

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

7:00 PM

Monarch Butterfly

By Monroe and Ole Schell



Ole Rodriguez

Monarch Butterfly

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

Where have all the monarchs gone? Recent population trends and data on the Monarch Butterfly will be shared, as well as the good habitat work going on throughout Marin, especially Ole Schell's West Marin Monarch Sanctuary. Tips for how you can help will be offered, and a few controversies will be discussed, such as the role of eucalyptus and the dangers of tropical milkweed. Local photographers will be featured, and the work of the Marin Monarch Working Group will be a focus.

Mia Monroe is a Xerces Society volunteer, organizer of the Western Monarch Count over 25 years ago and is active in monarch butterfly conservation in California.

Ole Schell is an award-winning filmmaker, director, and farmer, who grew up in Bolinas on his father's Niman/Schell Ranch, where the annual arrival of thousands of Western Monarch butterflies was a dependable autumn phenomenon, and where he has established a Western Monarch Butterfly sanctuary on his family land.

THURSDAY, MAY 9

7:00 PM

Ethical Wildlife Photography

By Sarah Killingsworth

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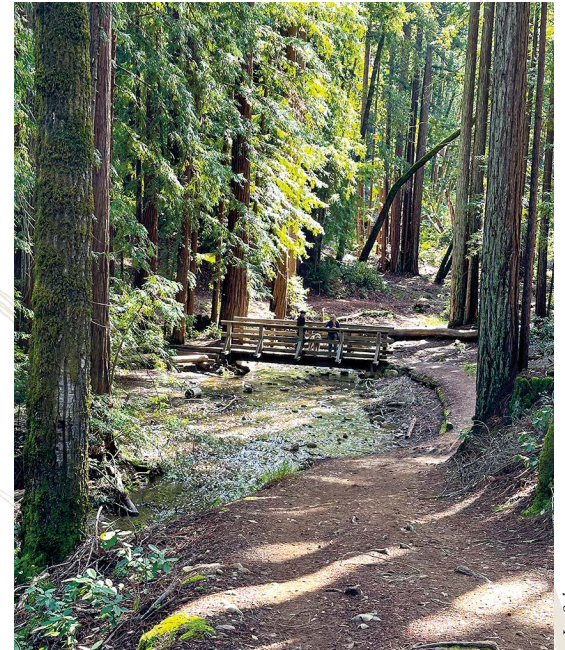
The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

MMWD Recreation Feasibility Study Released

There was some hope that MMWD's Recreation Management Planning Feasibility Study ("Study") would improve protections for Mt. Tamalpais natural resources, but when the Study was released, those hopes were dispelled. The Study begins with an explanation that it built off of their E-Bike Advisory Committee recommendation to view public access holistically. It outlines how the District and the community can work together to create "a sustainable and balanced future where shared enjoyment of these landscapes and the protection of their natural treasures go hand in hand." The District describes the Study as "a beacon of responsible stewardship," "a roadmap toward a future where enjoying the Watershed's roads and trails coexist harmoniously with protection of its ecosystems." Instead, it is a path not only to continuing passive public uses, interpretive and stewardship programs, but also to expanding active uses that are currently not allowed but are occurring, and pose a threat to sensitive habitat.

To its credit, the Study describes the ecological resources of the Watershed and mentions adverse impacts of recreation on natural resources. The Watershed supports



Joy Salzman

Middle Fork of Lagunitas Creek

1,000 species of plants and more than 400 species of wildlife, and is recognized as a Biosphere Reserve. The native plant communities consist of up to 50 special-status

continued on page 4

News from our Nominating Committee ...

Thank you to our Nominating Committee Chair Ellena Ochoa, and Committee members Doug Waterman and Mike Anderson. Our bylaws require that our members be informed of nominees 20 days before the election, which means they must be announced in our April newsletter. Board members of the Marin Audubon Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization, must be elected by our members. The election takes place at our May program meeting, and newly elected directors take office in June for three-year terms.

