

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11 7:00 PM**

**Nature's Best Hope**

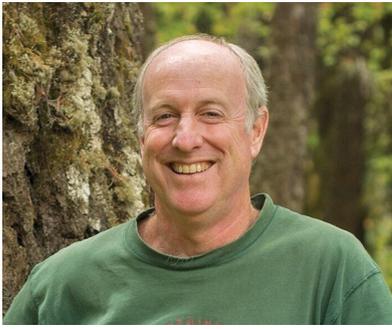
By Doug Tallamy



# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Photo courtesy of Doug Tallamy



**Doug Tallamy**

Tonight's program arranged by Golden Gate Audubon Society, is co-sponsored by Marin Audubon Society and other area chapters. The Zoom link to the program is on Marin Audubon website's Speaker Series page.

Recent headlines about global insect declines and three billion fewer birds in North America are a bleak reality check about how ineffective our current landscape planning has been for sustaining the plants and animals that sustain us. If we design landscapes that enhance local ecosystems rather than degrade them, we can create Homegrown National Park, a network of viable habitats that will provide vital corridors connecting the few natural areas that remain. This approach to conservation empowers everyone to play a significant role in the future of the natural world.

Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture at the University of Delaware. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. His books include *Bringing Nature Home*, *The Living Landscape*, co-authored with Rick Darke, and *Nature's Best Hope*, a New York Times Best Seller

**NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16 6:00 PM**

**A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds**

By Saul Weidensaul

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## State of the Birds Report 2022

Three billion breeding birds have been lost in the United States and Canada in the last 50 years according to the State of the Birds Report United States of America 2022. The report is published by 33 agencies and organizations including National Audubon Society, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Cornell Lab, USGS, and Point Blue Conservation Science and is based on articles published in Science in 2019 and information from the Birds of Conservation Concern and/or state lists of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Bird declines are evident in every habitat type except wetlands – which is attributed to decades of investment that have resulted in dramatic gains. According to the Report, “Four decades of conservation have generated spectacular comebacks of ducks and geese.” Further conservation actions are needed to reverse the trend for species dependent on other habitat types.

The BCC list, updated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Species of Special Concern list, identified 269 species that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The Report identifies 70 species from the BBC list and/or state lists of Species of Greatest Conservation that “have lost half or more of their populations in the past 50 years and are on a trajectory to lose the other half in the next 50 years ... or they already have small remaining populations and face high threats, but lack sufficient monitoring data.” These are defined as *Tipping Point* species.

This report highlights the plight of birds in different habitats:

**Shorebirds**, many of which make epic migrations, flying thousands of miles between their arctic breeding grounds to South



NPS/Sally King

**The Pinyon Jay has lost half its habitat since 1970**

American overwintering areas. One third of shorebirds are *Tipping Point* species with cumulative population losses exceeding 70% since 1980. Threats include loss of stop-over habitats on coastal beaches, wetlands and estuaries, and unregulated hunting in the Caribbean and South America.

**Grassland birds** have suffered the biggest decline of any terrestrial biome due to habitat conversion and pesticide application. About two-thirds (15 species) of this group have had population declines since 1970 and one-quarter are *Tipping Point* species. Mountain Plover is in this category.

**Aridland birds** have been in long term decline, with a slight improvement since 2012. Fires, drought invasive plants, unsustainable grazing, development, and energy extraction pressure are cited as reasons. Sage Thrasher and Pyrrhuloxia have declined at accelerated rates. Public lands are noted as being particularly important for these species.

**Western Forest** birds have declined by 20% since 1990. Almost half of this group (19 species) have experienced significant declines. Five species have lost more than half of their habitat since 1970 including Pinyon Jay and Rufous Hummingbird.

*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 Lanctot 924-6138
Treasurer	Ann Thomas 924-9559 Martha Jarocki 461-3592
Conservation	Roger Harris 510/710-9120 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Doug Waterman 506-4675
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Contact Bob for membership problems or questions.	
Outreach, Website	Elyse Omernick outreach@marinaudubon.org
Speaker Series	Mike Anderson 990 9784
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Nominating	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Waterman 506-4675
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710 Clint Kellner (on leave)
Volunteer Coordinator	Ellena Ochoa
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 newest Board member Mike Anderson. Mike was attracted to Marin because he likes birds, our Marin environment and what Marin Audubon does. He is a retired CPA who lives in Corte Madera. Mike is assuming a partial term and will be taking over Speaker Series.

