



# THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

**SPEAKER SERIES**

*Free and Open to the Public*

**Richardson Bay Audubon Center**  
 376 Greenwood Beach Road  
 Tiburon, California 94920  
 Information: 415/388-2821

**FRIDAY, OCT 2 8 PM**

**Foraging Behavior of Large Wading Birds**

*With Jeff Martin*

“Curious, odd, humorous and fascinating” are the words Jeff uses to describe foraging behaviors he has recorded as movies all over the North American continent. Jeff has filmed many species: herons, egrets, storks, bitterns, ibis, anhingas, spoonbills and others.

Jeff is a clinical psychologist by vocation and a naturalist by avocation — having worked and taught for Point Reyes National Seashore and various national parks, colleges and universities.

Come see the **BIG BIRDS!**

**FRIDAY, NOV 6 8 PM**

**Fascinating Adaptations: Surviving Extreme Conditions**

*With Doug Cheeseman*

In a fast paced photo presentation, Doug Cheeseman will describe how wildlife adapt in unexpected ways to survive the tough conditions of the pristine areas of the Falklands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Focusing on seven species of penguins, albatross, seabirds, fur seals, sea lions, whales, and invertebrates, including courtship and nesting behavior, Doug's program is an educational and entertaining adventure filled with great images and natural history.

Doug, Gail and their son Ted Cheeseman have led 16 trips to the Southern Ocean since 1994 through their wildlife tour company, Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. Doug began leading trips to the Antarctic region in 1984.

A popular speaker for many Northern California Audubon chapters beginning in the 70's, Doug is well known for his enthusiasm about these remote regions. You won't want to miss this program!

## Lowell Sykes - 2009 Volunteer of the Year

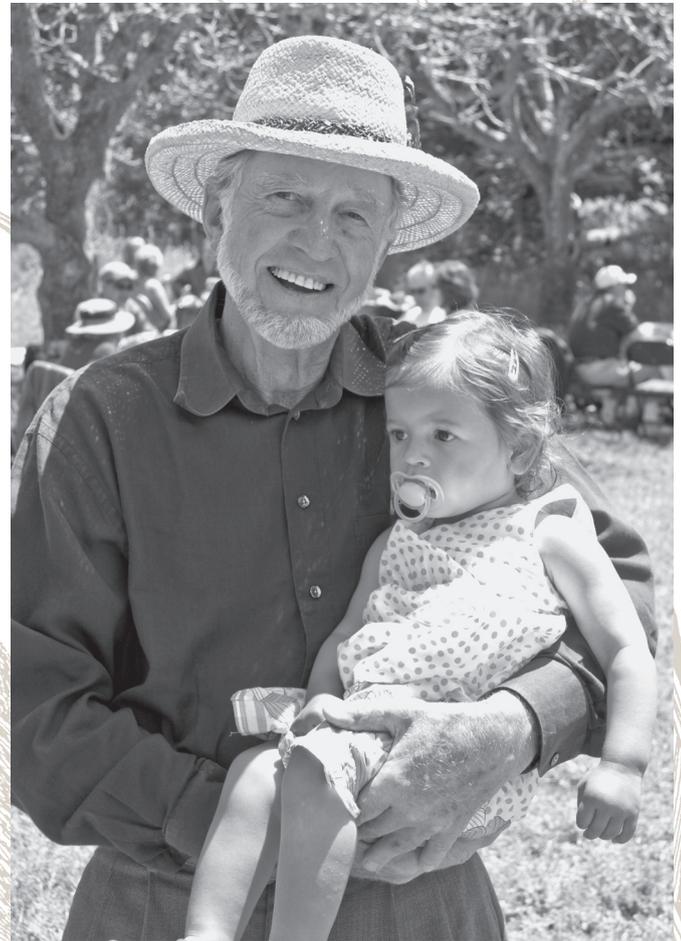
*By Barbara Salzman*

This year MAS pays a special tribute to a very special person — Lowell Sykes.

The MAS Volunteer of the Year Award honors Lowell for his unfailing dedication to Marin Audubon and his tireless efforts on behalf of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Always there and willing to help, on his own initiative Lowell began to grow native trees and other plants for our properties, helped construct the growing beds and designed the watering system to maintain the beds, installed the tank, and obtained recycled water from North Marin Water District.

Thank you, thank you Lowell.



JOSEPH SKORNICKA

**Lowell Sykes with granddaughter Kylie Sykes at the Mother's Day Barbeque**

## LOWELL SYKES — INSPIRATION & DEDICATION

*By Nancy Okada*

“Lowell is Marin Audubon's John Muir,” I was told when I began doing this newsletter a few years ago.

Little did I know how important this soft-spoken, calm individual is to Marin Audubon. Nor did I realize how lucky we are that he has chosen to give MAS so much of his time!

In a previous life Lowell was an attorney, but he preferred to be outdoors and gave it up for nature. Marin received an incredible gift.

