



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon
Information: 415/789-0703

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14 7:30 PM

Birds and Nature of the Southern Cone

With Alvaro Jaramillo



Photo courtesy of Alvaro Jaramillo

Andean Condor

The Southern Cone? Is that an Ice Cream place in Georgia? Nope, it is the triangle-shaped southern section of South America. What makes it special is that there are so many habitats and neat areas here, the Pampas, Patagonia, the Matorral, the Humboldt Current, Iguazu Falls, the Yungas, the Chaco—so many spots that are truly and uniquely South American. It is the land of Rheas, penguins, horneros, seriemas, as well as Southern Right Whales, Marine Otters, Viscachas and Vicuñas. A part of the world blessed with some enigmatic, unusual, beautiful and often rather unique creatures. But what absolutely is the icing on the cake is that the southern cone includes some of the most memorable and scenic parts of the Americas. This includes snow-capped volcanoes, huge granitic spikes, the big sky country of the Pampas and Patagonia and coastlines that are perhaps only rivaled by California for their beauty. Come enjoy an evening exploring a gorgeous part of the world and its equally fantastic bird and wildlife through the eyes of a birder-biologist who has an unbridled passion for this part of the world.

Come at 7:15 pm for refreshments. Meeting begins at 7:30 pm.

SMART Saves Mira Monte



Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz

SMART purchased Mira Monte as mitigation for environmental impacts along the train route in Marin.

The Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) District has purchased the Mira Monte Marina property, thereby saving it from development and ongoing detrimental uses. SMART purchased the property as mitigation for impacts to tidal marshes and endangered species along the train route in Marin. Although not yet designed, the mitigation plan will include removing fill to restore tidal marsh. Marin Audubon has tried twice to purchase the property over the last 20 years.

This is an exemplary mitigation because it both protects a property that was at risk of being developed and will restore marsh. It is an ideal property to restore to marsh because of its location and other characteristics. It is at the mouth

of the San Antonio Creek where it intersects with the Petaluma River, across the creek from the Petaluma Marsh which is the largest tidal marsh in the state that has never been diked. In fact, the property includes about 34 acres that are part of the Petaluma Marsh. The property consists of tidal and seasonal marsh, approximately five acres of upland created years ago by placing fill on marsh, and Burdell Island which is a hill that was an island before fill was placed in the marsh to connect the island to land. There are some rundown buildings on the filled land. Now there is the opportunity to restore that hill to an island; this could be the first island restoration in the Bay Area!

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2013 Christmas Bird Counts

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2013
CHEEP THRILLS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

This count was conducted from 1978 to 1987 and we successfully re-started it in 2011. It includes the following important birding areas: Mount Burdell, Stafford Lake, Bahia, Rush Creek, Indian Valley, Hicks Valley and some of the Nicasio Reservoir. The southern edge of this circle is at the intersection of Nicasio Valley Road and Lucas Valley Road and the center is on Mount Burdell, so this circle includes areas in northern San Rafael, all of Novato, a section of western Marin, and some areas of Petaluma.

The Cheep Thrills CBC is dedicated to the memory of Rich Stallcup, who generously shared his astounding knowledge of birds, dragonflies, and all natural creatures, and who

also taught us the importance of striving to be what he called “good humans.”

To sign up, contact compiler Susan Kelly at: cheepthrillscbc@yahoo.com. The deadline is December 15.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2013 43RD ANNUAL POINT REYES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count includes a unique combination of habitats in the Point Reyes National Seashore, Tomales Bay, agricultural pasture land and adjacent villages. Habitats include forest, chaparral, grasslands, riparian areas, Tomales Bay, Drakes Bay, Abbott’s Lagoon, various lakes and ponds, and the open ocean. As one of the biggest counts in North America, with usually over 200

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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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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.

6:30 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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Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
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

It's a busy time. This month we are reviewing three large planning documents: GGNRA's Dog Management Plan Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, Marin County Road and Trail Plan, and the Revised Farallon Islands Mice Eradication Plan with appendices. It is a great help to have comments from the public in support of wildlife and habitat protection, so check out these documents for yourself on the Web.

This past month, the Board has also been tending to our operations to keep in good order. We have submitted our Annual Report to Audubon California which is required each year for a chapter to be certified; revised and updated our Policies and Procedures; and adopted an Annual Plan for 2013-2014. Major goals we set for next year include completing several marsh enhancement projects on our properties and expanding our Outreach Program by establishing an e-mail list and our presence on other electronic media so that we can improve communication with our members and others.

