

Virtual Birding-by-Kayak on the Russian River

By Miles and Teresa Tuffli



Teresa and Miles Tuffli

Green Heron

The March 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.

Join Teresa and Miles Tuffli as they take you on a virtual birding-by-kayak trip along the lower Russian River in Sonoma County. A leisurely paddle is an ideal way to experience the wildlife the Russian River has to offer on a gorgeous summer day. Herons, swallows, raptors, ducks, and songbirds galore are easily observed while quietly moving along the tranquil river. They'll share some of their favorite photos and audio recordings captured while kayaking and map out their preferred launch spot and route.

Miles and Teresa Tuffli are avid birders from Guerneville who especially love helping "bird-curious" folks take the next step of getting into the field to enjoy the bird world! They lead guided bird walks and give educational presentations for local organizations including the Point Reyes National Seashore Association Field Institute, Redwood Region Ornithological Society, Laguna Foundation, and Sonoma Land Trust. Residents of West Sonoma County for 11 years, Miles and Teresa also enjoy writing about and documenting our local birds at their website: I'm Birding Right Now (<https://imbirdingrightnow.com>).

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

THURSDAY, APRIL 8

7:30 PM

Discovering Wood Warblers in Marin County

By Daniel Edelstein

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Monarchs in Serious Trouble



Joyce Waterman

Monarch Butterfly

This year's 2020 Thanksgiving and New Year's annual count observed fewer than 2,000 overwintering monarchs in coastal California. This is a 99.9% decline since the 1980s. These count results follow two years with fewer than 30,000 butterflies – record lows – indicating the western monarch population is nearing collapse. Pacific Grove, which goes by the name "Butterfly Town USA" because of the many monarchs overwintering in cypress the city's trees, had no monarchs at all this year.

Interestingly, with the unseasonably warm weather well into January monarchs have been observed around the bay and did not make it to their traditional overwintering sites on the coast where it is warmer. Hopefully these butterflies will survive the winter and join the spring migration inland. However, if we get some cold storms these lingering monarchs could be wiped out.

This sad news comes on top of the announcement by the US Fish and Wildlife Service that monarch butterflies are "warranted but precluded" from listing under the Endangered Species Act. This Federal decision comes on the heels of a court decision in California that terrestrial invertebrates including monarchs and bees cannot be offered protection under the California Endangered Species Act. Endangered species designation would usher in resources and funding to help the species to recover. Marin Audubon and others will be contacting legislators to encourage the

regulators to list the monarch as endangered. Despite these legal and regulatory setbacks there are things we urgently need to do to save this magnificent butterfly. It will be important to establish monarch "waystations" of nectar plants and milkweed. If you have a garden please consider planting native nectar plants and if you live away from the immediate coast also plant native milkweed, which is the host plant for the monarch larvae. A list of native nectar plants and milkweed can be found on the Marin Audubon Society website under The Monarch Rescue Project. Over the last two years Marin Audubon volunteers have been establishing stands of nectar plants and milkweed on two of its properties.

Western Monarch Mystery Challenge

In light of the more than 99% decline of the population of western monarchs, you are invited to participate in the Western Monarch Mystery Challenge. The challenge's purpose is to use community science to try to figure out where and how the monarchs migrate from their overwintering sites in coastal California to inland sites in the Central Valley, the Sierra foothills and beyond.

The challenge was started by a group of researchers from Washington State University, Tufts University, University of California at Santa Cruz and the Xerces Society to help fill a critical gap in knowledge about habitat needs of migrating monarchs in the spring. The challenge runs from February 14 (Valentine's Day) to April 22 (Earth Day) and is a call to action to report a monarch if you see one. To make a report, search for Monarch Mystery Challenge and follow the instructions on the Conservation Biology or Western Monarch Count websites. Once you report a sighting, you will be entered to win prizes.

Solving the mystery of where wild, migratory western monarchs are at this time of year is a way for Californians to make a contribution to conserving and restoring the monarch migration in the West.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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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

Tired of staying at home? We are, too. With the vaccines now becoming available, hopefully we'll be able to get outside with our activities soon. We're beginning to think of opening up, having some field trips outdoors. But it won't be the coming month. We're not out of the woods yet.