Lowell joined Marin Audubon in the 1980's, an avid birder looking for local birding trips, and in 1995 he was asked to join the board — to do field trips! In January 2000, fate tossed Lowell the job of president and peacemaker as Marin Audubon purchased Triangle Marsh — a controversial move — and half the board resigned. Lowell Sykes became President Lowell Sykes, and also took on the job of treasurer.

He served as president until September 2001, when current President Barbara Salzman took over and continues today.

To say Lowell does almost everything is no exaggeration.

*Continued on page 4*

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

We are getting our properties ready for the upcoming rains and need to remove invasive non-native plants such as ice plant, *Dittrichia* or stinkwort, and radish. If you are interested in these work days, or would like to be notified if additional dates are chosen later, please contact Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688.

TRIANGLE MARSH: OCTOBER 3  
 BAHIA: SEPTEMBER 19, OCTOBER 10, 24



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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

President Barbara Salzman 924-6057  
Vice President Lowell Sykes 388-2821  
Secretary Mariah Baird 456-3355  
Treasurer Josephine Kreider 381-1910  
Finance Chair Greg Block 479-8254  
Conservation Phil Peterson 898-8400  
Barbara Salzman 924-6057  
Earthshare Jude Stalker 668-1242  
Legal Laurens Silver 383-5688  
Field Trips Helen Lindqvist 789-0703  
Membership Bob Chilvers 444-0875  
Fundraising Richard Bohnet 331-3217  
Programs Lowell Sykes 388-2821  
Special Projects Jude Stalker 668-1242  
Nominating Josephine Kreider 381-1910  
Volunteers Bob Hinz 383-8688  
Property Mgt. Ed Nute 457-9241  
Publicity Nancy Okada 987-8800  
BAAC Reps Lowell Sykes 388-2821  
Barbara Salzman 924-6057

## DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members.

7:30 PM, first Tuesday of the month

Richardson Bay Audubon Center

376 Greenwood Beach Road

Tiburon, California 94920

**MAS telephone:** 721-4271

Marin Audubon Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. *The Clapper Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper. Edited by Nancy Okada, 987-8800, nxokada@yahoo.com; layout by Sue Morrison, and assisted by David Weinstock, staff photographer and other members of MAS. Deadline is the first of each month.

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## 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.

**Web site:** [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org)

**Webmaster:** Maggie Rufo 898-7721

**Northern Calif. Bird Box:** 681-7422

(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

## TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON:

Log onto [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) or contact

National Audubon Society

700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003

212/979-3000

## DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$100 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Clapper Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

It's been both a wonderful year, with many accomplishments, and a difficult one.

Our major difficulty has been the failure to receive grant funding from state agencies for restoration work at Bahia – completed on October 30, 2008. Payment from the Wildlife Conservation Board was received on August 4, nine months after the end of construction. Other funding has not come in. These extreme delays have put considerable strain on us with even more stress on our contractors, who have gone unpaid for all of this time.

In spite of this, we had a very successful year. We completed the Bahia Marsh Restoration project, began restoring habitat on the adjacent uplands at Bahia, accepted the donation of a 20-acre tidal marsh along the San Rafael shoreline from Mary Tiscornia, completed our financial audit, started our Habitat Stewardship Program and updated our Marin County Bird list.

We accomplished so much, thanks to the help of our dedicated board members and many other volunteers (we calculated more than 4,690 volunteer hours contributed last year), plus the financial support of our

many members and supporters. You have all helped make our work, and success, possible.

Looking ahead, our board has adopted a 2009-2010 fiscal year plan with goals to increase fundraising and membership, expand volunteer participation in our Habitat Stewardship Program and purchase bayland properties.

This month our Las Gallinas field trips resume on a limited basis, with Len Blumin as leader.

**ORDER NOW!** Our Annual Birdseed sale deadline is SEPT. 30, with pick-up on October 10 (see page 3). Your purchase buys high quality birdseed for your favorite backyard birds while supporting MAS. If you order NOW, you won't forget! Thanks.

On a personal note, my husband Jay and I traveled in May to South Africa, Botswana and Zambia, where I saw many fantastic birds and mammals in their natural habitats. An overwhelming experience, it makes me even more determined to protect Marin's natural habitats and wildlife

Thank you again for your continued support. Hope you can join us on one of our volunteer days. 

## CONSERVATION

By Barbara Salzman

Marin Audubon Conservation Committee reviews critical environmental issues related to wildlife habitats and comments to cities, agencies, and other jurisdictions. To attend, call Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057.

### DRAKE'S ESTERO

A big "thank you" to all members who responded to our Action Alert and sent comments to Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey urging wilderness designation in 2012 for Drake's Estero. Senator Feinstein attached a "rider" amendment to the Interior Department's budget allowing the oyster farm to continue operation until 2022.

Drake's Estero is the only estuary on the West Coast designated by Congress for wilderness protection. This was worth fighting for.

### INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE APPROVED

On July 21, the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) ordinance and policy. MAS and other environmental organizations requested an IPM program that considers each pest and the special circumstances of each location to determine the best strategies and techniques for removal.

Public concern was expressed at the hearing about the use of any chemicals. MAS supports a sound IPM program that uses herbicides and pesticides only after evaluating the invasive species, the risks and benefits of each control option and situation.

