

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14 7:00 PM**

**Protecting Biodiversity and Facilitating Landscape-scale Tidal Marsh Restoration: Management of Invasive Spartina in the San Francisco Estuary**  
With Jen McBroom, California Invasive Plant Council



# The Rail

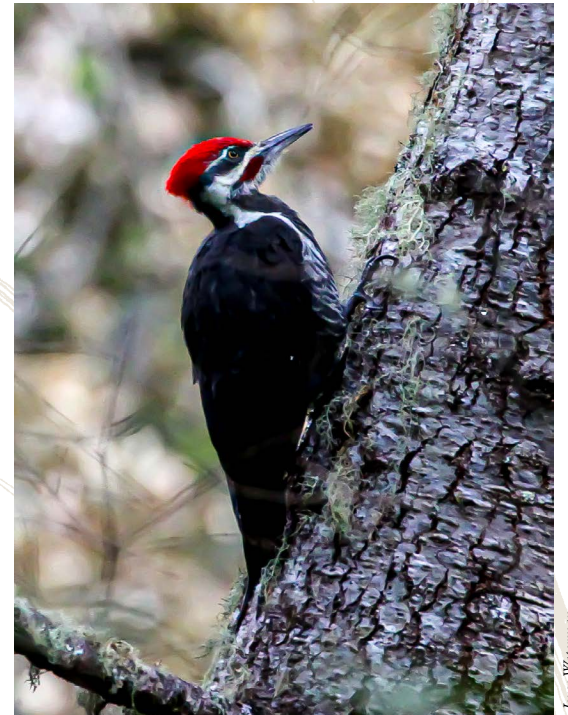
MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## The Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas II Completes Year 3!

As many of us turn our attention to sorting through migrating shorebirds and wintering ducks, work on Marin's second Breeding Bird Atlas continues. Under the sponsorship of the Marin Audubon Society, this project is a continuation of a landmark effort completed forty years ago by Dave Shuford and Point Blue Conservation Science (then Point Reyes Bird Observatory). While the second Atlas incorporates new mapping technology, thanks to the handiwork of GIS Analyst Will Wiskes, the foundation of both efforts is a cadre of dedicated and skilled volunteers spending many hours observing in the field. We are excited to share with you the release of our 2023 Annual Report, available on our website at: <https://marinaudubon.org/birds/marin-county-breeding-bird-atlas>. We hope you will check it out to learn what everyone's efforts are producing, what we are learning, and even how you might contribute.

Thanks to Marin Audubon and our individual donors' support, we hired a part-time project manager this year to assist with data management, support the production of a new volunteer handbook, and to help compile this year's report. In early 2023, we gathered a science advisory team that included Lisa Hug, Mark Dettling, Megan Elrod, Bill Merkle, and Rusty Salf, to help us update and clarify our Atlas protocols. We incorporated the changes into a new Volunteer Handbook that can be found on our website.

What have we learned as we complete Year 3? Preliminary results across the first three years of this effort continue to show distributional changes since the original Atlas (Shuford 1993). We have documented breeding of species not found during the first Atlas: **Bald Eagle, Least Bittern, Great-tailed Grackle, Forster's Terns, and Cedar Waxwing**. In addition, our preliminary data to date suggests changes in distribution for a number of species, and we present examples of this for **Hooded**



**Pileated Woodpecker in Point Reyes. See distribution map on page 6.**

**Orioles** along with three woodpecker species (**Acorn Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Pileated Woodpecker**), whose maps show expanded distributions in the county. While these data are preliminary and we have not evaluated it against vegetation data, it is interesting to ponder the relationship between the woodpeckers' distributions and patterns of habitat change throughout the county. We also confirmed breeding (for the Atlas effort) for five more species in 2023 (**Cassin's Vireo, Common Merganser, Common Murre, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and Ruddy Duck**), bringing the total number of confirmed breeding species to 137! The report details other highlights as well and directs readers – website to investigate further via our online Data Explorer, where you can look in more detail at species of interest to you, explore the

*continued on page 5*



Simon Ganner

**Marsh along San Leandro Bay**  
Register for the December program on the MAS website's Speaker Series page.

San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary on the west coast of North America and a critical stopover along the Pacific Flyway migration route for millions of shorebirds and waterfowl. Rimming the Bay between freeways, airports, and landfills remain tidal wetlands and opportunities to return salt evaporator ponds to functioning ecosystems. Since 2005, the Coastal Conservancy's Invasive Spartina Project has worked to push back the invasive plants that threaten wildlife habitat. Learn what's being done to address the global biodiversity crisis.

