



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: 415/789-0703

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14 7:30 PM

Burrowing Owls in California:

An Abundant Endangered Species?

With Jack Barclay



Photo courtesy of Jack Barclay

Burrowing Owl

Jack Barclay will present a slide show about burrowing owls in California. He will summarize burrowing owl natural history, range, abundance, distribution, range-wide and in California, breeding strategy, habitat associations and movements in California. In the second part he discusses its conservation status and addresses the question — why all the concern about burrowing owls in California? He illustrates how management of vacant lands in developing parts of California affects burrowing owls by initially attracting them and then removing their habitat.

Mr. Barclay has been a professional raptor biologist for 35 years. He graduated from Cornell University in 1972 and worked for 11 years at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology to restore peregrine falcons in the eastern U.S. Since coming to California in 1989, he has focused on burrowing owl research, management and conservation. He organized the California Burrowing Owl Symposium in November 2003 and was senior editor of the Proceedings of this conference. He has been a member of the California Burrowing Owl Consortium since 1990 and has actively worked to advance burrowing owl conservation in California. Mr. Barclay has published several papers on different burrowing owl topics.

MAS Transfers Novato Property to County Open Space District



Photo courtesy of Barbara Salzman

MAS is pleased to announce that we donated a 20-acre property to the Marin County Open Space District.

The property, which MAS purchased in 2003, is west of the intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues in unincorporated Novato. It is a diked historic bayland where bay tidal waters once met uplands before Highway 37 and the levees along Novato Creek were built. The wetland and upland habitats were littered with pieces of concrete that reportedly were from Highway 101 and dumped on this property during a highway improvement project.

Our goal was to remove the debris and restore marshland and upland habitats. We did just that in 2010.

This property was ideal for restoration because of its seasonal wetland and upland habitats. MAS hired construction contractors, Hanford ARC, to remove the debris and revegetate the wetlands. Hanford buried the debris in the uplands and scattered seeds of native plants in the areas where vegetation had been removed. Then they spread native plant seed, and we planted Coast Live Oaks and other native plants. The following year, volunteers from MAS and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, along with workers from the Conservation Corps North Bay, pulled invasive broom and removed acacia trees and blackberry from the area.

MAS had purchased the property from the Cheng Trust through the Campaign for Marin Baylands, a joint partnership of MAS and Marin Bayland Advocates, with funds from the Open Space District and the California Coastal Conservancy.

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OPENINGS IN MARIN AUDUBON'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

If you love birds, wildlife and their habitats, MAS is the place for you. We will have open seats on our Board for the next term.

MAS needs you. Contact Phil Peterson at 898-8400 to find out more.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the appropriate Board member.

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Volunteer Coordinator	Bob Hinz, 383-8688
Property Management	Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. If you wish to attend please call 924-6057.

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

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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Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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Members can receive *The Clapper Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by e-mailing joandbijou@sbcglobal.net

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.

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 MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

Thank you to Susan Kelly and Mark Forney, co-compilers of our Cheep Thrills and Southern Marin Christmas Counts, and to John Longstreth and Tom Gaman co-compilers of the Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count, and to all of the area leaders and other participants. We are fortunate to live in a county so rich with so many bird species and dedicated volunteers. At the Pt. Reyes count 185 observers found 194 species, at the Southern Marin Count 145 counters found 185 species, and 163 species were identified during the Cheep Thrills Count which covers the eastern part of the county north of San Rafael. The Christmas counts are important citizen science; they provide the longest consistent running record of bird surveys in the nation.

Our Nominating Committee is beginning to search for new Board members. To learn more, contact Phil Peterson at 828-4780.

One of the many ways we are missing Rich

Stallcup is that we no longer have the Marin Bird Log in this *Clapper Rail*. We are looking for someone to continue Rich's tradition by compiling the special birds seen in Marin County each month so that we can provide this information to you, our members. The Bird Log was a regular reminder about the special habitats in Marin and the uniqueness of the natural world. Please see our tribute to Rich Stallcup below.

Thank you again to our generous supporters for your contributions to our End-of-Year Appeal. You make possible our newsletter, conservation work, advocacy, field trips and programs.

One of the many ways your donation helps is with special conservation threats to Marin habitats. The year ahead looms with many such threats – the Greenbrae Interchange project and the Port Sonoma Rehandling Facility project to name just two.