### VICTORY TO STOP POACHING

Marin Assemblyman Jared Huffman's bill (AB 708) to enact tough penalties for poaching is on the

Governor's desk. The bill will significantly increase fines, establish mandatory minimums, and give authority to revoke hunting privileges for life.

A built-in fiscal incentive gets local counties to help. Half of the collected fines are returned to counties to reimburse court costs incurred in investigating and prosecuting each violation with the remaining half to the Department of Fish and Game for law enforcement. Previously, most counties (including Marin) had minimal or no penalties for poaching. 

### BIRD OF THE MONTH



RICHARD BOHNET

**Bald Eagle**

**MAS FIELD TRIPS**

Open to the public

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

**SPECIAL FAMILY WALK**

**LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS**

**9 AM to 12 NOON**

**Saturday, Sept 19**

With Jim White

Let's start off the season of weekend birding trips with a Saturday morning stroll through this good area in our back yard. The open level paths around the ponds offer children and adults a great place to watch the varied bird life both on the water and on the vegetated islands. Hawks will be seen flying overhead or hunting low over the adjacent wetlands.

**LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS**

**THURSDAY MORNING WALKS**

**RESUME**

**8:30 AM to 12 NOON**

**Oct 1 - Len Blumin**

Join Len on this regular first Thursday of the month morning birding walk at the storage ponds. Some of our feathered fall visitors will have arrived to join the resident ones that stay all year round.

From Hwy 101 in San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to end of road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds' parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot.

**PELAGIC TRIP to the**

**FARALLONES**

**8 AM to 4 PM**

**Sunday, Sept 20**

With David Wimpfheimer



Windy weather cancelled our trip on Aug 30 at the last minute so we have rescheduled for Sunday, Sept 20. The birds and marine mammals we shall hope to see include shearwaters, auklets, jaegers, Tufted Puffins, terns, murrelets, guillemots, phalaropes, cormorants and Black-footed Albatross plus whales, dolphins and porpoises. We are fortunate to have David Wimpfheimer lead us again this year. Due to the change of date there are still several spaces available for this exciting trip, so anyone interested in participating should contact Helen, the trip coordinator, as soon as possible at helen\_lindqvist@yahoo.com or 415/789-0703. Participants will be notified of payment method and other trip details by reply Emails. Members of other Audubon Chapters are welcome if space is available. So gather up your friends and come join us for a great day's cruise on the Pacific!!

**MAS WORK PARTIES - FIRST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH**

**TRIANGLE MARSH WORK PARTY**

**10 AM - 1 PM**

Come out on **October 3**. Bring your weed clippers, gardening gloves and weed wrenches/pullers for a day of fun. For details call Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688.

**MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY'S 24th ANNUAL BIRDSEED SALE**

It's that time of year again when sparrows, titmice, siskins and other hungry winter visitors return to Marin and will be looking for handouts at your feeders. Don't disappoint them! Our birdseed is the finest quality. Pre-order your seeds now. No sales on pickup day. *All profits from this sale support Marin Audubon Society's programs!*

**SEED MIXES AVAILABLE**

**WILDBIRD AUDUBON MIX:** This is especially blended for us to attract Bay Area songbirds. It contains only red and white millet together with blackoil sunflower seeds; no wasteful fillers.

**WILDBIRD PREMIUM MIX:** This mix is for birds that prefer a pure red and white millet mixture without sunflower seeds.

**BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS:** This is a favorite of chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, finches, and many others. If you want a variety at your feeder, this is the seed for you.

**WOODPECKER, JAY & WILDLIFE MIX:** This new mix includes whole yellow corn, assorted nuts, small black oil sunflower, large black stripe sunflower, Virginia in-shell peanuts, and dark raisins.

**NYJER THISTLE:** This minute seed, which is rich in nourishing oil, is very appealing to smaller birds, but unattractive to larger birds and squirrels. It is imported from India and is 98% pure.

Pickup at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon. No seed is available before or after the pickup date. **For information, call Wendy at 415/987-4445, not the Center.**

Enclose this order form with **EITHER your check made out to Marin Audubon Society OR credit card form on page 8**, and mail both to: SEED SALE c/o Wendy Feltham, 49 Oak Springs Dr., San Anselmo, CA 94960.



**ORDER DEADLINE: SEPT 30**

**PICKUP DATE: OCT 10  
10 AM - 1 PM**

ITEM	No. of Bags	Unit Price	Total Price
20# Wildbird Audubon Mix		\$15.00	
20# Wildbird Premium Mix		\$14.00	
20# Black Oil Sunflower		\$15.00	
40# Black Oil Sunflower		\$26.00	
15# Woodpecker, Jay & Wildlife Mix		\$20.00	
5# Nyjer Thistle Seed		\$12.00	
<b>TOTAL</b> (All prices incl. CA sales tax)			

**MAS Birdseed Order Form**

PLEASE PRINT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_



## PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP

### SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT OF INVASIVE CORDGRASS

Triangle Marsh and Tiscornia Marsh had recent invasions of non-native cordgrass, but thanks to the Invasive Spartina Project (ISP) these “plant pests” were monitored and spot-treated as needed.