These are the nominees:

Allison Pence

Allison grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania. She was blessed with a curious, inspirational mother who loved nature. Allison has been around Ring Mountain most of the years since 1977. She has a BA in environmental planning and policy from UC Santa Cruz and is a retired bookkeeper. Currently, Allison is a docent for Marin County on Ring Mountain. She also was coordinator of our 2023 Southern

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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.

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President	Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
Secretary	Lelia Lanctot 924-6138
Treasurer	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
Conservation	Roger Harris 510/710-9120 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
Membership Chair	Bob Hinz 383-8688 Contact Bob for membership problems or questions.
Outreach, Website	Elyse Omernick outreach@marinaudubon.org
Speaker Series	Mike Anderson 990-9784
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Ellena Ochoa volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
Property Management	Clint Kellner 895-8591
Property Real Estate	James Raives 497-4492
Volunteer Coordinator	Ellena Ochoa volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org
BAAC Reps	Barbara Salzman 924-605 Doug Waterman newsletter@marinaudubon.org
At-large Director	Lowell Sykes 388-2821

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. 6:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month. Meetings are currently held online via Zoom. If you wish to participate please call 924-6057.

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only) Marin Audubon Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Website: www.marinaudubon.org

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org.

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$500 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species, and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

President's Letter

By Barbara Salzman

Many Board members have been busy over the last several months filling in the National Audubon Society Annual Report. Submitting annual plans has been a requirement for being an Audubon chapter for many years. There have always been questions on the form about chapter membership, field trips, programs, finances, etc. This year things changed. The format changed. It is now significantly more detailed with questions now about properties owned, partnerships, broad range of activities, use of technology, and diversity/inclusion. And it required more technical expertise to fill out and submit. We were able to get responses with the help of board members, Ellena Ocho, Mike Anderson, Jude Stalker, and Doug Waterman. We were finally able to submit the report a few days early thanks to the technical skills of Ellena Ochoa.

Thanks to Nominating Committee, Chair, Ellena Ochoa, and Committee members, Mike Anderson and Doug Waterman for their work, reviewing nominees for Board positions this year. See pages 1 and 5 for information on the nominees.

We have volunteer opportunities on the first and second Saturdays to help us continue to enhance habitats at our Corte Madera properties. At this time of year we have an additional opportunity – removing invasive sea lavender. Jude Stalker is again organizing volunteers to remove it. The plants are not difficult to pull and the work takes place along the waterfront of Sausalito and other Southern Marin locations. To learn more about these volunteer opportunities, see page 6.

We also have exciting news – we now have a new supply of Marin Audubon Society baseball-type hats. They are of the same quality and design as our previous hats. If you haven't noticed already, you can see them, and learn how to order one, on page 5

On a recent visit to the trails around the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Marsh, a trail my husband and I visit regularly, we encountered troubling circumstances. The trail borders tidal marshes that support one of the largest endangered Ridgway's Rail populations in the Bay. The adjacent managed wetland and tidal slough are also habitat for a wide diversity of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Coyotes are sometimes seen. The trail is posted with clear signs that dogs are to be on-leash only. Until recently, walkers mostly followed the on-leash requirement. There was an occasional off-leash dog but, generally, compliance with on-leash requirements was good. **Latently I've noticed an increase in off-leash dogs and on**

this day the number of dogs off-leash was equal to those on-leash.

When I remind folks that dogs are required to be on-leash and point out the signs, some ignore me, some do put their dogs on leash and some defend their actions. Those who defend their actions usually claim their dogs are different, no threat, and stay by their sides. I am a long-time dog lover and have owned multiple dogs. I know that given tempting circumstances, like a coyote going by, the vast majority of dogs would take off. Even if your dog is perfect and would stay by your side in all circumstances, many visitors do not like dogs and some are afraid of dogs. Some have even been attacked by unleashed dogs on this very path. Even if your dog is one of the few that would not chase animals or disturb people, what kind of message does it send it others? If one person has their dog off leash, why shouldn't others? Maybe that's what's happening now – people are seeing multiple off-leash dogs and want theirs to be off-leash, too.

