

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10 7:00 PM

**Minnesota's Sax-Zim Bog and the "Invasion of the Vole Snatchers"**

By Sparky Stensaas



Sparky Stensaas

**Boreal Owl**

**Note new time!** Register for the February Speaker Series Zoom program on the MAS website Speaker Series page.

After an Introduction to the Sax-Zim Bog and why it's the "magic mix" for boreal birds, we'll learn about the invasion each winter of "vole snatchers": Great Gray Owls, Hawk Owls, Boreal Owls, Northern Shrikes, hawks, ermine, marten, fox, coyote and more survive and thrive on a diet of voles. We'll also touch on the work of Friends of Sax-Zim Bog to preserve over 4,000 acres of bog lands for future generations of birds and birders.

**Sparky Stensaas** is the founder and executive director of Friends of Sax-Zim Bog ([www.SaxZim.org](http://www.SaxZim.org)). Sparky is also a naturalist, publisher and wildlife photographer. He is the author of six books on the natural history of the North Woods. You can see more of Sparky's images at [www.ThePhotoNaturalist.com](http://www.ThePhotoNaturalist.com) and his videos on YouTube "Sparky Stensaas."

**NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**

THURSDAY, MARCH 10 7:00 PM

**Turkey Vultures, California Condors and the Migration of Raptors**

By Kurt Leuschner

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# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## County Begins Planning for Ring Mountain Preserve, Corte Madera



Jay Salzman

**Some of the trails on Ring Mountain. Looking south toward Angel Island and San Francisco**

**M**arin County Open Space District is undertaking a process to identify and designate a trail system at the Ring Mountain Preserve. A public hearing took place in December and comments from the public on where to locate trails were welcome.

The 387-acre Ring Mountain Preserve extends from Tiburon to Corte Madera and includes the ridge. There are entrances from Paradise Drive, across from our Triangle Marsh; from Taylor Road near the top of the mountain in Tiburon; and from various local streets. It was acquired by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) about 35 years ago and some years later title was transferred to the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD). TNC funds a staff person who monitors conditions and conducts educational programs.

Ring Mountain's natural resources are unparalleled. Its serpentine soil supports rare and endangered plants that attract visitors from around the world: Tiburon Mariposa Lily, Marin Dwarf Flax, Tiburon Jewel Flower, and Tiburon Paintbrush. The site is also rich in

archaeological resources and wildlife. Virtually every raptor species commonly seen in our area has been observed: Kestrel, Kite, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Kite, Red-tailed Hawk and Merlin, along with many other species.

The site is primarily grassland habitat with a large stand of ancient oaks and a stream. Much of the grassland is in a degraded condition – riddled with trails, some of which are light on the land and others deeply eroded and incised. Some trails extend through endangered plant colonies. When viewed from above, the trails look like a spider web – worn by people wandering around, and some possibly by deer and/or other wildlife. The trails are poorly marked so where people should be walking is unclear. How to protect the sensitive plant resources from being trampled by people, while providing access for the public, is the dilemma.

The MCOSD is considering various trail alignments. The current plan involves creating several new trails and closing some trails (or attempting to). The new trails include two new

*continued on page 4*

## 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	Doug Waterman 506-4675
Secretary	Lelia Lancot 924-6138
Treasurer	Ann Thomas 924-9559 Martha Jarocki 461-3592
Conservation	Roger Harris 510/710-9120 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Open
Membership Chair	Bob Hinz 383-8688 Contact Bob for membership problems or questions.
Outreach, Website	Elyse Omernick 694-2320
Speaker Series	Doug Waterman 506-4675
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Roger Harris 510/710-9120
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Waterman 506-4675
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710 Clint Kellner 895-8591
Volunteer Coordinator	Open
BAAC Reps	Barbara Salzman 924-605 Doug Waterman 506-4675
At-large Director	Lowell Sykes 388-2821

## DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. 6:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month. Meetings are currently held online via Zoom. If you wish to participate please call 924-6057.

