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**White-necked Jacobin**

Home to 482 species of birds, Trinidad and Tobago islands really are an introduction to the natural history of South America. Set in 200 acres of forest and home to more than 170 bird species, the Asa Wright Nature Center is a jumping-off spot for most field trips to the islands and is renowned for on-site access to specialties such as Bearded Bellbird, Tufted Coquette and Oilbirds. A not-for-profit trust, the Center funds its conservation and education programs through ecotourism.

An avid birder since a teen, Martyn Kenefick moved to Trinidad in 1999, birding tour guiding in Trinidad & Tobago and many other countries. He is the main author of the *Trinidad & Tobago Field Guide*, the 3rd edition of which will be published sometime in 2019. Martyn is on the Asa Wright's Board of Management as Chair of its Conservation & Education Committee. His visit is sponsored by Caligo Ventures, Asa Wright's North American booking agent.

**NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 13 7:30 PM**

**South Africa: Birds, Beasts, and Blooms**

By Roger Harris (postponed from February 2019)



# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## MMWD Management Plan Needs Work



Optic Splendor

Overlook of a portion of the wildland in Marin Municipal Water District's watershed.

Two major documents that will govern how Mount Tam and other MMWD lands are managed, the *Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan* (BFFIP or Plan) and the *Draft Environmental Impact Report* for the Plan, have been released for public review and comment.

The *Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan* states its purpose as "... to define and guide the methods to minimize the risk from

wildfires while simultaneously preserving and enhancing existing significant biological resources." And the Plan's goals are: "1) Minimize the Risk from Wildfire – prevent destruction of structures and loss of life; 2) Preserve and Enhance Existing Significant Biological resources; and 3) Provide an Adaptive Framework for periodic review and revision of BFFIP implementation decisions in response to

*continued on page 2*

## Marin Audubon Annual Meeting, May 10

Join us for Marin Audubon's Annual Meeting at our May Speaker Series Program on Thursday evening, May 10 to elect members of our Board of Directors for the coming three-year term. The election will take place just before the speaker presentation that's described in the adjacent column.

**This year our nominees are: nominated for a first term, David Chenoweth, Barbara Demeter, Ann Thomas and Doug Waterman; nominated for another term, current Board Member Jude Stalker.** Special thanks to Nominating Committee members Bob Hinz, Phil Peterson, and Martha Jarocki for their work.

Non-profit 501(c) (3) membership organizations, which Marin Audubon is, are required to have Board Members elected by the organization's members. We encourage all of MAS members to exercise their right to vote

for the Marin Audubon Board; these are the folks who will be in charge of managing our organization, our properties and our programs. Join us on May 10 to vote for them ... and to hear the interesting program on the birds of Trinidad and Tobago after the election.

TREAT MOM TO A WEST MARIN TRADITION

### The Marin Audubon Society's Mother's Day Picnic

to benefit Audubon Canyon Ranch  
and Marin Audubon Society

ACR's Volunteer Canyon  
May 12, 2019, 11 AM – 3 PM

Tickets: [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org)

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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                         |
| Conservation            | Phil Peterson 828-4780<br>Barbara Salzman 924-6057 |
| Field Trips             | Jane Medley 559/760-1551                           |
| Membership              | William Legge 388-7883                             |
| Outreach, Social Media  | Elyse Omernick 694-2320                            |
| Fundraising             | Everett Clark 789-9224                             |
| Speaker Series          | Lowell Sykes 388-2821                              |
| Special Projects        | Jude Stalker 680-6291                              |
| Nominating              | Phil Peterson 828-4780                             |
| Editor, <i>The Rail</i> | Bob Hinz 383-8688                                  |
| Outreach, Website       |  |
| Property Management     | Ed Nute 669-7710                                   |
| Publicity               |  |
| Volunteer Coordinator   | John Perone 279-6550                               |
| BAAC Reps               | Lowell Sykes 388-2821<br>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

We're thrilled to announce that the application for our Tiscornia Marsh project has been recommended for Measure AA approval. The recommendation must be approved by the Restoration Authority Board on June 7.

There are more and more actions being taken to address sea level rise (SLR). Last month, there were two Workshops focused on SLR. One of these, sponsored by the State Coastal Conservancy, focused on "living shoreline" methods that can be used to stabilize shorelines without hardening with rock riprap or concrete walls. The attendees, largely entities that are sponsoring SLR projects, heard about a variety of methods to address shoreline loss: cobble or sand beaches, planted ecotones, horizontal levees, oyster reefs and others. Another, hosted by Marin County Public Works, was a day long workshop at which presentations were made on 24 projects all along the eastern shoreline of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, along with a few projects from West Marin, and on related topics. Presentations were interesting and varied, made by public agencies and non-profit organizations about the SLR adaptation projects they have underway or are planning. With six past and future projects, we had one of the longest presentations. See the Public Works website to see the presentations. If any members would like to become more involved in our sea level rise projects, please let me know.

No Richardson Bay Regional Agency report this month and there won't be one until our late summer newsletter due to scheduling

**MMWD** *continued from page 1*

changing conditions and improved knowledge." We are concerned about the Plan's lack of attention to biodiversity and over-emphasis on fire.

