



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the Public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
 376 Greenwood Beach Road
 Tiburon, California 94920
 Information: 415/388-2821

FRIDAY, NOV 6 8 PM

Fascinating Adaptations: Surviving Extreme Conditions

With Doug Cheeseman

In a fast-paced photo presentation, Doug Cheeseman will describe how wildlife adapt in unexpected ways to survive the tough conditions of the pristine areas of the Falklands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Focusing on seven species of penguins, albatross, seabirds, fur seals, sea lions, whales, and invertebrates, including courtship and nesting behavior, Doug's program is an educational and entertaining adventure filled with great images and natural history.

Well known for his enthusiasm about these remote regions and a popular speaker for many Northern California Audubon chapters, you won't want to miss this program!

FRIDAY, DEC 4 8 PM

Create Some Magic: Build a Pond for Birds, Dragonflies and other Wildlife

With Kathy Biggs

Build a pond to create a habitat to attract wildlife to your property and learn how wildlife ponds and ponds for exotic Koi and/or tropical plants differ.

You'll learn how to use native plants and special pond-building techniques to encourage, not discourage, our native fauna – including birds, dragonflies, butterflies and mammals.

A birder since the 1970s, Biggs became obsessed with dragonflies when she built a pond for wildlife in 1996.

The author of: *Common Dragonflies of California* (recently updated and revised), *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest*, and *Dragonflies of North America, a Color and Learn Book/CD*, Biggs gives programs and workshops about dragonflies and about building ponds for wildlife throughout the West. Come hear how to create magic!

MAS Honored With Regional Award For Bahia Marsh Restoration

By Barbara Salzman

At each State of the Estuary Conference the Friends of the San Francisco Estuary presents awards for outstanding Comprehensive Conservation and Monitoring Program (CCMP) projects. The Bahia Marsh Restoration Project was one of three winners of 2009 awards. MAS completed the Bahia Restoration in October 2008 in partnership with CALFED, Wildlife Conservation Board, California Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service Private Stewardship Program, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the State Coastal Conservancy and several private foundations.

Bahia project, a wetland restoration and wildlife protection effort on MAS's bayside property in Novato, met CCMP objectives by expanding habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail, Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse as well as many species of migratory shorebirds and waterfowl.

Levees were breached and lowered and fill was removed to restore 377 acres of tidal marsh habitat. Broad expanses of transition zones were created adjacent to the restored tidal areas by grading the fill material that was removed, and 14 acres of seasonal wetland were restored and enhanced. Board member Jude Stalker accepted the award for Marin Audubon.

Other CCMP award winners this year were: the South Bay Salt Pond project, which is well on its way to restoring 15,100 acres of tidal marsh; and KQED's multi-media program, QUEST, which features science and environmental stories about Northern California on weekly TV programs and radio spots, a website, and postings on iTunes and You Tube.

The State of the Estuary Conference is presented every other year by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership (formerly Project).

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DECEMBER 26, 2008

Great rare birds are out there — help us find them, and along the way, identify and count all the more common ones too!!

Please join us for a day of fun and birding on the annual CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Teams will cover the whole southern part of the county, from Terra Linda to Bolinas Lagoon to the Golden Gate Bridge. We need lots of good birders in the field!! If you would like to stay at home that day and count birds that appear at your feeders, we can include your numbers in the count as well.

Continued on page 6

ANTI-POACHING BILL

Governor Schwarzenegger signed a new anti-poaching bill into law that creates tough new penalties. Thanks go Marin Assemblyman Jared Huffman who authored AB 708 and Audubon California. Late last year, California Audubon began pushing for legislation that would increase penalties for poachers after learning of an alarming increase in poaching.

Poaching violations rose from 6,583 in 2003 to 17,840 in 2007. Waterfowl have been hit particularly hard, with sensitive species of ducks and geese at greatest risk. The bill contains increased penalties, including increased monetary fines. Until now, California's poaching laws have been among the weakest in the country.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

We are getting our properties ready for the upcoming rains and need to remove invasive non-native plants such as ice plant, *Dittrichia* or stinkwort, and radish. If you are interested in these work days, or would like to be notified if additional dates are chosen later, please contact Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688.

TRIANGLE MARSH: NOVEMBER 7, DECEMBER 5
 BAHIA: NOVEMBER 7 & 14, DECEMBER 12



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the committee chair.

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Conservation Phil Peterson 898-8400
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Property Mgt. Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity Nancy Okada 987-8800
BAAC Reps Lowell Sykes 388-2821
Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members.

