

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12 7:00 PM

Unique and Rare Birds of Sub-Saharan Africa

With John Sterling



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY



John Sterling

Shoebill (whale-headed stork)

Register for the October program on the MAS website's Speaker Series page.

John Sterling will take us on a virtual tour of some of Africa's most unique and rare birds from his travels in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa, and will discuss the threats and challenges for some of the endangered birds and their habitats.

He will be discussing conservation issues such as climate change and loss of habitat; and many of the species in peril, such as Montane Blue Swallow, Picathartes, Shoebill and Nahan's Partridge. He will also talk about other bird families and species unique to the sub-Saharan region, such as Hammerkop, Ostriches, Turacos, Flufftails and Egyptian Plover.

John embarked on a career in ornithology while a student at Humboldt State University in 1979. He has worked for the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center in Washington DC, research labs of the US Forest Service, and many other organizations.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9 7:00 PM

Favorite Birds of the Sierra Nevada

With Rich Cimino

SR 37 Draft EIR Out for Review

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the State Route 37 (SR 37) Flood Reduction Project is out for review. It has many deficiencies. The DEIR states the purpose of the project as being to reduce flooding from stormwater overtopping and adapt to the sea-level rise projected in 2130 on SR 37. The flood protection would be provided by a causeway built across Novato Creek.

The project would be completed in two phases. Phase 1 would be to replace the Novato Creek Bridge with a longer 1,000-foot-long, 96-foot-wide bridge that would free-span Novato Creek 35 feet high. Temporary transition bridges on either end would connect the new Novato Creek bridge to the embankments that would bring SR 37 back to an at-grade elevation. On the western side, the embankment would start at an elevation of 9.7 feet and extend east until it connects with the eastern end of the bridge embankment at 11 feet. The western transition bridge would be 1,152 feet long with a 4% grade, ranging in elevation from 11 to 35 feet, where it would connect with the Novato Creek Bridge. East of

Novato Creek, the transition bridge would be at a 5% grade for 963 feet with an elevation range of 35 to 7.1 feet, then it would connect with the embankment.

The bridge would have two 12-foot-wide lanes in each direction, 10-foot-wide outside shoulders, a 12-foot-wide median that includes a 5-foot-wide insider shoulder, a 2-foot-wide median barrier, a barrier separating a 10-foot-wide bicycle-pedestrian path, and two 2-foot-wide barriers for a total roadway width of 96 feet. No accommodation is being made for the SMART tracks, which will remain in the baylands. Several local access roads would be relocated, seventeen culverts would be replaced and one extended, the drainage channel that parallels SR 37 east of Novato Creek would remain in place and be widened.

Phase 2 would connect both ends of the causeway, with Highway 101 on the west end and east with the Atherton Avenue interchange area. Caltrans plans no further environmental review for Phase 2. We disagree. The analysis in this EIR is so minimal, additional environmental

continued on page 4

Marin Audubon Society's Fall Open House

At our Corte Madera wetland habitat next to the Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve

SATURDAY OCTOBER 14 | 10 AM - NOON

A special event is planned to highlight the history of the site, restoration work, and ongoing stewardship to support bird habitat (see article on page 6).

LOCATION: Entrance to the wetland habitat is at the east end of Industrial Way in Corte Madera BUT there is very limited parking at the site.

PARKING: Parking is available in the parking lot behind the World Market Plaza Shopping Center at 2020 Redwood Highway. Access the parking lot by taking the road to the right of World Market. From the lot, take the packed dirt trail to the east, turn left on the main levee trail a short distance to the wetland habitat. There is also parking in the shopping center parking lot

BRING: Layers, a hat for cool or warm conditions, and binoculars for bird spotting

WEBSITE: Check the website for information updates the week before the event

CONTACT: For questions, contact Volunteer Coordinator, Ellena Ochoa at volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org

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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

As we begin our 2023-24 fiscal year, we have had successes; the Breeding Bird Atlas 2 survey this breeding season year has completed its third survey season. Sixty volunteers scanned habitats throughout the county and spotted nesting birds. The Project Coordinators, Daphne Hatch, Diana Humple, and Liz Lewis, are working on compiling the data, which will be reported in the November *Rail*. In addition, Elyse Omernick headed up a docent program to protect a Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) nest area, which is drawing to a close. The program was managed in partnership with the Marin County Open Space District. A report on the docent program and the NSO nesting success also will be published later in the year.

