

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11 7:00 PM

Northern Spotted Owls

With Taylor Ellis, National Park Service



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY



Taylor Ellis

Northern Spotted Owl

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

Northern spotted owls are considered an indicator species of healthy forests and were federally listed as a threatened subspecies in the 1990s and have been monitored closely by the National Park Service and Point Blue since then. Taylor Ellis will discuss the main threats to Marin's spotted owls, including the threat from barred owls, who have taken over most of the nesting sites for spotted owls to our north. He will also discuss what makes Marin's spotted owl population, which is geographically and genetically distinct from other northern spotted owl populations to our north, so unique relative to others

Taylor is a wildlife technician at Point Reyes National Seashore, where he implements the northern spotted owl monitoring program as well as monitoring other wildlife species throughout the year. He has been working with spotted owls for 20 breeding seasons since first interning with the U.S. Forest Service in New Mexico in 2003.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8 7:00 PM

Snowy Plover

By Matthew Lau, National Park Service

Northern Spotted Owl 2023 Nesting Season

Results from Point Blue Conservation Science breeding surveys for the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) show a slight, but not statistically significant, decline in nest success over the past nesting season. A report was made to the District Board at a Watershed Committee meeting on Tuesday, December 12, 2023.

Habitat loss through most of the NSO range is the result of logging, which does not occur in Marin County. In Marin, the

NSO faces threats from development, noise (construction, landscape work, traffic), rodenticide poisoning, climate change, genetic isolation, and competition from the Barred Owl (BO). Threats not mentioned by Pt. Blue that we would include are noise from recreational activities and habitat loss due to the clearing of understory, which could adversely impact food availability, e.g., woodrat prey, or NSO directly. The BO population in Marin is still low,

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Environmental Review for Barred Owl Removal Strategy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has developed a draft Barred Owl Management Strategy (Strategy) to address the threat to the survival of the native Northern Spotted Owls (NSO) (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) by avoiding substantial impacts to the California Spotted Owl (CSO) (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*) from the non-native, invasive Barred Owl (BO) (*Strix varia*). The Service has also prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that evaluates the potential impacts of, and alternatives to implementation of, the Strategy. The Strategy and the Draft EIS are out for public review.

Spotted owls are native to western North America. Habitat for NSO extends from Canada into Marin County and CSO inhabit the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Barred owls are native to eastern North America. They began to extend their range around 1900 facilitated by the expansion of settlers planting trees across the Great Plains.

Competition from the non-native BO has been identified as a primary threat to the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) and as an increasing threat to the CSO. Additional

primary threats to NSO include loss of habitat from timber harvesting on private lands, which does not occur in Marin County, and wildfires on Federal lands in the Pacific Northwest. BO compete directly with NSO for space and food. BO occupy the same habitat type, eat the same food items (except their menu is more varied), are more aggressive than NSO, produce more young, and have a higher nesting success rate than NSO. The population of BO in Marin is still low, (possibly helped by the removal of some of them). NSO populations farther north have declined significantly with the increase in BO. Major areas of impacts are in Oregon, Washington, and Northern California.

Conditions in Sonoma and Marin Counties are described as being substantially different than the rest of the NSO range. BO are present in small numbers; they have not established significant populations. NSO habitat, managed by different governmental agencies, exists in blocks within the 587,434 forest acres of potential NSO habitat in Marin. The management focus here is on preventing BO from being established and displacing NSO.

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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.

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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

With the new year, there will be new challenges and opportunities we are looking forward to meeting. And we'll still be addressing some of the old challenges and we'll continue our restoration projects, field trips, speaker programs, and advocacy in the coming year. We'll be looking at providing more field trips and improving efficiency of our accounting operations. We expect to be continuing our advocacy for wildlife and habitat with MMWD's recreation planning in the Mt. Tam watershed, Farallon Islands, Northern Spotted Owl, and the Novato Baylands Strategy. If you're interested in any of these areas, we invite you to contact us for more information.

It's Annual Plan time for National Audubon Society. Every year chapters are expected to submit an annual reporting on our activities, programs, volunteers. Each chapter receives Baseline Funding (based on the number of members a chapter had about 20 years ago) after submitting their annual report. This year National Audubon has revised the reporting forms and the process. They are expecting chapters to provide more information about our activities and volunteers.

