

Change in Bird Status in the Central Valley

By John Sterling



John Sterling

Bald Eagle

The January 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.

John will discuss 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 the 1940s. Loss of habitats, creation of new habitats, reduction of ranges, invasions of new species and other topics will be explored as we reconcile the fact that more species are detected now than prior to the book's publication.

John is a professional ornithologist and has worked for the Smithsonian Institution, US Forest Service, among other organizations since 1981. He has traveled throughout California learning about local bird distribution and is an authority on that state's avifauna. In 2015 he set the California's new big year record with 501 species. John currently has his own company, Sterling Wildlife Biology, specializing in tours, birding classes, research and environmental consulting.

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11 7:30 PM

Marin's Booming Bird Populations

By Roger Harris

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Speak Out for Management of Point Reyes National Seashore for Natural Resources



The Ledger Dispatch

Point Reyes wildlife face challenges from local agriculture.

The approval process for the Management Plan seems to be on a fast track. The Management Plan is scheduled for a Consistency Determination hearing before the California Coastal Commission on January 14. The Regional Water Quality Control Board will also have to approve their Plan.

Changes have been made in the Final Management Plan, EIS and related documents. The Succession Plan has been changed so that if family members "do not wish to continue in agriculture or lessees have not consistently met performance standards, the NPS would consider applications from other leaseholders or Park ranch workers operating in the Ranchland Sub Zone. "If there were still no interest, the NPS would "pursue a public process to identify an appropriate future use of the land." So there is a chance one or more ranch properties could be restored to nature, but the chance is probably slim. MAS's position is that when no family members wish to continue in ranching, all or most of the ranches should be returned to natural habitats.

In our review so far, there are many areas of potential impact that have not been addressed or are not addressed adequately. Approval of this Management Plan and EIS is premature and should be delayed until the analyses are more complete. Areas of inadequacy include:

1. Analysis of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas. There is no evaluation of streams and wetlands as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESHAs). The Plan admits impacts to Coho, Chinook and Steelhead, stream water quality and sedimentation would occur. "Nearly all streams potentially occupied by salmonids would be excluded from grazing." How many miles are included in "nearly"?

ESHAS should be identified and how they and the endangered and special status species that depend on them will be impacted should be addressed.

2. Analysis of the potential adverse impacts of diversification. Farm animals (chickens, goats, sheep), row crops and continuing silage production will all attract native wildlife: fox, bobcat, coyote, mountain lion, ravens, crows and other wildlife to prey on the animals and nest among the crops. Harvesting equipment destroys eggs and nestlings and there is no requirement that harvesting be done after nesting season. A lease condition requires farm animals to be housed in shelters but structures are not a foolproof protection. The lease/permit section 12.1 states, "Except for ranching, diversification, residential and maintenance activities authorized in the ROA, Lessees shall not engage in any other activities that impact wildlife ..." and "...on a case by case basis, and at its sole discretion, Lessor may evaluate incidents of depredation and choose a course of action." This acknowledges that the diversified activities will impact wildlife. There is no certain penalty or certainty that NPS will even consider depredation.

3. Impacts on water resources. Impacts of water use on ecosystem resources

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

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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)

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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

We're pleased to welcome Doug Waterman to a new position on our Board, newsletter editor. Doug is an experience editor and writer. His day job is producing a TV series. Doug has been on our Board for two years during which he has served as Speaker Series chair. We look forward to working with him in the position of our Newsletter Editor. Doug Wallace, who served as *The Rail* editor for the last four months, has accepted an appointment on the Restoration Authority (which distributed Measure AA funds) Oversight Committee. Doug was informed his position on our Board is a potential conflict. MAS has a Measure AA grant for Tiscornia and will probably be seeking additional Measure AA grant for our Tiscornia project.

We're in the process of getting out our end-of-year appeal letters. As you know, we ask for your support every year at this time. This is the main support for our operating costs, whereas our spring appeal supports our properties. We recognize that this is a difficult time for many, but give what you can. Your generous gift will be an important help to get us through the coming year and enable us to continue our programs and activities.

We're sorry to have cancelled the Southern Marin, Pt. Reyes and Cheep Thrills Christmas Counts. We didn't want to violate the governor's stay-at-home mandate and possibly put

participants at risk. Southern Marin is more populated than other parts of the county, has many trails that are well-used in comparison with other parts of the county. Our intent was to keep everyone safe. We hope folks who decide to do counts on their own stay safe.