On October 14, we'll be holding an Open House at our Corte Madera Marsh Restoration site to show off the progress of our most recent marsh restoration site, adjacent to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve. This is the first event of this kind we have held. We realize that we've been restoring wetlands for about thirty years, and we've never showed them off. This will be an opportunity to see how the restoration projects have progressed, both the tidal marsh and the important adjacent upland. We hope you will join us. See the pages 1 and 6 for more information.

This seems to be a time for planning. I am involved in multiple planning efforts going on around the Bay. The *Priority Conservation Areas Refresh* is an update of an effort to identify areas to be prioritized for protection. MAS recommended several parcels for the priority list when the MTC program began almost twenty years ago. This ability was soon terminated, and at a recent meeting it was reported that the practice of only government agencies recommending PCAs will, unfortunately, continue. The *North Bay Regional Conservation Investment Strategy* (RCIS) provides extensive information on focus species and habitats and is intended to identify mitigation opportunities for transportation and other projects. I am concerned that it could make it easier to fill wetlands because the RCIS lays out many ways one can mitigate by filling wetlands. The *North Bay Baylands* is an effort to restore North Bay bayland habitats, largely in Napa and Sonoma counties, and its planning is well underway. The *Novato Creek Baylands Strategy* will develop a plan to restore the baylands of lower Novato Creek. MAS is directly involved in this effort, and I'll be working to ensure a comprehensive plan is developed that restores all of the currently

Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count Needs Leader

A COORDINATOR IS NEEDED for the Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count this year. This Count has been held for more than 40 years.

Help and guidance will be provided. Bob Hinz will continue to do data entry and transmission to National Audubon Society. The coordinator's responsibilities are:

- Confirming last year's area leaders, adding new leaders where needed
- Collecting and distributing team participant names to area leaders
- Distributing forms and other information from National Audubon
- Organizing Count dinner, if we decide to have one

For more information, contact Doug Waterman by email at newsletter@marinaudubon.org or leave a message at 415/506-4675.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Jessica Obando, Hillary Pollaro, Robert Schepergerdes

THANK YOU, DONORS

Nicos Arechiga, William Clarke, Ross Flewelling, Nancy Hannon, Thomas Heinz, Alan Kepner, Daniel Mardesich, Sarah Martin, Debra Newman, Finn Moore Rauck, William Richardson, Marianna Riser, Cline Roland, Richard Scott, Nancy Warfield, Sharon Wilkinson

Grant from RHE Charitable Foundation

diked baylands in lower Novato Creek into an integrated tidal marsh with associated ectone habitat that provides for refugia habitat as well as accommodates sea level rise.

A special "thank you" this month for two grants we received from the Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission and the RHE Foundation. Both are to help with revegetating the levees at Bahia. Generous grants such as these make it possible for us to enhance and expand wildlife habitat on our properties.

Sign up for our MailChimp list through our website to receive notices of our activities and other important events.

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, October 5, 2023 and

Thursday, November 2, 2023

8:30 AM to noon

With Sande and Bob Chilvers

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

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

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

DIRECTIONS: Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about 0.5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There is an outhouse in the parking area for public use or you can use the bathrooms at nearby McInnis Park.

