

Albatross of Kaua'i; Their Style and Story

By Hob Osterlund



Hob Osterlund

Laysan Albatrosses

Albatross have likely nested in the Hawaiian Islands for millions of years, but disappeared with the arrival of humans. About 40 years ago, individual birds began returning to Kaua'i, and the population has gradually grown since then. Now, as their mother ship at Midway Atoll becomes more and more treacherous, Kaua'i may become the birds' Noah's Ark.

Hob Osterlund, MSN, APRN, is an award-winning writer, photographer and conservationist living on the island of Kaua'i. She is the founder of the Kauai Albatross Network (www.albatrosskauai.org/wp).

Her work includes direct services such as systematic monitoring of all Laysan albatross on those properties, assisting with predator control, and serving as a link between private landowners and state and federal wildlife agencies.

For five nesting seasons Hob worked as a Kaua'i Coordinator for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Cam project. As a result, Laysan albatross live streaming images were played as the chicks grew from hatch to fledge.

Many thanks to the Garden Island Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.

Next month's speaker:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12 7:30 PM

Mono Lake: Bird Populations and Conservation

With Nora Livingston

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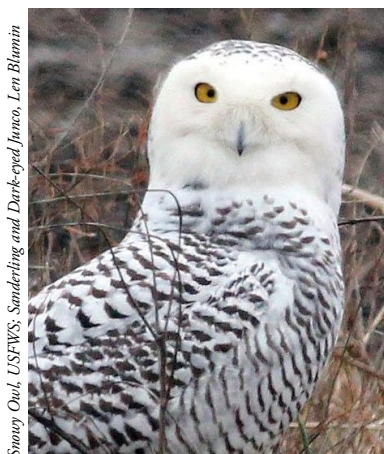
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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Dramatic Loss of Birds and Insects



Snowy Owl, USFWS; Sanderling and Dark-eyed Junco, Len Blumstein



These species from different habitats are among the many that have all declined seriously since 1970 according to a recent report in the journal *Science*. Left to right, Snowy Owl, Sanderling and Dark-eyed Junco

From time to time, we get calls from members concerned that they are seeing fewer birds in their neighborhoods. Turns out you were right. A study published last month in the journal *Science* reported that the world's bird population has diminished by one-third since 1970. That means that North America has nearly three billion fewer birds today than 50 years ago—more than 1 in 4 birds have disappeared in a half a century.

The researchers who made the announcement included collaborators from the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), Smithsonian Conservation Biology and the United States Geological Survey. The team analyzed the breeding population of 529 species using 13 data sets and more recent data collected through a network of 143 high-resolution weather radar stations. The radar technology allows scientists to track and estimate the numbers of birds migrating at night. The radars identified a 14 percent loss in nocturnal spring-migrating birds in the last 10 years alone. In addition, the scientists used models that incorporated all of the data to estimate the number of birds lost across various habitats and bird groupings over time. Even the scientists were astounded by the results, reported Cornell ornithologist, Ken Rosenberg.

Despite data gaps, the radar and survey data tell the same ominous story. Species with the highest losses are those that breed in high-risk habitats such as grasslands which have suffered the biggest losses with a more than 50% decline, or more than 720 million breeding individuals lost across 31 species since 1970. Ninety percent of the lost birds came from 12 widespread and common bird families including warblers, blackbirds, sparrows and finches, found across many different habitats. Boreal forests have lost 500 million birds. General forests have lost 482 million birds including a nearly 20% loss of Dark eyed Junco; western forests have lost 120 million birds. Arctic tundra has lost 80 million, including Snowy Owl. Thirty-five million birds, including cactus wrens, have been lost in arid habitats of the southwest. Coasts have lost 6 million birds, including sanderlings, due largely to human activities—dogs, kids and vehicles—on beaches. There is one exception: wetland birds gained 20 million birds thanks to federal laws protecting wetlands and to the availability of funding to restore wetlands.

The alarming bird data came on the heels of the news that insect populations across the world are plummeting. Often viewed as annoying

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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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

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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 LETTER

By Barbara Salzman

Marin Audubon needs a Treasurer. We're looking for a member who knows QuickBooks and Excel to continue the work of our current Treasurer who is retiring. This is a volunteer Board position. If a volunteer does not come forward, we will have to hire someone to do the Treasurer's work of writing checks and keeping track of our monies and that will mean there will be less money for our properties, field trips and other programs. We are currently an all-volunteer organization and hire consultants only when we need expertise or skills for specific projects. We may need to do this now but hope we don't have to. Contact me at bsalzman48@gmail.com or at 415/924-6057 for more information or to discuss.