Jen McBroom is a biologist at Olofson Environmental Inc. and has been counting Ridgway's rails for the Invasive Spartina Project since 2005. She got her start in the tidal wetlands of the San Francisco Bay studying song sparrows and marsh wrens after finishing her degree at U.C. Davis. Since then, she has logged many hours mapping invasive plants and observing the wildlife at the edge of the Bay.

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

**Northern Spotted Owls**  
With Taylor Ellis, National Park Service

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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](http://www.marinaudubon.org)

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing [membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org](mailto: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

We've lost three environmental leaders over the last few months, **David Herrema**, **Richard Plant**, and **Marge Macris**. A tribute to David is on page 3. Richard was a long-time Marin Audubon member and supporter. He was active in protecting the natural environment of West Marin, where he lived. He was a major donor toward the purchase of our Corte Madera property adjacent to the Ecological Reserve. Marge Macris held many positions as planner, including Marin County planning director. She shepherded the 2008 Countywide Plan, which provided for more environmental protections than ever before. In her retirement, she became active with Marin Baylands Advocates, protecting land. The world is a better place for their having been here, and they are missed.

Welcome again to **James Raives**, who was elected to our Board as Property Management Chair for real estate matters at our November meeting, returning after a hiatus. James comes with a unique background, having worked for the California Coastal Commission (CCC), in charge of consistency determinations, as well as for the Marin County Open Space District, where he was in charge of acquisitions, easement issues, and restoration projects. James has been volunteering with us, and now his involvement will continue to be beneficial for MAS in dealing with real estate and other issues.

Christmas Bird Count organizing has begun. MAS sponsors and organizes the Southern Marin count and sponsors the Point Reyes and Cheep Thrills (Novato) counts with financial support. At this time, the Southern Marin Count Coordinator, Alison Pence, is putting together teams to survey count areas within the count circle. See the box on the right for more information, including how to sign up.

I'm sure you'll enjoy the Annual Report Summary of the Breeding Bird Atlas's third year. They have reason to be proud of their accomplishment [continue to Breeding Bird Atlas 2]. They still have some blocks that need volunteer counters. Contact one of the compilers if you have a bit of time to volunteer to help spot nesting birds for this important survey.

Several weeks ago, the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved a vacation house in the Coastal Zone, in an area recommended by the County's own study to be protected due to anticipated sea-level rise. The reason: they were afraid of being sued. This is the story of efforts to begin addressing sea-level rise by keeping development out of the risk zone. Will we ever be able to face this issue? Will local governments and the state ever begin to face it? MAS has not taken a formal position on this yet, but we expect to take it up when it is considered by the CCC. That will be another opportunity to express opinions.

You will be receiving MAS's annual appeal

letter shortly, if you haven't received it already. In our Annual appeals, we review our accomplishments during the past year and, to the best we can predict, convey what we aspire to accomplish in the coming years. Donations at this time are important to support our programs, so please give generously.

At this busy holiday time, do make time to get out and enjoy our overwintering birds. Shorebirds and waterfowl have returned from their northern breeding grounds. It's an exciting time of year.

Have the happiest of holidays!

## 2023 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Three Christmas Bird Counts will be held in Marin this year:

### Thursday, December 14 – Cheep Thrills

Covering north Marin and extending into southern Sonoma County. Contact Susan Kelly at [s.kelly@sbcglobal.net](mailto:s.kelly@sbcglobal.net).

This count usually has enough volunteers, but a few more who have good birding skills and can hike moderate distances can be accommodated.

### Saturday December 16 – Point Reyes

Covering west Marin, including Tomales Bay and Point Reyes National Seashore. Contact coordinators David Wimpfheimer at [calnatureguide@gmail.com](mailto:calnatureguide@gmail.com) or Robin Blaney at [ptreyescbc@gmail.com](mailto:ptreyescbc@gmail.com)

All birders are welcome to participate, but beginners should be prepared for a fast-paced day in the field.

### Saturday, December 30 – Southern Marin

Covering much of east Marin and extending west as far as Bolinas and Stinson Beach. Contact Alison Pence, [alipence9@gmail.com](mailto:alipence9@gmail.com).

Volunteers are welcome. Some birding experience is helpful.

## VOLUNTEER FOR THE SOUTHERN MARIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) are the longest-running community science project in the nation. Audubon's CBC began on the East Coast in 1901. Marin Audubon's CBC began in 1978. The counts are conducted every year from mid-December to early January in approximately 2,100 count circles worldwide. Data from the counts are analyzed by the National Audubon Society. The analyses are critical for the identification of bird species in decline, as well as those expanding their ranges.

