

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 7:30 PM

When Waterbirds Are In Crisis

By JD Bergeron



Photo courtesy of JD Bergeron

JD Bergeron

The December Speaker Series program will be a Zoom meeting. Visit the Speaker Series page on the MAS website for information on joining the Zoom meeting electronically.

In 1971 after 800,000 gallons of crude oil spilled into the San Francisco Bay, concerned individuals led by Alice Berkner, a registered nurse, jumped into action, bringing International Bird Rescue to life. Staff and volunteers work alongside clients, partners, and the public to find solutions. Today, IBR researches best practices at its crisis response hospitals in California and Alaska and shares them worldwide. Its mission is to inspire people to restore balance with the natural world by rescuing waterbirds in crisis.

They rescue thousands of Bay Area birds every year and provide high quality care for them at their wildlife center in Fairfield, CA.

JD is the Executive Director of International Bird Rescue. He has redirected Bird Rescue's track record of working on oil spills to take on the challenges wild waterbirds face today.

Also, he is the founder of Chooda, a volunteer-run incubator whose mission is to inspire change through outdoor adventures.

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14 7:30 PM

Change in Bird Status in the Central Valley

By John Sterling

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

2020 South Marin Christmas Bird Count

To all Christmas Bird Count participants, we hope this message finds you and your loved ones well. We are living through unprecedented times, but the most important things are still those we choose to spend time with.

The coronavirus is still active in our county as well in the rest of California. The County of Marin issued a Risk Reduction Order, updated October 27, 2020, which allows outdoor recreational activities, provided social distancing is practiced, face coverings are worn, and hands are washed frequently.

National Audubon notes that there will be little to no impact on the scientific value of the Christmas Bird Count data by missing or altering one count season, due to the pandemic. December will be cold and it will be flu season so it is essential that you prioritize your own safety and the safety of others when making your decision whether or not to participate.

After some hesitation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Marin Audubon has decided to proceed with the 2020 Christmas Bird Count in South Marin. This will be a reduced scale count for the protection of all.

The count will be conducted in strict compliance with National Audubon's Guidelines for the 121st Audubon Christmas Bird Count, which require that all leaders and participants abide by the guidelines below.

- Social distancing and/or masking are **required** at all times in the field.
- Carpooling may **only** occur within existing familiar or social "pod" groups.
- Activities **must** comply with all current state and municipal COVID-19 guidelines.

The safety of the count leaders and participants is our top priority.

SOUTH MARIN CBC

Due to COVID 19, this year's South Marin Christmas Bird Count will be small and require a few changes.

1. Area leaders will be responsible for selecting their own teams and may limit participants so they can split up their count areas using individual birders or small count teams.
2. All others not on a formal count team are encouraged to do a feeder watch in their back yard or do a count in their immediate neighborhood. The results need to be transmitted to Bob Hinz so they can be included in the count total (see below).
3. Instead of the compilation dinner a virtual Zoom meeting will be held on the count day, Saturday, December 26 at 6 PM for the countdown and where the count leaders will give their reports and share interesting sightings. Even if you did not participate in that day's count you are welcome and encouraged to join the Zoom compilation.

If you are interested in participating in the field for the count day please contact your leader from last year. A sign up for backyard feeder watch, birding your neighborhood and the Zoom compilation meeting can be found on the MAS website: <https://marinaudubon.org/birds/christmas-bird-count>.

Other Christmas Bird Counts in Marin include:

- **Cheep Thrills CBC** in North Marin Thursday, December 17th. For more information visit <https://cheep-thrillscbc.blogspot.com>.
- **Point Reyes CBC** on Saturday, December 19th. For more information email ptreyescbc@gmail.com or visit www.pointreyescbc.com.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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
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Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Doug Waterman 506-4675
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Wallace 310-1693
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Volunteer Coordinator	Meghan Kehoe 209-769-8862
BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

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

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

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only)

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

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

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

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

MISSION STATEMENT

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

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Barbara Salzman

What a relief! It is with great hope that I'm looking forward to our government returning to normal, to agreements, standards and, perhaps even improving programs to protect our environment. We need to get back on track to a sensitive and sane approach to protecting the world and dealing with the many problems that threaten our environment. We are pleased to now turn the page with fresh hope for more supportive environmental policies in the years to come.

