

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

By Scott Weidensaul

**Scott Weidensaul**

This 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 Society's website's Speaker Series page.

Scientists continue to make astounding discoveries about the navigational and physiological feats that enable migratory birds to cross immense oceans, fly above the highest mountains, go weeks without sleep or remain in unbroken flight for months at a stretch. Ornithologist and author Scott Weidensaul, takes us around the globe to learn how people are fighting to understand and save the world's great bird migrations.

Scott Weidensaul's field research focuses on bird migration. He is a co-director of Project OwlNet, studying owl migration, and is a founder of the Critical Connections project, which is tracking the migration of birds that breed on National Park lands in Alaska. He co-founded the Northeast Motus Collaboration, which is creating a network of telemetry receivers to track the movements of bats, insects and small birds. His newest book, *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds* is a *New York Times* bestseller.

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**THURSDAY, MARCH 9 7:00 PM****Bay Area Mountain Lions**

By Winston Vickers

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Marin Water Recreation Planning

Over the last two years, Marin Water staff has been engaged in planning for recreation activities on its watershed lands. The planning has included a series of workshops that often began with brief presentations by various user groups on their interests, followed by comments from attendees. The groups presenting have largely been active users such as cyclists, groups repairing trails, youth groups using the watershed and a consultant whose expertise is integrating recreational use into natural lands. There have been a few environmental voices, but the vast majority of the attendees have been cyclists wanting more trail use, more trails, better trail conditions (out of the sun), and opportunities to build and repair trails.

The Marin Water recreation planning is focused on the many ways trails can be used by people. Protecting vegetative habitat, wildlife, biodiversity and the ecosystem, should be the foundation for planning any uses because protecting these resources protect water quality – Marin Water's primary responsibility. Little attention is paid to these resources.

The only way to protect water quality is to protect the watershed ecosystems, the native vegetation and the wildlife that make up the ecosystems. Trails and extensive use of those trails, degrade habitat and water quality.

Plants stabilize soil and prevent erosion. Trails are defined by a lack of vegetation. The absence of vegetation creates a pathway for water to flow downhill often causing gully; carrying particles of soil along with the flows, resulting in siltation and accumulation of sediment in streams.

Trails are also pathways for the invasion of non-native species many of which thrive in disturbed areas. Trails can also be pathways for predators. The lack of vegetation leaves wildlife

**Marin Water's (Marin Municipal Water District) Bon Tempe Reservoir and adjacent lands**

no place to hide and vulnerable to predation when they leave the protective cover of plant.

Well-designed, well-located, and managed trails that are lightly to moderately used may not be a problem. But active uses with numbers of active users, such as Marin Water seems to be encouraging, pose a significant threat for habitats, wildlife and water quality. This is the reason other water districts limit trails. Marin Water's approach allows and appears to encourage active uses by lack of policy/rules, lack of enforcement and planning for accommodating active uses. Marin Water is welcoming bicycle use.

Most wildlife are sensitive to the presence of people, but the associated impacts are more extensive. Animals keep a distance from trails well used by people, limiting the habitat for wildlife. People also bring noise – cyclists often heard yelling to each other. The smell of humans, often accompanied by their dogs, is easily detected by wildlife other than birds.

Bike trails bring another level of impact. Their numbers and aggressiveness exacerbate the problems. Some cyclists abide by the limits, but many go too fast, go off trails, behave irresponsibly in other ways, and there are a lot of them. They pose the same safety threat for

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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

Thank you again to donors to our winter appeal. Your generosity will make it possible for us to continue our work protecting Northern Spotted Owls, protecting our properties by obtaining legal assistance when needed, bringing you this newsletter, field trip, speakers and more.

For those who missed our Bay Area Audubon Program, professor and author Doug Tallamy, had important messages about habitat and supporting birds. His first message was that our backyard habitats are critical to support bird populations if we are going to reverse the loss of 3 billion breeding birds that has occurred over the last 50 years. Relying on protected public lands won't do it – there aren't enough of them. Creating habitat in our yards is essential. He advocated for getting rid of non-native plants especially lawns, which are habitat minuses. He advocated for converting our yards to native plant habitat, but stressed using specific native plants – those that support caterpillars. Caterpillars of all kinds are more succulent, filling and nutritious for birds than all other insects, according to Doug. So do your research – find out what native plants (in addition to milkweed) support insects in our Mediterranean climate. Doug's message empowers us all to play a significant role in the future of the natural world.