With so much negative and pessimism today, it was a pleasure to hear some positive messages from Roger Harris in his February Speaker Series program. Nationwide statistics show that we have lost three billion birds. However, Roger's investigations revealed that many bird species are doing well, and even thriving, here in Marin County. Some have expanded their range taking advantage of new habitat. Man-made ponds are attracting species. Shorebird Marsh in Corte Madera hosts the only known nest of site of Forster's tern in Marin, and Gadwall, once a rare species, outnumber mallards at Shorebird Marsh. Nuttall's woodpecker, Red Shouldered Hawk, and Osprey populations have expanded in recent years. Hooded oriole were first observed in 1941 nesting in the palms in Larkspur, Black-necked Stilt first arrived in 1978 and American Avocet in 1984. Now they are common birds. However, some the new species are not welcome news. Barred owls are expanding their range from the east coast and now pose a major threat to our native Northern Spotted Owl populations. And some species have declined;

Loggerhead Shrike and Kestrel populations have reduced greatly, possibly the victim of the clearing of snags for fire prevention, which removes nest cavities. Wildlife must go where habitats exist that they have evolved to use. Habitats change over time due to man-caused activities, climate change and natural processes. What's happening to the species that are declining in Marin? Have they moved to another place or died off? Are they declining everywhere? What can we do to maximize habitat? These are all questions generated by his talk. If you missed Roger's presentation you can find it on our website. Perhaps we should have Roger return to do a follow up program to answer these questions and discuss the status of the species he did not mention.

Our Nominating Committee is working busily to fill spots on our Board. Contact Committee members Doug Waterman, Jude Stalker or Ann Thomas, to find out about our Board and how you can help with our activities. We are currently looking for members to help with Field Trips and Secretary.

Another huge thank you to our generous donors who have contributed to our end of year appeal. A very special thank-you to Mary Love who made a most generous donation. It, along with the contributions of the other donors, will be a great help getting us through the year.

I hope all eligible members are getting their vaccine shots.

Spring Awakening

By Juan García, Atlas Coordinator

From now to the very moment of the vernal equinox, late winter is still upon us. But careful observers are already noticing the onset of early spring. By mid-February willow catkins were budding and several of our resident birds were finding their voices. Now that we're in the final approach to the equinox, watch for the signs of migratory jitters among our wintering birds, as hormones generate nervous energy.

The volunteers of the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas are getting the jitters too and will soon hit the field. For most of our breeding birds, March is above all a time for reconnaissance. This is a good opportunity for 'block leaders,' the volunteers who have accepted the assignment to supervise data collection in one of our study blocks, to identify the good breeding spots – what our friend Josiah Clark calls the 'habitat potential' – within their blocks.

Is there a particular start date for the survey proper? Working with another friend of the atlas, Dave DeSante, we've devised an ideal schedule of site visits based on the

number of trips atlasers can make to their block (with four visits per season being a notional minimum). Dave used historic data to establish a relatively constant peak season of roughly 90 days within which most records – playing the odds – should be obtainable. Over the four years of our project, we can use these parameters as guidelines for putting the energies of our volunteers to the best, most focused use, and seeing to it that their visits are well-distributed over the course of the breeding cycle.

To learn more, you may consult our website by following the links at www.marinaudubon.org. To renew our appeal to neighborhood bird watchers, home-owners, land-owners and managers, and experienced birders of all ages to help us answer two key questions: What bird species use our farms, ranches, parklands, shorelines, and neighborhoods to nest and rear young (or even attempt it)? What changes have this population seen since the original county atlas was published in 1993? All volunteers are most welcome and appreciated.

March Webinars Focus on Breeding Behavior of Owls and Rare Birds in Marin

Our Wednesday evening Webinar series continues with two programs this month. Joe Mueller returns with another intriguing owl program, and four high school birders from the California Young Birders Club will share stories and photos from their adventures while seeking rare birds in Marin.

To register for these webinars, visit the MAS website Field Trips page. The webinars are also livestreamed on Facebook.

If you miss the presentation, you can view a recording afterwards either on the MAS website or on Facebook by searching for Marin Audubon Society.

THE BREEDING BEHAVIOR OF OUR LOCAL OWLS—GETTING TO KNOW OUR NOCTURNAL NEIGHBORS

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

7 PM to 8:30 PM

With Joe Mueller

The best time of year to get to know owls is during the breeding season. This is the time when they communicate with each other and allow us a glimpse into their lives. Join Joe for a guided journey into understanding the reproductive behavior of our local owls. We'll explore topics from territoriality and pair formation to courtship and nesting.

As a Professor of Biology for 30 years Joe has been teaching a rich diversity of courses ranging from ornithology to marine invertebrate zoology as well as leading field courses from Alaskan tundra to Costa Rican Tropical Rain Forests. His teaching style has developed from a view of life focused on systems thinking and how interrelationships make up the essential nature of life. He developed and coordinates the Natural History Program at College of Marin and is the 2008 recipient of the Terwilliger Environmental Education Award.

RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS IN MARIN 2020

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

7 PM to 8:30 PM

With California Young Birders Club Members
– Joseph Zeno, Mark Schulist, Lucas Corneliussen, and John King

Marin County hosts some of the best opportunities to see and find rare birds. You can see a new bird in Marin every time you go outside. As you grow as a birder and begin to be able to recognize most of the local species, you will start to find new birds that may be rare where you live. The species you observe will change with the seasons. Fall

migration in Marin County is exceptional for finding rare birds compared to most places on the west coast because the extent to which Point Reyes National Seashore extends into the Pacific Ocean makes it an ideal resting place for migrating birds. Some of the birds that stop there are regular migrants, and some are truly rare because they get blown off course. These are known as vagrants. This webinar will illustrate where you can find rare migrants and vagrants in Marin county, giving tips on how to find them, and these talented and enthusiastic young birders will show you some of the highlights and best experiences they had with Marin's rare birds in 2020.

All of the young birders presenting on this date are part of the Bay Area Chapter of the California Young Birders Club (<https://californiayoungbirders.weebly.com/trip-reports1.html>). Check out their website and read about their monthly field trips throughout the state.

Young Birders

Joseph Zeno

Sophomore currently attending Terra Linda High School and part of the Marin School of Environmental Leadership (MarinSEL) program. Started birding in 2017 and likes to find and photograph birds and make photo books and calendars. Interested in studying how birds interact with other organisms in our changing environment. See Joseph's photo of the American Dipper on this page.

Mark Schulist

Sophomore currently attending Marin Academy High School. Started birding in 2017 and enjoys photographing birds as well as any other wildlife. Interested in patterns of birds and how birds are able to migrate with such consistency.

Lucas Corneliussen

Junior currently attending Credo High School in Sonoma County. Started birding in 2011 and enjoys California county birding and birding in new locations all over the state as well as birding throughout the Point Reyes National Seashore on an almost weekly basis. Currently interested in nocturnal flight counts (NFC) and changes in migration patterns within certain species over the course of different periods of time.

John King

Sophomore currently attending Terra Linda High School. Started birding in 2017, and still enjoying the different habitats California has to offer. He enjoys birding in coastal forested areas where small passerines are abundant and in large flocks. Interested in the evolution of birds and the adaptations (structural/behavioral) they made to survive in the wild.

Bird Paparazzi

As reported in the January 29, 2021 New York Times, one day during the last week of January a snowy owl was spotted in New York City's Central Park. According to bird records the last sighting of a snowy owl in Central Park was 130 years ago. Of course, the Manhattan Rare Bird Alert twitter feed with its 38,000 followers was abuzz reporting this mega-rarity and revealing its location. As a result hoards came running with a resulting crush of binoculars, cameras and spotting scopes. One person even used a drone to get better overhead photos. The next day the bird was gone.

The birder behind the Manhattan Bird Alert, a hedge fund manager, argues that that he was performing a community service and building awareness for conservation. Now that humans are the dominant species perhaps there are better ways to promote conservation and preserve the health of our planet and its wild species than feeding our own sense of entitlement.



Joseph Zeno

American Dipper at Leo Cronin Fish Viewing Area on Lagunitas Creek

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 consider joining us. If you are interested in learning more, please contact: Doug Waterman at 415/506-4675.

SAN RAFAEL GENERAL PLAN DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC REPORT OUT FOR REVIEW

The San Rafael General Plan 2040 (GP) Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is out for public review. Marin Audubon's primary focus when reviewing EIR's for General Plans and development projects is the protection of biological resources. The San Rafael GP generally addresses biological resources under *Goal C1 Supporting our Natural Communities. Protect, restore and enhance San Rafael's environment and natural communities.* The EIR reviews Policies and Programs that are intended to protect the resources of concern: special status species, wetlands, streams/creeks, and trees. Our analysis of the adequacy of the EIR assessments follows:

1. Protecting Trees The only Policy that mentions native trees is C-1-12B which requires development that would impact oak/oak savannah to avoid where feasible," minimize or compensate for the loss of oak trees. This policy reflects CA Fish and Game code, which contains the same requirement, and states a preference for avoidance. The DEIR should discuss how the city would interpret "feasible" because developers often claim avoiding resource impact is infeasible.