It is clear from the gloomy message of insect and bird population losses that we will have to change our ways to make a brighter future. We all need to reduce to our carbon footprint to make our world a more habitable place for birds, insects and people as well. Plant native plants around your house but don't discount

those weeds—weeds are just plants that are in a place you don't want them. Some weeds can be left in place if they are not invasive, i.e., they will not take over and crowd out native plants. You don't need to use chemicals on them. Use non-chemical means to eliminate insects in your garden or, better yet, be more tolerant of them. All insects have some beneficial purpose, such as food for birds. And eat more organic vegetables. If you don't like to garden, another way to improve habitat conditions for birds and insects is to help maintain one of our properties near your home. Email volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org to volunteer.

Christmas Bird Count time is coming up next month. See dates for Marin's counts on page 7 and plan on joining us for one or more of them.

A reminder, that nesting season is long over so now is an ideal time to trim your shrubs and trees and do other yard work with no danger of impacting nesting birds.

MAS Code of Ethics for Field Trips

At our May meeting the MAS board approved a modification to our "Code of Ethics for Field Trips." This is not a new policy. It is a clarification of an existing policy in this age of digital birding. To our previous policy which stated, "Recorded bird sounds shall not be used," we added the following statement: "This includes any kind of playback from digital devices all year round."

With smart phone apps making bird recordings now universally available, the Board felt it was appropriate to clarify our policy regarding the use of playback on field trips in order to minimize potential disturbance to birds and to clarify what is expected of trip participants. Even the judicious use of bird recordings played at low volume for educational purposes on a field trip may inadvertently cause disruption. With the majority of our field trips occurring in heavily birded areas, we believe entirely prohibiting playback provides the clearest guideline, not subject to nuances of interpretation, to assure our field trips minimize potential disturbance to birds and encourage participants to behave responsibly with respect for the birds.

We realize there is no simple correct response to the playback question and that not everyone will agree with our policy. However, given the intensity of birding in Marin and the

large number of birding hot spots in our area, we feel it is important for Marin Audubon field trips to model the use of least disruptive birding techniques. We think our best choice on field trips is to let the birds remain undisturbed as much as possible and for us to behave in a way that benefits birds rather than in a way that benefits birders. For more thoughts on the ethics of birding, we refer you to the "American Birding Association Principles of Birding Ethics" (<http://listing.aba.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/abaethics.pdf>).

Please respect this policy and refrain from using bird recordings on all Marin Audubon field trips.

MAS Needs A Treasurer

Would you like to support MAS's habitat protection enhancement and education work by becoming a Board member? Do you have bookkeeping experience or an interest in financial matters? Then we'd like to talk to you! For more information please contact Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057 or 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.

RUSH CREEK

Novato

Thursday, November 7, 2019

8:30 AM to noon

With Bob and Sande Chilvers

Due to continuing construction at Las Gallinas, Rush Creek has been selected for our first Thursday of the month walk in November. Known to provide wintering habitat for a variety of ducks including **Northern Shoveler** and **Common Goldeneye**, Rush Creek can also be a great place to see **Avocet**, **Dunlin**, and a variety of shorebirds. We'll also look for wintering passerines in the nearby trees.

Thank you, Bob and Sande, for agreeing to continue as our skillful and friendly guides on these popular monthly walks. We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels and help each other to find and identify the birds. The area for our walk will be mostly flat. Dress in layers and bring binoculars, scopes, and water. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Take the Atherton Ave exit from Hwy 101. Turn right onto Atherton and after just 0.1 mile make the first left onto Binford Rd. Go down the hill and meet at the trail-head on the right. Parking is available on both sides of the road. No restrooms available.

LAS GALLINAS AND HAMILTON WETLANDS

No. 11, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, November 16, 2019

8:30 AM to 3 PM

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

The Las Gallinas ponds (still accessible on weekends) are a great place for good views of many kinds of ducks and raptors. This is an easy 1.5-mile walk where many other species may be seen, including **Ridgway's Rail** and **Sora**. After a lunch break, we will go to the Hamilton Wetlands in Novato. This extensive wetland was recently reconnected with the Bay after two decades of planning and work, and the birds have repopulated the area in big numbers. We will see the waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and other species that have made these new wetlands their home. Come with your sharp eyes to help Jim and Bob find some of the species that have eluded our Birding in Marin group so far in 2019. We're hoping for **Wilson's Snipe**, **Bonaparte's Gull**, **Loggerhead Shrike**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, and **Palm Warbler**, among others.

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

SAN FRANCISCO BAY BOAT TRIP

Trip Full – Wait List Open

Sunday, November 17, 2019

Boat departs at 9 AM – Returns at 4 PM to Berkeley Marina

With John Klobas & Mike & Sue Denega

All available spaces on this boat trip

have been sold. However, there are often cancellations prior to the trip. If you wish to be included on a waiting list for this trip, contact Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net. Be sure to include the name, email address, and phone number for each possible passenger.

Those confirmed on this trip will receive directions to the Berkeley Marina and other instructions a week prior to the trip.