Our Nominating Committee is beginning its work. If you like what Marin Audubon does, are looking for challenges and interesting activities, and have some time. Please contact a member of the committee: Doug Waterman, Martha Jarocki and Lelia Lanctot (contact info in column on left). We have opportunities for you to help with our education programs and habitat protection work.

Thanks to all who donated to our Winter Appeal. Donations to this letter are dedicated to our programs and operations. Many of you donated even before receiving our appeal letter. We appreciate your support and are sorry for our tardiness. We have also received a number of donations that arrived before our appeal letter went out. We really appreciate your thinking of us early on. We'll try to be earlier next year. If you have not yet donated, it's not too late. You can just send a check or contribute through our website or PayPal.

A reminder that this month, and February, we will be having a special speaker program on a different day, Wednesday, January 11. Douglas Tallamy, author of *Nature's Best Hope*, will be giving this special program arranged by Golden Gate Audubon Society and sponsored by other Bay Area chapters. See the Speaker Series page on our website for a Zoom link to the program.

As we go to press we are in the middle of the Christmas Bird Count period. We are planning to have reports on the three counts next month.

What a fantastic gift scientists from Lawrence Livermore Laboratory have given to the world – net energy gain through nuclear fusion. This scientific achievement holds the promise of giving us humans the energy we want without damaging or destroying the environment: without coal mining that destroys the earth, dams that destroy rivers and ruin fish populations, without turbines that kill birds, panels that cover habitat, combustion engines that pollute our air, disasters from nuclear power plants, and on and on. Although it may not happen soon, clean energy may finally be within reach.

As I look at our activities over the past year, I'm impressed with our accomplishments – our education program especially in the light of lingering COVID, our advocacy for the environment, stewardship of habitats on our properties, and directly addressing sea level rise with our Tiscornia project. Looking ahead to the new year, I'm feeling excited with our challenges and optimistic about meeting them. We invite each of our members to join us.

## Interested in Joining MAS Board?

Marin Audubon Society's accomplishments in preserving and restoring natural habitats has been prominently displayed in this newsletter and other environmentally concerned publications. There is always more to be done. For MAS, the impetus for creating new project for providing field trips and speakers and confronting ongoing challenges starts with the Board of Directors. At this critical time when climate change and destructive development still threaten habitat, the stronger the Board is the more effective it can be. We invite anyone seeking to deepen their involvement with our efforts and concerns to consider joining us. If you are interested in learning more, please contact: Doug Waterman at 415/506-4675, Lelia Lanctot at 415/924-6138, or Martha Jarocki at 415/461-3592.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Jennifer Alter, Gleneda Borton, Annette Coppock, Robert Dalva, Kessa Early, Tammy Fetter, Terence Grant, Raphael C. Guzman, Thomas Harlan, Shirley Lindauer, Ulla McLean, Samira Nassrah, Jo Newman, Ken Shih, A. Alan Weber, Karin Wiedner

**THE PONDS AT THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD), San Rafael**

Thursday, January 5, 2023 and  
Thursday, February 2, 2023  
8:30 to 11:30 AM  
With Sande and Bob Chilvers

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

Beginning birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas ponds. Join our friendly leaders as we search for waterfowl, waders, songbirds, raptors, and shorebirds.

Bird enthusiasts of all levels 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 to 60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond and the group is easy to find. Heavy rain cancels.

