



US Fish & Wildlife Service

**California Condor over Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge**

Register for the April Speaker Series program on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

In this presentation you will learn about the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) – one of the largest and rarest birds in the world. Topics covered include: their conservation and natural history, recovery, reintroduction, and on-going preservation efforts (past and present), fun facts, and locations to see condors in the wild.

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

**NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**

**THURSDAY, MAY 18**

**7:00 PM**

**Islands and Avian Evolution**

Bob Lewis

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# The Rail

**MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY**

## Marin Audubon Joins Air Tour Suit Over National Parks

**M**arin Audubon Society has joined with the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and co-plaintiffs Western Watershed Network and Laura Chariton, in a suit against the National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) challenging the Air Tour Plan for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNSS), Muir Woods National Monument and San Francisco Maritime National Park. The NPS is challenged for approving the plan with a Categorical Exemption under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), violating requirements of the National Park Air Tour Management Act of 2000 (the Act).

The suit charges that NPS did not conduct environmental review, did not assess impacts, use noise surveys, consider ecological effects or alternatives to the current flights, thereby violating federal law. The plan also lacks any specific measures to administer the plan and enforce the limited restrictions it contains.

Further, NPS ignored pleas from the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary to keep overflights at least 2,000 feet above ground level to avoid impacts to nesting seabirds and marine mammals.

The suit asks for a court order to disprove the plan and limit overflights to no more than 50 per year, the maximum set by the court, until a plan that complies with the Act is prepared.

Concerns about air tour overflights is not a problem unique to bay Area national parks. The problem became obvious 1986 when two tour aircrafts collided over Grand Canyon National Park killing 25 people. In four months' time, the NPS and FAA were able to create a flight-management plan, however, it took until 1994 for the park service to report to congress, recommending that rules be developed that would aid in the preservation of natural quiet of parks.

It was not until a lawsuit brought by PEER

resulted in a court order requiring that any park hosting more than 50 sightseeing air tours develop a management plan by August 22, 2022. The Act requires the NPS and the FAA to adopt plans managing the more than 47,000 annual flights across 24 national parks that were named in the court order. More than half are still working through the NEPA review process, which should include environmental analyses and public comment.

NPS signed the Management Plan for the Bay Area National Parks in mid-January. Instead of reducing the number of air tours, however, the plan set traffic limits at a three-year average. This allows the current 2,548 overflights per year to continue, the 7th most in the national park system. The flyover numbers are much different than the 10 other parks that have submitted plans: Olympic National Park (NP) allows 64 overflights per year and Ranier NP allows one, Bryce Canyon's calls for 515 tours per year and Great Smoky Mountain NP allows 946 over flights.

The Act requires the NPS and FAA to work together to develop air-tourism management plans with 50 or more air tours over its landscape. So what's the problem? The problem is the FAA claims it has sole authority to control

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### Nominees for MAS Board

Marin Audubon Society's by-laws require that the slate of nominees proposed for election be presented to our members 20 days before the election which will take place at our Annual Meeting in May.

The slate of nominees for three-year terms on the Marin Audubon Society Board beginning in June 2023 is:

- Robert Hinz
- Elyse Omernick
- Michael Anderson
- Lowell Sykes

## 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
Membership Chair	Bob Hinz 383-8688 Contact Bob for membership problems or questions.
Outreach, Website	Elyse Omernick outreach@marinaudubon.org
Speaker Series	Mike Anderson 990 9784
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Waterman 506-4675
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710 Clint Kellner 895-8591
Volunteer Coordinator	Ellena Ochoa volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org
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

As we go to press we are having major storms, with wind and pouring rain causing trees to fall, water to flow, damaging property and injuring people. Nature has its own way of managing vegetation, of trimming trees by wind blowing down branches, making unhealthy or dead trees usable in the ecosystem and modifying landscapes – not in the way many people do by tidying up – but by making our environment messy. It works unless people or our structures are in the way, then tragedy can be the result. While some native trees have been lost in the storm, the overwhelming majority of downed trees seem to have been the non-native eucalyptus.