For a complete description of this trip, consult our *October Rail*, available at www.marinaudubon.org.

HAMILTON WETLANDS

Novato

Thursday, November 21, 2019

8 AM to noon

With David Sexton and Bill Jones

In an annual trip to this fabulously restored habitat, Hamilton Wetlands Volunteers, David and Bill, will lead us to view the wetlands and celebrate the return of shorebirds to this former flight line and landing strip. The trip will start with a stop at the nursery where Nursery and Restoration Manager, Christina McWhorter, may give a brief update on the restoration and replanting progress after which our group will visit several portions of the wetlands not usually accessible to the public.

Our outing will cover both the east side and the southwest sides of the wetlands as we search for early returning shorebirds and ducks. We hope to see **Sandpipers**, **Plovers**, **Yellowlegs**, **Willetts**, **Long-billed Curlews**, and **Marbled Godwits**. We may be fortunate enough to see **Phalaropes**, **American Wigeons**, **Pintails**, **Ruddy Ducks**, and **Northern Shovelers** of the fall migration as well as **Avocets**, **Black-necked Stilts**, Herons, Grebes, Gulls and Terns.

DIRECTIONS: The outing will start at the Novato Skate Park at 1200 Hamilton Pkwy. Take Exit 459 from Hwy 101 toward Ignacio Blvd, Bel Marin Keys Blvd. Turn right on Nave Dr, then left onto North Hamilton Pkwy. The skate park is on the left. We will carpool from there. We will finish at the south end of the wetlands at noon with parking at the pool and ball fields on Hangar Ave. Heavy rain cancels.

BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES IN BOLINAS

In and around Bolinas

Saturday, November 23, 2019

8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

With Juan Garcia & Mia Monroe

The Pacific edge of Southern Marin County hosts rich habitats for landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds as well as important aggregation sites for overwintering Monarch Butterflies. On this date we'll focus on what makes for good winter habitat, whether for birds or butterflies. In addition to several of the best birding locations around Bolinas, we'll visit one or two Monarch groves under the guidance of Mia Monroe, who coordinates the area's annual census of Monarchs for the Xerces Society.

Among the birding spots we'll visit are Agate Beach County Park, the BPUD Sewage Ponds, and Pine Gulch Delta at Bolinas Lagoon. An optional visit to Commonweal is also possible. Expect to walk 3 miles in all. Watch the weather, as it may be prudent to pack a rain layer. Heavy rain cancels. Note the time and come prepared with water and snacks. There are good sources of food and groceries in Bolinas town.

DIRECTIONS: Bolinas is 18.5 miles west from the Hwy 1 exit at Mill Valley or 11 miles south of Olema if you come through San Geronimo Valley or via Point Reyes Station. Once in Bolinas, turn right on Mesa Rd, then left on Overlook, then right onto Elm. Drive a mile west to the parking area of Agate Beach County Park, our first stop of the day. We'll organize a carpool for the rest of our visit.

HABITAT POTENTIAL BIRDING TACTICS

Fort Baker, Sausalito

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTERS READ THIS!

Sunday, November 24, 2019

9 AM to 1 PM

With Josiah Clark

Join this Christmas Bird Count (CBC) training trip and be sure that some of Josiah Clark's boundless enthusiasm for birds and Christmas Bird Counts in particular will rub off on you! This trip is well-suited for CBC Area Leaders interested in improving their methods of coverage and ultimately finding more species on upcoming counts. However, anyone interested in becoming a better birder and becoming a more informed conservation advocate will find this trip worthwhile and enjoyable.

We will meet on the pier at Fort Baker and begin our exploration of nearby habitats including rocky shoreline, sheltered coves, open water, coastal scrub, coast live oak woodlands, exotic woodlands, hilltop areas, and more. Josiah will share a variety of strategies developed for birding Big Days to help leaders explore the anatomy of a route, improve methods of coverage, allocate their time in various locations, and compare and contrast different birding methods and styles. He will demonstrate that how one looks is at least as important as where one looks.

We may visit additional, nearby areas such as Kirby Cove and Hawk Hill, so please be willing to carpool to locations with limited parking. There are portable restrooms at Fort Baker. Bring warm clothing, scopes, binoculars, water, and lunch. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Exit Hwy 101 at Alexander Ave. Continue on Alexander Ave 0.3 mile. Turn left on Bunker Rd and then turn right following the signs to Fort Baker. Park in the large lot along Center Dr at the Bay Area Discovery Museum or at the waterfront along Sommerville Rd. Meet at the pier.

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

Birds and Insects *continued from page 1*

pests, insects provide essential natural services. They are pollinators, scavengers, predators, and prey that sustain many birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals in virtually all terrestrial ecosystems. The insect community as a whole, especially butterflies, bees and moths, has been decimated over the last few decades.