It is almost Christmas Bird Count time. Do

sign up for one, two or all three of our Bird Counts: Pt. Reyes, Southern Marin and Cheep Thrills Counts. Christmas counts are an excellent way for non-scientists to assist in providing important data on bird population trends. Data from citizen science such as bird counts are even more important with climate change and already-observed migration changes for some species.

The Federal government shutdown is impacting our work us in various ways. We are not receiving federal government checks, meetings are being cancelled due to lack of participation of federal agencies, federal Web sites are unavailable and documents are not being reviewed. Do check on the meetings and deadlines for the GGNRA and Farallon issues. These meetings and deadlines may be changed because of the government furlough.

Finally, we are saddened by the death of Karen Nygren in late September. Karen was a dedicated environmentalist who followed transportation and other planning issues until the end. She will be remembered and missed.

SMART Saves Mira Monte

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We expect the mitigation project to restore tidal marsh and enhance an additional ten acres. The restoration will benefit the endangered California Clapper Rail and Coho Salmon, special status species including Black Rail and Steelhead, other species of native fish, migratory and resident waterfowl and shorebirds.

MAS and Marin Baylands Advocates have a long history with the property. We attempted to

purchase it about 20 years ago and then again three years ago. Our earlier effort failed when the property defaulted to a previous owner. Our recent attempt failed because we could not get the funds quickly enough to satisfy the owner who wanted to move. The owner then sold the property to her real estate agent who continued to operate an RV storage business on the site.

Our heartfelt thank you to Supervisor Judy Arnold and SMART General Manager Farhad Mansourian whose support and diligent efforts made this happen.

CBC

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participants and with such varied habitats in the count circle, the Point Reyes CBC regularly ranks in the top ten count areas for species of birds counted as well as participants.

Sign up by December 10 by completing the registration form online at www.forestdata.com/cbc. The post-count dinner will be held at the Dance Palace, 503 B Street, Point Reyes Station. Dinner is catered and the cost is \$16. You must sign up for the dinner in advance. Registration forms and checks should be sent to John Longstreth, PO Box 657, Inverness, CA 94937. Your assigned area leader will contact you by December 18. Rain does not cancel.

You can contact the compilers, John Longstreth and Tom Gaman, at ptreyescbc@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2013

SOUTHERN MARIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

This is one of the top counts in the country, both in the number of species seen and in the number of participants. It covers these areas:

Bolinas Lagoon, Audubon Canyon, Stinson Beach, Muir Beach, Fort Cronkhite, Muir Woods, Tennessee Valley, Sausalito, Tiburon, Ring Mountain, Mill Valley, Corte Madera, Larkspur, Alpine Lake, Bon Tempe, Phoenix Lake, Rock Springs, Fairfax, and some sections of San Rafael, including Terra Linda.

Sign up by December 21 by completing the registration form online at www.marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php or contact compilers Ed Nute and Bob Hinz at smcbc.marinaudubon@gmail.com.

If you'd like to contribute to the Christmas Bird Count, but will not be participating in the actual count, please consider volunteering for the CBC Compilation Dinner on Saturday, December 28. We need several volunteers afternoon (4 pm) through evening to help organize, oversee, set up, check people in, and clean up.

CBC UPDATES

For more information and updates, see MAS's CBC Web page at www.marinaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count.php.

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

LEFT OF THE FAULT – POINT REYES BIG PACIFIC PLATE DAY POINT REYES STATION

Saturday, November 2, 2013
7:30 AM to 4 or 5 PM
With Keith Hansen

This trip is full. For those already signed up, meet at the Bovine Bakery on A Street in the town of Point Reyes Station at 7:30 AM, where folks can get coffee and a pastry and find rest rooms. From there, we'll carpool to the outer point hitting as many of the migrant traps as is possible. Time permitting, we'll increase the list by hitting the Teal Ponds, Heart's Desire Beach, and maybe Bear Valley and Five Brooks.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, November 7, 2013
9 AM to 12 PM
With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin
and friends

On the first Thursday of each month we meet for a birding walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds just north of McInnis Park, continuing a tradition started years ago by Bruce Bajema. Birders of all levels are welcome. Each month the avian cast of characters will change, and we'll try to keep track of newly arriving species. Fall 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 bird families, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette. Try to bring a pair of binoculars, as well as some water. We'll be walking about 2 miles on the levees that surround the ponds.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then go east on Smith Ranch Road toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch Road, and go about 0.5 mi to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 9:00 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group. Rest room facilities are only at the parking area.