Volunteers are needed on Saturday, December 30, in the Southern Marin area. Some birding experience is preferred. Volunteers will be assigned to a count area team. If you are an experienced birder, we need leaders in a couple of count areas. It's a great opportunity to get outside and see some interesting birds in beautiful locations.

A compilation dinner will be held after the count for the first time in three years. You will receive information about it.

If you're interested in participating, contact Alison Pence at [alipence9@gmail.com](mailto:alipence9@gmail.com).

## 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, December 7, 2023 and

Thursday, January 4, 2024

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 on our regularly scheduled walks on the first Thursday of the month at Las Gallinas. We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels, especially beginning birders, on this leisurely walk around the ponds. 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 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.

### STINSON/BOLINAS

#### Birding in Marin, Season 9 – Trip 1

Saturday, January 6, 2024

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

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

A healthy happy New Year to you all. Bob and I are pleased to share the bird rich Stinson Beach/Bolinas birding area with you. Coupled with non freezing winter weather and many diverse habitats, the Southern Marin Christmas Bird Counts show this to be most species rich, birdiest area in Southern Marin county. These habitats include the ocean, beaches, rocky shores, a large lagoon with acres of mudflats, Douglas Fir and Redwood

forests, Alder riparian, parking lots, residential and more. The CBC data show an average of more than 125 species winter in this area. Plus, many of these birds, like ducks, gulls and shorebirds, are rather easy to see as they float about on the water or walk along the open shores. Can we find 100 species today?

Thanks can be given today to the founders of Marin Audubon and some conservation minded elders for the parks, open space, public access, and wildlife habitats in much of the country and around Bolinas Lagoon. Dr Martin Griffith was instrumental in saving Bolinas harbor from a hotel and yacht club destination and he is commemorated at the heron and egret rookery that we will pass along the east side of the lagoon.

So start your year list if you haven't already. Bob is adept with ebird and will keep a list of sightings on our trip. We strive to help all of our participants to see or hear all of the birds that we encounter but that is a goal not quite a reality. Let's go birding!

**DIRECTIONS:** Meet at 8:30 at the Stinson Beach School on Hwy 1, about one mile north of the Stinson Beach stop sign.

### LOCH LOMOND MARINA

#### San Rafael

Saturday, December 9, 2023

8:30 AM to 11 AM

With Rich Cimino

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

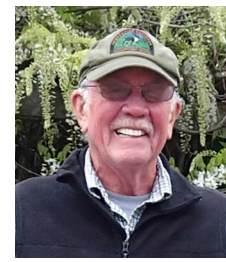
Join Rich for an easy stroll around the Loch Lomond Marina breakwater, wheelchair accessible with a paved path out to the end. The path provides panoramic views of the surrounding bay and gives you the feeling of actually being out on the bay in close proximity to the Marin Islands.

Winter birds here include **Black-bellied Plover, Black Turnstone, Least and Western Sandpipers, Black Oystercatcher**, and a variety of ducks on the bay. If you have one, bring your scope for a better look at the ducks.

**DIRECTIONS:** Head east on Second Street in San Rafael, which turns into Point San Pedro Road. Continue approximately 2 miles past the Montecito Shopping Center to a red light at the intersection of Point San Pedro Road and Loch Lomond Drive. Turn right here, then turn left in front of Andy's Market where the road comes to a "T" at the water-front. **Continue all the way to the end of the road** where you will find ample parking and a public restroom. Meet in the parking lot next to Andy's Market, 75 Loch Lomond Dr.

## DAVE HERREMA

1944 – 2023



We are saddened to hear Dave Herrema passed away on November 2, 2023.

Dave was

a long-time friend of Marin Audubon Society, wildlife and birds.

Dave was on the Marin Audubon Board for seven years from 1991 to 1997. While on the Board he served in various capacities as President, chair of the Endowment and Publicity Committees, and was involved in numerous other of our activities as well. In particular, he was a member of our Conservation Committee and for many years hosted our meetings at his home.

Even after he left the Marin Audubon Board, Dave stayed involved. He and his whole family – his wife Vicky Van Meter, son Garth, and daughters Brook and Lindsey – were a tremendous help with our Mother's Day Barbecue for many years. They helped with just about every facet of the event, particularly food preparation. Dave could be found behind the barbecues, cooking the chicken, year after year.

Dave and Vicky were a real team. They met while attending Florida Atlantic University while studying for their Master's Degrees in Marine Biology. Dave attended almost every field trip when Vicky was Marin Audubon's Field Trip Chair. He and Vicky helped us monitor and manage several of Marin Audubon's easement properties when they lived in Novato. For a number of years he and Vicky tended the 40 bird houses on our Simmons property, even after they moved to Sonoma County.