Ninety-six percent of North American bird species—except seabirds—feed insects to their young and more than 85 percent of flowering plants depend on pollination by insects, so it follows that a decline in insects means a decline in bird populations as well. As with bird declines, the causes of insect decline are likely to be varied. Many scientists believe pesticides used in agricultural fields play the major role. In 45 percent of European lands, 29 of 35 farmland bird species have declined in recent years. The same species fared better in cities than on farmland.

The world's most widely used agricultural insecticides are neurotoxins that are highly toxic to a broad range of insects and other invertebrates. The pesticides are dispersed by air, soak into soil, and are carried with dust to adjacent lands where they impact non-target insects and leach into water and watershed lands. Some neurotoxins can take as long as three years to degrade by half.

A 2014 study published in *Nature* was first to provide evidence of the depletion of insect populations by neonicotinoids ('neonics')—a family of neurotoxins that are absorbed by and stored in plants to resist insects—based on significant declines in abundance, diversity and biomass of farmland species in the Netherlands. Using tent-like contraptions called malaise traps, scientists in a 27-year study found a more than 75 percent decline in flying-insect biomass at 63 protected natural areas. The study attributed rapid declines in Barn Swallow and other insect-eating birds to the decline in farm insects. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research International* reports in recent studies that neonic usage in agricultural fields caused a decline in butterflies, bees and insectivorous birds in three different countries.

One organophosphate insecticide,

chlorpyrifos, commonly sprayed on apples, other fruits, nuts, and additional crops is among the most toxic insecticides. It's banned in Europe but in 2017 the US EPA extended its use for five years. Many birds eat fruits or seeds many of which are from treated plants.

Without insects there are few birds, but insect loss is not the only human-caused impact to birds. Habitat loss is still considered to be the number one reason for bird declines. Scientists are just beginning to assess the impacts of climate change. Actions you can take to help the dwindling bird and insect populations:

- **Eat organic.** Nearly 70% of the produce sold in the US contains pesticides. Eating organic fruits and vegetables is safer for you and for birds. We are fortunate to have organic produce in many farmer's markets and supermarkets.
- **Don't use pesticides.** More than 1 billion pounds of insecticides, chemicals specifically designed to kill insects, are applied in the US each year—most on agricultural fields but also in home gardens and on golf course turf. Pesticides can harm birds either by direct contact, by contaminating fruits and seeds birds eat, or by reducing insect prey.
- **Plant native plants.** Birds have fewer places to breed, rest and replenish energy during migration. The more than 63 million acres of lawns, in particular, offer little food or shelter for birds. In our Mediterranean climate, lawns must be watered all summer; producing potable water requires energy. Replace your lawns and other nonnative plants, particularly invasive species, with native species. Native plant nectar, seeds, berries and insects sustain our native birds.

Specifically to protect birds:

- **Make Windows Safer.** Up to one billion birds are estimated to die each year by colliding with windows. By day, birds see reflections of nearby vegetation as habitat they can fly into. During night migration, birds are attracted off course by lights on buildings and can collide with buildings. Flocks are known to be mesmerized by night lighting and fly in circles until

exhausted. For your windows, install screens or Acopian BirdSavers or devices with string two to four inches apart. Not washing your windows reduces reflections.

- **Drink Bird Friendly Coffee.** Three quarters of the world's coffee farms grow coffee in the sun. Shade-grown coffee preserves forest trees and provides habitat for both migratory and non-migratory birds.
- **Stop Using Plastics Whenever Possible.** Avoid single use plastics bags, bottles, utensils; don't purchase items with unnecessary packaging; reuse and recycle. According to the National Audubon Society, an estimated 4,900 million metric tons of plastics are estimated to have accumulated in our environment. Plastic is overwhelming our oceans and ocean wildlife including seabirds.
- **Keep Cats Indoors.** Pet and feral cats are estimated to kill 2.5 million birds annually in the US and Canada. Cats have been considered to be the #2 human-caused killer of birds in the US—110 million cats are estimated to roam habitats in the US (source: ABC Cats Indoors program). Cats, whether they are well-fed or feral, instinctively hunt and kill birds. Bells around their necks are not effective in protecting birds. Birds do not associate the noise of a bell with danger. Create a "catio" in your backyard or train your cat to walk on a leash.
- **Advocate for Protecting Habitat.** More than 10 million acres of land in the US were converted to 'development' from 1982 to 1997. Hard surfaces, buildings, roads, driveways, patios, and streets provide no habitat. Speak up for protecting natural lands through joining MAS's Conservation Committee or speak on your own.

Birds need all the help you can give them. Do your part.

BCDC REVISES BAY FILL POLICIES

The Bay Conservation and Development Commission voted to change policies of the Bay Plan to allow fill for habitat restoration, enhancement, creation, and adaptation. Until now, only small amounts of fill were allowed for public access and to improve

shoreline appearance.