ISP also successfully treated the invasive *Spartina densiflora* on our San Rafael bayfront tideland property several years ago.

### BAHIA

We have been busy this summer maintaining our nursery beds and removing non-native plants, primarily wild radish (another highly invasive non-native plant). We had too few volunteers to finish the job, so we hired workers from The Watershed Nursery. Thanks to the magnificent efforts of Lowell Sykes, other volunteers and The Watershed Nursery, 95% of the radish is GONE!

All of this “weeding” prepares the site for transplanting creeping wild rye, which we will do during the rainy season. If you’d like to help, please join us by calling Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688. Planting begins shortly after the first rains saturate the soil.

Suggestions sought. We continue to have problems with bicycle riders at Bahia. We are talking to the County Open Space District which manages the upland adjacent to the marsh, but if you have any suggestions, please contact Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057.

### SIMMONS SLOUGH PROPERTIES

Thank you MAS member Vicky Van Meter! Vicky now maintains the nest boxes built and installed by Lowell Sykes several years ago at our Olive and Atherton Avenue sites. We are also working with Vicky and the president of the Olive Ridge Homeowners Association to plant our easement (donated by subdivision developer Mission Valley Properties) with native greenery. 

## LOWELL SYKES – INSPIRATION & DEDICATION

*Continued from page 1*

**On the Range:** Lowell works on the properties, doing everything from fence mending, sign raising, restoration, planting, growing, eradicating and anything else I have forgotten. He builds bird boxes and posts them at our various sites. He plants trees – over 200 throughout Marin. He tends and waters the native plant nursery, growing oak trees and other natives of his choice. He also helps out at San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Rescue.

**Leading the Pack:** Up until last April, Lowell led two walks a month at Las Gallinas storage ponds. Every year he does the Birdathon to raise money for MAS. The Christmas Bird Count finds him out on the bay counting and he leads a variety of MAS field trips throughout the year, as well as being featured on the Vallejo/Mare Island Flyway Festival line-up in late January/early February.

**He Represents:** He’s the Marin Audubon representative on the Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) board, he also secures volunteers for the annual chapter hosting duties in the spring/summer, sits on the ACR property committee and, as if that isn’t enough, he monitors Great Blue Herons. (He also does bird monitoring on the MAS properties, wherever needed.) AND he joins Jean Starkweather once a month to monitor birds along the Pickleweed Shoreline in San Rafael. He also serves as treasurer for Marin Baylands Advocates!

**MAS Programs:** Lowell is the MC at our Speaker Series program. He also secures most of the speakers, follows-up on their attendance, sets up the snacks before and cleans up after! If you want to help him, please let me know (Nancy: 415/987-8800), as Lowell is often away from his phone.

**Habitat Acquisition:** Lowell goes up to the Marin County offices regularly to check out tax defaulted vacant land that MAS can acquire to save habitat. This was his idea, and his effort has helped save a patchwork of habitat throughout Marin.

**Lowell’s Summer Vacation:** For the past six summers, Lowell hiked the Pacific Crest Trail (extends from Mexico to Canada) and has completed a number of segments as he aims for the entire multi-mile hike. Summer of ’09 he hiked 215 miles in the southern Sierra section from Yosemite to Highway 178. Did I mention he served in the Peace Corps?

**Peace:** On Fridays, Lowell joins his wife Barbara Emily and regularly vigils against the war at Camino Alto & Blithedale in Mill Valley. Stop by and say hi!

Best of all, Lowell leads by example. He is a true teacher of environmental virtue and the value of calm persistence.

Please come help MAS and enjoy this true steward of the environment, Lowell Sykes! 



DAVID WEINSTOCK

**Flying Godwit sighted at Marta's Marsh**

### MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

- |                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| 1. Petaluma Marsh      | 180 acres  |
| 2. Bahia               | 60 acres   |
| 3. Simmons Slough      | 162 acres  |
| 4. Norton Avenue Pond  | 1 lot      |
| 5. Black Point Parcels | 4 lots     |
| 6. Arroyo San Jose     | .25 mile   |
| 7. Murphy Rock         | 34 acres   |
| 8. Corte Madera Marsh  | 1.8 acres  |
| 9. Triangle Marsh      | 31 acres   |
| 10. San Clemente Creek | 4.34 acres |

(Map update coming)

# Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

Our bird of the month is one of the success stories of the Endangered Species Act. Arguably the single most important piece of environmental legislation for the US, it is continually under attack by financial interests who would undermine the protection it affords native species and their habitats.

With pressure from citizens and environmental groups back in 1973, Congress declared species conservation efforts to be inadequate and passed comprehensive endangered species legislation. On December 28, 1973, President Nixon — bowing to overwhelming grassroots conservation sentiment — signed the federal Endangered Species Act into law.

