

**THURSDAY, MARCH 9 7:00 PM**

**Bay Area Mountain Lions – What We Know About Them and How They Fit into the Larger State Population**

By Winston Vickers



# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Winston Vickers/UC Davis Wildlife Health Center



**Mountain lion caught by trail camera**

Register for the March Speaker Series program on the MAS website [Speaker Series page](#).

Mountain lions in California are fragmented into subpopulations by roads and development. The Bay Area populations to the north and south of San Francisco are separated from each other and are separated from others further south and east by roads, development and agriculture. Those to the north are affected by increasing road traffic, agricultural conversions for the wine industry, and other factors. Dr. Vickers will discuss the state of current knowledge, legal status, and ongoing research and mitigation efforts that are focused on these populations.

Dr. Winston Vickers is a wildlife research veterinarian with the University of California-Davis Wildlife Health Center (WHC). He has been studying mountain lions and other wildlife in California for 20 years and directs the WHC's California mountain lion study. He collaborates widely with other mountain lion researchers, and on studies involving bobcats, wolves, Channel Island foxes, Santa Cruz Island scrub jays, and waterfowl. He has also worked on oil spill response with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network at UC Davis.

**NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 13 7:00 PM**

**California Condor, Forever Free**

By Kurt Leuschner

## Breeding Bird Atlas II Begins Year 3!

This spring the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas II (MCBBA2) begins its third year. Over the past two years, 130 observers including 63 “block leaders” contributed thousands of observations. We are grateful to all the volunteers who participated. As of 2022, 132 species are confirmed breeding in Marin including several species not confirmed during the first Atlas 40 years ago: Cedar Waxwing, Least Bittern, American Avocet, Forster’s Tern, Peregrine Falcon, and Bald Eagle. The 2022 Annual report with species lists, data-rich maps, and photos is available on the project web page: <https://marinaudubon.org/birds/marin-county-breeding-bird-atlas>. As we begin our third year, we need additional volunteers to survey the remaining ‘blocks’ across approximately half of the county, in order to complete surveys in 2024.

If you have been thinking you would like to contribute to the Atlas, now is the time! We need experienced birders who can identify birds

by sight, and by ear. Birding by ear is an essential skill crucial to confirming a bird’s presence and breeding status. Besides patiently noting a bird’s behavior, volunteers must be comfortable collecting data and submitting it to the project’s online database. To improve your birding-by-ear skills, consider joining a more experienced group or partner to help you gain experience. The MCBBA2 website contains an excellent 30-minute birding-by-ear video from Denise Wight. Also, consider a Marin Audubon field trip with expert local birders to improve your skills.

Many of the unclaimed blocks are in west Marin, including almost 30 within Point Reyes National Seashore. Available blocks within Point Reyes Seashore include these iconic areas:

- Five Brook Ponds (Wood Ducks!)
- The outer Point
- Drakes Estero
- Kehoe Beach to the end of Tomales Point

*continued on page 2*

## Invasive Sea Lavender Removal Project Needs Your Help!

Tis the season once again to remove the non-native sea lavender plants from Marin County’s marsh edges and shorelines.

Marin Audubon has been removing these highly invasive plants annually for over ten years in many locations where they are known to occur in Marin County.

We are making good progress reducing the number of plants and contributing to a larger, bay-wide project to remove the invasive sea lavender species from the entire San Francisco Bay Region.

We cannot get this work done without the generous help from volunteers and we need you to join us in removing the plants from March through June again this year.

The removal sites are in peaceful settings along the shorelines of marinas and marshes of Sausalito, Tiburon and Corte Madera. The removal work is relatively easy and we provide all of the gloves, tools, snacks and supplies needed.

Please contact Ellena Ochoa, MAS Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org) if you are interested in helping and she will add your name to a list of folks to be contacted once we have our dates set. Also, please also let her know on which days you prefer to help, if you would like to set up a group workday and/or if you have any questions.

### Join Marin Audubon Board

You can help us continue and expand our habitat restoration accomplishments, and birding field trip program. Our work is especially important at this time of climate change. Contact a member of the Nominating Committee to find out more Martha Jarocki, 415/461-3592; Lelia Lanctot, 415/924-6138 or Doug Waterman, 415/506-4675.