Certainly, avoiding loss of life should be a top priority. But the Plan's major focus is on reducing fire hazards by removing both invasive vegetation and native vegetative habitats to create fuel breaks and reduce fuel loads elsewhere to control fire risk. There is insufficient attention paid to the #2 goal of enhancing ecosystem functions and assuring biodiversity.

The Plan does not define what biodiversity is, why it is important or how the recommended actions will further biodiversity. The "significant biological resources" addressed are sensitive habitats and special status species only. These are protected by law, the Endangered Species Act, legislation protecting specific types of wildlife such as raptors, colonial nesting birds, etc. There is no mention of protecting species or habitats that are common or even

conflicts for two of the four Board members. A merit hearing on the vessel ordinance will take place at the June 13 meeting. In the meantime, Sausalito continues to make progress by working with marinas to lease berths to accommodate anchor outs.

We are working on revising our Birding Etiquette Guidelines on playing bird song apps. Playing recorded bird songs, particularly during nesting season, and even at low volume, may disrupt mating and nesting activity or make birds alter their behavior to the possible presence of competitors or danger. It should not be done. We are working on specific wording and expect to finalize it at our May meeting.

Hope to see you at the Annual meeting (May 10) to vote for our impressive new board members, and at our other May events: Mother's Day Picnic (May 12) and Give Back Monday (May 6).

Remember it is nesting season. Best to delay your major yard clearing and trimming work until after nesting is over, which is around the end of July.

## MOTHER'S DAY HELP NEEDED

Join other volunteers in making the Mother's Day picnic happen on Sunday, May 12. We need helpers to serve and set up on the day of the picnic. Contact volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org

locally unique. These too must be considered if biodiversity is to be protected.

Even more surprising, there is no discussion  
*continued on page 4*

## IRON SPRINGS PUBLIC HOUSE Give Back Monday

May 6, 2019, 4 PM – 9:30 PM  
901 4th Street, San Rafael

Join us to meet your fellow Marin Audubon supporters and help raise some money for birds and conservation!

We will be taking part in Give Back Mondays at Iron Springs Public House on Monday, May 6, when 10% of all food and beverage sales will be donated to MAS from 4 pm until closing. So, reserve the date, and we hope to see you there for a delicious meal and great fun! Vegetarian offerings, too.

<https://ironspringspub.com/publichouse>



**PINE MOUNTAIN & KENT LAKE BIRDING HIKE**

**Marin Municipal Water District**

Friday, May 3, 2019

9 AM to 3:30 PM

*With David Wimpfheimer*

The chaparral hillsides, grasslands, riparian and oak forests between Pine Mountain and Kent Lake are some of the least visited lands in Marin. On this moderately challenging eight-mile hike we will explore these habitats in search of some of the less common breeding birds in the county including **Ash-throated Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Rufous-crowned Sparrow**. Our loop hike will involve a car shuttle and may include a visit to Carson Falls and Pine Mountain, the second highest point in Marin. Besides the varied birds here, the botanical display in the serpentine soils is rich as well.

**DIRECTIONS:** From downtown Fairfax take the Bolinas-Fairfax Rd. for approximately 8 miles to Alpine Dam. We will meet at the north end of the dam at 9 AM. Allow 1/2-hour for the drive from Fairfax.

**BEST OF MITCHELL CANYON**

**Contra Costa County**

Saturday, May 4, 2019

8 AM to noon

*With Bruce Mast*

Mitchell Canyon, on Mount Diablo's northern flank is one of the best examples of mid-elevation riparian habitat in the East Bay. Along with numerous avian residents, spring brings an assortment of neotropical migrants. The canyon is also famous for its spring butterflies and wildflowers, including the rare endemic Mount Diablo globe lily (also called fairy lantern).

Join us for a spring birding walk along Mitchell Canyon and Red Road trails. We will walk about 4 miles through oak savannah, mixed woodland, riparian habitats, and a little way up into chaparral/sage scrub. The route has some ups and downs and a total elevation increase of up to 500 feet, depending on how far up Red Road Trail we go.

Meet at the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center at 8 AM. We will bird until noon. You may wish to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy back at the Visitor Center.

**DIRECTIONS:** The address for the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center is 96 Mitchell Canyon Rd., Clayton, CA 94517. There are several possible routes to our destination. Check Google Maps for the latest traffic conditions, and allow plenty of time for your drive.

**MIX CANYON MIGRATION**

**Blue Ridge, Solano & Napa Counties**

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

7:30 AM to 2 PM

*With Peter Colasanti & Luanna Helfman*

Everybody talks about spring migration, but who ever really sees it happening? You might at the top of Mix Canyon the first week of May. If conditions are right, there's

sometimes a torrent of passerines crossing low over the ridge from their Central Valley flyway in Solano towards forested regions in Napa and beyond for a two-county birding experience you're not likely to forget. Peter will be on site by 6:30 AM where we'll stay in place until folks show up. Last year the migration peaked at about 7:45 AM and included over 400 birds. Possibilities include **Calliope Hummingbird** and **Bell's Sparrow**.

Later we'll visit Rockville Park for a short hike. This park has a \$3 Day Use Fee per person.

**DIRECTIONS:** From I-80 east toward Sacramento take Exit 51A for Lagoon Valley Road toward Cherry Glen Rd. Go left/north on 179/Pleasant Valley Rd. Go 7.5 miles to a left on Mix Canyon Rd. At the top of the ridge take a right on Blue Ridge Rd. driving north. At about mile 6.0 (there are mileposts) the road goes through forest. We'll meet in the low saddle just past the end of this forest.