**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.

**STINSON BEACH/BOLINAS Bolinas-Stinson Elementary School Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 1**

Saturday, January 7, 2023  
8:30 AM to mid afternoon  
With Jim White and Bob Battagin

*Registration opens on December 28, 2022 at 8 AM on Marin Audubon website's Field Trips page. Trip limit is 15. No drop-ins, please.*

A healthy happy New Year to you all. Bob and I are pleased to share the bird rich Stinson Beach/Bolinas birding area with you. Coupled with non freezing winter weather and many diverse habitats, Southern Marin Christmas Bird Counts show this to be most species rich, birdiest, area in Southern Marin county. These habitats include the ocean, beaches, rocky shores, a large lagoon with acres of mudflats, Douglas Fir and Redwood forests, Alder riparian, parking lots, residential and more. The CBC data show an average of over 125 species winter in this area. Plus, many of these birds, like ducks, gulls and shorebirds, are rather easy to see as they float about on the water or walk along the open shores. Can we find 100 species today?

Thanks can be given to the founders of Marin Audubon and some conservation minded elders for the parks, open space, public access, and wildlife habitats in much of the county and around Bolinas

Lagoon. Dr. Martin Griffith was instrumental in saving Bolinas harbor from a hotel and yacht club destination and he is commemorated at the heron and egret rookery that we will pass along the east side of the lagoon.

So start your year list if you haven't already. We strive to help all of our participants to see or hear all of the birds that we encounter, but that is a goal not quite a reality. Let's go birding!

**DIRECTIONS:** We will meet at 8:30 at the Bolinas-Stinson Union Elementary School at 125 Olema-Bolinas Rd in Bolinas. From the south, head north on Hwy 1. Turn left at Bolinas-Fairfax Rd/Fairfax-Bolinas Rd. Turn left onto Olema Bolinas Rd. Turn left to stay on Olema Bolinas Rd. After 0.2 miles the school will be on your right. From the north, head south on Hwy 1. Turn right onto Olema Bolinas Rd. Turn left to stay on Olema Bolinas Rd. After 0.2 miles the school will be on your right.

**HAMILTON WETLANDS**

Tuesday, January 24, 2023  
10 AM to 2 PM  
With Daniel Edelstein

*Registration opens January 14 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page. Trip limit is 15. No drop-ins, please.*

This trip is perfect for beginning birders. We'll pursue sightings of visiting shorebird, duck, gull, and songbird species for this area, including uncommon to rare species such as **Lesser Yellowlegs, Western Snowy Plover, Glaucous Gull, Lesser Scaup, Barrow's Goldeneye, Eurasian/Common Green-winged Teal, and Redhead.**

Feel free to pack a lunch and beverage. Spotting scope recommended, but not essential.

Daniel is a long-time Avian Biologist, Birding Guide, and college birding instructor ([warblerwatch.com](http://warblerwatch.com)).

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101, take exit 458, take right fork to continue on Nave Dr. Make a right on Main Gate Rd, continue onto Palm Dr, right onto Hangar Ave, continue to South Hamilton Park, near the end of the road. Parking is available in the Park's parking lot. Meet at the Hamilton Wetlands trailhead, near the South Hamilton Park playground.

**SAUSALITO/TIBURON Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 2**

Saturday, February 4, 2023  
8:30 AM to mid afternoon  
With Jim White and Bob Battagin

*Registration opens Wednesday, January 25 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.*

We are going to explore the bay from the Sausalito water front to the Golden Gate and Richardson's Bay around to Strawberry

Point and on to Blacky's pasture in Tiburon. Many ducks, loons and grebes winter on the bay waters and we may find similar species to compare like **Eared and Horned or Clark's and Western Grebes**, of **Red-throated, Pacific and Common Loons** or **Greater and Lesser Scaup**. We are also likely to find some shorebirds, perhaps a **Spotted Sandpiper** or a rather rare **Wandering Tattler**.

Herring runs happen around this time of year and if we are lucky they will still be numerous. Herring deposit large numbers of eggs on eelgrass, which water birds, especially gulls, love to feast on. Last year near this time I think that 10 species of gulls were located. So brush up on your gull IDs and join Bob and I along the shore.

**DIRECTIONS:** Meet at the east end of Harbor Dr. Handicap Accessible. We will park where the birding is close, near level and smooth. Harbor Dr and Strawberry spit have fine public shoreline paths.

