

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

7:00 PM

Tricolored Blackbird Ecology and Conservation in California's Central Valley and Sierra Foothills

By Daniel Airola



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY



Lee Karmey, USFWS

Tricolored Blackbird

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

The Tricolored Blackbird has declined dramatically from its historical abundance to become a state-listed species, as a result of massive land-use changes in California's Central Valley. The species has adapted and now occupies a variety of novel habitats, including agricultural fields and grazing lands in the Sierra Nevada foothills. Daniel Airola is a member of the statewide Tricolored Blackbird Working Group and has studied Tricolored Blackbirds over the last decade to understand their population status, habitat requirements, future land use threats, and conservation management. He offers a conservation assessment addressing both the challenges of land use change and encouraging efforts to conserve the species.

Raised in Marin County, wildlife biologist and ornithologist Daniel Airola conducts research and conservation efforts for birds of concern in northern California. His recent book on 30 years of Purple Martin research and management is available at cvbirds.org.

Marin Audubon Awarded Second Restoration Authority Grant

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (SFBRA) has approved a second grant to Marin Audubon Society in the amount of \$3,082,000. The purpose of the grant is to further the Tiscornia Marsh Restoration and Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project. Ours was one of two grants awarded at the Board's April 22 meeting.

Only one Board member asked a question and that was: where we will get the dredge sediments to restore the tidal marsh? There are five possibilities, two marinas in the San Rafael Canal, (Lowry's dredges less sediments than we need); Loch Lomond just outside the canal, the Golden Gate Bridge District and City of Petaluma marina. All are scheduled to dredge this year and then again in five years except Loch Lomond which dredges every two years.

The SFBRA grant together with the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) grant will ensure we complete preparation of the applications for permits from regulatory agencies and then move into the first phase of construction of the project. The OPC grant will cover most of the permitting including additional studies that are needed such as a wetland jurisdictional delineation and studies for San Rafael's trash capture facility that will be constructed within the footprint of our levee.

Permitting will involve preparation of applications for permits and other authorizations from six regulatory agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Bay Conservation and Development Commission, National Marin Fishery Service. Permitting is complicated for a number of reasons. The site provides habitat for endangered species and special status species including Ridgway Rails, Salt Marsh Harvest

Mouse, salmonids, and green sturgeon. It involves work in tidal marsh, placement of sediments in the bay to restore tidal marsh in the bay, which has rarely been done before. It also involves flood control for a diverse community and shoreline public access.

Before construction can begin, bid documents must be prepared, a bidding process conducted, a contractor chosen and then a construction contract prepared. We may need two contractors because dredging is a different skill, needing different equipment than restoring marsh and constructing levees. We are not yet certain which of the project components will be constructed first, the levee or the coarse beach and placement of the dredge material.

BALD EAGLE NEWS



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Last year we announced the first Bald Eagle nest located on the shore of San Francisco Bay in Marin County. We just received photos from a local biologist showing an eaglet in the nest, making it the third year in a row this breeding pair has raised a chick. Their conservation success story continues.

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message	2
Field Trips	3
Conservation Report	4
Habitat Stewardship	6
Birdlog	7

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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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 is our last *RAIL* issue for the summer. Our next issue will be in September and that should reach you by the end of August. We will have no Speaker Series programs during July and August. They'll begin again in September. We will have only a few field trips during the summer. Very few waterfowl and shorebirds are here for the summer. Most go north to breed.

While our programs will slow, our Board members and active volunteers expect to be quite busy over the summer. We'll be working on conservation issues, advocacy, maintaining and restoring habitats on our properties at Bahia, Corte Madera Reserve, and others as well as continuing on our grant projects at Tiscornia and Simmons. Conservation issues we are anticipating that will require attention include State Route 37, fire issues such as the Greater Ross Valley Fuel Break, Point Reyes matters including the General Management Plan and Tomales Point Management Plan (Tule Elk).

Our fiscal year will end at the end of June. Reflecting back on our year, we've had tremendous successes and made impressive progresses earning two major grants, one from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority and another from the Ocean Protection Council. There is also a possibility that we will be awarded funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service for pollinator habitat enhancement at our Simmons Slough property. We'll be busy and have lots of challenges to manage these projects over the summer and throughout next year.