We wish you all a happy and healthy new year.

Remembering Rich Stallcup

MAS is saddened by the death of our colleague and friend Rich Stallcup. Rich died on December 15 from complications of leukemia.

Rich began birding in Oakland at age six when his father gave him an old pair of binoculars. By age 10 he was on boats watching birds and wildlife around the Farallon Islands. He would become a renowned birder, a consummate educator and a superb scientist, contributing a wealth of information about bird populations on land and offshore. His influence spread far beyond California.

Rich touched many people with his depth of knowledge about birds and the natural world. He led more than 1,000 trips, bird walks, and open ocean nature tours over the decades. He was patient with beginners and experts were in awe of his proficiency. His quiet excitement inspired interest and wonder in the most common birds.

It seemed that the birds were attracted to Rich. Noted Marin naturalist, David Wimphheimer observes "We had a nickname for Rich, Mr. Magic, as he was always finding rare birds. Yet, after years of hearing about Rich's birds, I realized that he wasn't just lucky. His years of experience allowed him to know what weather conditions and other factors would put birds at the Point [Point Reyes] or any small patch of trees."

Rich was co-founder of Point Reyes Bird Observatory, now known as now PRBO Conservation Science, where he served as a naturalist for many years. He wrote poems and books about wildlife, edited journals, and was an expert resource to many environmental organizations. He served as president of Western Field Ornithologists, as regional editor for American



Photo courtesy of Lisa Hug

Rich Stallcup at Cordell Banks

Birds, and as a member of the California Bird Records Committee. He published peer-reviewed scientific papers and seven books about birds, including "Ocean Birds of the Nearshore Pacific" and "Birds of Point Reyes."

In 2002, the American Birding Association presented Rich the prestigious Ludlow Griscom Award for outstanding contributions to regional ornithology.

Rich led field trips and presented programs for Marin Audubon Society and for many years prepared the Marin Bird Log for this newsletter. His last log appears in the December 2012 issue of *The Clapper Rail*.

MAS member Len Blumin recalls, "Rich's lesson was a simple one: learn love and respect for every living thing, and work tirelessly to ensure their preservation."

Those of us who knew Rich consider ourselves fortunate. We are more knowledgeable and inspired for knowing him. Rich will be greatly missed by Marin Audubon Society, and those who knew him.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Vicky Van Meter, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

Boat leaves and returns to the Antioch Marina

Sunday, February 3, 2013

(FYI, Super Bowl Sunday)

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' *Delphinus* for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. The cost is \$95. Contact Vicky Van Meter at 415/299-2514 or vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com to see if space is still available.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, February 7, 2013

9 AM to 12 noon

With Len Blumin

Beginner birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds at McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and over 100 species have been reported over the course of a year. Winter is a busy time at the ponds and provides an opportunity to study ducks and geese. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. This is great way to start learning the raptors, waterfowl, and other groups, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 9 AM but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

BAHIA BLUE OAK FOREST AND WETLAND RESTORATION WALK NOVATO

Wednesday, February 20, 2013

9:30 AM to 12 noon

With David Herlocker and

Lowell Sykes

Join us for a walk through the beautiful blue oak woodlands of Bahia and then tour Marin Audubon's wetlands restoration project. This unique woodland and salt marshes were saved from development by a coalition of environmental and community groups, spearheaded by Marin Audubon. In January 2004, MAS purchased 632 acres adjacent to the existing Bahia residential development. The upland area, consisting of 208 acres of oak woodland, was deeded to the Marin County Open Space District (now Marin County Parks) and 361.7 acres of diked baylands were deeded to the Department of Fish and Wildlife (formerly Department of Fish and Game). In 2008, MAS completed construction of a project that restored the Fish and Wildlife property and MAS property to tidal and seasonal wetlands. Levees around the former diked baylands have now been breached and filled areas have been re-contoured to maximize the area subject to tidal action. Public access to the lagoon and to certain trails has been provided. MAS retained 62 acres, which includes 1.9 acres at the end of Bahia Drive and about 60 acres around the enclosed lagoon owned by the Bahia Homeowners Association.

David Herlocker, the Interpretive Naturalist for Marin County Parks, will guide us through the woodlands and explain its interesting biology and history. We will see both woodland and marsh birds and some of the early wildflowers might be in bloom. After our woodland walk, we will meet Lowell Sykes, MAS Vice President, for more birding and a tour of restoration work in the lagoons, marshes and uplands owned by Marin Audubon.