**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

A warm welcome to our two new Board members, **Martha Jarocki** and **Clint Kellner**. Many of you know Martha. She was on the MAS Board five years ago serving as our Website and Outreach chair. Since leaving the Board, Martha has continued her involvement with MAS, most notably at our Corte Madera Ecological Reserve property where she is the general manager for the property. She oversees progress of the habitat, is in charge of the monthly Volunteer Workdays and removes lots of invasive plants on the workdays and many other days. Martha is a member of our Property Management Committee and also volunteers with planting and weed removal for our Monarch project. Martha's skills also extend to finances. She has been Treasurer for a non-profit organization and is employed in a CPA office. Martha will be helping with our Treasury tasks.

Clint Kellner has degrees in Ecology, a bachelors from UC Berkeley, a masters from UT Knoxville, and a doctorate from UC Davis specializing in insects and plants. He finished a 31-year career in environmental consulting and joined the Peace Corps in 2016 returning in 2018 from Guatemala, then went for a 2-month Peace Corps stint in Peru before being evacuated in March of 2020 because of COVID-19. Clint's personal interests involve searching for rare species and visiting undisturbed places and identifying the plants, animals, and ecological processes that occur there. He looks forward to assisting MAS in any capacity, particularly with our properties.

Another change in our Board is a void created by the unexpected resignation of our Speaker Series Program Chair. As a result, we now need a chairperson for our Speaker Series Programs. To fill the gap, our Board members have stepped up and filled all of the speaker slots through June, the end of our fiscal year, with excellent presenters speaking on interesting topics. We still need a Speaker Series Chair. If are interested, contact Nominating Committee Chair, Roger Harris.

With the new year, our attention turns to nominating for next year's board members and the need to finding nominees for open Board positions. Our Speaker Series and Field Trip Chair positions are both open. Field Trip Chair is a good job for two to work together as Co-chairs. For either position, the Board offers lots of help.

We're very pleased that we've had two volunteers who responded to Vicki and Dave's article last month, who are willing to help with our Nest Box program. Jeff Long will be

installing, with the help of Martha Jarocki and Lowell Sykes, and maintaining nest boxes he will provide for our two Corte Madera Properties, Triangle Marsh and the Ecological Reserve property. Jim Cunningham is interested in volunteering to help with maintaining the nest boxes at our Simmons Slough property.

Huge thank you to the generous donors who have contributed to our Winter Appeal. Your donations will enable us to continue our organization's work, our programs, field trips, newsletter and other activities. It's not too late. You can still contribute to support Marin Audubon's programs by sending your check to our Post Office box.

We're pleased so many current and future members are using our new website sign-up forms. We've had an online membership form for a long time, but last month, after the form went dead, we revised and updated it to make it clearer and more usable for new memberships, renewals and gift memberships. And, judging by the uptick in use, future-members and renewing members are finding it much more user-friendly.

Our Board continues to discuss adaptation to COVID and the latest variant. We are specifically interested in opening up our field trips to more participants. We know more of you would like to attend than can fit within the trip participant limits. However, most of our leaders are reluctant to risk the health of participants, and we agree. We're planning to evaluate trip participant limits at every monthly Board meeting, so we can respond to current COVID conditions. Hopefully, we'll be able to expand participants soon. One solution would be to have more field trips, but we need a Field Trip Chair to arrange more trips, and a volunteer to help with scheduling would also be helpful. Speaker programs will continue on zoom.

Stay well and stay masked.

## Join Our Team!

Marin Audubon Society has open seats on its Board of Directors for the coming year (begins in June) that offer a rare opportunity to benefit local wildlife while enjoying an interesting activity in the company of like-minded avid conservationists. Open positions are the Speaker Series and Field Trip chairs.

Questions, inquiries welcome. Contact Nominating Committee Chair, Roger Harris, at [roger.harris@comcast.net](mailto:roger.harris@comcast.net) or 510/710-9120.



## MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

In person field trips have resumed and are open to all **fully-vaccinated** participants. Trips are limited to allow social distancing. Register for trips on the MAS website Field Trips page. Registration is available on the date indicated in the trip announcements below.