Our Board has decided to send notices of our monthly activities to our members and others on our email list. If we don't have your email address and you would like to receive these and other notices, send a request through our website on the Join Our Email List form. If you don't want to receive these notices, please let us know that also. You can send us messages of any sort on the Contact Us form on the About Us page on our website.

So here we are at the end of 2020. It's been a downer year, but there is still a lot to be thankful for. I'm grateful that we now have an approved vaccine and, come January 20, we'll have a more stable, thoughtful and environmentally sensitive administration. I'm also thankful that we have a strong board engaged in bringing you education, conservation and habitat restoration programs. A new parcel has been donated recently and a Breeding Bird Atlas update has been initiated. It's ending as a good year. And we've even had rain.

We hope you're all having a healthy and happy holiday and are staying safe.

An Auspicious Start

By Juan García

The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas project is underway! As of New Year's Day, we have opened the books on breeding records – and will keep them open until the last days of the breeding season of 2024. If all goes well by that later date, we shall have fielded scores of volunteers from all over the region with the goal of providing to posterity an accurate, multi-faceted answer to this question: How have things changed for our breeders since Shuford published the first breeding bird atlas for the county in 1993.

The stakes are high. No one would argue that the health of bird populations alone tells us all we need to know about our lands and waters. But what makes a study like ours so valuable for the conservation of wild nature is the relative transparency of the nexus between humans, plant communities, and birds. If conducted with forethought and meticulous attention, projects like ours can become powerful tools in the hands of conservationists. And how often does an opportunity come along to achieve a sweeping, comprehensive panorama of what's out there—and how it's doing?

As it turns out, over the next few years, we shall witness a highly significant convergence of investigations among the hills and dells of Marin's topography. While our volunteers are combing their chosen patches for evidence of breeding and nesting, teams of field botanists will be mapping the vegetation—the complex plant associations—found there. We are working in tandem with this concurrent initiative to give depth to our own findings. This will result in an innovative effort to link avian breeding behavior with the findings of the Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program organized by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, locally under the auspices of One Tam.

Our hope is that through alliances of this kind we can establish new baselines against which future studies may make comparisons, just as Shuford did for the distribution of Marin County's breeding birds in the last three decades of the twentieth century. We are eager to learn what we can over the next four years, and to establish an accurate record of our findings for the use of those who come after us.

Point Reyes

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are unknown. According to the EIS the annual water consumption for beef and dairy ranches totals 32 million gallons to 77 million gallons per year. A huge quantity of water is lost to streams. And the quantity of water diverted will increase with more farm animals and more home stay rentals. Crops are not allowed to be irrigated. What are the adverse impacts on ecosystem resources of removing this massive quantity of water?

The Lease (Section 2.4) requires monitoring of the use of appropriated water. There should be more information about water rights. Is there a limit to the quantity that can be diverted? Is there a provision that ensures the water needs of native wildlife, including endangered fish and frogs, are met? What about dry years, is any water required to be left for resources? How will water use be considered when issuing permits for grazing and diversified activities?

4. Impact on Tule Elk. Elk would be limited in number and pushed to locations away from grazed areas which appears to be to protect four specific ranches. The NPS should provide a clear movement corridor for elk and other wildlife so they can use the wilderness area. Reason(s) that is not possible should be discussed.

5. Monitoring and enforcement inadequate. The Ranch Operations Agreement and the Lease/Permit require one annual meeting from NPS staff and one by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff, and also filing plans and reports. Additional site visits are provided to evaluate the number of cattle/cows and monitor residual dry matter on fields. Compliance with NRCS standards and mitigation measures primarily depends on voluntary compliance. NPS's own reports in the EIS show non-compliance with required limits on the number of cattle.

- The Lease language provides that if Lessees are found to be defaulting on the conditions of their lease, NPS "may" revoke the activity and fine \$100 a day if the Lessee fails

and instead of revoking the lease, do something other than what the Lessee did.

- To ensure effective compliance, a Plan with clear standards, and consistent monitoring enforcement with penalties, is needed, and should be developed and presented for public review. Five new staff persons are estimated to be needed to implement the Management Plan. Funding for two staff has been approved. They should be dedicated to natural resource protection.