ABBOTT'S LAGOON AND THE INVERNESS TENNIS AREA

Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 10

Saturday, October 7, 2023

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required for this trip. Registration opens on September 27 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Abbott's Lagoon on the Pacific Coast in the Point Reyes National Seashore is one of Marin's premier birding locations with an eBird sum of 283 species. Coastal fall migration south brings many birds to this area. Some include **Ferruginous Hawk**, **Baird's** and **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Red-necked Phalaropes**, **Lapland Longspur**, **Horned Lark** and **Pipits**. Hundreds of ducks of a dozen species, geese, herons, **Peregrines** and **Ospreys** are also likely

visitors. Out and back is about 3 miles (some in sand) and Jim likes to do a full 5-mile loop. Pack a lunch for a picnic on the beach and bring a couple of layers for the fresh ocean air.

To help bolster our participant's species lists to our yearly goal of 200, we plan to stop along Tomales Bay near the Inverness Tennis club to look for Pine and Alder woodland birds. A surprising number of species have been seen here and there is a nice little beach where we usually find several kinds of gulls.

DIRECTIONS: From Point Reyes Station on Hwy 1 go just south of town, right turn onto Sir Francis Drake Blvd, follow that through Inverness into the Point Reyes National Seashore. Go north on Pierce Point Rd. The parking lot is on the left in about 3 miles. Car pool if you can, allow 1.5 hours from San Rafael.

RODEO LAGOON

Marin Headlands

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

8:30 AM to noon

With William Legge and David Wiechers

Registration required for this trip. Registration opens on October 8 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

With large numbers of birds moving through the area this time of year, it's sure to be an interesting outing with unusual sightings a definite possibility. We'll start with a 30-40 minute visible migration and sea watch from Rodeo Beach hoping for grebes, loons, passing wildfowl and gulls before undertaking an extended circuit of Rodeo Lagoon in the search for scarce migrants including early winter wildfowl, shorebirds and fall passerines. More than 60 species should be possible at this time of year. The morning will begin with a sea watch at 7:30 AM. This trip is less suitable for beginners.

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

LAS GALLINAS AND HAMILTON WETLANDS Birding in Marin, Season 8 – Trip 11

Saturday, November 4, 2022

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required for this trip. Registration opens on October 25 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page

Join Jim and Bob on an easy, birdy walk of 1.5 miles around the Las Gallinas ponds where we are likely to see 10 species of ducks, five of herons, five of raptors, five of sparrows and some rails like **Ridgway's**, **Sora**, and **Virginia** with **Gallinules**, coots, swans, ducks and geese!

After lunch we'll visit the Hamilton Wetlands, restored by the Army Corps of Engineers to the San Francisco Bay ecosystem, which have become the winter home of some ten thousand birds.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 north San Rafael take the Lucas Valley/Smith Ranch Road exit east. In about 0.5 mile, immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, left turn and follow the road another 0.5 mile to the Las Gallinas parking at the end.

To the Hamilton Wetlands return to Hwy 101 north, take the second exit, Nave Dr toward Hamilton. Stay on Nave Dr, heading north, to Main Gate Dr and turn right. Go east to Hanger Ave and park along the levee behind Hanger 7.

WINTER BIRDS OF THE BAY BOAT TRIP

Saturday, November 11, 2023

9 AM to 4 PM

With Roger Harris

San Francisco Bay, the largest and one of the most important estuaries along the Pacific Flyway, is right in our own backyard. Join us as we cruise from Berkeley toward the Golden Gate Bridge and north into San Pablo Bay, hugging the shorelines and waters that are home to thousands of wintering birds. This trip offers bird and marine mammal viewing in stunning locations, many of which can only be seen by boat.

Dress in layers. Bring liquids and lunch. Please bring a mask for any time spent inside the cabin.