The rain is finally here and here with a vengeance. Waterfalls and creeks are overflowing. Non-tidal wetlands are full,

including our seasonal wetlands at Simmons Slough and Bahia and other diked baylands where the water is not pumped out, such as the field adjacent to the Las Gallinas Sewage Agency entrance gate. While great for wildlife, unfortunately, we've lost trees, hillsides, and some structures. Sewage treatment plants are overflowing unable to handle the excessive flows. With climate change we can expect storms such as we've had will be part of our lives from now on. We'd better begin to learn how to deal with these extreme events. As everyone probably knows by this time, Novato Creek levees have breached and flooded State Route 37 again and the SMART train tracks have been flooded through the Hamilton Area resulting in delays and the need to bus some riders.

We've supported three counts through the years. There are reports from the Southern Marin (below) and the Cheep Thrills Counts (Novato) on page 3. We're sorry we were not able to get a report of the Pt. Reyes Count in time for our publication date. We'll include next time if we can.

We have lots going on maintaining our properties, our grants, sponsoring the Breeding Bird Atlas, protecting wildlife to name a few. With your help we can do more. We have a few openings on our Board. Please contact a member of our Nominating Committee (Martha Jarocki, Lelia Lancot or Doug Waterman) to find out more.

New Year's Eve Southern Marin CBC was a Slog

Marin Audubon's Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count held on December 31 was a wet one. Predictions were that the rain would let up around noon, but it continued into the late afternoon and evening. In some places it was pouring but in other places the rain was not especially heavy, but persistent, and would get you pretty wet in a few minutes unless you wore proper gear.

Despite the inconvenient moisture, most of our intrepid area leaders and volunteers donned their heavy rain gear and went out into the elements to count birds. Bird species and numbers in most areas were down. For example the Tennessee Valley area, reported 44 species on count day, whereas last year they observed 119 species in their area.

Some data has not been compiled, some not yet received so the Southern Marin Count compilation is not completed. For most areas

so far the count was well below average. So far, only the Terra Linda area had an average or better count. The number of species reported for the areas compiled to date is about two-thirds of average over the last 10 years. The number of birds counted compared to average varied widely from one area to the next, from just 9% of average to 185%, with an average of 67%. "Count Week" species (seen during the three days before or in the three days after the count day but not on the count day) three areas recorded more than 20 "Count Week" species; that is very unusual. We'll aim to report on the completed compilation next month.

According to old timers this was one of the wettest count days in many years, even though the count day is mid-winter most of the time the weather is tolerable. Hopefully the weather for next year's CBC will be more conducive to counting birds as well as personal comfort.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

MAS is mounting a full schedule of field trips for the 2022-2023 season. While most trips are limited and require registration to allow for social distancing due to Covid-19, we have one open trip this month and are planning to schedule others.

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

Thursday, February 2, 2023 and

Thursday, March 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.

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. No drop-ins, please.

We are going to explore Richardson's Bay from the Sausalito waterfront 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 Grebes**, **Clark's** and **Western Grebes**, **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 Gulls, especially, love to feast on. Last year near this time I think that 10 species of gulls were located. So brush up on your gull identifications and join Bob and me and 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.

MOUNT TAM AND CORTE MADERA MARSHES Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 3

Saturday, March 4, 2023

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration opens Wednesday, February 22 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page. Trip limit is 15 fully vaccinated participants. No drop-ins, please.

Mount Tamalpais 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 Solitaires**.

About twenty years ago our friend Dave MacKenzie discovered a Townsend's Solitaire feeding on mistletoe berries in a Sargent Cypress tree along the trail to Barth's retreat and the bird or its children have returned every year since! But the trail, built by the California Conservation Corp in the '30s has not withstood the test of time quite as well. So, if you are up for a vigorous but short (3.5 miles) hike, please join us.

