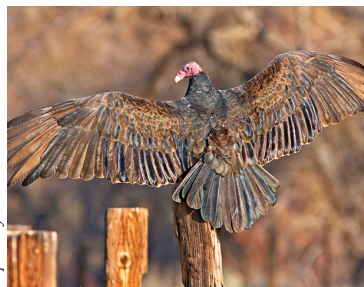


Turkey Vultures, California Condors and the Migration of Raptors

By Kurt Leuschner



Stephen Myers

Turkey Vulture

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

Each Fall and Spring the desert comes alive with migrating birds. Turkey Vultures are one of the earliest and most interesting of these migrants. Where are they going and what special habits and traits set Turkey Vultures apart from other migrating raptors? Are they really raptors or scavengers or both? Many of the secrets about Turkey Vultures, California Condors, and the migration of birds will be unveiled in this presentation.

Kurt Leuschner is a Professor of Natural Resources at College of the Desert where he teaches courses on Conservation, Entomology, Field Ornithology, Native Plants, and GPS Navigation. He is the founder of the Desert Cities Bird Club and is the past President of Western Field Ornithologists and the Natural Science Collaborative of the Desert. His most recent publications are the *Palms to Pines Birding and Nature Trail* map and brochure and a Field Guide to Desert Golf Course Wildlife.

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

Eye, Mind, Hand, Line: Identifying Birds Through the Eyes and Ears of an Artist

By Keith Hansen

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Protecting Northern Spotted Owls in Marin

by Elyse Omernick, NSO Coordinator



Elyse Omernick

Northern Spotted Owl fledgling

We have officially entered the 2022 Northern Spotted Owl's nesting season, which runs from February 1st to July 31st each year.

Marin County is home to one of the last stable populations of the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) in the world. During the 2021 nesting season, 45 nesting sites were monitored by Point Blue Conservation Science. Of the 45 sites, 39 were occupied by pairs of NSO, and of the 39 sites occupied by pairs, 24 attempted nesting. 21 (88%) of the 24 nests were successful (produced at least one fledgling)*. This data does not include any NSO activity centers on state or national park lands. Due to the sensitivity around this species, MAS and agencies do not disclose nesting locations.

The NSO is listed as a "threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Because of this, it is afforded extra protections from noise and habitat

disturbances during its nesting season. Activities or acts that result in the disturbance, harassment or death of a Northern Spotted Owl are considered a federal and state offense. This includes activities such as construction projects, tree work and roof repairs. Other acts that are considered harassment are hooting at or playing call back audio, using flash photography, baiting, loitering in groups, and sharing location information.

Marin Audubon has established a Northern Spotted Owl advisory mailing which is sent to residents that live within a quarter mile of a NSO

activity center at the beginning of each nesting season. The letter and fact sheet informs residents of special protections the owls have under the ESA, noise restrictions during the nesting season, as well as information on how to be a good neighbor to these owls. The mailing also discusses the presence of the invasive, non-native Barred Owl in our county, which is a direct threat to the Northern Spotted Owl. The Barred Owl is more aggressive, and will compete for suitable habitat, pushing the NSO out of their territory. Our letters are set to arrive in mailboxes around the end of February.

You can view this year's NSO Advisory Letter and fact sheet on our website at www.marinaudubon.org/conservation/northern-spotted-owl.

We are also focusing our efforts on educating the public on ethics around posting NSO photos and location information on social

continued on page 2

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	Bob Hinz 383-8688
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

This month we have two special announcements: First is the recommendation from staff of the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority for the Tiscornia Marsh project to receive partial funding. Final approvals will be made at the Restoration Authority Board meeting in April. See page 6 for details. Secondly, we've just signed an Agreement formalizing our continued sponsorship of the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas which will assure the Atlas will continue. See page 4 for more information about the Atlas. We will be publishing an article from the new Coordinators next month.

We're also working on updating the Junior Birdwatchers program through which elementary school students can learn about birds. We took over this program from National Audubon maybe 20 years ago but it has been inoperable for the last five or so years. At long last, it's been revised and we are almost ready to go live in a month or two.

Our Nominating Committee has a new chair, **Bob Hinz**. Contact Bob, or other Nominating Committee members **Martha Jarocki** and **Elyse Omernick** for information about our Board, our Board needs and how you can be involved in our activities and programs. Their phone numbers are in the column on the left, and their emails on our web site. We're anxious to expand our field trips and need a chair or perhaps co-chairs, to do that. Contact Bob Hinz for more information. Our Program position is also open. Join our team. We have lots of interesting activities going on.