DIRECTIONS: Take either Hwy 101 or Hwy 37 to Atherton Ave in Novato. From 101 turn east on Atherton. Proceed on Atherton about 1 mile and take a left onto Bugeia Lane. From Hwy 37, take the Atherton exit and drive west on Atherton 2.3 miles to Bugeia Lane. Turn right on Bugeia. Go straight on Bugeia over the hill toward the marshes (Bugeia becomes Bahia Drive at H Lane) to the end and park in the cul-de-sac.

CAPAY VALLEY, YOLO COUNTY

Saturday, March 2, 2013

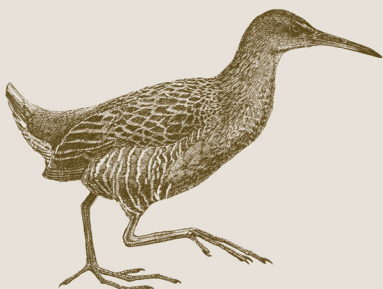
8:30 AM to 3 PM

With Terry Colborn

Join Terry Colborn for a delightful day in picturesque Capay Valley. The almond orchards should be at peak bloom, the valley's harbinger of the coming spring season! Our stops will include historic Capay Cemetery, Cache Creek and several favorite birding spots in idyllic Capay Valley. We'll look for Yellow-billed Magpie, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Phainopepla, Western Bluebird as well as any wintering and resident raptors. We also hope to see some early spring arrivals such as Barn, Rough-winged and Violet-green Swallow, and perhaps a warbler species or two. Past trips have produced Golden and Bald Eagle, Western Kingbird and Prairie Falcon. We also expect to see some early spring wildflowers along with Redbud, that very conspicuous flowering shrub along the roadside. Terry will meet everyone at Community Park in Esparto at 8:30 am. Participants who wish to may want carpool from there.

DIRECTIONS: From Marin County, take Hwy 37 east to Vallejo then go east on I-80; just past the Nut Tree Center take I-505. Travel I-505 north for about 20 miles to the Route 16 exit and turn left (west). Esparto is located about 4 miles west on Route 16; the park is in the center of town. Driving time is about 1½ hours but allow a little extra time, as there may be early morning fog.

Bring lunch and liquids; dress in layers and wear sturdy footwear, as we will do a little walking on flat roads. Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Terry at: 916/705-8991 or at www.TLCBirding.com.



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.



CALTRANS GREENBRAE INTERCHANGE STUDY NEEDS WORK

The Transportation Agency of Marin (TAM) released an Initial Study (IS) and Mitigated Negative Declaration which is intended to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and National Environmental Protection Act.

MAS does not consider this IS to be an adequate environmental review for this huge and complex project, which would be constructed along the shoreline of Corte Madera Creek and extend south to the Tamalpais interchange. The creek provides habitat for three endangered species.

The purpose of the project is to reduce traffic congestion on Highway 101 by widening and redesigning the Sir Francis Drake interchanges and interchanges at Fifer Avenue and Wornum Drive, eliminating short merging traffic lanes, and constructing auxiliary lanes and roadways separated from Highway 101. The project also includes new bus stops, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and ramp metering lights in various locations. New elevated structures would increase the urban feel of the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

MAS has many concerns about the IS's environmental analysis, such as how the project will impact endangered Clapper Rails using the creek. Neither is there an analysis of potential impacts to the Edgewater Pond at the Corte Madera Inn. The pond is well-used by birds. Our recent Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count found 12 Black-crowned Night-Herons, two Hooded Mergansers, Mallards and Greater Yellowlegs in this small pond.

The project area includes the creek-edge where endangered Clapper Rails move between the tidal marshes on the creek, but the study is deficient regarding potential impacts to the Clapper Rail. Creek-edge habitat is dismissed as being used "only" for dispersal. We consider dispersal habitat important for recovery of the Clapper Rail population. When the creek-edge habitat is unvegetated or nonexistent, the rails are more vulnerable to predation.