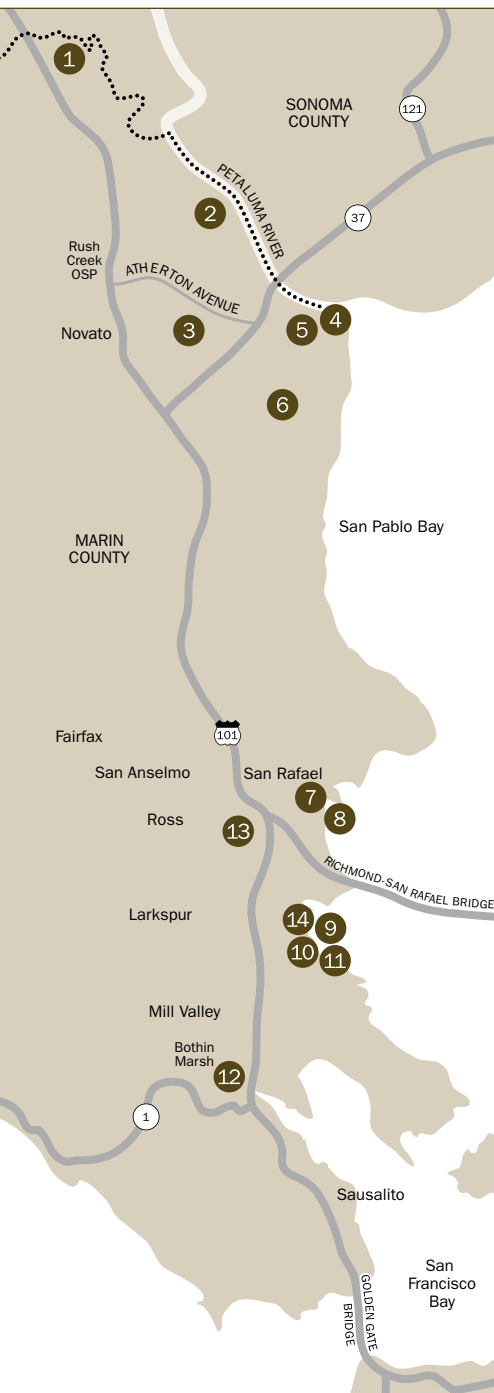
The trip costs \$130. Purchase tickets on Marin Audubon's website on the Field Trips page. Ticket sales begin on October 10 at 8 AM. If the trip is sold out, a waitlist will open. Click the "contact organizer" prompt on the Ticketbud page and send a contact phone number. You may cancel your ticket for a refund, up to 48 hours before the time of the event. Please note that a \$7.50 transaction fee will be deducted.

Registered participants will receive directions to the Berkeley Marina and other instructions prior to the trip.

Inclement weather will reschedule the trip to the next Saturday, November 18.

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.



SMART FILLING ENDANGERED SPECIES HABITAT

Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit has begun work on a segment of the multiuse pathway along Gallinas Creek. The pathway is part of the 2008 plan that is designed to follow the entire length of the rail line. In most locations this might not be a problem, but this section goes right through endangered Ridgway's rail habitat.

The pathway is on a tributary of the north fork of Gallinas Creek, along the tidal channel adjacent to McInnis Parkway. The pathway will cross the tributary channel and run along the (south) side of the railroad tracks, where it will be right between the tracks and the tidal marsh. Because there is no space between the marsh and the tracks through this area, they have cantilevered the path over the marsh in sections, which also has impacts. Vegetation under suspended structures often does not survive due to lack of light. As it extends north, the path will cross over to the San Rafael Airport property, then over Smith Ranch Road.

The affected habitat is a very sensitive section of Gallinas Creek, where Ridgway's rails have actually been seen on the tracks. The calculation of the wetland acreage filled by SMART seems low, and it does not appear to have considered the loss of marsh vegetation in the segments where plants will be covered by the elevated sections of the path. Not only is the project filling tidal marsh, but it will also result in many other impacts from the presence of people, noise, and fast-moving vehicles, including bikes, e-bikes, and other forms of multimodal transportation. Human activity over the adjacent tidal marsh will reduce the marsh usable to the rails as they tend to avoid proximity to people.