There is sad news, long time Marin Audubon member, field trip leader and photographer, **Len Blumin**, died last month. For many years, Len led MAS field trips at Las Gallinas Ponds and was a supporter and good friend of Marin Audubon. His impressive

photographs of birds can be found here: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lenblumin> and on the Marin Audubon Society website's home page in the BIRDS drop down menu. Len will be missed.

More Sad news – the Corda Dairy ranch has closed. The family's dairy was in operation since 1933. We are neighbors of the Cordas' at our Petaluma Marsh property and we enjoyed a friendly and cooperative relationship with them. We wish them well in the next phase of their lives, and are hoping that the ranch lands can be protected. In addition to the grazed lands, the property contains important tidal marsh, adjacent uplands habitat and ancient oaks. It's very much in the public interest to save the resource of this wonderful ranch property.

Thank you again to donors to our Winter Appeal. Your gifts will support our programs and activities through the coming year. You and your donations keep us going.

As we go to press, there has not been rain since December. The rainy season started so hopefully with the atmospheric rivers. It's very worrisome for our new plants, wildlife and human community. On the positive side, the latest COVID variant appears to be lessening. The state mask mandate has been lifted, although the safety of that action is not universally held. The CVC does not agree. We'll be checking with field trip leaders about opening up the trips to unlimited numbers.

Take care and stay well.

MAS Needs You!

Marin Audubon Society is looking for interested members to join our team. Now, more than ever, MAS and the North Bay ecosystem need your support. There are a number of different opportunities for you to help with: education, field trips, habitat protection, restoration work and Board membership. What better way to contribute to our shared environment than volunteering your time?

To find out more, please contact one of our Nominating Committee members:
Bob Hinz, 415/383-8688
Martha Jarocki, 415/461-3592
Elyse Omernick, 415/694-2320

We hope to hear from you.

Northern Spotted Owls

continued from page 1

media platform such as Facebook, NextDoor and Instagram. While posting a photo is usually harmless, never share or post location information. Sharing location information with others can lead to large groups of people disturbing the owls. Loitering, especially in groups, can stress the owls and can be considered harassment under the Endangered Species Act. Harassing an NSO could result in a criminal citation or fine.

We thank you all for doing your part to help protect our majestic Northern Spotted Owls!

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.

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

Corte Madera

Saturday, March 12, 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, searching for elusive **Ridgway's Rails** and seasonal migrants. Later, we will walk to the overlook on the west side of the Shorebird Marsh, which is managed by the Town of Corte Madera primarily as a flood basin, where we'll spend 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, March 2 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.

MOUNT TAM AND CORTE MADERA MARSHES

Birding in Marin,

Season 7, Trip 4

Saturday, April 2, 2022

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and

Bob Battagin

Mount Tamalpais, rising like an icon above Marin, hosts some birds uncommonly seen in the rest of the county such as

Pileated Woodpecker,

Red-breasted Nuthatch,

Purple Finch, Red Crossbill,

and in the winter 1 or 2

Townsend's Solitaire. About twenty years ago our friend Dave MacKenzie discovered a TOSO feeding on mistletoe berries in some Sargent Cypress trees along the trail to Barth's retreat and the bird or its children have returned every year since! But the trail, built by the CCC, (California Conservation Corp), back in the 1930s has not withstood the test of time quite as well. So, if you are up for a vigorous though short (3.5 miles) hike, join us to see what we can find.

After our lunch break back at Rock Springs with fine picnic tables and a restroom, we intend to drive down to sea level to look at the Corte Madera marshes. This area is very birdy so depending on the tidal height we expect to see a lot of birds there. Wintering shorebirds are gearing up for the return to their arctic nesting grounds so we may be able to see how **Black-bellied Plovers** got their name. As the shorebirds molt into their breeding plumage, if we are diligent, we might even be able to tell the two **Dowitcher** species apart.

Registration opens Wednesday, March 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: Meet at Rock Springs at 8:30 a.m. From Hwy 1 in Stinson Beach or up 3.3 miles from Tam Junction, take Panoramic Dr to its crest then go uphill 1 mile on Pantoll Rd to the Rock Springs parking lot.