ABBOTT'S LAGOON

Sunday, November 10, 2013
9:30 AM to 2 PM
With Carolyn and
John Longstreth

Abbott's Lagoon is well-known as a birding hotspot due to its variety of habitats, including coastal scrub, freshwater ponds and wetlands, brackish lagoon, dunes, sandy shoreline and open ocean. We can expect to see waterfowl, herons, raptors, wintering shorebirds, loons, grebes and possibly a few late migrating landbirds. With luck, we might find Virginia Rail, Sora or American Bittern on the upper pond, river otters on the lower lagoon or alcids beyond the surf. If the adjacent farm field is freshly plowed, there could be some interesting species there as well. We'll walk the 1.5 easy miles to the lower lagoon and another 0.3 mile to the ocean beach.

John and Carolyn have been birding for over 30 years. John, who ran an Audubon Center in Connecticut, is the co-compiler of the Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count and a skilled nature photographer. Carolyn has helped organize the Point Reyes Birding & Nature Festival for the past 4 years and created two CD's on local birdsong.

Dress in layers; bring hat, sunscreen, lunch and water. Bathrooms are available at the Abbott's Lagoon parking lot.

DIRECTIONS: Allowing about an hour and a half travel time, from San Rafael follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd (SFDB) to Olema. Or from Stinson Beach, go north on Hwy 1 to Olema. From Olema continue north on Hwy 1 (SFDB), take the second left turn (SFDB west), continue through Inverness, turn right (north) onto Pierce Point Road and keep driving until you come to the Abbott's Lagoon parking lot on the left (west) where our group will gather.

SKAGGS ISLAND AND HUICHICA CREEK WILDLIFE AREA

HWY 37, SONOMA COUNTY
Saturday, December 7, 2013
9 AM to 1 PM
With Daniel Edelstein

Daniel is a Consulting Biologist, teaching ornithologist at Merritt College, and long-time bird tour leader (www.warblerwatch.com). Join Daniel as we visit Skaggs Island along Highway 37 in southeastern Sonoma County. Here, the vast wetlands and open area often attract uncommon visiting, non-breeding season raptors such as Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, and Merlin, along with sightings of White-tailed Kite and other raptors. In addition we will see diverse shorebirds, waders, and ducks—many visiting us only for our "winter" pleasure. Afterward, we'll carpool to the Huichica Creek Wildlife Area (HCWA), immediately north of Skaggs Island. We will meet on Skaggs Island Road off of Highway 37 where we can safely park away from traffic before carpooling to HCWA. Bring lunch and water; be prepared for any kind of weather. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 north to Hwy 37. At the 121 junction (Sears Point), continue straight on Hwy 37 for about 4 miles to Skaggs Island Road. We will meet about 200 feet from Hwy 37 on Skaggs Island Road.

CYPRESS GROVE/TOM'S POINT ON TOMALES BAY CYPRESS GROVE RESEARCH CENTER

HWY 37, SONOMA COUNTY
Wednesday, December 11,
2013
9:30 AM to 2 PM
With John Kelly

John Kelly, the Director of Conservation Science for Audubon Canyon Ranch, will lead our trip to see winter waterbirds and shorebirds on Tomales Bay. This excursion will highlight a visit to the Cypress Grove Research Center of Audubon Canyon Ranch, with field observations and discussions about the identification, conservation, and ecology of Tomales Bay birds. We will view waterbirds and shorebirds along the east shore of the bay, then carpool to ACR's remote Tom's Point preserve at the northern end of the bay where we will end our day.

DIRECTIONS: The Cypress Grove Research Center is on State Highway One, about ½ mile north of the town of Marshall. (Marshall is 9 miles north of Point Reyes Station, or 7 miles south of Tomales.) The entry gate is on the bay side of the road and marked with the address "20545". Look for a small sign with ACR's green-and-white egret logo mounted on the gate pole. Enter the gate, continue in on the entry road and take the left-hand fork to the parking area. Walk down the trail at the northwest corner of the parking area to the main buildings in the lawn area. The main office is in Cabin #2.

CONSERVATION

GGNRA DOG MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISED DRAFT EIR

The Revised Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (RDSEIS) for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) Dog Management Plan is now in a 90-day comment period that ends on December 4. The RDSEIS weakens protections for habitats, endangered species, other special status and native species, and natural resources by opening more areas for dog walking than had been recommended in the previous DEIS. Off-leash dogs would be allowed at one Marin County site, on the beach at Rodeo Lagoon.

