



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY



Roger Harris

**Double-collared Sunbird, male, on
Pincushion Protea**

The Cape region of South Africa is arguably one of the hottest of the world's biodiversity hot spots. It is one of only six floristic kingdoms in the planet and is also by far the smallest and richest per unit of area. Both the Cape region and California enjoy a Mediterranean climate making for interesting ecological similarities. Yet the two regions, a half a world apart, are like parallel biological universes. Instead of hummingbirds, South Africa has magnificent sunbirds. Instead of deer and elk, zebra and ostriches graze the veldt. Their fynbos, populated by fabulous proteas, is the equivalent of our chaparral. Our Common Murres are the ecological equivalent of their penguins.

Our speaker is Roger Harris, a Certified Wildlife Biologist and a longtime member of the MAS. He leads international eco-tours for the Oceanic Society.

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

THURSDAY, MARCH 14 7:30 PM

**Bird Conservation at the
Backyard Level**

By Jack Gedney

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Johann Oseillo

The eager Olompali team for the Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count couldn't get the binoculars away from their eyes. Story on page 5.

San Geronimo Golf Course: Implications of Legal Decision and Initiative

Requirements of the CEQA suit and the recently qualified Initiative, both intended to defeat the sale of the San Geronimo Golf Course to the Trust for Public Land (TPL), would be devastating to Marin Audubon's ability to continue purchasing and permanently protecting property for natural habitat. The adverse effects would extend to the Marin County Open Space District's acquisition program and to state acquisition and funding programs as well. TPL is quoted by the Independent Journal that the legal decision creates an unprecedented statewide standard "that would be damaging to the conservation movement across California." We agree.

It could mean that for every acquisition opportunity for which we would be seeking state funds (which includes many of our purchases and all of our large purchases), we would first have to comply with CEQA. This

would add to the costs, increase uncertainty and lengthen the time needed to purchase property, factors which could adversely affect a timely and successful negotiation with a property owner. It would also break with CEQA history which has operated under the tenet that the CEQA process is triggered by a project that could impact the environment; an acquisition does not impact the environment.

Provisions of the Initiative also have potential adverse consequences for land use far beyond this individual property. If approved by Marin voters, the Initiative would require that golf be the primary required use for the property and that any proposed changes must be voted on by all county voters. This measure would encourage proposals to be qualified as ballot measures and would force expensive public votes whether or not the projects are economically or

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the appropriate Board member.

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President	Lowell Sykes 388-2821
Secretary	Everett Clark 789-9224
Treasurer	Susan Winston 949/632-0908
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Outreach, Website	Barbara Freitas 497-4705
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Publicity	Barbara Freitas 497-4705
Volunteer Coordinator	John Perone 279-6550
BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

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

6:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month
Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only)

Marin Audubon Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Website: www.marinaudubon.org

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

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$500 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species, and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

Our warmest appreciation to all of our generous donors this past season of giving. The donations have exceeded our expectations and will make possible a rich program of habitat protection, education and advocacy. You make all of our work possible and we thank you. You and our wildlife will be the beneficiaries.

We've had 195 donors so far, with 15 donating \$500 or more. A special thank you to all of you. Our most exciting thank you to our most generous donor of \$25,000 through Charles Schwab Charitable Foundation to "maintain our properties at the desired levels." This unsolicited donation will greatly benefit habitats on our properties. The donor has chosen to remain anonymous. Another very generous donation of \$23,000 for our operations will go a long way to keeping us operating and our programs thriving.

The time to find Board members for the next term is upon us. Our Nominating Committee this year consists of Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, and Phil Peterson. We are looking for volunteers for Board members for three-year terms. MAS is an all-volunteer organization and we depend on our volunteers for our programs to protect wildlife and their habitat as well as our education programs. Let Phil (philco222@gmail.com), Bob (rbrthnz@comcast.net) or Martha (marthajarocki@comcast.net) know if you are interested or would like more information.

We welcome our newest Board member John Perone, who will be filling an unexpired term and will be Volunteer Coordinator. John is a Marin native, a retired chemical engineer with an interest in wine making and the environment. He loves the outdoors, white

water-river rafting and mountain climbing and is an avid backpacker. Fortunately for us and Marin Audubon habitats he moved next to one of our properties, took an immediate interest in our habitat restoration projects and has already taken a leadership role in several restoration projects. John looks forward to the opportunity to "contributing to a stronger volunteer program." We look forward to working with John, also.