With more and more dogs off-leash, the trails will be less usable for many people, there would be more fights among dogs, more dogs in marshes, and our native wildlife and their habitats would be more at risk. These trails are adjacent to tidal marshes Marin Audubon worked so hard to save and restore. We continue our work at the Corte Madera marshes because they are an integral part of the ecosystem of San Francisco Estuary and because endangered resident and migratory birds depend on them. The birds have nowhere else to go. Trails adjacent to marshes can be shared so they are safe for walkers, runners, bikers, dogs and for native wildlife. Please do your part and keep your dog on a leash.

THANK YOU, DONORS

Mary Ann Brenner, Brynn Valinoti, William Clarke, Rosalind Colver, Janet Ekberg, Timothy Erdman, Jeannette Gustafson, Thomas Heinz, David Hudson, David Kimball and Anne Taylor, William & Anne Klemme, Judy Lichterman, Lawrence Lossing, Sarah Martin, Linda Nelson, Colin & Lise Nichols, Linda Novy, Ruth Pratt, Alison Quoyeser, William Richardson, Marianna Riser, Nancy Warfield

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Walt Beckman, Carolyn Carmines, Raymond Cobane, Karla Dayton, Deborah Doherty, Nancy Enos, Barbara C. Hollis, Janey Houghton, Terry Jones, Bernard Knechtli

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. If a trip is closed when you try to register, use the "contact organizer" and request to be put on the waiting list. If you won't be able to attend a trip you have registered for, please use "contact organizer" to cancel your ticket so that the spot may be opened for someone else.

Recently Ticketbud has not opened for trip signups precisely at 8 AM. This has led to confusion among would-be participants who assumed the message "There are no tickets available at this time" means the trip is already sold out, but it isn't, so please try to sign up again a minute or two later.

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

San Rafael

Thursday, April 4, 2024 and

Thursday, May 2, 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.

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.

NICASIO/TOMALES BAY

Birding in Marin, Season 9 – Trip 4

Saturday, April 6, 2024

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required. Registration opens Wednesday, March 27 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

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

nice array of other birds in this vicinity.

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

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

Meet at the ball field in Nicasio.

OLIMPALI STATE HISTORIC PARK, Novato

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

8:30 AM to noon

With Rich Cimino

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

It's always an exciting time to birdwatch at Olompali State Historic Park. This year we will be birding the Park well into spring migration. We'll be looking for early spring arrivals such as the **Western Flycatcher**, **Ash-throated Flycatcher** and the **Hooded Oriole**. Beginning and experienced birders are invited to join leaders Rich Cimino and others to bird the park as we walk the old ranch road to the park's reservoir. Olompali State Park features oak savanna, open grasslands and riparian habitat: There is a good assortment of species, raptors, flycatchers, swallows, vireos, warblers, woodpeckers, nuthatches, thrushes, and orioles. Be early, the field trip will start at 8:30 AM in the parking lot. There is an \$8.00 parking fee, pay by cell is now possible in the park. Rain cancels.

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

RODEO LAGOON, Marin Headlands

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

7:30 AM to noon

With William Legge and David Wiechers

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

With spring migration underway we will be looking out for migrant wildfowl, shorebirds, grebes, loons and passerines. As usual, the weather will dictate our focus with onshore northwest winds ideal for spring sea watches, while offshore easterly winds promise a good selection of passerine migrants. Join us for a Sea Watch at 7:30 AM or arrive later at 8:15 AM for a circuit of the lagoon. 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 signal light. Proceed through the tunnel on Bunker Road to the Rodeo Lagoon Parking Lot at the end and meet by the bridge over the channel to the beach.