Be sure to watch for cyclists on the steep and narrow sections of this road. Mix Canyon is a popular destination for riders who want to be challenged. With an average grade of 10.3%, the road contains California's steepest mile at a 15.8% grade.

**SPRING BIRD SONGS CLASSES**

**Registration now open**

**Five Brooks:** Thursday, May 9, Space Open

**Big Rock:** Tuesday, May 14, Wait List

**Mount Burdell:** Thursday, May 16, Wait List

7:30 to 11:30 AM

*With Lisa Hug*

Spring is the best time of year to hear and learn bird songs. Males are full of hormones and bursting with song. Many neotropical migrants are returning and vying for mates and territories. It is a very exciting time of year, so even if you dislike getting up early, it might be worth your while to join one or more of these classes. Participants will be asked to stay quiet to enable us to listen to the myriad of bird sounds. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring layered clothing, water, binoculars, field guides, and snacks.

There will be a \$10 fee for each class, or you may enroll at the first class for all three sessions at a discounted price of \$25.

We will collect payment at the beginning of each class and request payment by check or exact amount of cash. Each class will be limited to 15 participants. To sign up for one or more of these classes or to be included on a wait list, email Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net. Be sure to include the name(s) of the session(s) you wish to join and your phone number. Participants will be contacted to confirm registration. Please be sure to notify us if you are unable to attend as planned.

**DIRECTIONS TO FIVE BROOKS:** From Fairfax, take Sir Francis Drake Blvd approximately 15 miles. Turn left on Highway 1. Turn right at Five Brooks in 3.5 miles. We will meet at the Five Brooks parking area. Restrooms available.

**DIRECTIONS TO BIG ROCK TRAILHEAD**

**TO LOMA ALTA TRAIL:** From Highway 101 in San Rafael, take the exit for Lucas Valley Road west approximately 5.5 miles (look for the big rock on the left). The trailhead is on the south side of Lucas Valley Road. No restrooms available.

**DIRECTIONS TO MOUNT BURDELL:** Take Hwy 101 to Novato. Exit at San Marin Dr./Atherton Ave. At the end of the exit ramp, turn west (left) on San Marin Dr. Go approximately 2 miles and turn right on San Andreas Dr. Park on the street near the end of the road. No restrooms available.

**MOUNT BURDELL Novato**

Saturday, May 11, 2019

9 AM to noon

*With Martyn Kenefick & Rich Cimino*

Come meet visiting author and birding guide from the Asa Wright Nature Center in Trinidad, Martyn Kenefick, as he joins local birder and Marin Audubon friend, Rich Cimino, to experience spring birding on Mount Burdell. See page 2 for a description of Martyn's Speaker Series presentation. On this visit, Martyn is eager to explore a contrasting, non-coastal, dryer habitat, and Mount Burdell provides a good location for doing that.

Nesting season will be in full swing at the time of our visit. We hope to see a wide variety of species who thrive in the Park's oak savanna and open grasslands. The field trip will start at 9 AM at the entrance gate. We invite you to join Martyn and our group of birders afterwards for lunch at Ghiringhelli's Pizzeria, 1535 South Novato Blvd in Novato. Pizza lunch 12:00-1:30 p.m. Participants will be responsible for paying for their own lunches.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take Hwy 101 to Novato. Exit at San Marin Dr./Atherton Ave. At the end of the exit ramp, turn west (left) on San Marin Dr. Go approximately 2 miles and turn right on San Andreas Dr. Park on the street near the end of the road. No restrooms available.

**MOUNT BURDELL/STAFFORD LAKE**

**OR RUSH CREEK, Novato**

**No. 5, Birding in Marin Series**

Saturday, May 18, 2019

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

*With Jim White and Bob Battagin*

Join Jim and Bob for a field trip to the gentle slopes of Mr. Burdell where we'll listen to and observe the impressive variety of songbirds that make this area their springtime home. Species we might see include **Lark Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole, Lazuli Bunting, and Grasshopper Sparrow**, among many other possibilities. In the afternoon we plan to continue birding at Stafford Lake or Rush Creek.

This will be a moderate hike with many opportunities to look at birds and spring wildflowers. Wear comfortable walking shoes and layered clothing. Bring water and

**continued on page 7**

## CONSERVATION

**MMWD** *continued from page 1*

of wildlife – except for the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO), and even that discussion is minimal. Arguably, more common species of wildlife are even more important than these as they are a large and important part of the ecosystem habitats and cannot be separated from biodiversity.

The Goal #2 intent of striving to avoid damage to sensitive resources, reintroduce species, eliminate or contain weed growth, restore high quality habitat, and enhance and restore ecosystem functions in areas degraded by sudden oak death (SOD), are all laudable. However, the Plan does not follow through with discussing specifically how high-quality habitat will be enhanced and restored, and impacts will be avoided.

Of the 27 Management Actions, 19 are administrative e.g. planning, monitoring, mapping, etc. Four of the actions have to do with clearing fuel breaks or other actions to reduce the risk of fires; one is to expand Early Detection; one to reintroduce special status species (it is not clear which ones); one is to develop a plan for the areas noted in the paragraph above; and a final action is to conduct experiments to identify methods to control invasive species. Agencies have been working to remove broom for more than 30 years; we ask isn't there sufficient data to know what works to control broom?