A huge thank you to our Bird Count Compilers, Todd Plummer, George Kurth, Ed Nute, Bob Hinz, David Sexton and Susan Kelly, to all of the count leaders and to the participants. The volunteer participants and leaders together contributed more than 1,000 hours to complete our three counts in West, Northern and Southern Marin. Thank you for your contribution to Citizen Science and to our knowledge of bird populations in the county. A note to Southern Marin Count Dinner attendees, our apology again to those who did not receive salad because we ran out. The salads were in smaller containers than previously and we were not told. If you would like a partial refund, contact me at bsalzman48@gmail.com.

MAS's Mother's Day Picnic needs a leader and volunteers. For more than 40 years this event has benefitted MAS and ACR and attendees on ACR property in West Marin. We have committed volunteers, but simply need more help to keep the event going. See below for a full explanation of what we need.

Of course, we encourage you to join our field trips and habitat work days. Our overwintering water birds are still here. Don't miss the opportunity to see them before they leave.

Mother's Day Picnic Needs You

Although it may seem a ways away, this is the time we begin planning Marin Audubon's Mother's Day Event at Audubon Canyon Ranch. We need volunteers to help continue this special event. This year Martha Jarocki, who has ably coordinated our Mother's Day Picnic, is stepping down from this position but will remain involved. We have broken the event into discrete tasks and are seeking volunteers to help with them so that this event continues.

Tasks We Need Filled:

Cooking beans and preparing salad ingredients the day before; helping set up, serving and clean up on the day of picnic; coordinating volunteers; and coordinating overall.

Jobs We Have Volunteers For:

Soliciting and follow-up for donations; soaking beans days before; shopping for ingredients and making quiches; picking-up donated ingredients; cooking beans and preparing salad the day of the event, directing parking and staffing the wine table and entrance table.

We know many of you have enjoyed this annual event, so we encourage you to volunteer to help so it can continue. We have had this event for the last 40+ years and want to continue its tradition for our members to get together, and also to benefit for Audubon Canyon Ranch and Marin Audubon Society. To volunteer or for more information contact Barbara Salzman, bsalzman48@gmail.com.

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 LAS GALLINAS, San Rafael

Thursday, February 7, 2019

8:30 AM to noon

With Sande & Bob Chilvers

Beginning birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas ponds. Join our friendly leaders as we search for a wide variety of wintering as well as resident birds. eBird reports from this location have listed 133 species this January.

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

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about 0.5 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.

CEMETERY MARSH, Novato

Saturday, February 9, 2019

8:30 AM to noon

With Jim White

Part of Jim's Christmas Bird Count area and somewhat off the beaten path, this is an easy, level walk (less than 2 miles) that offers fine views of dabbling ducks and shorebirds. We may also have a look at nearby areas including Bahia, the Horseshoe Pond on Topaz Drive, or Rush Creek Wetlands.

DIRECTIONS: We will meet at the Cemetery Marsh Trailhead on Bugeia Lane in northeastern Novato. Take the Atherton Exit from Hwy 101 and travel east approximately 1.1 mile. Take the "Y" to the left onto Bugeia, and find the trail on the left near the Valley Memorial Park after approximately 200 yards. Watch for Jim's orange Crosstrek and park. Heavy rain cancels.

HAMILTON WETLANDS BY BICYCLE Novato

Thursday, February 10, 2019

9:00 AM to noon

With David Sexton and Jack Gedney

Join David and Jack on our first birding by bike field trip to the Hamilton Wetlands in Novato. Travelling by bike will allow us to easily cover the full Bay Trail segment, a total of around five miles round-trip, while making frequent stops at the most active areas. On bikes we'll see more birds! The Bay Trail is a wide, level, and well-maintained gravel path entirely separated from automotive traffic and appropriate for any kind of bike.

The expansive restored wetlands attract thousands of shorebirds, waterfowl and other birds in the fall and winter months.

Nowhere else in northern Marin attracts a wider variety of shorebirds. Duck and raptor abundance are at their seasonal peak, with numerous waterfowl and hawk species to be seen including kites, harriers, and falcons.

DIRECTIONS: We'll be meeting at the South Hamilton Park parking area near the intersection of Hangar Ave. and Maybeck St. in Novato. From Hwy 101 take the Ignacio/Bel Marin Keys exit. Stay right onto Nave Dr. and enter Hamilton at Main Gate Rd. After 0.5 miles, Main Gate Rd. becomes Palm Dr. Continue 0.2 miles and turn right onto S. Palm Dr. After another 0.2 miles turn right onto Hangar Ave. The parking lot is near the end of Hangar Ave. on the right beneath the solar panels.