We've lost another person important to the environmental community and particularly to habitat restoration in San Francisco Bay. Laura Hanson, partner with Diana Benner in The Watershed Nursery, passed away on December 5. Laura and Diana supplied plants for most of the restoration projects around the Bay, including Marin Audubon's restorations. Out

first restoration coincided with the early days of establishment of the Watershed Nursery. More than 20 years ago, Laura and Diana helped us plant the plants they had grown for the first restoration on an MAS property, at Triangle Marsh. She will be missed.

A huge thank you to all who have contributed to our winter appeal. Your donations are vital to our continuing our programs, paying our bills, meeting other obligations and taking actions necessary to our continuing our work. If you've not donated yet, it is not too late. Simply send your gift to P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942

Thanks also to all who participated in one of the three Marin County Christmas Bird Counts. By the time you receive this newsletter at least two will have been completed, and maybe the last, the Southern Marin Count as well. We're planning to bring you reports of the different counts in future months. Special thanks also to Alison Pence who took on coordination of the Southern Marin Count and did a most efficient job.

To receive our communications efficiently in 2024, sign up on our website to receive monthly notices of our activities and/or if you would like to receive our newsletter, *The Rail*, electronically.

We're sorry we have no Birdlog this month. Noah is out of town. He will return next month.

I hope you're having a wonderful holiday!

Take time to get out and see the birds that are overwintering with us.

Northern Spotted Owl Survey

continued from page 1

possibly helped by the removal of some of them.

The stated purposes of the nest surveys, which the Marin County Open Space District also contracts for, are "(1) to monitor population trends in occupancy and reproductive success over time, and (2) to determine occupancy and nesting status at sites where proposed management activities may occur so that disturbance to NSO is avoided." We hope the District uses the study to enhance habitat for the NSO. Pt. Blue recommends that BO surveys gather baseline data throughout Marin Water lands, including



Elyse Omernick

Northern Spotted Owl juveniles in Marin County

forested lands not currently surveyed for NSO where data is lacking, as has been done on Marin County Parks lands. We agree.

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, January 4, 2024 and

Thursday, February 1, 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.

Overwintering waterfowl and shorebirds now returned, 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.

LOCH LOMOND MARINA, San Rafael

SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO BIRDING – WINTERING WATERBIRDS

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

10 AM to noon

With Roger Harris

Registration required. Registration opens on January 7 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page.

Join Roger and other Marin Audubon board members for a field trip specifically designed for people interested in getting some of the birding basics down. And there is no place better suited for that than the half-mile-long flat and paved levee path at the Loch Lomond Marina. With panoramic views of the surrounding bay, we should get close-up views of wintering waterbirds including **Black Turnstone**, diminutive **Least Sandpipers**, **Black Oystercatchers** with bubblegum pink legs, **Snowy Egrets** sporting golden slippers, and a variety of ducks, grebes, gulls, and cormorants. This is a terrific place for photography, if you like, but each participant

is requested to bring binoculars.

Dress warmly as some winter days here are cold and windy. Heavy rain cancels

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

OLIMPALI STATE HISTORIC PARK, Novato

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

9:30 AM to noon

With Rich Cimino

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

Olompali State Park has reopened after a nearly nine-month closure due to mudslide damage. It's always an exciting time to birdwatch at Olompali State Historic Park! Beginning and experienced birders are invited to join Rich Cimino to bird the park. We will walk the old ranch road to the park's reservoir. We hope to see a wide variety of species that thrive in the park's oak savanna and open grasslands.

Meet Rich at 9:15 AM in the parking lot. The field trip will start at 9:30 AM.

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 cash only parking fee. Recently, the park gates have been opening by 8:30 AM.

SKAGGS ISLAND ROAD

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

10 AM to 2 PM

With Daniel Edelstein

Registration required. Registration opens on January 21 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Daniel invites you to discover the joy of a wilderness-like paradise – Skaggs Island Road – that often attracts dozens of duck and shorebird family members, in addition to uncommon, visiting non-breeding raptors such as **Rough-legged Hawk**, **Ferruginous Hawk**, and **Merlin** (along with sightings of **White-tailed Kite** and other raptor species).

Daniel is a freelance Birding Guide and Consulting Avian Biologist. His website (warblerwatch.com) features abundant birding information, in addition to his 17-year-old warbler-centric blog (warblerwatch.blogspot.com).

DIRECTIONS: To access Skaggs Island Road, which is closed to the public, we'll meet in the parking area adjacent to the north side of Hwy 37 where it intersects with Skaggs

Island Rd (approximately 3 miles east of Reclamation Road and 2 miles east of the Hwy 121/Sears Point Raceway intersection [at the stoplight]). From there we'll bird together while walking north on the road.