Four policies and seven programs address the protection of urban or street trees. While non-native trees that are typically planted in urban areas may have public values, those benefits are limited compared to the water conservation, biodiversity and habitat provided by native plants. The DEIR does not even acknowledge the importance of any native trees but oaks, even though a state and federal threatened Northern Spotted Owl nest site is in redwood trees within or near the San Rafael border.

The DEIR should address the environmental values of native trees, impacts of invasive trees and recommend favoring planting natives. Some non-native trees, notably eucalyptus and acacia, have adverse impacts: highly invasive, flammable and outcompete native plants.

Program C 1.16C should be strengthened by changing "*Consider ordinances and standards that limit the removal of trees of a certain size and require replacement...*" to "*Adopt ordinances and standards to protect trees, particularly native trees...*".

Program CDP 3.6A: "*Continue to*

implement mitigation requirements for tree removal..." But the requirements are not provided. The city's mitigation for tree impacts should be presented and their effectiveness discussed.

We note that the lack of protections for native trees (except oaks), which amounts to a preference for non-natives, conflicts with the goal of protecting environmental resources.

2) Special Status Species and Wildlife Policy C1-13 speaks to protecting special-status species but the Programs identified to carry out the policy rely on surveys to determine the presence or absence of species. Only minimization of adverse impacts is mentioned. Avoidance, the preferred mitigation in CEQA, should be recommended.

We support the recommendations to map wildlife corridors and to develop a bird-safe design ordinance with the goal of avoiding bird collisions with buildings, which is a significant cause of bird mortality.

3) Creeks Policy C1-6 *Protect and Improve Creeks* and Programs 6-6A and B provide for creek setbacks of 25 to 50 feet, should be supported except that C-1.6A allows for minor (undefined) encroachment under certain conditions, including "if it is demonstrated that the reduced setback adequately protects the resources and the results are approved by agencies." The EIR should state the agencies that regulate setbacks and what their regulations are.

Policy C-1-9 *Enhancement of Creeks and Drainageways* and Program C1.9A preparing Watercourse Protection Regulations would be beneficial except 1.9A calls for complying with San Rafael Code 11.30 which requires permits from public works for development within 15 feet of a bank of a watercourse. Fifteen feet is too close in our view and even closer is worse.

Day lighting, should be supported and encouraged for all creeks that have been undergrounded. It is only mentioned for Gallinas Creek.

4) Wetlands Policy C 1.1 *Protecting Wetlands.* Protection of wetlands and Program C-1.3 call for protection unless it is "not possible or practical." This amounts to no protection at all. "Not practical" is an easy standard, all it takes is a developer's claim. It is unclear whether the city has any guidance on how to define practical. The DEIR should address how this program can be depended upon to protect wetlands.

A Wetland Overlay Zone is proposed

and is a good idea. A Baylands Corridor would be more protective because it would cover lands that are historic baylands and would continue on the County's Baylands Corridor. The EIR should discuss benefits of adopting a Baylands Corridor as is included in the Countywide Plan. Protection for "Other Waters" for their habitat and other values should be adopted.

Program C1.3A calls for 2 acres of compensatory mitigation for each acre of wetlands lost, with 3 acres per acre lost "if on-site mitigation is not possible or practical." Again, allowing an exception if an applicant claims changing the project is "not practical" is not much protection. The program also allows the city to waive mitigation if, among other things, the wetland is small (0.1 acre) and the city determines that the filling would result in a more desirable development project, is not much motivation to protect wetlands. Fifty-foot setbacks would be required for wetlands of 2 acres except that that too can be waived if it can be demonstrated the functions would still be protected. Again, consultants can be found that would compromise the resources.

In conclusion, the EIR has strong policies to protect wetlands but the many exceptions weaken or render the protection sections of the policies moot. The exception for "more desirable development" blatantly disregards resource values and should be deleted. New programs are included requiring surveys. While the surveys are important to identify resources, by themselves they do nothing. There must be follow up ordinances to protect the identified resources. The EIR should discuss, for each of the resources surveyed, the policies and ordinances that will protect the resources. Policies intended to protect natural habitat appear to be easy to get out of.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Submit comments on whether the DEIR adequately addresses impacts of the project and ways impacts could be avoided or reduced through mitigation measures or alternatives. You may submit comments at a public hearing on March 9 at 7 PM or via email to Barry.miller@cityofsanrafael.org or U.S. Mail to Barry Miller, City of San Rafael, 1400 Fifth Street, San Rafael 94901. Comment deadline is also March 9.