I am constantly reminded that preserving habitats, even in protective ownership, is not certain. Unfortunately, we need to spend our time and funds defending habitats that are already protected by us or by others. The threats are many, from upstream water diversion or flooding, adjacent development, unleashed pets, and unauthorized use by the public. The list goes on and on. Current examples are threats associated with easements on two of our properties, Calpark and Simmons. We are having to hire attorneys to help us sort out and understand the legal issues, negotiate, advise and possibly represent our interest in court. Without sound legal advice, we could lose access to both properties and there could be other results adverse to MAS interests. We must all be constantly vigilant.

Another example of habitat and wildlife impacts on supposedly protected lands, is the impact of the extensive public use, bikers, ebikers, walkers, etc., as is occurring right now on MMWD habitats on Mt. Tam. It is of great concern that MMWD is spending staff time developing a Recreation plan that is ignoring its extensive policies on Mt. Tam (Policy 7) that emphasize protection of natural resources. The habitats and wildlife on Mt. Tam need our voices to speak for their protection. Attend the next Marin Water Recreation Planning Workshop that is scheduled for April 12, 5 to 7 PM.

The 26-member National Audubon Society Board of Directors voted to retain the current Audubon name at its March Board meeting. The vote followed more than a year of deliberating, gathering input from listening sessions, surveying people both pro and con changing the name. The results of the outreach did not show an overwhelming majority in either direction, “reinforcing the complexity of the decision” according to Susan Bell, chair of the Board, who reported to the Washington Post that the name has come to represent not

one person, but a broader love of birds and nature....” Three board members resigned over the vote and Chapters in Chicago, Portland, Seattle, and DC. have already decided to change their names. I’m inclined to agree that the word Audubon has come to mean interest in birds and bird habitats. John James Audubon was a slave holder whose name was adopted because he was an early ornithologist who, through his art, expanded interest in and love of birds. Today the Audubon name means and reflects an interest in birds and protecting their habitat which Audubon Societies have done for more than 100 years. The name is a symbol and is not any way intended to support aspects of Audubon’s life or his views. Marin Audubon has discussed the issue, but to date has not decided an interest in changing our name.

With the arrival of spring, many of us turn to revitalizing our yards and gardens. Remember to use native plants that require little maintenance and no irrigation except in really dry circumstances. See Ellena Ochoa’s article on page 6.

It’s migration time and a good time to see birds stopping over to refuel and rest on their migration journeys. Visit our tidal marshes and other wetlands to see the amazing variety of water birds. Remember our field trips are announced a month in advance so you can plan. Do join us.

## MARY ANNE COWPERTHWAITTE 1925 - 2023

We are saddened by the death of Mary Anne Cowperthwaite on March 2, after a short illness and a long and rich life. We all loved Mary Anne and knew her as a warm and caring woman with a lively laugh and sense of humor.

Mary Anne served as Secretary on the MAS Board for several terms in the late 1990s and early 2000s. She was a dedicated board member. One remembrance of her dedication is that she would attend committee meetings, even when she was not on committee, just to take minutes. After leaving the Board, Mary Anne continued her support of MAS, one of which was by volunteering annually for Mother’s Day Barbecue. You may remember her signing you in at the check-in desk and keeping track of sign-ups.

Mary Anne lived in San Anselmo with her husband, Jim, and their children, John and Peter, for most of her adult life. She taught briefly at Mill Valley schools and mostly at Ross Elementary School where she touched the lives of many youngsters.



Jude Stalker

## MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

MAS is providing a full schedule of free field trips for the 2023 season.

**Advance registration is required** for most of our trips, nearly all which have size limits to prevent overcrowding. Registration will open 10 days prior to the trip date on the Marin Audubon website's Field Trips page.