### SACRAMENTO DELTA BY BOAT

#### Corte Madera

Sunday, February 6, 2022

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' *River Dolphin* for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. Ronn Patterson, a Bay Area historian and naturalist, is captain of the *River Dolphin* and owner of Dolphin Charters. The boat is very comfortable, and the outer decks provide views over the levees of the amazing array of birds found in the Delta during the winter.

This rich area hosts a wide variety of raptors including **Swainson's Hawks**, **Peregrine Falcons**, and **Great Horned Owls**. Large numbers of shorebirds, **Sandhill Cranes**, **Tundra Swans**, **Snow**, **Canada** and **White-fronted Geese**, ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines make this cruise a highlight for birders. Uncommon mammals such as beaver, river otter, and mink often add interest to the cruise. We also will learn about the history, ecology and politics of the levees and the Delta as we travel through its meandering channels.

The cost will be \$125 per person. The trip limit is 25 **fully-vaccinated** participants. The trip is currently sold out, but there is an open waiting list in case of cancellations. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions the week before the trip.

### CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

#### Corte Madera

Saturday February 19, 2022

9:00 AM to noon

With Bryan Flaig

This trip is perfect for beginning birders looking to learn how to identify waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as experienced birders interested in honing their skills.

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve contains a variety of birding habitats, like tidal ponds, pickleweed marshes and a high tide refuge purchased by Marin Audubon in 2016. Much of the area has undergone extensive restoration for rare and endangered saltmarsh species.

On this field trip, we will hike a short distance to explore the marsh at high tide, searching for elusive **Ridgway's Rails** and seasonal migrants. Later, we'll walk to the overlook on the west side of Shorebird Marsh (pond), spending the majority of our time observing the wide variety of ducks, gulls, and wading shorebirds that frequent the area in winter.

Restrooms are available at nearby stores, but not on the marsh. Bring binoculars, scopes, layers, water, and snacks. Plan for a 1.5 to 2 mile walk on flat terrain. Light rain does not cancel the trip.

Registration opens on Wednesday, February 9 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page. Trip limit is 15 **fully-vaccinated** participants. There will not be a waiting list. No drop ins, please.

**DIRECTIONS:** Corte Madera Ecological Reserve is located behind Trader Joe's in Corte Madera. Meet in the parking lot behind the store, accessed by the driveway on the southside of World Market.

### NICASIO / TOMALES BAY

#### Meet at ball field in Nicasio

#### Birding in Marin, Season 7, Trip 3

Saturday, March 5, 2022

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

The rolling hills of central Marin are covered with pastures, horse ranches, forested ridges, homes, reservoirs and occupied by many interesting birds. We will look for them in and around Nicasio and along the nearby stream before heading three miles north to see what is on and around Nicasio Reservoir. This is Bob's birding "patch" and he has found both **Bald** and **Golden Eagles** recently with a nice array of other birds in this vicinity.

We expect to travel the few miles to Point Reyes Station for a lunch break or picnic. In the afternoon we will explore the south end Tomales Bay. Then, as time allows, we can explore the eastern edge of Tomales Bay along Highway 1, which supports a winter population of thousands of ducks, geese and shorebirds. We might travel 10 miles north to see if an Eagle's nest is having success. Heavy Rain cancels.

Registration opens Wednesday, February 23 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page. Trip limit is 15 **fully-vaccinated** participants. There is no waiting list. No drop-ins, please.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101 in north San Rafael take Lucas Valley Rd west 10.3 miles then right turn onto Nicasio Valley Rd for 0.5 miles and park near the baseball field, the center of town. For GPS use 1 Old Rancheria Rd Nicasio, the address for the Rancho Nicasio Restaurant.

## CONSERVATION

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

### Ring Mountain Preserve

*continued from page 1*

stream crossings and would extend through the oak woodland. With so many existing trails, it is difficult to understand why selected existing trails can't be designated as permanent trails, instead of creating entirely new trails through this sensitive grassland, particularly when it is unclear whether existing trails can be successfully closed and restored.