MOUNT BURDELL/STAFFORD LAKE OR RUSH CREEK, Novato

Birding in Marin, Season 9 – Trip 5

Saturday, May 4, 2024

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

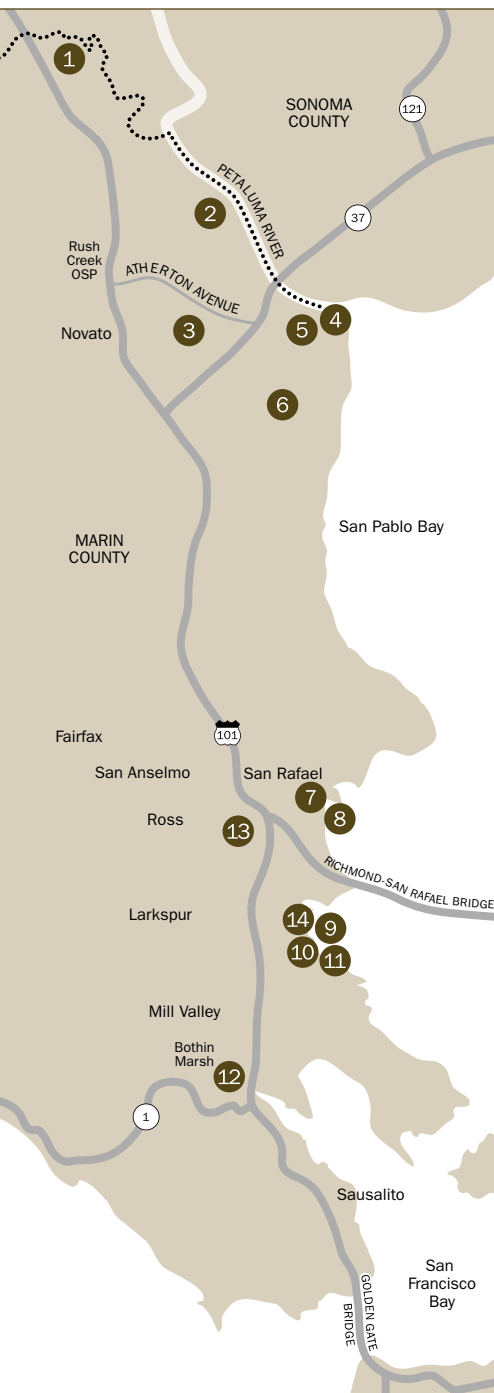
With Jim White and Bob Battagin

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

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

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

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



MMWD Study Released

continued from page 1

plant species, 88 distinct plant assemblages, 1,000 species of vascular plants, and 10 native plant communities. The Study acknowledges that recreation can facilitate the introduction and expansion of invasive species. For example, broom is growing on 1,500 acres and is still expanding.

The Study recognizes that plants and animals alike are threatened by recreation, altered fire regimes, climate change, and invasive plants. Major threats from invasive species are listed as groundwater depletion, changes in soil chemistry, competition with native species, and loss of native species diversity. Thirty percent of known plant species are non-native. Rare plants may be threatened by trampling, fuel-break construction, and road and trail maintenance. The Study recognizes that additional management enforcement is required and that efforts are needed to prevent visitors from creating new trails by hiking off-trail. Bike impacts are mentioned, but not bikers who have been caught constructing new trails without permission.

More than 400 species of wildlife are supported by the Watershed, and it is recognized that land birds are susceptible to impacts from recreation, mainly from disturbance, and that habitat can be degraded by negligent recreational use. The District has had Point Blue Conservation Science survey birds annually from 1996 to 2022 and analyze trends in abundance for 56 species. The results of the surveys were that 51% showed an increased or stable trend, 11% a slightly decreased or uncertain trend, 7% a moderately to greatly decreased trend, and 31% a greatly decreased trend. This means that almost half of the species were in some stage of decline. Apparently, the District has taken no actions to reverse the declines occurring in some species as none are mentioned.

The species with the largest decline are generalists, i.e., they use three or more habitat types, such as riparian/wetland associated habitats. Species with the largest decrease were associated with shrub/chaparral represented by only four species. Species primarily associated with mixed habitat types (hardwood and oakwood) and species that use multiple forest types were steadily increasing. The Study concludes that the District lands “appear to be important for maintaining diverse bird population,” they will continue with monitoring surveys, and the monitoring “should continue to inform management actions.” It is not clear what management actions will be continued, as no actions are mentioned as having been taken.