Trips can fill up quickly. Please register early to make sure you get a spot. If you won't be able to attend a trip that you have registered for, please use the "contact organizer" button on the Ticketbud trip description page so that the spot may be opened for someone else. If a trip is closed when you try to register, use the "contact organizer" button and request to be put on the waiting list

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

Thursday, April 6, 2023 and

Thursday, May 4, 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 – 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.

### RODEO LAGOON, Marin Headlands

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

7:30 AM to noon

With William Legge & David Wiechers

Registration is required for this trip.

Registration opens Sunday, April 2, 2023 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

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.

### MOUNT BURDELL/STAFFORD LAKE OR RUSH CREEK

Novato

#### Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 5

Saturday, May 6, 2023

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration for this trip is required. Registration opens Wednesday, April 26, 2023 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Join Jim and Bob for a field trip to the gentle slopes of Mount Burdell where we'll listen to and observe the impressive variety of songbirds that make this area their springtime home. Species we might see include **Lark Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole, Lazuli Bunting** and **Grasshopper Sparrow**, among many other possibilities. In the afternoon, we plan to continue birding at Stafford Lake or Rush Creek.

This will be a moderate hike with many opportunities to look at birds and spring wildflowers. Wear comfortable walking shoes and layered clothing. Bring water and snacks. We will meet at the end of San Andreas Drive in Novato.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take Hwy 101 to Novato, exit at the San Marin Dr/Atherton Ave exit. At the end of the exit ramp, turn left (west) on San Marin Dr. Go approximately two miles and turn right on San Andreas Dr. Drive nearly to the end of the road and park on the street. No restrooms available.

### THE PRESIDIO

Novato

Saturday, May 13, 2023

8 AM to noon

With Josiah Clark

Registration is required for this trip. Registration opens Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page.

The Presidio, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area since 1972, provides an excellent case study for the human and wildlife interface in San Francisco. Consulting Ecologist and San Francisco native, Josiah Clark, will share with us both the challenges and opportunities for wildlife and habitat preservation he has observed here. While the area has benefitted from the protection of the National Park Service and increased funding for special restoration projects, there have also been accompanying challenges brought about visitors, dogs, pathogens, and invasive plants that have all become more numerous as visitation to the area has dramatically increased.

We'll meet Josiah at the Baker Beach Parking Lot, then travel on foot to Logos Valley, Mountain Lake Park, and the Presidio Hills before returning to Baker Beach. We'll watch for signs of seasonal transitions in the area as wintering birds depart and the breeding season begins. A secondary focus for the trip will be habitat plants, some unique to the Franciscan scrub habitat, that Marin birders may not have seen. Heavy rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Marin take Hwy 101 south to Merchant Rd. (Exit 439, first exit after the bridge) toward 25th Ave. in San Francisco. From Merchant Rd. turn right onto Lincoln Blvd. Next, turn right onto Bowley St. and right again onto Gibson Rd. Park in the Gibson Rd. parking lot. Parking is limited here, so ride with a friend if possible.

## CONSERVATION

### MAS JOINS MARIN CLIMATE JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE

Marin Audubon is excited and honored to be part of the Climate Justice Collaborative recently established by the Canal Alliance to build local capacity and leadership to influence decisions about climate resilience. We look forward to working with the Collaborative toward these important goals.

Members of the Collaborative will work together with Marin County organizations and residents of Marin City and the Canal Community to encourage actionable plans and projects and implement neighborhood-based activities around health risks and climate uncertainty. Residents of these low-income communities face threats from climate change and sea level rise, flooding and displacement due to lack of housing and pressure from development.

The Marin Climate Justice Collaborative is being funded by a grant awarded to the Alliance by the Regional Climate Collaborative, an Afro-American led environmental justice community-based organization advocating for fair treatment and equitable inclusion in community planning and preparedness.

Other entities represented on the Collaborative are the City of San Rafael, Marin County, San Rafael School, Marin Community Services District, Multicultural Center of Marin, San Rafael City Schools, Play Marin, Community Action Marin and Greenbelt Alliance.