We want the MCOSD to do following:

- Protect endangered and rare plants. There should be an analysis of why new trails through endangered/rare plant communities need to be constructed; why existing trails through such areas cannot be decommissioned; and why existing alignments that do not go through rare plant colonies are not being identified as the designated trails.
- Maintain the habitat value of the grassland, stream and woodland habitats. It is not clear that there is adequate understanding of how the site, particularly areas where the new trails are proposed, is currently used by wildlife. Decisions about which existing trails to close or which to keep open should be informed by wildlife nesting, foraging, hunting and movement corridors, in addition to avoiding rare plant communities.
- Obtain data on bird and wildlife use of the site. Surveys of wildlife use, including nesting grassland and woodland birds, hunting raptors, wildlife movement, including coyotes and deer which are known to inhabit the Preserve, should be undertaken.
- Ensure effective method(s) are used to close trails. Closing trails through grasslands is difficult. The MCOSD should test the effectiveness of closure methods, such as signing, fencing, scarring and planting, on a few trails before a long-term commitment is made to close trails and open new ones.

The choice of the appropriate environmental document should be based on the potential adverse impacts of the project.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Visit Marin County Parks Ring Mountain website, the Road and Trail Management Plan and the recording of the public meeting to find out more about Ring Mountain natural resources and the current trails plan. The trail identification process is in an early stage. Email your comments to Jon Campo asap: [JCampo@marincounty.org](mailto:JCampo@marincounty.org).

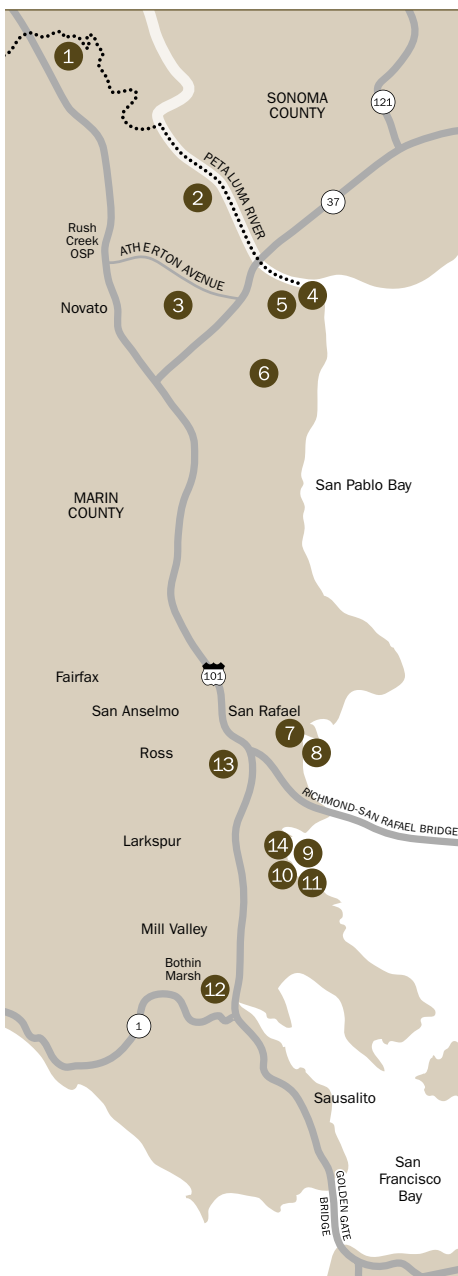
### COMMISSION APPROVES USFWS MOUSE ERADICATION PLAN

We're thrilled and grateful that the majority of the Commission recognized the validity of testimony of scientists and the long-term benefits to the ecosystem, and found the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) plan to restore the ecosystem of the Farallones to be conditionally consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Program. We appreciate staff's thorough analysis, the Commission's thoughtful deliberations, and the Commission majority for seeing the long-term benefits to the species and the ecosystem of the Farallones over unsubstantiated fears of environmental calamity.

The hearing went on for seven hours and included presentations by scientists who worked on other island eradications and similar projects, representatives of many scientific, regional, national, and international, conservation organizations, as well as testimony from opponents of the project and their supporters.