And I've been so moved by the outpouring of support and joy that spontaneously arose in cities and towns across the country with confirmation of the election of a new President and Vice President. I can't say that in all my years of living through presidential elections that I ever remember such jubilant demonstrations after a presidential, or any other election.

It's been disheartening and disturbing to witness and experience, over the last four years, our regulatory agencies and systems weakened, habitats threatened, degraded and lost, and climate change worsen. I anticipate getting back to our work of saving natural places that both birds and people need to thrive, without the burden of worry and dealing with the loss of habitats. We'll now be freer to continue to work for a healthier and more resilient world, one that provides for our wildlife and supports and inspires us.

You should be receiving our winter appeal letter soon. We know it's a stressful time, so we understand it may be a difficult time financially. Give what you can. Donations from this winter appeal are particularly important. We depend on them to support our operations, and educational activities. See page 7 for special information on tax benefits under the CARES act.

In our ongoing adaptation to the pandemic, you likely saw on page 1 that we're responding by honoring social distancing and conducting the Christmas Bird Count dinner on Zoom. Since we won't be able to drive together (except in family "pods"), counting birds in your backyard could be a good alternative to being a part of these citizen science surveys. And join us for the count dinner afterwards.

And, of course, we're continuing to expand and sharpen our skills, practices and ability to manage Zoom to make our Speaker Series and Field Trip programs and other activities run smoothly. Our Board is also working on internal security for our records and communication among our members and ourselves.

Maintain your vigilance, wear your mask, keep social distancing and stay well. And have a wonderful holiday.

Calling All Backyard Birders!

By Juan García

One of the pleasures of bird-watching is ... watching birds. What do they eat? How do they interact? Are some species more "territorial" than others? How do they show anxiety? Why do their feathers seem to change over the course of a year—and is there a pattern to this change? Why do some species seem to disappear for months at a time? How do they time their departures and arrivals? Do birds of the same species all sing alike? Do only males sing—or do females sing too? What do different bird sounds communicate?

Of course, you don't need a backyard to answer questions like these. But it does help to have patience and curiosity. Homeowners and long-term renters do often have the benefit of front-row seats at a small (and more or less natural) "theater." Some put out feeders. Some set up a fountain or bird-bath. Others just watch. And watch.

The upcoming *Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas* project needs these patient observers. As I explained last month, we've divided the county into a grid system, which we'll populate with skilled volunteers to gather the evidence of breeding. The idea is to cover the

whole county over a four-year period.

Marin County is blessed with a very large proportion of public and protected lands. As for private property – that will take patience and diplomacy. The Marin Audubon community can help in several ways. First, you can tell us what you're seeing in your own backyard or greenbelt by following simple instructions on our atlas website—which we're busily constructing right now. Second, you can encourage your neighbors to watch for breeding activity and report it to you—or directly to us. Third, you can watch our forthcoming website for announcements regarding Marin County's homeowners' associations. We're hoping that these groups can help us get the word out.

Feel so-so about your birding skills? Get in touch! Sometimes a few photographs are all we'll need. But if necessary, we'll send someone out who can help you figure out what you're seeing. Believe it or not, neighborhood gardens, yards, houses, and woodpiles can be home to our county's breeding birds. Keep us in mind if you see signs of life in the making.

BCDC OKAY'S SAUSALITO'S ANCHOR-OUTS PLAN BUT NOT RBRA'S

The Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) Enforcement Committee met on October 28 to evaluate the progress of compliance by the City of Sausalito and the Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) with the Committee's requirements. In accord with the Richardson Bay Special Area Plan, the Committee wants all long-term anchor-outs removed from Richardson Bay over the next five years.

Sausalito Councilwoman Joan Cox presented the city's progress meeting the Committee's direction. Sausalito has removed all but six boats from its part of the bay, and those are all occupied by experienced mariners between 60 and 80 years of age. In her review, Councilwoman Cox reported the city's progress addressing BCDC's requirements by finding slips for relocating anchor-outs to marinas, providing onshore services including showers and debris collection days, coordinating with law enforcement, efforts to find onshore housing including working with Senator McGuire's office, cooperating with the RBRA, and working with MAS to enhance and restore eelgrass. Councilwoman Cox expressed certainty that the city would be able to having all anchor-outs out of Sausalito waters in five years. Committee members found the efforts and progress to be acceptable and directed staff to prepare consent decrees for Sausalito. At a subsequent Committee meeting, issues raised for Sausalito were a requirement specifying a time between when a boat leaves and can return, timing for eelgrass monitoring and a restoration plan.