We're pleased that the Breeding Bird Atlas

has come together, and is going well under the new coordinators. The volunteer surveyors have been counting nesting birds since mid-April and will be continuing through mid-July. The Coordinators are managing this multi-faceted project with efficiency and professionalism. We're also very pleased to have reconstituted the Junior Birdwatchers Program. We're also honored to know and have the benefit of all of the good works of Dr. Marty Griffin.

Our spring appeal letter has just arrived at your homes. Our printer had equipment problems that delayed printing. Please consider a generous donation to support maintenance and enhancements. All of your donation will go to benefit our habitat and the wildlife they support.

It feels like we've been learning to live with COVID for a very long time. However, we're now getting news of new variants appearing, and a surge in cases is predicted in the fall. We'll just have to wait and adapt as best we can. While we may be wishing to have more field trips that will not require signing up and where participation is not limited, with a surge of COVID cases predicted, it may be too soon for unlimited participation.

Do join us over the summer for our field tips, and/or for our volunteer Stewardship Work Days which will be continuing at Corte Madera and Triangle Marsh on the usual schedule of first and second Saturdays. They are an opportunity to work with others with similar interests, restore habitats and enjoy the outdoors.

Have a wonderful summer and stay well.

WELCOME, BOARD MEMBERS

Congratulations to our Board members elected for three-year terms at our May Annual meeting.

James Raives, who will be in charge of Speaker Series Programs, is our newest Board Member. James spent 20 years as a planner at the Coastal Commission, where he worked on federal consistency determination projects such as the Point Reyes Management Plan and Farallon Island Mouse Eradication. Later, James was a planner for the Marin County Open Space District where he worked protecting properties with natural resources of interest to the district. James lives in San Rafael.

Clint Kellner, PhD., was appointed to fill a vacant seat on our Board earlier this year, and has been serving as Property Management Co-chair. Clint has a Ph.D. in environmental sciences specializing in insects and is retired from an environmental consulting firm. He and his wife spent two years in the Peace Corps and live in Novato.

The three other electees may be well known to members:

Ann Thomas, from Corte Madera, is our Treasurer and also serves on our Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (MCBBA2) Steering Committee. She serves on a number of other environmental organization boards, as well.

Douglas Waterman, who lives in Novato with his wife, has been our Vice President, Field Trip Chair and Speaker Series Chair for the past year. Doug also serves on the MCBBA2 Steering Committee.

Jude Stalker has been in charge of Special Projects for many years. Jude is involved with our properties – helping with planting projects as well as keeping track of volunteers. Jude lives in San Francisco.

Special thanks to our Nominating Committee: Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki and Elyse Omernick.

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.

LUNAR VIEWING EVENT

Friday, June 10, 2022

8:30 PM to 10:30 PM

With Ken George

No registration required.

Join Ken George, longtime member of San Francisco Amateur Astronomers, who will be sharing his homemade astronomical telescope to view the Moon at its optimal viewing angle and phase for the month. Ken has been giving free public night sky viewings for over 12 years at various locations in the North Bay Area, including Chabot Space and Science Center and many Marin Public Libraries. He also meets with fellow "Sidewalk Astronomers" on Mt. Tam once a month for free public star parties. Rain, high wind or excessive cloud cover cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Exit 101N at Atherton/San Marin Dr (exit 463). At end of exit ramp, turn east (right) onto Atherton. In 0.8 miles, turn left onto Bugeia Ln. In approx. 1/2 mile, slight right onto Bahia Dr, continue approx. 1 mile to stop sign. Turn right onto Topaz until near the end of the road. Meet at gate entrance across from Bahia Clubhouse.