Please be careful turning into Skaggs Island Road when coming from Marin County because oncoming traffic is often heavy.

Here's a map link that shows where we'll meet: <http://tinyurl.com/5fxw8x4m>.

SAUSALITO/MILL VALLEY/STRAWBERRY Birding in Marin, Season 9 – Trip 2

Saturday, February 3, 2024

8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required. Registration opens Wednesday, January 24 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

We are going to explore the bay from the Sausalito water front to the Golden Gate and Richardson's Bay around to Strawberry Point and on to Blacky's pasture in Tiburon. Many ducks, loons and grebes winter on the bay waters and we may find close comparative looks at similar species pairs like Eared and Horned or Clark's and Western Grebes, of Red-throated, Pacific and Common Loons or Greater and Lesser Scaup. We are likely to find some shorebirds too, perhaps a Spotted Sandpiper or a rather rare Wandering Tattler.

Herring runs happen around this time of year and if we are lucky they will still be numerous. Herring deposit large numbers of eggs on eelgrass, which water birds, especially gulls, love to feast on. Last year near this time I think that 10 species of gulls were located. So brush up on your gull IDs and join Bob and me along the shore

DIRECTIONS: Meet at the east end of Harbor Drive. Handicap Accessible. We will park where the birding is close, near level and smooth. Thanks to enlightened development planning, Harbor Drive and the rather posh Strawberry spit have fine public shoreline paths.

WINTER BIRDS OF THE DELTA BOAT TRIP

Sunday, February 4, 2024

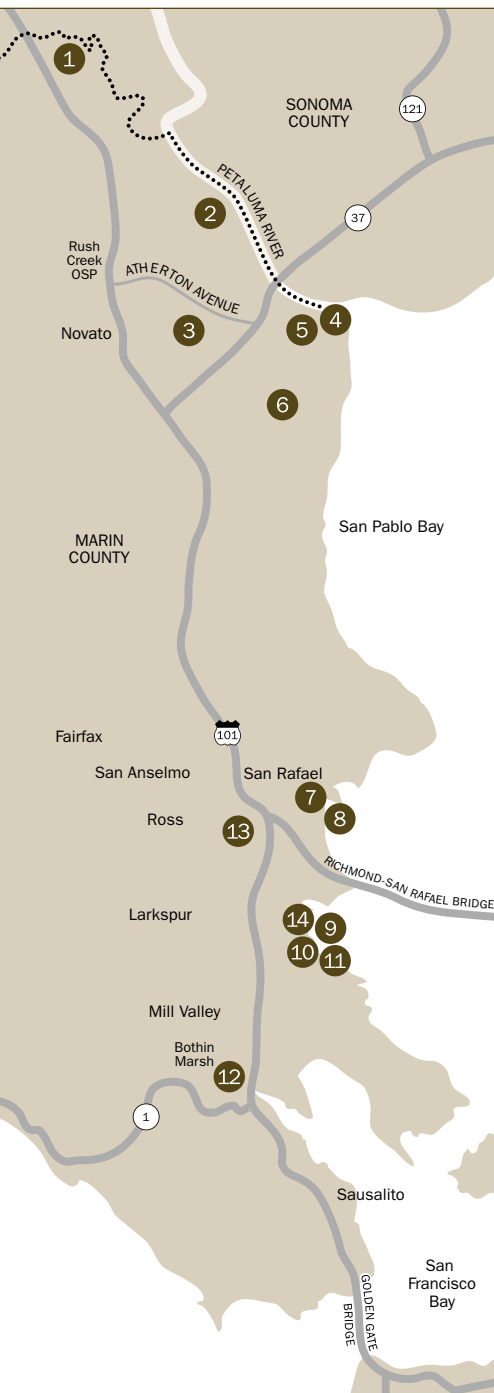
8:40 AM to 4 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

This very popular trip is being held on Sunday, February 4, 2024. After meeting at 8:40 AM for sign in and instructions, we'll depart from the Antioch Marina at 9 AM. As we enter the San Joaquin River, we'll be keeping an eye out for overwintering birds and any marine (or other) animals that happen to show up. Heading east, we enter a number of the smaller sloughs and waterways with views out over the flooded agricultural fields that provide a refuge for flocks that nest in the north but winter here.