The Endangered Species Act is designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction as a “consequence of economic growth and development untempered by adequate concern and conservation.” The Endangered Species Act not only legally protects individual listed species from direct harm, the Act also protects “the ecosystem upon which they depend.” As of this summer, 22 species have been saved from extinction, recovered, and de-listed, our bird of the month being one of these. Twenty-three others have been down-listed from endangered to threatened status.

This month's species was edging toward extinction in the 1950s. Once a common sight in much of North America, our species was severely affected by the use of the pesticide DDT. DDT was not directly lethal to adult birds, but its metabolites caused fatal thinning of egg shells. Through a process called biomagnification, concentrations of DDT byproducts in the bird's body interfered with the bird's calcium metabolism. Females laid eggs too brittle to stand the weight of being brooded, so they were not producing offspring.

Also taking their toll were factors such as loss of suitable habitat, illegal shooting, strikes and electrocutions on powerlines, as well as pollution from oil, lead, and mercury. Thus humans were the key factor in the drastic decline in the population of our bird. By the 1950s, only 412 nesting pairs remained in all of the 48 contiguous states.

With the signing of the Endangered Species Act and its associated recovery actions as well as the ban of DDT in the US in the early 1970s, our species' population began to rebound. Our bird was officially de-listed on June 28, 2007.

Further good news came to Marin last year. Wildlife biologist Jules Evens conducts an annual nest survey for Ospreys on Kent Lake. In 2008, he noted a pair of this month's bird nesting on an old Osprey nest with a chick in it, for the first confirmed nesting of our species in Marin County. (Historically, our bird may have nested in Marin in remote locations, but those occurrences went

unrecorded.) This year, Jules reports, a pair was again nesting on Kent Lake and had two chicks.

Reservoirs such as Kent Lake meet several of our species' requirements: old forests with big trees, locations remote from human intrusion, and adequate foraging areas near water. Access to the known nest site is by boat, which can only be launched with the permission from the Marin Water District and when accompanied by a ranger. This isolation is a good thing, because our species is prone to abandon its nest if disturbed.

Our bird of this month has the largest nest of any North American bird. One nest, reused for 34 years by subsequent pairs, measured over 8 feet in diameter, over 11 feet high, and with an estimated weight of two tons. They usually construct nests in large trees, composed of sticks in a stack.

A wingspan of 71-92 inches makes it the second largest North American bird of prey. (The first being the California Condor, if you consider it a bird of prey.) In most raptors, the female is larger than the male; 25% larger in the case of our species. It is a powerful flier and can soar on thermal convection currents reaching speeds of 35-45 mph when gliding and flapping.

This month's bird is a member of a group known as fish eagles, closely related to kites in the family Accipitridae. Our bird is an opportunistic forager, preferring fish but also eating a variety of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. Carrion is a major part of its diet. When it can, our bird also steals food from other species, like the Osprey, in preference to catching its own dinner.

Our bird is none other than the symbol of the United States. Founding father Ben Franklin famously wrote, “For my own part I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of bad moral Character. He does not get his Living honestly. You may have seen him perched on some dead Tree near the River, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the Labour of the Fishing Hawk; and when that diligent Bird has at length taken a Fish, and is bearing it to his Nest for the Support of his Mate and young Ones, the Bald Eagle pursues him and takes it from him.”

Despite his anthropomorphizing, Franklin was a keen observer of Bald Eagle behavior ... and some might argue of American foreign conduct as well.

The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) gets both its English and scientific names from the distinctive appearance of the adult's head. Bald now means bare and hairless; however, in Middle English bald meant shining white. Its scientific name is derived from the Greek *halo* for sea and *aetos* for eagle and from *leukos* for white and *kephalos* for head. 



DAVID WEINSTOCK

**Flying Willet & Black-bellied Plovers sighted at Marta's Marsh**

## MARINE PROTECTED AREA APPROVED

By Rick Johnson,  
Conservation Committee

After a long and heated public hearing, the Fish and Game Commission adopted the Integrated Preferred Alternative for the North Central Coast Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in a 3-2 vote on August 8.

For more details go to <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/northcentralhome.asp>. Details on the regulatory language is <http://www.fgc.ca.gov/regulations/new/2009/632regs2ipa.pdf>.

### MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Judy and H. Spencer Bloch, Sarah and Terry Calvani, Cecelia & James Donahue, Rose Gehm, Roger Harris, Robert Hinz, Susan L. Janson, Mark Lindberg, Mary Love, David and Barbara Meschi, William and Laura Moseley, Barbara Munden, Frank and Lois Noonan, Warren and Marcia Nute, Susan and John Ristow, Theodore Sachsman, Virginia and Robert Shaffer, Stuart Snyder, Harriet Stix, Meryl Sundove, Anna F. Wilson, Christine Wood

### IN MEMORY OF PAM DALY

Virginia A. Cunningham

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Heather Allan, David Anderson, Mirabai Baker, F. Bunting, Maureen Callon, John Davis, Lynn Rachelle Eden, Andrea Freeman, Jan Kadrie, Lou Klein, Cherin Mooradian, Carole Ormiston, Lillian Powell, Lisa Wagg, Thel Wong

# MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY 2008 - 09 ANNUAL REPORT

The Marin Audubon Society (MAS) mission to protect habitat (particularly wetlands and adjacent uplands) benefits people as well as wildlife. Our four-pronged approach is to acquire, restore & enhance, advocate, and educate.