Ten habitat types totaling 1,805 acres support 400 species of vertebrate animals, 1,000 species of vascular plants, 200 lichens, 9 special status species of invertebrates, 4 amphibians and reptiles, 20 special status birds and 10 special status mammals. What the species are, what their habitat needs are, and how the vegetation clearing will impact the habitats and the wildlife populations, are not discussed. These interrelationships should be clearly identified.

Currently there are 900 acres of cleared land, half for fuel breaks along road, trails and interface and half for fuel reduction within wider areas of habitat. It is anticipated that 117 more acres would be treated for new or widened fuel breaks. It is unclear how much additional native vegetation would be removed for fuel reduction beyond fuel breaks, and how this would impact native wildlife and their ability to survive.

The discussion of Threats and Strategies addresses controlling invasives, the need for continued research on sudden oak death, and improving wildfire resiliency, which is defined as reducing fuel load and likelihood of crown fires, using ignition prevention BMPs. There is no mention that a major part of the problem is the location of structures in the habitats. While we recognize MMWD has jurisdiction only over the location and characteristics of their own

structures, it seems time to at least raise the issue.

We agree that removing invasive plants is important to the ecosystem health and to reducing fire hazard. However, the District history in removing invasives is poor, and this is contributing to the expansion of invasive plants, particularly broom. We would recommend that the District adopt an approach that would be more effective in removing invasives, such as the use of herbicides on these plants as a last resort. We are also concerned that clearing more native plants for fuel breaks may simply exacerbate the problem, because the cleared land will not remain vegetation free. The specie that will recolonize is likely be the highly flammable French broom.

The Plan notes "The general consensus among climate scientists is that global climate change will result in more and larger fires in California (OEHHA-2008)." We would like to know how effective the fuel break approach has proven to be in large scale fires.

We have not had time to review the DEIR. We are looking to it to address our questions. We will continue our review of the Plan and will discuss our further analysis in next month's *Rail*.

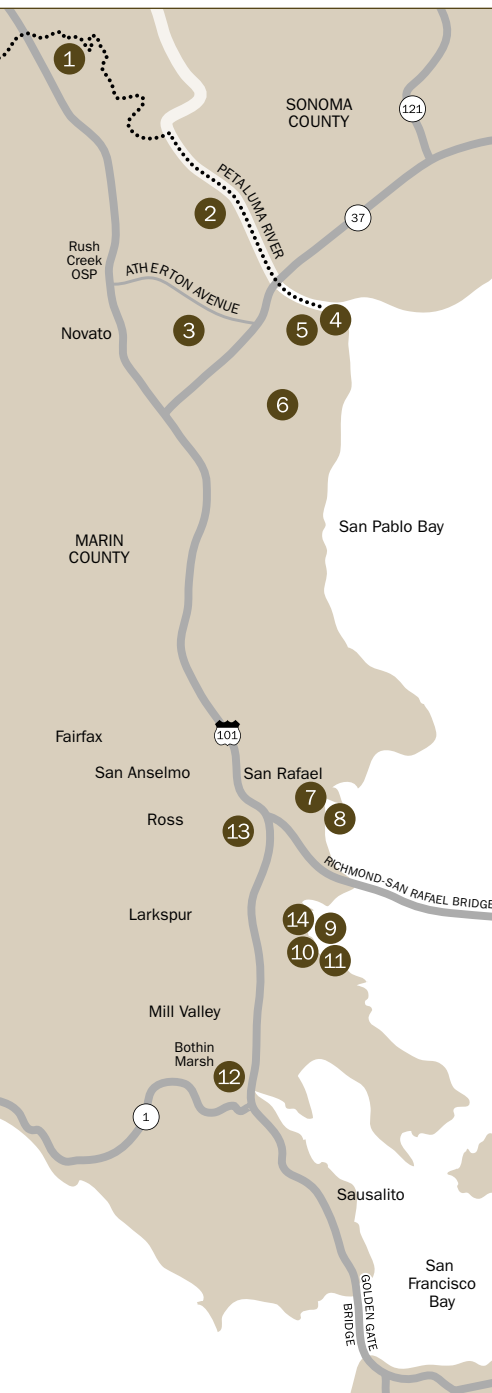
### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Use this link <http://marinwater.org/455/Biodiversity-Fire-and-Fuels-Integrated-P> or go to the MMWD website and review the plan and EIR. The District has provided a 90-day comment period which ends on June 19. Submit your comments on the Plan and/or the EIR by that date.

### WATCH FOR PROPOSED CHANGES TO BCDC POLICIES ON FILL IN THE BAY

In the light of current knowledge that sea level rise threatens the very existence of tidal marshes and the Bay ecosystem, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) has undertaken a process of revising its policies on filling the Bay. BCDC policies, and indeed the very reason BCDC was established, was to limit filling of San Francisco Bay. Then the risk was development, now it is that sea level rise will drown tidal marshes.

Sediment will be a critical component in sustaining the marshes as sea levels rise. It is now recognized that some fill, particularly sediments from the Bay, will have to be put back into the Bay to ensure marsh habitats are not lost. This fill will be used to restore marshes, stabilize marsh edges, and ensure marshes keep up with sea level rise. As an example, MAS wants to use sediments taken from the Bay to expand the existing marsh at Tiscornia.