In conclusion, it is clear that a primary intent of the Management Plan is to continue ranching, the vast majority of which are beef cattle. The vast majority of ranches are raising beef cattle. Of the 28 ranches, only six are dairy ranches. This is a time when there is less demand for milk products and the recommendation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Land, to save our planet, calls for dietary changes based on plant based coarse grains, fruits, vegetables, nests, and seeds.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Send comments expressing your opposition to the California Coastal Commission: pointreyesmanagement-plan@coastal.ca.gov or 455 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94904. Use any of the points above to oppose or ask for additional review of the Plan. Put in your own words and submit before January 14.

INPUT SOUGHT ON ADAPTATION PROJECTS FOR TWO MARSHES

Corte Madera's Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Plan

Corte Madera's Climate Change Plan is a call to action to adapt to climate change. Funded by a Caltrans grant, the planning has taken place over two years and is based on input from their Resilience Advisory Group (of which MAS is a part) and from the community at two public meetings. The consulting firm, Adaptation International, managed the project and the San Francisco Estuary Institute provided technical and scientific information.

The Plan addresses adaptation to anticipated impacts of climate change (increased fire and flooding): Townwide, Shoreline, Hillsides and Central Corte Madera. Of course our particular interest is in the

shoreline with its extensive tidal marsh habitats, endangered species and MAS's properties along Paradise Drive, at the end of Industrial Way, in-bay tide lots at the mouth of San Clemente Creek, and at the end of Channel Drive. A large part of the Town is built on former tidal marsh and currently lies in the floodplain. It is considered a Special Flood Hazard Area by FEMA.

The Shoreline discussion recognizes the importance of the extensive marshes on the Corte Madera bayfront, to endangered and special status species, and it addresses residential properties in Mariner Cove and Marina Village, communities built on tidal marsh in the 1950s, and the Lucky Drive area. While some of these areas already experience flooding, the Town recognizes it must plan for the increased flooding that will result from sea level rise (SLR).

Three strategies for adapting to SLR flooding are presented: 1) Protection (some kind of engineered structure to keep water out) such as levees and sea walls. 2) Accommodation (living with water) includes modifications to existing structures, raising structures or roads, floodproofing retrofits, as well as zoning, land use designations that limit building to where it is safe to build, and overlay zones which are intended as alerts to specific conditions; and 3) Retreat (getting out of the water) setting the stage for relocation/removal of people and infrastructure out of hazard areas. Various actions are presented under each strategy.

Two main alternatives were developed to protect homes from SLR flooding 1) use nature based methods as much as possible, and 2) maintain current land uses for as long as possible keeping in mind the increasing vulnerability.

Measures discussed to protect the major access corridors along Lucky Drive and Paradise Drive, and the neighborhoods of Marina Village and Mariner Cove, are considered along with maintaining the adjacent critical marsh habitat:

- A levee or sheetpile wall with nature based enhancements that would block high tides from San Clemente Creek – The levee could be constructed along the inner (south) or outer (north) banks of San Clement Creek. The inner alignment would be in the back yards of houses where they would impair residents' views. A tide gate across the mouth of the creek would

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Input Sought on Two Marsh Projects

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be needed for both locations, but with the inner alignment it could be some distance up stream. This would have substantially fewer ecological impacts.

With the outer or north levee alignment, the tide gate would have to be located at the mouth of the creek where it would block off the tides for the entire creek when closed. The gate would be closed to block floodwaters, infrequently initially. But as time goes by and the tides get higher, the gate would need to be closed more and more, and eventually altogether. The entire ecology of the creek would be changed from a tidal marsh to a pond, endangered and many other species would be lost as their habitats are lost. North bank alternative would have significantly greater ecological impacts.

Three levee designs are presented for along San Clemente Creek:

- A traditional earthen levee or light-weight fill levee with 8-foot crest and 112-foot base. With a lightweight material core, the potential for settlement would decrease substantially;
- A block wall which could also be a lighter weight and have less potential settlement;
- A sheetpile wall with supporting fill which would have less settlement potential than a block wall.

Strategies for the North-south levee are similar and include flood protection that follows the current alignment or are built on either side of it. Levee hardening with an ecotone slope are being considered. Three designs for this levee are also being considered:

- Earthen fill levee or a levee constructed with lightweight fill;
- A block wall connected by geogrid; and
- A sheetpile wall with earthen or light weight fill for support.