Dave was an excellent birder, and was well known among birders in Marin. He had a very long life list of ABA birds. He enjoyed participating in many Christmas Bird Counts and also volunteered for the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory where he helped train a new generation of birders.

Dave and Vicky enjoyed traveling and had many birding adventures chasing rarities over the years.

Dave was warm, caring, down to earth, always willing to help and well-liked by everyone. His death is a great loss and he will be widely missed.

# Conservation

## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION (CCC) CONSIDERS POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE WATER QUALITY STRATEGY

The first annual briefing on the National Park Service's (NPS) implementation of the Water Quality Strategy for Management of Ranching Operations for General Management Plan Amendment (Strategy) for Point Reyes National Seashore was reviewed by the California Coastal Commission (CCC) on November 16. After an initial rejection of the Seashore in April 2022, the CCC, on a vote of six in favor and five opposed, originally approved the Strategy modified to include annual updates and additional commitments. This review of the Strategy is part of the CCC's conditional approval of the consistency determination for the Point Reyes National Seashore.

The CCC staff report on the Strategy assessed the NPS's compliance with CCC requirements and found the NPS fulfilled all requirements except for the following:

### 1) Requirements not yet completed:

The requirement that there be plans (including responsible entities, funding, timing, and scheduling) for incorporating response measures into ranch operating agreements (ROAs) is deemed not yet complete, because the NPS's development of systems for tracking and annual inspection, to be included in ranch leases, has been delayed by litigation.

### 2) Requirements in progress:

- a) Annual reporting of monitoring results. Because water quality can be subject to significant annual variability, the usual practice is to evaluate multi-year data.
- b) Enforcement. CCC staff investigation found that regulatory programs intended to minimize the delivery of pathogens, nutrients and sediment, are complete for the short term, but long-term plans are incomplete. Also CCC found that some of the reported violations were not violations at all; some were outside of the Coastal Zone.

Five Notice of Violation letters were sent to ranchers identifying unpermitted development, including grading and removal of riparian vegetation, and the dumping and stockpiling of derelict vehicles into a former silage pit. Responses were

received from most of the ranchers, and staff is working to resolve damage to resources through discussing mitigation measures with ranchers. One rancher did not respond.

### 3) Requirements fulfilled:

- a) Measures planned and taken in response to monitoring. These include responses to sampling, showing high results for *E. coli*. NPS plans further investigations before determining actions. Sampling was conducted and followed up; exceedances continued with monthly sampling at eight sites for water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, salinity conductivity, turbidity, and fecal indicator and specific conductance; water quality was monitored downstream of five dairy operations following three storms; the possible effect of pathogens on elephant seals from runoff was investigated, with no affects found; and weekly sampling was conducted at six sites along Olema Creek.
- b) Recreation beach monitoring was done to fulfill this commitment.
- c) Best Management Practices: actions taken include a water supply pipeline extension of 130 feet; installation of two troughs and four storage tanks on four ranches; completion of pond restoration on two ranches; installation of 5,217 feet of exclusion fencing along Drakes Estero, North Home Ranch Creek, and a tributary to Abbott's Lagoon; installation of 3,090 feet of pasture fencing; upland and riparian native plantings and invasive plant removal on two ranches; and native plantings on approximately 1.3 acres.

CCC Staff noted that the NPS has devoted significant efforts to developing six individual monitoring programs and has completed initial inspections of water quality on all ranches. One site out of three monitored exceeded RWQCB benchmarks for waste requirements for confined animal facilities. Three dairy operations submitted Corrective Action Plans but only one has pursued planning and funding



**Cattle on the beach at Abbott's Lagoon taken May 2023 – in snowy plover habitat during the snowy plover breeding season.**

opportunities. Additional monitoring will be needed to determine where more actions may be required.

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is separate from the Strategy. The NPS has begun to develop the CAP and is committed to focusing on structural improvements in ranch and dairy waste management, to reduce runoff and emissions.

**Supplemental information:** NPS submitted modifications to the Strategy shortly before the Commission meeting. Modifications included additional installation of piping and fencing and revegetation with native plants. It was also reported that all 17 ranches within the park boundaries were jointly inspected by NPS and EHS and that needed corrective actions were provided to NPS staff: two septic repair systems were installed. Two ranches are now on "pump and haul" with unrepaired systems.

Water quality monitoring continued to be evaluated. Most samples were within benchmarks except for *E. coli* in winter testing on Drakes Bay Watershed, three sites at Drakes Bay and three sites on tributaries. Summer testing showed that all sites with running water exceeded the *E. coli* benchmark. Overall, the majority of sites were within benchmark range for dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. The highest percentage exceedance was for *E. coli* at 31%.