MUIR BEACH/REDWOOD CREEK

Saturday, June 11, 2022

8:30 AM to noon

Birding with young birders John King, Joseph Zeno, and Mark Schulist

Limit of 20 fully vaccinated participants on this trip. Registration opens on June 1 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Join John, Joseph, and Mark for a field trip to the coastal riparian habitats of Muir Beach and Redwood Creek where we'll observe some of Marin's nesting songbirds and catch the tail end of Spring Migration. We will meet at the Muir Beach parking lot, and then bird the Green Gulch Trail. We will likely encounter breeding warblers, flycatchers, and other small passerines. Next, we will travel to another portion of Redwood Creek's Riparian corridor just down the road to find more songbird species in the vegetation around the creek. Finally, we will end our trip at the Muir Beach overlook where encounters with **Peregrine Falcons** are common. We can eat lunch with a nice view of the ocean.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at Muir Beach parking lot. From Hwy 101, take exit 445B and merge onto CA-1S, in approx. 1/2 mile, turn left onto CA-1N, in 5.1 miles, left onto Pacific Way, continue straight 0.2 miles to parking lot.

BIG ROCK AND LAS GALLINAS

Birding in Marin, Season 7 – Trip 7

Saturday, July 2, 2022

8:30 AM to 3 PM

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Limit of 15 fully vaccinated participants for this trip. Registration opens on June 22 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Trails at Big Rock, rather steep, allow us to view some of the expansive grasslands and forested ravines in Marin. Some of the grassland nesting birds we will be looking for include **Lazuli Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark, and Ash-throated Flycatcher**. We will also have a vast amount of sky visible so swallows, swifts, and raptors may appear with a chance for a **Golden Eagle**.

At midday we expect to drive Lucas Valley Road to Las Gallinas where we will be looking for **American and Least Bitterns, Green Heron, Cinnamon Teal, Common Gallinule, and Great-tailed Grackle**.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 in San Rafael, exit on Lucas Valley Rd and go west approximately 5.5 miles (look for the big rock). We will be walking approximately 3 miles. Because this area can get quite hot this time of year, be sure to wear a hat, use sunscreen and carry plenty of water.

SKY TRAIL AND LIMANTOUR

Birding in Marin, Season 7 – Trip 8

Saturday, August 6, 2022

8:30 AM Meet at Sky Trail, directions below

9:30 AM, Limantour

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Limit of 15 fully vaccinated participants for this trip. Registration opens on July 27 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

The Sky Trail, called "the misty spine of Bear Valley," takes us through a maturing Douglas Fir/Bishop Pine forest. Forest birds are more active early and moving birds often follow ridges so I would like to look and listen on our walk through this habitat. We may see or hear a **Pileated Woodpecker, Band Tailed Pigeons, Stellar's Jays, Swainson's Thrush, Osprey, nuthatches** and surely **Acorn Woodpeckers** and **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**.

After we leave, we drive down to Limantour Beach, meeting at 9:30 AM in the parking lot with restrooms nearby. We'll pack our lunches, shoulder our scopes and head out and up the beach. We can hike far enough to find **Snowy Plovers** to get our exercise and to cross over to the estuary side for our walk back.

DIRECTIONS: To Sky Trail, from CA 1 South, right (left from CA 1 North) onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd for 0.7 miles, left onto Bear Valley Rd for 0.5, then right onto Limantour Rd for 3.4 miles to the Sky Trailhead. Roadside parking is available near the trailhead.

From Sky Trailhead, the drive to the Limantour beach parking lot is 4.3 miles.

THE PONDS AT THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD)

San Rafael

Saturday, September 1, 2022

9 AM to noon

With Sande and Bob Chilvers

All fully vaccinated participants are welcome to join this trip. No registration required.

Join old friends and meet new ones as we resume our regularly scheduled walks on the first Thursday of the month at Las Gallinas. Special thanks to Bob and Sande Chilvers for volunteering once again to lead our monthly walks in search of waterfowl, waders, songbirds, raptors, and shorebirds. With fall migration underway, we are likely to spot some interesting species, so come assist in our search.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, and there are usually several experienced birders to assist. You don't even have to arrive on time because we spend the first 30-60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond, and our group is easy to find.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, exit at Smith

Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about 0.5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There is an outhouse in the parking area for public use or you can use the bathrooms at nearby McInnis Park.