7:30 PM, first Tuesday of the month
Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920

MAS telephone: 721-4271

Marin Audubon Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. *The Clapper Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper. Edited by Nancy Okada, 987-8800, nxokada@yahoo.com; layout by Sue Morrison, and assisted by David Weinstock, staff photographer and other members of MAS. Deadline is the first of each month.

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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.

Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON:

Log onto www.audubon.org or contact National Audubon Society
700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003
212/979-3000

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 \$100 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 Clapper 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.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

During the past month, the MAS board updated our Policies and Procedures and reviewed and approved our income tax return. Even though we are a 501(c)(3) organization and do not pay federal taxes, we still must file. The tax forms for nonprofits have become increasingly complicated over the last several years.

We also are updating our website and expect the new site to be unveiled soon. Our thanks to Jo Kreider for her work on the policies and tax forms and Richard Bohnet for his work on the website.

The Christmas Bird Count is coming up. Planning has been underway since August. We welcome our new compiler, Dominik Mosur, and thank him and our Count Committee: Meryl Sundove, Dianne Sierra, Roger Harris, and me. The nationwide Christmas Counts have proven most useful. For example, National Audubon is using the data to analyze the impacts of climate change based on bird distributions. Visit our website to sign up for this year's count at www.marinaudubon.org.


Please consider volunteering for MAS. Volunteers are the backbone of our organization. Everything we accomplish is because of our volunteers, as we have no paid staff. Currently, we have two board openings for partial terms of less than one year. We also need volunteers to work on our speaker programs and organize our volunteer program. Please call Jo Kreider 415/381-1910 or me 415/924-6057 if you can help.

A huge thank you to an anonymous donor whose generous contribution helped us pay some of the Bahia restoration contractors who have been waiting more than a year for payment.

We recently heard that our CALFED contracts have been approved to resume, and to our great pleasure, checks followed in less than two weeks. A special thank you to Assemblyman Jared Huffman, and his aide, Jenny Calloway, who were most helpful in getting CALFED to pay attention to paying our invoices.

Thank you to all who ordered our birdseed. Buying seed through MAS helps us, and the birds, who will doubtless enjoy the birdseed.

We apologize to Bahia residents for the sulfide odor from the small pond on our property near the Petaluma River. Our volunteers moved quickly to address the problem by hand digging a hole in a levee to get more tidal action and increase circulation in the pond. Special thanks to Lowell Sykes, Ed Nute, Bob Hinz, Jude Stalker, and Richard Bohnet for their work, and to the California Air Quality Board, which was most helpful in addressing the problem.

Waterfowl migration is in full swing. This is the most exciting time in the bay for viewing birds. Do join us for a field trip and get out and bird on your own. 

CONSERVATION

By Barbara Salzman

Marin Audubon Conservation Committee reviews critical environmental issues related to wildlife habitats and comments to cities, agencies, and other jurisdictions. To attend, call Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057.

STILL TIME TO WEIGH IN ON OYSTER FARM AT DRAKE'S ESTERO

Unfortunately, the US Senate has passed the Interior budget bill with a rider authorizing the Secretary of Interior to issue Drake's Bay Oyster Company "a special use permit with the same terms and conditions as the existing authorization, extending the lease for a period of 10 years from November 30, 2012."

While this language appears to be an improvement in that it does not authorize a permanent extension, as the original language would have, it should still be defeated or withdrawn. This rider would allow the uses that are damaging the Estero's natural resources to continue for ten more years, and it would set a precedent for other requests to use natural parklands for the financial benefit of private individuals.

The House of Representatives also has passed a similar bill but with no rider, so the two bills must now be reconciled in conference committee. This will probably happen in October.

Please see YOUR ACTIONS COUNT on page 6.

TAM JUNCTION TRAIL

The Marin County Public Works Department is proposing a major renovation of the trails along

Coyote Creek and Hwy 1 at Tam Junction. The project would construct 12,365 sq. ft. of new asphalt pathway with 7,816 sq. ft. of compacted shoulders, 6,976 sq. ft. of gravel pathway and approximately 13,312 linear ft. (lf) of elevated boardwalk, plus 8,090 ft. of new bridge walkway. We are concerned that this project would destroy wetlands and result in ongoing increased disturbance, as it would encourage more bike and other users.

West of the Hwy 1 bridge there would be a combination of a cantilevered boardwalk and at-grade asphalt walkway with compacted shoulders. East of the Hwy 1 bridge there would be an elevated boardwalk and asphalt walkway. A 100 lf, 8 ft. wide pre-fabricated pedestrian/bike bridge overcrossing adjacent to the existing bridge and a pressure-treated wood retaining wall would be constructed.