**Commission hearing:** The initial positive impression conveyed by reports and analyses was that the NPS was on its way to addressing issues, however, this changed at the Commission hearing. Public testimony was overwhelmingly concerned about adverse impacts to natural resources and management by NPS, and many of

*continued on page 5*

# Unusual Gray Whale Sighting on Field Trip

By Roger Harris

“Thar she blows” is not what we were expecting to hear on an Audubon field trip. Yet, much to our surprise and delight, a Gray Whale popped up in front of our boat, the *River Dolphin*, on November 11. Binoculars and big lenses immediately turned to documenting this unusual sighting.

We had left the Berkeley Marina on our annual bay cruise and were passing south of Point San Pedro right off the San Rafael coast. Three hours later, a kayaker spotted the same whale further south off of the Estuary & Ocean Science (EOS) Center in Tiburon.

Based on the photographs taken, The Marine Mammal Center research biologist Bill Keener quickly identified the whale from their catalogue of photographs as #23-3 (aka “Morse”), which was last documented in the bay in March 2023. The pattern of shades of gray blotches, unique to each individual, matched earlier photographs.

New were a row of white scar marks along the whale’s right side. Apparently a boat’s propeller had run into Morse in the intervening eight months. Ship strikes are a continuing hazard for whales, though fortunately this individual appeared healed and healthy.

Two days before, another Gray Whale, a juvenile male, had been found dead at the Carquinez Bridge. This is an unusual time of year for Gray Whales to be in our waters, let

alone this far up in the bay. Keener, who has been studying local cetaceans for many years, commented that he had never heard of a Gray Whale in the bay in November.

Most of the population would be expected to be migrating down the Pacific coast from their far northern summer feeding grounds to their breeding lagoons in Baja California. Gray Whales in any numbers would not normally be expected in our neighborhood for at least another month.

However, as the population of Gray Whales has been recovering under protection, individuals do on occasion wander off their normal coastal migratory route into the bay.

As recently as 1972, whales were still being harvested in the Bay Area and processed at a plant in Point Richmond. The Marine Mammal Protection Act ended that practice, and cans of Moby Dick brand whale meat



**Photograph taken on the MAS trip by Chris Wills of the Gray Whale shows white scars from an encounter with a boat’s propeller, which the same individual whale did not have when it was first photographed in the bay in March of this year.**

Chris Wills

are no longer marketed here. In 1994, Gray Whales had sufficiently recovered that they were removed from the US endangered species list.

We ticked off California Sea Lion, Harbor Seal, and Harbor Porpoise among the other marine mammals sighted, besides a Peregrine Falcon off of Marin Audubon’s Tiscornia Marsh restoration site and a healthy number of other bird species on a stunningly beautiful day on the bay.

## Point Reyes Water Strategy

*continued from page 4*

the Commissioners expressed the same concerns. Only two speakers spoke in favor of the ranchers, but all others (about 15) were critical of the NPS management and presented information on impacts to park natural resources, particularly water quality. Concerns expressed included water quality violations, particularly *E. coli*; reduced flows; health of recreational users; and the need to know the sources of pollutants. Photos of piles of tires that are increasing in size on J Ranch, cattle on beaches at Abbott’s Lagoon, and the spreading of manure on land were presented. One organization expressed the opinion that the NPS is not capable of managing the problem because they simply do not have the resources, that the \$50,000 they have spent so far managing the ROAs is not enough, and that this effort is taking staff away from other important environmental needs at the Seashore.

The Commission’s deliberation went on for more than an hour. Commissioners were clearly concerned about improving protections

for coastal resources of the Seashore but were uncertain about the best way to proceed, given the limitations of their consistency determination jurisdiction under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). They must determine whether there is enough of a change in circumstances to cause non-compliance with the CZMA. Non-compliance would allow the Commission to reopen their conditional approval of consistency. But re-opening for quasi-enforcement action is risky because the NPS is not bound to take the Commission’s recommendations. In the end, the Commission decided the best approach at this time is to work with the NPS. The Commissioners voted unanimously to bring the Strategy back for their consideration in March 2024.

The Commission recognized that this is a complex circumstance, that it is tied up in litigation at this time, which is limiting consideration of longer-term solutions due to inability to negotiate long-term leases. Additional monitoring is needed, but monitoring is not enough; corrective actions and

mitigation are needed. They hope there would be additional information produced during the intervening time that would identify measures to ensure protection of coastal resources.