All design alternatives have a 20' wide crest.

In all designs, a coarse beach is shown along the outer marsh edge of the Muzzi Marsh, Heerdt Marsh and our property at Triangle Marsh, to prevent further erosion and loss of marsh. Considering that erosion rates along the face of the marshes have averaged 0.5-2m/yr over the last 25 years, a coarse beach is proposed along the edge of the Muzzi, Heerdt and Triangle Marshes.

To address the conflict between conserving tidal marsh for today and provide for marsh into the future as sea level rises, a horizontal levee is proposed. It would only be in locations that are upland fill or where the marsh is degraded—not in locations where there is marsh.

An ecotone slope is a nature-based adaptation with a very gradual grade that provides transition zone habitat for marsh species during high tide, stabilize shorelines and provides space for marshes to move inland as sea level rises. Some other examples of nature-based adaptations are tidal marshes, submerged aquatic vegetation (like eelgrass) and coarse beaches, all of which protect shorelines.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Go to <https://cortemaderaadapts.org/draft-plan> to access the plan or individual chapters, and to find out more and about project decision points and costs. The plan has multiple choice evaluation questions for you to express your views, and you can add your own comments.

Evolving Shorelines Project, Bothin Marsh, Mill Valley

The Bothin Marsh Evolving Shoreline Project focuses on maintaining public access and the tidal marsh in the face of sea level rise. Project sponsors are One Tam partners—The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and Marin County Parks with the Parks Conservancy providing fundraising and outreach. The conceptual design is partially funded by the California State Coastal Conservancy and the Marin Community Foundation through the Advancing Nature-Based Adaptation Solutions grant program. The Bothin Marsh Open Space Preserve is owned and managed by Marin County Parks.

The current Bothin alignment bisects the marsh, adversely affecting the marsh and limiting its use by birds and other wildlife that depend on the marsh. Wildlife avoid proximity to people, so they don't use marsh habitat immediately adjacent to trails and walkways when people are on them. And this path is very well used. A levee bisecting the marsh also means tidal interchange and sediment flow are blocked. It is also too low to withstand the increase of 10 inches of sea level rise over the next 10 years that is likely to occur. Three concepts for marsh adaptation, each with a 20' public access path, are presented:

Concept 1 is an elevated levee constructed in place by building up the existing earthen embankment. The current levee would be raised to accommodate SLR, expand the public path, and lengthen and widen the bridges to allow for restoration of tidal action to the south. Although tidal interchange would improve, it would be limited; more marsh would have to be filled because the base of the levee would have to be widened to accommodate the increased height and wider path.

Concept 2 is a causeway elevated on pilings along the existing alignment. The causeway-on-pilings improves current conditions because it would allow for increased tidal interchange between the north and south marsh and expanded marsh vegetation, provide for connection with Coyote Creek and for fluvial sediment delivery to the marsh. And this concept would continue to bisect the marsh. Impacts of people on the trail would continue even though the trail would be higher. The cost of constructing on pilings would be very high.

Concept 3 realigns large segments of the path out of the marsh, along the shoreline. This alignment allows for full hydraulic and ecological connection between the Bay, creek and marsh. For travelers, it provides more connectivity to Tam Junction and offers a different view of the marsh path than on the current alignment. The wider trail would be suspended over the marsh from the shoreline so that some marsh could continue.

Clearly Concept 3 is the preferred alternative. The current alignment has long been a concern. It was the alignment for the railroad but, now that we know better, the access corridor should be moved to the more environmentally benign location along the shoreline.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The county is looking for input. Go to the project website at www.one-tam.org/our-work/bothin-marsh to learn more about the project, view the designs for the different concepts, and register your view on the Adaptation Concepts Survey multiple choice questions. The survey will be up until the end of January. We urge you to provide your comments.

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Conservation

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GGBHTD MITIGATION MARSH RESTORATION UPDATE

Most of the four-acre marsh restoration at the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District's 72 acres on the Corte Madera bayfront has been completed. The four acres of fill that were placed when the ferry terminal facility was constructed has been moved to other sections of the 72 acres. The material came from dredging the channel for the ferry access to the shoreline. The rest of the project continues. It involves planting upland transition zone vegetation on approximately 10 acres where the

Golden Gate Bridge Highway Transportation District



GGBHTD restoration: new channel excavated to connect the new marsh to the larger channel from Corte Madera's pump station

excavated material was placed. The job will probably be finished in a week or so, but certainly by the end of the year.

