

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 8 7:00 PM****Dragonflies**

By Kathy Biggs and Sandra von Arb

**Cardinal Meadowhawk**

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

Learn about the colorful and interesting Dragonflies and their unique biology with enthusiast Kathy Biggs and field biologist Sandra von Arb. These co-authors of *Dragonflies (Anisoptera) of California* will talk about the 47 species that occur here, how to identify them and present what the Dragonflies need for survival, where to find them and their migratory habits. Seeing these colorful beauties on your screen will be a delight.

Kathy Biggs has been a nature lover all her life. When she built a wildlife pond in the backyard in 1996, dragonflies arrived and she found her true passion. Wanting to share her passion, she developed websites for her wildlife ponds, and those matured into her authoring California's first dragonfly guide, *Common Dragonflies of California*, as well as other publications.

Sandra von Arb has been a professional wildlife biologist for 30 years, focusing on sensitive and endangered species in northern California, southern Oregon, and northern Illinois. She is a co-founder of Biodiversity Education and Research Foundation, whose mission is to foster ecological stewardship through science and education.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12 7:00 PM****Phalaropes**

By Nathan Van Schmidt

**IN THIS ISSUE**

|                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| President's Message | <b>2</b> |
| Field Trips         | <b>3</b> |
| Conservation        | <b>4</b> |
| Habitat Stewardship | <b>6</b> |
| Birdlog             | <b>7</b> |



# The Rail

**MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY**

## Vaux's Swifts Migratory Roost Site in Marin

**S**wifts don't seem quite real. The frenetic angularity of their flight is like no other and grabs the eye. They are so optimized for aerial life as to be an extreme life form; an evolutionary theme pushed to the limit.

Yet one cannot argue with their success. Swifts occur on every continent except Antarctica. The taxonomy has been shifting but currently there are 109 described species organized into four tribes.

Each of our three California species belongs to a different tribe.

White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) is in Apodini. They roost and nest in cracks in cliffs though locally have adapted to drainage 'weep holes' in the hollow concrete sections used to build freeway bridges. In season, walk along Heatherton Street along elevated Hwy 101 in downtown San Rafael to see them entering these holes under the elevated Hwy 101.

Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*) is in Cypseloidini and, like most of this clade, nests behind waterfalls! With diligence one can spot Black Swifts at Yosemite. You need to look up, especially near waterfalls.

Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura Vauxi*) is in Chaeturini or Needletails; an Old World family that includes the largest swifts in the world. Chaetura is the only New World genus of Needletail and are quite small. Vaux's Swift is just 4.25" in length and often overlooked as these Swifts frequently feed at high elevation and can be mere specs for those who don't think to point their binocular into overhead clouds. They also come in low to wetlands with emergent insects, such as the Las Gallinas ponds. Vaux's Swifts, like all Chaetura, evolved to nest in hollow trees and are birds of old growth, or at least mature forests. Their stronghold is the Pacific Northwest from northern British Columbia south to the California Redwood country. Increasingly though Vaux's are making

**Vaux's Swift feeding**

the same conversion to nesting in residential chimneys as their congener, Chimney Swift, did more than 200 years ago. Our region is at the southern tip of their nesting range and chimney nests have been recorded in Sebastopol, St. Helena and Martinez.

Today the entire species seems to be imprinted on old chimneys during fall migration; Pre-WW II chimneys which lack the ceramic or metal lining of modern chimneys. Obviously this is a precarious situation as these antique structures are all in decline.

Prior to the early 2000s Vaux's Swift migratory roost sites, nearly all old chimneys, were only locally known and not recorded in the professional literature. One of these was at the US-Canada border, the Sumas Old Customs House, the second was Monroe Wagner Elementary School in Washington State which offered an annual spectacle to locals and was saved from destruction by a concerted community effort 25 years ago. Biologist Larry Schwitters, who lived in the area, had visited both sites, and knew there had to be others. Finding them became a life's work. Schwitters reached out to local Audubon