Mitigations proposed for the loss of wetlands and endangered species impacts also are inadequate. There are only conceptual descriptions with "promises" that the habitat would be "created, restored or preserved at a 1:1 ratio" or alternatively that credits would be purchased at a mitigation bank. We are opposed to mitigation banks, and a 1:1 ratio is insufficient

for endangered species habitat. Further, in order to adequately assess project impacts, the location of the proposed mitigation, specific acreage and type of habitat to be restored must be known.

FLOODING/CLIMATE CHANGE

The project will not address the regular flooding of the northbound lanes of 101 at Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. The IS acknowledges that the interchange at northbound Highway 101 and Sir Francis Drake will continue to flood as sea levels rise. A 16-inch sea level rise is predicted within 50 years, which would inundate most of the proposed project area. The IS reports that to address flooding a complete reconstruction of the interchange would be needed, but it rejects that option as economically unfeasible. A more limited option, reconstructing under a mile of the highways, is estimated to cost \$86 million but was also rejected as too expensive.

Considering the inadequacy of the document, we are consulting with the law firm, Shute Mihaley and Weinberger, about further action and the need for an Environmental Impact Report.

What You Can Do: Attend the public meeting scheduled for 6 PM, Tuesday, January 29 at the Redwood High School. View the Initial Study on the TAM Web site, www.TAM.ca.gov.

Submit written comments by Thursday, February 14, 2013 at 5 pm to Caltrans District 4, Attention Valerie Shearer, Senior Environmental Planner, Office of Environmental Analysis, MS-8B, P.O. Box 23660, Oakland, CA 94623-0660.

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	162 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	4 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

MAS Transfers Novato Property

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The agreement with our funders stipulated that the property be transferred to the Open Space District once the habitat was restored.

The deed we conveyed to the County provides that the property be retained as habitat with no structures or active uses except those necessary to maintain the property.

Through the MAS and Marin Bayland Advocates partnership, MAS now owns fifteen properties with current or historic wetlands. Once restored, several additional properties will also be transferred to the County. Portions of Bahia have already been donated to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (formerly Fish and Game) and to the Marin Open Space District.

Three Successful Marin Christmas Bird Counts

Photo courtesy of Cathlin Lou



The Strawberry team scans Richardson Bay.

THE 43RD POINT REYES PENINSULA CBC

December 15, 2012

By Tom Gaman & John Longstreth, compilers

The count day started completely overcast and in the 40s, with rain beginning around 2:00 PM, coming down hard at times. The weather probably accounts for the lower numbers of birds and participants than usual. The 185 participants found 194 species (preliminary count) versus the five-year average of 198 and last year's high total of 205. More importantly, the number of individual birds seen, 99,543 (also preliminary), was significantly lower the five-year average of about 125,000.

Some species had higher numbers such as **Brant** with 2,457, up 35% over the average. **Red-throated Loons** and **Pied-billed Grebes** were also significantly higher (37% and 56%). **Dark-eyed Juncos** were twice the average at 1,169.

However, more species saw declines. **Greater Scaup** were down 34% to 5,848; **Surf Scoter** down 54% to 3,387; **Pacific Loons** down 37% to 740; both species of pelicans were significantly lower as were Double-crested and **Brandt's Cormorants**. Observers recorded many fewer gulls with **Mew** down 81%, **Ring-billed** down 70%, **California** down 22%, **Western**—down 53%, **Glaucous-winged**—down 53%. Only **Herring Gulls** had an increase over the five-year average up to 740 counted against 427 on average. Both species of jay were significantly down while crows and ravens increased.

Several rarities were observed: **Lucy's Warbler**, **Chestnut-collared Longspur**, and **Nashville Warbler**. Likewise some unusual species for this count were also seen: **American Avocet** (common on Bolinas Lagoon 10 miles south but quite unusual in our count), **Red Crossbill**, **Mute Swan**, **Barn Swallow** and **Eastern Phoebe**.

One hundred forty-five participants came to the compilation dinner and a good time was had by all. Many thanks to our sponsors, Marin Audubon and PRBO. One very sad note was

that Rich Stallcup, one of the founders of the Point Reyes count and a steadfast supporter of it, passed away the day of the count. We will miss him greatly.

RICH STALLCUP'S CHEEP THRILLS CBC

December 19, 2012

By Susan Kelly, compiler

There once was a CBC named Arroyo Cheap Thrills, which was founded in 1977 and conducted until 1986, when it was suspended. Last year, the count was resumed and renamed "Cheep Thrills" (CTCBC).