The CCC was impressive in their concern and commitment to protecting resources of the Seashore. Their concern was evident in the heartfelt responses from many of the Commissioners.

The CCC staff analysis focused on the NPS compliance with the requirements for monitoring and not on the results of the monitoring. Focusing on the monitoring results, it is pretty clear that while some ranchers are complying, others are not. It is pretty clear that at least one rancher is not responding to or complying with regulations. One issue we would like to have heard discussed is penalties for ranchers who are not complying with regulation and water quality standards.

# Habitat Stewardship

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Annual weeds have germinated but are too small to deal with, and the perennials are not growing much, either. It is a good time to clear the area around the native forbs and shrubs and then add mulch. Doing that will hinder the weeds now and preserve moisture during the warmer seasons.

Join us on a workday. Working 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: December 2 – CANCELLED, January 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: December 9, January 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, Stewardship Volunteers

Debbie Ablin, Annette Anzalone, Bob Hinz, Linda Nicoletto, Ed Nute, Lowell Sykes

We're happy to have rain early in the season. We're relieved of the need to irrigate at Bahia and at Simmons. Now we're preparing for planting at Bahia and Triangle Marsh when our plants are ready to be picked up at The Watershed Nursery.

## BAHIA

**A huge thank-you** to the Marin Chapter of the National League of Young Men!

We had a very successful volunteer workday at Bahia on October 28. Approximately 40 young men and adults from the Marin Chapter of the National League of Young Men joined MAS volunteers to pull troublesome weeds. The hard-working group was able to remove all of the stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) from the MAS property.



Eileen Cameron, CC by SA 4.0 Deed

### Stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*)

Thanks to Board members Jude Stalker for arranging and managing this workday and Martha Jarocki and former Board member Flinn Rauck for helping to lead the project.

Unfortunately, there is still a lot



Jude Stalker

### Marin Chapter of the National League of Young Men and others who volunteered to pull stinkwort in Bahia.

of stinkwort on the adjacent Novato Sanitary District property. We will work with the District to secure access to remove it from their property as well.

Stinkwort is a relatively new invasive plant. First observed in California in 1984, the plant is native to the Mediterranean. It has rapidly expanded in Marin in recent years, and plants can now be seen growing in disturbed lands, cracks in concrete along sidewalks, and along the edges of most major roadways. It blooms in the fall and is fairly easy to remove by hand pulling. If pulled after blooming, the plants should be permanently removed from the site. The plants are sticky, with hundreds of tiny seeds that can easily be carried to other favorable locations and cause new infestations.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Greg Ashton, Kathleen Bishop, Melinda Dart, Minnie McBride, Leslie Patterson, Yvonne Postelle, Peggy Rose, Leslie Schaaf

## THANK YOU, DONORS

Debbie Ablin, Nancy Angelos, Joyce Applen, Rosalinda Astari, Phyllis Barry, Richard Braun, Melinda Dart, Mario and Barbara DePinto, Daniel Drake, Bonnie Edwards, Louis & Tamara Fehrenbacher, Inge Fraser, Mark Hansen, Margaret Harrington, Susan Janson, Angela Kerby, Ellen Kipp Trust, Katherine Look, Denise Loomis, Jim MacDonald, Kent McDonald & Betty Smith, John and Ana Hilda Mosher, Geraldine Nardi, Betsy and Ron Niewiarowski, Phil Petereson, Yvonne Postelle, Ann Roughton, Judy Simmons, Jude Stalker, Roger Stoll, Anne-Christine Strugnell, Peter & Jeanne Tymstra,

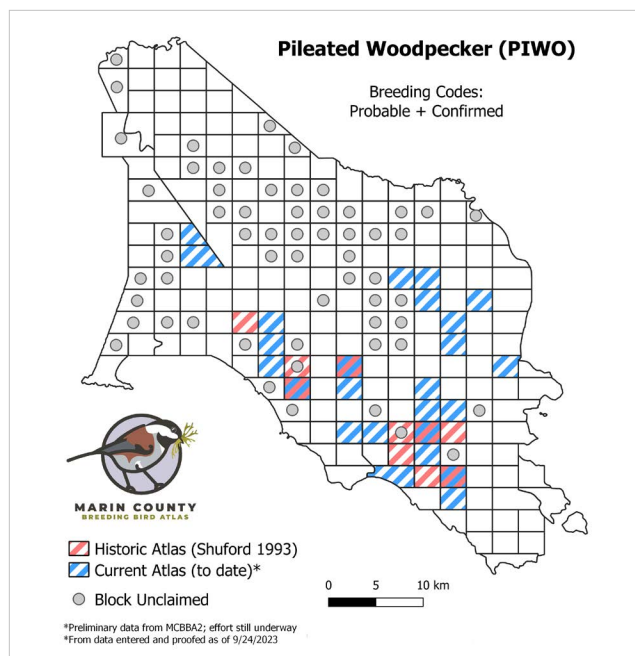
## Breeding Bird Atlas

*continued from page 1*

much as we direct you now – to the Atlas results more broadly, and see what blocks are available for next spring.