NICASIO RESERVOIR

No. 2, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, February 16, 2019

8:30 AM to 3 PM

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

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

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

BIRDING EASTERN YOLO COUNTY Beginning in Davis

Saturday, February 23, 2019

8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

With John Klobas & Sarah Brooks

The low-lying agricultural lands, rice checks, and paddies of eastern Yolo County are the focus of this trip. In February, bird diversity and numbers are at their wintertime peak.

Burrowing Owls are among the most threatened of California's owls. We will look for this small, ground-dwelling owl in the Davis area before heading to West Sacramento's Bridgeway Pond. From there, we will try to access the Wood Duck ponds along the Sacramento River, despite ongoing construction on the Levee Road. **Wood Ducks**, usually a restive species, are not as skittish here as those found in hunting areas. The afternoon will find us heading back towards Davis, finishing our day at the Vic Fazio Wildlife Area (Yolo

Bypass) where we will enjoy the waterfowl and water bird spectacle. In the event of flooding in the Bypass, we will bird other areas around Davis.

DIRECTIONS: We will meet in Davis in the El Macero Center (Nugget Market and Starbucks). Exit I-80 at Mace Blvd. in Davis, turn left on the frontage road, then a quick right to Mace Blvd., then an immediate right into the El Macero parking lot. We'll be between Nugget Market and Starbucks. Please carpool if at all possible. A smaller number of cars allows us to be much more opportunistic. Allow 2 hours for an early morning winter drive to Davis from most North Bay locations. Heavy rain cancels.

Dress in layers. Include rain gear. Binoculars are a must and bring a scope if you have one. This is a car-oriented trip with minimal walking. Wear shoes that can withstand muddy conditions. Bring lunch, snacks, and drinks. Nugget is a full-service market that opens at 7 AM. Let's go birding.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY WEEKEND AND ALEUTIAN GOOSE FLY-OFF, Arcata

Sign-ups began January 14, 2019

Saturday–Sunday, March 2–3, 2019

With Ken Burton

Former MAS Board member and compiler of our *Bird Checklist for Marin County, California*, Ken Burton will lead us on a two-day exploration of his current home territory. The itinerary will be flexible allowing us to look for species that don't occur in our area (such as **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Gray Jay**) and any vagrants that may be around. We'll also visit some of Humboldt County's incredible general birding sites such as the Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Bay NWR. At any time of year, it is possible to see over 100 species in a day. Sunday morning we'll witness the Aleutian Goose fly-off at the Refuge and bird that area until early afternoon.

For more information, contact Ken at 707/499-1146 or shriketree@gmail.com. Please email Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net if you wish to sign up. Indicate whether you will join the group on Saturday morning or Saturday midday.

DIRECTIONS: Participants wanting to drive up on Friday can meet Ken at 8 AM Saturday at the south end of South I Street in Arcata (40.855695, -124.098106). We'll meet anyone traveling on Saturday at noon at the Humboldt Bay NWR Visitor Center (40.686082, -124.206460) for lunch. Pack a picnic lunch at least for Saturday.

SKAGGS ISLAND, Sonoma County Sign-ups Now Required

Thursday, February 28, 2019

9 AM to 1 PM

With Daniel Edelstein

Join Avian Biologist and Birding Guide, Daniel Edelstein, for this special opportunity to visit Skaggs Island, a rich winter birding location not generally

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CONSERVATION

SAN GERONIMO GOLF COURSE

continued from page 1

environmentally beneficial. Marin voters would not be able to have the benefit of review and/or environmental analysis. The Initiative proposes the opposite of the court decision which held that environmental review is needed before an acquisition. The Initiative would require a permanent golf course, a use that could only be changed by a vote of the people, not by environmental analysis.

Not to ignore the specific issues related to this property: it is astounding that some folks are actually stating that we have enough open space. That's like saying that we have enough clean air and clean water. Restoration of all or most of the site would give us more clean air, just what we need at this time of climate change, and more clean water, that the endangered salmonids need.

Getting rid of the herbicides and pesticides used on the manicured fairways and greens and allowing more runoff to flow directly into the creek would improve the water quality of San Geronimo, Lawson and Lagunitas Creeks to the benefit of endangered salmonids, other wildlife and people. Likewise with air: restoration of all or most of the property to natural habitats would mean native trees and wetlands would replace manicured lawns of the golf course and would absorb (sequester) carbon dioxide, one of the major greenhouse gasses, and release oxygen through photosynthesis. This is the only process that actually removes greenhouse gasses and restores oxygen. It combats climate change and benefits all creatures.