E-BIKE USE ON MMWD LANDS UPDATE

At their December 15 Board meeting, and after hearing comments from 40 speakers, the Marin Municipal Water District Board (MMWD) of Directors decided not to take the staff recommended action on E-bikes at this time, but to refer the issue to their Watershed Committee for further review and consideration.

The staff recommendation was to approve an interim special use permit to allow E-bikes on District lands for a period of three years. Right now E-bikes are not allowed under MMWD regulations, but they are being used anyway. The intent was for the

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BIRDING PROGRAMS ON ZOOM

Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas Re-study Launches With January-February Webinars

Our Wednesday evening Webinar series continues with three programs covering our newly adopted breeding bird atlas project. 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.

While extensive behind-the-scenes planning for the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas II sponsored by Marin Audubon has been going on since April 2020, the upcoming webinars described below will launch this exciting and important project into full public view for the first time. These programs will give Bay Area birders along with those more generally interested in conservation issues an opportunity to learn about past breeding bird atlas projects and other bird population surveys as well as some of the background information regarding our upcoming study beginning in the spring of 2021. Specific training sessions for those who sign on as participants will be held on later dates.

Register now for these important programs. We hope you will participate as a citizen scientist in this worthwhile project and/or by making a donation to support this collaborative work in support of Marin birds. Watch for more information on these topics in the weeks ahead.

How to Register: A separate registration is required for each program. Register on our new Marin Audubon 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 Marin Audubon Facebook page ([facebook.com/marinaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/marinaudubon)). That means 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, no problem. 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 on the Marin Audubon website via Dropbox.

MARIN'S BREEDING BIRDS (HOW WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW)

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

7 PM to 8:30 PM

With Dave DeSante, PhD

By way of welcoming the new re-study of the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas, Dave DeSante offers his reflections on the various sources of evidence we have for the birds who nest here. He'll talk about the importance of the study of avian populations, the Breeding Bird Survey sponsored by the US Geological Survey, and the MAPS bird banding program organized by the Institute for Bird Populations. An engaging raconteur, Dave will offer a rare-bird's-eye-view that will interest birders of all levels.

David F. DeSante received his PhD from Stanford University in 1973 with a groundbreaking study of 'misorientation' in bird migration. Over the course of a long career, he has been interested in population trends and phenology in North American birds. In 1989, he founded the Institute for Bird Populations, a non-profit devoted to the conservation of North American birds. He is widely published, writing both for popular and scholarly audiences. He resides in Forest Knolls.

NEW BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

7 PM to 8:30 PM

With Atlas Coordinator Juan García

As of this month, the Marin Audubon Society is launching its new breeding bird

atlas project. Project leader Juan García will tell us how we got here—and where we're headed. He'll review the history of the original project (resulting in the first atlas, published in 1993), describe the goals of the new atlas, and discuss how the volunteers will gather and store data. Listeners will not only learn how the current project is organized but get a preview of key innovations that will be introduced in the new study.

Juan F. García is an independent contractor serving as overall Atlas Coordinator. He grew up on the coastal bend of south Texas, where he began studying birds. A former college professor, he has conducted field surveys for a wide variety of non-profits involved in avian conservation. He has been a Bay Area resident for many years, living presently in Point Reyes Station.

MAPPING THE BREEDING BIRDS OF MARIN

Wednesday, February 3, 2021

7 PM to 8:30 PM

With William Wiskes

Like every atlas project, the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas will feature, at its core, a series of maps that track the distribution of our nesting birds. Join us for a fascinating exploration of high-tech map-making with William Wiskes. William will talk about the pleasures and pains of creating maps for a modern breeding bird atlas. He will focus especially on three classes of maps that he is developing for the Marin County BBA project: conventional paper (printable) maps, an interactive web-map, and a phone-based app that volunteers can use in the field.