The initial study states that the 11,051 sq. ft. of development would occur as a result of the proposed shoulders, elevated boardwalk and asphalt surface, yet no mitigation is proposed for wetland impacts. Unfortunately, the initial study takes the approach of many developers: claiming that there will be no significant impacts.

Continued on page 6

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. Information, weather check, and accessibility: Helen Lindqvist at 415/789-0703 or 415/306-2325 (cell).

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

8:30 AM to 12 NOON

Thursday, Nov 5

With Len Blumin

Join Len on this morning birding walk at the storage ponds. Some of our feathered fall visitors will have arrived to join the resident ones that stay all year round.

From Hwy 101 in San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to end of road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds' parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot.

ARROWHEAD MARSH AND SURROUNDINGS, OAKLAND

9 AM to 12 Noon

Sunday, Nov 15

With Rusty Scalf

Arrowhead Marsh, part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, is noted for Clapper Rails, Soras and Virginia Rails. In the annual survey of this marsh by Fish and Game several years ago, the rail count was 112 Clapper, 67 Sora and 17 Virginia! Visiting this area during a rising high tide should enable us to spot quite a few!

Join our leader Rusty Scalf to view this interesting marsh and adjacent shoreline. Wintering shorebirds, ducks and geese should be seen and songbirds, gulls and raptors will probably show up.

Meet at 9 AM at the Arrowhead Marsh parking lot. From Marin, cross the Richmond-San Rafael bridge and take I-80 south. Continue south on I-880 to Hegenberger Rd (goes to Oakland Airport) then go west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Dr. Turn right on Doolittle, then right on Swan Way. Turn left into the MLKRS Park and drive to the parking lot at end of road.

BIRDING WEST MARIN

9 AM to 3 PM

Sunday, Nov 22

With David Wimpfheimer

Come and join David to discover the varied habitats of West Marin, an area he has been exploring for almost 30 years. Our route will be flexible, but our birding will include wetlands at Tomales Bay, Drake's Estero or Abbott's Lagoon — where ducks, loons, grebes and shorebirds should be numerous. Over 200 species of birds are found in Point Reyes National Seashore and nearby habitats in the winter. We'll look through forests for thrushes, woodpeckers, warblers and wintering landbirds, as well as visiting ocean bluffs to look for seabirds and raptors. Total walking distance will be less than three miles and mostly a number of short hikes. Dress in layers with footwear that may get wet. Gentle rain will not cancel this outing.

Meet in the parking lot opposite Bear Valley Visitor Center near the restrooms at 9 AM (Coffee shop nearby).

If the weather is questionable, contact Helen at 415/789-0703 or 415/306-2325 (cell).

GRAY LODGE & SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Saturday & Sunday, Dec 5 & 6

With Bruce Deuel

Motels:

OROVILLE

Villa Court Inn, 530/533-3930

(discount to MAS participants)

Best Value Inn: 530/533-7070

Comfort Inn: 530/533-9673

Motel 6: 530/532-9400

GRIDLEY

Gridley Inn: 530/846-4520

Pacific Motel: 530/846-4580

Join us for a post-holiday extravaganza! We'll spend most of Saturday at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area that is managed by the California Department of Fish and Game. Normally about half a million birds use this area in winter and favorable breeding years can bring more. We will walk a 2-mile loop observing birds until lunch, then hike out to the viewing platform to look for additional species. Time permitting we will take a drive around part of the Sutter Buttes then return for the evening fly-out!

Ducks and Snow Geese abound, and perhaps Sandhill Cranes will arrive in the late afternoon. At dusk great clouds of birds leave the ponds to go to the rice fields to feed (dusk = no hunters!). Then motel, dinner and get ready for Sunday's early morning walk along the Feather River in Oroville, where there will be a completely new cast of birds. From there we will caravan over to the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge arriving around noon for lunch near the visitor center. After a brief tour, we will drive around the ponds and fields that usually have new species missed elsewhere.

Both refuges charge entry fees, and please be prepared for a bit of cold or rain. Meet at 10:30 AM Saturday at the large parking lot just beyond the small museum, well within Gray Lodge. From Marin to Gray Lodge, take I-80 to Davis, Hwy 113 north to Hwy 99 near Tudor, north to the town of Live Oak, west on Pennington Road to the Gray Lodge entrance. Allow 3.5 hours. Note: Most people stay in Oroville Saturday night for an early start on Sunday for birding by the Feather River. A forecast of heavy rain will cancel. For further information on the trip or motels contact: helen_lindqvist@yahoo.com. Please let Helen know by Nov 30, if you are planning to join us!