It was a different story with the RBRA. Harbormaster Curtis Havel presented the RBRA's Transition Plan which included adoption of policies addressing Legacy status, a Safe and Seaworthy Program designed to allow vessels in good shape to remain, removing some unoccupied vessels, committing to a 72-hour limit with the Harbormaster's ability to extend the time, increased enforcement, and hiring Coastal Policy Solutions to help develop a plan to protect and restore eelgrass. But the Harbormaster did not or could not commit to have all of the anchor-outs off the Bay in five years. The Committee has set five years as the deadline for anchor-outs to be out of the bay. BCDC Committee members felt

that deadline could be met in spite of the pandemic.

The Harbormaster spoke at some length about his efforts communicating with vessel occupants about the Safe and Seaworthy program, removing unoccupied vessels, and the problems he faces undertaking these tasks: a lawsuit against RBRA and threats on his life.

Committee member recommendations to the RBRA include: not allowing new boats to stay beyond 72 hours; making contact with marinas in Marin County jurisdictions (Sausalito has only communicated with marinas in Sausalito); and encouraging member jurisdictions (other cities and county) of the RBRA to help with enforcement.

Eleven members of the public spoke, with eight wanting the anchor-outs to remain. But the position of the Enforcement Committee members was clear: they rejected the idea of permanent residents in vessels in Richardson Bay even with environmentally protective moorings. They want the RBRA to commit to removing all anchor-outs from the Bay within five-year time lines and they want to see RBRA progress along the way.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

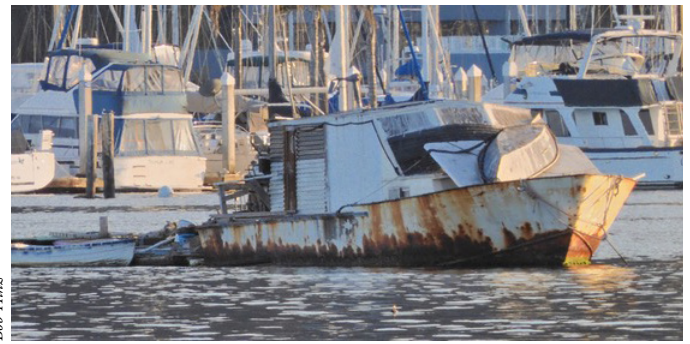
Write BCDC and support the Enforcement Committee's recommendation.

Write Marin County Supervisors, and City Councils of Mill Valley, Tiburon and Belvedere urging them to ensure enforcement support for the Harbormaster's enforcement efforts and to support their RBRA efforts to remove anchor-outs from Richardson Bay.

POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE

The Park Service's preferred Alternative for the management of the Seashore, Alternative B, needs a Consistency Determination from the California Coastal Commission to move forward—the same as the process required for the Farallon Islands Mouse Eradication Plan. Marin Audubon believes the Coastal Commission should find that Alternative B is not consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Program.

The California Coastal Act guides the Coastal Zone management of lands within



Bob Hinz

Anchor-outs on Richardson Bay eelgrass area

its jurisdiction, 1,000 yards inland from the shoreline. The Coastal Act specifies policies on which conservation and development decisions in the coastal zone are to be based. The policies address wildlife, wildlife habitats, coastal related agriculture, public access to the coast and other topics.

Coastal related agriculture is allowed, and even encouraged in the coastal zone. However, we're talking about public land and a National Park. It must be recognized that grazing of beef cattle and dairy cows degrade the land; their heavy large hooves compact soil, manure adds nutrients to the soil that favor invasive weeds; and runoff degrades stream waters. Cattle trample eggs and nests of birds that are attracted to nest in pastures. While grazed agricultural lands provide habitat for some wildlife, (a few species prefer short grass or sparsely vegetated habitat), native grassland habitat is of substantially greater value for native wildlife.