### 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  |



The potential impacts of this change in policy must be carefully evaluated as policies allowing fill could lead to more fill being placed for purposes that are detrimental to the Bay ecosystem. BCDC policies require that fill for any purpose be the minimum amount necessary. The quantity of fill allowed will need to be defined in new policies, and care is needed to ensure that permitting does not become overly complicated so that it inhibits, rather than encourages, beneficial fill projects.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

BCDC is planning to release the draft policies by May 20, with a June 20 deadline for public comment. After May 20, go to BCDC's website for the Draft policies and look for "Filling the Bay for Habitat." Submit comments via email or hard copy.

### ANOTHER BLACK POINT PROPERTY DONATED

Another property at Black Point has been donated to Marin Audubon. The owner, a Colorado resident, contacted Marin Baylands Advocates, our partner in the Campaign to Protect Marin Baylands, with the offer. The parcel consists of lowlands that extend to the Petaluma River; it is in the cove just north of the 2.6-acre parcel we purchased last fall.

Once tidal marsh, most of this parcel and parcels around it are now seasonal wetlands. The conversion occurred when a levee was constructed along the outer boundary of the tidal marshes. With our high rainfall this year, there has been extensive ponding on the parcel. The title report showed nothing problematic, so we were able to close escrow rather quickly, on March 29, 2019. Thank you to Marin Baylands Advocates for contributing the funding for Old Republic Title Company to prepare a title report, provide title insurance and prepare and record the deed.

Marin Audubon now owns 18 small parcels in Black Point. We originally purchased more parcels, but some have been combined to reduce our parcel tax burden.

### NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL NESTING SEASON BEGINS

February 1st is the beginning of the nesting season for the Northern Spotted Owls. This is when they begin to pair bond and look for nest sites; by now they are sitting on nests. In Marin, we have the unusual circumstance of some nests being located very close to residences. Most Spotted Owls are in more remote old growth forests.

Several years ago, the City of Larkspur sent a letter to residents who had a



The Associated Press

#### Northern Spotted Owl

Spotted Owl nest with a ¼ mile of their home, recommending that they consider minimizing activities that might raise noise levels above ambient background levels or that could result in habitat disturbances. Loud noises are one of the primary reasons for adults abandoning nests, which can result in the death of young owls; ¼-mile is the buffer distance recommended by the US Fish and Wildlife Service within which activities that could impact Spotted Owl nesting should be avoided. Postponing activities that could increase noise levels until after breeding season ends can reduce this problem. The Marin Open Space District considers July 31st the end of the nesting season because young are fledged and have left the nest area by then.

We applauded Larkspur's outreach, and when they did not repeat the notices the following year, we contacted staff and urged that the letters be sent again this year. We have also met with staffs of the Town of Fairfax and City of Mill Valley, where there are also homes within a 1/4 mile of nest sites. Here again, residents within these boundaries should make every effort to postpone major construction during Spotted Owl nesting season. We are also planning to meet with Corte Madera, where there are also houses near nests.

Since 1999, Point Blue Conservation Science has been conducting annual Spotted Owl surveys for the Open Space District and MMWD. Last year the survey found that while 40 sites were occupied by Spotted Owl pairs, only 20 attempted nesting, a rate below the 20-year survey average. Of the 20, 16 nests successfully produced at least one fledgling and the overall fecundity (i.e. the number of female young produced per territorial female) was just below average. Overall, the proportion of successful nests

and fecundity were close to the study average.

Northern Spotted Owls are a threatened species under state and federal law. As such they receive the same protections as endangered species. It is against federal law to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct." (Section 3(18) Federal Endangered Species Act). Point Blue also reports that the owls "face other potential threats including urban development, noise and/or other disturbance by humans (e.g., construction, landscaping noise, traffic), rodenticide poisoning, climate change, and genetic isolation" and, we add, impacts from recreational users.

Any activity that causes adults to leave a nest, disturbs or in any way threatens young or adults is harassment. There have been behaviors by some photographers at a nest in Larkspur that have met that criteria. If you observe any activity disturbing nests on Open Space District lands, please call the District (415.473.2816) right away so Rangers can address the infraction as promptly as possible.

### MMWD RATE INCREASE

As discussed in last month's Rail, MMWD is pursuing a customer rate increase of 4% per year over the next four years. MAS does not believe the rate increase is enough to manage vegetation and other resources, to maintain a healthy and resilient watershed, or protect the natural resources of the Mt. Tam watershed and other District lands. We recommend that MMWD include sufficient funds in its rate increase to ensure the watershed program is at a level that protects the natural habitats and water quality.

The rate setting procedure is governed by Proposition 218, which requires that rate payers be notified in writing of the proposed rate increase and of the date, time and location of a public hearing on the increase. You are considered to have voted YES unless you file a protest in writing. MMWD customers have received their notice in the mail. Please read the instructions carefully.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

MMWD customers, in particular, but everyone who cares about Mt. Tam, should attend the public hearing on Tuesday, May 28, 7:30 pm and tell the Board you want them to set the increase at a sufficient level to assure the watershed habitats are adequately protected and enhanced. If you cannot attend the hearing, email or write the Board.