### MARIN WATER LOOKS FOR WATER

All of us, but southern Marin residents in particular, should be paying attention to Marin Water's (formerly MMWD) effort to develop a water supply that can provide customers with water during draught conditions and is resilient to climate change. Marin Water is nearing the end of its process of identifying options for expanding its water supply. The District Board has approved what it is calling a Water Supply Roadmap that consists of strategies or elements to achieve mid- and long-term increase in water supply.

Elements are being weighted by the long-term resiliency of the system and the quantity of water that could be saved as well as cost. A wide variety of strategies or elements were evaluated and five were approved by the Marin Water Board on February 28. Below is a simplified description of the elements approved for expanding water supply:

- **Water Conservation.** Building on the existing program, activities would be pursued to incentivize further conservation. The activities include: reducing water needs for out-door landscaping by programs

that step-up use of native drought tolerant native plants and eliminating turf; AMI leak notification; rain barrel irrigation; laundry-to-landscape program; water reuse, and expanding the reclaimed water program.

- **Improving Operational Flexibility of Storage Facilities** by electrifying the pump station at Lake SoulaJulie so it can operate more frequently, connecting Phoenix Lake to Bon Tempe reservoir, which will increase controls over water supply and improving forecasting and water release automation.
- **Maximizing Use of Sonoma Water** by improving existing conveyance via the south transmission system and Kastania pump station; developing a conveyance in two places: Stafford Lake to Koulouri and the north Marin aqueduct to Stafford; and developing an operational strategy to maximize the use of supplemental water in dry years while minimizing the potential for reservoir spills.
- **Increasing Local Storage by Expanding Reservoirs.** This alternative could include improving gates on and/or expanding/deepening reservoirs by raising dams or constructing a moveable spillway at Kent, Nicasio or SoulaJulie reservoirs. Regional partnership with Sonoma County that would provide for increasing capacity through pumping existing groundwater from the Santa Rosa Plain aquifer which would allow the storage of more winter water.
- **New Local Supplies** which could be achieved by a desalination facility. This alternative would study the feasibility of desalination through brackish/fresh water system along the Petaluma River based on tracking of desalination plants in California and advances in desalination technology. This alternative also includes expanding the current recycled water program.

The alternative of an Intertie with the East Bay and Delta has been dropped, fortunately. For this option, which was seriously considered a year or so ago, Marin Water would have to be involved in the complex system of California water rights. Water would have to be diverted from other systems, be transported through such systems as EBMWD, and would require a pipeline across the Richmond Bridge. Supply would be unreliable as we would be last in line and first to be cut in times of drought. Also, this alternative was found to have the largest water deficit during droughts.

Some of the elements being currently

*continued on page 5*



#### 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

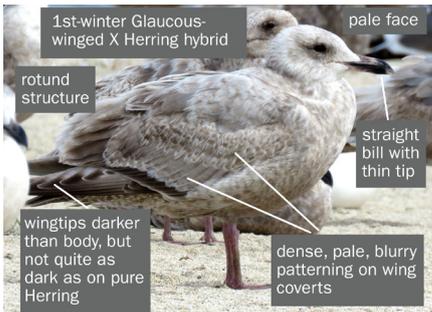
# Identifying First-Winter Hybrid Gulls in Marin

By Noah Arthur

Immature hybrid gulls are probably the most dreaded ID conundrum in Bay Area birding, and here in Marin we are either blessed or cursed with an abundance of them in winter. In this article I hope I can simplify the identification of first-winter hybrids.\* Even the experts have to leave some gulls unidentified, but most, even hybrids, are fairly straightforward. Typical individuals of each hybrid type have a consistent, unique combination of features not matched by other hybrids or pure species.