Our current concerns about Alternative B and how it will degrade the ecosystems of the Seashore, at this time, are:

- The Coastal Zone Act specifies that Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) be protected. The Management Plan and EIS do not identify ESHAs or discuss how they will be protected with buffers. There should be maps, with accompanying written description of the streams, wetlands and other habitats that qualify as ESHAs and how they would be protected and amended restored for native wildlife.
- Diversification of agriculture is allowed under Alternative B, with sheep, goats, and chickens, and growing of row crops. Farm animals will attract predators and increase degradation of runoff into streams from the confined animals. The draft lease calls for the animals to be in enclosures, but wild animals have been known to break into

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Point Reyes, continued from page 3

enclosures. We are concerned that the presence of farm animals will result in wild animals being killed either with approval of the Seashore or not. Row crops too will attract wildlife that will be vulnerable to trapping and being killed by farmers.

- Expand growing of silage, which is hay that is harvested, stored and fermented as food for livestock during the dry season. However, birds establish nests in the growing hay, only to be chopped up when the hay is harvested before the end of nesting season. The eggs and young that have been destroyed attract flocks of ravens and crows in hay fields following harvesters.
- The adequacy of future enforcement is highly uncertain. By the Seashore's own records, ranchers currently violate permitted uses. For example, the number of cattle on some ranches exceeds the number permitted, which apparently staff has been unable to control. The leases offer no compliance motivation or enforcement guidance. At the bare minimum, no new leases should be allowed until the ranches comply with current requirements, and the leases should be changed to provide clear enforcement standards, triggers and meaningful penalties for non-compliance.

Our position is that the number of ranches should be reduced by attrition. The proposed succession policy, however, ensures that agriculture will continue at its current level, even if no one in an extended family wants it, even if no neighbors want to take over the ranch and even if the demand for beef and milk continues to decline, as it has been.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Write the Coastal Commission and express your views: 455 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94904 or pointreyesmanagementplan@coastal.ca.gov. Feel free to use any of the points above.

FARALLON ISLANDS UPDATE

The latest update is that the Consistency Determination hearing before the California Coastal Commission will not take place until February or as late as April. The Commission is waiting to receive additional information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Commission wants specific

information on implementation that is not usually prepared until a project is approved. Normally the project is first approved and then the Service hires a contractor to implement the project. The first step in implementation is to prepare a detailed work plan based on the approved project. Because the Commission is asking for some details in advance, the already understaffed Service must address these implementation details themselves.

So there is still a need, and there is still time, for you to send your comments in support of the Eradication Plan consistency with the Coastal Zone management Program. We note that Assembly Bill 1788, the bill that prohibits use of rodenticides in California, has passed the legislature and is now law. AB 1788 has a specific exemption for island conservation purposes, allowing "The use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides for the eradication of nonnative invasive species inhabiting or found to be present on offshore islands in a manner that is consistent with all other applicable federal and state laws and regulations." 12978.7(2)) (Section C.2).

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Submit your comments via email to the dedicated email farallonislands@coastal.ca.gov or to the Commission's new address: 455 Mission Street, San Francisco CA 94105.

Use any of the information above. For more information see Point Blue Conservation Science's website or MAS's website, as well as the last six issues of *The Rail*.

GGBHTD MARSH RESTORATION BEGINS

Work on the four-acre marsh restoration on the Bridge District's 72 acres at the Corte Madera marshes began in late October. This project fulfills a mitigation requirement for marsh erosion caused by the ferry wakes when the District added more ferries. The mitigation requirement languished for more than 30 years. Then in 2011, Marin Audubon and Marin Baylands Advocates launched an effort to require the District to complete their mitigation responsibility. We initiated a series of meetings with the District and with the agencies that had imposed the requirement. The purpose of the project, as defined by the Army Corps of Engineers 1988 CWA Section 404 permit, is to provide habitat for the endangered Ridgway Rail which is losing habitat due to

increased erosion of the marsh edge by the ferry wakes.

The District hired consultants, developed a plan to restore tidal marsh on their diked lands, and decided where to locate the four acres of restored marsh on their 72 acres. We preferred a location closer to the Bay, but the District chose and agencies approved the northwest corner. That is also where a horizontal levee to protect the Town of Corte Madera from sea level rise would logically be located in the future.

The construction needs to be finished by the end of January to protect the Ridgway Rails during their nesting season. Construction is scheduled Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. through January 2021. During construction, portions of the northern berm and informal trail will be removed and inaccessible to the public. Construction and trail signage is posted at and around the work site. You can read more here: www.goldengate.org/corte-madera-marsh-restoration-construction-begins-october-26.