MAS WORK PARTIES

TRIANGLE MARSH WORK PARTY

10 AM - 1 PM

First Saturday of each month. Come out on Nov 7 and Dec 5. Bring your weed clippers, gardening gloves and weed wrenches/pullers for a day of fun. For details call Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688.

BAHIA WORK PARTY

10 AM - 1 PM

The Bahia work days will be Nov 7, Nov 14, and Dec 12. Please call Bob Hinz for details and directions at 415/383-8688.

NON-AUDUBON EVENTS

BRUCE BAJEMA MEMORIAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY AT LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

Thursday Mornings

The Bruce Bajema Memorial Bird Watching Society is an informal group, formed to carry on the tradition of birding enthusiasm Bruce Bajema was known for when he led walks at Las Gallinas Storage Ponds. Please join them on Thursdays when there are no Marin Audubon sponsored walks. Walks start at 8:30 AM on Thursday mornings, weather permitting. Please bring water, sun protection and comfortable shoes. Look for us in the parking lot or near the bridge. For further information, email Brucewalks@gmail.com.

RICHARDSON BAY: RESTORATION WORK DAY

9 AM to 12 Noon

Sunday, Nov 22

Bring your family and friends for a morning of restoration and clean-up at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary. We may be removing trash, invasive plants, or helping with restoration projects. Appropriate for young children. Children 10 and under MUST be accompanied by an adult. Please bring a reusable water bottle, wear appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes. RSVP: 415/388-2524.

PROPERTY STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

We have been busy at work on Bahia. We recently had a problem with sulfide odors from anaerobic conditions that developed in a small pond on our property near the Petaluma River. The pond was not part of our marsh restoration project and we are not aware that there have ever been any problems from it in the past. We moved quickly to address the problem. Our volunteers lowered a section of an existing levee by hand digging thereby allowing more bay water into the pond and reducing the potential for anaerobic conditions.

Over the past month, we have focused our attention on removing an unexpected infestation of stinkwort (*Dettrichia graveolens*), a highly invasive plant with a curious growing pattern — it seems to flourish at the end of the summer, when the soils are hard and there is no water. Thanks to volunteers, we were able to remove it from the west peninsula and seasonal wetlands on our property. We have also successfully removed radish and broom (not much of that). Other invasive plants, including starthistle and fennel, still need to be removed.

Lowell Sykes, Ed Nute, and Richard Bohnet erected three large signs at the entrance to our Bahia property, with a map showing areas that are open and closed to public access and listing activities permitted at the property. Additional small signs marking locations where access is not allowed will also be installed.

Lowell has been watering and weeding our growing beds and erected a gate to prevent vehicle access to the central and east peninsula. Unauthorized vehicle use has worn away vegetation and compacted soils in areas intended to be restored as habitat. We are concerned that plants will not be able to grow in these compacted areas.

Lowell and Phil Peterson have refilled the water tank and made repairs to the fence around our property. New locks have been purchased and installed on all of the gates.


PG&E's crew has returned to finish securing their pylons on the western peninsula before the rains.

Finally, Cooper Crane and Rigging will be repairing a malfunctioning flashboard/weir structure between the seasonal wetland and newly restored tidal area at West Bahia. The structure failure resulted in very minimal ponding of water.

TRIANGLE MARSH


We got high marks from Caltrans for our Triangle Marsh Restoration. A Caltrans representative met with us recently to evaluate the progress of the marsh and upland restoration project. Native tidal marsh plants now cover the entire restored marsh area and the upland looks great, too, with huge coyote brush, creeping wild rye, and many other native plants.

Our work is not over, however, since there is still lots of Harding grass and other non-native, invasive plants to remove.

Caltrans contributed to the restoration project as part of their mitigation for retrofitting the bridge over Corte Madera Creek for earthquakes. Caltrans needed to provide mitigation because widening the pilings that support the overpass resulted in more coverage and shading of the creek. 

JUNIOR BIRD WATCHERS CORNER

By Wendy Dreskin

This year's Junior Bird Watchers are off to a good start. St. Rita kindergartners are already identifying American Crows and Scrub Jays around their school. First and second graders used binoculars for the first time and got looks at a California Towhee. Bacich first and second graders are identifying Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Scrub Jays, and Turkey Vultures. If you know an individual child or a teacher who would like to participate, please have them go to www.marinaudubon.org and click on Junior Bird Watcher. Questions? Call Wendy at 415/457-3949. 

A Special Thanks

A very special **Thank You** to an anonymous donor who gave us \$1000 to pay down on the Bahia contractor's bills because the State of California had not paid.