The new policies now allow larger quantities of sediment to be placed as fill for habitat projects in tidal marshes, tidal flats, and subtidal habitats that would benefit fish, wildlife and other aquatic organisms. In addition, the Bay Plan Shoreline Protection policies were changed to require consideration and use of natural and nature-based methods to protect the shoreline and to encourage pilot projects to identify the best approaches for natural protection methods. Finally, the Bay Plan Dredging Policies were modified to recognize the importance of pilot projects in determining the best approaches and locations for

dredged sediment reuse; to change the term 'dredged material' to dredged sediments; and to lift the limitation on using dredged sediments to benefit the Bay after the Port of Oakland Middle Harbor enhancement project is completed.

These changes will benefit Marin Audubon's efforts to restore habitat inasmuch as our Tiscornia restoration may be the first project, that would place material in the bay for habitat restoration, to go through the permitting process.

ANCHOR-OUT HAPPENINGS

Although the final report is not yet completed, Keith Merkel of Merkel & Associates

presented San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's (BCDC) Enforcement Committee and the Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) with a report on the "Mooring Feasibility and Planning Study of Anchor-Outs" that was commissioned by the RBRA. According to his presentations there are few locations suitable for developing mooring fields due to the presence of eelgrass, navigation channels and other restrictions. Matters addressed in the study included: an update on moorings in county waters which now number more than 200, mapping of eelgrass beds which are extensive this year, verification of 'crop

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FIELD TRIPS (continued from page 3)

YOLO BYPASS WILDLIFE AREA AND ENVIRONS

Off Interstate 80, 3 miles east of Davis

Monday, November 25, 2019

8:30 AM to 4 PM

With John Sterling

On this special trip in the heart of the Pacific Flyway, we will continue the discussion started at John's October Speaker Series presentation about the changes in our knowledge of bird distribution and populations in the Central Valley since the publication of Grinnell and Miller's book on California birds in 1944. We will visit locations that exemplify characteristics highlighted in John's evening program such as loss of habitats, creation of new habitats, reduction of ranges, and invasions of new species. Additional topics will be explored as we reconcile the fact that more species are detected now than prior to the book's publication.

The Yolo Basin was once a nearly 80,000-acre wetland teeming with wildlife, from herds of tule elk to dense clouds of migratory waterfowl. The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area now encompasses just 16,600 acres, which provide wetland habitat for water birds and other wildlife. Different vegetation community types include managed seasonal wetland, natural seasonal wetland, natural perennial wetland, and riparian woodland. These habitats attract a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, neotropical migratory birds, and raptors. Common residents in this area, but rare in Marin, include **White-faced Ibis** and **Yellow-billed Magpie**, and from fall through spring, **Sandhill Cranes** are often seen and heard.

Bring water, snacks, and lunch. Come prepared with warm clothing for changeable weather including rain. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Eastbound I-80 take the East Chiles Rd Exit and travel east one-quarter mile to the west levee access. We will meet at the first dirt parking lot.

PACHECO POND

Novato

Thursday, December 5, 2019

8:30 AM to noon

With Bob and Sande Chilvers

We'll repeat a trip to Pacheco Pond for our first Thursday of the month walk in

December. It's hard to compete with Las Gallinas, but Pacheco Pond has provided a reasonable substitute location for our usual Las Gallinas walk. The area provides habitat for a variety of ducks, **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **Common Gallinule**, **Sora**, and **Virginia Rail**. The adjacent trees provide additional habitat for both songbirds, egrets, and a number of raptors including **Peregrine Falcon**.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels and help each other to find and identify the birds. The area around Pacheco Pond is mostly flat, but **we will be walking across some rocky, uneven surfaces**. Dress in layers and bring binoculars, scopes, and water. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Take the Bel Marin Keys Blvd exit from Hwy 101. Travel east on Bel Marin Keys Blvd for 1.4 miles passing through a commercial/industrial section until arriving at a small parking area on the right, which faces the pond. We will meet in the parking area and walk to the trail a short distance up the road.

BAHIA, RUSH CREEK AND ROWLAND AVE WETLANDS

Novato

No. 12, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, December 7, 2019

(Note: Usual date has been changed to avoid Christmas Bird Counts.)

8:30 AM to 3 PM

With Jim White & Bob Battagin

Please meet at the foot (east end) of Bahia Drive in Novato where Marin Audubon has completed a large marsh restoration project. Shorebirds, ducks, herons, swallows, and rails will be reaping the benefits here for years to come. After viewing the birds and the restoration area, we intend to walk the trail along the edge of the mixed oak woodland.

