

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025 7:00 PM**

**Migratory Shore Bird Conservation**  
Matthew Reiter, Point Blue Conservation Science



Carey Gregory

**Dowitcher Flock**

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

Shorebirds are some of the most migratory species on the planet. However, their populations in the Western Hemisphere have been declining over the past 40 years. To better understand what is driving changes in shorebird populations and to turn data into knowledge and then conservation action, in 2011 Point Blue and partners launched a coordinated research, monitoring and conservation network for shorebirds in the Pacific Americas Flyway. The Migratory Shorebird Project is now a network of over 50 partners in 13 countries working together to study shorebirds and take conservation actions for these long-distance travelers.

As a Research Director and quantitative ecologist with Point Blue Conservation Science, Dr. Matt Reiter's work focuses on the ecology and conservation of migratory waterbirds and their wetland habitats in order to understand the impacts of threats such as habitat loss and climate change across broad migratory landscapes. Matt received a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Minnesota and has been at Point Blue since 2009.

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

**Bay Area Wildlife: An Irreverent Guide**

Jeff Miller

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# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## More Parcels Acquired at Black Point

We're fortunate to have been able to acquire two more parcels at Black Point, Novato, this month from a private owner. We were contacted by a representative of the new owner, asking if we were interested in purchasing the properties. The previous owner had died, and a relative who inherited the properties was interested in selling.

As we noted in our earlier *Rail* article report, we have been actively pursuing acquisitions in the Black Point area. These new parcels are oak woodlands and adjacent uplands located slightly uphill from a large seasonal wetland already owned by MAS. Other properties we own are nearby.

Last month we completed the acquisition of a Black Point tax default parcel from the county, and another tax default acquisition at Black Point is due to be completed later this month. As is common for our acquisition of small parcels, our partner, Marin Baylands Advocates,



Barbara Salzman

**New parcels are in the oak woodland adjacent to this seasonal wetland**

covered the cost to acquire these parcels.

This brings to 22 the number of parcels owned by MAS at Black Point. The number we have purchased was more, but we have combined some of them to reduce our parcel taxes. We plan to combine these parcels with the parcel we intend to purchase that is between these two, forming an expanded habitat for the many native wildlife species, including egrets and lots of landbirds that make this area their home.

## Preliminary Injunction Granted in Suit Against Marin Municipal Water District

On December 3, Judge Andrew Sweet granted a preliminary injunction prohibiting Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) from implementing its Trail Sharing and Class 1 E-bike Pilot Programs, at least until a final ruling is made on the merits of the projects. The suit was brought by the California Native Plant Society, Marin Audubon Society, and Marin Conservation League because of our concern about the lack of environmental review for these projects.

The order granting the preliminary injunction contained the same review information as was in the preliminary order (a review of the exclusions and exceptions)

as well as a new analysis. The new analysis addressed whether the e-bike and trail-sharing pilot projects are in fact separate projects, as claimed by MMWD attorney during our court hearing, or whether they are parts of the same project, as MMWD had been arguing until the court hearing.

In court, the District argued that the two projects are separate and distinct, and that the court should treat them as such when considering the impacts.

In support of its position that the Class 1 E-bike and Trail Sharing Pilot Programs are part of the same project, the order went on

*continued on page 4*

## 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
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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](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

As we begin the new year, there are many unknowns ahead. I have to admit I have some trepidation. There have always been threats, but now more are likely to be of a different kind. There is likely to be less federal funding for restorations and acquisitions, and there could be weakening of federal regulation to protect wetlands and waterways. While actual filling of wetlands may not be likely, developments will be allowed to go right up to wetland edges, which will degrade the quality and usefulness of the wetlands by wildlife. And we'll lose many upland habitats because recent state laws require jurisdictions to approve housing without environmental review. And we can expect ongoing gradual impacts from sea level rise and climate change.