After our lunch break back at Rock Springs (picnic tables and restroom), we'll drive down to the Corte Madera marshes. This area is 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.

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.

RODEO LAGOON, Marin Headlands

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

7:30 AM to noon

With William Legge & David Wiechers

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

With early spring migration underway we'll be looking out for migrant wildfowl, grebes, loons, gulls, and passerines. As usual, the weather will dictate our focus with onshore northwest winds ideal for spring sea watches, while offshore easterly winds promise a good selection of passerine migrants. Join us for a Sea Watch at 7:30 AM or arrive later 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 signal light. Proceed through the tunnel on Bunker Rd to the Rodeo Lagoon Parking Lot at the end and meet by the bridge over the channel to the beach.

Cheep Thrills 2022

By David Sexton, Cheep Thrill Co-compiler

On December 15th, 73 volunteers went out on a frosty morning to conduct the 12th annual Cheep Thrills CBC, held in memory of Rich Stallcup. The day remained sunny and dry, so conditions were set for a great day of birding.

The volunteers applied their skills and knowledge of their count areas to document 162 species and a total of 47,534 birds. The diverse habitats covered by the 15-mile diameter count circle, centered on Mount Burdell, were highlighted by 28 species of birds that were only seen in one of the 13 count areas.

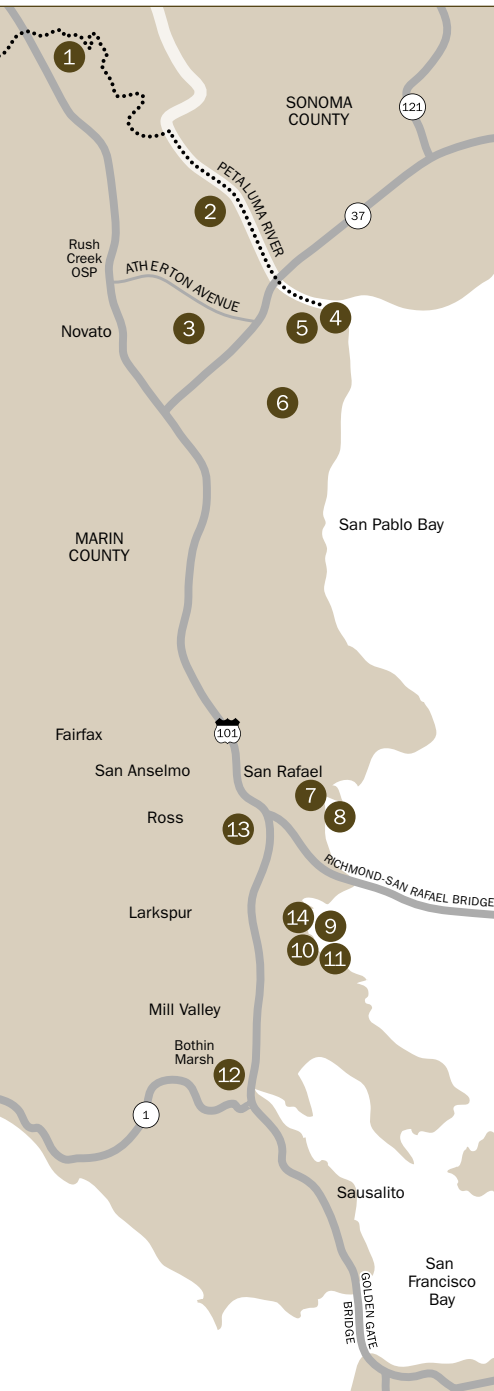
Both the Bahia area, led by Heather Cameron, and Black Point area, counted almost single-handedly by Maryanne Flett, each had 11 unique species to add to the count. Rush Creek, (Jim White) added a Long-billed Curlew, Petaluma Marsh (Lowell Sykes) counted 6 Iceland Gulls (Thayers), Hicks Valley (David Wimpfheimer) saw the only Green Heron, Nicasio (Bob Battigan) saw the only Osprey and Tricolored Blackbirds, and Lakeville (Peter Colasanti) had eyes to the sky to see a Golden Eagle and a Prairie Falcon.