The mitigation approved by regulatory agencies for the filling of this tidal marsh would take place at the Mira Monte Marina site and the Helen Putnam Park in Sonoma County. The site of the former Mira Monte Marina was purchased by SMART and restored to tidal marsh, for which SMART set up a mitigation bank for their use. Both sites are far from the habitat that will be impacted and will not on



Heavy equipment stuck in marsh at SMART multi-use path construction site on Gallinas Creek

Kate Powers

Gallinas Creek benefit the species losing the habitat. At the Sonoma County site, riparian wetlands will be enhanced, reportedly to compensate for the loss of trees at the Airport site. Certainly, a place to mitigate for the loss of tidal marsh could have been found along Gallinas Creek, closer to the rail's current home.

Unfortunately, environmental groups were not notified before permits from regulatory agencies were issued. If we had known, we could have objected to this very damaging project. But members of the biking community certainly knew about it and praised staff at a SMART Board meeting for the accomplishment.

We are now trying to find out how the regulatory agencies approved this project, particularly the mitigation measures that do not benefit endangered species on the site.

TOMALES BAY AREA PLAN REVISED

The Tomales Bay Area Plan (Plan) public meeting held on August 31 provided some basic information about the Pt. Reyes National Seashore and the Tomales Bay Planning Area, and the planning process, but most of the time was scheduled for response to questions from attendees. The major focus of the Plan will be the removal of the fence that confines the tule elk to the 2,900-acre Tomales Point Area and the management of wilderness, recreation, cultural resources, and visitor use.

In the way of background, the Seashore was established in 1962, a 1978 amendment to the Wilderness Act established the Tomales Point Area, and elk were introduced in 1978.

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 |

Cultural preservation focused on historic Pierce Ranch, which was established in 1856 as a dairy ranch and later became a beef ranch; it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. The ranch is now open for self-guided tours. Park staff will be working with the Indians of Graton Rancheria to develop the Plan.

Three alternatives will be considered: A) No project—existing conditions retained; B) Remove the elk fence—water facilities removed, no supplemental water provided, new vault toilets, trails maintained, possible spur trail; C) Keep the elk fence—supplemental water systems removed, elk population actively managed, and overnight camping allowed.

The following are some highlights of the information that was provided. National Park Service staff reported that with the fence removed, all elk would be free-ranging. Those that leave the fence enclosure would be managed the same way as current free-ranging herds (in Drakes Bay and Limantour), according to General Management Plan (GMP) guidelines. The GMP allows for culling of up to 140 animals, which would include problem animals and sick animals. When asked how the NPS would handle elk that may leave the park boundaries, the response was that they would be returned to the park.

Regarding elk population declines in 2013, 2019, and 2023, staff reported that they were due to lack of forage caused by drought conditions, not lack of water to drink. There was no evidence that the animals were suffering from dehydration, and there were water sources (natural springs, seeps, etc.) that were available to them. With the fence removed under the preferred Alternative B, elk would be free to leave the currently enclosed area. No supplemental water or food would be provided. The NPS noted various other problems associated with importing forage, such as introduction of seeds of invasive plants.

Timing of our newsletter and comment deadline were out of sync, so we hope you noted our message in last month's issue. The NPS wants input on issues to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment that will analyze the alternatives that will inform an amendment to the 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) for Tomales Point area. There will be another opportunity to comment when the Environmental Assessment is released. That will perhaps be the best time to comment, as we will see areas we think are not adequately addressed or not addressed at all.

WETLANDS REGULATION TO CONTINUE

The recent US Supreme Court ruling on wetlands (Sackett v. EPA) narrowed the geographical scope of federal regulation over wetlands, so that now a continuous surface connection to a navigable waterbody is required to be federally regulated. This means that regulation by the Army Corps of Engineers of diked baylands and other seasonal wetlands will be eliminated. How this will be reflected in actual regulation will not be fully known until the federal regulations are revised. Fortunately, the

Regional Water Quality Control Board will be continuing to regulate all wetlands under its California Clean Water Act authority. The concern about the Water Board's regulation is whether it has the staff resources to meet the increased workload that will result from being the sole regulator of seasonal wetlands. Responsibilities of regulators include conducting or reviewing wetland delineations (defining the boundaries of the wetlands) prepared by others, in addition to approving the delineations. The Army Corps of Engineers has been the primary agency responsible for regulating wetlands.