Along with the flocks of snow geese,

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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.

CORTE MADERA BEGINS SHORELINE ADAPTATION ENGAGEMENT EFFORT

The Town of Corte Madera has begun an effort to engage shoreline neighborhoods in a discussion about potential strategies to address the impacts of increased flooding from high tides, subsidence, heavy rains, sea level rise and other vulnerabilities. The aim of the effort is to provide residents and stakeholders with the most recent information about current and future vulnerabilities and offer the opportunity to share their opinions and concerns, so as to collectively determine the best course of action for the neighborhoods of Marina Village, Mariner Cove, along San Clemente Creek.

The Town plans an engagement project that will extend through the summer of 2024 and include multiple ways residents and other stakeholders can communicate their thoughts, desires, and interests. They want to avoid what happened during the Town’s last public adaptation process: people who participated in the process were supportive, but at the end an entirely new group of people came forward and opposed the process. This time they will make extensive efforts to include everybody early in the process and reach out in a variety of ways.

Ten residents spoke at this first meeting, expressing different interests: the protection of their views, their ability to get to the water, their property values, their homes from flooding, the creek, and others. One resident recognized that it would be hard to please everybody; another suggested that the Town compensate them for the lowering of their property values. Marin Audubon’s interest, of course, is the protection of habitat on San Clemente Creek, a tidal creek that supports endangered Ridgway’s Rails and of our property. Marin Audubon owns several properties at the mouth of the Creek and in the Bay.

MMWD BEGINS STRATEGIC PLANNING

MMWD (District), now calling itself Marin Water, is beginning a strategic planning process intended to guide its activities over the next five years. An abbreviated version of the of the draft goal of the Strategic Plan process states that “The District’s 19,800 acres of watershed lands serve as bedrock foundation for the District’s operations, providing essential ecological services that directly influence water quality Stewardship of these lands

safeguards our precious water resources and cultivates a resilient and thriving ecosystem that benefits our community and future generations. The goal reflects our commitment to maintaining high-quality water while preserving the biodiversity of the region and fostering a deep connection between the community and watershed lands.”

The Board reviewed the overall planning process and tackled Objective 3, **Watershed Stewardship**, at a special meeting during the last week of November. The four other objectives, **Reliable Water Supply**, **Resilient Water System**, **Fiscal Responsibility**, and **Organization Excellence**, will be discussed at future meetings. The five Watershed Stewardship objectives, each with an Introductory Statement (Intro), were discussed:

1) Creek Restoration The Intro calls for striving to protect watershed stream habitat, as the District has been doing since the 1990s. Bulleted actions call for advanced implementation of the Lagunitas Creek Enhancement Plan, continued monitoring, integration of new monitoring techniques, and the sharing of lessons learned.

While the actions are positive, we would like to see some attention paid to enhancing habitats of the many other water courses in the watershed.

2) Wildfire Resiliency The Intro calls for the continued implementation of multi-benefit restorations, advancing the landscape scale efforts to maintain the resiliency of the watershed, which will help safeguard communities and ecosystems. Actions are focused on implementing the Biodiversity, Fire and Fuel Integrated Plan (BFFIP), as well as replacing aging firefighting equipment while maintaining overall focus on biodiversity.

Director Russel noted that the title should be changed. They want to make the forest ecosystems resilient, not wildfire. We note that many of the actions the District is taking in the name of fire resiliency, particularly the removal of understory vegetation, actually destroy habitat. There is no mention of protecting ecosystems in the fire-reduction efforts.

3) Stewardship The Intro focuses on involving the community as do the bulleted actions:

- Continue monitoring
- Engage technical experts

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

- Provide opportunities for people to engage in volunteer activities that are listed as habitat restoration, trail maintenance, education, and community science.

We consider stewardship to be taking of good care of the watershed, not the process of engaging people to do so, which is the major focus of this objective. The only mention of habitat restoration is where it is listed along with maintenance of trails (see above). One of the Board members suggested another bullet to continue biodiversity programs and to evaluate the impacts of recreation programs. During the discussion, it was pointed out that monitoring only records what is there and involves no action. We would change the emphasis of this objective to be on action, following up on what the monitoring finds and on the actual effects of the volunteer efforts. Such actions as removing invasive plants; revegetating with native species and removing sediment, are measurable activities that support biodiversity and should be listed. “A comprehensive description of existing natural habitats and an assessment of the impacts of current recreational uses need to be presented.