There were two new species added to the count, Lucas Corneliussen located a beautiful Red-naped Woodpecker at Slade Park. Cedric Duhalde picked out a Scaly-breasted Munia while assisting Josiah Clark who was applying his expert eye to the sparrow count.

While these uncommon birds helped the count total of 161 species, the count is really about the common birds as a reflection of the health of our habitats. There were 34 species of birds that were seen on eleven or more count areas of the thirteen total. Red-tailed Hawks, Acorn Woodpeckers, Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Black and Say's Phoebe, as well as the California Scrub-jays, Common Ravens, American Crows were among those seen in every count area. The most ubiquitous birds were the over-wintering sparrows, the White-crowned Sparrow (1,585) was surpassed in count by the Gold-crowned Sparrows (1,621). These most common 34 species totaled 21,266 birds, about 45% of the total count.

A final observation, the final bird count was 47,189, which is a very average total. This was despite ideal weather and very skilled observers covering all the count area. We hope this is not a high-count mark for future CBCs to be compared to, as hopefully habitat restorations and seasonal rainfalls facilitate greater populations of our expected birds.

A hearty thanks to everyone who participated. We look forward to our next count on December 14, 2023.



HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

Marin Water Recreation Planning

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wildlife as for people. They run into slow moving animals and injure or kill them. Lizards that have been run over are observed along trails. Cyclists go off-trail for a joy ride downhill, crushing plants and breaking limbs, destroying habitat, and increasing the risk for birds and wildlife collisions. They can run over ground nesting birds and wood-rat nests

To make matters worse, renegades have constructed 70 miles of unauthorized trails on Marin Water lands, further fragmenting habitat and expanding impacts.

There is pressure to allow electric bikes (ebikes) on Marin Water the trails, further increasing the dangers and impacts. Electric bikes can go faster on and off trail increasing the threat of collision and they are quiet so you can't hear them coming. Mountain bikes add to the cumulative impact of vehicles on Marin Water lands, converting quiet natural habitats into busy, noisy high-use areas with more activity, disturbances, noise and danger for wildlife and for people.

Marin Audubon positions taken over the years:

- No new trails, unless an equal length of system trail is decommissioned.
- Decommission unauthorized trails
- Bicycles on fire roads only
- No electric bikes

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Let us know if you are interested in working on this issue.

Attend the net Marin Water Recreation Planning Workshop on February 8 from 5 to 7 PM. Find Zoom link on Marin Water website.

Support protecting wildlife and habitats by limiting use of single-track trails to passive uses.

PEL SR 37 REPORT RELEASED

Caltrans has released a report on the State Route (SR) 37 Planning and Environmental linkages Study (PEL) that we have reported on several times during the two-year study. The PEL Study evaluated corridor-wide solutions to address the diverse environmental and social needs of the SR 37 corridor using a collaborative approach. The report presents the preferred alternative identified during the PEL process —, a raised causeway along the current SR 37 alignment. It describes the process used to identify and evaluate the alternatives, options considered and reasons six were not chosen. In addition, new information is presented: possible approaches to environmental review, requirements and options for implementing the

ultimate project and next steps

The PEL process was developed by the Federal Highway Administration to provide an early integrated approach to transportation planning. This was only the fourth time it was used and the first time in California. A PEL study gathers data, identifies issues, considers conceptual designs, and evaluates traffic and environmental impacts in a process involving regulatory and transportation agencies, stakeholders and the public. The outcome of a PEL study may include recommendations for solving transportation problems, as it did for SR 37 corridor. A PEL process is intended to reduce implementation costs and time. It remains to be seen whether it does that here.

The PEL process identified seven alternatives. Six were rejected including alignments extending to the north and over the Bay. Reasons for rejection included environmental impacts and increase in vehicle miles traveled.