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Julie Allecta, Bonnie Bollengier, Denise Ferry, Judith and Harold Lichterman, Helen and William Lindqvist, Achilles W. Malet III, Anne Merrifield, Jordan Rinker, Ann Sheldon

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Nancy Bennett, Anne Boeri, Marianna Cohen, Alice Dunning, Sally Fee, Curt Fong, Robin Heard, Thomas Hendricks, Cody Jonholt, Karen Julius, Mike Kelly, Bernie Kepke, Julie Korb, Connie Kroeck, Michele Manos, Philip Marcus, Joan Parker, Kalyani Ryaro, Denise Della Santina, Anne Slaughter, Patricia Stein, Julie Fyfe Steward, Anita Torres, Robin Van Tassel, David and Lindsay Wall



MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Petaluma Marsh | 180 acres |
| 2. Bahia | 60 acres |
| 3. Simmons Slough | 162 acres |
| 4. Norton Avenue Pond | 2 parcels |
| 5. Black Point Parcels | 2 parcels |
| 6. Arroyo San Jose | 2 parcels |
| 7. Tidelands at Murphy's Rock | 34 acres |
| 8. Corte Madera Marsh | 1.8 acres |
| 9. Triangle Marsh | 31 acres |
| 10. San Clemente Creek | 4.34 acres |
| 11. Tiscornia Marsh | 20 acres |
| 12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio | 2 acres |

GUESS WHO?

Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

If you have ever tried tending a home vegetable garden in Marin and found tell-tale v-shaped pieces missing from your freshly sprouted lettuce leaves, you have encountered the calling cards of this month's bird. It also loves fruit-tree blossoms. As one of the most abundant wintering birds in California, it once had a bad reputation for harming fruit orchards in the earlier part of the twentieth century, although it is no longer considered an agricultural pest.

During the Alaska gold rush, miners interpreted its sad-sounding song as saying "no gold here" and considered our bird of the month to be an omen of bad luck. They nicknamed our bird Weary Willie, because of its plaintive song.

But we love to hear its almost ethereal song when it returns to Marin around this time of year from its northern breeding grounds. Its beautiful anthem is arguably the quintessential sound of the autumnal season.

Most male songbirds sing mainly in the breeding season, but the bird of the month frequently sings in September and October and more occasionally into the winter. Song frequency again picks up in the early spring before they migrate north. The distinctive song is composed of three clearly whistled, descending notes in a minor key. Our favorite mnemonic device for recognizing the song is that the bird is saying "oh dear me."

Marin is in the middle of its wintering range, which extends from southern British Columbia to northern Baja California, generally west of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada. Our bird leaves for its breeding grounds in British Columbia, Alaska, and the Yukon Territories around April and May. Increasing day-length triggers its migratory behavior. The birds travel at night in flocks.


They also gather in flocks in the winter, when our bird is readily attracted to feeders offering a mix of small seeds. Each flock has a

distinctive home range. Individual birds are known to return to the same small wintering area each year. Meryl banded and recaptured one such bird at the same location at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center four winters in a row.

The bird of the month has a distinctive yellow median patch on the crown of its head. Unlike the Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) and the Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*), species that were named for their most often hidden ornamentation, adults of our bird display their golden crowns all of the time. The crown is a bit faded in the winter, but brightens up in the breeding season. There is some evidence that younger adults have less vivid crowns than their older peers. The sexes look nearly alike, although on average the males are a bit heavier.

Our bird is in the same genus, *Zonotrichia*, as the White-crowned Sparrow (*Z. leucophrys*), some of which breed in western Marin County. In the non-breeding season when our bird returns to Marin, the two congeners (same genus) sometimes form mixed feeding flocks at suburban feeding stations and in natural shrub habitat. Overall, our bird of the month tends to prefer moister and less open winter haunts than the White-crowned Sparrow, although there is a substantial area of habitat overlap.

Side-by-side, our bird is slightly heavier and slightly more dark-brown colored than the White-crowned Sparrow. Bill color is a good clue to distinguishing the two species, especially the more confusing immature birds. The White-crowned Sparrow's bill is yellow or sometimes yellow-orange, while our bird's bill is dusky gray. A closer inspection reveals that the bill is subtly bicolored with lower part appearing paler.

The return of our bird, the Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Z. atricapilla*) is a harbinger of the changing seasons, chanting in autumn and saying good bye to the splendor of summer. 

VOLUNTEER HELP AT BAHIA – THANK YOU FOR GIVING US A HAND!



JUDE STALKER

Prem McMurdo removing *Dittrichia graveolins* (stinkwort)

September 19: Barbara Salzman (leader), Richard Derr, Flinn Moore Rauck and John Rauck.