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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

The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas II is gearing up for the beginning of this year's survey period. Volunteers to take on survey blocks are still needed and welcome. Contact [mcbreedingbirdatlas@gmail.com](mailto:mcbreedingbirdatlas@gmail.com) to volunteer. I'm also thrilled to welcome Liz Lewis, recently retired from the Marin County Department of Public Works, as the third member of the MCBBA Coordinators. While Liz will be greatly missed at the county, I'm thrilled she is joining the BBA. Liz's background and love of birds will be a tremendous benefit for the project. See page 1 for more information about the BBA.

Contribute your financial, editing, and/or organizing skills and make us a more effective organization. Our treasurer will be retiring so we need someone with financial interests – and some experience would help but is not necessary.

With spring almost here, I'm reminding everyone that Spring is **not** the time to do yard work, removal, cutting, or trimming of your vegetation. Some species nest early and you

risk damaging or destroying nests. Nests are very difficult to locate. Best to do your yard maintenance in fall.

Spring is also migration time for many species and the majority migrate at night. Night lights can throw birds off their migration path or causing them to fly around to exhaustion. Although most of the problems may be with large buildings, even small buildings contribute to cumulative night glare. Some suggestions from National Audubon to reduce the impact of light pollution: turn off exterior decorative lighting; extinguish pot and flood lights; install automatic motion sensors and controls wherever possible; turn off interior lighting especially on higher stories; and eliminate horizontal glare and all light directed upward.

Huge thank you again to all donors to our end-of-year appeal. You are keeping us going.

Stay well and join us on our field trips, speaker series and work days.

## Breeding Bird Atlas

*continued from page 1*

- Bear Valley Trail from Divide Meadow to the ocean

Other open blocks include portions of Tomales Bay State Park, Oakwood, and upper Tennessee Valley within the Golden Gate Recreation Area, Woodacre, Lagunitas, and Devil's Gulch in Samuel P. Taylor State Park.

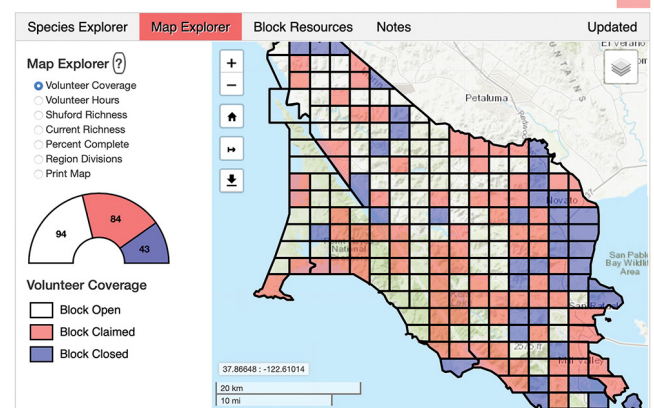
You can view the MCBBA Data Explorer on the website and navigate to the Map Explorer to view volunteer coverage and open blocks. Returning Atlasers who have completed their assigned blocks or wish to add more get first dibs on open blocks if they act fast! The image below from the Atlas website shows the Open Blocks as of February 12, 2023.

Block Leaders are responsible for bird surveys, data collection, data entry, and data proofing. A minimum of 16 well-distributed hours per block, per season, is requested. To maximize breeding confirmation, these visits must be distributed strategically throughout the field season from April 15 through July 15. For example, four visits at four hours each approximately every 3-4 weeks.

Contact [mcbreedingbirdatlas@gmail.com](mailto:mcbreedingbirdatlas@gmail.com) to sign up as a potential Block Leader or as an additional observer, and you will be contacted to determine the best role for you.

If you are unable to survey a block, you can still provide your breeding-bird observations

## MCBBA Data Explorer



**To view volunteer coverage and open blocks, go to the MCBBA Data Explorer on the website and navigate to the Map Explorer.**

(for behaviors that indicate confirmed breeding or high probability of breeding) to the Atlas using the Incidental Breeding Behavior form on our website.

The project has officially been under the non-profit sponsorship of the Marin Audubon Society since early 2022, which has been instrumental in the project's success to date.

Donations to the Atlas project can be made via PayPal (see Atlas website) or via check made out to the Breeding Bird Atlas and sent to Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas, c/o Daphne Hatch, 67 Pinheiro Circle, Novato CA 94945.