Jude Stalker

Rush Creek Preserve, looking east towards Bahia wetlands

MARIN COUNTY PARKS EVENT

Marin Audubon Society is pleased to help celebrate 50 Years: Bahia

Sunday, March 27, 2022

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Come celebrate Marin County Parks 50th Anniversary with a walk at Bahia! This 200-acre parcel, now part of the Rush Creek Preserve, was acquired through a major fundraising effort by MAS and then donated to Marin County Parks. Our day will start with a walk through the oak-studded upland habitat where we'll discuss this unique forest and why its preservation was so fortunate. Then we'll visit the adjoining Marin Audubon wetland area with Wetland Ecologist Jude Stalker, from Marin Audubon, who will explain how the restoration efforts here have been improving the marsh and vital habitat for the plants and animals that depend on it. Registration is not required. This is not an MAS-sponsored event.

Adverse weather may cancel. Call 415/473-6086 after 8 a.m. on the day of the event to hear a recorded message if canceled.

Please send any questions to Shannon Burke at sburke@marin-county.org.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at the Bahia trailhead near the end of Bahia Dr in Novato. From Hwy 101 in Novato, take the exit for Atherton Ave east approximately 1 mile. Turn left onto Bugeia Ln, which turns into Bahia Dr at the "y". Follow Bahia Dr approximately 0.5 miles before Bahia Dr dead ends. Trailhead is on the left.

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.

MARIN COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS IN ITS SECOND YEAR

The Marin Audubon Board is excited to announce that an agreement has been finalized between the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (Atlas) and the Marin Audubon Society. The Agreement establishes the Atlas as a legal entity under Marin Audubon's 501(c)(3) tax exempt status and it lays down principles to govern our relationship and ongoing interactions. The Agreement establishes Marin Audubon as fiduciary sponsor of the Atlas which will allow donors to the Atlas to deduct their contribution from their taxes.

Joan Lamphier, Daphne Hatch and Diana Humple are the current Atlas Coordinators. Marin Audubon will be working closely with the Coordinators to support the Atlas. Organizing for the coming years of surveys and data recording will take additional time and effort. The Coordinators will be establishing operating principles and procedures to support the Atlas data collection and its volunteers. To fully cover the county will require more volunteers and funding.

One of the first tasks of the Coordinators will be raising funds. Initial donations will go to support training for Atlas volunteers and for technical support. Contributions to the Atlas will be fully tax deductible under Marin Audubon's 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. To contribute to the Atlas, send a check (made payable to Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas) to: Joan Lamphier, PO Box 1022, Stinson Beach CA 94970.

The new Coordinators have diverse, impressive backgrounds that will provide stable, expert leadership to guide the Atlas through the coming years. It is expected surveys will continue for the next four years. Data analysis and publication of the report will follow.

Meet the Coordinators

Joan Lamphier is a City Planner specializing in environmental review throughout northern California. She has been a volunteer for twenty years as a hawkwatcher for GGRO and seventeen years counting shorebirds for Beachwatch. She is the Regional Coordinator for Point Reyes, and Block Leader for Stinson Beach.

Daphne Hatch retired 4 years ago after serving as the Chief of Natural Resource Management & Science for the National Park Service at GGNRA for 15 years. Daphne, along with Mia Monroe, was instrumental in establishing the Northern Spotted Owl monitoring

program in Marin County starting back in the early 1990s that continues today. She now lives in Novato and is the Block Leader for the west side of Mt. Burdell for MCBBA2.

Diana Humple is a senior avian ecologist with Point Blue Conservation Science, where she has worked for 25 years. As Program Lead for Point Blue's Palomarin Field Station, she coordinates the science, training, and outreach at Palomarin, as well as landbird monitoring across a network of sites in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is Block Leader for two Bolinas area blocks, and resides in one of them.