October 10: Jude Stalker (leader), Bud Alderson, Brian Somers, Jesus Majia, Prem McMurdo, Christine Fong, Richard Bohnet, Lowell Sykes & Ed Nute (digging the ditch).

October 15: Thank you Prem for spending the better part of the day pulling more invasive stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolins*).

Our ongoing efforts of Habitat Stewardship are particularly rewarding when we find a team of people assembled and ready to help.

This was the case in both September and October. We really appreciate you all coming out to Bahia!

Thank you to all that dropped by and helped during various work activities. You are sincerely appreciated!

If we didn't get your name, make sure to tell us next time so we can thank you in this newsletter!

THANK YOU's to our local businesses: Sloat Garden in Kentfield for donating nine garden trowels and Jackson's Hardware in San Rafael for giving us a very generous discount on loppers and tarps for our Habitat Restoration Program.



JUDE STALKER

Bud Alderson, Brian Somers and Prem removing *Dittrichia graveolins* (stinkwort)



Golden-crowned Sparrow

RICHARD BOHNET

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Continued from page 1

Whether you are going to count in the field or at a feeder, please sign up in advance by email to cbc@marinaudubon.org, or visit the signup form at marinaudubon.org. The count occurs on Saturday, December 26, rain or shine. At the compilation dinner (see box on page 7) at the end of the day, hear about the species the other teams have seen. HAPPY BIRDING!

YOUR ACTIONS COUNT!

Please let our lawmakers know you care about conservation.

TAM JUNCTION TRAIL (page 2) - The project is tentatively scheduled for the Bay Conservation and Development Commission meeting on Thursday, November 5, and the county deadline for comments on the initial study is October 23.

WRITE AND EXPRESS YOUR OPPOSITION to the **Marin County Public Works Department**: Farhad Mansourian, Director, 3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #304, San Rafael, CA 94903. Tel: 415/499-6530 Fax: 415/499-3799 TTY: 415/473-3232. Email: DPW_Webmaster@co.marin.ca.us and to **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission** (BCDC), 50 California Street, Suite 2600, San Francisco, CA 94111. Tel: 415/352-3600 Fax: 415/352-3606 Email: info@bcdc.ca.gov objecting to this destructive project.


STILL TIME TO WEIGH IN ON OYSTER FARM AT DRAKE'S ESTERO (page 2) - Write Congresswoman Woolsey asking her to oppose extending the lease on the privately owned Drake's Bay Oyster Company, and instead require that the Estero be permanently protected and managed as wilderness, as provided in the original legislation, when the oyster company's lease expires on November 30, 2012. Address is: Congresswoman Woolsey, 110 College Avenue, Suite 200, Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Go LOCAL!

If you enjoy watching birds or other activities in San Francisco Bay Area — take note! Replace your plain license plate with one depicting the Golden Gate Bridge and the words, "Nature Within Reach." When the goal of 7,500 sold is reached, the state DMV issues the plates.

Help meet the 7,500 goal! Go to www.bayarealicenseplate.org and see the image. Then enter your current plate number, mailing address and pay \$50 with a credit card.

The San Francisco Bay Area license plate project will help protect habitats, restore wetlands, protect rivers and creeks, improve water quality, and provide for a variety of other public interest uses.

Buying a license plate will help the State Coastal Conservancy fund projects to help protect habitats, restore wetlands and protect rivers and creeks throughout the Bay Area. 

CONSERVATION

Continued from page 2

Countywide Plan policies require that wetland impacts be avoided and mitigated with a 2:1 on-site and 3:1 off-site replacement, if wetland loss cannot be avoided. The initial study did not even identify loss of tidal marsh in an area that has already suffered significant tidal marsh loss as a potential adverse impact, even though the project would be built over and through endangered species habitat. Other impacts include noise impacts from construction, water quality impacts from pressure-treated wood, loss of adjacent upland refugia habitat for Clapper Rail, ongoing impacts from increased use of the trail.

The initial study claims the area under the elevated boardwalk would have more wetlands. It is questionable whether it would grow marsh vegetation, as the boardwalk would shade it. Minimal mitigation measures that should be considered are removal of the dirt trail along the west side of Coyote Creek and removal of the existing bridge to compensate for the new one.

The project is tentatively scheduled for the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) meeting on Thursday, November 5, and the county deadline for comments on the initial study is October 23.

WRITE AND EXPRESS YOUR OPPOSITION to the Department of Public Works and to BCDC objecting to this destructive project.

Please see YOUR ACTIONS COUNT! on this page.