*By Liz Lewis, Daphne Hatch, and Diana Humple, Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas Steering Committee.*

## 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.

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

**San Rafael**

Thursday, March 2, 2023 and

Thursday, April 6, 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.

### 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 for this trip is required.

Registration opens Wednesday, February 22 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page.

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 is required for this trip.

Registration opens February 22 at 8:00 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.

### OLIMPALI STATE HISTORIC PARK

Novato

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

9 AM to noon

With Rich Cimino

Registration for this trip is required.

Registration opens March 12 on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Beginning and experienced birders are welcome to join in birding the Park. It's always an exciting time to birdwatch at Olompali State Historic Park which occupies parts of two blocks in the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas II survey. Four MAS members who are surveying the Park for the Atlas will be with us on the outing.

Early spring arrivals should be on hand as we walk the old ranch road to the park's reservoir. Olompali State Park features oak savanna, open grasslands and riparian habitat: There is a good assortment of species, raptors, flycatchers, swallows, vireos, warblers, woodpeckers, nuthatches, thrushes, and orioles. Be early, the field trip will start at 9 AM in the parking lot. Rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** Exit Hwy 101 at Atherton Ave/San Marin Dr in Novato. Follow the signs to Olompali State Historic Park. A right turn onto the Old Redwood Hwy frontage road will take you to the park. There is an \$8 parking fee.

### NICASIO/TOMALES BAY

**Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 4**

Saturday, April 1, 2023

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration is required for this trip.

Registration opens Wednesday, March 22 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page.

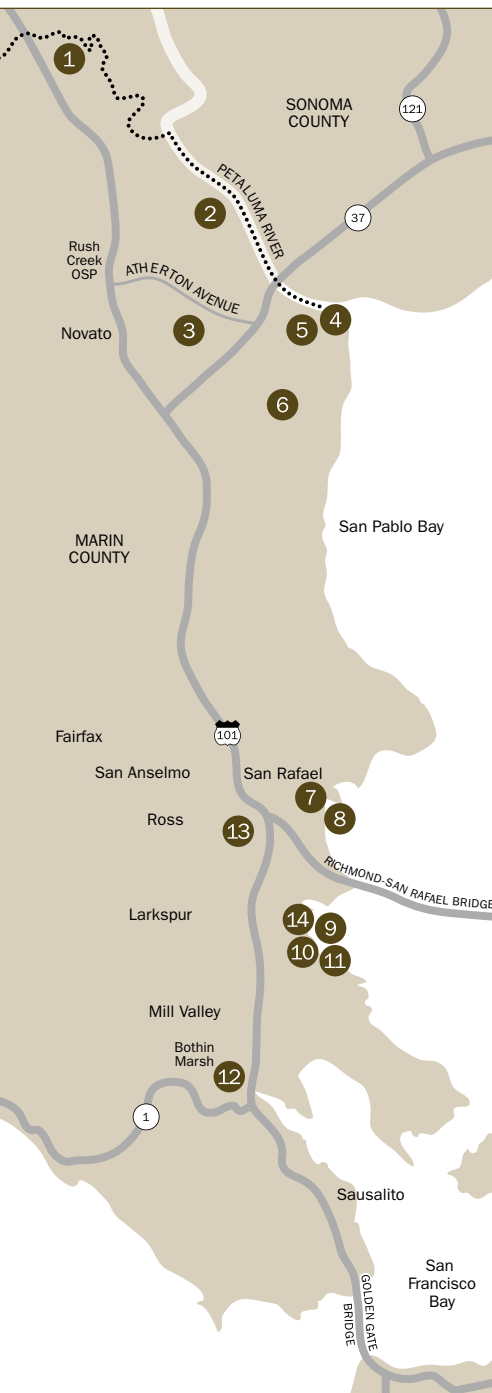
The rolling hills of central Marin are covered with pastures, horse ranches, forested ridges, homes, reservoirs and occupied by many interesting birds. We will look for them in and around Nicasio and along the nearby stream before heading three miles north to see what is on and around Nicasio Reservoir. This is Bob's birding "patch" and he has found both Bald and Golden Eagles recently with a nice array of other birds in this vicinity.