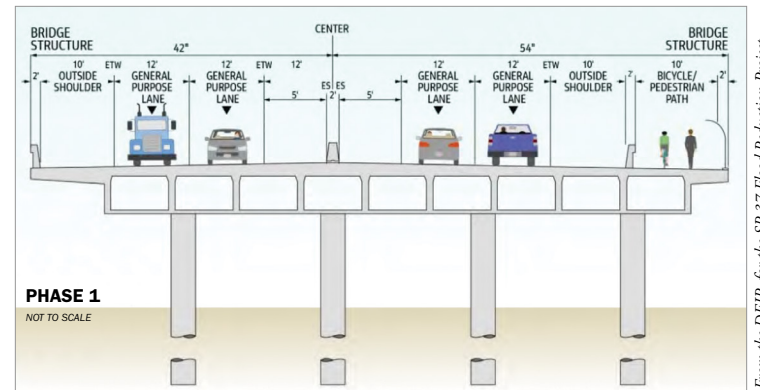
SR 37

continued from page 1

analysis should be prepared, if Phase 2 ever will be constructed. The remnant of SR 37 would be a significant impediment to restoring tidal marsh.

While this design is a causeway, which is what the environmental community has been advocating, there are questions and issues that need to be addressed that are not. The DEIR is sparse and fails to address a number of important issues:

- First, there is no mention of what would happen under the bridge, what would happen to the existing SR 37 roadway. One is left to assume that they are simply planning to leave it in place. This would block connecting the diked baylands to the north with those to the south.
- The proposed wetland mitigation is inadequate. Only a small amount of fill in the wetlands is reported: 0.57 acres. The DEIR proposes compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts through a plan that includes purchase of credits in an agency-approved mitigation bank and/or providing in-lieu funding to a nearby restoration program or restoration project that will enhance, create or restore wetlands or other waters adversely impacted by the project. As we see it, there is mitigation opportunity right on site, where it would directly benefit the Novato Creek ecosystem: removing existing fill from the current roadway. At minimum, an area at least equal to if not larger than the area of wetlands that would be filled should be removed and restored to tidal action.



Conceptual cross section of proposed Novato Creek bridge

- There is no information about the number of piles needed to support the causeway, how many there would be, or where they would be placed.
- The causeway does not extend over Simmons Slough so that tidal flows will still be restricted, limiting the restoration potential of baylands to the north.

Removing the existing roadway is important for restoring the baylands, including eventual connection of the diked baylands. Further information needs to be provided on this and the other issues that have not been addressed.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

- Submit comments by the October 8, 2023 deadline.
- Tell Caltrans that they need to remove the remnants of the existing SR 37 after the causeway is constructed.
- Use any of the points noted above, put them in your own words, and add your own issues.
- Email the above to SR37FloodProject@dot.ca.gov.

Or send by regular mail to Caltrans District 4, ATTN: Skylar Nguyen, Senior Environmental Scientist P.O. Box 23660, MS: 88, Oakland, CA 94623-0660.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

In the effort to remove two late season invasives, stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) appears to be absent from Triangle Marsh and Corte Madera restoration, but it's still a concern at Bahia. Russian thistle (*Salsola soda*) is still present along the edges in Corte Madera, but it's scarce at Triangle. Harding grass is beginning to grow again even before it rains because the days are cooler and shorter. Digging it now from the dry soil is a bit more difficult, but after it is uprooted, it dies without the rain.

The second Saturday in October at the Corte Madera restoration will be an open house, a chance for everyone to stop by the property and understand what Marin Audubon does to improve bayside habitat. Please drop in.

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. Make a difference.

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: October 7, November 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: October 14, November 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.

THANK YOU TO SEA LAVENDER REMOVAL VOLUNTEERS!

Thank you to the volunteers who helped remove invasive sea lavender, cocklebur and stinkwort plants from various locations from mid May through mid September.