*continued on page 6*

## 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<br><a href="mailto:dglswtrmn@gmail.com">dglswtrmn@gmail.com</a>  |
| Secretary   | Lelia Lanctot 924-6138   |
| Treasurer   | Martha Jarocki 461-3592  |
| Conservation                                      | Barbara Salzman 924-6057<br>MJ Schramm<br><a href="mailto:maryjane.Schramm@gmail.com">maryjane.Schramm@gmail.com</a>   |
| Field Trips                                       | Doug Waterman<br><a href="mailto:dglswtrmn@gmail.com">dglswtrmn@gmail.com</a><br>Alison Pence 254-4551   |
| Membership Chair                                  | Bob Hinz 383-8688  |
| Contact Bob for membership problems or questions. |  |
| Outreach, Media                                   | Open   |
| Outreach, Website                                 | Cary Sparks<br><a href="mailto:cary@holotropic.com">cary@holotropic.com</a>  |
| Speaker Series                                    | Mike Anderson 990-9784   |
| Project Management                                | Jude Stalker 680-6291  |
| Nominating  | Michael Anderson<br><a href="mailto:mdander65@gmail.com">mdander65@gmail.com</a><br>Alison Pence<br><a href="mailto:alipence9@gmail.com">alipence9@gmail.com</a> |
| Newsletter Editors, <i>The Rail</i>               | Doug Waterman<br><a href="mailto:newsletter@marinaudubon.org">newsletter@marinaudubon.org</a>  |
| Property Real Estate                              | James Raives 497-4492  |
| Volunteer Coordinator                             | Ellena Ochoa<br><a href="mailto:volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org">volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org</a>   |
| BAAC Reps   | Barbara Salzman 924-605<br>Doug Waterman<br><a href="mailto:newsletter@marinaudubon.org">newsletter@marinaudubon.org</a>   |
| 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.

*The Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper; edited by Doug Waterman, [newsletter@marinaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@marinaudubon.org), assisted by other members of MAS, and designed by Studio NaCl ([www.studionacl.com](http://www.studionacl.com)).

©2026 Marin Audubon Society

**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

I hope everyone is having a wonderful holiday season and that the new year brings happiness and health. Reflecting on our past year and the year to come, I would have to say in the overall that last year was full of challenges and opportunities, and looking ahead many of those opportunities will be coming to fruition. In the new year, we're starting a new adventure to further Living Shorelines with a Coastal Conservancy grants, purchasing new properties, and our field trips and programs are doing well. There are still challenges such as our need for funding to complete Tiscornia Tidal Marsh Restoration and Sea Level Rise Adaptation project. However, attacks on the Endangered Species Act and other aspects of our environment is a cloud over our efforts.

One of the delights of winter is the array of spectacular waterbirds that join us in the extreme high tides. To me, the King Tides are akin to snowfalls in other climates—a temporary transformation of our world that comes with inconveniences for some, but is nevertheless an awesome experience. The opposite is also true. King Tides are accompanied by extreme low tides that are also a transformation. Low tides that reveal portions of channel bottoms and extensive mudflat that are not usually exposed.

The not-so-old belief that documents and plans are released for review during the holidays so that the public won't be likely to give them much attention proved true this year. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published several notices of proposed changes that would weaken

the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and our attorney has sent a notice about a Federal Aviation Agency- (FAA) proposed plan to contract with individual air tour businesses instead of doing a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. Both are, due in the last two weeks of December. These vital issues have come during the holidays, when we are reviewing and evaluating proposals for RALS (Regionally Advancing Living Shorelines), involved in purchasing a parcel, and handling a number of threats to wildlife on and off our properties. Lots going on!

By the time this newsletter reaches you, three Christmas Bird Counts in Marin will have taken place. We're planning to report on all three counts in February's *The Rail*.

MAS still needs help with treasury tasks. If you like what we do, like working with figures, and have a bit of time to volunteer doing something you like to support wildlife and habitat work, please contact Mike Anderson—see box below.

A huge "thank you" to all who have donated to our winter appeal. We're still not certain how much of an impact the erroneous zip code has had or will have on our fund-raising this year. If you haven't received our appeal letter summarizing our accomplishments last year and our needs for 2026, please see the directions on page 1 on how to access it. We need and appreciate your support in continuing our programs and activities!

I hope you're all enjoying our overwintering waterfowl and shorebirds!

## Year-End Appeal Letter

The Grinch is up to his old tricks again! Envelopes for our crucial end-of-year appeal letters were printed with the wrong zip code, and we didn't catch the error until most were mailed. The U.S. Postal Service has advised that they would reach the correct destination but we are concerned some may not.

Donations to this end-of-year solicitation are the foundation of our budget for the coming year. We need your support!

If you didn't receive your MAS appeal letter, or if you just want to access the letter [HERE](https://bit.ly/453T1xm) (<https://bit.ly/453T1xm>), you can read about the many vital activities your donation will support.