The overall goals of the plan are to provide multiple visitor experiences, protect park resources, and establish rules that are easily explainable and enforceable. Six Alternatives are presented: Alternative A – existing conditions; B – National Park Service dog regulations; C – mixed use; D – most environmentally protective; E – most dog access; and the Preferred Alternative F which is intended to provide “balanced visitor use and protection of natural resources and visitor safety.”

GGNRA changed various alternatives after reviewing the 4,713 comments that were received on the original DEIS. MAS’s analysis of the Plan and recommendations for specific areas are preliminary because we are still reviewing the 1,430-page document.

We have several overall problems: the impacts of virtually all alternatives are evaluated as being only minor to moderate based on dog walkers voluntarily complying with requirements that dogs be kept on-leash or kept out of areas where they are prohibited. This expectation is unrealistic. MAS’s experience from more than 30 years of walking trails, is that users cannot be relied on to comply voluntarily. Many people ignore signs and rules.

GGNRA proposes a monitoring-based strategy that includes a stepped process of education with brochures, meetings, and signs; focused enforcement including time and use restrictions; and closures. Staff would monitor all sites regularly and record noncompliance and impacts to resources. Areas where there is current evidence of problems would be monitored more frequently. Monitoring results would guide the prioritization of responses that could include focused enforcement of regulations or short- or long-term closures. Closures would not be permanent. The strategy is designed to “return impacts to a level that

assumes compliance.” There appears to be no certainty that enforcement would be timely or effective. It is not clear how decisions would be made to restrict use or to issue tickets.

The mitigation measures for virtually all of the adverse impacts of the Dog Management Plan are actions that are already taking place including existing stewardship and management activities and habitat restoration projects. None of the activities cited are related to the dogs nor would they compensate for the impacts of dogs. Further, all of the restoration and management activities cited have already occurred or would occur without the Dog Management Plan, and many are necessary requirements for the Park Service to carry out its species and habitat protection responsibilities. Habitat restoration projects that did not even occur on federal lands are claimed as related improvements. This would include MAS’s Bahia and other completely unrelated wetland restoration projects.

The following is a discussion of the preferred Alternative F for Marin County sites with MAS analysis:

Stinson Beach No dogs would be allowed on the beach, but leashed dogs would be allowed in the parking lot, picnic areas, and on a path leading to Marin County’s Upton beach where dogs are allowed. A fence or barrier would be installed to separate this trail from Stinson Beach. However, the indicated path is likely to cause impacts because it would be located within coastal dunes that are already subject to erosion.

Homestead Valley Leashed dog walking would be allowed on the Homestead Fire Road and the neighborhood connector trails. Coyotes, spotted owl and rare native grassland and shrubs are present but GGNRA claims they would be protected because dogs would be leashed and there are few dogs walked there. New neighborhood connector trails would be established in the future. MAS opposes new trails unless existing trails are decommissioned.

Alta/Orchard Fire Road/Pacheco Fire Road The original GGNRA recommendation, to allow leashed dogs only on the fire road but not on the trails to protect the endangered Mission Blue Butterfly, is modified to allow leashed-dog walking on the Alta Trail south to the Morning Sun Trail, and on Orchard and Pacheco Fire Roads. The endangered Mission Blue Butterfly habitat, which is described as being “away from the trail,” is

presumed to be protected by the assumed compliance with leash laws. How far the trail is from the habitat is not stated.

Oakwood Valley Leashed dog walking would be allowed along the Oakwood Valley Fire Road and on Oakwood Valley Trail from the junction with the Fire Road to the junction with Alta Trail. No dogs would be allowed on Oakwood Valley Trail from the trailhead at Tennessee Valley Road to the junction with Oakwood Valley Fire Road and on the social trails. Leash requirements are relied upon to protect wildlife.

Muir Beach The preferred alternative would allow on-leash dogs on the connecting bridge, on the beach and on the proposed Muir Beach Trail. Fencing would be installed to protect the dunes and lagoon, and would be a visual barrier but dogs could still get through. The effect of the dogs on the beach is determined to be not detrimental based on voluntary compliance, on the trail rehabilitation and habitat restoration projects at and near Muir Beach, and the lack of adverse impacts of this alternative. Muir Beach has wetlands, creeks, dunes and lagoon; it has shorebirds, steelhead trout, endangered red-legged frog, and Coho salmon. Protecting these resources will require diligent enforcement which we are not confident will happen.