The end of the PEL process is only the beginning of implementation process. The preferred causeway alternative still needs to undergo environmental review. The environmental community recognizes that with such a large and expensive project, the usual environmental review process may not be suitable and we may need to think out of the box. The report lists four options:

- A.** Programmatic EIR-EIS for the entire preferred alternative. Because of costs it is likely the entire project will have to be built in phases needing multiple evaluations and biological assessments over time.
- B.** Programmatic EIR-EIS for entire preferred alternative followed by separate review for specific segments. The initial environmental document would likely take too long, two or more years and subsequent review of individual segments would take two or more years.
- C.** Project level review of individual segments. This option would have the smoothest transition from the end of PEL to some construction that would improve conditions. Downsides are uncertainty about whether the entire project would be built and about impacts and mitigation measures.
- D.** Project level review of individual segments with programmatic cumulative analysis of individual segments (with biological opinions) of entire preferred alternative. This option would include project level review of individual segments and analysis of the entire project even if full funding has not been obtained. This seems to be Caltrans preferred alternative.

The report presents possible ways of dividing the preferred alternative into smaller projects each of which could deliver improvements

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 |

independently and could be combined and be integrated into the entirety of the project. Suggested divisions in Marin: 1) US 101/SR 37 interchange. 2) 101 to Atherton Avenue 3) Atherton Avenue to Petaluma River.

The information generated by the SR 37 PEL Study, along with the agency and stakeholder relationships enhanced through the course of the study, should help Caltrans and its transportation authority partners in next steps, which include the following:

Refine Project Design: The preferred alternative needs to be refined into viable, smaller, individual projects. Caltrans has determined that it is critical to demonstrate that each project can stand on its own in delivering benefits while also dovetailing with adjacent projects.

Determine Priorities: Caltrans will determine which one (or possibly more than one) of the smaller projects would have priority based on factors such as transportation equity, flooding, creating resiliency to sea level rise, providing

ecological enhancements.

Secure Funding: Before Caltrans can sign off on an environmental document, it must demonstrate that it has appropriate funding in place. Potential funding sources are being discussed.

The cost range to fully implementing the preferred alternative is \$6.3 billion to \$11.1 billion. Raising this amount of money will require funding from numerous sources, federal, state, and local sources, as have other large transportation projects. Local support (funding, joint projects and collaborative mitigation) is believed to be especially important because it helps make funding applications more competitive.

SR 37 FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

The first individual project moving forward in the SR 37 corridor is the Flood Control and Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project in Marin County. Caltrans has just begun environmental review of this two-phase project that extends from Highway 101

to the Petaluma River Bridge. Phase 1 is replacing the bridge over Novato Creek with a substantially longer bridge in a design that could be connected in Phase 2 to create a causeway as a section of the ultimate project. Phase 2 would connect the Novato Creek bridge structure with Hwy 101 and with Atherton Avenue Interchange and the Petaluma River Bridge.

We have many questions about this project which we expressed in our scoping comments for the Draft Environmental Impact Report. The description of the project is lacking in sufficient detail to adequately evaluate the project. Our concerns include lack of environmental benefit and how the project would reduce the potential for flooding. The history of flooding in the Marin section is likely the main reason this is moving forward first.

It should be some months before the Draft Environmental Impact Report is released.

MAS Sends NSO Advisory Letters, Continues NSO Docent Program

This year's Northern Spotted Owl nesting season has officially begun, running from February 1st - July 31st each year, and Marin Audubon Society is busy preparing for our annual "Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Advisory Letter" mailing, as well as expanding our NSO Docent Program.

The Northern Spotted Owl 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 large 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 County is home to one of the last stable populations of the Northern Spotted Owl in the world, which is why we believe educating our community about the sensitivities around the Northern Spotted Owl is extremely important. Our "NSO Advisory Letter" will be mailed in February to Marin residents living within a quarter mile of a Northern Spotted Owl activity center. It outlines the importance of being a good neighbor to these owls, the laws protecting them, and what we can do if we see unethical behavior within an active activity center.

The letter also discusses the growing population of the Barred Owl in our county, an invasive species that is a direct competitor for NSO habitat, and what we can do if we believe we've come across one. If you receive our "Northern Spotted Owl Advisory Letter" in the mail, please take the time to read through it, and reach out to our team with any questions or concerns.