Of course, you don't need the letter or the enclosed envelope to donate. You can contribute through [PayPal](https://PayPal) (<https://PayPal>://

[marinaudubon.org/donate](http://marinaudubon.org/donate)) or send a check to:

Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

Thank you for your generous support of Marin's birds and habitats.

## MAS Needs You

MAS is looking for a volunteer Treasurer or someone to help with Treasury tasks.

Accounting experience and/or familiarity with Excel spread sheets is desirable but not required.

If you like what MAS does and are interested in figures, contact Mike Anderson at [mdander65@gmail.com](mailto:mdander65@gmail.com) or 415/990-9784 for more information.

## MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

MAS is providing a full schedule of free field trips for the 2026 season.

**Trips with participant limits require registration on MAS website's Field trips page.** 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.**

**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 1, 2026

Thursday, February 5, 2006

8:30 AM to noon

With Mark Clark

*No registration required. 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 and raptors. 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:** From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd toward McInnis Park. Turn left 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.

### SKAGG'S ISLAND ROAD

Friday, January 16, 2026

10 AM to 2 PM

With Daniel Edelstein

*Registration required. Registration opens on January 6 at 8 AM on the MAS website's Field Trips page. Limit of 15 participants for this trip.*

Skagg's Island Road 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**.

**DIRECTIONS:** Closed to the public, Skagg's Island Road is accessed by meeting our group in the parking area adjacent to Hwy. 37 (approximately 3 miles east of Reclamation Road and 2 miles east of the Highway 121/Sears Point Raceway intersection. We'll meet on the north side of Hwy. 37 where it intersects with Skagg's Island Road. Bring lunch and drinks.

*Daniel is a freelance Birding Guide ([WarblerWatch.com](http://WarblerWatch.com)) and Consulting Avian Biologist. His website ([WarblerWatch.com](http://WarblerWatch.com)) features abundant birding information.*

### CORTE MADERA MARSH

Thursday, January 22, 2026

9 AM to noon

With Michelle Muir and Rich Cimino

*Registration required. Registration opens*

*January 12 at 8 AM on MAS website's Field Trips page. Limit of 15 participants.*

This trip is perfect for both beginning birders looking to learn how to identify waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as experienced birders interested in honing their skills. We will explore the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. Much of the area has undergone extensive restoration for rare and endangered saltmarsh species. On this field trip, we will walk the Reserve starting at the Marin Audubon Society site lookout. The walk is level and easy, about two miles.

Dress with warm layers, and bring binoculars, scopes, snacks and water. In case of rain, participants will receive an email by 7 AM the morning of the field trip informing them of cancellation. There are restrooms at nearby stores, though no public restrooms on the walk.

**DIRECTIONS:** Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve is located behind Trader Joe's in Corte Madera. Meet in the parking lot behind the store, accessed by the driveway on the south side of World Market.

### JEAN AND JOHN STARKWEATHER SHORELINE PARK

**San Rafael**

Sunday, February 1, 2026

12 to 2 PM

With Rich Cimino and Janet Bodle

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

Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park is a narrow strip of parkland in east San Rafael that stretches for 2 miles along the Bayshore and freshwater ponds. We will walk a section of the Bay Trail that travels the edge of the park, including two ponds, and will be provided with plentiful birdwatching of wintering diving ducks, dabbling ducks, wetland waders, peeps, shorebirds and possible rail.

Bring your scope. Rain at any level cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** Meet in the Target parking lot, 125 Shoreline Parkway, at the southeast corner close to the pond vista point.

### WINTER BIRDS OF THE DELTA BOAT TRIP

**Antioch Marina**

Sunday, February 8, 2026

8:40 AM to 4 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

This popular cruise is a winter highlight for birders and provides a specialized look at the richness and history of the California Delta. After meeting at 8:40 AM for sign

in and instructions, we'll depart from the Antioch Marina at 9 AM.

As we head east, we enter sloughs and waterways with views out over the flooded agricultural fields that provide a refuge for flocks of geese, ducks, swans and shorebirds that nest in the north but winter here. Well known birder and naturalist David Wimpfheimer will provide commentary and captain Ronn Patterson will fill in bits about the history of the delta.

Coffee, tea, hot chocolate is provided, bring lunch and snacks. As bad weather can cancel as with any winter trip, there is an inclement weather date set for February 22. Light rain will not cancel.