ABBOTT'S LAGOON AND THE INVERNESS TENNIS AREA

Birding in Marin, Season 7 – Trip 9

Saturday, September 3, 2022

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Limit of 15 fully vaccinated participants for this trip. Registration opens on August 24 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Abbott's Lagoon is one of Marin's premier birding locations sporting an eBird sum of 283 species. Fall migration south along the coast brings many birds to this area. Some that we hope to see include **Ferruginous Hawk, Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers** and **Red-necked Phalaropes**. Ducks, geese, herons, **Peregrines** and **Ospreys** are also likely visitors. You will get some exercise; out and back is about 3 miles (some in sand) and Jim likes to do a full 5-mile loop. So pack a lunch for a picnic on the beach, bring layers for the fresh ocean air and help us spot a rarity.

We plan to stop along Tomales Bay near the Inverness Tennis club to look for Pine and Alder woodland birds.

DIRECTIONS: From Point Reyes Station on Hwy 1 go just south of town, right turn onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd, follow that thru Inverness up over Inverness ridge into the Point Reyes National Seashore then go north on Pierce Point Road. The Abbott's Lagoon parking lot is on the left in about 3 miles. Car Pool if you can, allow 1.5 hours from San Rafael.

RODEO LAGOON, MARIN HEADLANDS

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

7:30/8:30 AM to noon

With William Legge and David Wiechers

Limit of 15 fully vaccinated participants for this trip. Registration opens on August 28 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Join William and David for this fall migration field trip at Rodeo Lagoon. This is their long-time "patch," which never seems to disappoint birders with daily variations in species seen and unusual sightings. On this particular trip, our group will be targeting **Parasitic Jaeger**, migrating shorebirds, warblers, and other passerines. We will begin the morning with a Sea Watch at 7:30 AM. Those arriving later may join us at 8:30 AM for a circuit of the lagoon.

DIRECTIONS: Head south on Hwy 101 and take the last Sausalito exit just before the Golden Gate Bridge. At the exit stop sign, turn right and go under the freeway, then follow the road down to the left. Within 300 feet turn left at the sign to the Marin Headlands (This is the only available left turn before you begin the descent into Sausalito). You should see the tunnel with the five-minute light. Proceed through the tunnel on Bunker Rd to the Rodeo Lagoon Parking Lot at the end. Meet by the bridge over the channel to the beach or join MAS birders with scopes along the nearby beach area.

MEASURE A ON THE JUNE BALLOT

The county has worked hard to make sure Measure A has something in it for everybody. However, doing so has made it difficult to support for some. It is a measure that has left many environmentalists conflicted, including members of the MAS Board. Our position can be best described as based on the axiom “don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good.” MAS board has voted to support Measure A. Our support is qualified by our concerns, as discussed below.

We fully support the benefits Measure A would bring to the natural resources managed by the Marin County Open Space District (OSD). In particular, we endorse enhancing and protecting habitats and funding staff and seasonal workers who plan for and work on the lands to maintain and improve habitats and build and repair trails. Park staff positions would be lost if the ballot measure is not renewed as funding for their salaries would be gone.

The list of concerns and objections expressed about certain aspects of the measure is lengthy. Objections include: the percentage dedicated to acquisition of OSD lands has been reduced; a specific percentage dedicated to fire suppression; using funding for agricultural easements on private lands; and inadequate information about easement restrictions.

Some believe that if the measure fails in June, the county could regroup and put a revised measure on the November ballot.

The ballot measure funding is divided into percentage allocations. These are described below along with our analysis of each area:

65%, the largest percentage of the funds, is designated for Marin County Parks Department.

This is the largest category and it is devoted to the Marin County Parks Department (MCPD) which is divided into the OSD that manages all of the Open Space Lands, and Parks that manages the County’s parks for active uses (McInnis, Hal Brown Park at Corte Madera Creek, McNears Beach, Stafford Lake Park, and Paradise Beach Park). The 65%, would be divided as follows:

- **30% of the 65%** would be used for the 34 MCPD open space preserves, such as Rush Creek, Cascade Canyon and Ring Mountain Preserves, and properties designated as parks (see above) to improve habitats, protect wildlife, provide and maintain public access, provide interpretive programs, and improve facilities on

park lands. This category includes 27 permanent staff biologists, plant ecologists, a wildlife biologist, park planners, and other permanent staff as well as 54 seasonal workers who perform maintenance work. This is the only amount that would be used for natural habitats and public recreational improvements on county lands. An important reason for supporting the measure is that the funding for many permanent and seasonal staff would be lost. This means maintenance and enhancement for habitats would also be lost.