The plan involves approximately fourteen acres. Fill that was placed when the channel was first dredged for the Ferry is being excavated to allow marsh to recover, portions of existing berms will be relocated, and the excavated fill will be placed on other sections of the site.

Once the project is completed (anticipated in early 2021), recreational users will have access to a new trail on the berm around the restored marsh that will connect to the north-south trail, creating a loop similar to what existed before. The District will also plant native plants along the trail as part of the tidal marsh habitat, install benches, and trash cans.

SAN RAFAEL GENERAL PLAN 2040

San Rafael's review of the Draft General Plan 2040 will continue into the New Year. The Planning Commission is reviewing it now, and after the New Year, the Plan will move to the City Council. The Plan addresses climate change and sustainability, and has chapters on Neighborhoods and Parks and Open Space. In addition to some new policies on Canalways and trees, the Plan retains some policies on wetlands.

San Rafael residents should check out the policies in the sections on their neighborhoods to see if the policies reflect your vision for where you live. But even folks who don't live in San Rafael should pay attention if you care about the bayfront, native trees, and

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San Rafael, continued from page 4

creeks in San Rafael. We recommend commenting on certain environmental policies and programs as follows:

- **Wetlands** There are strong policies to protect wetlands but troubling exemptions. Policy C-1-2 calls for protecting wetlands unless it is “not possible or practical.” Both of these are vague, undefined exceptions. If the city wants to make exceptions, they should be defined, so the policy is clear. Otherwise the policy is open to any number of interpretations. Similarly, wetland mitigation and setback policies (50-foot setback for properties two acres or more) are fine, except they provide for waivers with testimony from experts that wetland functions would be protected. Experts can be found to say almost anything.
- **Canalways** Development should be restricted to the high elevation upland portion of this 85-acre site along

Bellam Boulevard as reflected in the current General Plan. New Policy NH 3.24 opens the door for additional development into the area that has never been filled. The Policy also provides that “Development be economically viable for the site’s owners.” Such a statement is inappropriate for a General Plan which is supposed to put forward a vision for the community.

- **Creek Protection** This is provided in Policy C-1-6 by 25-foot setbacks, and minimum 50 feet on Miller Creek, and 100 feet for properties more than 2 acres. But again, setbacks can be waived if experts say less protection would be adequate protection.
- **Native Trees** Program C-1.12B calls for development to avoid, minimize or compensate for the loss of native oak and is the only mention of native trees. Other policies/programs speak to protecting trees, but none mention native species. Native oaks, redwood,

madrone, buckeye, big leaf maple and other native trees should be protected.

- **Special Status species** These are protected by Policy C-1.13, which, however, allows for impacts with on- or off-site mitigation. Special status species should be protected in-place.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Email comments to the San Rafael Planning Commission (c/o City Clerk). Review sections of the Plan that are of interest. You can find the Plan by Googling San Rafael Plan 2040. The next Planning Commission hearing will be on December 10 when comments on all sections of the Plan will be accepted. There will be a 60-day comment period for the Plan’s Environmental Impact Report that is expected to end in January or beginning of February. It is expected the Plan and the EIR will go to the City Council for final approval in April or May.

BIRDING PROGRAMS ON ZOOM

Waterbird Theme Continues in December Webinars

Our Wednesday evening Webinar series continues with two additional Migratory Waterbird programs in December. Consistent with our earlier schedule, each of these free programs will be scheduled from 7:00 to 8:30 PM and begin with a one-hour program to be followed by a time for questions and discussion.

How to Register: A separate registration is required for each program. Register on our new MAS website at www.marinaudubon.org where these programs are listed under the “Field Trips” section. At the top of each program listing, click on the Zoom program link, which will take you to the Webinar Registration Page. After registering you will receive a confirmation as well as two reminders prior to the program.

We are happy to report that most webinars will now be livestreamed on the MAS Facebook page ([facebook.com/marinaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/marinaudubon)). So if you forget to sign up in advance or decide you’d like to join the program once it has started, you can do that. Additionally, if you miss the entire presentation, you can view it afterwards in the same location. Eventually we hope to also make these recordings available via Dropbox on the MAS website.