On top of our advisory mailing, Marin Audubon established our "Northern Spotted Owl Docent Program" in partnership with the Marin County Open Space ranger team during last year's nesting season. Our goal for this program is to further educate our community when people come across an NSO on a trail, how to ethically observe them, and to work with the Marin County Open Space ranger team when unethical behavior needs to be reported. There are some activity centers that are more well known than others, and sadly, word of mouth has gotten out about Northern Spotted Owls in our county. When groups of people congregate around nesting owls it can cause disturbances that potentially have a very negative effect on the owls, such as not being able to hunt for their offspring, keep themselves and their young protected from predators, and getting important roosting (sleeping) in during the day light hours. If you are interested in becoming a Northern Spotted Owl docent, please contact: Elyse Omernick: outreach@marinaudubon.org

Lastly, we would like to remind our community that sharing location information of



Elyse Omernick

Northern Spotted Owl in Marin

a NSO is never a good idea. We have seen first hand the negative effects of sharing locations with others at some of the NSO activity centers, and it will only get worse if people continue to share sightings with others. When people loiter, especially in groups, it can stress the owls and can be considered harassment under the Endangered Species Act. Harassing NSO could result in a criminal citation or fine. While posting a photo on social media (Instagram, Facebook and NextDoor) is usually harmless, never share or post location information.

We thank you all for doing your part to help protect the Northern Spotted Owls in Marin County!

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After two months of rained out workdays, we will be getting back to removing weeds amongst the native plants. Some annuals, maybe thistles and mustard, might be large enough to take out.

No, it's not glamorous work but it is gratifying. Removal of Harding grass and some other non-native plants is important to establishing the native species. Doing the work with other folks makes the time go quickly and provides an opportunity to learn more about native habitats.

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: February 4, March 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: February 11, March 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 or phone 415/461-3592.

Bahia, Novato:

If you'd like to help, please contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Beth Allen, Amarjit Aulakh, Marianne Baker, Catherine & Christ Barnes, Larry K. Bazzani, George Bousquette, Ute Brandon, Martin J. Brenner, Fran Burkell, Kacey Carmichael, Hilary Colyer, Adam Correa, Janice Cumming, Carol Cuneo, Pamela Dekema, Frank DeRosa & Janies Roudebush, Brian Douglas, Woody & Ann Elliott, Ann Fairlie, Kanyakran French, John Jackson, Beatrice Johnson, Sandra Kierulff, Lauren Lee, C. McKown, Lydia Mendoza, Janet Mondot, Lachlan Purcell, Charyl Roberts, Robin Rogers, Jeff Sand, Marni Shapiro, Abu Shahrabani, Sheryl Smith, Witold Sobanski, Sandra Studdert, Timothy Sullivan

CALL FOR RING MOUNTAIN WILDFLOWER DOCENTS

Marin County Parks and the Marin chapter of the California Native Plant Society have joined together to recruit volunteers interested in becoming Ring Mountain Preserve Wildflower Docents. Docent activities will include assisting visitors in finding wildflowers. They will train volunteers who participate. All the details on the docent program are on the California Native Plant Society website: www.cnpsmarin.org.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP



Doug Waterman

MAS Simmons property flooded by recent rains

SIMMONS PROPERTY FLOODED

Thanks to the atmospheric river that came through California this January our 145 acre Simmons property in Novato is now mostly flooded. This is exactly what we want. In 2009 Marin Audubon hired Peter Baye, PhD, Botanist and Coastal Ecologist, to prepare a Vegetation Management Plan for the Simmonds Slough Corridor (Olive-Atherton). This plan identified the providing of habitat for dabbling ducks as the primary management objective for this property. When Simmons floods the **Shovelers, Mallards, Teal, Wigeon** and sometimes **Pintail** find this large expanse of shallow open fresh water. Great habitat for ducks!

Flooding has occurred in the past during periods of heavy rainfall. Recently the County of Marin has made improvements to its pumping system on Novato Creek to reduce the flooding of Highway 37. At Marin Audubon's request to allow continuation of the traditional flooding of the Simmons property the County constructed three weirs in the downstream slough, which allow water to backup and flood the property during less than extreme rains.