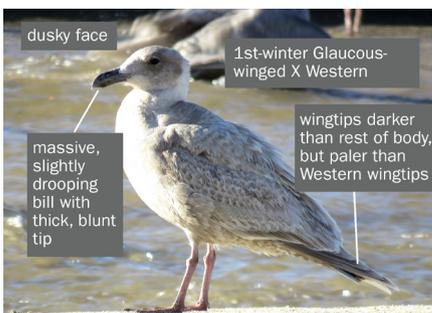
**Glaucous-winged X Herring Gull** (a.k.a. 'Cook Inlet Gull') is probably the Bay Area's most common hybrid gull. In first-winter plumage these hybrids tend to resemble Herring, with dark wingtips contrasting with paler body plumage. They are distinguished from Herring by a bulkier body with a deep belly; pale, dense and blurry patterning on the wing coverts; and slightly lighter brown wingtips with stronger pale feather-fringes. The head is usually pale, and the bill straight with a fairly thin sharp tip. Bill color is mostly black, sometimes with a partial dull pink base.



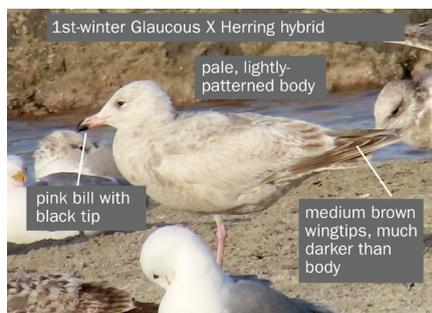
**Glaucous-winged X Glaucous Gull** (a.k.a. 'Seward Gull') is one of our uncommon hybrids, with just a few occurring in Marin each winter, but still more common than pure Glaucous Gull. These hybrids are very pale overall, with whitish wingtips and a black-tipped pink bill, resembling pure Glaucous. But the hybrid always has a messy black streak along the side of the bill (cutting edges), extending from the black bill tip toward the base. Pure Glaucous never shows this pattern, always having a clean pink bill with a small, neat black tip.



**Glaucous-winged X Western Gull** (a.k.a. 'Olympic Gull') is also common in Marin and the Bay Area. These hybrids are rather variable, usually paler overall than Western, but with wingtips darker than the body unlike Glaucous-winged. The face is usually rather dark, like Western and unlike Glaucous-winged X Herring. The black bill is huge with a slight droop and thick, blunt tip, again like pure Western.



**Glaucous X Herring Gull** (a.k.a. 'Nelson's Gull') is also uncommon to rare. First-winter birds are pale and lightly-marked overall with contrasting darker, medium brown wingtips. The bill is sharply bicolored, pale pink with a limited black tip, often similar to pure Glaucous and unlike the much darker bill of Glaucous-winged X Herring.



## Marin Water

*continued from page 4*

considered would have environmental impacts of varying severity. Careful analysis will be needed to ensure environmental impacts are minimized or avoided, if possible. Habitat would be destroyed as a result of expanding reservoirs or raising dams. Desalination leaves sludge, a residue of elements removed from the water which is usually toxic and must be disposed of at a site acceptable to regulatory agencies. Marine organisms can be impaled on screens, and construction of the facilities can have direct impacts on shoreline habitat depending on the location. Unless there is significant technological change, desal is energy intensive and costly. Removal of water from natural systems has adverse impacts on aquatic organisms depending on when, where, and how the water is diverted. Increasing interties with Sonoma County would divert more water from other watersheds which would have cumulative adverse impacts. The least environmentally impactful would-be conservation and water recycling.

A mix or combination of elements would undoubtedly be chosen. All have costs, both environmental and financial, which contribute to the need to increase rates. We need to be working toward a combination of elements that is most protective of our natural resources and ecosystems.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Learn more about the alternatives and what they will mean for you and the environment. Attend the Board meetings and other supply discussions, check [www.marinwater.org/WaterSupplyResiliency](http://www.marinwater.org/WaterSupplyResiliency) more often and express your views to the Board or to your representative on the Board if you live in Central and Southern Marin. The Marin Board will be deciding in the coming months.