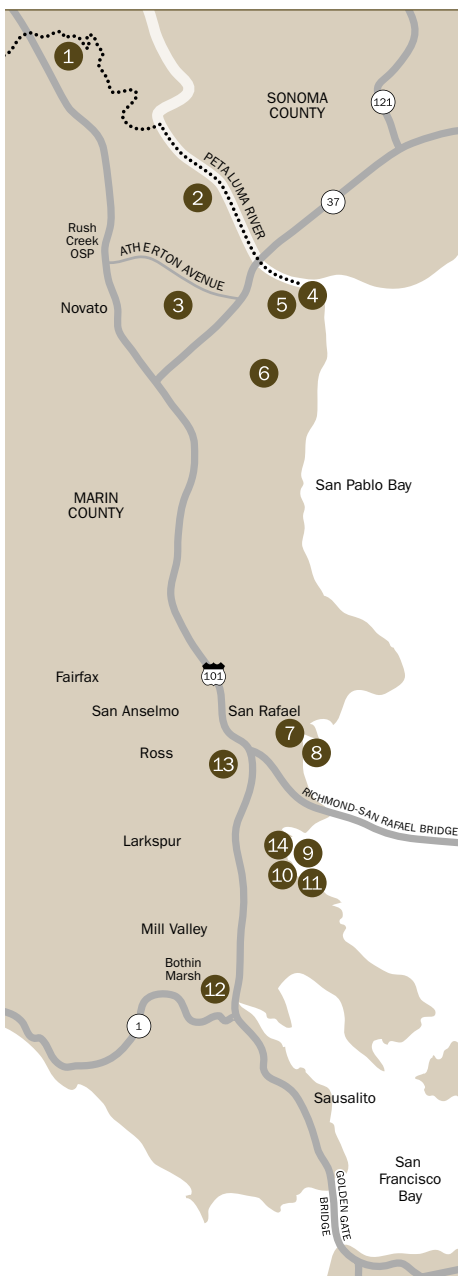
MEASURE A UPDATE

In the last two issues of *The Rail* we have addressed MAS's position on allocation of funding for agriculture and fire prevention activities in the renewal vote on Measure A, the ballot measure that will continue funding for Marin County's Parks and Open Space. This month the importance of funding for acquisition of Open Space District (OSD) lands is discussed below.

Maintaining funding for acquisition of OSD lands is essential to protect natural resources at a high level because these are the lands that are needed to protect natural resources, i.e. the streams, creeks, wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and chaparral habitats. These are the habitats that support diverse populations of birds and other native wildlife. And the opportunity to acquire properties can arise unexpectedly.

The notions that the OSD owns enough lands, that there is no need for more acquisition funds because all of the major lands are acquired, or that funding should be used to maintain what the OSD owns now, are all inaccurate. There is a lengthy list of large parcels that are at risk, some of which are historic tidal marsh. And there are many small parcels that would enhance existing habitats by expanding them. Measure A funds are used to maintain OSD lands.

The allocations approved by the supervisors are: 15% to cities for park uses; 65% for the OSD. That amount, however, would actually be 35% because 25% of the 65% would be restricted to fire suppression and 10% (reduced from 20%) is for land acquisitions; and 20% for agriculture. We've objected to reducing the acquisition percentage to 10% because of the essential values of these lands to wildlife and people. They provide wildlife habitat, biodiversity, clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration,



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

climate moderation and recreation.

The 20% for a Sustainable Agriculture Program is to be divided into: 30% for a competitive matching grant program for a wide variety of activities such as a sustainable food program, environmental restoration and water and soil health; 20% for matching grants to the Resource Conservation District, and the remaining 50% of the 20% is guaranteed for the purchase of agricultural easements – no organization is identified to acquire the easements.

At their first reading of the ordinance on February 8, the supervisor's removed qualifying wording that the easement amount would be "Up to 50%" (or 10% of the total ballot measure) so that the 10% is guaranteed. At the second ordinance reading at its February 15 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved the ordinance wording without much comment from the public.

MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORS UPDATED ON FARALLON MOUSE ERADICATION PLAN

by Mary Jane Schramm

On February 10, Conservation Committee members **Barbara Salzman** and **Mary Jane Schramm** briefly addressed the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries' advisory councils, reaffirming Marin Audubon's support for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Farallon Islands mouse eradication plan. They apprised council members of the recent California Coastal Commission (CCC) Conditional Consistency Determination for the plan (see *The Rail*, February 2022, "Commission Approves USFWS Mouse Eradication Plan") and corrected misstatements made previously to the Greater Farallones council by the plan's opponents, and recently repeated in media and other public forums.