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Conservation

continued from page 4

NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL OUTREACH

The Northern Spotted Owl's (NSO) nesting season has officially begun! In Marin County, nesting season runs from February 1 to July 31 each year. Last month, Marin Audubon completed our 2021 Northern Spotted Owl Advisory Mailing for residence that live with a 1/4 mile of a NSO activity center.

These mailings are important, as Marin County supports one of the last stable populations of Northern Spotted Owls in the world. They are listed as "threatened" on both the California and Federal Endangered Species Act, and because of this they are afforded extra protections from noise and habitat disturbances during its nesting season.

Our NSO advisory letters and fact sheets include details about types of noise pollution, and other disturbances that negatively affect the Spotted Owl's ability to nest and raise its young properly, as well as what to do if a resident is planning loud outdoor construction work during the Spotted Owl's nesting timeframe. Activities or acts that result in the disturbance, harassment or death of Northern Spotted Owls are considered a federal and state offense. Our fact sheet also discuss the growing presence of the Barred Owl in Marin County. Reporting Barred Owl sightings is important as they are an invasive species, and one of the largest threats to the Northern Spotted Owl's long term survival.

The Northern Spotted Owl faces an uphill battle against wildfires, human interference (construction, rodenticides, off-leash pets), the Barred Owl, and logging. Marin Audubon is also coordinating with organizations and agencies in the North West where logging impacts are an ongoing problem, and where the Trump administration removed many thousands of acres from Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat. These actions will further threaten the owl's existence. We want to broaden our efforts and our influence to protect this threatened species by joining with others who are taking action.

We hope these yearly mailings bring critical awareness to this threatened species, as they need all the help they can get. Please visit Marin Audubon's website: <https://marinaudubon.org/conservation/northern-spotted-owl> for more information on our Northern Spotted Owl conservation efforts, our fact sheet, a list of agencies and biologists to contact should you need to report a Barred Owl sighting and/or live within a NSO buffer zone and

are planning a construction project.

Marin Audubon is grateful for our partnership with Marin County Open Space District, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Point Blue Conservation Science. Our Northern Spotted Owl conservation efforts could not be completed without their support and guidance.

CORTE MADERA CREEK FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PROJECT DEIR STATUS

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Corte Madera Flood Risk Management Control Project is out for public review. The project has been transitioned from the Army Corps of Engineers to the management of Marin County Flood Zone #9 and the Town of Ross, and the project design has been revised to be more reflective of local priorities and values. Boundaries of the project extend from the Ross/San Anselmo boarder to the end of the concrete channel in Kentfield.

Environmental enhancements the project will provide include restoration of fish passage habitat by removing an impediment to flood flows, the fish ladder, increasing capacity of the channel, creating floodplains, constructing larger fish resting pools and removing the concrete channel from Stadium Way down to the natural channel. Restoring natural creek banks and stabilizing slopes will also improve bird habitat. The project will have an additional benefit for 327 structures in Ross and Kentfield by installing stormwater pumps and low flood walls to reduce the risk of flooding.

There is too much concrete, especially in the Frederick Allen Park. Use of natural materials for at least some of the walls and the park should be used wherever possible. We had raised the issue of potential impacts of constructing steps down to the creek. The DEIR misunderstands our concern as being about people impacting the restoration area. Our concern is actually broader than just the restoration area. It is about the ongoing impacts on the creek habitat, fish and other wildlife that use the creek waters. The mitigation measures presented to reduce these impacts are fencing and signs saying "Stay out of Restoration Area," would be of questionable effectiveness. While some people may abide by sign messages, many do not. It is also unclear whether the fencing would be effective either. The impact of people using the steps on the vegetation; and the birds and fish using the creek waters could be significant and is unnecessary. People do not need to go to the water, they can view the creek from the bank.

The project will destroy some existing vegetative habitat. We are concerned about tree loss, tree replacement and particularly with uncertainty about mitigation for removal of native trees. Even though the project is no longer an Army Corps of Engineers project, a Corps 408 permit will still be needed and Corps guidelines do not allow trees to be planted within 15 feet of floodwalls. Total tree loss would be 364, or 333 if the county is successful obtaining a variance from the Corps guidelines which they plan to request. Fortunately, the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife has strong requirements for native oak mitigation: 4 trees planted for each one removed to 15 mitigation trees planted for each tree removed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Submit comments by March 17 via email to cortemaderacreek@marincounty.org or by USPS to Joanna Dixon, Project Manager, 3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 304, San Rafael, CA 94903.