— This month we commented on the following projects —

TOLAY CREEK/TUBBS ISLAND RESTORATION

MAS provided testimony to Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) supporting the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) plan to repair a damaged levee in a manner that would allow free tidal flow to the internal diked marsh and provide public access. However, we did not support reconstruction of the access to the loop trail. We believe the loop reconstruction would threaten the safety of the public, have no benefit to endangered species or other wildlife, and would waste public money because the levee would require constant repair. During the last few weeks, a compromise was worked out that includes the USFWS providing a bridge but there would be no commitment to maintain the bridge in the future. This addresses the concern about the need for constant repair in the light of rising sea level.

RICHARDSON BAY


We testified before the Marin County Board of Supervisors to require Jack Krystal to remove debris stored on property on Richardson Bay (adjacent to the heliport), including an office without sewage hook-ups, barrels with unknown contents, and trailers that has been marring the site and threatening water quality of the adjacent wetland and waters of Richardson Bay for 20 years. The Supervisors required some of the uses to be removed but did not specify which ones. A work group will be convened to decide which uses will be allowed to stay and which removed.

SAN RAFAEL BAYFRONT

We commented on an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a proposed Target Store along the San Rafael bay front, adjacent to Home Depot. We asked the City of San Rafael to address inadequacies in the final EIR, in particular questions about how the habitat buffer will be protected and sustained with a maintenance road and breaks for public access through the buffer.

MT BURDELL

We provided comments to the "Commons at Mt. Burdell" in response to the City of Novato's notice seeking scoping comments for an Environmental Impact Report.

This massive project proposed for the former Firemen's Fund property consists of 757,536 sq. ft. of new construction including office, multi-family residential, hotel/conference center, restaurant, community facility, sports/health club and recreation facility. We requested that the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) address, among other things, impacts to existing wetlands and streams on site, as well as impacts to the Rush Creek wetlands that are downstream of the project. 

MARIN BIRDLOG - SEPTEMBER 2009

By Rich Stallcup

While some new birders thought last month was the best time ever for rarities, it was, in fact, the worst since September 1968. I give it a D+.

Relentless northwest breezes and winds kept most off-course migrants from reaching the outer coast and clear skies kept those that did make it through from staying. The vagrants were here but since the wind kept them from over-flying the headlands at night, they blended, in solution with mixed flocks of western insectivores foraging more interior woodlands.

With Horseshoe Pond on the O.P. inhospitable to birds since its "restoration," Abbott's Lagoon simply not its former wader-friendly self (water quality?), Limantour changed by restoration, deflating avian diversity, and Las Gallinas mostly too full of water, shorebirds have little incentive to attempt resting and refueling in Marin County.

Because ranching has completely overtaken farming on the O.P. there are not longer plowed fields there in the fall. That results in an absence of plovers, pipits and longspurs.

In spite of all that, it was *September* and here is a summary of ornithological surprises I heard about:

White-fronted Geese were blowing around but seldom stopping towards the end of the month as usual like 45 in two groups over Hawk Hill on the 27th (DP,PRBO). A **Hooded Merganser** at Abbott's Lagoon 9/7 (CC) was the second earliest ever and a male **Redhead** at Las Gallinas 9/22 (DP) was still there 9/27 (HC). **White-faced Ibis** are annually scattered around the Bay Area in September so three at upper Abbott's 9/30 (NK) was only mildly thrilling.

Pectoral Sandpipers put in their usual strong showing with about twenty, and two **Solitary Sandpipers**, one near Point Reyes Station 9/8 (JE) and one in Novato 9/25 was about average. Oops! I seem to remember another SOSA at Nicasio Reservoir for a total of three. An adult **Bald Eagle** on the east shore of Kent Island in Bolinas Lagoon was watching a young Peale's Peregrine devour a godwit, and was doubtless one of the recently established year-round residents. A young **Swainson's Hawk** spent the last week of the month feasting on microtus on the O.P. (MB,MR) then (RS,HC) and was one of FIFTEEN species of diurnal raptors (not counting Turkey Vultures) seen on the (NK) PRBO Bird-a-thon. As usual numerous **Broad-winged Hawks** and a couple of **Prairie Falcons** migrated past "the hill" (GGRO).

Continuing a series of rare hummingbirds at Bolinas was a hatch-year **Ruby-throated** 9/30 & 9/31 (KH, m.ob). Thirty-one **Black Swifts** southbound over the Marin Headlands 9/2 (GGRO) were at the peak of their rapid-fire migration.