To address the coming challenges, we'll follow the usual practices as well as atypical ways to protect our wildlife and natural resources. So far, some methods that have emerged are the joining with others in coalitions to increase the effectiveness of our efforts and turning to the courts in frustration when decision-makers are not listening. While these methods have been used before, I expect we will be depending on them more. We've recently been contacted to join with other organizations in coalitions in conservation efforts on various issues. Regarding acquisitions, thank heavens we've already purchased as many properties as we have, considering the likely reduction in grant funding ahead. There are still a few baylands that need to be protected because they are in private ownership. We're continuing our acquisition efforts to protect the few remaining baylands in private ownership, and hopefully there will be sufficient resources available to support our efforts. In summary, we reaffirm our commitment to protect, to the best of our ability, our natural resources during the coming year.

A huge thank you to those who have donated through our winter appeal. As our Board members have noted on many appeal letters, your donations are more important now than ever to keep us in operation, continue our programs, and meet the challenges of the times. If you haven't contributed yet, please do so now. The year ahead will bring challenges which your support will help us meet. If you have not yet donated, you can still make a difference locally by sending a donation online through our website at [marinaudubon.org/donate](http://marinaudubon.org/donate) or sending a check to our PO box at MAS, PO Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

Thanks to all who have participated in

one or more of our Christmas Bird Counts. Depending on when you receive this newsletter, at least the Point Reyes and Cheep Thrills Counts will have taken place, and maybe the Southern Marin Count will be over as well. We always plan to bring you reports for each count. Look for reports from Coordinators of each count in our February issue. An account of the personal experience of Josiah Clark on the Point Reyes Count is on page 7.

Our Nominating Committee has begun its task of identifying members who may be interested in becoming involved with us by joining our Board. We are an all volunteer Board and so we all have responsibilities for some aspect of our work. See box below for information on who to contact to find out more.

I hope everyone is having a wonderful holiday! Do take time to get outdoors and see the great variety of migratory birds, and resident species, too, that winter with us in the Bay Area.

## MAS Hats for Sale

Our hats feature MAS's Ridgway's Rail logo embroidered on the front. The logo was designed by local artist Keith Hansen. The hats are constructed of high quality materials and made in the US.

Hats will be available to purchase in person on most field trips or by arrangement. The cost is \$30 per hat, payable by cash or check. To receive a hat by mail, please add \$8 for postage. To order, please contact Jude Stalker at [judestalker@gmail.com](mailto:judestalker@gmail.com).

## Join Our Team

MAS's Nominating committee is looking for members interested in being involved with MAS as a Board member. In particular we are searching for a new Outreach Chair whose primary responsibilities are to manage the technical side of our outreach.

- Maintain and update our website
- Send monthly event announcements to list
- Manage Ticketbud listings for field trips
- Post special events on website

Contact Nominating Committee for information on Board membership and the Outreach position specifically: Mike Anderson, [mdander65@gmail.com](mailto:mdander65@gmail.com); Alison Pence, [alipence9@gmail.com](mailto:alipence9@gmail.com); or Lelia Lanctot, 924-6138.

## MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

MAS is providing a full schedule of free field trips for the 2024–2025 season.

**Registration is required for our trips** with size limits, which are used 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 are unable to attend a trip you signed up for, use "Contact Organizer" to cancel so that someone on the waiting list will have an opportunity to attend.**

**In some instances, trip signups aren't available precisely at 8 AM but it doesn't mean the trip is full. PLEASE TRY TO REGISTER AGAIN A FEW MINUTES LATER.**

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

#### San Rafael

Thursday, January 2, 2025

Thursday, February 6, 2025

8:30 AM to noon

With Mark Clark

All participants are welcome to join this trip.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels, especially beginning birders, to join leader Mark Clark on our monthly walk around the ponds at Las Gallinas. On our search we'll be looking for waterfowl, waders, songbirds, raptors and rails. On our December walk, we spotted over 50 species, including **Blue-winged Teal**, **Palm Warbler** and **Belted Kingfisher**. We are likely to spot some interesting species, so come assist in our search.

The packed dirt paths around the ponds are wide, flat and easy to navigate. Heavy rain cancels.

**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 a portable restroom in the parking area for public use.

### LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT PONDS AND HAMILTON WETLANDS

#### Birding in Marin, Season 10 – Trip 1

Saturday, January 4, 2025

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required. Registration opens at 8 AM on December 26 on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

Bob and I are leading our Birding in Marin monthly first Saturday field trips for the tenth season sponsored by the MAS. Please join us as we go birding with a goal of finding and sharing 100

species at two of our prime wintering habitats for ducks, shorebirds, raptors and sparrows.