SANDHILL CRANE POPULATIONS IN CALIFORNIA’S CENTRAL VALLEY

Wednesday, December 2, 2020
7 PM to 8:30 PM
With Gary Ivey, Ph.D

While only occasionally seen in Marin, both breeding and wintering Sandhill Cranes can be found in greater abundance in California’s Central Valley and the broader Pacific Flyway. All things Sandhill Crane related will be covered in this program: their status, their life history, migration routes, and breeding areas of the three subspecies that use our state. Dr. Ivey will also discuss where and when you can enjoy them during their winter season.

Dr. Ivey is an undisputed expert who has concentrated his work for over 35 years on waterbirds, waterfowl, and wetland conservation. Sandhill Cranes were the focus of both his Master’s Thesis and Ph.D. He currently serves as a Research Associate with the International Crane Foundation (saving cranes and the places where cranes dance!) and works to further conservation of cranes, Trumpeter Swans, and other waterbirds in Western North America.

REFUGE — A FILM FROM GRAY LODGE WILDLIFE AREA

December 9, 2020
7 PM to 8:30 PM
With Director Mark Lipman

We invite you to immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of this dawn-to-dusk portrait of the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area in Gridley, located between Sacramento and

Chico. When he first visited Gray Lodge in 2011, Director Mark Lipman was not a birder but was deeply touched by the beauty of the place and the symphony of bird sounds. On the night of our program, Mark will briefly introduce his film and be available for the Q&A session afterwards.

Mark created this beautiful film and sound recording over a period of three winters. His program is vastly different from our previous webinars and departs from the familiar classroom-type learning presentation. Rather, it offers an aesthetic, meditative experience that we hope you will enjoy as you head into the busy holiday season.

This forty-five minute film is intentionally slow paced with no narration, although we may have a birding expert quietly identify the various birds as they appear on the screen. (To access a Bird List in advance of the program, do a search for *Birds of the Gray Lodge and Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Areas*. Then you can bird your way through the film.) We recommend that you view this film on your largest available screen as Mark has created a three-channel video with surround sound, and viewing would be optimal on a large screen.

Mark has worked as a documentary filmmaker for over thirty-five years, exploring a wide range of subjects from domestic violence to human sexuality to affordable housing and community organizing. His films have been broadcast nationally on public television and won numerous awards. *Refuge* is his first foray into video installations and the natural world.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

SALT MARSH HARVEST MOUSE STUDY

Following the approvals by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service, Marin Audubon has given permission for a non-invasive survey to test a new method for surveying Salt Marsh Harvest Mice (SMHM). Surveys done the traditional way are time-consuming to carry out and disturbing to the marshes and the harvest mice. Traps to capture the mice must be set and visited daily to determine the species and release the mice. This trapping method is expensive and complicated, and few such surveys have been done in Marin that we are aware of in recent years.

The to-be-tested non-invasive method involves setting open bait stations that will reduce habitat disturbance because they require fewer field visits to maintain, and they would cause no stress to the mice. They will just pass through, eat the bait, and leave their droppings.

The boxes only have to be checked every few weeks. Scat is removed and genetically identified at a UC Davis lab to determine the species. It is anticipated that the easily obtained, genetically verifiable material will significantly increase understanding of current range of SMHM.

So you may see folks tending traps at two of our marshes, Tiscornia in San Rafael and Triangle Marsh in Corte Madera. There are historic records of SMHM at these marshes and that is why they were chosen.

The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse is a federally and state listed endangered species that inhabits tidal marshes in the San Francisco and San Pablo Bays.

BAHIA

We appreciate the Novato Sanitary District for allowing us to remove a large patch of the non-native plant stinkwort (*Dittrichia*) on their property adjacent to MAS property at Bahia. Our contract crew from On Point Land Management, along with our volunteer Lowell Sykes, removed what amounted to be 10 large garbage bags of this highly invasive plant. We were concerned that with so many plants so close to our property, the tiny stinkwort seeds, would blow over onto our property. *Dittrichia* is a fairly recently arrived invasive plant that has an unusual pattern of coming to seed in the fall.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Our volunteer days remain on the schedule. Staying a healthy distance from each other on our volunteer days is easy, so don't let that concern keep you away! A little outdoor physical activity is good for a person's mood, and if it does good for the environment, it is doubly good.