We expect to travel the few miles to Point Reyes Station for a lunch break or picnic. In the afternoon we will explore the south end Tomales Bay. Then, as time allows, we can explore the eastern edge of Tomales Bay along Highway 1, which supports a winter population of thousands of ducks, geese and shorebirds. We might travel 10 miles north to see if an Eagle's nest is having success. Heavy Rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101 in north San Rafael take Lucas Valley Rd west 10.3 miles then right turn onto Nicasio Valley Rd for 0.5 miles and park near the baseball field, the center of town. For GPS use 1 Old Rancheria Rd Nicasio, the address for the Rancho Nicasio Restaurant.

# 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.



## SPEAK OUT TO PROTECT MT. TAM

The most recent Recreation Planning Workshop again showed that the intent of staff is to promote recreation activities, not to protect the essential natural resources on Mt. Tam. The presentations were by recreation planners – not by biologists and naturalists informing attendees of the value of the natural resources.

A presentation on the natural resources is supposed to be given at the next and last workshop. We're looking forward to finally hearing this essential information that should have been presented at the first workshop.

Before the public testimony there was an exercise for attendees to present views on sticky notes. There were no restrictions on the number of notes submitted by each individual, so the exercise would not present an accurate picture of the public opinion. At this Workshop there were many more speakers advocating for the environment than at previous workshops.

If you want to protect the birds and habitats on Mt. Tam, have a quiet experience and want to feel safe while walking in the watershed, do plan to attend the next workshop and speak up. Let me know if you want to join with others to protect the watershed.

## ROY'S REDWOODS RESTORATION PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Marin County Parks has released an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS) for the Roy's Redwoods Open Space Preserve Restoration Plan for public review. The purpose of the Plan is to improve environmental conditions and enhance the experience of the public at this Preserve in the San Geronimo Valley.

The 19.5-acre project area encompasses the valley floor: approximately 16 acres of redwood forest, California bay forest and oak woodlands, 2.8-acres of grassland and 0.7-acres of wetlands.

A major feature of the Preserve is the stand of old growth and large second growth redwood trees. Their popularity with the public has contributed to an extensive social trail network through the redwood grove and resulted in large areas of soil compaction and erosion and denuded vegetation around points of interest, and sedimentation of aquatic resources. The project aims to correct these problems, avoid them happening in the future, and restore habitat.

The Preserve is habitat for Northern Spotted Owl (NSO). Point Blue Conservation Science has been conducting long-term NSO surveys at Roy's Redwoods. NSO have not been documented as nesting within the project site since 2006, but in 2020 and 2021, a pair of owls produced young within 1,300 feet southeast of the project site. A nest was in the same location in 2022.

The project plans to reduce environmental impacts on sensitive resources by reducing sedimentation and erosion, improving infiltration, closing unauthorized trails and establishing a sustainable system of trails. Specific environmental benefits include:

- Reducing trail redundancy, revegetate degraded areas and reducing habitat fragmentation.
- Correcting incised channel reaches of Upper Larsen Creek through the valley floor using large and small wood structures.
- Reestablishing a wetland-channel complex, to reconnect Upper Larsen Creek to its surrounding floodplain, reduce erosion, restore hydrologic functions, increase infiltration and raise the groundwater table.
- Reorienting fallen trees and downed branches and obtaining and placing additional logs, where needed, through the floodplain to slow and spread water throughout the floodplain to allow flows to infiltrate into the soil.

Some components of the project have the potential to impact habitat.

There would be a loss of some 22,200 square feet of understory vegetation within sensitive plant communities, soil disturbance and compaction due to construction of the trails and boardwalks. Boardwalks would be constructed in the valley floor to direct visitors out of the wetland. These would impact approximately 6,650 sq. ft. of understory vegetation.

Mitigations are proposed to address adverse impacts:

**Mitigation BIO-1 Protection of Woodrat Nests.** Nests would be protected by establishing buffer zones and relocation, if nests can't be avoided. Woodrats, while not a special status species, are the main prey for NSO. We are concerned about the effectiveness of buffer zones and relocation as methods to protect woodrats.

**Mitigation BIO-2 Special Status and Nesting Bird Protection.** According to the IS, all project work will be done outside of NSO nesting season. Surveys for other nesting birds will be

### 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

conducted and buffers established according to agency guidelines, unless a qualified biologist determines the work would not impact the nest.

**Mitigation BIO 3 Protect Native Trees and Vegetation.** The IS reports that the project is designed to not remove any trees, and to minimize pruning and impacts to tree root zones. A tree replacement plan would be developed for any trees that would be removed.