- **10% of the 65%** would be reserved for the purchase of open space lands. This is half of the percentage provided in the current Measure A and this reduction is a major disappointment for MAS. The major goal of Marin Audubon and Marin Baylands Advocates’ 30-year-old Campaign to Protect Marin Baylands is to protect bayland habitats by acquiring them. Acquisition is the surest way to protect wetlands and upland habitats. Supporters of the reduction say that the important lands have already been purchased and/or that the money is not needed because \$8 million has not yet been spent. Such uninformed views ignore the fact that there are at least five major properties as well as many valuable smaller habitat properties in private ownership and, therefore, at risk of being lost to development. That there are funds left in this category does not reflect on future funding needs. Purchasing land is expensive. Eight million would not be enough to purchase even one large property. When such opportunity arises, more money would be needed. Grants and other funding may be available, but there are pressures from other counties. Local funding is important to leverage other funding. We argued, to no avail, for the current 20% to continue.
- **25% of the 65%** would be designated for fire fuel reduction. Over the past 10 years, the OSD staff has spent a percentage of their funding on fuel reduction including removal of invasive species, based on their expert evaluation of conditions. Designating a percentage for fire suppression has been an issue for MAS because, in our opinion, the decision on the amount to be spent should continue to be made by the Park’s staff, not directed by the measure. With \$20 million going to the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority through the passage of Measure C, it



Joy Salzman

Marin County Park’s Rush Creek Preserve. This section was purchased by MAS and transferred to Marin County.

is not even clear this much would be needed. It is also uncertain that the nesting surveys and biological assessments required to conduct vegetation removal in the name of fire prevention would be paid for out of the 25%. Payment for these required studies may need to be subtracted from the MCPD percentage, further reducing the 30% available for habitat enhancements.

20% would be reserved for sustainable agriculture. This percentage would be further divided as follows:

- **50% of the 20%, or 10% of the full measure,** would be reserved for agricultural easements and purchase of additional real property interests to permanently preserve Marin farms and ranches. Although the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) is not mentioned in the ballot measure, it is a virtual certainty that MALT would be securing easements with this funding because they are the only organization operating an agricultural easement program in Marin. This category has been controversial within the environmental community for a number of reasons: that public money would go to benefit private interests; the public is not allowed on these lands protected with public money; the practice of selling easements to board or family members, which MALT has discontinued; that protections required in MALT agricultural easements are not disclosed; that the tax is regressive, burdening people least able to afford it; and that responders



Jay Salzman

Diked bayland would be restored to tidal marsh with McInnis Marsh Restoration Project.

to the MCPD public survey ranked agriculture as the least important category to be funded. Agriculture advocates claim biodiversity is protected on ranch lands. Well-managed ranches that are not overgrazed provide habitat for raptors and mammalian predators such as coyote, gray fox, and other species, and riparian habitat can be protected on ranches if fenced. However, large expanses of grazed lands are a monoculture and do not resemble natural habitats and do not promote biodiversity. It is not clear how many ranches are managed to protect natural resources.

- **30% of the 20%** would be reserved for grants to qualified organizations for a wide range of projects that would promote sustainable food systems, community gardens, beneficial management and improving natural resource values, addressing climate change including carbon capture farming practices, providing environmental improvements such as corridors for wildlife and other habitat improvements. The specifics of these projects and the entity that would manage this program are not stated.
- **20% of the 20%** would go to the Resource Conservation District, a state agency, for projects on agricultural lands. Projects such as enhancing water quality, soil health, biodiversity, riparian zones, and to reduce soil erosion could be funded.