4) Recreation The Intro is to maintain a welcoming environment and support visitors. Actions include engaging in nature-based recreation; completing the Azalea Hill and Cataract Trail projects; educating the public about biodiversity, water resources, and climate change; and evaluating improvements to hiking trails, fire roads, picnic and other public-use areas.

It is not clear what “welcoming” means. It sounds like the District is preparing to increase visitor use. We want to see a full assessment of the natural resources and impacts of current recreational uses. The impacts of existing conditions need to be identified and addressed.

5) Facilities The Intro is to ensure that facilities are operational and well kept, ranger residents are suitable for summer workers, elements of West Peak restoration are advanced, the Road and Trails Master Plan is updated.

Fifteen people testified. All but two, were from the biking community, wanted more and dependable biking opportunities.

Throughout the discussion, most of the Directors expressed support for ensuring the watershed is protected. However, that is not currently clearly expressed in the objectives. Monitoring is the major focus. As noted

above, monitoring only provides information; it does nothing to correct problems or improve conditions. There are references to habitat improvement, for Lagunitas Creek, and a mention of habitat restoration under Stewardship, but they are in regard to volunteer engagement. Monitoring volunteers may tell you what work they did on the ground but now how successful it was.

We want to see more focus on actions to protect water quality by protecting the wildlife, habitats, streams, creeks, and vegetative habitats, and we want a commitment to follow-up on corrective actions for problems monitoring may identify.

MMWD RECREATION PLANNING UPDATE

At the December 12 Watershed meeting staff gave an update on the schedule for release of the long-anticipated Watershed Recreation Feasibility Study (formerly Watershed Recreations Plan).

Release of the Study anticipated for mid-December has been delayed. The anticipated release is now February 2024.

Barred Owl Removal

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NSO may be removed from any areas within the management area where there are willing land managers.

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve the survival and recovery of the NSO by reducing BO populations within selected treatment areas in the short term, and increasing NSO populations in those areas. For CSO the purpose is to prevent declines in their populations.

The need for the action is the significant decline of NSO. The decline has been so rapid that it is critical BO be managed to reduce their negative effects before NSO are extirpated from large parts or all of their range. NSO are declining between two and nine percent annually, with greatest declines in the north, where BO have been the longest.

The removal Strategy consists of a set of recommendations for the management of barred owls. As stated, the Strategy provides a management framework for entities (federal, state, or tribal government agencies and private entities) that choose to implement the BO management. Nothing in the Strategy requires any entity to implement BO management;

rather, it outlines management approaches, geographic areas, and other components to guide management actions by interested and willing landowners or land managers.

The draft EIS evaluates six alternative actions with elements common to all alternatives including: would allow for, but not require, management; issuance of a Special Purpose permit, renewable for up to three years, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which would allow for the take of BO; use of lethal removal under specific protocol using methods proven to be effective, efficient and as humane as possible; and a requirement for monitoring.

Alternative 1, No Project BO would be removed only for research.

Alternative 2, Proposed Action Management would remove BO from within and around NSO
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The Barred Owl (left) is larger than the Northern Spotted Owl (right) with a streaked instead of spotted chest. Note paler face and yellow-orange bill on Barred Owl.

Both images are in the public domain

REPORT OWL OBSERVATIONS

If you see a Northern Spotted Owl or a Barred Owl you are encouraged to report the observation to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's owl observation database at owlobs@wildlife.ca.gov.

Habitat Stewardship

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

We will weed and mulch around the native plants to allow them to become more established and more able to compete with the non-natives. Mustard and bristly ox-tongue are two weeds that do not die at the end of summer and are large enough for us to see and dig them out. They can spread rapidly so let's get rid of them before they produce seeds and multiply in warmer weather. Rain cancels our work days.

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: January 6, February 3

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: January 13, February 10

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, DONORS

Daniel Bikle, Donal Brown, Kathlyn Capdeville, Guy Craig, Donita Decker, Carl Dulsberg, Brett Elebash, Leslie Ellison, Jane Evans, Margaret Fawcett, James Forsell, Gretchen Franz, John & Barbara Ganem, Tamara Goldsmith, Francine Goodman, Belle & Ron Guelden, Kimberly Hansen, Roger Harris, William & Anne Klemme, Josephine Kreider, Joanne Lee, Mark Lindberg, Lynn MacDonald, Brian & Michelle Muir, Barbara Nathan, Larry & Maxine Nilsen, Philip Nonneman, Frank & Lois Noonan, D.C. Nuban, Jack & Judy Obedzinski, Ellena Ochoa, Christine Pattillo, Steve & Meg Piatek, Allen Preger, Donald Reinberg, Ann Robinson, Amy Rodney, Sallie Rowe, Scammell Consulting, Denise Shaheen, Lawrence Smith, Lynn Stenzel & Gary Page, Dean Stephens, Kandice Strako, Meryl Sundove, Marilyn Tiaven, Hilary Winslow, Carolyn Zwicker