William Wiskes, GIS Specialist, is the staff cartographer of the new Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas. He is currently a master's degree candidate at San Francisco State University. An excellent field ornithologist, William has worked on numerous projects in conservation biology, including, among others, field studies of raptors, Pacific Wren, and Black Rail.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After a dry early rainy season, it is planting time at Triangle Marsh. We have three native species to put in the ground, and the mid-December rain might be just enough to allow us to do it. At the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve expansion project the native plants are doing well, but the largest nonnative invasive species can still be trouble. At this time of year bristly ox-tongue and Harding grass are the two most obvious problem species that we are working to control.

Our volunteer days remain on the schedule. Staying a healthy distance apart 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.

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

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: January 2, February 6

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: January 9, February 13

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 at Bahia, contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

THANK YOU, STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

AmeriCorp, Debbie Ablin, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Linda Nicoletto, Ed Nute, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

THANK YOU, DONORS

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HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

A HUGE THANKS TO AMERICORP

Marin Audubon was pleasantly surprised in November to get an offer from an AmeriCorp crew to help us with our habitat stewardship work at Bahia.

They are a crew of nine young adults from nine different states serving in the AmeriCorp NCCC Pacific Region who are currently being hosted by the Novato Baylands Stewards, a habitat restoration group founded and run by Christina McWhorter. They live, work and travel together as a 'pod' and are periodically tested for the Corona virus in order to keep each other and those that they work with safe.

We took them up on their offer and are we glad that we did!

They arrived in full uniform—including masks—and did a tremendous job of sheet mulching a sizable patch of invasive Harding grass and planting several native creeping



Jude Stalker

AmeriCorp's crew of volunteers at Bahia in November.

wild rye plants over a previously sheet mulched area.

They were the most enthusiastic, curious, considerate and hard-working group of volunteers that I have ever worked with and it was truly a pleasure to spend the day with them.

We owe them a huge heap of gratitude for their help and wish them all the best of luck in their future endeavors.

E-bikes on MMWD Land

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District to gather information on E-bike use on District lands, prepare a Watershed Recreation Plan and hire two additional rangers during the three year period.

Among the speakers comments were that the staff recommendation was premature, was not heard by the Water Committee nor was there adequate notice, concerns about impacts on wildlife, public safety, and many folks concerned about losing E-bikes that are important to their recreation and health, and others who have had unsafe experiences with E-bikes on trails.

If you are interested in this issue, pay attention to MMWD's website for scheduling at the Watershed Committee.

FARALLONES UPDATE

The Farallon Islands Mouse Eradication Project is still on track for a hearing in spring—could be as long as April. So there is still a need, and there is still time, for you to send comments stating your support for the Eradication Plan's consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Program. Here are points you can use:

- The goal of the eradication is restoration of the unique ecosystem of the Farallon Islands.
- The choice is clear: save the non-native mice that are decimating the islands' indigenous and rare species or save the islands' indigenous species. These include nesting Leach's and Ashy Storm Petrel, Farallon

Arboreal Salamander, and Farallon Camel Cricket.

- Complete eradication is essential. If even a few mice are left, the infestation will simply recur.
- The only alternative is a carefully planned one-time application, in two phases, of a rodenticide. Similar programs have been used to successfully remove non-native rodents on 700 islands throughout the world with no significant environmental effects or harm to non-target species.
- Even the person who developed the birth control chemical for rats has admitted that such a chemical for mice does not exist and that temporary sterilization only reduces, but does not eradicate, populations. Total eradication is the only viable alternative.

In case you missed it or would like to refresh your memory, here is a link for our Farallones Zoom program presented last summer www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXd1Fw9XIAI&feature=youtu.be.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Send your comments 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 points above or from the Zoom presentation. For more information see Point Blue Conservation Science's website or MAS's website, as well as the last six issues of The Rail.

MARIN BIRDLOG: NOVEMBER 2020

By Noah Arthur

Starting in late fall and fading into early winter, November produces a randomized hodgepodge of rare birds in Marin. This month started out slow, with many continuing rarities but nothing much new in the first few days. Unusually late was a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Las Gallinas on the 3rd (MD), joined by two **Cliff Swallows** on the 5th (GP).

A **Snow Bunting** at Abbotts Lagoon on the 4th (LC) proved to be a different individual from the one reported there previously, adding to the small invasion of the species we've seen in coastal California this fall. It was enjoyed by many birders in the following days. Also present were several **Lapland Longspurs** and one **Chestnut-collared Longspur** (LC). Another very good rarity materialized at Abbotts on the 7th, an **American Golden-plover** photographed nicely in flight (JK).