We then plan to drive around to the end of Topaz Street to view the Horseshoe Pond where some diving ducks, including a few **Barrow's Goldeneyes**, like to winter. During the day we may practice some bird counting to help prepare for the upcoming Christmas Bird Count season. After lunch we will take

a look at two nearby areas—Rush Creek and the Rowland Ave wetlands. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 in North Novato, take the Atherton Ave exit east about 0.9 miles, then turn left onto Bugeia Lane, which becomes Bahia Dr. Follow it to the end where there is street parking. No restrooms available here.

MARTA'S MARSH

Corte Madera

Sunday, December 8, 2019

8 to 11 AM

With Derek Lecy

Marta's Marsh hosts a wide variety of bird species and provides great viewing opportunities. Typically, shorebirds, ducks, gulls, terns, and some of Marin's only endangered **Ridgway's Rails** can be seen at this Marin birding hotspot. We will take a short walk alongside San Clemente Creek to the creek mouth where it then enters the bay. Some other of our target birds include **Blue-winged Teal**, **Dunlin**, **Western** and **Least Sandpiper**, and possibly raptors such as **Osprey**, **Peregrine Falcon**, and **Northern Harrier**.

We have timed our walk to put us at the creek mouth a few hours after low tide, as the incoming tide causes sandpipers, gulls, and ducks to fly from the bay mudflats to the high tide refuge at Marta's Marsh. As we walk, we will listen for rails as well as any other migrants that we may run into. At the mouth of the creek we will scope the bay looking for ducks like **Lesser** and **Greater Scaup**, **Bufflehead**, **Wigeon**, and possibly **Canvasback** or **Redhead**.

Heavy rain cancels. Bring binoculars and, if you have one, a spotting scope. There are no restroom facilities in the marsh.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, take Exit 449A at Tamalpais Dr in Corte Madera; go east 0.2 mile toward the bay; turn right on San Clemente Dr just beyond the Home Consignment Store and go 0.5 mile; make the first left onto Harbor Dr for 0.2 mile; turn right onto Yolo Street for 400 feet. Then turn left onto Channel Dr. We will meet where the road dead ends at 21 Channel Dr.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Before the winter rains arrive, our attention will turn to stopping smaller plants of the more troublesome invasive species from growing to be larger and more difficult to remove. There are small Harding grass clumps and small fennel plants that will be relatively easy to cut off or dig up. Stinkwort removal seems to be done at Triangle and Corte Madera.

Is one of our project areas in your neighborhood? Our volunteer days are particularly good opportunities for students who need a community service project. Act locally and join us on a workday. We all make a difference.

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: November 2, December 7

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

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: November 9, December 14

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

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

Bahia, Novato:

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

THANK YOU, STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Dave Chenoweth, Bob Hinz, Martha and Gerry Jarocki, Linda Nicoletto, Ed Nute, John Perone, Lowell Sykes

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Theresa Blue & Timothy Daniels, Lauren Chandler, Jim MacDonald, Madeline Mork, Clayton Platt, Emily Robinson, Catherine Silva, Janet Turner

THANK YOU, DONORS

Anonymous, William A. Clarke, Charles & Norma Flanik, Frost Family Sustainability, Lisa Holm (gift for grandmother Madeline Mork), Sarah Martin, Mrs. E. W. Moews, Marianna Riser, Richard K. Robbins, Harold Sherley, Catherine Silva (car donation), Janet Turner

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

CORTE MADERA RESTORATION SITE

Thanks to our Water Brigade, the last of five scheduled waterings took place on October 6. We are depending on the rains to do the watering from now on. The work of this crew has been important keeping the 15,000 plants thriving and flourishing. So far it is working. Martha Jarocki and her crew continue the second Saturday workdays to keep the weeds (stinkwort and Harding grass, mostly) under control.

BLACK POINT PROPERTIES

We have had quite a bit of stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) come up on one of our properties at Black Point. Thank you to Lowell Sykes who spent the better part of a week cutting the plants.

TRIANGLE MARSH

Volunteers on the first Saturday workday searched for, found and pulled the very few stinkwort plants that they encountered. In addition, they dug out many small Harding grass clumps. On another day, students from San Domenico School pulled *Salsola soda* near the high tide line.

There have been several incidents of vandalism at Triangle Marsh recently. Last month a tree company dumped two loads of wood chips, clearly from a job, on grasses we planted last winter. Thanks to volunteers Bob



Bob Hinz

Hundreds of plants of western goldentop (*Euthamia occidentalis*) are blooming in the MAS restoration project beside the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. The flowers are attracting and supporting many insects.

Hinz, Bob Bundy, Doug and Joyce Waterman, Dave Chenoweth, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes and Barbara and Jay Salzman, the piles of chips were moved, and it looks like the plants are surviving. More recently, someone drove a vehicle, with what looks like the tread of a tractor, over some of our plants along the edge of the berm.

Conservation *continued from page 5*

circle' damage, review of mooring alternatives and additional damage from anchor-out boats resting on the bay bottom during low tide.