It is planting season and we plan to expand the sheet mulched area at Triangle Marsh and plant later. We have no planting planned this season for the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve expansion project, so we will continue to remove the non-native competitors for our thousands of native plants. Two perennial species, bristly ox-tongue and Harding grass, are still the main problems.

Act locally and join us on a workday. We all make a difference.

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: December 5, January 2

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

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: December 12, January 9

Meet at the end of Industrial Way.

For up-to-date information, 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, Rich Cimino, Brett Elebash, Bob Hinz, Gerry and Martha Jarocki, Ed Nute, Lowell Sykes, Doug Waterman

THANK YOU, DONORS

Mariah Baird, Marion Brennan, Ginja Brilliant, Robert and Sarah Chilvers, William Clarke, Richard Cimino, Wayne Cooper, John Dahl, Heather English, Lewis Fredrickson, Dr. Michael Freeman, Lizabeth Gluck, Harry Hicks, Douglas Howell, Ruth Jacobson, Jo Kreider, Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission, Bonnie Marmor, Sarah Martin, Sandra Massen, Nancy Parks McCarthy, Patricia Merrill, Claudine Minchella, Eric Nickel, Philip Nonneman, Melville Owen, Anne Pearl, Lynn Perry, David Quady, Marianna Riser, Dr. Jill Sideman, Frances Steele, Jeanne Tymstra, Valorie Van Dahl, Douglas Wallace, Doug and Joyce Waterman

It is a low growing dark green plant with spiky leaves that can be seen in spring sprouting up along the freeways and other disturbed areas.

We are also happy that the Sanitary District disposed of the 10 bags of removed *Dittrichia*. Thank you Novato Sanitary District!

After removing the *Dittrichia*, On Point Land Management crew watered the plants they had planted for us on the Bahia levees last winter.

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE RESTORATION SITE

Our stalwart crew Martha and Jerry Jarocki, Lowell Sykes, Doug Waterman, Rich Cimino, Dave Chenoweth, and Bob Hinz conducted what we hope is our last watering day of the season on November 1. This is the sixth watering day of the year. With the recent rains, hopefully our watering is over for the season.

TISCORNIA MARSH UPDATE

It's been a busy month for our Tiscornia Marsh Restoration and Sea Level Rise Adaptation project. We had our first public meeting for the community to learn about the current project design for restoring tidal wetlands, and improving the levee to increase flood protection for residents of the Canal and adjacent communities. One hundred and nine attendees viewed a video produced by youth from the Multicultural Center of Marin (MCM); Chris Choo, Marin County Watershed Planner, spoke about sea level rise; Paul Jensen, San Rafael Planning Director and Cory Bytof, San Rafael Sustainability Coordinator, spoke to the city's efforts to provide flood protection; and ESA engineer Dane Behrens presented the most recent plan for the marsh restoration and sea level rise adaptation. Unfortunately the connection was unstable and the interpretation feature of MCM's Zoom account did not function smoothly. In spite of that, the information provided by the presenters was excellent and the participation of the community was impressive.

We've had our initial CEQA planning meeting with the city staff, and engineers and planners from ESA who will be preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). We expect the scoping meeting to be held in the next few months. As we go to press, the description of the project in the EIR is being formulated.

MARIN BIRDLOG: OCTOBER 2020

By Noah Arthur

October is the second half of fall vagrant season in Marin, and though less predictable than September, it usually produces a diverse grab bag of rarities from all points of the compass. This time around it featured very few eastern passerines and sparrows, but a rather unusual late push of vagrant shorebirds.

The month kicked off with a typical October rarity in the form of a **Vesper Sparrow** at Rodeo Lagoon on the 1st (WL). On the 2nd, a pelagic outing at Cordell Bank picked up a **Short-tailed Shearwater** (LC). Mid to late fall is prime time for **Tropical Kingbirds** in Marin, and a very wet and dejected one was seen at Drakes on the 2nd (KP) by birders chasing the persisting **Great Crested Flycatcher** found in late September. Another **Tropical Kingbird** was found by kayak along Bolinas Lagoon on the 4th (DH).