The trip costs \$130. Registration for this trip opens January 6 at 8 AM on Marin Audubon's website, on the Field Trips page. Limit of 25 participants for this trip. A waitlist will open if the trip sells out. Add your name to the list by clicking Contact Organizer prompt.

If you cancel your registration before February 1 and we can fill your spot with someone else on the waitlist, you will be reimbursed, unless you would like to convert your registration fee into a tax-deductible donation to M.

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

### HAMILTON WETLANDS

**Novato**

Friday, February 20, 2026

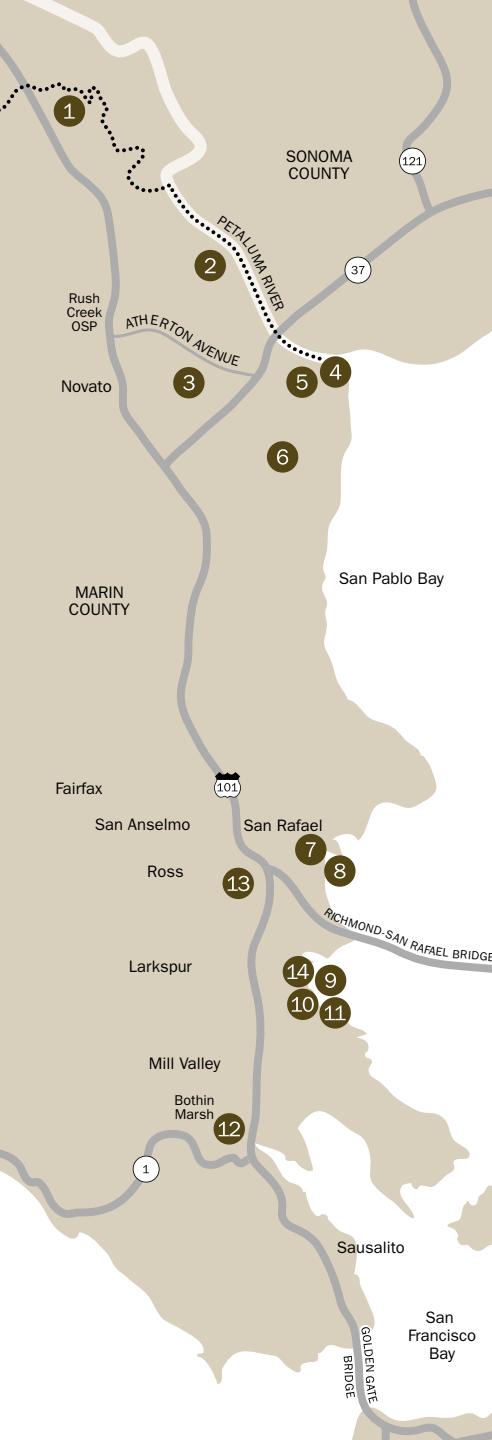
8:30 AM to noon

With David Sexton and Matt Keller

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

Birders of all experience levels are welcome to join us for an exciting morning at Hamilton Wetlands with Point Blue Conservation Science! Spotting scopes and binoculars will be available. We recommend bringing your own pair of binoculars, water, sun protection, layers of clothing, and comfortable walking shoes. We will be on a wide, flat compacted dirt/gravel levee. A fully accessible bathroom will be available at the start and end of the event

**DIRECTIONS:** Meet at Point Blue's Novato Baylands native plant nursery at 737 Aberdeen Road, Novato. From Hwy 101, take exit 458 to merge onto Nave Dr toward Hamilton Field. Turn right onto Hamilton Pkwy. Turn left through an open gate onto Aberdeen Rd, then keep to the right at the fork to proceed to the nursery.



## 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.

### ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES WEAKENING ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Trump administration is proposing major changes to the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), first signed into law in 1973. Most of the newly proposed changes would restore wording from the 2019 version, which was changed in 2023 during the Biden administration to improve protections. The current proposed changes would weaken the Act by revising the regulations governing procedures and criteria that are used for listing species as threatened and endangered, classifying and delisting species as endangered and threatened, identifying critical habitat, reducing protections for threatened species, and undermining the priority of protecting species on their way to extinction.