Further, the golf course property is surrounded by public lands—it is a gap in the landscape of currently protected open space/natural habitat. Its protection would connect the landscape and provide habitat corridors for wildlife movement, habitat for endangered species and connecting links for people.

We need to get on with business of restoring lands and resources that have broad public benefits. The Initiative that will be on the ballot, probably at the March 2020 primary election would do just the opposite. It must be defeated.

After hearing public testimony at their January 29 meeting, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to have staff produce a report, that would provide information to voters, before the Initiative would be on the ballot. Public testimony was 28 for producing a report, 12 people who qualified the Initiative, against.

ANCHOR-OUT UPDATE

At its January meeting, the Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) moved ahead with plans for a mooring field. It approved a

contract with Mercel & Associates and ESA Associates to conduct a “mooring feasibility and planning study to advise on potential location, mooring type/technique, capacity and access to the shore, accounting for the presence of eelgrass and other aquatic life and migratory birds, weather, wind and tide conditions; water quality/health of the Bay; and other physical conditions ...”.

It appears that the contract is set up to establish a mooring field. It calls for providing a means of evaluating the capacity to accommodate moorings on a scale from no impacts to increasing resource impacts. The impact of moorings on natural resources will be evaluated. However, the contract does not include collecting data necessary to identify the sensitive locations wildlife use. They are depending on existing data, including our Christmas Bird Count data. Our data, however, does not differentiate between birds seen at various locations along the shoreline. All of the birds seen in Richardson Bay are listed together. A new study is needed to show sections of the Bay that are important for wildlife.

Another issue revealed at the January meeting was that the RBRA has been renting out five moorings that were permitted by BCDP for the specific purpose of having a location to moor impounded boats. By renting them out, the RBRA is not only engaging in an illegal activity, they have no location to put any impounded boats. Of course, it is unclear that they have done any impounding of boats. The moorings are in Sausalito waters and Sausalito, understandably, wants them out.

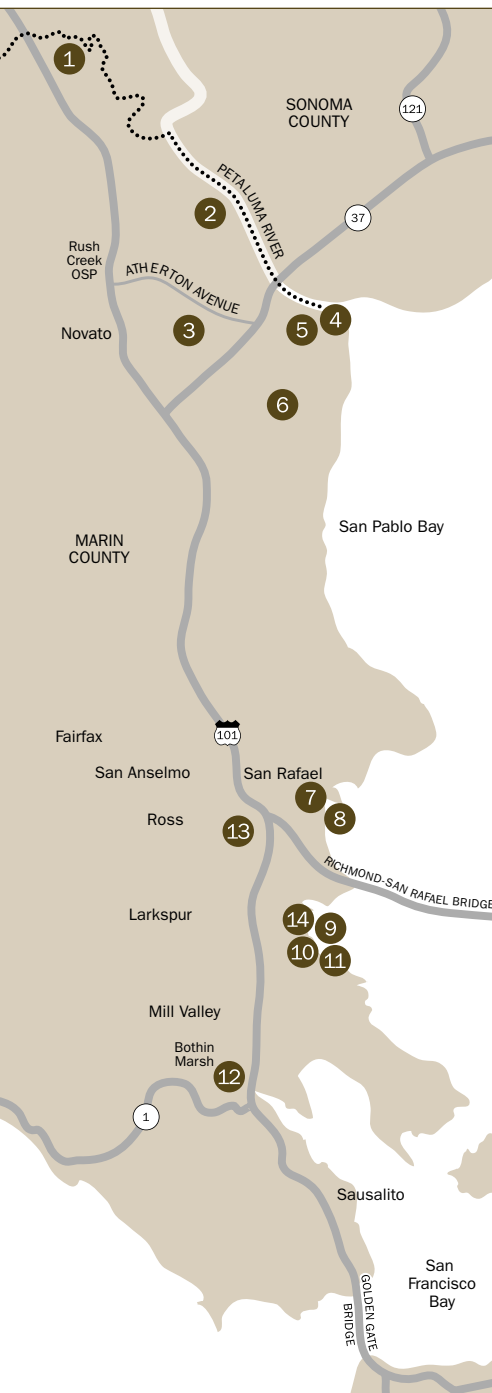
This unauthorized activity will be a major topic at the upcoming Bay Conservation and Development Commission enforcement hearing on February 21, 9:30 am at the METRO Center 275 Beale Street, San Francisco.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Attend the meeting and testify or send an email supporting removal of the moorings and the anchor outs to Adrienne Klein, adrienne@bcdp.ca.gov. Email Barbara Salman, bsalzman48@gmail.com, for more information.