Las Gallinas is a great example of generating wildlife habitat with ample human access. This will be a 2 mile walk over a wide, flat packed dirt walkway with plenty of scope views to share close-ups. Bring lunch. We'll stop at the picnic tables before leaving.

The Hamilton wetlands have been restored with intelligence, sensitivity, and precision. The birds and wildlife have appreciated this and come back in numbers that we expect to share. The walk is flat over a wide, mostly paved walkway, accessible via a ramp.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101 in northern San Rafael take Smith Ranch Road east about a mile, just crossing the tracks turn left and park in 1/2 mile near the east end. Meet at Las Gallinas VSD parking lot.

### SKAGGS ISLAND ROAD

Wednesday, January 10, 2025

10 AM to 1:30 PM

With Daniel Edelstein

Registration required. Registration opens at 8 AM on December 31, 2024 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 shorebird and duck 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).

Skaggs Island Road has flat, level hiking for no more than 1.5 miles; bring your lunch, we'll eat at the bridge approximately 0.6 mile from the parking area at Hwy 37.

**DIRECTIONS:** Closed to the public, Skaggs Island Road is accessed by meeting our group in the parking area adjacent to Hwy 37 (approximately 3 miles east of Reclamation Rd and 2 miles

east of the Hwy 121/Sears Point Raceway intersection (at the stoplight). We'll meet on the north side of Hwy 37 where it intersects with Skaggs Island Road. Here's a map link that shows where we'll meet: <https://bit.ly/3YYJeg>.

Please be careful turning into this road when coming from Marin County. Oncoming traffic is often heavy.

### SAUSALITO / STRAWBERRY Birding in Marin, Season 10 – Trip 2

Saturday, February 1, 2025

8:30 AM to mid afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Registration required. Registration opens at 8 AM on January 22 on the MAS website's Field Trips page.

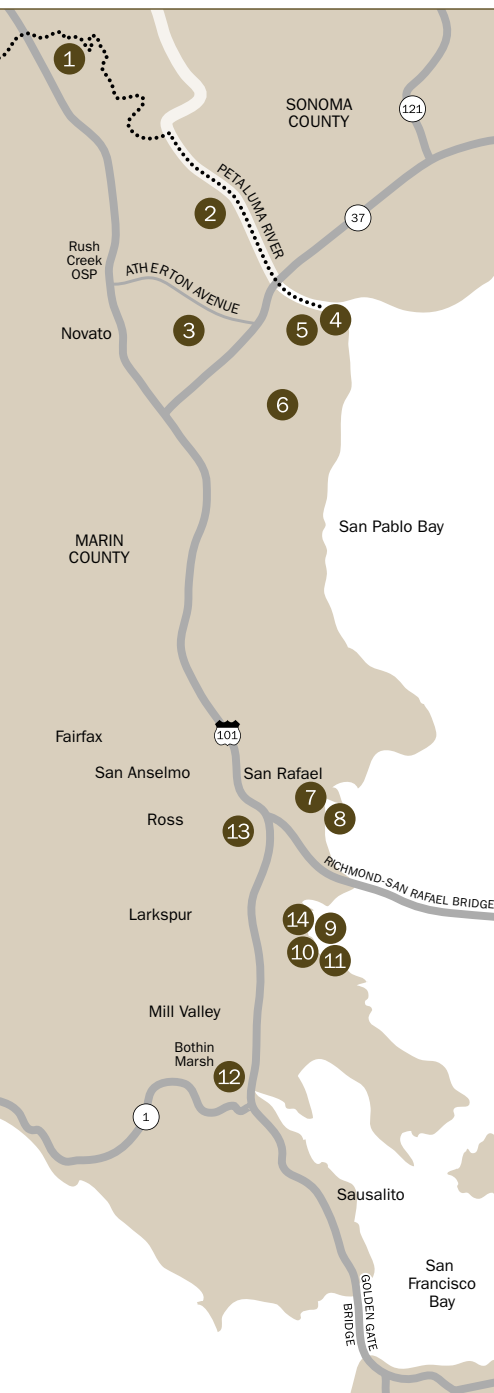
We get a fine view of the San Francisco Bay waters from the small park at Harbor Point and the nearby rocky shoreline. Some grebes, loons, gulls, cormorants and a few shorebirds are often visible. We hope for **Black Turnstones** and a **Spotted Sandpiper**.