The parts of the Simmons property, that do not flood are the edges and two mounds that were enlarged some twelve years ago as part of a habitat enhancement project. Portions of the upland edges are actively being vegetated with native plants as a part of Marin Audubon's Monarch Rescue and Pollinator Habitat Improvement project. This winter and spring more than 800 native plant seedlings including milkweed, the host plant of monarch butterflies, will be planted by volunteers.

BAHIA PROPERTY FLOODED

Much as we love and welcome the rain it has hampered our planting at Bahia. Seasonal wetlands on the central peninsulas are flooded. We like water in our seasonal wetlands but it means we are limited in places where we can

plant Creeping Wildrye. We can't plant in the ponded areas so we'll be planting in patches where we had removed Harding Grass and in higher areas towards the northern end of the peninsula. *Baccharis* will also be planted on the Eastern Peninsula on the side of the levee adjacent to the Homeowners Association lagoon across from where STRAW is planting. This year, Gardner's Guild will be doing our planting.

We are very please to announce that we have been awarded a grant

in the amount of \$10,000 from the RHE Foundation to purchase plants for Bahia. We'll be receiving the funds in August and we'll be using those funds to purchase plants for next year's planting.

DUMPING AT TRIANGLE MARSH

We've had another incident of illegal dumping at Triangle Marsh. Our first time was about five years ago. Recently, a load of woodchips we purchased to mulch our new plants has been on the site. When we acquire mulch we are always very careful it is free of seeds of invasive species, plant parts that could sprout, and free of phytophthora (sudden oak death) so our habitats are not contaminated or infested with invasive plants. Probably attracted by the pile of our clean mulch, someone has unfortunately dumped a significant load of eucalyptus chips.

Now we're stuck with pile of the highly invasive eucalyptus chips that we can't use and we're now burdened with disposing them. Arborists or tree trimming workers often look for places to dispose of loads of debris when they cut down or trim trees, rather to take them to the dump where you have to pay a fee. We expect that may have happened here. Of course, it is illegal to dump on someone else's property, but we're stuck with removing it.

Join Us!

Marin Audubon Society's accomplishments in preserving and restoring precious natural habitats have made it a long-standing force for conservation in the county. There is still much to be done. If you have accounting, finance, education, or writing skills, you can help us continue to be a strong force. To learn more about Board Membership, please contact Martha Jarocki, 415/461-3592; Lelia Lancot, 415/924-6138 or Doug Waterman, 415/506-4675.

MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2022

By Noah Arthur

December in Marin includes our coldest “deep winter” weeks, and the unique birding opportunities that come with them, often including a diverse array of winter rarities. The first good one this month was an **Eastern Phoebe** at Rodeo Lagoon on the 2nd (WL). Petaluma Marsh was productive on the 3rd, with a **Tundra Swan** and three off-season **Caspian Terns** (JV).



Red-naped Sapsucker

Some of the most iconic December rarities in Marin are vagrant sapsuckers, such as a male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in a Point Reyes Station neighborhood on the 2nd (NA). Even rarer for winter, a **Black-and-white Warbler** was in (AM)’s Tamalpais Valley yard on the 3rd. Also on the 3rd, a **Red Fox Sparrow** was along the aptly-named Fox Drive west of Pt. Reyes Station (EM).

A pelagic boat out of Bodega Bay poked around northern Marin waters on the 4th, turning up a **Short-tailed Shearwater**. Increasing in Marin in winter in recent years, another **Caspian Tern** was at Nicasio Reservoir on the 9th, joined by a second on the 14th (BB). An **American Dipper** showed up at Leo T.

Cronin Fish Viewing Area on the 12th (DH).

Midwinter is a time when rare warblers can show up in the most random and unlikely of places, such as a female **Blackburnian Warbler** hopping on the ground under some bushes in the CitiBank parking lot in downtown San Rafael on the 12th (SC). Another bank parking lot produced a rarity on the 13th, this time an unseasonable **Western Tanager** by the Chase Bank in Greenbrae (DH & CH).