POINT REYES SEASHORE BILL DIES

The Huffman bill (HR 6687), that would have assured permanence to ranches at Pt. Reyes and controlled the range and population of elk, has not made it to the Senate floor for a vote. It seems that with the Democrats taking over leadership in the House, legislators friendlier to resource conservation and less connected with ranching interests are prevailing.



MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh Expansion Site	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. Tiscornia Marsh	20 acres
8. Tidelands and Murphy's Rock	34 acres
9. San Clemente Creek Tidelands	4.34 acres
10. End of Channel Drive	?? acres
11. Triangle Marsh	31 acres
12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio	2 acres
13. Cal Park	<1 acre
14. Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion Site	5.2 acres

Marin's Christmas Bird Counts

The longest running citizen science surveys in the world are the annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) sponsored by the National Audubon Society for 119 years. The CBC surveys now cover most of the US as well as many in other countries. Each CBC covers a circle 15 miles in diameter. Three counts are sponsored by MAS. Count results are sent to the National Audubon Society and provide valuable information on bird populations and trends.

POINT REYES

Report unavailable at press time. Yet another victim of the Federal government shutdown. Appearing soon on www.marinaudubon.org

CHEEP THRILLS

The Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count, held in memory of Rich Stallcup, took place on December 20th.

Despite the gray, overcast morning it was a fine day for raptors soaring in the sky above us. **Turkey Vultures** numbered 560. We saw 171 **Red-tailed Hawks** and 80 **Red-shouldered Hawks**. There was a mated pair of **Golden Eagles** at Deer Island, 4 in Hicks Valley and 1 each in the Lakeville and Mount Burdell areas. Two adult **Bald Eagles**

appeared near Stafford Lake. **Ferruginous Hawks** were recorded in Nicasio, West Petaluma, and Lakeville.

Interestingly, the Redwood Landfill team — Barbara Salzman, Lowell Sykes and Lisa Hug — counted several thousand blackbirds but their gull count, normally in the thousands, was down to only 323 individuals this year. Where did they all go?

The tides were favorable for a count record of 24 **Black Rails**, all found by Jules Evens and his team in the Black Point area. Their species total of 114 was impressive, as was the total number of ducks they counted: 2,662.

Heather Cameron's Bahia team tallied 8,310 individual birds, including over 2,100 ducks of various species. In the lagoons off Bolero Court in Novato they observed 235 **Common Goldeneyes** and 4 **Barrow's Goldeneyes**. In a very focused effort Josiah Clark and Cédric Duhalde counted hundreds of sparrows, including two **Swamp Sparrows**, in the fields near Simmons Slough. In the ponds behind Vintage Oaks, Susan Kelly and David Sexton saw a pair of lovely **Wood Ducks** and a stunning male **Mandarin Duck**.

It was a great day for citizen science, as 81 volunteers found 158 species and counted



Double-crested Cormorant

many thousand individual birds.

Detailed results will be posted soon at <https://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>.

SOUTHERN MARIN

On Saturday, December 29th in pleasant weather about 130 volunteers and team leaders scoured the circle centered on Mill Valley and extending from the Marin Headlands to Terra Linda and from the Tiburon Peninsula to Bolinas. Baykeepers generously provided a boat to count birds in San Francisco Bay.

The preliminary totals for the circle are 183 observed species and, similar to last year, approximately 54,000 individuals. The species total is at the 43-year average of 182 species, but the number of individuals was far below the average.

Two species were recorded for the first time: **Black Vulture** (Bolinas area) and **Lawrence's Goldfinch** (Alpine Lake area) **Bufflehead** and **Double-crested Cormorant** were the most abundant species with counts of 2554 and 2358, respectively. In Tiburon masses of cormorants and gulls as well as some brown pelicans and seals were observed following a presumed run of herring. The number of ducks in the bay was very low and the total for the circle was the lowest ever. The duck total, however, fluctuates tremendously, often depending upon where the diving ducks find a herring run.

Brown Pelicans rebounded to 86 from last year's low of 4. **Peregrine Falcon** sightings remained high at 12, a total not reached during the first thirty years of this count. **Bald Eagles** (3) continue to be regular in recent years compared to only three sightings in the first thirty-two years. **Black-necked Stilts**, a species not seen in the first nine years, were found in eight areas and numbered 177.