Special-status species are discussed:

Yellow-legged frogs are described as being particularly susceptible to environmental changes and recreational activities, which can degrade habitat, increase sedimentation, flooding, disturbance, and facilitate predators into habitat.

Osprey decline appears to be the result of bald eagles moving into the ecosystem. Installing platforms to provide nesting sites is mentioned; however, there is no reference to the lack of nesting sites as being a cause of decline.

Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) nesting has been monitored by Point Blue Conservation Science on both District and Marin County Open Space District lands. The Study reports that the annual Point Blue monitoring and the continued sharing of information with land managers will reduce potential impacts of projects on the NSO, and that surveys and monitoring to inform management and Watershed operations have proven effective in protecting NSOs on Watershed lands. In the District’s opinion, the “current Watershed visitation does not seem to be impacting spotted owl activities.”

We must point out that surveys and monitoring do not reduce or prevent potential impacts. Follow-up actions must be taken to address any issues revealed by the monitoring. Furthermore, there is no mention of the cumulative impacts of recreational activities (biking and hiking), or understory clearing for fire management activities, or of protecting the NSO’s primary prey, the dusky-footed woodrat.

Quoting from Board Policy 7, the Study presents a justification for its focus on public access in the Watershed: “Watershed is held in trust as a natural wildland area of great biological diversity, as scenic open space, and as an area for passive outdoor recreation for Marin and much of the Bay Area.” The limitation that recreation be passive is clearly being ignored.

The Watershed is composed of 94.5 miles of fire roads, 57.5 miles of system trails, and according to the 2005 Road and Trails Management Plan, over 50 miles of non-system trails. (Actually, it’s now up to 70 miles.) The lack of policy or restriction on hikers going off trails is identified as contributing to the creation of non-system trails, and it is added that bicyclists are also known to create and utilize non-system trails.

The Study acknowledges that non-system trails (trails constructed illegally) are a threat to water quality and natural resources and are difficult for the District to address. The process they outline for restoring illegally constructed trails, however, would be complicated and lengthy. It has multiple steps: 1) communicate

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

official routes; 2) prioritize District response based on selected criteria (undefined); 3) develop a range of management guidelines and actions; and 4) develop strategies to enforce management actions. We wonder why restoring illegal trails needs to be so complex.

Four categories of activities are discussed to protect the Watershed's unique biodiversity, habitats, and water quality, and to provide safe and inclusive access on District lands. Resource protection is coupled with expanded access which is in striking contrast to other water districts in the region that limit recreation, if it is allowed at all. The Study states that the options came from community feedback:

1. Improved Stewardship Program – includes opportunities for people to volunteer for trail maintenance and docent programs. Decommissioning is coupled with new trail alignments.
2. Visitor Services – more park rangers, the upgrading of signage, and interpretive programs.
3. Visitor Facilities, Policies and Plans – provides for different activities. There is significant variation in the types of use and experiences visitors desire (from quiet solitude to social adventure): provide a more welcoming and inclusive environment, e.g., provide picnic areas, fishing piers; conduct a pilot study for bike and e-bike access and use; update power-driven mobility device to include e-bikes; prioritize projects that support access; and Watershed project zoning, which would integrate biological resources into road and trail planning.
4. Monitoring and Adaptive Management – the District's mission and goals would

be unchanged while guidelines may be adjusted to changing circumstances.

Biological resources are discussed and referenced. But the intent seems clearly to continue to expand public access, framed as “innovative stewardship program.” MMWD proposes to use vegetation zoning, i.e., protecting more intact vegetative habitats, which is encouraging, but pilot programs for access for the now-illegal e-bikes and more access for bikes are alarming.

The Study repeatedly identifies the approach, alternatives, and opportunities as having been informed by community input at workshops, by visitor use, and through survey feedback. They should be informed by protection of the Watershed's natural resources. It seems like the District is handing over their management to whoever speaks the loudest or with the most voices.