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), surrounds the island refuge, but is a separate federal agency with jurisdiction over waters up to the islands' mean high tide line. It protects the health and biodiversity of marine life and habitats in one of the planet's richest upwelling systems. These waters sustain over 350,000 seabirds that breed on the Farallon Islands—the largest rookery in the contiguous United States—including the Ashy Storm-Petrel whose numbers have declined 32% in the last 12 years, primarily due to the mice. The sanctuary hosts populations of whales, pinnipeds, and sharks, and myriad other marine life including 25

threatened and endangered species.

Though rodenticide pellets will be deployed solely on the islands, the sanctuary is concerned about bait drift and ecological and socioeconomic impacts on marine species and commercial and recreational fisheries. The plan calls for hand placement of bait in sensitive areas such as island perimeters, narrowing the zone of potential entry. Experts have characterized impacts as low risk: Brodifacoum D-Conservation has very low water solubility, and sinks quickly to the seafloor, becoming biologically unavailable for uptake by most organisms. Hear what the experts say at <https://marinaudubon.org/conservation/farallon-islands-at-risk>.

Next steps include fulfilling the CCC's conditions: finalizing the Bait Spill Contingency Plan, a Water Quality Control Plan, refining the Gull Hazing Plan, providing independent operations monitoring, then a National Marine Sanctuaries Act 304(d) consultation. It is non-binding, as Greater Farallones does not have jurisdiction over another federal agency's actions outside the sanctuary. But sanctuary staff, having worked closely with USFWS and Pt. Blue Conservation Science for decades, have already provided substantial input. Barring unforeseen delays, the project is slated for October-November, 2023.

STREAM AND CREEK ORDINANCE ADOPTION SCHEDULED

Having been approved by the Marin County Planning Commission, the draft Stream and Creek Ordinance for San Geronimo Creek is scheduled for adoption by the Supervisors at a meeting in April.

San Geronimo Creek is a tributary of Lagunitas Creek which supports one of the largest endangered Coho salmon populations in the state. With the early rains this year there was extensive flooding and Coho spawning in San Geronimo Creek. What happens with this ordinance is additionally important because it is expected to set the stage for an ordinance covering streams throughout the county.

At its hearing in December, the Marin County Planning Commission agreed on several important changes in the ordinance. They clarified that certain structures (play, solar, electronic vehicle structures) are not exempt and that Site Plan review is required for most activities to preserve the creek, while providing for exceptions. Most of the exemptions are understandable: repair of septic facilities, creek restoration and removing of exotic (nonnative) vegetation, but one is not. It is the exemption for the removal of

native plant species and native plant species: California Bay Laurel, Toyon, and Douglas Fir, in addition to exotic species, under the assumption they are pyrophytic. Growing along creek banks, these native species are part of the riparian ecosystem and are likely to be well hydrated. Without the review that is required for other activities, including removal of other native species, this provision could actually encourage the removal of the three valuable native plants. The three native species should be removed from the list of exemptions so that Site Plan review is required for the removal of all native species.

Another concern about removal of vegetation from stream banks is the potential for the removal to leave unvegetated banks, increasing the possibility of bank erosion, and of sediment entering the creek waters, potentially adversely impacting salmonid spawning.

To ensure protection of the creek, the removal of any native trees and removal of large areas of any species from the stream-side conservation zone should be prohibited, unless Site Plan review determines that erosion is not a risk.

THANK YOU, DONORS

Terry Ainsworth, Annina & Tom Arthur, Juliet & Larry Bathgate, Timothy Behr, Gordon Bennett & Kate Carolan, Ann Bentley, Mary Bicknell, Celeste Binnings, Joanna Boches, Timiera Bolden, Benjamin Bonlander, Carol Budzinski, David Buller, Barbara Byers, William Carney, Leila Chism, Myra Chow, Megan Clark, William Clarke, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, John Davis, Paula Dawson, Janice DiNatale, Cheryl Donohue, Elaine Drude, Carl Duisberg, Mary Durell, Timothy Erdman, Mary and Neil Erickson, Richard Felton, Phoebe Fielding, Barbara Freitas, Betty Gandel, Give Lively Foundation, Lisa Glaser, Bill Glosser, Elena Gogoleva, William & Suzanne Gorenfeld, Joan Halverson, Sharon Hampton, Susan Hamstra, Michael & Valerie Hancock, Kimberly Hansen, John Harrison, Thomas Heinz, Alanna Hickey, Alice Hofer, Sarah Evers Hoffman, Stephanie Hom, Dorne Huebler, Mary Hynes, Robert Kennis, Mark & Jane Knowles, Rama Kumar, Merrily Labarthe, Paul Larkin, Hilda Leefeldt, Mardi Leland, Lennox Foundation, Jacqueline Littee, John & Nancy MacPherson, Sarah Martin, Laura Marx, McCance Foundatio, Michelle McKechnie, Tony Mekisich, Joan Murphy, Patrick Murray, Michael Muschell, Marianne Nannestad, David Neuman, Brenda Novick, Barbara O'Toole, Dvora Parker, Toni Pinsky, James Raives, Patricia Ravitz, Charlotte Reiter, William Richardson, Marianne Riser, James Roessler, Karen Rosenthal, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association, Lisa Sargent, Mary Jane Schramm, Claudia Schwalm, Richard Scott, Deborah Sorondo, Michael Stone, Bibit Traut, Margaret Wagner, Joyce & Douglas Waterman, Rona Weintraub, Nancy Weir, Michael Whitt, Chris & Teri Wills, Kathryn Wilson, Lucy Autry Wilson, Carolyn & Fred Wood, Edward Woods, Patricia Wright, Catherine & John Yee, Lois Yuen, Linda Zercher