MAS FIELD TRIPS (continued from page 3)

accessible to the public. The island is now part of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge. It often attracts uncommon visiting, non-breeding season raptors such as **Rough-legged Hawk**, **Ferruginous Hawk**, and **Merlin** along with **White-tailed Kite**, and other raptors in addition to diverse shorebirds, waders, and ducks.

This trip was previously scheduled for January 11 but was postponed due to the government shutdown. Because of the high level of interest in this area, we are requiring advance sign ups. Twenty-five people will be allowed. If you would like to participate, please contact Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net. Include the names of people who will be attending with you.

Meet on Skaggs Island Road. Please arrive promptly at the south entrance to Skaggs Island off of Hwy 37. Those arriving late may find themselves locked out! We'll carpool through the locked gate far into the heavenly solitude and bird-filled environs of this amazing birding venue. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 north to Hwy 37 East. From the intersection with SR 121 (Sonoma Raceway), continue straight on Hwy 37 for 3.8 miles and turn left at Skaggs

Island Rd. Please be careful crossing Hwy 37 to turn onto this road because oncoming traffic is often heavy. No restrooms available.

STAFFORD LAKE Novato

Saturday, March 2, 2019
9 AM to noon
With Bob Atwood

Located west of Novato, Stafford Lake is a less birded area that is productive for waterfowl and raptors. Approximately 172 species of birds have been spotted at Stafford Lake throughout the years, and our group is likely to see a considerable variety of the resident as well as wintering birds. The county park has facilities, parking, mostly level terrain and water views that make for pleasant birding as we walk around a portion of the lake and the surrounding area. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 in Novato, exit onto San Marin Dr. and go west 2.9 miles. Turn right onto Novato Blvd. for 2.6 miles. The park is on the left. Turn left after the gatehouse to reach the parking lot. Our trip has been scheduled on a "Measure A" day of free entrance to Marin County Parks, so no fees will be required. Nice scheduling, Bob!

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After a rainout there are still some grass plugs to transplant at Triangle Marsh, but all the other planting on MAS properties for this season is finished. A number of invasive non-native species are ready for pulling or digging and the moist soil makes the task easier. Old mustard plants, for example, pull relatively easily. Rain will cancel our workdays.

Is one of our project areas in your neighborhood? Act locally and join us on a workday. Witness restoration first-hand and be a part of it. We all make a difference

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: February 2, March 2

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Dr. directly across from the main Ring Mountain trailhead near the Montessori School.

Bahia, Novato:

If you'd like to help, please contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: February 9, March 9

Meet at the end of Industrial Way (near Cost Plus Plaza).

Contact Martha Jarocki, marthajarocki@gmail.com or phone 415/461-3592.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Bob Hinz, Gerry & Martha Jarocki, Vivian Liu, Hannah Ma, Lucienne O'Keefe, John Perone, Roger Stoll, Lowell Sykes

THANK YOU, DONORS

Mary B. Abbott, Elizabeth P. Anderson, Michael D. Anderson, Anonymous, Annette Anzalone, Bob Atwood, Mariah Baird, Gary & Joan Bardwell, Linda Bartera, Bob Battagin, Nance Becker & William Keener, Judith Bell, Jay Berger, Leland & Joan Bertolone, Marianne Bertuocelli, Donald Bixby & Renate, LaVonne Blasche, Carl Blom, Patricia & Leonard Blumin, Shirley & Andrew L. Bogardus, Patricia Anne Bradford, Marion Brennan, William Broder, Deborah Brown, Janet S. Brown, Thomas & Carol Budzinski, Lois K. Cannady, Steve Capper, Deborah A. Celle, Carolyn Charlton, Samuel & Ingrid Chase, Paul Chasoff, Richard S. Cimino & Janet Bodle, Everett Clark, William A. Clarke, Collin & Jill Cochrane, Ann Cognato, Dayton Coles, Geri & Wayne Cooper, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, John Crawford, Richard Daly, Ken & Ann Davis, Paula Dawson, William & Sarah Devlin, Patricia DiLuzio, Laura Disterhoft, David & Kristine Donadio, Michael Donovan, Lillian B. Dreyer, Bette F. Durham, Douglas Emery & Barbara Wong, Karen Evans, Tamara & Louis Fehrenbacher, Richard Felton, Richard & Joyce Finley, Charles & Norma Flanik, Mary Anne Flett,

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HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

We were thrilled to receive a most generous donation of \$25,000 toward maintaining our properties. This generous support came from an anonymous donor through the Schwab Foundation. Our Property Committee has begun a process of identifying and evaluating our needs and deciding how best to spend the donation to benefit our habitats and wildlife.