At the hybrid public hearing on the Study, at least 59 people spoke. Approximately 90% were cyclists wanting more biking options and allowed use of e-bikes; many seemed to be part of organized efforts. Few even mentioned the Watershed or environmental resources. Yet their voices are guiding the District's actions.

The District's mission is to “provide water to manage the lands, water and facilities in our trust to provide reliable, high-quality water, and adapt and sustain these precious resources for the future.” Is extensive planning and providing for access opportunities really in accord with this mission statement?

We'll be working with other like-minded organizations in an effort to ensure that Mt. Tam's biological resources and ecosystems are not degraded and destroyed.

Nominating Committee

continued from page 1

Marin Christmas Count. Allison looks forward to working with Marin Audubon to expand our field trips and continuing to use the communication skills she acquired during her years of employment.

Returning board members:

Lelia Lanctot

Lelia, a longtime Marin Audubon member, has been our Board Secretary for the last three years. A former teacher, Lelia is a docent at the California Academy of Sciences. She has been an active and involved Board member, attending many committee meetings and helping with field trips.

Martha Jarocki

Martha was on our Board from 2015 to 2022. She returned in 2022 as Treasurer for our Property Management account. In 2023, she

took over as Treasurer. In addition, for years Martha has been in charge of enhancement of the upland habitat at MAS's marsh expansion project at the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. This has involved organizing and overseeing monthly volunteer work days, including on-the-ground management activities.

Roger Harris

Roger is a retired biologist, longtime MAS member, and former NAS employee. Roger has presented speaker programs and led many MAS field trips over the years, and has recently served as Conservation Co-chair.

Barbara Salzman

A longtime board member, Barbara has served as Conservation Chairperson and President in recent years. She is also Project Manager, overseeing our Tiscornia Marsh Sea Level Rise Restoration Project as well as all of our other marsh restoration projects.

Marin Audubon Hats are Back!

OUR BEAUTIFUL HATS AVAILABLE FOR SALE, AGAIN.

The hats are made in the USA of high quality materials. Each hat is tan with dark green contrast along the outer edge of the visor.

The front is embroidered with the Marin Audubon Ridgway's Rail logo designed by **local artist and birder Keith Hansen**.



“Marin Audubon Society” is embroidered on the back which has a tuck-in strap with a slide buckle.

We are offering these hats for \$30.00 each – by cash or check.

They will be available to purchase in person on most field trips or by arrangement.

If you would like to have a hat sent to you, there will be an additional **\$5.00 postage fee**.

To place an order, please contact Jude Stalker, judestalker@gmail.com.

REPORT BARRED OWL SIGHTINGS

Barred Owls have extended their range to the west coast and have been seen in Marin. There is increasing concern about their impact on Marin's Northern Spotted Owl population. Barred Owls are larger, more aggressive and occupy the same habitat type as Spotted Owls. See contact list at marinaudubon.org/2020/09/01/alert-report-barred-owl-sightings.

Habitat Stewardship

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

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

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

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: April 6, May 4

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive between the Ring Mountain Phyllis Ellman trailhead and the Montessori School.

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: April 13, May 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, Stewardship Volunteers

Annette Anzalone, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Lowell Sykes

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, 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.

THANK YOU NATIONAL LEAGUE OF YOUNG MEN

We had 30 volunteers at Bahia in early March, primarily from the National League of Young Men (about 23 young men, four parents, former MAS Board member, Flinn Rauch; and Jude Stalker, organizer of the day). They were super workers and were able to remove a number of outlier Harding grass plants, and they dug out, trimmed and sheet mulched over a larger patch of Harding grass on the Central Peninsula. Everyone had a great time and we are hoping they will return.