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Italian thistles will be maturing but it isn't too late to cut into their seed production. It also will be a good time to cut Harding grass before it produces seed. Later in the summer we can dig it out. Before the heat of summer we can mulch some of our new plants.

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: May 4, June 1

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](mailto:judestalker@gmail.com).

#### Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: May 11, June 8

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

Contact Martha Jarocki, [marthajarocki@gmail.com](mailto:marthajarocki@gmail.com) or phone 415/461-3592.

### THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Martha Jarocki, Lucienne O'Keefe, John Perone, Jude Stalker, Roger Stoll, Lowell Sykes

### THANK YOU, DONORS

Robert L. Belichick, Benevity Community Impact Fund, Leslie Brown, Janeen Castner, Robert & Sandra Chilvers, William A. Clarke, Gail Cushman, Robert & Michelle Friend, Abe Froman, William & Sally S. Gonda, Bonnie & Terry Gosliner, Elizabeth Graham, Jeannette Gustafson, Hanford ARC Fund, Eric Haun, Donald K. Howard, Richard Jennings, William & Catherine Jones, Robert & Karen Kustel, Achilles W. Malet III, Sarah Martin, Cynthia Meigs, Nancy C. Merritt, Julie Munro, Lisa & Colin Nicholls, Deborah Quinn, William Rentsch, Marianna Riser, Cameron Torcassi, Betty Jo Van Gelder, Jim White, Lucy A. Wilson

### Common Poorwill



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Lots of planting going on this month. Planting season is usually over by March, but this year with the late rains and plants available, we thought it was okay to plant later.

### CORTE MADERA

We were pleased to receive 500 plants (salt grass, *Frankenia*, pickleweed and bee plant) donated by the Marin County Open Space District for planting at Corte Madera. Thanks to volunteers Lowell Sykes and John Perone who planted half of them at the end of March. Most of the rest were planted by volunteers on the Second Saturday Work Day. We are super grateful for the County's donation and for John and Lowell's planting work and that of the Work Day volunteers.

Invasive *Limonium* removal — Jude Stalker and eight other volunteers finished removing the invasive *Limonium* on the south and east side of the old channel at the Ecological Reserve on April 14. Next, the group will move to Sausalito, where there have been a number of populations of these plants along the waterfront. Removal of this invasive species from various locations in Marin is a joint project in cooperation with the California

Invasive Plant Council.

### SIMMONS, BLACK POINT & BAHIA

We had 2,975 meadow barley plants that were ordered in advance for planting at our Simmons property for the joint project with Marin County Parks (MCP). However, the MCP grant was not finalized in time, so we were left with the plants that needed to be planted. We would have had to pay for them even if we didn't take them. Without a contract and, therefore, a requirement that they be planted at Simmons, we hired the Center for Social and Environmental Sustainability to plant 1,000 at Simmons, 1,000 at the Black Point property in areas where they had just removed the broom, and the rest at Bahia; there were way too many for our volunteers alone to plant. We will have to order more plants when we sign the contract with the County to mitigate for habitat that will be impacted by their Deer Island project.

### TRIANGLE MARSH

Thanks to John Perone for subbing for Bob on the First Saturday Work Day at Triangle. The Work Day was cancelled again due to rain.

## MARIN BIRDLOG: MARCH 2019

By Noah Arthur

March in Marin is an unpredictable month, in terms of both weather and birds. It may not produce as many rarities as earlier in the winter or later in the spring, but it does give us some unexpected surprises, such as a **Cassin's Auklet** that flew by Chimney Rock on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 3rd of this March (MS, LS, & LC).

A species more typical of Christmas Bird Count season and rarely reported as late as March, a male **Red-naped Sapsucker** was along Fairfax-Shafer Grade Rd. near Mt. Tam on the 4th (WS).

The first **Wilson's Warbler** of the season arrived on the 6th, a singing male in San Anselmo (CC).

A male **Common Teal** (Green-winged Teal, Eurasian subspecies) at Las Gallinas on the 11th (CM) may have been the same individual that has showed up occasionally in the area throughout the winter. The first **Least Bittern** of the season showed up at Las Gallinas on the 12th (JM).

Also on the 11th, a **Costa's Hummingbird** attended ML's feeders in Novato.

Rarer on Outer Pt. Reyes than many eastern vagrant warblers, two **American Crows** flew over Drakes Beach on the 16th (DS). Crows are one of the species that don't normally cross an imaginary line somewhere around the base of Pt. Reyes; I have only seen a crow on the Outer Point once.

A breeding resident in Marin, but rarely reported, one or two **Common Poorwills** hunted along a trail at night in the Marin Headlands on the 18th (AC). A large, pale first-cycle gull that flew by Chimney Rock on the 19th (MF) proved to be a **Glaucous-winged x Glaucous Gull hybrid**. These hybrids are more frequent on the central California coast than pure Glaucous Gulls, and are usually easily distinguished by a black line along the cutting edges of the bill.

The season's first **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** arrived on the 20th in Woodacre (LH), **Warbling Vireo** on the 21st in Fairfax (LH), **Grasshopper Sparrow** on the 23rd in Novato (DE), **Black-headed Grosbeak** on the 26th north of Fairfax (CC), and **Bullock's Oriole** on the 28th in Bel Marin Keys (RC).