The amount of misinformation expressed by the project opponents is truly astonishing. Below is a list of examples. Thank you to former Farallones biologist, Peter Pyle, for providing information for this list. The misinformation is followed by the accurate information in italics:

- California law bans the use of brodifacoum 25-D Conservation. *The state law that now bans the use of rodenticides (SB 1788) specifically exempts Brodifacoum 25-D Conservation for Conservation use on islands.*
- Ashy Storm-petrel population is increasing. *Some evidence indicates that the Ashy Storm-Petrel has actually declined up to 32% in the last 12 years. Only about 10,000 adults breed worldwide and half of that number breed on the Farallones.*
- The project will kill 3,000 gulls. *This projection is based on the peak breeding population. In fact, only up to 100 gulls are typically on the island during the months the project will be implemented.*
- Killing mice is inhumane. *Currently mice die inhumane deaths – from starvation, cannibalism, disease and starvation when rains cause the seeds they feed on to sprout.*
- Killing non-target wildlife is unacceptable. *Some non-target species (Western gulls) is unfortunate but may be unavoidable. The gull loss is expected to be low, at worst – nowhere near a level that would affect the population.*



#### MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh Expansion Site	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	144 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	4 parcels
5. Black Point Parcels	many parcels
6. Arroyo San Jose	2 parcels
7. Tiscornia Marsh	20 acres
8. Tidelands and Murphy's Rock	34 acres
9. San Clemente Creek Tidelands	4.34 acres
10. End of Channel Drive	1 acre
11. Triangle Marsh	31 acres
12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio	2 acres
13. Cal Park	<1 acre
14. Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion Site	5.2 acres

- Sound science on the Farallones is not available. *There are 200 plus published scientific papers and several books on natural resources of the Farallones.*
- Raptors occur regularly at the Farallones and will eat the dead mice. *95% of migrating raptors pass through <2% remain for <1 day. Migration is just about over in October – December when the project will occur.*
- Pt. Blue Conservation Science representing the USFWS was collusion. *Sole-source contracting is a common, acceptable and perfectly legal practice.*
- Contraceptives will work. *Contraceptives control populations, eradication of the entire mouse population is needed otherwise they would continue to reproduce. Contraceptive bait traps would have to be maintained regularly which would cause unacceptable disturbance to nesting birds that cover the island.*
- Trap the owls and the problem goes away. *Trapping is also not a long-term solution. The USFWS tested 48 methods including traps, terriers, predators, and trapping and removing owls. Removal would need to occur in perpetuity because it would not eradicate the mice. Trapped owls become highly stressed which, considering their protected status, would be creating additional significant impacts.*
- There is no need to rush. *The project has been studied and planned for more than 20 years. It's hardly rushed. Pelagic birds and the island ecosystem will continue to decline the longer the mice remain.*

A Commission majority (Aminzadeh, Brownsey, Luce, Rice and Wilson) voted to approve the conditions recommended by staff: Develop and implement a more robust Bait Spill Contingency Plan and a Hazing Plan, prepare a Plan for an independent monitor to be present during implementation, and submit the plans to the Executive Director for review. The Commission added: prepare a Water Quality Control Plan and submit the final plans to the Commission to review compliance with conditions and hold a hearing if the commission so votes.

The opponents will not go away just because the Commission found the project conditionally consistent with the Coastal Program. Letters are appearing in newspapers objecting to the Commission's vote. Four weeks after the hearing a letter in the Marin IJ claimed, with no substantiation, that a video of mice on the Farallones that was shown at the hearing, was staged or taken somewhere else; input designed to cast doubt on the validity of the problem. Commissioners even reported seeing lots of mice on the island during an

arranged visit. Supporters of the ecosystem must remain vigilant to ensure the project moves forward to restore the island ecosystem.

## MEASURE A – NEXT STEPS

Judging from the last hearing on Measure A, the supervisors are headed toward approving a Parks ballot measure that includes the same percentages as the current Measure A, 20% for agriculture but with approximately half for resource enhancement/protection; 25% of Marin County Park's (MCP) 65% reserved for fire prevention work; and 10% for acquisition of open space land. Last month our discussion focused on agriculture, this month our focus is on the funding for fire prevention activities. The Supervisors are expected to decide on ballot language the end of January and are scheduled to finalize the language on February 8. There will be two readings of the ordinance.