**WINTER BIRDS OF THE DELTA BOAT TRIP**

Antioch Marina Harbor, Marina Plaza  
Sunday, February 5, 2023  
Meet at the Marina at 8:40 AM  
With David Wimpfheimer

*This trip costs \$135. Registration opens Sunday, January 8 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page. Trip limit is 25 fully vaccinated participants. Cancellations will be accepted until February 2 at noon. If tickets aren't available, you may sign up for the waitlist by using the Contact Organizer prompt on Ticketbud and leaving your name and phone number.*

Join us on Sunday, February 5 for this very popular trip. We'll depart from the marina at 9 AM and enter the San Joaquin River, keeping an eye out for overwintering birds and any marine (or other) animals that happen to show up. As we head east through the day we enter a number of the smaller sloughs and waterways with views out over the flooded agricultural fields that provide a refuge for flocks that nest in the north but winter here.

Along with the flocks of snow geese, white fronted geese and **Tundra swans**, numerous ducks, shorebirds, and raptors are usually spotted. Well known birder and naturalist David Wimpfheimer will provide commentary and Ronn Patterson (captain and naturalist) will fill in bits about the history of the delta as we transit this altered but still viable ecosystem.

Coffee, tea, hot chocolate are provided, bring lunch and snacks.

Bad weather can cancel, slight rain will not. Inclement weather will reschedule the trip to Sunday, February 19.

Approximately one week prior to the trip ticketholders will receive instructions and directions to the Antioch Marina, where the trip begins and ends.

# 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.

## State of the Birds 2022

*continued from page 1*

**Seabirds** are experiencing catastrophic population declines with one study documenting a 70% loss since the 1950s. About a quarter are described as *Tipping Point* species. Climate change, fishery bycatch, and other human-induced causes; marine debris, and invasive species such as rodents on islands, cause breeding population declines for more than half of the seabird species on islands.

The long-term recovery of waterfowl and waterbird populations is largely attributed to public-private partnerships and federal policy changes, but ducks continue to face threats from habitat loss, and climate change.

The report emphasizes that protecting and restoring habitat for birds also benefits people. (Something we have been saying for years.) The report points out benefits of protecting bird habitat for "wildlife, people, entire ecosystems and Planet Earth": biodiversity, environmental justice, climate resilience. Examples include, 1) the ability of many plant species to survive depends on birds. More than half of all plant species depend on birds for seed dispersal. The only time when plants have the opportunity to move to elevations that have more suitable climatic conditions in the future is at the seed stage. 2) protecting and managing priority bird habitat will keep more than 100 billion tons of carbon out of the atmosphere as reported in the 2021 National Audubon Society National Carbon Solutions Report. The restoration of 300,000 acres of Central Valley riparian forests would sequester 7 million metric tons of carbon.

## FISH THRIVING IN LAGUNITAS CREEK

Eric Ettinger, Marin Water (formerly MMWD) fish biologist, reports that the rain in late November raised flows in Lagunitas Creek and brought in the season's first surge of Coho Salmon! Immediately following the rain, Marin Water crews counted 19 Coho and 20 Chinook Salmon in the upper creek. For just a few hours, flows out of San Geronimo Creek were high enough to allow salmon to navigate through the bedrock pools known as The Inkwells. Mid-December is often peak season for Coho Salmon spawning in the Lagunitas Creek watershed. This year the storms arrived in early December and coho numbers surged shortly thereafter. Marin Water staff counted 71 coho redds (gravel nests) so far, which is all fairly typical.

What hasn't been typical is the number of Chinook Salmon that have been seen. In fact, a 25-year record for Chinook sightings was just broken, with a tally that currently stands at 146! Some of those fish were likely counted more than once, which is why counts of redds are relied on more. By that measure, we're still a bit shy of an all-time record.

Rain is predicted as we go to press at the end of December. When the rains return it is likely more coho will be spawning, maybe a few more Chinook, and the first steelhead of the season. At least, that's what would be typical.

## LARKSPUR GENERAL PLAN DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Larkspur initiated its general plan update several years ago. They have just come out with the draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on the Plan. As our readers know, we review General Plans and EIRs of many cities and the county with a focus on biological resources. General Plans cover many environmental topics including, traffic, air quality, geology, hydrology, cultural and biological resources.