Social trails through the forest would be decommissioned and native vegetation planted to improved understory. New trails would be outside of habitats. Some trees would be limbed, downed trees may be cut and some placed to direct visitor use.

In summary, the project is designed to rehabilitate approximately 1.77 acres of heavy visitor use areas throughout the valley floor, to reduce soil compaction and increase conditions for natural regeneration of vegetation and hydrology. It will also construct trails/boardwalks intended to direct people use out of the wetlands/floodplain.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Review the Initial Study/Negative Declaration found on Marin County Parks' website under Projects and Plans. Submit comments to Jon Campo, Principle Natural Resource Planner, by March 10.

## UPDATE ON STATE ROUTE 37 PLANNING

Six state agencies have announced a partnership agreement to implement near-term improvements to State Route 37, while pursuing the long-term project to make the corridor more resilient. The state agency partners are: Caltrans, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Natural Resources Agency, California State Transportation Agency, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

The agreement to implement short-term improvements dismisses the recommendation of the two-year long PEL process as well as of the Baylands Group, (the partnership among agencies and environmental organizations of which MAS is a part) to implement the long-term project, a causeway, and that any sections constructed to address traffic in the short-term be a causeway.

The state partnership advances interim solutions to congestion but does not include causeways in the long-term plan, except in Marin where the Novato Creek Bridge would be replaced as a causeway. East of 121, a new lane would be added in each direction requiring filling of wetlands. Existing lanes would be converted to HOV lanes. There is no funding for construction, but tolling is cited although the recent introduced bill has not passed. No goals

or objectives of the Baylands group were incorporated. Five Baylands goals, however, were referenced including:

- Collaboration to minimize and mitigate impacts.
- Evaluation of ecological connectivity and ecosystem resiliency in near and long-term designs.
- Prioritizing ecological improvements. Improvements include: replacement of the Tolay Creek Bridge; enhancement of the tidal strip of tidal marsh along SR 37 to provide for protected species and resilience to flooding, and; expediting the flood reduction project between US 101 and Atherton Avenue by replacing the Novato Creek Bridge
- Examining the feasibility of designing the long-term project, or facilitating the transition, to the long-term elevations. Unfortunately this only means the long-term project will be considered and could mean building up the earthen berm.

In his press release, Congressman Jared Huffman characterizes the agreement as vague and unenforceable, describes the "interim project" supported by the agreement and as "10-mile long widening of the existing roadway that will fill wetlands, impede restoration, cost at least \$500M and be underwater in 15 years." He recognizes that supporters of the ultimate project will need to stay involved to ensure that improvements will actually be carried out.

## 2022 Christmas Bird Counts

### SOUTHERN MARIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT UPDATE

With a little data yet to be reported, the number of birds so far recorded is about 40,856; that is about 62% of 65,900, the 2010-2021 average. The number of species reported is 161, 88% of the recent average of 182. The lower numbers may be attributed to the heavy rains on December 31, the day of the Southern Marin CBC.



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

There were few unusual species but an **Eastern Phoebe** was reported for the first time and was still being seen at press time. The **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (a first last year), **Pacific Golden Plover** and **Ruddy Turnstones** were the other rare records.

### POINT REYES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The annual Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count took place this year on December 17, 2022 with nearly 200 participants. This was the 53rd count in the Point Reyes Circle. Over the course of a beautiful West Marin day 196 species were counted across 31 areas, making the PRCBC one of the country's largest counts in terms of both participants and species. The species total is typical for our circle on a day with good weather, as is the birder turnout, though we run the count rain or shine. Counters participated on foot and by boat to cover the Point Reyes National Seashore, Tomales bay and the areas around Point Reyes Station, Inverness and Marshall.



Lapland Longspur

Some unusual highlights this year included a **Cassin's Finch** and a **Snow Goose** spotted in the Olema Marsh, a **Cassin's Auklet**, **Vesper Sparrow** and **Lapland Longspur** counted in the Kehoe Beach Area, and a collection of four **Kingbirds** (one **Western**, three **Tropical**) who seem to have gotten lost in the Drakes Estero Area.

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

It is time to start preparing where we might plant next winter. That means digging or cutting Harding grass and then sheet mulching (putting down cardboard and covering it with mulch) the same area.

