammer out a solution. During the coming year it is expected that state and federal legislation will be introduced. Broad support will be needed to fund further research and solutions.

Christmas Bird Count Season

continued from page 2

count welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels. Bird counters are also welcome to attend the compilation dinner held at the Dance Palace in Point Reyes Station starting at 5 pm. To find complete information about the count and dinner and to register go to <http://tgaman.wixsite.com/prcbc>. We hope to see you at the count. John Longstreth and Tom Gaman, compilers

SOUTHERN MARIN, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31

The Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count is one of the top counts in the country. The count circle runs from the Golden Gate Bridge on the south, Terra Linda on the north, Bolinas Lagoon on the west, and San Francisco bay and marshes on the east. Habitats covered include the Audubon Canyon Ranch, Stinson Beach, Muir Beach, Fort Cronkhite, Muir Woods, Tennessee Valley, Sausalito, Tiburon Peninsula, Ring Mountain, MMWD watershed and lakes as well as the suburban areas of Mill Valley, Corte Madera, Larkspur, Fairfax, Ross, San Anselmo and San Rafael. Weather permitting boats are used to count in San Francisco Bay and in the ocean outside the gate within the count circle.

Sign up online by December 27 by completing the registration form at www.marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php or contact compilers Ed Nute and Bob Hinz at smcbc.marinaudubon@gmail.com.

If you'd like to contribute to the Christmas Bird Count, but will not be participating in the actual count, please consider volunteering for the Christmas Bird Count Compilation Dinner on Saturday, December 31 immediately following the count.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

SIMMONS SLOUGH

We did a site visit with our staff person from the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the federal agency that holds an easement on this property. Although there are still a lot of non-native plants, we were pleased to see that native plants are taking hold and expanding. The banks of Simmons Slough are well vegetated with native fresh-water wetland plants. Native grasses are expanding, primarily *Elymus triticoides* and *Elymus glaucous*.

We need to update our management plan; it will address the continuing removal of Harding grass by mowing while they are small and reducing its vigor by mowing at all stages as we are able. We will experiment with a new approach of raking in seeds of native grasses to speed restoration.

BAHIA

PG&E will be upgrading their walkways through the tidal marshes adjacent to ensure access to maintain their pylons. The current walkways are dilapidated. They want to travel and store some supplies on our property.

PG&E plans to replace deteriorating boards, install hand rails and place gates at the ends to prevent people from walking out onto the boardwalks. It is important not to have any encouragement for going onto the marshes because these are habitat for the endangered Ridgway's Rails and special status California Black Rails. Kayakers often haul up on marshes.

An unexpected benefit of this work, is that we may finally get gates installed on the walkways that were upgraded leading to the pylons at the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. About five years ago, these walkways were widened, the wood replaced and railings added, but no gates were installed. This created an inviting situation for people to walk out over the marsh disturbing Ridgway's rails, and/or making the habitat less usable for the rails. We thank PG&E for correcting this damaging situation.

TRIANGLE MARSH

Thank you to the Town of Corte Madera for removing a large limb that fell from a huge eucalyptus tree onto our property and Town property at the end of Cay Passage.

OCTOBER 2 FIELD TRIP

Farallons with David Wimpfheimer

By Dave Herrema

Naturalist David Wimpfheimer led our annual trip to the Farallon Islands aboard the catamaran *Outer Limits*. The trip started cool and foggy but turned beautiful as the day progressed. The birds picked up soon after passing under the Golden Gate Bridge—always a magical moment. **Brandt's Cormorants**, **Common Murres**, and, of course, **Western Gulls**, were abundant. Several **Parasitic Jaegers** and **Elegant Terns** were found inshore. Offshore we found **Sooty**, **Pink-footed**, and **Black-vented Shearwaters**. We circled the islands and learned about the human and natural history of this amazing formation and smelled the distinctive aroma of the bird guano and hundreds of **Northern Fur Seals**, **Steller Sea Lions**, and **California Sea Lions** hauled out on the rocks. Highlights of the trip were several large pods of hundreds of California Sea Lions feeding in schools of fish. Putting on quite a show, the sea lions were joined by **Humpback Whales** and huge numbers of seabirds. We probably saw close to 60 whales on this very successful day.



Humpback Whale



Western Gull

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Ahhh! Rain! Good for stewardship.

At both Bahia and Triangle we might find a few *Dittrichia plants*. Any of those will be so mature that we will have to bag the plants and take them away to prevent the seeds from escaping. *Salsola*, too, will be mature enough that we must not leave the plants where they grew. At Bahia we might eliminate some competition by pulling cocklebur that is near our new native plants. Next month it might be planting time. Yay!