**Habitat Acquisition:** Marin Audubon Society (MAS) currently owns 508 acres on 22 properties. Funding assistance came from Marin Baylands Advocates, large state and federal agency grants, and other foundations and individuals.

**Habitat Restoration and Enhancement:** Completion of the 200-acre tidal marsh restoration project at Bahia in Novato was followed by work on adjacent upland habitats. In addition, we refined plans for our Olive and Atherton properties and did project restoration monitoring at Bahia and Petaluma, as required by regulatory agency permits.

MAS launched a Habitat Stewardship Program to attract volunteer help for restoration and maintenance, including Bahia, maintenance of 31-acre Triangle Marsh in Corte Madera, and easement revegetation with help from the Olive Ridge Homeowners Association (next to Olive and Atherton Avenue parcel).

**Advocacy:** MAS commented on environmental reviews required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Specific concerns: avoid adverse impacts to endangered species and habitat, protect wetlands and streams, provide adequate buffers around streams and wetlands (usually 100 feet wide or more), and avoid impacts to native trees, woodlands and other native habitats. We obtained legal and scientific support to increase our effectiveness.

**Education:** Many outreach methods: Our monthly newsletter *The Clapper Rail*, a monthly speaker series, 45 field trips, two bird classes taught by Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris, Junior Bird Watchers, Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count, co-sponsors of West Marin Christmas Bird Count. Fundraisers: "Bird-a-thon," Mother's Day Barbecue and Annual MAS birdseed sale. Testimony at public hearings and local media interviews kept the public informed.

**Major accomplishments this year:** Bahia Marsh Restoration project completed in October 2008. Received property donation of 20-acre Tiscornia Marsh, located at the mouth of San Rafael Creek, from property owner Mary Tiscornia. Revised and published an updated Marin County Bird List. Completed audit of financial records.

## Specific Actions in Fiscal Year (July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009)

**Testified:** (1)Revisions to the Town of Corte Madera's General Plan;hired law firm Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger for legal support, resulting in plan changes plus improved wetlands and buffer protection policies; (2)Marin County

Parks and Open Space Bond measure: questioned measure's lack of clear standards to protect natural resources and fire/vegetation management plan; (3)Environmental review of the Dillon Beach Lawson's Landing project: testified at County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings regarding protection of coastal dunes, wetlands, and endangered species and joined in an appeal to the California Coastal Commission challenging Marin County project approval; (4)Marin Municipal Water District's (MMWD) proposed Desalination Facility: asked for additional information on wetland and bay impacts, supported stronger water conservation measures and opposed use of water from the Russian and Eel Rivers; (5)Marin County Planning Commission's Local Coastal Program review workshops: advocacy for streams, water quality, wetlands, and other natural resources; (6) Greenbrae Interchange and Central Marin Ferry Connection projects: raised issues about impacts to important wetlands and endangered Clapper Rail population in the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve.

**Commented on:** (1)Marin Country Day School's development project: recommended buffers and reduction of fill in creek; (2)San Rafael's Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for huge multi-soccer-field complex along Gallinas Creek: hired biologist Jules Evens for expert testimony proving endangerment of Clapper Rails and other DEIR deficiencies; (3) Marin County Airport expansion at Gnos Field (during the Joint Federal Aviation Administration and Marin County scoping session): impacts to wetlands, wildlife, and environment; (4)Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC): objected to boat dock permit for private Richardson Bay residence; (5)Notice of Preparation for the North Bay Water Recycling Program: requested North Bay water quality and habitats be included in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR); (6)Todd Road Mitigated Negative Declaration: criticized City of Novato for ignoring two years of committee work on plan by residents to reduce noise and air quality impacts; (7)College of Marin Kentfield campus: the initial study for site improvements; (8) DEIR for proposed Target store at San Rafael Shoreline Park: impacts on adjacent Canalways seasonal wetland, etc.; (9)Endangered Species Act new rules: objected to shortened timeline for informal consultation and removal of public agency consultation when projects adversely impact endangered species; (10)Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Restoration Project scoping documents: will adversely impact Alginates Creek and remove mature redwood trees near Samuel P. Taylor State Park; (11)Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Dredged Material Aquatic Transfer facility (managed by the Army Corps of Engineers): bay and biological impacts on eelgrass beds, native fish species (particularly sturgeon) and

diving birds (large flocks gather during winter months); (12)continued funding of the Invasive Spartina Project to the California Resources Agency: supported; (13)DEIR for 650 North San Pedro Road plan for 14 houses on 14.8-acre site: impacts to the fresh water pond, native trees, water quality, and wildlife; (14)US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Carillon Islands National Wildlife Refuge Management Plan: opposed opening the islands to public use as will harm largest seabird-nesting colony on the West Coast; (15)USFWS: objected to permit allowing homeowners association to hire sharpshooter