We will walk or take the short drive to see if Sausalito's **Yellow Crowned Night Heron** has returned for another winter, usually offering a direct comparison to our **Black-crowned Night Heron**.

We then intend to drive the 2 miles to Fort Baker under the West end of the Golden Gate Bridge to see birds in the active bay mouth and the calmer Coast Guard boat harbor. We wonder if the **Wandering Tattler** will be spending another winter on the breakwater.

Bring lunch for a quick break for our final stop at Strawberry Point, a rather new development with a fine public path along the Richardson Bay shore. This portion of San Francisco Bay is protected from boating, hunting and fishing, so many diving ducks spend some of the winter there. If the herring are running this can be an active space.

**DIRECTIONS:** Meet at 8:30 at the bay end of Harbor Drive. From Bridgeway in North Sausalito take Harbor Drive to the ample parking lot at its bay end.



#### 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

### Preliminary Injunction

*continued from page 1*

to identify many different instances in which MMWD connected the two.

Based on case law, the order pointed out that the review of a project must account for future actions: where the purpose of a project is a step in a broader plan to expand the project and/or the expansion of a project is a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the initial project, otherwise the project is considered to be piecemealed. The court points out that it is reasonable to foresee that implementation of the e-bike project will result in the use of e-bikes not only on dirt roads but also the nine trails of the pilot program as well. To accomplish this both programs have to proceed. If the trail-sharing project occurs, it will materially change the scope of the e-bike project by expanding e-bike access to the nine trails where bikes are presently not allowed at all.

The court pointed out that the District had already attempted to implement both projects at the same time and had been defending its legal right to do so in court. The District's attempt to salvage the e-bike pilot by insisting that it does not have to involve e-bikes on trails is "basically an admission that this change is significant."

The court did not find convincing MMWD's insistence during the hearing that it always envisioned the two pilots as being independent. It pointed out that MMWD's staff report described both the trail-sharing and e-bike projects as being part of the Trail Sharing Pilot Program. Also, MMWD materials were "riddled" with references that anticipated the effect of the e-bike trial as being to put e-bikes on single-track trails. This would not have happened without simultaneous implementation of both the e-bike and trail projects. The interaction between the trails is a defining trait of the project as a whole.

The court expressed its belief that the pilot projects are sufficiently interrelated so that a CEQA analysis of one must consider the effects of the other. To do otherwise would be considered a violation of CEQA. It would be piecemealing.

The court concluded, as it did in the preliminary order, that the environmental organizations made a "very modest" showing of irreparable harm, whereas the MMWD "did not make any" showing of interim harm. The conclusion is 1) the likelihood of success heavily favors the petitioners, and 2) the balance of interim harm "very modestly" favors us. Therefore, the environmental organizations "are entitled to a preliminary injunction that will remain in place until the court can rule on the merits."

Our negotiations with the Marin Municipal Water District continue.

### POINT REYES SEASHORE ELK FENCE SET TO COME DOWN

Soon, more elk will be roaming around the park. Point Reyes National Seashore has finalized the Tomales Point Management Plan, the major feature of which is removing the enclosure fence that has confined elk since their introduction, thereby allowing them to move freely about the Seashore. Also, to be removed are all parts of the temporary water system that was installed for the elk during the most recent drought. Adoption of the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) marks approval of the project.

The management plan does not only concern elk. Other features include updating management zoning to include a recreation area, continuing elk and plant monitoring, adaptively managing the use of Pierce Ranch, formalizing parking in existing lots, minor rerouting of trails, modifying stock ponds, modifying the camping reservation system, using prescribed fire to preserve ecological functioning, and enhancing native plant communities.

As we go to press, the Independent Journal reports that the National Park Service had moved quickly to remove the fence. However, the removal of most of the fence has been delayed due to a suit brought by the California Cattlemen's Association. The Association is representing ranchers who fear the elk will compete with their cattle for food and water.