Why the Supervisors are considering specifying that 25% of MCP's 65% be reserved for fire prevention work is unclear. Over the past ten years, the MCP has spent roughly \$2 million per year on fire prevention on Open Space District (OSD) (the Open Space District is part of Marin County Parks) lands under their overall funding allocation. The OSD decided on how much money to spend and what areas need fire prevention work, which is usually removal of understory plants and often invasive species, on its own land. In different years they may want to spend more or less on fire prevention actions. We believe the OSD is best suited to make decisions about how much money to spend where, when, and the treatment method. The flexibility has benefitted the OSD and the habitats it manages.

Also to be considered is that extensive work is also underway by the various fire districts, Marin County Fire, and the Marin Wildlife Prevention Authority (MWPA) with funding from Measure C. This measure that provides \$19.5 million annually for fire prevention work was approved by Marin voters three years ago. Although not one of the MWPA Joint Powers agencies, MCP benefits because MWPA funds projects on MCOSD lands that border city boundaries in order to create defensible spaces for city resident's houses. And MWPA is planning on working even more closely with land owning agencies, including MCP, State Parks.

In summary, we believe the OSD is competent to decide how much money to spend on fire prevention activities on lands it manages. MCP should have the flexibility of using funding any given year based on its own judgment.

Next month we'll discuss funds for acquisition of habitats.

**DIANNE HAYES MCCLUNG SIERRA**  
JUNE 5, 1936 - JANUARY 8, 2022



Roger Harris

We are saddened by the loss of long-time Marin Audubon Society supporter, Dianne Sierra. Dianne was born in Omaha Nebraska, graduated from the University of Kansas, and earned a masters in mathematics from the University of Wisconsin in 1959. She was an early computer programmer for IBM and she developed the first software program for monitoring post-operative heart patients while working at the Institute for Medical Sciences in San Francisco.

Marin Audubon folks knew Dianne as an avid birder and MAS Board member for more than 10 years until 1983 when she moved from Mill Valley to Oakland with her partner Chris Pattillo. She was truly a mainstay of MAS. She served as our Christmas Bird Count Compiler for a decade, wrote a software program to compile the data for the count, was active in organizing our field trips and programs, and attended most of our field trips. After moving to Oakland, Dianne continued her support for Marin Audubon and continued to pursue her passion for birds. Through their long life together, Dianne and Chris took many trips in the U.S. and abroad to see birds. And Dianne, Chris, Dianne's two daughters, three grandchildren and extended family members never missed a MAS Barbeque.

Dianne was a wonderful person, a good friend, and beloved by all who knew her. She will be greatly missed.



## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

This winter's new plants are in the ground at Triangle Marsh and the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve expansion project. Now they need some mulch to keep the soil cool with shade from the summer heat. Mulching not only slows water loss from the soil but also helps control weeds around the young native plants.

The ample rain early in the season has led to far more growth of the invasives this year than last. Some invasive annuals like Italian thistle might be large enough to earn our removal effort. Removing the perennial Harding grass is always a useful activity.

Rain cancels our workdays. Act locally and join us on a workday. Being there and being active would be good for your mood as well as the landscape. California's wild plants and animals need your help. We all make a difference.

### Volunteer Workdays

#### Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: February 5, March 5

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: February 12, March 12

Meet at the end of Industrial Way near Trader Joe's in Greenbrae. 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

Annette Anzalone, Michelle Baucke, Rich Cimino, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Kent McDonald, Ed Nute, Lowell Sykes, National League of Young Men (Braden Coe, Ray Hettleman, Willy Baker)

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Rebecca Akin, Nancy Cardillo, Arlo Christenen, Tom Clyde, Cheryl Donohue, Mira Inbar, Eric Jaye, Celia Jenkins, Marion Love, Bruce & Carolyn Lowenthal, Susan Marrinson, Anna & Dan Paustenbach-Filice, Eileen Prendiville, Deborah Price, Richard & Dee Robbins, John Walsh, Christy Wise, Julie Wittmann, Edward Woods