Proposed changes that are of particular concern:

1. A two-step process for evaluating and defining endangered species habitat. Areas that are known to be currently occupied and evaluated as being needed for the survival of the species would have to be identified as critical habitat before evaluating and determining that unoccupied areas are necessary for future expansion and species recovery. This approach is proposed, it is stated, “to avoid identifying expanded areas of unoccupied habitat.” How can a species’ population be expected to increase if there is not suitable unoccupied habitat for it to expand into?
2. Including the consideration of economic impacts as part of the process for determining that a species is threatened or endangered. Economic impact have no place in deciding whether or not a species is endangered or threatened. This determination must be based on the presence of the species and scientific assessment of the status of the species and identification of threats to its survival.
3. Using the new “unleashing of American Energy” doctrine to justify a directive to review all agency actions to identify those that potentially impose an undue burden on development or use of domestic energy resources. It would require these agencies, where appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to suspend, revise, or rescind any agency actions identified as unduly burdensome and/or that conflicts with this national objective. The species populations would be further undermined by expanding energy.
4. A revision requiring that “recovery” or “delisting” is appropriate when a species no longer meets the criteria of endangered or threatened,” is justified by the claim that “this approach better achieves the fundamental objective of clarifying the standards and requirements that apply to delisting decisions.” Currently, specific criteria must be met for a species to be evaluated as recovered. For example, the population of a given species must reach a certain number. The new language would likely lead to premature, inaccurate, and/or inconsistent decisions on removing species from the Endangered list.
5. Removal of the “blanket rule,” the practice of assigning protections to species designated as Threatened, with the justification that it would reduce the burden on staff, among other reasons. It is recommended that species-specific protections be developed. Such a requirement means that protection designations won’t happen, or will rarely happen because it would take a long time to address species individually, therefore, this proposal means a that newly designated Threatened Species would have no protections at all.

America’s natural resources would be seriously compromised by sanctioning policies that prioritize economic incentives and workloads, over species conservation—including our own species. Instead of weakening the Endangered Species Act the USFWS should serve as one of the vital checks and balances needed to prevent further damage. We urged that the USFWS reject the proposed changes and fulfills its responsibility to protect our national fish, wildlife and plants.

MAS sent the above message to the USFWS in response to the public notice. We are sorry there was insufficient time to urge our members to respond to the notice as well.

#### 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    |

## AIR TOUR UPDATE

The Federal Aviation Commission and US Fish and Wildlife Service have released a voluntary agreement (V.A.) to settle our suit against them for failure to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The federal agencies propose that the Agreement would be signed by each of the tour companies. However, the proposal would simply perpetuate and codify existing substandard conditions. They've decided, with no analysis of the potential impacts on wildlife or the public's recreational activities, to implement existing conditions.

Basically, the proposed approach not only violates NEPA, it also fails to comply with the Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In addition to no environmental assessment, the VA contains no effective enforcement; there are no effective penalties for violations. Operators are essentially self-policing.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join MAS in opposing this inadequate response to our concerns about the impacts of air tour flights. Email your comments to Sandy Fox, Environmental Protection Specialist at the FAA, [sandra.y.fox@faa.gov](mailto:sandra.y.fox@faa.gov). Or submit them to: NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment System, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?documentID=147892>.

## CATHOLIC CHARITIES WANTS TO CUT DOWN 21 NATIVE TREES

Catholic Charities CYO of the Archdiocese of San Francisco has applied to Marin County Community Development Department for a Tree Removal Permit to cut down 21 mature native trees on the grounds of its property at 530 Blackstone Drive, San Rafael. The purpose of the removal is to construct a parking lot for 17 cars. For each car, 1.25 heritage trees would be destroyed. We've rarely seen such a blatant disregard for forest vegetation, involving two species iconic to the California landscape, providing high aesthetic value for people and ecologically important habitat for many species of wildlife.

The tree species are Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), both valuable species for wildlife and woodland ecosystems. The trees vary in size, with diameters ranging from 8 to

more than 23.5 inches. All trees proposed for removal are large enough to be protected under Marin County Code Section 22.120.030.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists *Sequoia sempervirens* as endangered (EN). This designation indicates that the species is facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild. In the state of California, *Sequoia sempervirens* has a state rarity code of S3 (vulnerable). This makes these pockets of surviving sequoias on private land that much more vital to the species' conservation. Redwoods support the threatened Northern Spotted Owl and many other species. Mature native oaks support 800 species of insects and wildlife.

In addition to habitat for wildlife, these native species are of value to the community with broad benefits for people. The many important services they provide include cleaning the air and releasing vital oxygen through photosynthesis; sequestering carbon; stabilizing creeks, shorelines and slopes; cooling the atmosphere; and beautifying our landscapes.