### NEW MARICULTURE PROPOSAL FOR TOMALES BAY



**It is unclear what design is being proposed for this project. This is an example of a rack and bag system**

In November, the San Andreas Shellfish Company (SASC) resubmitted a proposal to the California Fish and Game Commission (CFG) for a mariculture lease on tidal waters, wetlands, and intertidal areas at the mouth of Tomales Bay within Special Wildlife and Seagrass Protection Zones. SASC proposes to install an aquaculture operation on 37 acres

of some of the most biologically sensitive and ecologically important areas of the bay, adjacent to Brazil Beach. The project would use 46 rafts, floating culture and operations platforms covering 13,500 cubic feet of the bay bottom to grow non-native oysters and algae. Approximately 16,500 oyster and clam bags would cover a total of 99,000 square feet.

The shellfish and algae cultivation would cover, shade, and occupy habitats, displacing and otherwise harming native wildlife, including shorebirds, marine mammals, eelgrass, and algae that other native species rely on. Most of the covered intertidal habitat is essential foraging habitat for migratory shorebirds along this part of the Pacific Flyway. Audubon Canyon Ranch biologists have documented a high abundance of Black-bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plovers, Willets, Marbled Godwits, and Sanderlings in the study area. Dunlins and Western Sandpipers have experienced significant declines. The mariculture operation would cover mudflat and shallow-water habitat by removing foraging habitat from these already-declining shorebird populations.

The Tomales Bay shorebird population decreased by 66 percent from 1989 to 2018. In addition to direct habitat loss from covered mudflats, there would be much disturbance caused by operations and maintenance—from vessels, machines, and workers maintaining the racks and harvesting the oysters. These activities would further limit shorebird foraging on adjacent mudflats with the noise and water quality degradation from boat engines.

Adjacent eelgrass would also be adversely affected. The margins between the oyster beds and eelgrass beds may be too narrow and shallow for the oyster boats to avoid damaging the beds. Eelgrass beds normally expand and contract. At minimum, natural expansion of these beds would be prevented by the mariculture operation. In addition, the movement of anchor and mooring lines can cut into eelgrass, further limiting its natural condition.

Harbor seals use the waters, the tidal and intertidal habitats of the proposed project area, to feed and breed. The National Park Service Pinniped Monitoring Program has documented 400-500 harbor seals, including 100 pups, that depend on Tomales Bay. The noise, visual disturbance, and air and water quality degradation would also impact these and other marine mammals. Also, the structures would have fencing and roofing intended to exclude birds and mammals. The potential impacts of



Kate Powers

**Construction crew builds new SMART path through endangered species habitat.**

these features have not yet been studied.

SASC's project description also includes commercial cultivation of unspecified red algae for production of agar, a substance used in food products, cosmetics, laboratories, and other things, and is a growing industry. The referenced algae of unstated species could include an invasive species accidentally introduced earlier through mariculture. Without specifics it is difficult to quantify potential impacts. Non-native resilient, hardy algae can outcompete and displace native algae and the native species that depend on it, putting the estuary ecosystem at risk.

Finally, the endangered Coho salmon and threatened steelhead use the estuary waters. These fish species also would have reduced habitat and be subject to the impacts of human presence and degraded water quality.

It is relevant to note that in the past 12 years our marine life has suffered the devastating effects of two marine heat waves, the deaths of over 40 percent of our gray whale population, massive sea star die-offs, and the loss of 90 percent of our kelp forests. This operation could compromise the integrity of the bay's ecosystem and impair its resilience in this time of radical changes in our ocean's climate.

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

To express your views on the project to the Fish and Game Commission email at [fgc@fgc.ca.gov](mailto:fgc@fgc.ca.gov); or by mail to P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090). The project will require CEQA review, a permit from the California Coastal Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers and likely the Water Quality Control Board, in addition to Fish and Game Commission. So, there should be plenty of opportunities to have input.