15% to Marin cities and towns and applicable special districts to manage their existing parks, maintain, restore or renovate parks, preserve recreation facilities, construct

new parks or recreation facilities, acquire new parklands, conduct vegetation management to reduce fire risk, control invasive species, or promote biodiversity on lands within the jurisdiction of cities and towns.

While we clearly have concerns about funding priorities and allocations, we find that there is more good in the measure than not. The measure will provide funding needed to protect and preserve valuable habitats.

McINNIS RESTORATION UPDATE

We are pleased to report that there is still hope the McInnis Park tidal marsh restoration will become a reality. Chris DeGabriele, Acting General Manager of the Las Gallinas Sanitation District and Open Space District Director, Max Korten, have met to talk about resolving the problem with the force-main (pipe under pressure) that is in the path of the restoration. With the support of both Marin County Parks and the Sanitary District Board, we are confident issues can be resolved and the restoration can finally take place. It's been 30 years since restoration of the diked baylands at McInnis was first promised.

GREATER ROSS VALLEY SHADED FUEL BREAK

Big changes are coming to the Ross Valley's vegetative habitats. The Ross Valley Shaded Fuel Break Project (Project), is being planned by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority, (MWPA) to encompass an enormous area: 38 miles in length and 1,379 acres. It will take place on private and public lands in Larkspur, Fairfax, Ross, Corte Madera, San Anselmo, and Kentfield.

The goal of the project, as reported by the MWPA, is to build and maintain a continuous 200-foot-wide fuel break and to promote forest health in a zone around the Central Marin communities. An even wider fuel break of 300 feet will be evaluated, so it could be even wider in many areas. What they mean by "forest health" is not stated and is a concern. Many publicity photos from fire agencies show the areas beneath trees with all of the shrubs, forbes and grasses removed, as examples of desirable forest condition.

Treatment methods will entail hand removal with loppers, hand saws, hand pruners, hatchets and string trimmers. There could be some use of herbicides.

Environmental review of the project will use the state's Vegetation Treatment Plan (VTP) as the Programmatic EIR to evaluate impacts of and provide mitigation measures for the Project. Much of the Project area has

been evaluated in the VTP. An Addendum will be prepared for areas not included within the VTP boundaries. Mitigations and requirements and impact reviews from the VTP will be used. The project will be phased over five years and will include maintenance to keep the understory vegetation from returning.

MAS will be working together with other FERN (Fire and Resilience Network) organizations, California Native Plant Society and the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin, to address the need for, and environmental impacts of, vegetation removal for fire prevention. We are particularly concerned about the extensive impacts that could occur from this massive project. While we support the removal of non-native plants by the Project, we are concerned about Project impacts on native habitats, and endangered and special status species of plants and animals. For instance, there are many Northern Spotted Owl nests throughout the Greater Ross Valley. This federally-threatened species would be at risk directly through destruction of their habitat, and indirectly by destruction of nests of their primary prey species, the Dusky-Footed Woodrat.

Concerns and questions we have raised with the WMPA include: What is the percentage of the project that is within 100 feet of occupied structures? Will MWPA seek permission to create defensible space on private property or only on public lands? Will condemnation be used when permission is not given? How will the environmental effects of the project be monitored?

The WMPA plans to make decisions about treating areas beyond 100 feet when crews are on the ground, making it impossible to evaluate ecological impacts in advance. We have asked that the areas to be treated be staked so that we can evaluate the impacts onsite and that enough time be allowed for examination to avoid impact. MWPA plans to file the final documents with the state immediately after the comment deadline, leaving no time to make any changes in response to comments. We will be working to ensure the environmental damage from this huge project is kept to a minimum. We'll report results in our next issue.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Ann Allen, Sigrid Boehm, Derick Carss, Linda Darby, Nusi Dekker, Karen Ellingboe, Teri Hollowell, Frank Lawrence, Victoria McElroy, Earle Owen, Kathleen Paylor, Kara Perras, Gordon Reynolds, Patricia Russell, Jeffrey D. Weitzman

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After April's rains, the newest native grasses and shrubs are still doing well. The need to water was alleviated in the short term, but in the usual dry summer ahead we will be watering some of our less established natives. We will also help them by removing invasive plants, particularly those closest to the natives, and perhaps adding mulch.