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### CORTE MADERA

Environmental Science Associates (ESA) has completed monitoring of the restored marsh, part of the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, 5.2 acres of which are owned by MAS and an one acre owned by the California Fish and Wildlife. The property is located at the end of Industrial Way in Corte Madera. In accord with the Monitoring Plan, year 3 monitoring covered the tidal marsh and adjacent upland, included erosion and inundation surveys, aerial photographs and ground truthing, photo monitoring, and preparation of a comprehensive report. Tidal water levels, marsh vegetation, and erosion monitoring were conducted by ESA. Upland vegetation monitoring was conducted through a partnership with The Watershed Nursery (TWN).

Since year 1 both new channels in the restored marsh have widened. Erosion monitoring indicated that the channel providing water to the rest of the site is actively expanding. This means the channel can better convey tidal waters in and out of the site. Active slumping of the outboard channel evident in photos, however, also indicates a resizing channel and blockage at low tides.

Monitoring of the marsh plants revealed that 89% of the marsh was vegetated with pickleweed (*Salicornia*). This is well above the 50% benchmark identified in the Year Three Monitoring Report. It was noted that this may be an overestimate as the color of the pickleweed was brownish, similar to the color of the adjacent mudflat, making the remote sensing process more difficult to distinguish the plants. The color variation may have been due to the extreme drought of the past year. Usually tidal marsh vegetation is a bright green color in June, when the field work was done.

Upland vegetation has continued to do well which can be attributed, in large part, to the maintenance work done by our volunteers. At the time of the June field work, approximately 77% of the upland was vegetated with native plant species. The Creeping Wildrye was already flowering and setting seed. Many of the Yarrow plants had already flowered and set seed. A few Sagebrush plants were beginning to flower as well. This flowering and seeding was on the early side comparatively for the plant phenology and may be drought related. Sagebrush planted on top of the hill was more robust, possibly due to lack of competition from weeds. Western Ragweed was robust throughout the site with some plants 3.5 meters tall.



The first class of STRAW students attend planting at the tidal marsh along the Petaluma River.

Overall the year 3 monitoring found that the site is progressing well. While the outboard channel size is somewhat limiting tidal conveyance during low tides at this time, visual erosion checks confirmed that the channels are naturally resizing in order to increase water conveyance for the site. The native marsh vegetation colonization has already met the benchmark requirements of 50% coverage for monitoring year five.

### BAHIA

The first class of students planted at Bahia on January 12. We're so pleased to announce that the first Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW) class planting on the East Peninsula at Bahia took place on January 12. It was a beautiful weather day and a special planting day for the students from Bolinas-Stinson Beach School who installed Creeping Wildrye to enhance refugia habitat of the tidal marsh along the Petaluma River. The students and their adult chaperones were grateful to be able to come onto our land and install the plants. STRAW will be scheduling more schools in future months in accord with federal, state and local guidelines.

### TISCORNIA MARSH RESTORATION PROJECT

We're happy to report that the San Rafael Planning Commission voted unanimously to certify the Environmental Impact Report for our Tiscornia Marsh Restoration and Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project.

This is the final CEQA action as the project does not need to go to the City Council for any further approvals. This is an important action as CEQA compliance is required to obtain grant funding from state agencies for construction. This is where we will be needing funding next as our Ocean Protection Council funding will carry us through permitting.

# MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2021

By Noah Arthur

December produces a uniquely diverse cast of rarities in Marin, from warblers to swans and everything in between. The coldest weeks of our year come in December, the frigid “deep winter” when insects are scarce and many passerines visit town yards and feeding stations, making them easy for Christmas Bird Counters to find.

The first new rarities of this month were two shorebirds, a **Ruff** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the Inverness Park marshes on the 4th (LC, LS, CM, & BB). Rare for the Outer Point, a **Nuttall's Woodpecker** was at Nunes Ranch on the 4th (LC, LS, & BB). A **Lapland Longspur** was at the Nunes plateau on the 5th (DL), and an off-season **Western Tanager** was in Pt. Reyes Station on the 6th (NA).