We don't see too many applications for removing so many trees these days, and certainly not for parking lots. It is hard to believe that the applicant and/or arborist did not recognize the ecological and aesthetic value of mature native oaks and redwoods, and could not come up with other alternatives in accommodating 17 parked cars. All around the county there are examples of people living amongst redwoods and oak trees—buildings can be found right next to them and trees are in the middle of paved streets. With some creative thinking, couldn't a parking lot be designed with the trees in mind? And if not, couldn't another location be found?

These trees have been living, growing and providing ecosystem services for more than 100 years. They will continue to serve us—unlike a parking lot for 17 vehicles—for another 100 years if they are not destroyed. This proposal is drastically out of step in keeping with the spirit and character of Marin County. What better statement could there be on the deplorable impacts of developers on nature than in that iconic song by Joni Mitchell: "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join MAS in opposing the removal of these trees. Send your objections to the Project Planner via email: [Immanuel.Bereket@MarinCounty.gov](mailto:Immanuel.Bereket@MarinCounty.gov).

## GREATER BAHIA EXPANSION PROJECT

This month we had the wonderful news that the State Coastal Conservancy is looking favorably on our application for funding to acquire the Leveroni properties. Nothing is certain until the project is approved by the Coastal Conservancy Board, but we are on the way. We expect to be scheduled for the Conservancy Board's February meeting.

Another contingency we've been working on clearing is ensuring there are no hazardous materials on the sites. We're arranging for a Phase 1 hazardous materials assessment which is carried out by professionals and consists of a site visit and record search to evaluate the potential for hazardous materials to be present on the properties. If conditions are found where it appears likely there may be hazardous materials, then further investigation will be done. There is nothing on either property that indicates hazardous materials may be present.

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Brenda Gill, Laurie Harris, Charle Martin, Eric Meyer, Joanne Murach, Michael Serecsko, Beverly Weinkauf

### THANK YOU, DONORS

Paul Atkinson, Ann Buell, Daniel Bikle, Renate Bixby, Dorothy Breiner, Bob & Sandra Chilvers, Jill & Collin Cochrane, Ruth Collins, Jim Crumpler, Donita Inez Decker, Margaret Fawcett, Louis & Tamara Fehrenbacher, Michael Freeman, Barbara & John Ganem, Lawrence Haines, Margaret Nichols Harrington, Angela Janet Kerby, Jo Kreider, William & Helen Lindqvist, Richard Miller, Audrey Myers, S & R Nash, Larry & Maxine Nilson, Phillip Nonneman, Carla Parkinson, David Quady, Lawrence Smith, Christine Mariscal Soloman, Georgia Struhsaker, Jeanne Tymstra, David Weichers, Hilary Winslow, Alex Wittenberg, Amy Worth.  
An Anonymous Gift of \$25,000.

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

After successful planting sessions in December, there are more plants to put in the ground at the Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve expansion (CMMERE) site. Planting at Triangle Marsh is probably finished for this season. We'll be mulching the new plants at both locations. The mulching will control some of the weeds near the new plantings, but we'll remove others by cutting them off.

If you appreciate our birds or native plants, volunteer on a workday to give them a boost. The native plants are so much better for the insects that are food for the birds. Birds are declining in number and so are insects. It is also an opportunity to learn more about a native habitat of your county and be a part of improving it.

Rain cancels our workdays.

### Volunteer Workdays

#### Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: January 3, February 7

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 10, February 14

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

Annette Anzalone, Bob Hinz, Martha Jarocki, Simon Kolek, Alison Pence, Lowell Sykes, Jaden Selvig, students from San Marin and Novato High Schools, David Gladko, Violetta Jones, Genevieve Walshe and Jude Stalker

## 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 contactlist at: [marinaudubon.org/2022/05/01/alert-report-barred-owl-spotting](http://marinaudubon.org/2022/05/01/alert-report-barred-owl-spotting).

## Habitat Stewardship

### CORTE MADERA COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT

We've completed our revisions to the right of entry document prepared by the Town Council, adding in provisions to ensure our Triangle Marsh property is not damaged in the process of constructing the new trail and street. As we last heard, the plan is to raise Paradise Drive and move it northward toward our property. It will be constructed on the right-of-way (an area of public land adjacent to most streets), so there will be no more parking adjacent to our property. We have been advised that the plan has been changed so that part of the road structure will no longer be located on our property. We have no other information about the change in the roadway.