A whopping 13 **Black Swifts** flew over Hawk Hill on the 4th (KO). A red bottlebrush—one of the best flowering trees for fall birding—produced a **Baltimore Oriole** in Bel Marin Keys on the 7th (LC), only the 2nd record ever for East Marin. Also on the 7th, a **Ruff** was at the Valley Ford wetlands (RC). Another major rarity came on the 8th in the form of a well-photographed **American Golden-plover** at Kehoe Beach (EE & KC). The late shorebird spree continued with a **Baird's Sandpiper** on the 8th at Bolinas Lagoon (AD).

Hawk Hill produced another rare interior migrant on the 10th, a fly-by **Lawrence's Goldfinch** (EG), followed by another lone **Black Swift** on the 14th (JR). A subtle fall **Mourning Warbler** was at Green Gulch in Muir Beach on the 11th (LC & LS). A **Tropical Kingbird** at Drakes Beach on the 12th (JP) may have been a new individual. Also on the 14th, a **Painted Bunting** was seen by a few observers at a private residence in Bolinas (GG).

Two nice interior rarities came on the 15th, a **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at Rodeo Lagoon (WL) and a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** caught at the Palomarin banding station. This was followed by another **Lawrence's** at Bald Hill on the 16th (CC).

The female **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** returned for a second season on her winter territory at James Black Circle in Marinwood on the 17th (JW).

This fall's surprising late-season push of rare shorebirds continued on the 18th with a juvenile **Bar-tailed Godwit** at Limantour Beach (LN), incredibly followed up with a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** at Valley Ford on the 19th (MB). Echoing the beginnings of a big flight of this species in the East and Midwest, an early **Evening Grosbeak** flew over Hawk Hill on the 18th (EG). Also on the 18th, a **Philadelphia Vireo** was at the Inverness tennis court (RM). Very rare anywhere in Marin but Las Gallinas, a **Least Bittern** was at Scottsdale Pond in Novato on the 19th (BB).

A **White-winged Dove** was at the McClure's Beach dairy ranch on the 21st (MS & LS). Exceedingly late was a **Swainson's Thrush** at San Geronimo Golf Course also on the 21st (BB). Everybody's favorite **Black Vulture** floated over an auto parts store parking lot in San Rafael on the 22nd (RM).

Another or the same **American Golden Plover** appeared at Abbotts Lagoon on the 24th (JP), and a **Red-throated Pipit** was near Abbotts the next day (LC & CC). Also on the 25th, a **Vesper Sparrow** was in Summer Valley (LS). An even rarer find at Abbotts on the 27th was a **Snow Bunting** (SH).

Another **Tropical Kingbird** showed up at Rodeo Lagoon on the 28th (WL & DW). The month ended with two back-to-back **Sage Thrashers**, one at Rodeo on the 30th (WL), and another along Pierce Pt. Rd. near McClure's Beach on the 31st (TF).

Observers and Acronyms **WL:** William Legge, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **KP:** Karen Pinckard, **DH:** Diana Humple, **KO:** Kurt Ongman, **RC:** Reef Comer, **EE:** Elias Elias, **KC:** Kaia Colestock, **AD:** Adam Donkin, **EG:** Eli Gross, **JP:** Jeff Perkins, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **JR:** Jane Rudebusch, **GG:** Geoffrey Geupel, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **JW:** Joyce Waterman, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **MB:** Mario Balitbit, **RM:** Ron Mallory, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **RM:** Ravan Moezzi, **SH:** Steve Howell, **DW:** David Wiechers, **TF:** Teale Fristoe



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Lawrence's Finch

New Charitable Rules Promote Giving

You can get a tax break for donating \$300 to MAS or other non-profit. It is now easy for donors to be sure of your tax savings while benefitting from increased charitable deduction for qualified contributions. The CARES Act now allows taxpayers to take a charitable donation if you donate up to \$300 and do not itemize on your 2020 taxes. You just have to opt in on your 2020 tax returns.

And there is no limit to the deductions you can take for charitable donations if you itemize your contributions, according to Section 2205. Previously you could only deduct up to a maximum of 60% of your adjusted gross income via charitable contributions. Under the new guidelines, 100% of your donation is now tax deductible. For example, if your donation last year was \$500, then 100% of your donation will now be tax deductible (where previously just \$300 was deductible). If your tax-deductible income is \$500,000 in 2020 and you give \$500,000 in charitable donations, you won't have to pay any income tax.

Information from Morgan Simon, Forbes

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Glen Tepke, phase.com/gepke

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

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