\* First-winter gulls can usually be distinguished from older ages by their entirely mottled backs (lacking solid patches of adult grey coloration), and relatively neat, repeating patterns of brown and white on the wing coverts. Beware, the field marks discussed here are for first-winter birds only and some will not work on older birds!

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### TRIANGLE MARSH

At the last Triangle work day, volunteers cleared weeds from a small area in preparation for planting. This month on the March workday before the rain got too heavy, they planted that patch with seeds of chick lupine (*Lupinus microcarpus*), a native annual. A similar spot was planted with California poppies earlier in the winter and now has some poppy seedlings with relatively few weeds.

The Corte Madera Reserve workday was rained out. Bob Hinz got soaked before getting started!

### TISCORNIA

Our permit applications to the many agencies have been submitted and our consultants have been following up answering the questions agencies have asked about our Tiscornia Project. We've finally connected with PG&E about components that intersect with their transmission towers, one of which is in tidal marsh on our property, and about PG&E's access to the towers. The second tower is in the

diked marsh owned by the city of San Rafael.

PG&E is firm that access to the towers is necessary for maintenance and emergency repair, and that they need boardwalks to reach the towers, particularly in case of emergency. We want the access method that is least environmentally damaging, and that would be access by boat. PG&E wanted to replace boardwalks in their current location, connecting with the city's levee that we will be removing. Fortunately, PG&E has agreed to another alignment that is shorter and will cover less marsh. The existing boardwalks are narrow and open to people and predators. The new ones will be wider, constructed of composite material and have gates and hand rails. We now are discussing ways to ensure the tower on our property is kept safe.

Due to the need to change the project design on the west end and deal with PG&E issues, we may need to postpone construction from 2023 until 2024.

We have another public meeting coming up. We are planning for a date in May. Stay tuned for more information.

## Native Plants: A Necessary Food Source for Birds

There are many important reasons why growing native plants in your garden is a good idea. But if you are a friend of birds, providing a reliable food source for them should be at the top of the list. Our native birds eat native insects and their larvae, and these insects eat and live on native plants. Local flora and fauna have coevolved and now coexist and depend upon symbiotic connections for survival. Though natural ecosystems are long gone from anywhere there are human populations, we can each do our part to re-create habitat for our resident birds.

The connection between native birds and plants is clearly described by a recent Speaker Series guest, Doug Tallamy, in his book *Nature's Best Hope*. According to Tallamy, a large percentage of bird species require caterpillars to feed their nestlings. And the numbers consumed are huge. For example, just one bird species, the Chickadee, must feed its babies 300-500 caterpillars per day over a period of approximately 18 days until they can leave the nest. And only native species of trees and plants can support the large number of caterpillars necessary for these birds to raise their young.

Tallamy suggests that with a clustering of one type of native "keystone" tree such as an oak, one or two native shrubs, and several flowering native herbaceous plants – a home

gardener could provide sufficient habitat for mobile species and migrating birds. This resource is crucial, especially in large expanses of urban and suburban development where food and shelter is sparse.

It does not take a complete conversion of all available yard space or even a lot of space to provide enough habitat to support insect, pollinator, and bird life where you live. What it does take is the right kind of plants. Most of the popular landscaping ornamentals found in nurseries are from another part of the world and cannot be used as food by native insects and pollinators.

We are fortunate to have an ever-growing number of native plant nurseries, seed suppliers, and educational resources in Marin and the wider Bay Area. A quick online search should help you find a nearby nursery or instructive websites. There are distinct microclimates in Marin, so be sure your native plants are suitable for either the hotter climate of north Marin, the wetter, cooler climate of southern Marin or for foggy west Marin.

For the beginner, there is much to appreciate about this type of gardening. And who knows, maybe you will be convinced that all your available outdoor space should be given over to birds and other wildlife, which is a tremendous benefit to human life as well.

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After the rains come not only native grasses and wildflowers but also the weeds. After several rained out workdays our native plants need a little help. Italian thistles are now large enough to deserve our attention. It's a good time to pull any French broom that we find. Putting down some mulch around our native shrubs will preserve moisture for them well into the summer and keep down the weeds.