A young **Northern Parula** found in late August at the Point Reyes RCA Station stayed through mid-September (m.ob). Another was


briefly on the O.P. in the third week (MR,MB). A juvenile **Virginia's Warbler** 9/1 (RS,m.ob) at the Point Reyes Lighthouse cypress was *very* well seen (m.ob). **Tennessee Warblers** were at Bolinas 9/18 and 10/6 (KH). There will be several more in the October Birdlog. A young female **Cape May Warbler** at the Fish Docks 9/13 (NS,m.ob) stayed through 9/16 and (finally), two **Blackpolls** appeared at the light trees 9/26 (m.ob). Only one **Prairie Warbler** appeared at the docks 9/11 (m.ob). Two **American Redstarts** were found 9/6 – one at Rodeo Lagoon (WL) and one at Pine Gulch (KH). Five others were on the O.P. on different dates. A **Northern Waterthrush** banded at Palo Marin 9/22 (PRBO) was the only one detected and an **Ovenbird** at the docks 9/16 (RS) may have been the same bird found 9/15 at Nunes (MB,MR).

The only extralimital tyrannids were a **Dusky Flycatcher** at the docks 9/7 (OJ) and an **Eastern Kingbird** at Road Fork's Pool 9/8 (JD). That is weak!

Two **Summer Tanagers** were found - one at Point Reyes Station 9/3 (CP) and another at the PRNSHQ Morgan Horse Stables 9/6 (Lindsey). Two **Blue Grosbeaks** were *more* than usual - one at Gospel Flat 9/4 (KH) and one at the O.P. Search and Rescue 9/26 (MR,MB). There were only three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks!** A **Green-tailed Towhee** 9/14 (m.ob) on the O.P. was a good find and the only longspur reported flew close, past a PRBO group on Hawk Hill 9/27 (RS,MC,PE). A juvenile **Orchard Oriole** was at the end of Point Reyes 9/19 (MB,MR).

Because the weather was not conducive to outer coastal migration, September 2009 was not good for vagrant hunters. NO Chestnut-sided and NO Magnolia Warblers, NO rare Vireos and few fringillids . . . simply unacceptable. Maybe October will be bigger than September for the first time ever.

OBSERVERS AND ACRONYMS

DW-Dan Williams, **KW**-Kerry Wilcox, **NW**-Nick Whelan, **MW**-Mary Westlake, **S<**-Scott and Linda Terrill, **NS**-Noah Starky, **RS**-Rich Stallcup, **LS**-Larry Silver, **MR**-Mary Anne Rotella, **DR**-Don Reinburg, **PRBO**-PRBO Conservation Science, **CP**-Claire Peaslee, **DP**-Desert Peach, **O.P.**-Outer Point Reyes, **DN**-Danielle Norris, **NK**-Ninja Kinglets Bird-a-thon Group, **NB**-Native Birds Birding Group, **DM**-Dominik Moser, **NM**-Natalie McNear, m.ob-many observers, **WL**-William Legge, **AK**-Andy Kleinhesselink, **OJ**-Oscar Johnson, **KH**-Keith Hansen, **GGRO**-Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, **DF**-Deborah Fitzpatrick, **JE**-Jules Evens, **PE**-Phil Eager, **JD**-Jane Dang, **CC**-Chris Conrad, **JC**-Josiah Clark, **HC**-Heather Cameron, **MC**-Mimi Calter, **MB**-Mark Butler, **L&PB**-Len & Patti Blumin, **BB**-Bob Battigan. 

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT COMPILATION DINNER

Join us at our COMPILATION DINNER following the Christmas Bird Count. Whether you reserve a dinner or bring your own, everyone on the count is encouraged to come to the evening compilation.

The dinner will be held from 5:30 - 8:30 PM (doors open at 5 PM) at the Tamalpais Valley Community Center, Mill Valley. **Reservations required** for the catered dinner (pasta, green salad, garlic bread, coffee or tea). Cost: \$12. Please pay at the door.

To keep with our dessert pot-luck tradition, we encourage everyone to bring something sweet to share.


BE "GREEN": In order to minimize waste, please bring your own plate, cup, cutlery and napkin. Thank you!

DIRECTIONS:

Take Stinson Beach exit, which turns into Shoreline. Follow around the bend to Tennessee Valley Road (at the fruit stand) and turn left.

Go 1/4 mile to Marin Avenue and turn right, then make an immediate left into the Center parking lot.

TO RESERVE A DINNER:

Email jcowper993@aol.com or mail your NAME(s), EMAIL and MAILING ADDRESS and PHONE NUMBER to Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, 141 Oak Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960. Questions? Call Mary Anne at 415/453-2216. 



THE Clapper Rail

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enhancement of open space in and around Marin County, which will remain undeveloped habitat and open space in perpetuity. Our members' ideas, values and resources help us shape our agenda and carry out our goals and mission. We are confident you will find that being a Marin Audubon Society Chapter Member is worthwhile.

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