*Continued on page 7*

### MAS Statement of Financial Position As of June 30, 2009

#### Assets

##### Current Assets - Checking Accounts

General (Unrestricted)	19,349
Marin Baylands Advocates (Restricted)	1,103
Property (Restricted)	295,853
Special Projects (Restricted)	7,744

**Total Current Assets** **324,048**

##### Fixed Assets - Real Estate

Arroyo San Jose	4,800
Atherton (Chang)	315,000
Atherton (Sheridan)	370,000
Bahia	1,600,471
Black Point	9,900
C.M. Tide Lot 1	3,200
Channel Drive	2,800
Mill Valley	2,600
Murphy's Rock	9,719
Norton Avenue 1	4,100
Olive (Mission)	315,000
Petaluma Marsh	276,526
Triangle Marsh	750,000

**Total Fixed Assets** **3,678,842**

##### Other Assets

Endowment (Designated)	630,800
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**Total Other Assets** **630,800**

**Total Assets** **4,846,270**

### Statement of Financial Income & Expense July 2008 Through June 2009

#### Income

Donations	86,114
Easement Fees	35,911
Endowment Income	17,859
Events & Activities	13,659
Grants	1,314,923
Interest Earned	3,757
Membership	21,644

**Total Income** **1,493,867**

#### Expense

Bank Charges & Credit Card Fees	489
Contributions	135
Copy & Printing Services	23,720
Endowment Expense	5,303
Insurance	8,211
Miscellaneous	293
Office Supplies & Expenses	557
Permits & Fees	(11,819)
Postage & Shipping	3,307
Professional Services	24,745
Program Expenses	12,038
Property Expenses	5,574
Property & Sales Taxes	4,565
Rent	712
Wetlands Restoration Construction	1,503,320

**Total Expense** **1,581,149**

**Net Income** **(87,283)**

By Rich Stallcup

The 92 days of this birdlog report include elements of the local breeding season and both migration periods. This year, all of the rare species mentioned here were lost *spring* migrants – even those mid-to-late June.

It's always good to see pelicans . . . or is it? This year, big numbers of **White Pelicans** began arriving on the coast in April and they were here to stay. It is best when they appear in early July as usual. The early incursion indicates total (or partial) reproductive failure. **Brown Pelicans** did a similar (but unconnected) behavior with line after line stringing north along the coast in April and May rather than June through August. There is no doubt that some portion of both species' populations did not fledge chicks this past spring.

## UNUSUALS

### *The Usual Spring Unusuals*

Nineteen **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** (five inland) were more than in most springs even with good vagrant weather. There were four **Indigo Buntings** (all O.P.), five **Northern Parulas**, three **Black-and-white Warblers**, two **Chestnut-sided Warblers**, three **American Redstarts** and one each of **Eastern Kingbird**, **Magnolia Warbler**, **Ovenbird** and **Yellow-breasted Chat** (m.ob).

### *Spring Rarities by Date*

A **Cassin's Kingbird** on the O.P. 5/2 (RS,HC) was a Marin County third if we count a successful nesting at Bolinas decades ago as one record even though it eventually involved five birds. Six **Sandhill Cranes** high over the Rush Creek wetlands 5/6 (LS) is unexplainable. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** of the expected race *albilora* was on the O.P. 5/17 to 5/20 (DM,AK, m.ob). There are only about eight spring records. A female **Hooded Warbler** at the B Ranch 5/18 (RS) was one of fewer than ten spring records ever for the O.P. but there are a similar number from the Marin "mainland" in past years.

An adult male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at the B Ranch O.P. 5/29 (NB,RS) was unprecedented there in spring. They may be of annual occurrence in the county during early autumn but those, in juvenile plumage, are identified by few birders. A hatch-year (just under one year old) male **Cape May Warbler** was in the Point Reyes Lighthouse trees 5/30 (OJ,m.ob) and a **White-eyed Vireo** was there 6/6 (m.ob). This Vireo was the sixth of its kind for Marin, five of them in spring!

A singing, male **Mourning Warbler** at Dogtown 6/22 (RD) was amazing given the overall rarity of the species in the Western U.S.

## NESTING

A pair of **Bald Eagles** nested for the second year in a row at Kent Lake and apparently fledged two youngsters (JE). There were several other sightings of one, two and three-year olds during the period suggesting that Marin County is now a permanent part of the species expanding range.

## LATE

A probable female (it never sang) "white-striped" **White-throated Sparrow** remained at an Inverness feeder through 6/3 (MR, MB) . . . more than a month after all other migratory *Zonotrichia* sparrows vanished.

## A EUPHASID FEEDING FRENZY

At some point in the opening week of May a huge ball of krill apparently drifted from the open sea into Drake's Bay and burst as it hit the beach. Northbound migrant birds stalled at this forage banquet for several days until we (RS,NB) happened upon the scene on 5/11. The nearshore water was alive with birds for a least a two-mile stretch.