Merkel's general recommendations include relocating vessels out of eelgrass; eliminating the influx of new vessels; having a goal of one vessel-one resident; regular inspection; effective enforcement; have moorings be publicly owned; and requiring vessel registration. While making clear that he was not recommending establishing mooring fields and that his recommendations were based on environmental resources, Merkel identified five locations where mooring could be put: the largest being a swath 600 feet off the western shore of Belvedere; another in Belvedere Cove for smaller boats; and three other small spots spread around at the ends of marinas. Concerning bird habitat, Merkel stated birds can go to the Audubon Sanctuary waters which are not available for anchoring. Our concern is that the Sanctuary waters are shallow habitat, different than closer to the Gate.

Members of BCDC's Enforcement Committee were clear in their response: permanent living on the bay is bay fill which is not allowed under BCDC policy and under the

McAteer-Petris Act, legislation that established BCDC. The Committee also heard presentations from others including State Lands and the Port of Oakland staff who said that anchor-outs in Oakland waters damage public docks and other facilities, and there is evidence that those they eject go to Richardson Bay.

The RBRA also heard Keith Merkel's presentation but the agency members made no comments and took no public comment. A public hearing will be scheduled in the future. There was no report to the RBRA on the BCDC Enforcement Committee's comments or the Committee meeting.

Marin Audubon's continued position is that permanent living on the bay is contrary to the public trust and BCDC's policies, and it is damaging to eelgrass and wildlife including birds and fish.

We welcome new Richardson Bay Harbor Master, Curtis Havel, former Marin County Planner and a boater, and are encouraged by his efforts so far to control anchor-outs. An ordinance recently adopted by the RBRA limits to 72 hours the time new boats entering the Bay can stay.

MARIN BIRDLOG: SEPTEMBER 2019

By Noah Arthur

September is the peak month for eastern warblers and other migrant rarities in Marin, especially on Outer Pt. Reyes, but this September started slow. eBird alerts in the first few days showed little more than the usual Drakes Beach **Bushtits** and **Wrentits**, considered rare on the Outer Point despite being resident at Drakes. The first eastern migrant of the month showed up on the 3rd, in the form of a **Prairie Warbler** at the New Willows (DM). On the 7th a **Red-eyed Vireo** was at the Pt. Reyes Coast Camp (TM, JM).

One of the most interesting developments in Bay Area rarity occurrence over the last decade has been the increase in **Chestnut-sided Warblers**, which now seem to be the most regularly-occurring eastern warbler in Bay Area in the fall. There was surprisingly only one reported in Marin this September, on the 8th at Redwood Creek (AM).

The Palomarin banding team caught a **Hammond's Flycatcher** on the 11th. Another **Hammond's Flycatcher** was along the Pt. Reyes Bayview Trail on the 14th (AS). On the 12th a **Townsend's Solitaire** flew over Hawk Hill (JR), and a **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at the Fish Docks (MF). Another **Red-eyed Vireo** was in a private Marin yard on the 13th (JK).

One of the rarest warblers of the month, skulking in shrubs by the road at Nunes Ranch on Friday the 13th, was an immature **Mourning Warbler** (DS, MF).

Uncommon at any season but especially rare so early in the fall, a male **White-winged Scoter** was just off Drake's Beach at dawn on the 16th (CD, DM). Also on the 16th, a **Lark Bunting** was at Hall Ranch and three **Vesper Sparrows** were near Nunes Ranch (DM, CD).

An **American Redstart** was at Drakes on the 17th (DS). At least one **Yellow-breasted Chat** at the Fish Docks on the 17th (AA) may have been a different individual from the one seen there on the 12th. Only the third record for Pt. Reyes, a **Vermilion Flycatcher** was photographed at the Clem Miller Environmental Education Center on the 18th (JT).

A **Blackpoll** at the Fish Docks on the 20th (J&C) was the only rare warbler reported there this month. Another or the same one was at the "Junior Mendoza" trees on the 21st (SK, KS, MM), and at Mendoza Ranch proper on the 22nd (AH). The first **White-throated Sparrow** of the season was at Nunes Ranch on the 20th (DS). On the 22nd there was a brilliant male **Summer Tanager** in Olema (KS), and a **Gray Catbird** in Corte Madera (NW).

Rarest shorebird of the month in Marin, an American **Golden-plover** was with **Black-bellied Plovers** along shore north of Abbotts Lagoon on the 24th (ML). Two **White-faced Ibis** were at Rodeo Lagoon on the 25th (WL). A 'rufina-group' **Song Sparrow**—one of the northwestern subspecies, rare this far south—was near Bolinas on the 26th (MD).