Debbie Ablin
Annette Anzalone
Betsy Bikle
Julia Dierauer
Joshua and Eli Maltz
Dana Morawitz
Susan Matross
Javier Alejo Mendoza
Dominic Oliveri
Alison Pence
Flinn Moore Rauch
Jude Stalker
Lowell Sykes

Habitat Stewardship



Gerry Jarocki

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve restored by MAS

OPEN HOUSE IN CORTE MADERA

At this time when climate and the natural world are at the center of our collective concern for the future of the planet, it is important to highlight the victories, especially those we can directly affect and those that are happening in our own communities.

Marin Audubon Society's marsh restoration project at the Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve (CMMER) is one of those success stories that we welcome you to engage with during the Open House event on October 14th. (see announcement on page 1)

MAS worked to acquire the property for 30 years and successfully purchased the site in 2015. Construction to restore tidal marsh habitat, connect channels, and provide high tide refugia for the endangered California Ridgway's Rail, was completed in 2018.

There are many conservation challenges locally and regionally – such as pressure for development of baylands, increasingly intensive recreational uses in the watersheds that release sediments into the bay to the detriment of habitats, and expanding wild fire suppression work that destroys understory habitat needed by wildlife. We have the distinct advantage of being able to carry out our work knowing the lands we own will be protected forever.

In recent years, work at the CMMER has been centered on stewardship made possible by the generous support of members and work day volunteers, without whom we would not be able to carry out this important work. Stewardship includes an ever-changing range of tasks that includes planning, controlling non-native invasive plants, monitoring and caring for established native plant communities, and filling

in with new native plants every year or two.

The site supports many native upland plants we installed and some that have come in on their own. The marsh is 100% populated with native pickleweed and cordgrass that have grown from seeds brought in with the tides. On the upland, native species (creeping wildrye, yarrow, goldenrod) some planted by MAS and others recruited naturally, are gradually expanding. It has been quite a task controlling invasives, but we're finally making headway.

We hope you'll join us on the 14TH to see the progress of our work restoring habitat.

GREATER NOVATO SHADED FUEL BREAK ON MAS BLACK POINT PROPERTIES

MAS was contacted by the Novato Fire Protection District (NFPD), wanting to clear and trim vegetation on our properties at Black Point. The request also included permission to enter the properties to perform maintenance clearing in future years. MAS properties at Black Point are scattered around the oak-wooded hillsides near the diked seasonal wetlands. Many of these properties are within the Greater Novato Fuel Break Project.

To evaluate the request, a committee of board members visited the targeted property with NFPD staff to evaluate and discuss the proposed actions. Our attention focused on the largest parcel MAS owns at Black Point, a 2.6-acre parcel that includes both seasonal wetlands and adjacent wooded uplands. We purchased it in 2008. A few of our other smaller properties are also within this year's treatment area.

The NFPD's usual approach is to limb up trees to eight or so feet, remove downed limbs,

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Marin Birdlog: May 2023

By Noah Arthur



Gen Spierburg

on the 13th (EM). A more classic August rarity came on the 13th, the season's first **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Abbotts Lagoon (DK), joined by a second individual the next day (LS). Oddly rare in Marin, two **Ruddy Turnstones** came back-to-back on the 14th and 15th, the first near Abbotts Lagoon (LS) and the second at Rodeo Lagoon (WL). Also on the 14th was a **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the Mendoza Ranch pond (DM).

Two **Pacific Golden-plovers** were near Abbotts Lagoon on the 18th, and a second **Ruddy Turnstone** was present there that day along with the continuing one (ML). Also at Abbotts Lagoon on the 18th was a **Franklin's Gull** (TF). Two more **Ruddy Turnstones** turned up on Limantour Spit on the 19th (ES), and an additional **Lesser Yellowlegs** flew by at Drakes Beach (NW).

An **Eastern Kingbird** at Las Gallinas on the 19th was the first eastern passerine of the fall (ECW & WG).