## **GALLINAS CREEK BRIDGE AND PATH IMPACTS**

Several weeks ago, the IJ carried a front-page article celebrating the opening of a new segment of the SMART trail extending from Smith Ranch Road south to McInnis Parkway, with a bridge over the south fork of Gallinas Creek. Although praised as a benefit to bikers and others, the path and bridge are built through endangered Ridgway's Rail habitat. In fact, a Ridgway's Rail was observed on the railroad tracks several years ago.

Originally located uphill where the impacts would be less, the trail was relocated by SMART downhill closer to the tidal channel that supports Ridgway's Rail. SMART changed its plans and moved the trail with no public notice. Or at least they did not notify any environmental organizations, even though MAS had commented on the trail earlier and had been involved with SMART in other ways through the years. The regulatory agencies also failed the rails. They appear to have issued permits automatically, apparently thinking it was a small project and would have minimal or no impacts.

So, now the trail is right next to and in the marsh in some areas, and the bridge spans the creek destroying marsh on both ends. Bikers will be whizzing by and walkers, too, will be using the trail at a slower pace, not realizing or noticing that they are invading endangered species habitat.

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The winter rains have been ample so far, and plants are growing even in the cool temperatures of winter.

Some new native plants are in the ground and we may move a few more, but weed control is our main goal, especially near the native plants. Mustard is growing rapidly; cutting it now will be easy but important. Older bristly ox-tongue isn't flowering and removing it before warm spring days will give us a leg up. Italian thistle seedlings are abundant but too small to deal with except those nearest native plants.

Students can earn community service hours. Come out to see the greening of our native species. It is an opportunity to learn more about a native habitat of your county and be a part of making it better. Make a difference.

### Volunteer Workdays

#### Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: January 4, February 1  
Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive between the Ring Mountain Phyllis Ellman trailhead and the Montessori School.

#### Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: January 11, February 8

Meet at the end of Industrial Way near Trader Joe's in Greenbrae.

For up-to-date information, contact Martha Jarocki, 415/461-3592 or [marthajarocki@gmail.com](mailto:marthajarocki@gmail.com).

#### Bahia, Novato:

If you'd like to help, please contact Jude at [judestalker@gmail.com](mailto:judestalker@gmail.com).

#### Thank You, Stewardship Volunteers

Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Alison Pence, Rosa, Lowell Sykes, Fynn Rauck, Linda Nicolette, Debbie Ablin, Jude Stalker

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Susan Berlin, Richard Clark, Agneta K. Dupen, Judith Fraser, Renee M. Goff, P. Jeanmonod, Patricia Peeples, Ila Rosengarten, Ernest Torigoe

## THANK YOU, DONORS

Paul Atkinson, Deborah Brown, Bob & Sandy Chilvers, Roland Cline, The Colin Family Fund, Jane Evans, Diane Fowler, Beverly Galloway, John & Barbara Ganem, Doreen Gluckin, Mick Griffin, Belle & Ron Gueldon, Susan Hamstra, Osborn Howes, Christina Jaqua, Angela Kerby, Barbara Nathan, Jody Newman, Larry Nilsen, Donald Reinberg, Sallie Anne Rowe, Anne Ruben, Elizabeth Schriock, Anne-Christine Strugnell, Jim & Georgia Struhsaker, Kelly Swanson, John Yee

## Habitat Stewardship



Robert Hinz

### Trees blown down by December storm

## CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS

Over the weekend of December 14 and 15 there was a convergence of a king tide (7.07 feet) and a significant storm. It is typical for tidal marsh vegetation to be completely covered during king tides which are the highest tides of the year. King tides occur when the sun, moon and earth are aligned resulting in the moon's gravitational pull to be about stronger than the sun's. At Tiscornia also the marsh vegetation was covered.

These times of extreme high tides are the most dangerous time for Rails, when they must seek cover in adjacent uplands to avoid being caught by raptors.

The storm did major damage throughout Marin with massive power outages and downed trees. One of the fatalities was a large eucalyptus tree along with two smaller non-native trees, on our Triangle Marsh property, as shown in the photo above. The tree blew across Paradise Drive but the Town of Corte Madera, fortunately, had it removed and deposited back onto our property. We are working to have the debris disposed of.

## BAHIA

We're planning ahead for the next phase of planting native species at Bahia. We'll be planting creeping wild rye (*Leymus triticoides*) in the seasonal wetlands as well as coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) on the adjacent levees.