A Christmas Bird Count on the 15th produced a number of good birds around Novato. Much, much rarer in Marin than the Yellow-bellied, a male **Red-naped Sapsucker** turned up at Slade Park (LC). 2 **Common Teal** were at Petaluma Marsh, and a **Red Fox Sparrow** was on a closed property east of Novato (JC, CD, & MC). The rarest bird of the month and a potential first county record, an immature **Scaly-breasted Munia** was in willows along Lea Dr in Novato on the 15th (JC). These non-native finches have become abundant in SoCal, and are established in small pockets north along the coast at least to the South Bay counties. They may soon be breeding north to Marin and beyond.

A **Common X Barrow’s Goldeneye hybrid** was in Bel Marin Keys on the 16th (MS, LS, CC, & LC). The 17th continued the rare waterfowl trend with a **Tundra Swan** on Abbotts Lagoon (JCh). Likely a returning bird from past winters, a **Black-and-white Warbler** was in Muir Beach on the 17th (PB). Also on the 17th a female **Evening Grosbeak** was near Inverness (LN, MD, & NC), a **Vesper Sparrow** was near McClure Ranch on Pt. Reyes (PK, KS, & TF), and a ‘**montana/merillii**’ **Song Sparrow** was near Abbotts Lagoon (LS & BB). Probably the rarest find on the Point Reyes CBC on the 17th was a **Cassin’s Finch** in Olema Marsh (ST & LT).

The 19th produced three more **Caspian Terns**, 2 at Stafford Lake (WVD) and 1 along Corte Madera Creek in Larkspur (PB), and another was at Rodeo Lagoon on the 20th (WL). Also on the 20th a **Western Tanager** was in San Anselmo’s Sleepy Hollow neighborhood (WC), and a **Mallard X Gadwall hybrid** showed up at Rush Creek (NC). Yet another **Caspian Tern** was at Abbotts Lagoon on the 22nd (NW).

Quite rare for the Outer Point, a **Snow Goose** was at Drakes Corner on the 23rd (AM). Incredibly, 2 more **Cassin’s Finches**, a male and a female, were with the continuing male at Olema Marsh on the 23rd (JP). Oddly, no new rarities were found in the entire last week of the month.

Observers and Acronyms **WL:** William Legge, **JV:** Jeff Valfer, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **AM:** Alex Merritt, **EM:** Eddie Monson, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **DH:** Dean Hanson, **SC:** Sara Curtis, **DH:** Derek Heins, **CH:** Cris Heins, **LC:** Lucas Corneliusen, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **CD:** Cedric Duhalde, **MC:** Mike Carrozza, **JCH:** Jim Chiropoulos, **PB:** Phred Benham, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **MD:** Molly Donahue, **NC:** Natalie Clark, **PK:** Parker Kaye, **TF:** Teale Fristoe, **KS:** Kirk Swenson, **BB:** Brian Browne, **WVD:** Willem van Dam, **PB:** Pierre Beurang, **WC:** Will Cornwell, **ST:** Scott Terrill, **LT:** Linda Terrill, **NW:** Nils Warnock, **JP:** Jeff Perkins

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In memoriam

Gretchen Hoskins in memory of Tony Harrow



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- March 9 **Speaker Series:** Bay Area Mountain Lions: What We Know About Them and How They Fit into the Larger State Population
By Winston Vickers

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We invite you to become a Chapter-Supporting member of Marin Audubon Society (MAS) to support our important habitat protection and restoration work, conservation advocacy, our full calendar of birding field trips and speakers and our newsletter, *The Rail*. Marin Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon (NAS). However, becoming a **Chapter-Supporting Member** of MAS is separate and distinct from a membership in NAS. While MAS works with NAS on issues of mutual concern, we are a separate non-profit Section 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization. Marin-based NAS members do receive this MAS newsletter, *The Rail*, however we encourage all NAS members to also become Chapter-Supporting members of MAS to support our local work. Very little of our funding comes from NAS, and we rely on our MAS Chapter-Supporting members and donors to help us fund our land acquisitions, restorations, habitat protection, conservation advocacy, this newsletter and our local programs.

If you're not already a Chapter-Supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors and relatives to join us, too.

You can join MAS or make a donation on our website using your credit card or PayPal by going to www.marinaudubon.org. Alternatively, you can join by filling out this form and sending us your payment by mail.

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