A pelagic boat moved through Marin waters on the 20th, turning up **Black Tern**, **Guadalupe Murrelet** and **Hawaiian Petrel** well offshore. Also on the 20th, yet another **Bank Swallow** showed up, this one at Abbotts Lagoon (AP).



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August is the middle of Marin County shorebird season, and this month did not disappoint with a number of nice shorebird rarities as well as some other good birds. The first rare bird of the month came on the 6th, a **Bank Swallow** flying over Limantour Beach (LS), followed by another **Bank Swallow** the next day at Muddy Hollow (RC). Yet another **Bank Swallow** flew by Fish Docks on the 12th (DL, CC, & MSc).

Very unusually early was an adult **Broad-winged Hawk** floating high over White House Pool on the 11th (EM). Rare for the Outer Point, a **Downy Woodpecker** was at the Fish Docks



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A new **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Abbotts Lagoon on the 26th (unclear who found it). Another early record of **Broad-winged Hawk** came on the 28th, with two birds over Hawk Hill (KG). The best bird of the month also came on the 28th in the form of a juvenile **American Golden-plover** at Walker Creek Mouth in Tomales Bay (NW & KH).

On the 30th two **Black Swifts** flew over Hawk Hill (GGRO hawk watchers). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Abbotts Lagoon on the 30th may have been a new individual (BB), and a **Pacific Golden-plover** there on the 29th may also have been new (ML).

OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS LS: Lucas Stephenson, RC: Richard Cimino, DL: Derek Lecy, CC: Connor Cochrane, MSc: Mark Schulist, DK: Durrell Kapan, EM: Eddie Monson, WL: William Legge, DM: Dominik Mosur, ML: Matt Lau, TF: Teale Fristoe, ES: Emilie Strauss, NW: Nils Warnock, ECW: E. C. Winstead, WG: Whitney Grover, AP: Adam Panto, KG: Keith Gress, KH: Kenneth Hillan, BB: Bob Battagin

NOVATO FUEL BREAK

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brush piles, remove non-native plants and small trees, and generally clear the understory while leaving larger logs and tree trunks. NFPD showed some flexibility (i.e., willingness to modify the usual practices) during our discussions.

Based on our mission to protect habitat, the MAS Board voted unanimously to allow the NFPD to remove non-native broom and rockrose only. Both are highly invasive species that are also considered flammable and should be removed. We do not want native trees and understory vegetation, brush piles, and downed limbs removed. All are habitat. NFPD staff were aware of the seasonal wetlands and reported that they are not planning to do any work in the wetlands.

We asked that the material be removed by pulling, the most environmental approach, then chipped and left on-site. We requested to be notified in advance when crews will be working on our property so that we can visit the site when the work is underway. For additional work, including ongoing maintenance in future years, NFPD will need to request our approval beforehand.

Some MAS properties are within the massive 300-foot Greater Novato Fuel Break boundary, although it is unclear how many. MAS owns nineteen properties at Black Point, totaling 7.087 acres. Most are tiny undevelopable sites that were purchased through tax default sales. There is a cluster around and in most of Norton Pond. The tiny parcels are the result of a subdivision many years ago that allowed the parcels to be used as incentives for a newspaper or magazine subscription.

CORRECTION FOR THE RAIL, SEPTEMBER 2023

Limonium latifolium, a native sea lavender, reported as being removed by volunteers is incorrect. The invasive species being removed are two: *Limonium ramosissimum* (Algerian sea lavender) and *Limonium duriusculum* (European sea lavender).



The Rail

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November 11 **Boat Trip:** Winter Birds of the Bay
8:30 AM With Roger Harris

November 5 **Field Trip:** Rodeo Lagoon
With William Legge and David Wiechers

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. Alternatively, you can join by filling out this form and sending us your payment by mail.

ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON FOR THE FIRST TIME.

MAS will receive 100% of your initial membership if you enter **MAS's chapter code C04** on your application. To join, go to www.audubon.org/join.

The best option for the birds: Join MAS **and** NAS.

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