Important marsh habitats within Larkspur's boundaries, the Pocket tidal marshes at Piper Park Marsh, Redwood High School muted-tidal marsh and the fringe marsh along Corte Madera Creek are identified in the EIR. The Piper Park tidal marsh supports endangered Ridgway Rails and the fringe marshes enable the rails to move safely along the creek under the cover of overhanging vegetation. All of the flatlands along Corte Madera Creek were historically tidal marsh. These, plus Hal Brown Marsh, are all that remain. Creeks in Larkspur have suffered the same fate. Most have been undergrounded and there is little creekside buffer along Larkspur Creek and King Mountain Creek. According to SSWMP, Larkspur undergrounded more creeks than any other jurisdiction in the county.

Migratory waterfowl and shorebirds also use the waters and banks of Corte Madera Creek, marshes and other waterbodies. The man-made lagoon at the Larkspur Marina offers refuge for migratory diving ducks, and the freshwater habitats Remillard Pond and Tubb Lake, are not recognized in the EIR. Also not mentioned is that Remillard pond has supported a population of Western Pond turtle, a special-status species.

Larkspur also supports important terrestrial habitats, particularly Redwood forests that support probably the largest concentration



### 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    |

of Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) nests in the county. Some NSO nests and Activity Centers (areas where the owls raise their young) extend onto city and onto private property. The DEIR's presumption that these habitat are protected because they are owned by the Marin County Open Space District or the city is in error. It is not recognized that protecting the habitat does not just mean protecting the actual space. In addition to development, habitats and species can be impacted by activities on adjacent lands, presence of people, noise, lights, invasion by non-native species, removal of native plants on-site or on adjacent lands, and lack of ecotone to provide high tide refugia habitat for rails and nesting and foraging habitat for San Pablo Song Sparrow.

We concentrate on how Biological Resources would be protected. The following discussion presents the Biological Resource paraphrased Goals, Policies and Action Programs (in italics), our analysis of their adequacy and some recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the Proposed Actions:

The **Goals** and **Policies** put forward in the DEIR generally present a positive approach for protecting biological resources, however, the Action Programs do not follow through. Those proposed are vague, weak and unlikely to improve conditions for, or even protect, the important habitats and wildlife in Larkspur. Some of the recommendations are based on inadequate information, would duplicate work already available on species locations populations and on the nature of resources. Some recommendations seem designed to delay actions that would protect or improve habitats and species.

**GOAL 1** *Protected native habitats particularly for special status and endangered species*

**Policy ENV 1.1** *Protect biological resources including, migratory birds, fish and a threatened and endangered species . . . . Avoid adverse impacts of development on species. Action Programs: Implementing CEQA, providing information to the public and cooperating with others to acquire habitat to protect species.* These recommendations will not protect the species or implement the policy or the goal. CEQA does not protect resources. It identifies natural resources that need protection and should provide policies and actions that will protect them. It is up to jurisdictions, to adopt adequate policies and actions. In this case the actions are too vague and inadequate to ensure protection.

**Policy ENV 1.2.** *Protect and enhance native plant communities. . . .*

There are positive *Action Programs under this policy: encourage the use of native and the removal of invasive plants, continue to protect trees on public land; protect trees; encourage and, where appropriate require, private property owners to protect the health of native woodlands and trees; require protection of existing native plants or apply conditions to offset the loss.* Unfortunately, how these actions would be implemented and whether they would be implemented consistently and effectively, is unclear because there is insufficient direction as to how to carry them out.

**Policy ENV 1.5** *Endeavor to preserve and protect wildlife habitat . . . and control human use . . . as necessary to protect them.*

Action Program 1.5a *Review and, to the degree feasible, condition development proposals to protect wildlife habitat.* Particularly vague, will not ensure protection. What does it actually mean in terms of regulating development? What does "degree feasible" mean? What conditions would be required? What does it mean to protect the habitats?

**Policy ENV 1.6** *Ensure that even minor projects do not significantly affect special status resources and habitat.*

This is a great concept, however, where is the guidance for how to accomplish it. These conditions are regularly required by regulatory agencies.