It's the green season and it's comfortable. Marin's birds and the native insects that nourish their young need your help. Join us on a workday. Doing the work with other folks makes the time go quickly and provides an opportunity to learn more about a native habitat of your county. We all make a difference

#### Volunteer Workdays

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

First Saturdays: April 1, May 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: April 8, May 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](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).

#### THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS

Annette Anzalone, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Lowell Sykes, Zoe Trainer



Anna's Hummingbird feeds its young

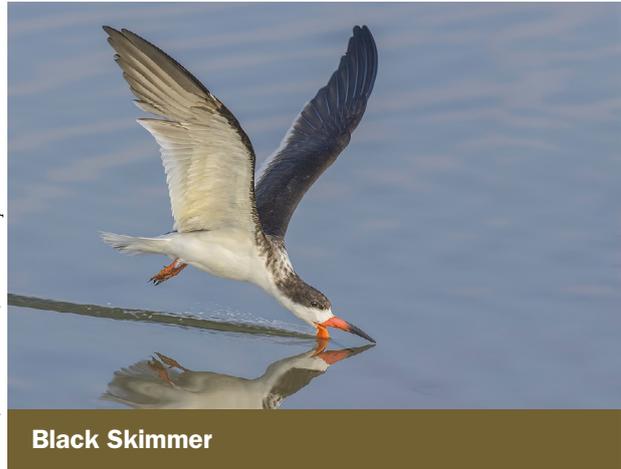
Elise Omerick

# MARIN BIRDLOG: FEBRUARY 2023

By Noah Arthur

This February was especially cold and wet, with few signs of spring and mostly continuing rarities from earlier in the winter. These included small flocks of **Black Skimmers** wintering at Bolinas Lagoon and Corte Madera, part of an unprecedented incursion of the species in Marin this winter.

The first new unusual bird of the month was a **Burrowing Owl** at an undisclosed location near the Bay in southeast Marin (DE). Next came 2 **Townsend's Solitaires** in BB's Woodacre backyard



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on the 4th (BB), exceptionally rare in Marin away from their traditional wintering area on Mt. Tam. A new **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, this one a male, materialized in south Novato at the intersection of Redwood and Palmer on the 6th (BS).

Rare for the Outer Point, an adult **Bald Eagle** was near the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse on the 8th (JC).

The **Black Skimmer** incursion escalated on the 8th with two individuals at the Pt. Reyes Oyster Farm (EH), burgeoning to 6 individuals by the 12th.

A **Common X Green-winged Teal**

hybrid was in Chileno Valley on the 12th (LS), and a pure **Common Teal** showed up at Mart's Marsh on the 16th (LN), both males. Females probably routinely pass unidentified in Marin.

Two more **Townsend's Solitaires** showed up in random backyards in the third week of February, both in East Marin: one in north San Rafael on the 17th (LCi) and one in San Anselmo on the 19th (SB). Yet another one was a bit east of their usual Mt. Tam hotspots on the 19th, along Bolinas Rd. in Fairfax (CC).

Observers and Acronyms **DE:** Daniel Edelstein, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **BS:** B Schriock, **JC:** John Callaway, **EH:** Eric Heisey, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **LCi:** Luca Cinus, **SB:** Scott Buchanan, **CC:** Connor Cochrane

## Air Tour Suit

*continued from page 1*

the nation's air space and its role is to promote commercial air craft. The NPS role is to protect the parks. These conflicting roles are making it extremely difficult to come to agreement on a management plan in a manner that protects national park natural resources and quiet experience of visitors.

One known study by the Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division of the NPS, found that "sound levels in high air-traffic areas in Glacier National Park's wilderness can be elevated up to 5 decibels, drastically reducing the area in which predators can hear their prey.... "Even with this data, after 20 years working on air tourism problems, Glacier couldn't proceed to reduce sound levels, according to Jeff Ruch, PEEL attorney, "The FAA told Glacier that their jurisdiction stopped at the treetops..."