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The 'weeds,' that is, the non-native invasive plant species, got off to a fast start this winter. With the lack of rain subsequent to January 7 those weeds, where they are thickest, have made the soil quite dry already. They will soon start to produce seeds.

We will be removing some of those weeds and adding more mulch around our new native plants. Italian thistle and some bristly ox-tongue will be large enough to be seen and removed before they bloom. Harding grass is recognizable even now before it flowers so it can be cut off or dug out. Until they bloom, however, the annual grasses are difficult to distinguish from native grasses on the site.

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: March 5, April 2

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

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: March 12, April 9

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

Debbie Ablin, Annette Anzalone, Michelle Baucke, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Gerry Jarocki, Kent McDonald, 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://marin-audubon.org/2020/09/01/alert-report-barred-owl-spottings>.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

Lots of activity at Bahia over the last six weeks. A total of 101 fourth and fifth grade students from four Bahia Vista School classes came on two different days and planted on the East Peninsula. Bahia Vista School is just a few blocks from our Tiscornia Marsh site in the Canal Area of San Rafael. We look forward to their students planting at Tiscornia also, as they did eight years ago on city property.

Also, crews from Hanford ARC spent six days removing the highly invasive exotic radish and planting native plants (*Elymus triticoides*, *Baccharis pilularis*, *Ambrosia*) along the Central Peninsula levee. And another Hanford crew put in another day's work clearing the radish from sections of the East Peninsula that are not being planted this year. We hope, over time, to outcompete all of the radish and increase habitat by planting native shrubs and grasses along the sides of the infested levees. And we're almost there. Maybe we'll finish next year, but certainly in two. With the lack of winter rain, however, we're concerned about the survival of the new plants and are scheduling watering.

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE WORKDAY

Weeding Harding grass was the main event at the MAS Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion restoration site on February 12 – our Second Saturday Volunteer Workday.

We have been digging the Harding grass on the site since the rains arrived this fall. The tough grass roots are possible to remove when the soil is moist. On Saturday, once the Harding grass had been cleared from a small section, we

experimented with sowing seeds of *Elmyrus glaucus* seeds – a native blue wildrye grass.

The grasses on the site are green and thick, and the planted natives have greened up. Now that we have had more than 30 days of zero rain, the ground is looking considerably drier. The next month or so will be critical.

Many thanks to the volunteers: Annette Anzalone, Michele Baucke, Kent MacDonald, Bob Hinz, Gerry and Martha Jarocki.

TISCORNIA MARSH UPDATE

Our spectacular news is that we have been recommended for partial funding in the next round of San Francisco Restoration Authority grants. Our application requested funds to complete permitting and construct the coarse beach that is necessary to contain the dredged material. The recommended funding amount of \$3,082,000 will pay for most of that work, but not all. The grant is not definite until approved by the Restoration Authority Board which is scheduled to occur at their March meeting.

We've finished the work plan for our Ocean Protection Council (OPC) grant and it is now with OPC staff for review. We're also reaching out to potential sources of sediment needed to restore the marsh. We've now talked with the Golden Gate Bridge District and five marinas. All dredge on a regular basis and are potential sources of sediments for beneficial reuse to restore our marsh. The problem is timing. Most are planning to dredge in the next year or two which is too soon for us. It will be 2024 before we will have the containment structure built and be able to accept sediments to expand the marsh.