BAHIA, SIMMONS SLOUGH AND BLACK POINT

The Conservation Corps North Bay was busy planting at both our Bahia and Simmons habitats this January. Early in the month, in spite of equipment problems and rain, two Conservation Corps crews managed to plant 1,000 *Elymus triticoides* in the Central Peninsula at Bahia. We have been planting native species in this peninsula since the marsh restoration project was completed in 2008. The native plants are gradually spreading, but it is spotty. Plant survival in diked baylands such as this can be difficult due to salt residues in the soil and our Mediterranean climate with no rain during the summer.

Like the Central Peninsula at Bahia, our Simmons Slough site in Novato was once tidal marsh, but it was diked off by Highway 37. The Conservation Corps crews planted field sedge (*Carex praegracilis*), meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*), alkali bulrush (*Bolbochoenus maritimus*), spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*), and Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*).

We ordered 1,200 plants in anticipation of receiving a grant from the county for planting along a remnant slough. The grant (IRWMP) to County Public Works, for the major flood control project around Deer Island, was delayed. We needed to accept and plant the plants because we contracted for them, and we will pick up the funding from the county grant this coming year.

CORTE MADERA

The 15,200 plants the Watershed Nursery grew for us are all planted and mulched. The geese exclusion structure (stakes and strings) has been installed thanks to our 16 volunteers, and especially John Perone and Lowell Sykes. John not only made a generous donation to support this site, but he has persisted in completing the exclusions by purchasing stakes and string and installing them. On January 12, eight volunteers finished tying ribbon on the string to make it more visible to geese flying over, dug out Harding grass and spread native grass seed on the unvegetated areas. The Harding grass plants are still small and the ground is wet, so it is an ideal time to dig out the plants.

In the meantime, the birds are loving the newly excavated area which is now mudflat at

low tide and open water at high tide. But signs of what is to come are appearing: the fringe of pickleweed along the edge is growing and other marsh native plants, *Grindelia* and *Limonium*, are also colonizing the edge. Least Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, egrets and various waterfowl are regular users. We also have an osprey that regularly visits.

THE MONARCH PROJECT

Eight volunteers met at Marin Audubon's Simmons Slough property in Novato on a cold, foggy January morning to kick off The Monarch Project. This is a joint project of the Marin Audubon Society (MAS) and the Marin chapter of the California Native Plant Society in an effort to provide much needed host plants and flowering plants for the Monarch Butterfly as well as for other pollinating insects.

The butterfly count conducted last year by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation found a dismally low population of Monarchs throughout California. In 2018 there was an estimated 86% decline of California's Monarch population from the previous year, this is on top of a 97% decline in the total population since the 1980s. Monarchs require milkweed, an herbaceous plant that grows throughout the United States and Mexico, for breeding and migration. Acreage of milkweed, though, has been declining in recent years because of herbicide use and urban development. In order to reverse this precipitous decline of Monarch Butterflies, it is essential that the availability of milkweed be expanded throughout the US as well as in Marin.

For The Monarch Project Charlotte Torgovitsky's Home Ground Habitats generously donated seed and plant starts for Narrow-leaved Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) as well as for Goldenrod (*Solidago velutina* ssp *californica*) and Bay Area Gumplant (*Grindelia stricta* var. *platyphylla*). For many years MAS has been planting the latter late-blooming plant species on the properties it has been restoring, but this is the first time that Milkweed or Goldenrod has been planted. For detailed information about Monarchs and other native butterflies see Charlotte's website at www.homegroundhabitats.org.

Seed germination and plant survival at Simmons will be monitored, and the plots will be weeded as necessary through the spring and summer. As we gain experience with the survival conditions necessary for milkweed plantings, The Monarch Project will be expanded to other MAS properties. Another workday is planned for February but no date has been set. Call Ed Nute for information: 415/669-7710.

MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2018

By Noah Arthur

December is deep winter, the coldest month on average in the Bay Area, and the peak month for many of Marin's rare winter birds. Late-staying fall rarities, some attempting to stay for the winter, are often still around through the month, and are joined by midwinter rarities such as northern waterfowl. Extensive birding coverage during Christmas Bird Counts also contributes to the many rarities found during December, and this year was no different.

Long-tailed Duck is hardly a rarity on the outer coast in Marin, but a female fishing with **Red-necked Grebes** at the Fish Docks on the 1st was still a nice find (LN).