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: June 4, July 2, August 6

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

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: June 11, July 9, August 13

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, VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Annette Anzalone, Bob Hinz, Dana Howell, Maggie Keil, Julia Kirby and Tony, Kathy Lake & Sam Collier-Lake, Dana & Terry Morawitz, Alison Pence, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Skye & Sunny Thompson

THANK YOU, DONORS

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BAHIA

Maintenance, minor weeding and watering of the plants installed last January on the Central Peninsula, will be done by Hanford ARC crews over the summer. These plants are part of our plan to create habitat on the levees surrounding the Bahia homeowners association lagoon.

In addition, STRAW staff will be maintaining the plants the elementary school students planted this past winter through their program. The crew will be coming to maintain the plants all summer as well. So it should be a busy place.

CORTE MADERA

Five volunteers joined the workday at CMER on Saturday, April 9th. The volunteers dug Harding grass clumps where they could, and cut the seed heads where the ground was too dry. The Harding grass is looking pretty robust. In the next months we will need some strong hands to manage the string weed trimmer to stay ahead of the Harding grass seed.

Volunteers also weeded and watered the emerging *Euthamia* and the milkweed patches planted in December.

SIMMONS SLOUGH

Marin Audubon is working to develop a Pollinator Habitat Enhancement area on three acres adjacent to Atherton Avenue on our Simmons Slough property. This project will involve planting of various species of native plants including trees and bushes, which flower at different times during the year. The plant list will include milkweed, which is the host plant to the monarch butterfly, as well as plants which host other butterfly species as well as moths.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is considering funding this project and is in the process of providing suggested plant lists and layout designs. Hopefully the project will start later this year with the preparation of the soil to reduce competition by non-native weeds and annual grasses. Planting will take place the following year. An irrigation system will be installed to water the plants for the first couple of years to get them established.

Monarch butterflies and pollinating insects are in trouble so this project together with Marin Audubon's other restoration projects will improve the biodiversity of the wildlife corridor from Southern Sonoma through East Marin.

The Ongoing Battle to Remove Invasive Sea Lavender from Tidal Marshes



Jude Stalker

Volunteers remove invasive sea lavender at Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve.

For some time, invasive sea lavender has been invading the tidal marshes of the San Francisco Bay, crowding out the native species in the process. Jude Stalker, biologist and MAS Board Member, feels we still have a chance remove and manage the plant manually, with timely intervention, and concerted coordination. For

about 12 years, Jude has organized groups of volunteers to help remove invasive sea lavender in areas throughout Southern Marin, many of them situated around Richardson Bay.

It takes a team effort, however, to rid the area's marshes of this invasive plant. Marin County Parks removes invasive sea lavender from their properties. The California Invasive Plant Council is managing a Baywide effort to manage the removal of the invasive plants throughout the rest of the Bay marshes and has been increasing its efforts at some Marin County sites. Jude also works with CalTrans and the Conservation Corps North Bay to remove these invasives

along a stretch of Highway 101 and at the Manzanita Park & Ride.

The goal each year is to remove every known invasive sea lavender plant from the Marin County shoreline. To offer your help in this effort, contact Jude at volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org.

Marty Griffin, Honorary Life Member of the Marin Audubon Society

We are pleased to present Dr. Marty Griffin with an Honorary Life Membership – the first of its kind – to the Marin Audubon Society.

This award is in recognition of his long-standing relationship with the Marin Audubon Society (MAS) and of all of the outstanding and important work that he has done over the course of the past sixty five years to save and protect so much of Marin County's natural lands and resources.

In the 1950s as a young physician, Marty was recruited by environmental icons, Elizabeth Terwilliger and Caroline Livermore, into the successful effort to prevent the filling and development of the northern end of Richardson Bay. This major environmental victory spawned the MAS Chapter; established the Richardson Bay National Audubon Center and Sanctuary in Tiburon; and ignited a spark in Marty. The experience led to a lifetime of environmental activism, thwarting several major attacks on the majestic landscapes of West Marin and beyond.