On Thursday December 20th, 2012, about 60 people participated in the second year of the revived CTCBC and were successful in locating thousands of birds of about 163 species. Our joy was only marred by the untimely loss of our great friend, teacher and leader, Rich Stallcup. Participants at the CTCBC dinner dedicated and renamed the count in Rich's honor. This count is now called Rich Stallcup's Cheep Thrills CBC.

The count circle is divided into 12 areas. Rich lived in one of them and it was the area he specifically requested and delineated last year when he helped us update the maps and restart the count circle.

The CTCBC preliminary total species count is 163 but may be revised upward once all of the area leaders have submitted their data. We observed several unusual species for this area and time of year, including **Barrow's Goldeneye**, **Pacific Loon**, **Rough-legged Hawk**, **Spotted Owl**, **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, **White-throated Swift**, **Lewis's Woodpecker** and **Palm Warbler**.

SOUTHERN MARIN CBC

December 29, 2012

By Mark Forney, compiler

The 38th Southern Marin CBC (SMCBC) was conducted on December 29, 2012 in better than expected weather and fine fellowship. Final Count Circle results will be available at the National Audubon Society Web site <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>; Count Code = CAMC. Area results within the Circle will be available at www.marinaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count.php.

The preliminary total number of species seen during this year's SMCBC was 182, one species more than the 37-year average. 152 species

were reported from the Bolinas Lagoon Area.

Species seen in at least five of the last ten SMCBCs are referred to as "expected," others as "unusual." Of the expected species, exceptional numbers of **Red-throated Loon** were observed, exceeding 2000 individuals, a number not observed on the CAMC since 1983, primarily in ocean waters. Expected species, but in notable concentration, were four **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and three **Nashville Warbler** at the Bolinas Lagoon Area, 18 **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at the Fairfax Area. Notably not yet reported during this year's CAMC, although the data remains to be fully analyzed, of the expected species, were Wood Duck, Cinnamon Teal, Red-necked Grebe, Semipalmated Plover, Wandering Tattler, Bonaparte's Gull, Loggerhead Shrike and Tree Swallow.

Unusual species observed were: **Harlequin Duck**, San Rafael area; **Shearwater sp.**, Sausalito area; **Snowy Plover**, Stinson Beach area; **Pomarine Jaeger**, offshore area; **Ancient Murrelet**, offshore area; **Burrowing Owl**, area name intentionally withheld; **Long-eared Owl**, area name intentionally withheld; **Townsend's Solitaire**, Rock Springs area; **Palm Warbler**, Bolinas Lagoon area; **Summer Tanager**, Fairfax area; **Evening Grosbeak**, Bolinas Lagoon area.

The 2012 SMCBC owes its success to the time, expertise and effort volunteered by over 110 participants, guided by the 25 Area Leaders: Deb Self, of San Francisco Baykeeper, arranged for a boat, skippered by Robert Fairbank, on the bay waters, and Rick Holway skippered his own boat on the ocean waters within the Count Circle. A handful of people contributed observations from their backyards.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

We completed several major stewardship projects at Bahia. The Watershed Nursery (TWN) planted 265 native plants including coyote bush, gumplant, aster and California sage along the Eastern Peninsula at Bahia. The upland plants were planted in groupings designed to grow into thickets to provide cover for Clapper rails and other marsh species. TWN devised a special planting technique to overcome the problem of clay soils we have been struggling with on this peninsula. The technique includes digging wider and deeper planting holes, using a minimal soil amendment so the plants do not acclimate to a rich soil that is unlike what they will have to grow in, and then mulching with cardboard and straw to retain moisture. This project is funded by the EPA through a SF Estuary Partnership grant.

The other Bahia project is the Supplemental Environmental Project funded by the Novato Sanitary District through a program of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

We hired the Conservation Corps North Bay to remove ice plant and plant more than a thousand wetland and upland plants and two thousand rhizomes of creeping wildrye. The work was completed at the end of December but not without difficulty. Moving the

equipment along the low berm was difficult and impossible at times because the rain had made the soil very slippery. The ice plant was trucked to Redwood Landfill.