You may also attend and testify at the public hearing on March 2 before the Board of Supervisors. See the Board of Supervisors agenda that is usually available on the Friday before the meeting for the time of the hearing.

THANK YOU, DONORS

Ablin Family Fund, Diane Aldrich, Tom and Annina Arthur, Anonymous, Anne Baxter, Benjamin Bonnländer, Tom and Carol Budzikski, Jan Capper, William Carney and Tamra Peters, Imok Cha, David Chenoweth, Tessa Cherniss, Robert and Sandra Chilvers, Carole and George Eade, Janet Ekberg, Gayanne Enquist, Kathleen Foster, Rick and Dee Fraites, Martha Frankel, Catherine Fuller, Garth Gilchrist, Jim Gonsman, Pauline Grant, Karen Guasco, Valerie Hetherington, Stephanie Hom, Mary K Hynes, Martha Jarocki, Reese and Margaret Jones, Robert Kennis, Cynthia Kenyon, Klein-Donahoe Family Fund, Warren and Barbara Levinson, Jack and Alexandra Liebster, Sarah Martin, Peter Mason, Nancy Merritt, Regina and John Milavec, Gerald Mitchell, Joan Murphy, Martha Nelson, On Point Land Management, J Morrow Otis, Joy Phoenix, Colette Pratt, Alison Quoyeser, RHE Foundation, Carla Ruff Fund, Barbara Salzman, Mary Kent Schardt, Ann Sheldon, Sharie and Clem Shute, Judd Simmons, Everett Stanley, Michael Stone, Anne-Christine Strugnell, Stephen and Britt Thal, Mary Jeanette Walker, Douglas Wallace, Doug and Joyce Waterman, Dr. Sandra Weiss, Alex Wittenberg, Christine Wood

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The planting is finished for the season and now our attention turns to removing the competition, the non-native annuals and perennials. Hard-
ing grass, a perennial, might be the worst of them and with moist soil it is a little easier to dig out now. Annuals, like Italian thistle, are probably large enough to pull or cut off. It is also time to start removing radish and its cousin, mustard, before they begin to flower.

Our volunteer days remain on the schedule. They are good opportunities for students who need community service hours. Staying a healthy distance apart from each other outdoors on our volunteer days is easy, so don't let that concern keep you away! A little 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: March 6, April 3

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: March 13, April 10

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

Debbie Ablin, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Carolyn Losee, Ed Nute, Lowell Sykes

ALERT

Report Barred Owl Spottings

Barred Owls have extended their range to the west coast and have been seen in Marin. There is increasing concern about their impact on Marin's Northern Spotted Owl population. Barred Owls are larger, more aggressive and occupy the same habitat type as Spotted Owls. See contact list at <https://marinaudubon.org/2020/09/01/alert-report-barred-owl-spottings>.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

On Point Land Management (OPLM) crew has finished planting 360 plants – 180 California sage (*Artemisia californica*) and 180 coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) – on the Bahia levee that we ordered last year. As noted last month, these plants were installed to outcompete the highly invasive radish and improve upland habitat. In addition, a rootball of a mature pampas grass plant has been removed and left to decompose.

NORTON POND

OPLM also removed sediments from the culvert, as far as they could reach on our property. One end of the culvert is on MAS property and the other on property of the house across Norton. The culvert connects our pond to a tidal channel that extends to the Petaluma River and is the source of water for the pond. The culvert was in place long before we acquired the property and was reportedly installed by the former owner of the house across Norton, possibly to allow the road to be extended across the tidal channel. The sediments were moved to another of our properties, at the other end of Norton Avenue and placed on uplands. By acquiring many small parcels and accepting the donation of a few parcels, MAS now owns most of the pond and its shoreline.

THE REDWOODS

MAS's volunteers planted 50 western ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*) and removed invasive acacia on our property. MAS owns the upland adjacent to the mouth of Arroyo Del Corte

Madera and the Redwoods facility and did some clean up. Recently someone has cut the lower limbs from several oaks on our property. If they wanted to cut to reduce fire risk, it did just the opposite. The cut limbs were left to dry on the ground where they are more of a fire danger than when they are growing on the tree. It should also be noted that oaks growing near the bay never seem to grow with an upright trunk. Rather they grow as short trees, with no visible trunk and their canopy close to the ground.