The rich and diverse ecosystems of GGNRA and PRNSS, and the wildlife that depend on them, are at risk from the tour flight noise levels disturbing their habitat, their ability to hear predators and each other. Our interest in participating in this suit is to protect our

native wildlife from the impacts of the tourist overflights. At risk are resident and migrating raptors, pelagic bird nesting colonies at Alcatraz Island and along the coast, migratory shorebird and waterfowl stopping-over during migration and overwintering in wetlands and ponds. Also at risk are endangered Northern Spotted Owl in Marin, resident and migrating song birds and many species of marine mammals pupping or resting along the coast.

The suit will also further park visitor interests. Visitors do not want to hear or see helicopters or airplanes when visiting national parks. Most of us want to hear the sounds of nature when we are visiting national parks.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Pay attention to airplane and helicopter flights when you're in GGNRA, Pt. Reyes or Maritime Museum in San Francisco national parks. Please let us know if you witness wildlife being disturbed: bird disturbance such as being flushed, marine mammals leaving beaches, other mammals running away.

## THANK YOU, DONORS

Dr. Hilary Beech Giving Fund, Anthony Campodonico, Bob and Sande Chilvers, William Clarke, Robert and Michelle Friend, Thomas Heinz, Valerie Hetherinton, Paula and Russell Hunt, Elizabeth Jameson, Sarah Karste, Robert Keller, Mary and Jane Knowles, Elizabeth Lewis, Sarah Martin, Cynthia Meigs, Linda Miller, Barbara O'Toole, Leslie Plant, Jessie Powell, William Richardson, Marianna Riser, Harriet Spiegel, Inta Vodopals, and Nancy Warfield.

### For the Marin Breeding Bird Atlas

David Sexton, Susan Kelly, Kris Wiskes, Barbara Gaman, Jeanne Azen, Bill and Kate Jones, Mia Monroe, Whitney Grover, Whitney Mortimer, Barbara Benson and Robert Hinz, and Kenneth Hillan and Ian Duncan Robertson

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Shelley Alger, Harold Anderson, Malcolm Baker, Bennett Bakke, Thomas Baty, Christopher Bebbington, Gina Biernacki, Morgan Brigham, Lynette Carlton, Elisa S. Charne, Ginger Deehan, Mary Duncan, Mary Jane Gagnier, Alice Glover, James Gronvold, Daniel Habig, Farida Hakimi, Janine Higgins, Cynthia Holbrook, Lucie Hollingsworth, Janice G Johnson, Jann Johnson, Jessica Kaplan, Bonnie Kohl, Michele Lagana, Trudy Larriue, Judith Lopez, Laura Miwa, Patricia Olson, Linda Oqvist, Adrienne Poremba, Heather Pruneau, David Riker, Kate Ruehle, Gloria Ruppert, Cecil Sherrord, Queenie Taylor, Timothy Teague, Traci Thiercof, Thea Venckus, John Ward, Joan Weinberg, Carleen Wong, Janice Wyrick, Sanford Zweifach

## DONATE YOUR CAR TO MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Looking for deductions on your 2023 taxes? You may qualify for a write-off if you donate your unwanted car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or boat.

It's easy, just contact CARS. They will pick up your car, sell it, and after paying your costs, give the rest to Marin Audubon Society.

If you would like to donate your car, follow this Marin Audubon Society link <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/Marin-Audubon-Society> to the CARS website where you can start the vehicle donation process or call 855/500-7433.



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- May 6 **Field Trip:** Mount Burdell/ Stafford Lake or Rush Creek  
*With Jim White & Bob Battagin*
- May 13 **Field Trip:** The Presidio  
*With Josiah Clark*
- May 18 **Speaker Series:** Islands and Avian Evolution  
*With Bob Lewis*

Check website for updates and details

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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](http://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](http://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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