SIMMONS SLOUGH

We had planned to plant coyote bush at Atherton Avenue, our National Resource Conservation Service easement property, but had to cancel because the extensive rains in December flooded the site. The water even covered the stakes that had been placed to mark locations where the coyote bush could be planted. About half of the stakes will need to be moved to higher ground before the plants are planted. We plan to finish planting the end of January.

TRIANGLE MARSH

A stewardship planting day took place on Saturday, January 5 at the upland adjacent to Triangle Marsh. A dedicated crew consisting of Bob Hinz, Lowell Sykes, Jude Stalker, Debbie Ablin, Bob Bundy, Martha Jarocki, and Jerry Jarocki planted about 100 plants that had been propagated for us by the Watershed Nursery and purchased with funds from a National Audubon grant. The habitat on this site is looking more and more like it has been there forever. We know it has just been 10 years now.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

At Triangle Marsh in January we put new plants into some 'empty' areas, and we may have a few plants remaining to be planted in February. Although some of the oldest and largest coyote bush and monkey flower had been damaged by strong winds, new self-seeded 'recruits' of coyote bush were evident; native plants are beginning to take care of themselves. Non-native radishes and thistles are also showing substantial seasonal growth, and we will begin removing them. The situation at Bahia is similar. We've planted a lot there this winter and there may be more planting in February, but it's also time to get an early start on annual non-natives. Join us on a workday. See the progress for yourself. You would make a difference.

We have the tools, gloves and snacks. We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome. Rain cancels.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: February 2, March 2

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive directly across from the main Ring Mountain trailhead.

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: February 9

Meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Dr. near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

If you would like to help, please contact Bob Hinz at rbrthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

John Anderson, C. C. Anderson, Eleanor D. Balch, Brigitte Bendszus, Kelly Boys, Dan Brady, Mayling Breslow, Paul Chasnoff, Glenis Claymore, Deborah Colitta, Barbara J. Conrad, Donald R. Dickey, Patricia Duggan, Lena Estrella, Fischer Family Fund, Jo-Ann Fretz, Josefina Garcia-Puerta, David Glick, Padma Gordon, Margaret Gordon, Elizabeth A. Graham, John W. Granicher, Patricia J. Grossi, Sandra Hare, Joanne Heffelfinger, Helen Heitkamp, Frances T. Henshaw, Stephen Inciardi, Ruth J. Kaplan, Julianna Landscape, Joe Lavigne, Dee & Richard Lawrence, Suzanne Le Count, Ann Linder, Bryan Loretz, Michael Manley, Pamela G. Manwaring, Evan Marks, Antoni Mavrantonis, Kate McCormick, Zoe McCormick, Alma McDaniel, Rachel McKay, Paul Minault, Joshua Mooney, Clara M. Namee, Suzanne T. Nelson, Ronn Patterson, L. Peters, Fernando Pons, Judith A. Reichart, Stacy Reis, Reliance Fund, Mary Reynolds Thompson, M. J. Romo, F. & Sandra Hirschfield, Judy Schriebman, Martin Schuller, Susan Severin, Martha Shaw, Madeleine & Donald Simborg, Fred Slater, Mae Stadler, Alice Caldwell Steele, Mary Stevens, Gordon Taylor, William & Norma Taylor, Dean Thomas, Scott Thompson, Elizabeth Trumbly, Cydney Tune, Bonnie Turman, Janet Valette, Chris & Teri Wills

Update on Drakes Estero

By Amy Trainer, Executive Director, Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

As we let you know in the last newsletter, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar decided to let the 40-year reservation of use and occupancy for Drakes Estero expire on its own terms on November 30, 2012. Many developments have occurred on the legal front since then.

On December 4th a Federal Register notice was published declaring that the commercial, non-conforming uses under the Wilderness Act within Drakes Estero had ceased and that 1,363 acres of potential wilderness had become designated wilderness.

On December 5th, Drakes Bay Oyster Company, represented by Cause of Action, filed a lawsuit in the Federal district court for the northern district of California against Secretary Salazar, the Interior Department, the National Park Service, and NPS Director Jon Jarvis challenging Secretary Salazar's decision on a number of grounds. On December 7th, the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin, Natural Resources Defense Council,

National Parks Conservation Association, and Save Our Seashore, all represented by Earth Justice, filed a motion to intervene as co-defendants in the lawsuit.