TISCORNIA

It's been a busy month for our Tiscornia marsh restoration project. To restore tidal marsh, we've been exploring with the City of San Rafael and the Army Corps of Engineers possibly using sediments the Corps will be removing from the San Rafael Cana. In addition, the City has scheduled a scoping meeting on February 23, at which time the project will be presented, and attendees can submit issues and questions to be addressed in the EIR. The project description can be found on our website along with how to submit comments. Comment deadline is Friday, February 26 at 5 pm. The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority is funding the project, including preparation of the EIR, through a grant to Marin Audubon.

BLACK POINT

Our volunteer, Lowell Sykes, has pulled substantial quantities of broom from our largest property. This is the ideal time to pull broom, it is easier after there has been enough rain to soften the ground.

USFWS Farallon Islands Mouse Eradication Plan

One more delay. I've been assured it will be the last. We're almost there. The California Coastal Commission will be hearing the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge Consistency Determination in May – not in March. So we have a few more months to send emails or letters to support the Plan or to sign up and speak during open time at the one of the Commission meetings in March or April, before it is on the agenda in May. If you haven't sent in your comments yet, **do it now**. The Plan needs to be implemented to:

- **Restore** the ecosystem of this rare island habitat
- **Protect** the rare native Leach's and Ashy Storm-Petrels
- **Protect** endemic species, Farallon Camel Cricket, Farallon Arboreal Salamander, Farallon Daisy
- **Use** the only method that has successfully restored pelagic ecosystems on 600 island

habitats throughout the world

- **Use** the only method that would be effective; a one-time (two applications) use of a rodenticide specifically permitted for use to rid island ecosystems from habitat islands.

If this Plan is not implemented, the island habitat will continue to degrade, populations of rare native species will continue to decline and would be eventually extirpated from these islands.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Sign up to testify during open time at the California Coastal Commission hearings in March or April. The Commission sets aside one to two hours at the beginning of each meeting to hear from the public on items not on the agenda. Write and email to the commission telling them the Plan is consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Program. jWeber@Coastal.org or 45 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94105.

MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2020

By Noah Arthur

As midwinter fades into the beginnings of late winter, January is often a peak month for rare waterbirds in Marin. This month, however, kicked off with a spectacular profusion of midwinter land-bird rarities in the first week – as often happens during what tends to be one of our coldest weeks of the year. On the 1st, three **Mountain Bluebirds** were along Shoreline Highway in Tomales (AB), and an unseasonable **Wilson's Warbler** was in Muir Beach (BB). The rarities kept on coming on the 3rd, with a **Winter Wren** in the Olema Campground (MS, LS, & EM), another **Wilson's Warbler** at Bear Valley (MS & LS), and an off-season **Western Tanager** in a San Rafael backyard (DL). On the 7th a female **Williamson's Sapsucker** (WA) and a male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (RM) materialized in the Olema Campground, found by Winter Wren chasers, a nice demonstration of the "Patagonia Rest Stop Effect" in action.

A very rare hybrid appeared on the 9th in the form of a **Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser** at a herring run in Richardson Bay (LC). This outlandish intergeneric is a 2nd county record for Marin. Also on the 9th, an off-season **Black-throated Grey Warbler** was in the Marin Headlands (MS & LS).

On the 10th, a really spectacular seasonal rarity was found on outer Pt. Reyes in the form of a juvenile **Swainson's Hawk** (LC). This is a first for January in Marin and adds to Lucas's pile of seasonal megas this winter, along with his late November Swainson's Thrush!

Almost expected in fall but much rarer in winter, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at a feeder near Valley Ford on the 10th (JE).

On the 12th, the long-absent **Yellow-crowned Night-heron** reappeared in Sausalito (EF). Rare onshore and often seen after storms, a **Red Phalarope** was at Rodeo Lagoon on the 15th (WL). A new **Common Teal** (Eurasian Green-winged) was found on the 16th in Stinson Beach (AH), adding to at least two others in Marin this winter, followed up by a hybrid **Common X Green-winged Teal** in Bothin Marsh on the 17th (CC). The unseasonable passerine parade also continued on the 16th with a **Grasshopper Sparrow** in Corte Madera Marsh (KD & LW), and a **Nashville Warbler** in Bolinas (AH).

One of the best birds of the month came on the 18th, a **Yellow-billed Loon** on Tomales Bay at Tomales Bay State Park (MS & LS). Also on the 18th, a mixed movement of winter finches over Bolinas Ridge east of Stinson included an **Evening Grosbeak** and a **Lawrence's Goldfinch** (CC).