Out at sea, far off the tip of Pt. Reyes, a **Laysan Albatross** was seen from a cruise boat on the 27th (RN).

Continuing birds that arrived earlier in the winter and stayed into or through March included the **Little Blue Heron** in San Rafael, the flock of **Cattle Egrets** near Las Gallinas, the **Townsend's Solitaires** on Mt. Tam, and the **Red Fox Sparrow** in Marshall.

Observers and Acronyms **AC:** Andrew Cayer, **RC:** Richard Cimino, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **DE:** Daniel Edelstein, **MF:** Mark Forney, **LH:** Luanna Helfman, **ML:** Margareta Luff, **CM:** Colin Meusel, **JM:** Jon Missing, **RN:** Richard Norton, **WS:** Will Simkins, **DS:** Dan Singer, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **MS:** Mark Stephenson



snacks. We will meet at the end of San Andreas Drive in Novato.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take Hwy 101 to Novato. Take the San Marin Dr./Atherton Ave. exit. At the end of the exit ramp, turn west (left) on San Marin Dr. Go approximately two miles and turn right on San Andreas Dr. Drive nearly to the end of the road and park on the street. No restrooms available.

**TENNESSEE VALLEY, Marin Headlands**

Sunday, May 19, 2019

8:00 AM to 1:00 PM

With Jonah Benningfield

Join youth birder, Jonah Benningfield, now a junior at the Bay School in San Francisco and founder of the California Young Birders' Club (CAYBC) Bay Area Chapter, for a leisurely walk along the Tennessee Valley trail at the height of the nesting season. As we walk down to the beach through both riparian and chaparral habitats, we hope to see a variety of passerines and possible migrants including **Black-headed Grosbeak, Cedar Waxwings, Orange-crowned** (and with some luck **MacGillivray's Warblers, Swainson's Thrushes, Warbling Vireos, Pacific-slope Flycatchers**, and more. At the beach, **Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants, Common Murres, and Pigeon Guillemots** are likely. Afterwards, we invite you to picnic with us at the tables located at the head of the trail.

Youth birders are encouraged to join our group. Bring water, snacks, and binoculars.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101, take the Stinson Beach exit. Turn left on Shoreline Hwy in 0.1 mile. Turn left on Tennessee Valley Rd. in 0.3 mile. Take a slight right turn onto Tennessee Valley Rd. We will meet at the parking lot at the end of the road.

**MIWOK MEADOWS**

**CHINA CAMP STATE PARK, San Rafael**

Friday, May 23, 2019

8:30 to 11:30 AM

With Matt Perry

Miwok Meadows, on the east side of China Camp State Park, is somewhat off the beaten path and under-birded, but it is one of Matt Perry's favorite regular birding spots. Consisting of a relatively short, easily hiked loop, it offers a range of habitats, including the bay, marsh, oak savannah, and denser woods. Frequent highlights include Osprey, woodpeckers, and many swallow and swift species. Less common finds may include included **Pileated Woodpecker** and **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**. Rarer birds, but not unheard of, might include both **Ridgway's Rail** and **Black Rail**. In spring the trail should be filled with lovely birdsong and bustling activity—and great views of yet another beautiful Marin landscape.

Following our walk at Miwok Meadows, we may cross the street and hike the bay and marsh loop around Turtle Back Hill (0.75 miles easy). We'll watch for wildlife along this trail, which juts out into the salt marsh habitat along San Pablo Bay.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take the Hwy 101 Exit onto North San Pedro Rd. Follow North San Pedro

Rd. approximately 3.8 miles to the Miwok Meadows Trailhead sign. On the right side of the road adjacent to the trailhead, there is a self-pay kiosk where you may purchase a Trail Only Pass for \$3.00 per person. Exact change is needed at this pay station.

**OSPREY ON THE BAY CRUISE**

ONLINE SIGNUPS BEGIN MONDAY, MAY 6

Sunday, June 16, 2019

9 to 11 AM

Ferry leaves from and returns to Marina

Bay, Richmond

With Tony Brake

Over a dozen **Osprey** pairs will be busy raising their young on the edge of the Bay, especially along Richmond's shoreline which is a notable hotspot for this species. Our cruise has been scheduled to optimize our views of nestlings, maybe even some that have fledged and are still hanging around the nests. Departing from Marina Bay in Richmond, we will also get good views of a **Caspian Tern** colony, nesting **California** and **Western Gulls**, and a small heron-egret rookery on the breakwater.

Farther out on the water will be views of the Harbor Seal rookery at Castro Rocks below the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, and a large heron-egret rookery on Red Rock. We also hope to check out a couple of nests on the Marin shoreline, including one on a channel marker for the San Rafael harbor and one at the Dutra quarry site next to McNear's Beach. We are fortunate to have Tony Brake, who has been monitoring the Bay's osprey population for several years, as our leader.

The cost for this 2-hour cruise will be \$65 per person. Online registration and payment via PayPal will begin on May 6, 2019 at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org). Include the name, email address, and phone number of each participant. We recommend that you sign up for this trip ASAP as our boat trips usually sell out quickly. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to Marina Bay in Richmond and other instructions prior to the trip. When the trip fills, a wait list will be maintained by Jeanine Starritt at [jeanineis@comcast.net](mailto:jeanineis@comcast.net).