To construct Paradise Drive in its new alignment, contractors will have to work on our property, so there is a great risk that our vegetative habitat will be damaged by the heavy equipment. As we go to press, we have not heard back from the Town about our proposed changes, which include erecting protective fencing and repairing any damage.

Triangle Marsh was purchased with public funds through the State Coastal Conservancy and several other sources. We are responsible for making sure the property is used for the purpose for which the funds were provided; i.e., as a habitat for wildlife.

### Vaux's Swifts

*continued from page 1*

chapters and birding groups throughout the west coast. His efforts resulted in a known network of 20 significant sites from British Columbia to San Diego, each of which is now monitored by volunteers. A gigantic winter roost was recently discovered in Morelos, Mexico.

In September 2010 the long-decommissioned chimneys of McNear Brick & Block in San Rafael were discovered to be a major migratory roost for Vaux's Swifts. This was a big surprise. The facility is private property, but with the kind permission of management, regular counts (estimates) of numbers began right away. In the 15 years since, this site has become the most important Vaux's Swift migratory roost site in the United States. From the first counts, there were thousands. Estimates of nightly roosting birds at peak migration have increased dramatically in the past several seasons, doubling and more. We have no idea why.

### PLANTING HOPE AT CMMERE

We had two successful planting days at our Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve Expansion (CMMERE) restoration site in December. Roughly 200 plants were put in the ground over two days by twenty-seven volunteers. We added more Purple Needle Grass, Creeping Wild Rye, and Euthamia to the site. All are important pollinator plants in spring and seed for warblers in the fall. We also added one new species, California Aster.

The plants were healthy, but small and will need compete with fast growing non-native species. As we teased apart the new roots, tamped soil and watered in the new plants—it was clear to many that we were planting hope.

On Saturday, January 10, we will plant again at the Corte Madera Marsh site. The time will be 10 AM until 1 PM. Please join us! Find more information on the MAS website or contact [marthajarocki@gmail.com](mailto:marthajarocki@gmail.com).

Many thanks to our volunteers, we couldn't have done it without you: Carrie Ann Adams, Fred Andres, Annette Anzalone, Sarah Creighton & David Kirley; Mary DeByl, Brooke Freskos, China & Jim Granger, Bob & Kate Huber, Simon Kolek, Maya Lehman, Carl Ma, Minnie McBride, Eiden Metcalf, Suslan Meffert, Luis Eduardo de Oliveira; Stacey Pogorzelski, Jaden Selvig, Oahn Tran & Theo Ma-Tran, Vera Woo, Tyler Yang, Sienna Young, Elliot Zalda.

Indeed, recent seasons have overwhelmed our counting protocol and we are searching for solutions (and open to suggestions).

Averages taken from the Top Ten Counts during Fall migration:

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| 2014 | 17,008 |
| 2015 | 19,604 |
| 2016 | 17,394 |
| 2023 | 64,641 |
| 2024 | 52,552 |
| 2025 | 70,706 |

The 2025 fall migration was the largest yet.

What could be going on? One theory is that the birds have lost a major roost in the region, one that was unknown to us. That would account for the suddenness of the shift. Another possibility is they are staying longer before continuing south and therefore accumulating to higher numbers. Perhaps they arrived calorie stressed. Fires have scorched millions of acres of western forests in the past 5 years. California

*continued on page 7*

# Marin Birdlog: November 2025

By Noah Arthur

Sitting awkwardly between fall and winter, November produces a random but often exciting hodgepodge of rarities in Marin. This November got off to a good start with a pure **Yellow-shafted Flicker** at Abbotts Lagoon on the 1st (EL), very rare and in a bit of an odd habitat. Also on the 1st a male **Black-and-white Warbler** was along Earthquake Trail (DH). On the 2nd a **White-winged Dove** turned up at Nunes Ranch, a semi-regular location for this species in recent years, along with **3 American Crows**, rare on the Outer Point (LS & CH). Also on the 2nd, another **Black-and-white Warbler** was by Whitehouse Pool (LS, MF, & CH), and **2 Lewis's Woodpeckers** flew over Trojan Point (DA & FR), at least one of which was still there in following days. Abbotts Lagoon produced a **Tropical Kingbird** on the 3rd (LN).