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 Saturday: November 5

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: November 12

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

If you would like to help, contact Jude Stalker at 415/680-6291 or volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org for more information and to be sure you can be informed about possible changes.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Michael Anderson, Cathy Capper, Barbara Garfien, Pete Groat, Gail Jackson, Joan Kloehn, Lori Leighton, Leo Lewin, Maria C Mcmillan, William H Richardson, Lala Talbot, Andrea K Tobor

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MARIN BIRDLOG: SEPTEMBER 2016

By Josiah Clark

All good things must come to an end, and the epic days of fall birding in Marin are no exception. Though many species will be moving in earnest well into November, the bulk of the fall migrants have now passed with many species all but gone. This year the migration seemed to have begun a bit on the early side. The best conditions for eastern vagrant songbirds tend to be south winds and an extensive marine layer. These conditions were relatively fleeting, but that did not stop birders from finding many vagrants in Marin's best-known trap, Outer Point Reyes.

All through September the more common vagrants seemed to be showing up and bopping around out there, namely **American Redstart**, **Tennessee** and **Chestnut-sided Warblers**.

Blackpoll Warblers seemed in notably short supply this year, with just a few about. Warblers deserving special mention include a **Canada Warbler** on 9/13 at the Mendoza Ranch (MP).

Similarly rare was a **Yellow-green Vireo** on 9/28 (NA). At the fish docks on 10/1 a **Blackburnian Warbler** was found with a **Palm Warbler** nearby (BT, EC). **Green-tailed Towhee** is a rare western

migrant anywhere on the coast, so one on 9/13 at the lighthouse was of special note (PC, DF).

Elsewhere in Point Reyes, a **Common Poorwill** by the Limantour Youth Hostel on 9/27 is part of a continuing trend of the species that is rare at the coast (DA).

Toward the center of the county Nicasio Reservoir produced some interesting shorebirds including **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Baird's Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper** and also uncommon for that spot, a **Blue-winged Teal**. But the rarest bird there was a **Red-throated Pipit** on 9/28 (MS)



Simon Wray, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Green-tailed Towhee

that was seen by dozens of birders in the end.

Probably the rarest bird for the period came from Bolinas, where members of the Point Blue Birdathon Team "The Lookers" found a **Harris's Sparrow** near Poplar Street on the Bolinas Mesa on 10/5 (DH). Always very rare in Marin, this one was especially noteworthy because of the September date, which is early.

Observers and Acronyms **BT**: Bob Toleno, **DA**: David Armstrong, **DF**: Dea Freid, **DH**: Diane Humple, **EC**: Everett Clark, **JK**: John Kendall, **MS**: Mark Stephenson, **MP**: Michael Park, **NA**: Noah Arthur, **PC**: Peter Colasanti

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD TRIP *(This is not an MAS event)*

CHILDREN'S FIELD TRIP TO LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

San Rafael

Saturday, November 12th, 2016

9 to 11 AM

Trip leaders:

Eugenia Caldwell (ec94131@gmail.com)

and Pauline Grant (415/990-1291)

This field trip is designed for children ages 8 and up with either no experience birding or limited experience birding.

The focus of this outing will be wintering ducks and geese—birds that sit still longer than tree birds!! Some typical species for these ponds: Ruddy Duck, Common Merganser, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Canvasback, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Scaup.

We will begin with a quick explanation of how to use binoculars (a few loaner pairs will be available during the field trip) and some basic information on how to identify birds.

RSVP required. Maximum 15 participants. An adult must accompany children under 12. Dress in layers, bring binoculars if you have them, sunscreen, water, sturdy shoes, and a hat, and be prepared for rain showers. Heavy rain will cancel the trip.

DIRECTIONS: See the MAS November 3 field trip on page 3. Meet the group by the short concrete bridge that connects to the first pond. The bridge is next to the parking lot closest to the ponds. Rest room facilities only at the parking area at the entrance to the golf course (not near the storage ponds). Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/9a4oXrRKapM2>

William H. Majoris



Canada Warbler

TIME TO TRIM TREES NOW!

Many folks trim trees in Spring which is the worst time for nesting birds. Instead, do your tree trimming or cutting during winter months to avoid harming nests and young birds in nests.

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SAVE THE DATE

- December 1 **Field Trip:** Las Gallinas
With Susan Kelly & Len Blumin
 - December 3 **Field Trip:** Bahia, Rush Creek
and Rowland Blvd Wetlands
With Jim White & Bob Battagin
 - December 10 **Field Trip:** Clifton Court Forebay,
San Joaquin River Delta
*With Rich Cimino & Ohlone
Audubon Society*
 - December 15 **Cheep Thrills CBC**
 - December 17 **Point Reyes CBC**
 - December 31 **Southern Marin CBC**
- Check website for updates and details

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The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter-supporting members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. 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.

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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.

For new and renewal NAS memberships send checks directly to NAS.

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