**BIRDING ON ALCATRAZ**

ONLINE SIGNUPS BEGIN MAY 13

Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Boat leaves Pier 33 at 8:45 AM

Trip ends early PM

Ferry leaves from and returns to

Marina Bay, Richmond

With Waterbird Docents Coryn Foster & Pauline Yeckley

With nine species breeding on the island, Alcatraz is one of the most important waterbird nesting sites in California.

Our Waterbird Docents Coryn Foster and Pauline Yeckley will share an informative look beyond the island's prison culture with a focus on the natural history of the island, the variety of birds and their life histories. We'll see the birds up close on their nests, watch parents feeding chicks, and witness territorial displays, as well as discuss the general ecology of the region's waterbird populations. This is an excellent



opportunity for photographers with many birds only a few feet away

This will be an easy, slow-paced excursion. Dress in layers and comfortable walking shoes (pavement is often uneven). Bring binoculars (scopes too if you wish) and water; snacks are allowed only on the Dock area of the island. We will depart from Pier 33 on the 8:45 AM boat, and the tour will end in the early afternoon. After the tour participants may continue to explore the island and the prison returning on a boat of their choice.

The trip will be limited to 20 Marin Audubon Chapter Supporting Members. The cost will be \$45 per person. If you are not yet a Marin Audubon Chapter Supporting Member, please sign up now at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org) to enjoy this special opportunity. Online registration and payment via PayPal will begin on Monday, May 13, at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org). Include the name, email address, and phone number of each participant. Those confirmed on the trip will be sent additional information as the trip date approaches. When the trip fills, a wait list will be maintained by Jeanine Starritt at [jeanineis@comcast.net](mailto:jeanineis@comcast.net).

**SIERRA VALLEY OVERNIGHT TRIP**

**Highway 89 North of Truckee**

REGISTRATION REQUIRED AND

OPENS APRIL 15

June 21-22, 2019

With Rich Cimino



The valley floor of this popular Sierra birding destination is covered with sagebrush scrub, broken by freshwater marshes, grasslands and riparian woodland. The western portion of Sierra Valley supports unique vernal pools and the entire edge of the valley supports coniferous forest and chaparral, protecting the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. For a list of birds seen in this Important Bird Area (IBA), check out both Plumans and Sierra County checklists <https://ebird.org/printableList?regionCode=L1007569&yr=last10&m=5> and <https://ebird.org/printableList?regionCode=L109258&yr=last10&m=5>. Many of the birds on these lists will be present at the time of our visit.

This popular trip will fill quickly, so sign up right away if you want to join our group. The trip will be limited to 15 participants. Although there is no charge, you must be a Chapter-Supporting Member of Marin Audubon to participate. To sign up for the trip, email Jeanine Starritt at [jeanineis@comcast.net](mailto:jeanineis@comcast.net). Be sure to provide your name(s), email address and phone number. If you are not yet a Marin Audubon Chapter-Supporting Member, please sign up at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org) prior to registering for this trip. Participants will be responsible for their own lodging or camping arrangements in the Sierraville, Truckee or Portola areas. Plan to arrive in the area by the evening of June 20. Those confirmed on the trip will receive additional information and instructions prior to the trip.



# The Rail

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Contact [volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org)

## SAVE THE DATE

- June 8 **Field Trip:** Muddy Hollow  
With Bob Atwood
- June 15 **Field Trip:** Big Rock/Las Gallinas  
With Jim White & Bob Battagin
- June 16 **Boat Trip:** Osprey on the Bay  
Registration opens May 6, 2019  
With Tony Brake
- June 18 **Boat Trip:** Alcatraz Island Tour  
Registration opens May 13, 2019  
With Corny Foster & Pauline Yeckley
- June 21-22 **Overnight Field Trip:** Sierra Valley  
Registration now!  
With Rich Cimino

Check website for updates and details

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## SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

We invite you to become a Chapter-supporting member of Marin Audubon Society (MAS) to support our important habitat protection and restoration work, conservation advocacy, our full calendar of birding field trips and speakers and our newsletter, *The Rail*. Marin Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon (NAS). However, becoming a **Chapter-Supporting Member** of MAS is separate and distinct from a membership in NAS. While MAS works with NAS on issues of mutual concern, we are a separate non-profit Section 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization. Marin-based NAS members do receive this MAS newsletter, *The Rail*, however we encourage all NAS members to also become Chapter-supporting members of MAS to support our local work. Very little of our funding comes from NAS, and we rely on our MAS Chapter-supporting members and donors to help us fund our land acquisitions, restorations, habitat protection, conservation advocacy, this newsletter and our local programs.

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.

You can join MAS or make a donation on our website using your credit card or PayPal by going to [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org). Alternatively, you can join by filling out this form and sending us your payment by mail.

## ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON FOR THE FIRST TIME.

MAS will receive 100% of your initial membership if you enter **MAS's chapter code C04** on your application. To join, go to [www.audubon.org/join](http://www.audubon.org/join).

The best option for the birds: Join MAS **and** NAS.

## Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

- Enroll me as a Chapter-Supporting Member
- Renewal
- New Member
- \$25 Annual rate for students (18 years and under) and seniors (65 and over)
- \$35 Basic
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- \$500 Patron
- \$100 Sustaining
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- Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Fill out form and mail to:  
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**Marin Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 599**  
**Mill Valley, CA 94942**

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