Mentioned in most of these monthly reports, the long-staying **Black Vulture** returned from its fall home in Inverness to Bolinas, where it was first seen on the 2nd (EC), and again several times late in the month. **Townsend's Solitaires** also continued at Barth's Retreat on Mt. Tamalpais throughout the month. An additional three **Townsend's Solitaires** were in Fairfax on the 6th (RCi, JB), making this an unusually good winter for the species in Marin.

Rare sapsuckers are perhaps the most characteristic vagrants of December, with several found most years in Marin. Most are discovered on Christmas counts, but an immature **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found earlier in the month, on the 7th, in Lagunitas (AD). Uncommon at any season but especially so in winter was a **'Gray-headed' Orange-crowned Warbler** at Drakes Beach on the 7th (DS), likely a late migrant still moving south. Orange-crowned Warblers of multiple subspecies appear to continue their migration very late into the season, with many of them seen as late as December probably being migrants that will winter well south of us.

The rarest bird of the month, and a really unexpected find especially for midwinter, was a **Little Blue Heron** in a small lagoon north of the Richmond Bridge in San Rafael on the 8th (DH), which had apparently been present for at least a day beforehand. Many happy birders were able to see this far-flung vagrant in the following days.

A flock of 7 **Tundra Swans**, likely continuing birds that arrived earlier in the winter, were on Abbotts Lagoon on the 9th (PD). The 8th and 9th were an exceptional couple of days for lingering summer terns in winter Marin, with a **Caspian Tern** along the Bay Trail in San Rafael on the 8th (BB) and two **Elegant Terns** at Baypoint Lagoon on the 9th (MA). Another **Caspian Tern**, this a different individual, was flying over Tomales Bay off Inverness on the 13th (RB, DT). The number of **Caspian Terns** on Tomales Bay had increased to 4 by the time of the Pt. Reyes Christmas Bird Count on the 15th (KH, NA).

Upstaged somewhat by the Little Blue but still a very rare heron for Marin was a **Cattle Egret** found on Pt. Reyes along Pierce Point Rd. on the 13th (DSe).

The Pt. Reyes Christmas Count on the 15th turned up some nice rarities, the best being a **Yellow-billed Loon** on the north end of Tomales Bay, off Tomales Point (JG). Other good finds were a **Pacific Golden-plover** at Drakes Corner on the Outer Point (RCo), a male **Red-naped Sapsucker** along Sir Francis Drake Blvd. south of Inverness Park (NA), a **Snow Goose** flying with Canadas north of White House Pool (KH), a **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Tomasini Canyon just north of Pt. Reyes Station (MB, JoG), **Barn** and **Violet-green Swallows** in Pt. Reyes Station, and 3 **Black-headed Grosbeaks** in Inverness. As usual, there were several **Swamp Sparrows** in the marshes off Inverness Park (KH, NA), although high water prevented us from surveying much of the area that often produces 30 or 40 Swamps on the count.

An apparently pure **'Yellow-shafted' Flicker** was at Olompali on the 20th (JC), much rarer than the intermediate birds with yellow or orange shafts we often see in the Bay Area. Two **Yellow Rails** were seen during a high tide at the south end of Tomales Bay on the 23rd (DSe), and another **Caspian Tern** was at Chileno Valley on the 25th (EC). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was with a flock of Greater at Las Gallinas on the 28th (LC).

Much rarer than the Red-naped Sapsuckers, although perhaps underreported due to its subspecies status, was a **'Northern' Red-breasted Sapsucker** (subspecies *ruber*) found in Bolinas on the Bolinas Christmas Bird Count on the 29th (LC). Elsewhere on the 29th, 3 **Lawrence's Goldfinches**, and 1 **Slate-colored Fox Sparrow**, 14 **'Thick-billed' Fox Sparrows** were along Pine Mtn. Fire Road (EC).

Observers and Acronyms **AD:** Adam Donkin, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **CM:** Colin Meusel, **DSe:** David Sexton, **DH:** Daphne Hatch, **DK:** Durrell Kapan, **DS:** Dan Singer, **DT:** David Tomb, **EC:** Everett Clark, **JB:** Janet Bodle, **JC:** Jim Crumpler, **JG:** Juan Garcia, **JoG:** Joachim Gonzalez, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **LC:** Lucas Corneliusen, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **MA:** Myrto Ashe, **MB:** Max Benningfield, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **PD:** Preston Duncan, **RB:** Russ Bright, **RCo:** Reef Comer, **RCi:** Rich Cimino

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If you're not already a Chapter-supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors and relatives to join us, too.

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