While serving as the third president of MAS in 1961, Marty halted plans for a massive highway, urban and commercial

development of the Bolinas Lagoon and surrounding hillsides by strategically purchasing the 503-acre property known as "Canyon Ranch." While initially a project of MAS, he enlisted the support of Golden Gate – and later the Sequoia and Madrone Audubon Society chapters – to establish the independent Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) and saved one of the largest heron rookeries on the West Coast. Through ACR he continued to purchase many parcels of property in and around the Bolinas Lagoon and Tomales Bay to prevent future development and protect the natural environment and resources there.

His list of eco-accomplishments stretches on to saving lands beyond Marin County and founding programs including the Environmental Forum of Marin to educate and engage citizens in environmental advocacy. As an elected board member of the Marin Municipal Water District in the 1970's, he was able to help limit development in Marin County to available water supply through a moratorium on water hook-ups. His many other talents include playing the



Jude Staker

Marty Griffin entertaining the crowd at the 2016 Marin Audubon Mother's Day Picnic at Audubon Canyon Ranch.

accordion and making wine.

Marty is currently advocating for restoration and preservation of the natural resources of Point Reyes National Seashore. This membership is a token of our appreciation for all that he has done for Marin Audubon, and for the natural resources of Marin County. We are in awe and most grateful for his boldness, foresight and wisdom in saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast.

MARIN BIRDLOG: APRIL 2022

By Noah Arthur

April in Marin is peak spring migration, when common migrant warblers, flycatchers, and others pile through on their way to northern and mountain breeding grounds. It's not great for rarities though, often being our least productive month. The first unusual find of this April was a **Belted Kingfisher** at the Pt. Reyes Fish Docks, rare on the Outer Point, on the 1st (TI).

The rarest bird of the month, and one of the best of 2022 so far, a **Grey-bellied Brant** was at Lawson's Landing in Tomales Bay on the 3rd (MS, LS, & LC). This little-known subspecies of Brant, intermediate between Pacific and Atlantic forms, winters regularly in the Vancouver/Seattle region but is exceedingly rare in California.

A **Swainson's Hawk** floated over Olompali on the 6th (PD). Two **Chipping Sparrows**, one at Spaletta Ranch and one at Nunes Ranch, were on the Outer Point on the 7th (PC). The Palomarin banding station caught a **Myrtle X Audubon's Warbler hybrid** on the 12th – a surprisingly rare hybrid in Marin considering the

abundance of both parent (sub)species.

Resident in our county but elusive as a ghost, a **Northern Pygmy-owl** was calling along the Limantour Beach trail on the 15th (JK & MS).

Rare for the Outer Point were two **Bald Eagles** in flight near the Fish Docks on the 23rd (DL). Also on the 23rd, a male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was in Chileno Valley (BD). On the 24th a **Townsend's Solitaire** was at Mt. Burdell, and a confused **Black Swift** drifted in to the McNear's Brickyard swift roost with **Vaux's Swifts** (both RC).

A cruise boat with a bunch of birders on board moved through Marin waters on the 26th, logging a **Sabine's Gull**, **Laysan Albatross**, and a whopping 16 **Murphy's Petrels**.

A male/female pair of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** flew over the Palomarin banding station on the 27th. A late **Long-tailed Duck** was at Fish Docks on the 29th (JH). Also on the 29th, a **Sandhill Crane** was seen in flight near the Lighthouse (DH), and later found by a Pt. Reyes nature field trip group



Alan & Elaine Wilson, www.naturepicsonline.com

Belted Kingfisher, female

near South Beach.

Continuing birds from past months included the wintering **Common Teal** at Las Gallinas, which lingered fairly late, at least through the 18th (JP).

Observers and Acronyms **TI:** Tony Iwane, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **PD:** Patricia DiLuzio, **PC:** Peter Colasanti, **JK:** John Keeley, **MS:** Meghan Sullivan, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **BD:** Ben DeDominic, **RC:** Rich Cimino, **JH:** John Hackney, **DH:** Dan Habig, **JP:** John Palgut



The Rail

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SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

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.

ALTERNATIVELY, 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.

Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

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