Two **Barn Swallows** flew by Rodeo Lagoon on the 21st (WL), and a **Tundra Swan** was at Abbotts Lagoon on the 22nd (JP & RM), and another **Western Tanager** was in DS's San Rafael yard. Rare off our shores in winter, a **Pink-footed Shearwater** flew by the bluffs near Nunes Ranch on Pt. Reyes on the 23rd (MS & LS), and a female **Mountain Bluebird** was near Drakes Corner (MS, LS, & LC).

A big herring run blanketed the Tiburon shoreline in roe on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th, attracting thousands of gulls. Best of all was a stunning adult **Slaty-backed Gull** (LC), the first in Marin in several years. Other good ones included a 1st-winter **Glaucous** (LC) a 1st-winter **'Kumlien's' Iceland** (NA), and both **Glaucous-winged X Glaucous** and **Glaucous X Herring** hybrids (NA & LC). Gull numbers probably topped 10,000 at the peak of the event.

Another **Pink-footed Shearwater** was seen from shore at the abandoned ranch on Pt. Reyes on the 24th, along with an even rarer **Black-footed Albatross**. Also at the ranch was a **Palm Warbler**, much rarer in winter than in fall (CC).

A very nice **Red Fox Sparrow** visited a Tamalpais Valley backyard on the 24th.

Regular in winter on Tomales Bay these days but rarer elsewhere, a **Caspian Tern** flew by Rodeo Lagoon on the 25th (WL), and another flew over Tiburon on the 26th (EG), and yet another was at Corte Madera Marsh on the 28th (BF). This rapid-fire series of reports suggests there was some movement of **Caspian Terns** into our region – or perhaps out of Tomales Bay and into other areas.

A **Laughing Gull** in Bolinas Lagoon on the 30th (GS), possibly the same individual in the area in fall, rounded out an outstanding month for gulls in Marin. Just as rare were two **Black Skimmers** found in the Lagoon the next day (BB). The 31st also produced three **Pacific Golden-plovers** in a plowed field near the RCA Station on Pt. Reyes (EM). Also on the 31st, a female **Black-and-white Warbler** at Bass Lake along the Palomarin Trail (LC), and a **Myrtle X Audubon's Warbler** hybrid at Sacramento Landing on the 31st (LS) added to the month's impressive total of rare warblers.

Continuing rarities found in previous months included the **American Dipper** at Leo T. Cronin Fish Viewing Area, the **Black Vulture** in Bolinas, **Townsend's Solitaires** on Mt. Tam, **Lapland Longspurs** at Abbotts Lagoon, and the male **Black-and-white Warbler** at Muir Beach.

Observers and Acronyms **WA:** Will Anderson, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **LC:** Lucas Corneliusen, **KD:** Konshau Duman, **JE:** Janeann Erickson, **EF:** Emily Ford, **EG:** Eli Gross, **AH:** Adrian Hinkle, **WL:** William Legge, **RM:** Ron Mallory, **EM:** Eddie Monson, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **JP:** Jeff Perkins, **DS:** Dan Singer, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **LW:** Lynette Williams

Salmonellosis Outbreak Causing Songbird Deaths*

Removing bird feeders is the best way to help

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) reports that they have been inundated with calls from residents who are finding sick or dead finches at bird feeders. There have been reports from Sonoma, but none from Marin. CDFW's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory has determined the cause of illness to be Salmonellosis, a disease caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. Pine siskins are the primary species affected by the outbreak. The disease has also been reported in smaller numbers of lesser goldfinches and American goldfinches.

Salmonellosis occurs periodically in pine siskins in some winters. When large numbers of pine siskins congregate, the disease can spread rapidly causing high mortality. Birds become infected when they ingest food, water or come into contact with objects (e.g., bird feeders, perches, soil) contaminated with feces from an infected bird. Sick birds often appear weak, have labored breathing, and may sit for prolonged periods with fluffed or ruffled feathers.

Salmonellosis is almost exclusively reported from locations with bird feeders where birds congregate. Residents can help reduce disease transmission by removing bird feeders and birdbaths. Allowing birds to feed on natural seeds rather than at bird feeders reduces contact between birds and helps slow spread of the disease. As of mid February there have been no reports from Marin.

Residents can report dead birds to CDFW's Wildlife Investigations Laboratory using the mortality reporting form (<https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/laboratories/wildlife-investigations/monitoring/mortality-report>), which helps biologists monitor the outbreak. Disposable gloves should be worn and hands should be thoroughly washed after disposing of dead birds, and handling of bird feeders and birdbaths. If sick birds are found, please contact Wildcare for advice.

**Excerpted from CDFW Fact Sheet*



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.

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

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