It is a very effective, herbicide-free way of stopping the undesirables and holding a great amount of moisture in the soil. Planting there next winter gives new native plants a great start with little competition. The same process applied around existing native shrubs benefits them for the entire summer.

Act locally and 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. Marin's wild plants and animals need your help. We all make a difference.

#### Volunteer Workdays

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

First Saturdays: March 4, April 1

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

##### Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: March 11, April 8

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, Anita Charworn, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Ho Lin, Lowell Sykes

#### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Shelley Alger, Harold Anderson, Elizabeth Bartelmez, Sheryll Baumgard Janine Bisharat, Barbara A. Boylan, Helen Brackley, Jen Bucktrout, Judith Buder, Nima Catani, Kara Chowanec, Kenneth Cribley, Claudia Cudia, Mary Donahue, Diana Flasher, Tim Flinders, Evan Ford, Jeannette & Jon George, Desiree Goyette-Bogas, Edward Granger, Barbara J. Hazard, Lenore Heffernan, Judith Keegan, Linda Lundwall, Sean Peisert, Lucas Peisert, Aidan Poile, Vivian Reyes, C.B. Wenger

### DUMPING AT TRIANGLE MARSH

Unfortunately, yet another huge truck load of 'chipped' stuff has been dumped at our Triangle Marsh site. It is not far from the overlook and a short distance from one of the 'No Dumping' signs. This time the result is even worse than last month's dumping.

This dump is particularly troublesome for two reasons. First, it was dumped on needlegrass we planted. Second, much of it appears to be bamboo and perhaps palm. Bamboo might not be readily composted. It is not chipped into small pieces, just sort of broken up and shredded. Also, the material in this pile is going to be heavy because it is quite green and has now been rained on.

We have put up another sign and we are considering options for addressing the problem. Anyone have any large rocks that we can use

to fit in to create a more complete barrier to prevent trucks from dumping? Or if you have any other ideas let us know?

### BAHIA

Gardner's Guild crew has completed planting in Bahia on the Central Peninsula and Eastern Peninsula. Native species planted on the Central Peninsula were Creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*), Field sedge (*Carex praeacilis*), common spikerush (*Eleocharis macrostachya*), and on the Central Peninsula and shrubs: coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and mugwort (*Artemisia Californica*) on the eastern peninsula.

STRAW also has had their last restoration day with students. And they still had some plants to get in the ground. STRAW staff came for another planting day to plant the rest. They'll be maintaining the plants over the summer.

### THE ZEN OF PLANTING AT SIMMONS SLOUGH

On a chilly foggy/sunny Saturday in January seven members of the Tamalpais High School Environmental Club joined another seven volunteers who planted over 100 native plants including milkweed at Marin Audubon's Simmons property in two hours. The goal of the project is to provide milkweed host plants for monarchs as well as host and nectar plants for our native butterflies, bees and other pollinators. Plants for this project were provided by Charlotte Torgovitsky's Home Ground Habitats nursery in Novato and included the native nectar plants of *Aster chilensis*, *Grindelia* and *Baccharis*.

As explained by Doug Tallamy at Marin Audubon's January 11th Speaker Series program, <https://youtu.be/jqjY81dXEjI>, birds depend on insect larvae hosted by our native plants for their survival. Butterfly and moth caterpillars represent a high protein food for birds, especially during the time they are feeding their nestlings, since most very young birds cannot digest seeds from bird feeders. Native plants are essential because our local insects are not biologically able to use as a food source, lawns and those nice-looking non-native nursery plants from Europe, Asia or Africa. Native plants support the food web necessary for our



Volunteers plant milkweed at Marin Audubon's Simmons Slough property

local birds and also provide biodiversity and habitat for other native fauna.

To finish off the day of planting the volunteers prepared a seed bed by scarifying the soil to remove emerging weeds and grasses and covering the area with compost. Seeds of three varieties of native wildflowers were cast on the seed bed to see if they will sprout. All we need is some rain and favorable spring weather.

If you are interested in volunteering for this type of project to help the environment and provide habitat for bees and butterflies please contact Ellena Ochoa, Marin Audubon's Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org).