BAHIA

We've planned to plant our levee and seasonal wetlands on the Central Peninsula for early January. We will be planting the following species: *Artemisia californica*, *Baccharis pilularis*, *Carex praegracilis*, *Elymus triticoides* and *Euthamia occidentalis*.

TISCORNIA MARSH RESTORATION

We're planning to begin construction this summer. The actual time depends on whether endangered species are found in the marsh and whether our preparation and bidding goes speedily. We've been working with San

Barred Owl Removal

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nests, with priority on recently occupied sites, so NSO can recolonize larger areas as BO populations decrease. Focus would be on maintaining viable NSO subpopulations.

Alternative 3, Management Across Range

Would allow for management to be implemented anywhere.

Alternative 4, Limited Management by Population

Supports a single but larger management area, delaying management in Canada and Northern Sierra Nevada until detections reach a specific level.

Alternative 5, Management Based on Highest-Risk Areas

Focuses management on northern provinces and Northern Sierra Nevada.

Alternative 6, Management Focused on Best Conditions

Focuses management on the southern portion of NSO populations, where NSO populations have not declined as much as they have in the north.

Alternative 2 is identified as the preferred alternative because it would result in the greatest increase in NSO populations, in part due to focus on managing recently occupied sites. Alternative 3 has the greatest area of BO removal but lower benefits to NSO, due to the lack of focus on high priority areas. Alternative 4 would have a smaller but positive effect on NSO, due to restriction of management areas. Alternatives 5 and 6 would have adverse effects in some areas because not all areas would be managed. The habitats are divided into General Management Areas, which are large mapped areas within the boundaries of BO management, and further into Priority Areas ranging from A through E, according to

Rafael to integrate its park projects with our levee design, drainage, and location of public amenities. The City has a Land and Water Fund grant to improve the ballfield at Albert J. Boro Park by building a basketball court and additional parking. Also, we have a bunch of agreements to finalize. In addition to the standard grant agreement with the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority) MAS has already signed, the Authority requires two Landowner Protection agreements, one with the City and another with the Authority, and an agreement identifying responsibilities during construction.

urgency. In Priority Area A actions should be taken immediately, while in Priority E actions, if implemented, would provide additional support. Marin is in Priority Area B where actions may be taken as soon as possible to slow NSO population declines.

Preferred Alternative Actions:

Lethal removal from identified management areas is the only method that is proven to work in reducing BO populations. Lethal removal will be accomplished by attracting BO with recorded calls and shooting birds that approach closely. This approach is designed to ensure a quick, humane kill; to minimize the potential for non-fatal injury to BO; and to reduce the potential for non-target species injury or death. Management would include removal of hybrids, as hybrids represent the same impacts to NSO as purebred BO. Removal protocol for hybrids is more restricted so as to reduce the risk of killing or injuring a spotted owl. Detailed protocol for removal is provided in the Management Strategy. Based on experiments, continued removal over several years will result in continued decline in BO density, allowing spotted owls to respond to the newly available habitat.

Because there may be situations where firearms cannot be used, guidelines and precautions are provided for trapping live owls. There are detailed requirements, including previous experience removing owls or training for all individuals conducting removal.

Effects on other wildlife:

BO are generalists, non-native predators that exert pressure on species not adapted to this new source of predation, leading to negative effects on potential prey species and competitors for the prey. There is a high

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Nature Note: The DeSilva Island Bird Rookery

By Ron Brown

The DeSilva Island bird rookery is in a grove of eucalyptus trees at the edge of Belloc Lagoon, an inlet to Richardson Bay. A small colony of Great Blue Herons was first documented there in 1979 by researcher Helen Pratt. The colony was incorporated into the Audubon Canyon Ranch's Heron and Egret Project in 1990.

A townhouse development was constructed and opened in 2001 near the nesting colony. Nesting Great Blue Herons continued to use the rookery with stable colonies of 10 to 16 active nests recorded there in recent years.