Action Program 1.6a *is to develop a program that identifies the resources, where they are, prepare a schedule of feasible mitigation measures.* What the resources are and where they are is already known. Vegetative habitats in Marin have been mapped and the subspecies that depend on these habitats are known. The EIR even identifies some.

The EIR suggests two positive additions to Policy ENV 1.1 mitigation measures: surveys for special status species and avoidance of nesting season in compliance with state and federal regulations. Other additions we suggest to better ensure protection of the natural resources:

- Special status species on terrestrial habitats: for NSO, protect nest sites and Activity Centers, protect habitat by prohibiting removal of redwood trees, NSO primary prey Wood rat nests, and understory habitat.
- Tree ordinance should be updated to protect native trees because of their ecological value, particularly nest trees for NSO and other species. The habitat and other values of native plants (not just heritage trees) should be addressed.
- Endangered species: tidal wetlands need adjacent upland with suitable native vegetation to protect them from avian

predators during extreme high tides. The EIR assumes that because marshes are in public ownership they are protected. That may mean they won't be developed, but it does not mean their values and functions are protected. For example, the Piper Park marsh has inadequate marsh edge transition zone, the vegetation is insufficient to provide high tide refuge habitat for Ridgway Rails.

**GOAL 2** *Protect Water and Riparian Resources*

**Policy ENV 2.1** *calls for preparation of a Creek, Shoreline and Riparian Master Plan* – this would delay protective action until a plan is prepared. Without a commitment to a completion date this is just a vague promise that might never be implemented. Furthermore, there is extensive information available on the needed characteristics of "creek setbacks." Creek setbacks are an essential part of creek ecosystems, ensuring cool water temperatures, habitat for wildlife, stabilized creekbanks thereby protecting water quality from sediment deposition.

Action Program ENV 2.2b *calls for preserving or enhancing buffers or transition zones between wetlands and shorelines.* This program would provide an essential component of wetland habitats and it should be done now. It should also include recommendations for the size and vegetative characteristics of buffer to ensure habitat and other benefits, and to ensure it is uniformly applied.

**Policy ENV 2.3b** *This policy supports continued designation of the wetlands along Corte Madera a Creek, at Piper Park, Redwood High School and Ferry Terminal and shoreline between Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and the Bay waters as Shoreline/Wetland Conservation Areas.* This concept should be described. What are the restrictions, if any, on wetlands in the Conservation Area?

General Plans are intended to reflect the vision of the community. We hope residents of Larkspur and others interested in the habitats in Larkspur speak up to protect the important biological resources in Larkspur.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Review the DEIR and submit your comments by the January 17 deadline. Feel free to use any of the points above. Put in your own words.

Submit comments to Elise Semonian, Community Development Director, 4009 Magnolia Avenue, Larkspur, CA 94939, [esemonian@cityoflarkspur.org](mailto:esemonian@cityoflarkspur.org).

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

In January we will go back to removing Harding grass where it is most troublesome for our existing native plants and where we hope to plant more natives either this winter or next. The rain that cancelled the December workdays at both Triangle Marsh and the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve made removal of Harding grass a little easier. Nearly all the annual plants at these sites are nonnatives, but we might have some native annual seeds to plant in areas where Harding grass and bristly oxtongue are under control.

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

#### Volunteer Workdays

##### Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: January 7, February 4  
Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive directly across from the Ring Mountain Phyllis Ellman trailhead near the Montessori School.

##### Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: January 14, February 11

Meet at the end of Industrial Way near Trader Joe's in Greenbrae. For up-to-date information, contact Martha Jarocki, [marthajarocki@gmail.com](mailto:marthajarocki@gmail.com) or phone 415/461-3592.

##### Bahia, Novato:

If you'd like to help, please contact Jude at [judestalker@gmail.com](mailto:judestalker@gmail.com).

### ARKITES ENHANCE LARKSPUR BOARDWALK

Huge thank you's to the "Arkites," residents of the Larkspur Boardwalk One, who participated in a highly successful "work party" pulling the highly-invasive *Salsola soda* from the marsh surrounding their houses. Much progress was made, particularly on Audubon's lot that was donated by the Blauvelt family in 2020. Our piece of marsh was a prime target as there was a large swath that has been expanding over the past several years.