The upland species will be planted in areas along the levees in spaces where native species have either not survived or have not been planted yet. We're planning to have Hanford ARC, the company that did our planting last summer, plant in January.

## BLACK POINT

Our dedicated volunteer, Lowell Sykes, has worked diligently to remove the highly invasive French broom from our largest seasonal wetland parcel at Black Point. This is one of a few parcels that MAS owns that still has a fairly large patch of broom. We've managed to remove broom from our properties. Once in a while a small patch pops up here and there, which we work to get removed.

## CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE SITE

This month we hired a restoration crew from Habitat Potential, a small restoration company, to remove harding grass from the upland on our Corte Madera Marsh property adjacent to the ecological reserve. The crew of six successfully dug out many huge harding grass plants.

We also reviewed the success of the treatment of harding grass by covering it with landscape cloth. There were mixed results. The harding grass seems to have been controlled, as there are now fewer plants, but fennel seems to be thriving. In the coming months, we'll be looking at the most effective methods of controlling, or preferably eliminating, harding grass.

## TISCORNIA

Caltrans has finished installing the new tower. The only good news is that the metal plate that covered the base of the structure, which we had been told would be permanent, will be removed. We still have no resolution to our issue with Caltrans about our project.

## TRIANGLE MARSH

Triangle Marsh is one of those sites where a patch of French Broom has popped up along Paradise Drive. We're organizing a work day to get a number of volunteers together to remove the broom quickly and efficiently.

# Marin Birdlog: November 2024

By Noah Arthur



Chipping Sparrow

Mdf, CC BY-SA 4.0

November is an awkward month for rarity-finding in Marin – not quite fall anymore but not quite winter yet. As usual, this November produced a random grab bag of rarities from both seasons, but seemed above average especially for rare passerines. The first new thing was an **American Golden-plover** at Abbotts Lagoon on the 3rd (TF). A **Chipping Sparrow** was at Pine Gulch on the 6th (Palomarin banding team). A **White-winged Dove** was foraging with blackbirds and ignoring nearby collared-doves at Nunes Ranch on the 8th (NA). This blackbird flock also included one or two ‘Red-winged’ **Red-winged Blackbirds** (DS), a locally rare northern/interior subspecies group subtly distinct from our

usual ‘Bicolored’ Red-wings.

Two more nice interior vagrants showed up at Lupine Gulch (near Pt. Reyes Lighthouse) on the 11th, a **Sage Thrasher** and a subtle female **Mountain Bluebird** (both EH). A ‘**Montana/merrilli**’ **Song Sparrow** returned on the 12th to the same bushes at Rodeo Lagoon where it wintered last season (WL) – so far the only northern Song Sparrow this winter, which is definitely not repeating last winter’s major incursion of them.

A classic late-fall/early-winter rarity in our area, an **Eastern Phoebe** turned up at Marta’s Marsh on the 15th (SS). Rare for the Outer Point, a **Snowy Egret** was at Horseshoe Pond and **5 American Crows** flew inland past Drakes Beach on the 17th (DG). A presumably returning male **Black-and-white Warbler** was found in Muir Beach on the 17th (JP), adding to the pile of annual wintering records of this species there in recent years.

The winter town-birding season kicked off with a bang on the 23rd, with a **Cassin’s Vireo**, **Slate-colored Junco**, and **Summer Tanager** in suburban Bolinas (LK, LC, EM, & LS), plus a **Clay-colored Sparrow** in JW’s back garden in Muir Beach (JW). Another returning **Black-and-white Warbler**, this one a female that was banded last year, resurfaced in the Muir Beach riparian on the 23rd (JW & JP). Muir Beach continued its good run on the 24th with a calling **Winter Wren** in the riparian (LC).

An epic Lighthouse sea watch on the 26th produced **200 Pink-footed Shearwaters**, **6 late Parasitic Jaegers**, **3 Cassin’s Auklets**, a **Marbled Murrelet**, and **11 Ancient Murrelets** (LK, LS, JG, & MF), with many of these birds still around on the 28th plus a **Short-tailed Shearwater** (EM & MAI). Also on the 26th, a **Hammond’s Flycatcher** was in the Inverness Park willows (LK, LS, JG, & MF).