As we now switch gears to prepare for the 4th year of the Atlas in 2024, we are eager to fill in the remaining data gaps, to recruit more skilled birders, to engage our existing volunteers with how they can best contribute next year, and to bring in data being collected in parallel to the Atlas effort by partner institutions doing monitoring in the county.

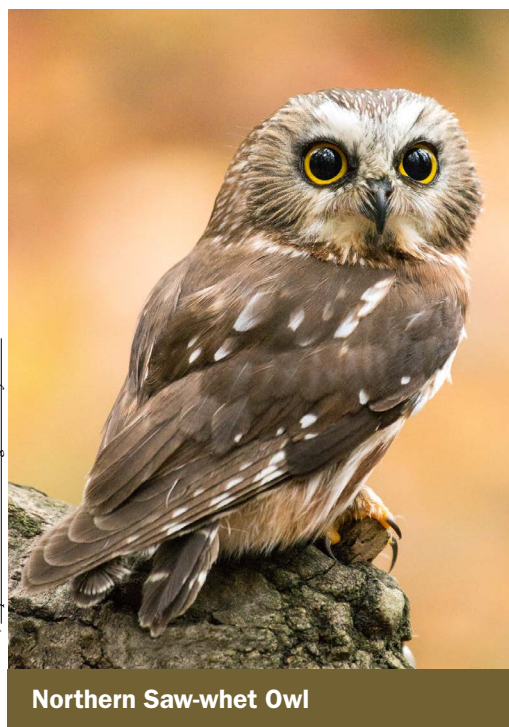
Our Year Three report is a testament to everyone who has contributed to and supported the Atlas this past year and since its inception, and we are grateful to the many who made the Atlas effort possible this year and continue to contribute to its success.



**Pileated Woodpecker map from 2023 Annual Report showing their expanded distribution since the Historic Atlas.**

# Marin Birdlog: October 2023

By Noah Arthur



Northern Saw-whet Owl

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This October began in the middle of a Pt. Reyes vagrant wave, with new finds on the 1st including a **Blackburnian Warbler** at the Lighthouse (EC), and a juvenile **American Golden-plover** and a Ruff at Abbotts Lagoon on the (TF). A **'Rufina-group' Song Sparrow** (Pacific Northwestern) was at the Fish Docks on the 1st (CC), the beginning of an irruption that has hit the Bay Area this fall. One of this fall's rarest sightings for the Outer Point came on the 2nd, a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** that flew in to roost at the Lighthouse cypresses (DK).

Elsewhere on the 2nd, another **Ruff** turned up at Pacheco Pond (BB).

Another good warbler showed up on the 3rd, a female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at the Lighthouse (RC). One of the rarest vagrants of the month, a **Great Crested Flycatcher**, was found at the Lighthouse on the 4th (EF), plus a flyover **Bobolink** at Lupine Gulch (AB). Also on the 4th was a distinct incursion of interior Californian birds on the Point, including **Acorn Woodpecker** (EF) and **Lawrence's Goldfinch** (AB) at the Lighthouse,

**Townsend's Solitaire** at Fish Docks (AB), and **Band-tailed Pigeon** at Spaletta Ranch (AB).

On the 6th a **Grasshopper Sparrow** (CC) and **Chestnut-collared Longspur** (JB) were at Abbotts Lagoon, a **Lawrence's Goldfinch** landed on the railing at Hawk Hill also on the 6th (HT). Two very rare passerines came on the 7th, a **Philadelphia Vireo** at the Inverness Tennis Club trees (MS & LS), and a very secretive **Veery** at the Fish Docks (DW). A **Magnolia Warbler** was also at the Fish Docks on the 7th (Sacramento Audubon group find).

A visitor for the **Ruff** at Pacheco Pond found a bonus **Virginia's Warbler** on the 8th (GG). Two **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** sightings in and near Muir Beach on the 8th (JW & AW) may or may not have been one bird. The irruption of northern **Song Sparrows** hit hard at Rodeo Lagoon from the 9th through 11th, with at least 5 **'montana/merrilli' Song Sparrows** at various places around the lagoon (WL). Muir Beach continued its good run of rare cardinalids with a **Painted Bunting** and **Blue Grosbeak** together at a feeder on the 10th (DM).