Surprisingly rare considering the commonness of both parent (sub?) species in our area, a hybrid **Myrtle X Audubon's Warbler** was at Mt. Vision Rd. on the 7th (CC).

An exceptionally late **Swainson's Thrush** was banded at Palomarin on the 12th, very close to the approximately mid-November cutoff beyond which the species is exceedingly rare and enigmatic in Marin. A late **Western Tanager** was in DL's yard in San Rafael on the 15th, and another was at CC's yard in San Anselmo the next day. DL's bird returned on the 25th and may be wintering. Surprisingly rare in West Marin in winter, a **Northern Mockingbird** was in the Bolinas mesa neighborhoods on the 18th (LC). Also on the 18th, no fewer than 7 **Thick-billed Fox Sparrows** were reported at Rocky Ridge near Mt. Tam. (CC). A further 19 **Thick-billed** were found at their more usual spot on Pine Mountain Fire Road on the 21st (CC & BB).



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A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was with several **Greater Yellowlegs** in Bahia Marsh on the 19th (JC). Also on the 19th, a **Green-tailed Towhee** was added to the burgeoning pile of rarities found at Abbotts Lagoon this month (DA). A male **Common Teal** (Eurasian Green-winged) was photographed beautifully by ML at Las Gallinas on the 20th.

A spectacular winter finch movement was observed from Blithedale Ridge by CC, LC, & BB on the 23rd, consisting of **312 Pine Siskins**, **65 Purple Finches**, **16 House Finches**, **15 Lesser Goldfinches**, **7 Evening Grosbeaks**, **5 American Goldfinches**, **5 Red Crossbills**, and best

of all, a female **Cassin's Finch**. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was also calling in the area.

Another male **Common Teal** was in Corte Madera Marsh on the 25th (BB). A fly-by probable **Glaucous Gull** at Muir Beach on the 26th (JCh) could also have been a **Glaucous X Glaucous-winged** hybrid, which are probably more frequent than pure **Glaucous Gulls** in the Bay Area, and can be difficult to separate without close views. An additional **13 Evening Grosbeaks** flew by the Blithedale Ridge spot on the 28th (JP). Yet another male **Common Teal** showed up at Laguna Lake in Chileno Valley on the 29th (LC & CC).

For the first time this year, the long-staying Bay Area **Northern Gannet** put in a Marin appearance, flying by Limantour Beach on the 28th (TB & ZM).

Wintering **Swainson's Thrushes** are an interesting phenomenon in our area. Reported dubiously once or twice every winter, they have only very rarely been documented with convincing photos or descriptions, and are something of an enigmatic ghost in our area between mid-November and March. Only the fourth confirmed Marin record for that period, a **'Russet-backed' Swainson's Thrush** was nicely photographed in Tomales town on the 29th (LC & CC).

Observers and Acronyms **MD:** Michael Day, **GP:** Garrett Pierce, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **JK:** John King, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **BB:** Brian Browne, **JC:** Jim Crumpler, **DA:** David Assmann, **ML:** Miya Lucas, **JCh:** Jim Chiropoulos, **JP:** Jeff Perkins, **TB:** Theadora Block, **ZM:** Zack Mikalonis



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Cassin's Finch (Female)

Interested in Joining MAS Board?

Marin Audubon Society's accomplishments in preserving and restoring precious natural habitats has been prominently displayed in this Newsletter and other environmentally concerned publications. But there is always more that needs to be done. For MAS, the impetus for creating new projects and confronting ongoing challenges starts with the Board of Directors. At this critical time when climate change and destructive development still threaten habitat, the stronger the Board is the more effective it can be. Our Board of Directors are totally staffed with volunteers and we invite anyone seeking to deepen their involvement with our efforts and concerns to join us. If you are interested in learning more, please contact: Doug Waterman 415/506-4675.

New Acquisition

Marin Audubon is most pleased to announce that we have acquired another wetland property—a piece of tidal marsh at the Larkspur Boardwalk. The marsh was donated by the Blauvelt family. This is the last undeveloped parcel on the Larkspur Boardwalk and, although small, it is important because it, and the rest of the marsh of which it is part, support endangered Ridgway Rails. Thank you, Blauvelt family.

BENEFIT MAS THIS HOLIDAY

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The Rail

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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.

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.

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