BOARD FIELD TRIP

We visit our properties annually to assess conditions, identify actions that may be needed, and introduce new board members to the properties. We have so many properties now that we need to take three days to visit them all. Our first visit was to Bahia, where we saw the levee and seasonal wetland areas that we've been planting for the last five years. We also visited our Simmons Slough property, where we've been planting, and the access near Deer Island, where we've been trying to work out easement boundaries and a legal access agreement.

On our second trip, at the end of February, we visited our properties at Black Point, Bahia, Arroyo San Jose, and CalPark. At Black Point, we visited our properties off Holly Avenue and Norton Pond. There was a lot of water on both sites, which is consistent with winter conditions. At Arroyo San Jose (off Bel Marin Keys Boulevard, across from the Humane Society), we were horrified to find a large patch of broom along a section of the creekbank. Finally, at CalPark, where we are negotiating access boundaries and are concerned about the dirt fill that has been dumped in or near our property.

We have five more properties to visit and our third field trip will be the end of March.

BAHIA

Our annual visit with the HOA board took place on February 20 and was attended by Susan Ristow, James Raives, and Barbara Salzman, representing MAS. This annual visit is required by an agreement between our two organizations dating to the time of our acquisition of the 635-acre property. It addresses access, both allowing the HOA to manage their culverts, disallowing access on the Western and Eastern Peninsulas, and walkers with unleashed dogs on all of our property. We reviewed the native planting work that was done over the last year on the Eastern and Central Peninsulas (watering

and weeding last summer by a crew hired by MAS and STRAW, and planting this past winter), asked for their help in notifying visitors that dogs should be leashed, informed them unauthorized use of the peninsulas is continuing, and discussed the HOA's recent concern about erosion. HOA board members had researched it and were able to clarify that the extent of the HOA property adjacent to their bridge and culverts is more extensive than they had initially thought. The eroding area is on HOA property.

Following up on our planting of the Central Peninsula seasonal wetlands and sections of the levee this past January, we had a crew from Habitat Potential come to Bahia to remove weeds and place mulch. Invasive plants are flourishing with all of the rain, and they had to spend a considerable amount of time weeding. The job was not finished in the one day we had scheduled, so they will need to return. This is our fifth year planting this area.

CORTE MADERA

The second-Saturday workday at MAS's tidal marsh restoration site at the Ecological Reserve went very well. Three new volunteers were welcomed and everyone worked on the Italian thistle, digging and pulling it, and putting down wood chips. Some Harding grass was also removed. The clumps of Harding grass are getting big and more formidable. Harding grass is very difficult to remove and there is no generally accepted removal method. We'll need to discuss and decide on one or more method to remove it pretty soon, before it really gets out of hand.

Unfortunately, there are also some thick mats of Italian thistle – particularly in places where the ground was disturbed by digging Harding grass last summer – that need to be removed also.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO REMOVE INVASIVE SEA LAVENDER

It's once again the time of year when the highly invasive sea lavender has emerged and needs to be removed so our native wetland plants can grow. For a number of years now, Jude Stalker has been organizing volunteers to remove the sea lavender in various locations along the Sausalito waterfront and along the Bay in Southern Marin. It's fun work in beautiful, peaceful shoreline places with other like-minded folks – quite a rewarding experience.

Volunteers generally work for three hours but any amount of time you can give will be greatly appreciated. Jude provides instructions,

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Marin Birdlog: February 2023

By Noah Arthur



Green-tailed Towhee

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Ranch on the 4th (NW).

Possibly driven south by the storm, two more **Mountain Bluebirds**, both males this time, were at the Fish Docks on the 7th (BA & BA). An exceptional mixed flock in a yard in Pt. Reyes Station on the 10th included a 1st-winter male **American Redstart** and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (MS & LS) – the former being an extremely rare find for late winter.

The northern Song Sparrow irruption this season is unprecedented in recent memory, and though more pronounced in the East Bay, there have been a number of them in Marin too. On Feb. 11th, two **montana/merrilli Song Sparrows** were at Inverness Tennis Club, which also produced an exceptional **11 White-throated Sparrows** (CC). Another mixed flock in Pt. Reyes Station on the 11th produced a **Black-and-white Warbler**, and a **Myrtle X Audubon's Warbler hybrid** was also in town (CC).