Organizer of the work party, Betsy Clark, reports that 20 large bags of *Salsola* were removed that day but it isn't ALL gone. Betsy also comments that it was a successful community event: "that the experience was so positive – even addicting for some! Many have become "converts" to ridding the marsh of *Salsola soda*!"

The Larkspur Boardwalk now has 35 residences, all that remain from the original 400 residences in four ark communities that were built along Corte Madera Creek in the early 1900s. Some the structures were originally house boats but all now have foundations that rest on the marsh. Current environmental regulations would prohibit any new structures.

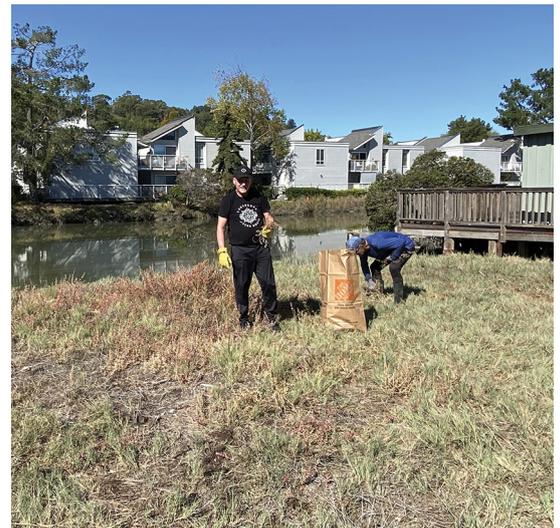
*Salsola soda* is a small (to 0.7 meters tall), annual succulent hydrophytic (salt tolerant) shrub that is native to the Mediterranean Basin, North Africa, Italy, Sicily and Spain. There is concern about its invasiveness in California's salt marshes. It has invaded many tidal marshes in Marin. Along Corte Madera Creek, in addition to the Larkspur Boardwalk One and Piper Park Marsh, there are extensive dense patches in Redwood High School Marsh and it is even invading Marin Audubon's marsh and the Ecological Reserve Marsh near the mouth of the Creek.

### BAHIA STRAW PLANTING

Everything has been going great with the STRAW classes during December. The students *love* their planting days. Input from the students, families, and teachers along with feedback after restoration days has all been positive – they had a wonderful time, and the planting was a meaningful and fun experience. One morning everyone heard a Ridgway's Rail! What a special surprise. There were four restoration days in December: one class from Bahia Vista Elementary School, two from Lynnwood Elementary and one from Olive Elementary School. One Bahia Vista class was rescheduled to January due to rain.



Betsy Clark



Betsy Clark

#### Arkites volunteer work party

### TISCORNIA MARSH RESTORATION

The Tiscornia team from ESA has been busy at work this month preparing technical reports and completing our applications to regulatory agencies. At its December 16 meeting, the San Francisco Restoration Authority Board voted unanimously to approve an augmentation of \$386,000 to the \$3,082,000 grant the Board approved at its April 22 meeting in order to fund extra cost for construction of the levee improvements. Originally, we had planned to build the coarse beach first, but due to sediment supply limitations and other considerations, it was decided that it made most sense to build the levee first. The project will be built in phases over a period of four to five years. With construction limited to protect rails and fish, our work window is only about five months. Not enough time to build the whole project at once. In addition, the first layer of fill on the levee will have to settle for a time before finishing.



STRAW students planting at Bahia site

Lara Seeger

# MARIN BIRDLOG: NOVEMBER 2022

By Noah Arthur

November in Marin falls within an awkward season between fall and deep winter, when most of the eastern migrants have already passed and many winter rarities are not in town yet. But it does produce some good birds, starting this time with a **Swainson's Hawk** over Hawk Hill on the 3rd (MF). A bit rarer than Cackling and White-fronted on the Outer Point, a **Snow Goose** was at a pond near Drakes Beach on the 4th (DS). On the 5th, a **Spotted Towhee** was at Spaletta Ranch and a **Swamp Sparrow** turned up at Nunes (LC) – the latter an oddly-distributed winter sparrow that is regionally rare, locally regular in the Tomales Bay marshes, but rare on the Outer Point.