Things slowed down in the next few days, but a **Pacific Golden-plover** at Drakes Beach was nice (SE). On the 15th, a new **'montana/merrilli' Song Sparrow** and a **'rufina-group' Song Sparrow** joined the party at Rodeo Lagoon. The latter was eventually identified as the far northwestern subspecies 'caurina,' resident in northern B.C. and southern Alaska.

The best birds of the month were found by a pelagic trip in Marin waters on the 15th: two **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, one light morph and one dark morph, an extremely rare seabird in North American waters. On the 17th, a **Broad-billed Hummingbird** was banded at Palomarin.

The 18th and 19th produced a nice flight of mountain vagrants in Marin. An incursion of **Clark's Nutcrackers** along the California coast hit Marin on the 18th with two birds flying over the Golden Gate from the Marin side (LC). Also on the 18th 2 **Cassin's Finches** and a **Townsend's Solitaire** flew over Mt. Tam (MS & LS), followed the next day by 4 **Evening Grosbeaks** (AM).

An **'Olive-backed' Swainson's Thrush** was at Nunes on the 20th (LC & LS), and a female **Indigo Bunting** was in Tomales on the 22nd (LC).

Very late for such a rare eastern passerine, a **Yellow-throated Vireo** was at Green Gulch (Muir Beach) on the 27th (TS). Also on the 27th, a **'rufina-group' Song Sparrow** was at Indian Valley (PP). On the 28th, a **Costa's Hummingbird** was

photographed at a backyard feeder in Novato (JDLF), and a **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Hawk Hill (SJ).

A classic big-ticket rarity of late fall, an **American Tree Sparrow** popped up at Abbotts on the 28th (RR & AR). Also, on the 28th, 12 **Evening Grosbeaks** flew over Muir Beach (LC). The 29th produced 2 **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** at Abbotts (CC), an **Orchard Oriole** along Pierce Point Rd. (MS & LS), and a **Nelson's Sparrow** at Inverness Park (CC). Exceptionally late, a **Swainson's Thrush** was heard at Muir Beach on the 29th (MS & LS).

Also, very rare for late October, a **Cassin's Vireo** was at Pine Gulch on the 30th (no info).

Frequent rarities included **Tropical Kingbirds** at Pine Gulch on the 6th (MD), Rodeo Lagoon on the 6th (WL & DW), Abbotts Lagoon on the 7th (no info), Fish Docks on the 7th (MS & LS), Redwood Creek on the 7th (AM); Giacomini Wetlands on the 11th (TP), Richardson Bay on the 14th (SS), and Bolinas on the 16th (RA). **Blackpoll Warblers** at the Lighthouse and Lupine Gulch on the 2nd (DS), RCA trees on the 3rd (RC), Fish Docks on the 9th (AP), and Fish Docks on the 13th (ZM); a **Clay-colored Sparrows** at Mendoza on the 1st (DS); **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Keith Hansen's gallery in Bolinas on the 1st (KH); and **American Redstart** at Fish Docks on the 21st (FF).



American Tree Sparrow

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**OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS:** EC: Everett Clark, TF: Teale Fristoe, DK: Durrell Kapan, DS: Dessi Sieburth, BB: Bob Battagin, CC: Connor Cochrane, RC: Rich Cimino, EF: Evan Farese, AB: Aidan Brubaker, MD: Mark Dettling, WL: William Legge, DW: David Wiechers, HT: Holly Thomas, MS: Mark Stephenson, LS: Lucas Stephenson, JW: Dan Williams, JB: Jonah Benningfield, AM: Alex Merritt, GG: George Griffeth, AP: Adam Panto, JW: Jim White, AW: Alex Wild, DM: Dave MacKenzie, TP: Todd Plummer, SE: Scott Erickson, ZM: Zack Mikalonis, SS: Sylvie Silverstein, LC: Lucas Corneliussen, RA: Rebecca Akin, FF: Frank Fabbro, TS: Tim Shore, JDLF: Jim de la Fuente, SJ: Severus Jo'inn, RR: Rajan Rao, AR: Adi Rao, PP: Peter Pyle



# The Rail

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- January 6  
8:30 AM **Field Trip:** Stinson Beach and Bolinas  
*With Jim White and Bob Battagin*
- January 31  
10 AM **Field Trip:** Skaggs Island Road  
*With Daniel Edelstein*
- February 4  
8:40 AM **Boat Trip:** Winter Birds of the Delta  
*With David Wimpfheimer*

Check website for updates and details

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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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