Expected on Mt. Tam, a **Townsend's Solitaire** was at Rock Springs on the 13th (CN). A flock of **16 Lapland Longspurs** were first eBirded at the Pt. Reyes RCA Station on the 15th (LN), but had apparently been present for awhile.

Very rare this far north, a **Black Skimmer** was on Tomales Bay on the 17th (JL).

The good run of winter rarities in Pt. Reyes Station continued on the 18th with a young male **Bullock's Oriole** (MS & LS). Also on the 18th, a wintering '**Calaveras**' **Nashville Warbler** was found in an odd place for such a bird to winter, along Pacheco Creek in Pacheco Valley Preserve (JW). A new **Mountain Bluebird**, a male this time, was at Abbotts Lagoon on the 23rd (WL), and also on the 23rd, DL's yard in San Rafael had a presumably wintering **Western Tanager** (DL).

An early **Barn Swallow** was on a wire at Drakes Beach on the 24th (DS). Two rare finches on the 25th were a female **Evening Grosbeak** at Pine Gulch (MD) and at least one **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at Rodeo Lagoon (CC). A new **montana/merrilli Song Sparrow** was also at Rodeo Lagoon on the 25th (CC), and yet another new one on the 26th (WLe). And another winter **Western Tanager** was in Novato on the 25th (CP & SS).



Evening Grosbeak

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February is usually a waterbird month in Marin, but this time it produced an exceptional array of winter passerine rarities, starting with a female **Mountain Bluebird** and three **Lapland Longspurs** at Abbotts Lagoon on the 1st (JC).

A new **Common Teal** showed up at the pond by Redwood Landfill on the 1st, and inside the landfill (strictly closed; accessed by permission mostly for surveys) two **Glaucous X Herring Gull hybrids** were in with the horde of gulls (LC & CC). A sulky **Green-tailed Towhee** was at Audubon Canyon



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Sausalito

Rare Visitor Yellow-Crowned Night Heron

The habitats for Yellow-crowned Night Herons are typically in tropical climates, the shallow tidal marshes and bayous of the Gulf Coast and Baja California. Yellow-crowned Night Herons are considered to be a casual visitor in California because they are observed fairly regularly. There have been sightings along the Sausalito waterfront in 2021, 2022, and 2023. While these visitors may have been multiple individuals, it seems unlikely more than one individual bird would have ended up along this particular shoreline over such an extended period of time. This photo of the Yellow-crowned was taken by Ron Brown the end of December 2023 while it was feeding and rooting with herons native to the Bay Area.

Junior Birdwatchers

Our Junior Birdwatchers program is ready to go! Last year, we had fun experiences with several elementary classrooms in Marin County and we hope our members will talk to their local school teachers about adding this experience for their students this spring. For information, contact Lelia Lanctot, Leliaannlanctot@gmail.com.

Invasive Sea Lavender Removal

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equipment and materials needed, (gloves, tools, etc.), snacks, and water. Jude will sign off for volunteer service hours if needed.

Contact Jude (judestalker@gmail.com) if you're interested in volunteering specific days of the weeks/times of the day.

OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS: **JC:** Jim Chiropolos, **LC:** Lucas Corneliusen, **CC:** Connor Cochrane, **NW:** Nils Warnock, **BA & BA:** Bob & Bettina Arrigoni, **MS:** Mark Stephenson, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **CN:** Christian Naventi, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **JL:** Jeff Loomans, **JW:** Joyce Waterman, **WL:** William Luckhardt, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **DS:** David Sexton, **MD:** Mark Dettling, **CP:** Carla Parkinson, **SS:** Sylvie Silverstein, **WLE:** William Legge



The Rail

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May 15 **Field Trip:** Rodeo Lagoon
7:30 AM With William Legge and David
Wiechers

June 1 **Field Trip:** Big Rock
8:30 AM With Jim White and Bob Battagin

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.

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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