An Amazing Delta Cruise

It is always a pleasure to attend a Marin Audubon field trip but sometimes everything lines up so perfectly that the trip is just spectacular. This was the case on the Delta Cruise with Dolphin Charters and our Naturalist, **David Wimpfheimer**, on February 6th.

The morning started with the great group of birders being serenaded by the chatter of **Great-tailed Grackles** as we watched a beaver and a **Sora Rail** in the tules just below the deck where we met at the Antioch marina.

With clear skies and calm winds we set off from the marina and headed down the San Joaquin River and through a web of sloughs.

The Pelican Charters crew – Captain **Ron Peterson** and **Barbara Fitzgerald** – were amazing and shared their knowledge of the historical and natural features of the area.

David called out the birds and other wildlife and shared his vast knowledge of them with us.

He pointed out a **Bald Eagle** perched in an unoccupied former great blue heron rookery. Apparently the herons had gone elsewhere to avoid the eagle.

We passed several double-crested cormorant rookeries and counted 98 **Red-tailed Hawks** and several **Great Horned Owls** along the way. Much to our amazement, there were two Great Horned Owls perched in the frame of a channel marker, giving us an up close view as we passed by.

From the top deck of the boat we could look down over the levees and view hundreds of **Snow-**, **Greater White-fronted-** and **Cackling Geese** as well as **Sandhill Cranes** flying overhead and feeding in the farm fields below. We spotted two very elusive and cryptic **American Bitterns** in the tules and observed several river otters in the water as we cruised by. We counted seventy-four bird species in total.

It was truly an amazing trip.

MARIN BIRDLOG: JANUARY 2022

By Noah Arthur

January is waterfowl month and it was at peak performance this year, producing lots of rare ducks and gulls as well as other good stuff. It's been a good winter for shorebirds, and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at China Camp on the 1st (LC & CC). A Tennessee Valley headlands seawatch on the 1st produced a **Parasitic Jaeger** and a distant but diagnostic view of the resident Bay Area **Northern Gannet**, the first Marin sighting since late 2020 of this most iconic individual vagrant bird in the Bay Area (LC & CC).

Also on the 1st, a **Townsend's Solitaire** was at the usual spot at Barths Retreat on Mt. Tam (DS), a nice total of 11 **Thick-billed Fox Sparrows** were at their usual hangout of Pine Mountain. Fire Rd. (EC), and a **Caspian Tern** was at Corte Madera (RG).

The first new rare duck of the month came on the 2nd in the form of a **Gadwall X Mallard hybrid** at Bahia (DH), the distinctive "Brewer's Duck" first described by Audubon as a new species. Also at Bahia that day was a flyover **Caspian Tern** (JZ). Very rare in the winter, a '**Western**' **Flycatcher** (probably Pacific-slope) was in Bel Marin Keys on the 2nd (JC).

Probably more overlooked than rare, at least one and possibly three '**Alberta**' **Gulls** (California Gull subspecies *albertaensis*) were at Blackies Pasture during the beginnings of the herring spawn on the 5th (WL). Also on the 5th a **Lapland Longspur** was with a big flock of larks and pipits in Bel Marin Keys (LC).



Gadwall X Mallard (Brewer's Duck)

Two nice waterfowl finds on the 7th were three **Tundra Swans** in Chileno Valley and a **Tufted Duck** on nearby Laguna Lake (both LC). On the 8th, another **Caspian Tern** turned up in Corte Madera (DL). A **Common Teal** (CC) and a **Sandhill Crane** (DL) added to the pile of rarities around Chileno Valley on the 9th.

Two more **Caspian Terns** at Blackies Pasture (WL) and another one at Bolinas Lagoon (B & B A) on the 11th added to the unexpected number of them wintering in Marin this season.

A second **Townsend's Solitaire** joined the continuing one on Mt. Tam on the 15th (LN), a **Thick-billed Fox Sparrow** was on Mt. Tam on the 16th (CC), and another two **Tundra Swans** turned

up on Abbotts Lagoon on the 17th (EF). Also on the 17th, rare for outer Pt. Reyes, an **American Crow** was along the Chimney Rock trail (KW), and a **Western Tanager** was in the Petaluma Marsh near Novato (JCr & WVD).