I conservatively estimated 18,000 **Red-necked Phalaropes** and 1,200 **Bonaparte's Gulls**. Over the next three days, numbers dropped but we found a **Laughing Gull**, two **Franklin's Gulls** and two **Sabine's Gulls** downwest on the sand. There were four species of "hooded" gulls (JH,RS). At the peak, there was so much wild energy out there . . . we just sat and stared.

AUGUST brings the waders, sees the outgoing of most migratory passerines and, if the weather is correct, a bluster of vagrants in the last few days of the month. SEPTEMBER is even better.

## OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS

**LB**-Len Blumin, **MB**-Mark Butler, **HC**-Heather Cameron, **MC**-Mary Cantini, **RC**-Rich Cimino, **JC**-Josiah Clark, **RD**-Ryan Digaudio, **JE**-Jules Evens, **DF**-Deborah Fitzpatrick, **LF**-Leslie Flint, **KH**-Keith Hansen, **JH**-Justin Hite, **DH**-Diana Humple, **OJ**-Oscar Johnson, **AK**-Andy Kleinhesselink, **WL**-William Legge, **CL**-Cindy Lieurance, **LL**-Les Lieurance, **m.ob**-many observers, **NM**-Natalie McNear, **DM**-Dominik Moser, **NB**-Native Birds birders, **DN**-David Nelson, **BO**-Becky Olsen, **O.P.**-Outer Point Reyes, **DP**-Desert Peach, **PRBO**- Point Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science, **DR**-Don Reinburg, **KR**-Kathy Robertson, **MR**-Mary Anne Rotello, **MgR**-Maggie Rufo, **RS**-Rich Stallcup, **LS**-Lang Stevenson, **LT**-Linda Terrill, **ST**-Scott Terrill, **MW**-Mary Westlake, **KW**-Ken Wilson. 

Continued from page 6

to kill Acorn Woodpeckers damaging houses; (16)Novato segment of the Bay Trail: objected to alignments adversely impacting Novato Creek, adjacent wetlands, and MAS property at Olive and Atherton Aves.; (17)San Rafael Canalways (a seasonal 85-acre diked bayland along the San Rafael's bayfront): objected to pre-application proposal to park debris boxes; (18)Federal funding to remove debris (particularly abandoned boats) from Richardson Bay's waters and shoreline: supported; (19)MMWD's Biodiversity Management Plan update: recommended maintaining wildlife populations and specific habitats, particularly chaparral; (20)Marin County's Integrated Pest Management policy and ordinance update: supported a range of methods to remove invasive species.

**Supported:** (1)Golden Gate National Recreation Area's General Management Plan revisions; (2)SB 187 (fund restoration of the Salton Sea); (3)Vedanta Society's removal of non-native deer from their property near Point Reyes National Seashore; (4) Certify Redwood Landfill DEIR and permit, and allow continued operation with adjacent marshes to be fully protected; (5)Marin County Community Development Agency's refusal to allow building of 60,000-sq. ft. hotel on the 2.2-acre Whaler's Point property on Richardson Bay; (6)Richardson Bay Audubon Center proposal to enhance habitat on Aramburu Island in Richardson Bay.

**Opposed:** Measure Q, tax measure to fund SMART, due to environmental impacts to endangered California Clapper Rail habitat and potential growth harmful to environment.

**Grants awarded for planting at Bahia:** Estuary 2100, from the Environmental Protection Agency; Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission

**Legal:** Joined efforts with four other Audubon chapters to settle lawsuits on Altamont Pass wind turbine bird kills; hired law firm Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger regarding Corte Madera General Plan and several other property issues.

**Fiscal Sponsorship:** Continued as fiscal sponsor of Marin Baylands Advocates, an informal organization established 17 years ago to acquire baylands.

**Representatives on Boards:** Audubon Canyon Ranch, San Francisco Estuarine Reserve, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (represent Bay Area Chapters), the BCDC Citizens Advisory Committee.

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELP MAKE MARIN AUDUBON A SUCCESS.** In addition to our Board of Directors, a special thank you to: Rich Stallcup, Roger Harris, Meryl Sundove, Harrison Karr, Wendy Feltham, Dianne Sierra, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, Sue Morrison, Prem McMurdo, Debbie Ablin, and many others.

For full, unedited text, please contact Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057. 



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Details on page 3
- Dec 26 Audubon Christmas Bird Count

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Another school year has started, giving kids a chance to grab their binoculars and look to the sky. A welcome sight for parents perplexed by non-stop computer obsession. Get your kids birding!

Ross Valley naturalist Wendy Dreskin heads up Marin Audubon's **JUNIOR BIRD WATCHER PROGRAM**, inspiring everyone from

kindergarteners to adults to learn about the birds around us. Kindergarteners learn to identify 10 birds, by fourth grade it's 40 birds. Many children work on their life lists and help in the Christmas Bird Count. Teachers also brush up on their birding skills.

Interested? For more information on Marin Audubon's **JUNIOR BIRD WATCHER PROGRAM**, go to [marinaudubon.org](http://marinaudubon.org). Please contact Wendy Dreskin at [bdreskin@comcast.net](mailto:bdreskin@comcast.net).

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