On December 10th, the oyster company filed for a temporary restraining order to stop the 90-day clock from running, but the judge declined to hear the motion. The oyster company then filed a motion for preliminary injunction on December 21. The motion was heard in Federal court in Oakland on January 25. The judge did not specify a time to issue her ruling.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

February 15-18

Report birds you see during at least 15 minutes at the location of your choice anywhere in the world.

www.birdsource.org/gbbc

Gray Lodge and Sacramento National Wildlife Refuges With Bruce Deuel



Photo courtesy of Dana Herronia

Thousands of snow geese feed in Sacramento Valley rice fields during the winter.

It was a rainy day in Marin but overcast and dry at the Gray Lodge refuge where we joined Bruce Deuel, our leader, to start our weekend. The heavy rains of December resulted in lots of water so the waterfowl were more spread out than in previous years, but the birding was fabulous. Several of the participants were new to birding and were awed by number and diversity of birds. On the drive up along Hwy 113 many of us stopped to admire the huge flocks of snow geese in the rice fields and circling in the air.

At Gray Lodge, we started our morning with good views of **Blue-wing Teal** and a variety of other waterfowl from our parking lot meeting place. We then walked to the viewing platform. A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** in a willow thicket flashed his red crown for all to see. At the viewing platform we saw **White-fronted Goose**, **Snow Goose**, **Ross's Goose**, **Northern Pintail**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **American** and **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **Bufflehead** and many more. We then walked the two-mile path through the refuge, stopping at the blinds for even better looks at the waterfowl. In the trees along the path we saw many finches, sparrows and warblers, including **Orange-crowned Warbler** and the ever present **Yellow-rumped Warbler**. **Woodpeckers** included **Acorn**, **Northern Flicker**, **Nuttall's**, and **Downy**. As dusk approached, we caravanned out through the rice fields to see the **Sandhill Crane**.

Our day ended with a group dinner in old town Oroville. We presented Bruce with a print of the woodpecker plate from Keith Hansen's upcoming book, *Birds of the Sierra Nevada*, to commemorate 40 years of leading the Gray Lodge trip for Marin Audubon.

Sunday morning under blue skies we met for a walk along the Feather River in Oroville where we saw our first **Western Bluebird** and then a **Phainopepla**. Side-by-side views of female **Common** and **Barrow's Goldeneye** in the scopes helped us learn the field marks. We also enjoyed watching **Belted Kingfishers** and **Common Mergansers**. We then spotted a **Merlin** in a tree above us, plucking and eating what looked like a junco. The feathers floated down around us as we watched the spectacle. An **Osprey** circled low over our heads.

We then started our drive along the State Water Project impoundments and rice fields on the way to the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge. At the Thermalito Afterbay we saw several **Bald Eagles** and then in a flooded rice field we saw what Bruce estimated were 1600 **White-faced Ibis**. Part of Bruce's job with the California Fish and Game was to count waterfowl, so we believed him. We also saw a large group of **Long-billed Curlew** and then fields filled with **Tundra Swan**. A **Bald Eagle** flew over the swans and they took to the air. At the Sacramento Refuge we enjoyed the many ducks, geese and swans and were able to study the **Ross's** and **Snow Goose** side-by-side. Our day ended with close up looks of a **Loggerhead Shrike**, **Ring-necked Pheasant**, and then a perched **Peregrine Falcon** just overhead.

The raptors for the weekend were impressive. We counted at least 60 **Red-tailed Hawk** and saw many **Northern Harrier**, **White-tailed Kite**, **Red-shouldered**, and **Cooper's Hawk**. Our species tally for the weekend was just over 100. Thank you to Bruce for 40 years of leading this trip and we hope he will agree to take us out again next year.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY FLYWAY FESTIVAL

The 17th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival will take place February 8-10, 2013 on Mare Island in Vallejo. Choose from over 60 guided hikes, outings, tours and workshops on the schedule. Events include a silent auction, an art exhibit and various exhibitors. MAS Vice-president Lowell Sykes will lead a walk at Bahia. For more information visit the Festival Web site at www.sfbayflywayfestival.com.

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS

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THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Bob Bundy, Bob Hinz, Jerry Jarocki, Martha Jarocki, Angela Ramirez, Flinn Moore Rauck, Genevieve Rauck, Jude Stalker, Idalia Sullivan, Lowell Sykes



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If you are not already a chapter supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors, relatives to join us, too.

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