Very rarely seen from shore, a **Leach's Storm-petrel** foraged close in off the Pt. Reyes Fish Docks on the 6th (JC & CMF). Abbotts Lagoon produced yet another incongruous rarity on the 6th, a young female **Magnolia Warbler** (BS). Still rare in Marin but maybe not for long, a lone juvenile **Scaly-breasted Munia** visited a San Rafael birdfeeder on the 7th (MS). Also on the 7th a hybrid **Common X Green-winged Teal** turned up at Pine Gulch in Bolinas, a **Magnolia Warbler** at New Willows, and a **rufina-group Song Sparrow** at the Fish Docks (EM).



Magnolia Warbler

©2016 Alan D. Wilcox naturepicsonline.com

this month, with the latest reported on the 19th at Abbotts Lagoon (many observers).

A **Harris's Sparrow** at Rodeo Lagoon on the 21st (WL) was a first for this well-birded location, and the banded female **Black-and-white Warbler** of Muir Beach was back for her third winter there on the 21st (JP). On the 22nd a **Tundra Swan** joined the Mute Swan flock on Abbotts Lagoon (EC).

A flock of **6 Scaly-breasted Munias** were found in Corte Madera Marsh on the 23rd (CP), including adults and juveniles. This flock continued to be seen at least through December 7th; time will tell if these are just transients or a colonizing party settling in to eventually breed in the area.

A pelagic in Marin waters on the 23rd turned up a **Tufted Puffin**, **Laysan Albatross**, and **Flesh-footed Shearwater** (many observers). Two nice off-season warblers were around Pt. Reyes on the 25th, a **Nashville** at the New Willows and a **Wilson's** at Inverness Tennis Court (LS & LC). Even rarer at this season was a **Yellow-breasted Chat** at Terra Linda-Sleepy Hollow Divide Preserve on the 27th (JG).

The long-returning Sausalito **Yellow-crowned Night-heron** was back on the 29th (BB), and **3 Hooded Mergansers** (rare for the Outer Point) were on the Nunes Ranch pond on the 30th (LN & MD). And the **Scaly-breasted Munia** invasion continued on the 30th with 2 juveniles at Las Gallinas (IM & LA).

**OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS:** **EL:** Elizabeth Lewis, **DH:** Dan Habig, **LS:** Lucas Stephenson, **CH:** Chris Henry, **DA:** David Assmann, **FR:** Felix Rigau, **LN:** Larry Nigro, **JC:** Jenna Curtis, **CMF:** Chad Marks-Fife, **MF:** Marty Freeland, **BS:** Bridget Spencer, **MS:** Mario Santi, **LL:** Liz Lewis, **BW:** Brendon Westerhold, **MK:** Markus Kazmierczak, **EM:** Ethan Monk, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **NC:** Natalie Clark, **DL:** Derek Lecy, **WL:** William Legge, **JP:** John Paul, **EC:** Everett Clark, **CP:** Carla Parkinson, **LC:** Luca Cinus, **JG:** Jay Geck, **BB:** Brian Browne, **IM:** Igal Milchtaich, **LA:** Lyla Arum



Red-necked phalarope

## Vaux's Swifts

continued from page 6

lost 4 million acres of forest in 2020 alone. At the same time the Sacramento Delta has been quite green and productive with emergent insects. Could the birds be staying longer to gain strength for the remainder of their trip to the tropics? We don't know. This increase is not necessarily a good sign.

This past season we have supplemented visual estimates with sonic detection devices which operate much like the Merlin app from Cornell. This gives some temporal idea of presence/absence of swifts though only very roughly of numbers. This has been helpful on days of inclement weather when the flock might enter earlier in the day, before observers arrive, and provides some temporal context.

Estimating numbers is an immediate technical challenge, but there are longer range issues we have to consider. The main chimneys at McNear Brickyard date from 1902 and 1904. They're of brick & mortar and quite mortal. Through binoculars one can see missing bricks and signs of decay. These structures are a critical wildlife resource yet enjoy no legal protection and really are at the mercy of time and the elements. Comparable chimneys in Richmond and Larkspur have been declared historic landmarks and preserved "By filling them with concrete!" Not good for migrating swifts!

Repair and reinforcement of at least one of the McNear chimneys is a possibility albeit an expensive one. Building a new structure that is acceptable to these birds might be more feasible and such a structure need not be 100 feet high. On the East Coast experiments are ongoing with far smaller Chimney Swift nesting structures and have met with some success. We need to start at least thinking about the future of this site and the impact it's loss would have on Vaux's Swifts.