On the 28th, a **Short-tailed Shearwater** joined the ongoing seabird party off the Lighthouse, and a **Lark Sparrow** was in Lupine Gulch (EM, EIM & MAI). A late **Yellow Warbler** that had been present all month at Drakes Beach was last seen on the 28th (EM, EIM, & MAI). More off-season passerines turned up on the 29th, a **Wilson’s Warbler** in Olema Marsh (EM) and a **Bullock’s Oriole** and **Western Tanager** at Chicken Ranch Beach (LS & MS). Out on the Point on the 29th, a new female **Mountain Bluebird** (drabber than the other) was between Nunes and Mendoza (DL & MSc).

The insectivorous passerine theme continued on the 30th with a **Cliff Swallow** at Las Gallinas (SL) and yet another **Black-and-white Warbler** at Earthquake Trail (EM, EIM, & MAI).



Hammond’s Flycatcher

Dominic, Sherry, CC BY-SA 4.0

**OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS:** TF: Teale Fristoe, NA: Noah Arthur, DS: Dan Singer, EH: Eric Heisey, WL: William Legge, SS: Sylvie Silverstein, DG: Dan Goldfield, JP: John Paul, LK: Logan Kahle, JW: Jim White, LC: Luca Cinus, EM: Ethan Monk, LS: Lucas Stephenson, JG: Joaquim Gonzalez, MF: Marty Freeland, MAI: Mark Alan Iantosca, ELM: Elizabeth Monson, DL: Derek Lecy, MS: Mark Stephenson, SL: Steve Laymon, MSC: Mark Schulist

While official tallies of Marin’s Christmas Bird Counts are still being tabulated, Josiah Clark offers a personal account from one of the Point Reyes count areas.

## Inclement Conditions Experienced on Point Reyes Count

By Josiah Clark

On Saturday 9 observers recorded 98 species (lower than average) in the rich and diverse habitats surrounding the town.

Noteworthy sightings included: **2 Red Phalarope**, **2 Eurasian Wigeon**, a **Blue-winged Teal**, **10 Swamp Sparrows**, **Black Rail**.

The combination of a winter king tide at high tide coinciding with a big rain event and apparent sea level rise made this the highest tide I have ever seen. Getting a high species count in this area requires really going after the marsh Birds. This year it was slow going slog, challenging but rewarding.

With roosts and foraging areas flooded, shorebirds were sparse or absent. Waterfowl on the other hand were abundant. Scattered among flooded plants and much further inland than usual, the large numbers were more difficult to count than usual. As I waited in as high as my rubber boots would take me, out deeper the harriers eventually shuffled the deck for me allowing me to find the **Eurasian wigeon** and **Blue-winged Teal** (finally!).

Dozens of **Wilson’s Snipe** and nearly **200 sparrows**, usually in the pickleweed were pushed up into the flooded willow, blackberry and hemlock. That’s when a **Black Rail** unexpectedly bounded up and then plopped down into the flooded field.

Aside from the countless fallen trees and multiple road closures, the other main events in our area had to do with the birds brought in by extreme Westerly winds. These push water, and weather beaten birds (like the **2 Red Phalaropes**) into the narrow headwaters of Tomales bay.

“The gull cyclone” was present all day but peaked in the late morning. It was comprised of 8 gull species and an estimated 10,000 birds, with **California** and **Short-billed** constituting 80% of the numbers. (Great working that over with you, Daniel from Davis!) And thanks to the groups who found the only **Ferruginous Hawk**, stakeout **Barn Owl** and lonely **Pied-billed Grebe**.

While most groups reported low numbers of land birds. I was lucky to stumble onto a few very active sparrow flocks, tallying a couple hundred and just over an hour.

Notable, misses included **Hutton’s Vireo**, **Oak Titmouse**, **Sharp-shinned hawk**, **Merlin**, **Blue-winged Sparrow**.

Thanks to all the organizers and other counters. Happy counting!



# The Rail

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With Jeff Miller

March 1 **Field Trip:** Valley Ford Wetlands  
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With Jim White and Bob Battagin

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