A second drake **Common Teal** joined the regular multi-year returning drake at Las Gallinas on the 9th (EC). Rare in Marin even during migration and much rarer in winter, a **Dusky Flycatcher** turned up at Olompali State Park on the 16th (RC). Another **Western Tanager** was near downtown San Rafael on the 17th (IS). Also on the 17th, a **Sooty** or **Short-tailed Shearwater** (more likely the latter given the time of year) flew by off the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse (CS).

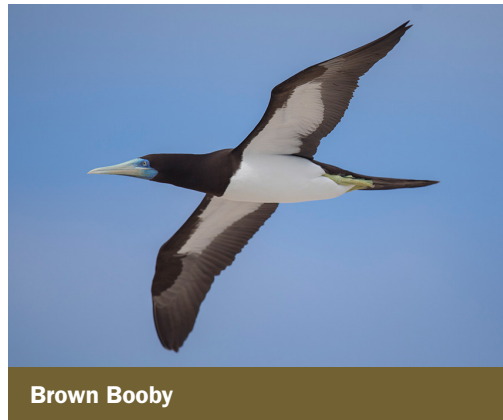
The Pt. Reyes CBC was on the 18th, and as usual the many birders out and about West Marin found a number of nice rarities. A flock of 17 **Tundra Swans** was at Drakes Estero (DL, VV, & PB), along with a **Barrow's Goldeneye** and **Ross's** and **Snow Geese**. Tomales Bay held a **Tufted Duck** near Millerton (DL) and two **Caspian Terns** (seen by many). Town streets in Inverness yielded a

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, two ‘sordida’ **Orange-crowned Warblers** (NA), and a **Hermit Warbler** (SC). Another **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was in Olema (EM), a **Prairie Falcon** was at Creamery Bay, a seasonally exceedingly rare **Palm Warbler** was at Inverness Ridge, and a **Lapland Longspur** was at Abbotts Lagoon.

Elsewhere in the county, a **Ring-necked Pheasant** was heard calling near Las Gallinas (RA).

One of the best birds of the month, a **Brown Booby** was spotted from a boat off Sausalito on the 19th (AM). One of the rarest and most spectacular hybrids that occurs in Marin, a **Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser** was on Richardson Bay on the 21st (WL). Christmas Day brought another very rare seabird, a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** flying around off Chimney Rock on the Outer Point (AL). Another **Caspian Tern** was over Richardson Bay on the 28th (RH), and amazingly, another **Brown Booby** showed up on Chimney Rock on the 30th (DL).

**Observers and Acronyms** **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **CM:** Catie Michel **BB:** Brian Browne, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **EC:** Elizabeth Crouthamel, **RC:** Rich Cimino, **IS:** Ivan Samuels, **CS:** Cole Sage, **DL:** Dallas Levey, **VV:** Vicens Vila, **PB:** Phred Benham, **DL:** David Lumpkin, **RA:** Robert Aramayo, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **EM:** Eddie Monson, **AM:** Alex Merritt, **WL:** William Legge, **AL:** Andrew Lawrence, **RH:** Robert Hinz, **SC:** Scott Carey



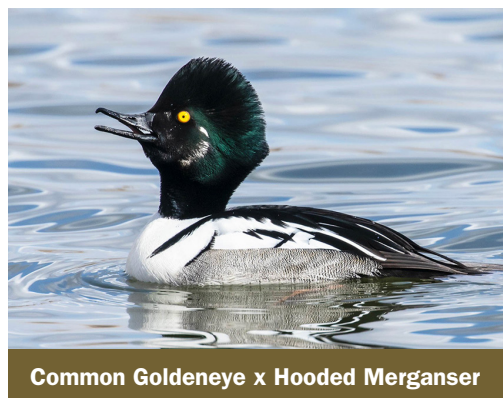
Brown Booby

Andrew Treppe, www.avi-fauna.info



Dusky Flycatcher

Bettina Arrigoni, CC BY 2.0



Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser

Diane Davies / Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab (ML320253511)

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