# MARIN BIRDLOG: JANUARY 2023

By Noah Arthur

January in Marin begins in deep winter and ends with the first hints of spring, such as returning Allen's Hummingbirds, and is often characterized by rare waterbirds. The first rare find this month, however, was an aerial insectivore: a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Las Gallinas on the 1st (JC), exceptional anywhere in California in midwinter. A more classic winter passerine rarity, a



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Mountain Bluebird, male

male **Mountain Bluebird** was on outer Pt. Reyes on the 3rd (NF). Very rare in Marin despite being common in parts of the South Bay, a **Black Skimmer** turned up at the Shorebird Marsh Overlook on the 5th (RC), joined by others over the following days until a total of 4 **Black Skimmers** were there on the 9th. Also on the 9th, 3 **Black Skimmers** turned up at Bolinas Lagoon (MD), with that flock swelling to 7 individuals later in the month.

A male **Common Teal** at Las Gallinas on the 8th (JM) may or may not have been a continuing bird from earlier in winter.

Semi-regular in winter at this specific location, a **Wilson's Warbler** was calling along Redwood Creek near Muir Beach on the 8th (JP). Another out-of-season passerine on the 8th was a **Chipping Sparrow** at Slade Park in Novato (BB).

Heavy winter storms slammed into Marin during the second week of January, setting off the largest **Red Phalarope** irruption in the Bay Area in recent memory. Pushed in off the high seas by harsh weather, flocks and single birds were found in harbors, coastal ponds, construction site puddles, and flooded ball fields all over the Bay Area, with the highest counts being in Marin. Over 200 were on Abbotts Lagoon, and 75 on Rodeo Lagoon (WL) on the 10th. A much rarer vagrant from the open ocean also visited Rodeo Lagoon on the 10th, a **Leach's Storm-petrel** (WL).

Rain also pushed gulls in off the ocean in unusual numbers, with the best find being a **Glaucous Gull** at the Fish Docks on the 14th (LC & CC). Probably more regular than we know but rarely reported, a 2nd-cycle '**Alberta Gull**' (California Gull, subspecies *albertaensis*) was at Rodeo Lagoon on the 14th (DL).

Another presumably wintering **Wilson's Warbler** turned up on the 16th, this one at Rodeo Lagoon (SP). The next couple days produced two even rarer passerines, a female **Summer Tanager** in Bel Marin Keys on the 17th (WVD), and a male **Black-throated Grey Warbler** at Cypress Grove on the 18th (NW).

Maybe the best bird of the month, one of just a few records for Marin, was an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Blackies Pasture on the 18th (WL). This appears to be a different individual from last winter's bird, being larger/bulkier in structure. Almost equally rare, a **Cattle Egret** turned up at China Camp State Park on the 22nd (SS, JM, & CP). Rarest of all this month, an out-of-season **Wilson's Phalarope** made a brief appearance at Giacomini Wetlands on the 22nd (RH).

Herring runs continued to bring large numbers of gulls to the Richardson Bay shorelines, with another highlight being a 2nd-cycle '**Commander Gull**' (Glaucous-winged X Slaty-backed hybrid) near Bramble Beach on the 23rd (NA). Rarer in winter than fall, a **Pacific Golden-plover** was at Drakes Corner on the 25th (B&BA).

On the 27th, Bel Marin Keys produced a **Red-naped X Red-breasted Sapsucker** (LK). Rare to see from shore and even rarer over land, a **Black-legged Kittiwake** flew over the parking lot at Pt. Reyes South Beach on the 28th (EM, LS, & MS).

Observers and Acronyms **JC:** Jim Chiropoulos, **NF:** Nathaniel France, **RC:** Rich Cimino, **MD:** Mark Dettling, **JM:** Jeff Manker, **JP:** John Paul, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **WL:** William Legge, **LC:** Lucas Corneliusen, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **SP:** Steven Popper, **NW:** Nils Warnock, **WVD:** Willem van Dam, **SS:** Sylvie Silverstein, **JM:** Jane Medley, **CP:** Carla Parkinson, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **B&BA:** Bob & Bettina Arrigoni, **RH:** Roger Harshaw, **LK:** Logan Kahle, **EM:** Eddie Monson, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **MS:** Mark Stephenson

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The Hatch Family Fund for the Marin Breeding Bird Atlas.

## In memoriam

Gayanne Enquist in memory of Dianne Sierra, Len Blumin, Gary Thompson and Rick Stallcup



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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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