A pure **Glaucous Gull** at the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse on the 16th, already a rare species for Marin, was even rarer due to its age: nearly all our Glaucous records are 1st-winter birds, but this one was a 2nd-winter (DL).

By now a raging herring spawn was going in Belvedere, and on the 17th it attracted a 3rd-winter **Lesser Black-backed Gull** of the West European and East American subspecies *graellsii* – the most regular (but still very rare) form of this species in California (AM). On the 18th yet another **Caspian Tern** showed up, this one at Rush Creek (LC). Unexpected this late in the winter, a **Tropical Kingbird** was in east San Rafael on the 18th (JF). Also on the 18th a **Common X Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid** turned up at the Belvedere herring spawn (LS).

Muir Beach produced two rare winter warblers on the 19th, a **Black-and-white** and a **Wilson's** (JP). Another presumably wintering **Wilson's Warbler** was at Five Brooks Pond on the 21st (SS & CP). Another wintering **Western Tanager** showed up in BB's Larkspur yard on the 23rd, and another **Common X Barrow's Goldeneye** was in Bel Marin Keys on the 24th (AM). Bel Marin Keys continued its good run with 4 **Tundra Swans** on Pacheco Pond on the 28th (MG).

The fourth hybrid duck of the month came on the 29th in the form of a spectacular male **Mallard X Pintail** at Piper Park in Corte Madera. Also on the 29th, 3 **Tree Swallows** were at the Drakes Beach pond, probably new arrivals from the south and the year's first spring migrants in Marin (DS). The last rare bird of this productive January was another hybrid, this time a **Red-naped X Red-breasted Sapsucker** along the Estero Trail on the 31st (DG).

Observers and Acronyms **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **CC:** Conor Cochrane, **DS:** David Sexton, **EC:** Everett Clark, **RG:** Richard Garrigus, **DH:** Daphne Hatch, **JZ:** Joseph Zeno, **JC:** Jim Chiropoulos, **WL:** William Legge, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **B & BA:** Bob & Bettina Arrigoni, **SS:** Sylvie Silverstein, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **EF:** Evan Farese, **KW:** Karen Walker, **AM:** Alex Merritt, **JF:** Judith Frumkin, **JCR:** Jim Crumpler, **WVD:** Willem Van Dam, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **JP:** John Paul, **CP:** Carla Parkinson, **BB:** Brian Browne, **MG:** Mike Gragg, **DG:** Dan Goldfield

Christmas Bird Counts

CHEEP THRILLS – 12/16/2021

By David Sexton

The 2021 Cheep Thrills CBC caught a break between the rainy days, and the sunny, calm weather contributed to the fun. We had 71 volunteers in the field and our count is 155 species. This includes a first time count of a **Swainson's Hawk** observed in the Black Point area by the always excellent Avocet Research team led by Maryanne Flett.

This was the same species total as the previous year, but the total 42,918 birds observed was definitely lower than most years. This is only a snapshot view however; this count is but one of the 2,500 count circles with over 70,000 observers. The true value is the big picture view from all of the participants that will contribute to the science needed to track the health of the bird world.

POINT REYES – 12/18/21

By George Curth

After a one year absence from the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count due to COVID restrictions, The Point Reyes Christmas Count was back in full force on December 18th of last year.

With a total of 165 participants 210 species were counted. The effort included more than 500 party hours of observation and more than 525 miles traversed on foot and by car.

For more about the Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count visit our website at pointreyescbc.com. At the website there is a contact sheet if you would like to get hold of us at the PRCBC and a great map showing the Count area.

Finally our thanks to Marin Audubon, Point Blue Conservation Science and Web People Media for their continued support.

SOUTHERN MARIN – 01/01/22

By Bob Hinz

In very comfortable weather for the Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count, 100 volunteers reported finding more than 52,000 birds of 183 species, about an average number.

Northern Gannet and **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** were additions to the all-time species list this year. The gannet, a species of the Atlantic Ocean, is the only individual of the species in the Pacific and is seldom spotted in Marin waters. Its journey to the Pacific might have been the result of decreased sea ice in the Arctic. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons are extremely rare in Northern California.

Brown pelicans are an example of the extreme variability in the number of a species from year to year. This year 2784 were recorded, but in the 2019 count there were 41. You can investigate some of the trends at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/where-have-all-birds-gone>.



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.

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