Great Egrets were first observed attempting to nest at the site in 1995 but did not successfully pull off a brood until 2017, when two nests each produced three chicks. Since then, the number of breeding Great Egrets has grown steadily.

Starting 2018, Double-crested Cormorants were observed at the DeSilva Island colony site. This coincided with the demolition of the last



Nesting Double-crested Cormorant chicks on DeSilva Island.

Ron Brown

remnants of the Treasure Island to Oakland section of the earthquake-damaged Bay Bridge. A large number of cormorants had nested in the under-structure of the bridge.

By 2021, cormorants had 6 active nests with chicks. The following year there were 17 Cormorant nests, almost all of which produced chicks. And this year there were 33 cormorant nests along with the established heron and egret nests. In addition to nesting, an estimated 100 cormorants roosted there in 2022 growing to approximately 200 in 2023.

Barred Owl Removal

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potential for other species to be adversely affected by a new predator through direct predation or direct competition for prey. Impacts can be to common and to other listed species. Marbled Murrelets, an endangered species, could be adversely impacted if BO near murrelet nests are not removed. Without removal, impacts to even common species would increase due to ability of BO to exist in dense populations. Removing BO would have a beneficial effect on potential prey species by reducing the competition.

Conclusion:

There is clear evidence from years of extensive experience and study that BO in the western US are causing significant environmental harm to NSO and CSO, and that they are likely to harm other species if not checked. Marin Audubon supports the removal of the invasive BO to protect the native NSO for all of the reasons discussed above. We will be writing in support of the proposed removal action strategy and providing comments as we review the Management Plan further. You, too, can now convey your support for NSO.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

The Service encourages anyone with an interest in Northern Spotted Owl recovery and Barred Owl management to provide written comments on the draft Barred Owl Management Strategy and draft EIS. Documents can be obtained online in Docket No. FWS-R1-ES-2022-0074 at www.regulations.gov or by Googling "USFWS barred owl management strategy."

Public comments can be submitted in writing via the following:

- Internet: www.regulations.gov. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS-R1-ES-2022-0074.
- U.S. mail: Public Comments Processing; Attn: Docket No. FWS-R1-ES-2022-0074; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: PRB/3W; 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

Comments submitted online at www.regulations.gov must be received by 11:59 p.m. EST on January 16, 2024.

Comments submitted by mail must be received or postmarked on or before January 16, 2024.

FIELD TRIPS (continued from page 3)

white fronted geese and Tundra swans, numerous ducks, shorebirds, and raptors are usually spotted. Well-known birder and naturalist David Wimpfheimer will provide commentary and Ronn Patterson (captain and naturalist) will fill in bits about the history of the delta as we transit this altered but still viable ecosystem.

Bring lunch and snacks. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate will be provided. Bad weather can cancel as with any winter trip. Light rain will not cancel.

The trip costs \$130. Registration for opens January 8 at 8 AM on the Marin Audubon website's Field Trips page. A waitlist will open if the trip sells out. Add your name to the list by clicking Contact Organizer prompt. You may cancel your ticket for a refund until 9 AM on February 2 by clicking Contact Organizer on the Ticketbud site and leaving a message.

Ticketholders will receive instructions and directions to the Antioch Marina, where the trip begins and ends, approximately one week prior to the trip.

Inclement weather will reschedule the trip to Sunday, February 18.

DONATE YOUR CAR TO MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

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

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

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Marcia Basalla, Starrett Dalton, Isabel Diamond, Leonard Garrison, Craig Guy, Robert Hockenos, Donna Horowitz, Shelley Hyder, Shae Irving, Nan Leavell, Robert MacKenzie, Marisa Remak, Douglas W. Roberts, Judy Roberts, Janice Rock, Christopher Rush, Marilyn Tiaven, Colin Walton, Edward Ward



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February 3 8:30 AM **Field Trip:** Sausalito, Mill Valley, Strawberry
With Jim White and Bob Battagin

February 4 8:40 AM **Boat Trip:** Winter Birds of the Delta
With David Wimpfheimer

February 8 7 PM **Speaker Series:** Snowy Plover
With Matthew Lau, National Park Service

Check website for updates and details

♻️ Printed on 100% recycled paper

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.

Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

- Enroll me as a Chapter-Supporting Member
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- \$25 Annual rate for students (18 years and under) and seniors (65 and over)
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- \$500 Patron
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- Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ _____

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