The first really good day of the month was the 27th, with a **Least Flycatcher** at the Palomarin banding station, a **Hammond's Flycatcher**, a **Prairie Warbler**, a **Clay-colored Sparrow**, and a **Painted Bunting** at the Fish Docks (AH, EC, PD), an eastern **Orange-crowned Warbler** (subspecies *celata*) at the New Willows (AH), and perhaps rarest of all, a **Rusty Blackbird** at Cypress Grove Point on Tomales Bay (DL).

The Outer Point vagrant wave continued on the following days. An **Ovenbird** at the Fish Docks (RR), a **Tennessee Warbler** at the New Willows (HC, EI), and an **American Redstart** at Drakes were found on the 28th (AM).

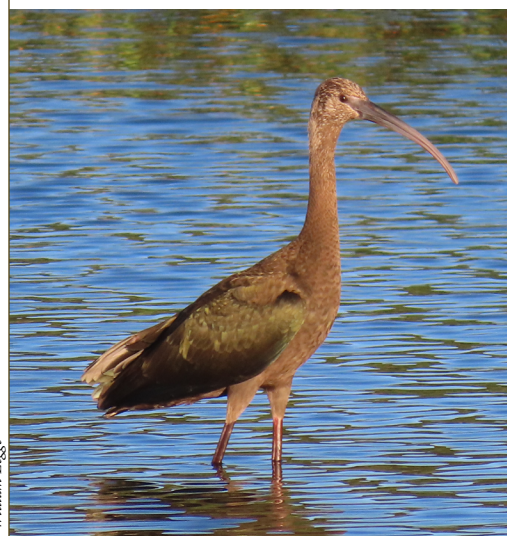
On the 29th, a **Yellow-green Vireo** was seen by many at Mendoza Ranch (finder's name not available), joined later in the day by a **Red-eyed Vireo** (JL), as well as another **Painted Bunting** (JL). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at the Fish Docks (MA) and a **Least Flycatcher** at Mendoza (BP & KO). A **Broad-winged Hawk** floated over Nunes (JB, DM). A **Canada Warbler** at the Fish Docks, accompanied by another **Redstart**, rivals the Nunes Ranch **Mourning Warbler** as the rarest warbler of the month (MS, LS).

Back in on the 'mainland' on the 29th, a **Brewer's Sparrow** was found in Kentfield (BL).

By the 30th things had calmed down again with only continuing birds reported, demonstrating the often intense but brief nature of vagrant incursions in Marin.

Observers and Acronyms AA: Anne Ardillo, AH: Adrian Hinkle, AM: Alex Merritt, AS: Andy Stepniewski, BL: Bill Lenarz, BP: Bill Pelletier, CD: Cédric Duhalde, PD: Preston Duncan, DL: David Lumpkin, DM: Dominik Mosur, DS: Dan Singer, EC: Everett Clark, EI: Emmitt Iverson, ER: Erica Rutherford, HC: Holly Coates, J&C: John & Carolyn Longstreth, JB: Jonah Benningfield, JC: John Colbert, JK: Jeffrey Kimball, JL: John Luther, JM: James Marvel, JR: Jane Rudebusch, JT: Jim Thomason, KO: Kitty O'Neill, KS: Kenneth Sobon, LS: Lucas Stephenson, MA: Mary Ann Allan, MD: Mark Dettling, MF: Mark Forney, ML: Matt Lau, MM: Mary Muchowski, MS: Mark Stephenson, NW: Nick Whelan, RR: Ruth Rudesill, SK: Stephen King, TM: Tom Marvel, WL: William Legge

William Legge



White-faced Ibis

Mike's Birds, CC BY-SA 2.0



Ovenbird

Marin's Christmas Bird Counts

The 120th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is coming at the end of the year. Administered by the National Audubon Society, CBCs are the longest-running citizen science program in the world. The Marin Audubon Society sponsors three counts with hundreds :

Point Reyes

► **Saturday, December 14**

Cheep Thrills (Northern Marin)

► **Thursday, December 19**

Southern Marin

► **Saturday, December 28**

Everyone, whether beginner or more experienced, is encouraged to participate. See some new birds, meet old and new friends, be a citizen scientist. It's fun. Mark your calendar.



The Rail

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- Dec. 7 **Field Trip:** Bahia & Rush Creek
With Jim White & Bob Battagin
- Dec. 8 **Field Trip:** Marta's Marsh
With Derek Lecy
- Dec. 9 **Online signups begin for Delta Boat Trip,** February 2, 2020
- Dec. 12 **Field Trip:** Jean & John Starkweather Trail, *With Rich Cimino*
- Dec. 14 **Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count**
- Dec. 19 **Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count**
- Dec. 28 **Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count**
- Jan. 2 **Field Trip:** Deer Island/Simmons Slough
With Bob & Sande Chilvers
- Feb. 2 **Boat Trip:** Sacramento Delta
With David Wimpfheimer
- 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. 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.

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**.

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- ☐ Renewal
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- ☐ \$35 Basic
- ☐ \$50 Sponsor
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- ☐ Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ _____

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