Sometime early in the month a **Winter Wren** was found along Bear Valley Road near White House Pool by EM, but I can't seem to find the original report. It continued throughout the month.



Andreas Trepte, www.avi-fauna.info

White wagtail

Abbotts Lagoon was productive on the 6th, with an **American Golden-plover** that got flushed by a **Prairie Falcon**, a vagrant-on-vagrant interaction probably never before seen in Marin (TF & DH). Elsewhere on the Point, a **Pacific Golden-plover** was at Drakes Corner (LC). Also on the 6th, a **Tropical Kingbird** was at Marta's Marsh (LC).

The **White Wagtail** that had showed up at Las Gallinas two weeks earlier then disappeared, put in another appearance on the 6th, refound by SK, and subsequently enjoyed by many birders the next day.

Rare for the Outer Point, a **Lark Sparrow** was at Spaletta on the 10th (JT).

A classic November rarity in Marin is the **Chestnut-collared Longspur**, and one was with pipits at Abbotts Lagoon on the 11th (TF & PG). Getting late, two **Parasitic Jaegers** were chasing gulls of Drakes Beach on the 11th (DM).

One of the best rarities of the month and a species that seems to be declining in recent years, a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was found at Limantour on the 12th (TK), quickly followed by another **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** the next day at the Pt. Reyes Oyster Farm (LC & LS) – known to be a different individual because it was seen at the same time as the continuing Limantour bird was being seen by other birders! An **American Golden-plover** was at Limantour on the 12th, accompanied for hours by an inseparable Dunlin sidekick (DLT).

A **Red Fox Sparrow** was at Rodeo Lagoon on the 15th (WL).

History was made on the 15th, when another **White Wagtail** showed up at Petaluma Marsh (BDD) – probably the first time two of them have been in Marin in the same month.

A late **Tennessee Warbler** was in lupine tops at Limantour on the 17th (EC).

Yet another Eurasian rarity came on the 19th, a **Tufted Duck** at Abbotts, along with a **Mallard X Gadwall hybrid** (TF). Also on the 19th, a **Sandhill Crane** was at Laguna Lake (MD), and an extremely late **Broad-winged Hawk** flew over Hawk Hill (JR).

A **Prairie Falcon** flew by Hall Ranch on the 20th (LN). Also on the 20th, continuing the push of late “fall” vagrants, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was in Inverness, a **Vesper Sparrow** along the road to the Lighthouse (MS & LS), and best of all, a **Lucy's Warbler** flew in to bushes at Drakes Oyster Farm (LS).

On the 21st, a continuing **Royal Tern** at Crissy Lagoon in San Francisco flew off with a squadron of Elegants into Marin waters near Angel Island (LC, LS, MS, & CC). Getting very late – and probably still around because of the strong Elegant Tern presence – a **Parasitic Jaeger** was off Sausalito on the 22nd (DL). An unprecedented count of 40 **Thick-billed Fox Sparrows** was obtained at Carson Ridge on the 24th (CC).

A **Common Teal** was at Las Gallinas on the 26th, possibly a returning bird (TG). A probably wintering **Western Tanager** was in a neighborhood west of Fairfax on the 26th (CC), and a **Chipping Sparrow** was along the Tomales Bay Trail on the 30th (DS).

Observers and Acronyms **MF:** Michaela Figari, **DS:** Dan Singer, **TF:** Teale Fristoe, **DH:** Derek Heins, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **SK:** Susan Kelly, **PG:** Philip Georgakakos, **JT:** Jim Thomas, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **TK:** Thomas Koffel, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **EM:** Eddie Monson, **WL:** William Legge, **DLT:** Dean LaTray, **BDD:** Ben DeDominic, **MD:** Mark Dettling, **JR:** Jane Rudebusch, **EC:** Elizabeth Crouthamel, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **DL:** DEREK LECY, **TG:** Terrence Gosliner, **DS:** David Sexton

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## In memoriam

Amy Rodney in memory of Raymond Rodney

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Chipping Sparrow



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*By Saul Weidensaul*

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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.

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