Rodeo Beach The originally preferred Alternative C was changed to extend the off-leash area to include the entire length of the main beach. Extending the off-leash area is justified by low shorebird counts on the beach which leads to an assumption that impacts would be minimal. They did not appear to consider that the low counts may be because the current dog use is restricting shorebirds from using the beach. When funding becomes available, fencing would be installed from the footbridge across the western edge of the lagoon to protect sensitive habitat. There is no indication of when that could happen. When there are marine mammal strandings, the beach would be closed. Dogs would be prohibited on South Beach.

Marin Headlands Trails The original recommendation is weakened to allow on-leash dog walking on the Rodeo Avenue and Morning Sun Trails, Batteries Loop and other perimeter trails. This is intended to protect the relatively undisturbed continuous habitat in the interior of the Headlands. Leash requirements are relied upon to protect wildlife. Mission Blue Butterfly habitat is described as not near the trails

where dogs would be allowed. The beneficial effects of trail rehabilitation in this area are cited as reducing adverse impacts. We fail to see how trail improvements would reduce dog impacts.

Fort Baker The preferred alternative would allow on-leash dogs on Drown Fire Road, Bay Trail, Battery Yates, Loop Road and Vista Point Trail. No dogs would be allowed on the beach. Compliance with leash requirements is relied on to protect Mission Blue Butterfly.

The RDSEIS points out that there are very few site-specific, peer-reviewed studies of the impacts to dogs on vegetation, wildlife and water quality. It is about time GGNRA conducts studies in areas where there is insufficient information.

We note that elements of the preferred alternative are still subject to change, so it is important to comment on elements that you like or do not like.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Attend one of the three planned public hearings. The Marin hearing is scheduled for 4 to 8 PM on November 8 in the Ruby Gym at Tam High School, 700 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley. Deadline for written comments on the Revised Draft Supplemental EIS is December 4. Send comments to General Manager, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Fort Mason, Bldg 201, San Francisco, CA 94123-0022.

FARALLON ISLANDS INVASIVE MOUSE ERADICATION PROGRAM

We received notice earlier this month that the US Fish and Wildlife Service is issuing a Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in which it will modify language to clarify the Service's scientific review of possible impacts to seabirds. According to the notice, the Revised DEIS does not modify or add alternatives from the former DEIS.

The project purpose is to benefit native Ashy Storm-Petrel and Leach's Storm-Petrel populations, amphibians, invertebrates and plants and to protect the island ecosystem by removing the last remaining invasive mammalian species on the Refuge.

The revised DEIS was tentatively expected to be published in the Federal Register on October 11, 2013, but with the federal shutdown it will be later. The public will have 45 days following the publication to submit additional comments. Any comments submitted so far have already been incorporated into the record and need not be resubmitted.

GREENBRAE INTERCHANGE

Swept along by pressure from the bike community and their ally, the Marin Deserves Better group, the Transportation Authority of Marin Board approved \$4.5 million to study the so-called North-South Greenway. There is nothing green about this proposed trail because it would impact endangered species and tidal marsh, therefore, we refer to it as the Ungreenway. The exorbitant cost is to analyze the environmental impacts of a new bridge over Corte Madera Creek, an environmentally-damaging trail at the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Tidal Marsh and a trail from the former railroad right-of-way to the Sandra Marker Trail, including a tunnel below sea level under Wornum Drive. Rainwater would have to be pumped out of the tunnel.

Such a project would have to reconstruct and raise the former RR levee, address impacts to endangered species and tidal marsh, and flooding from sea level rise. All of this, when there are alternatives with fewer environmentally damaging alternatives. What a threat to our environmental resources! And what a waste of taxpayers money!

COURT DECISION ON SWALLOWS

On October 11, the US District Court denied Caltrans' motion to stay proceedings, thereby allowing our lawsuit to continue without having to wait the 120 days Caltrans claimed they needed to issue a final decision on whether a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement should be required. Waiting 120 days would bring us up to next year's nesting season which would be ineffective and unacceptable.

MAS joined Madrone Audubon Society, Native Songbird Care and Conservation, Golden Gate Audubon Society, and the Center for Biological Diversity in bringing the initial complaint in May 2013 when it was discovered that actions or inactions by Caltrans' contractor, CC Myers, working on the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project, had incorrectly installed exclusionary netting on the bridge that caused the deaths of almost 100 Cliff Swallows attempting to nest on the bridge.

LEAD SHOT BANNED TO PROTECT WILDLIFE

Governor Brown has signed AB 711 (Rendon) into law, making California the first state to ban lead shot for hunting. Many hundreds of studies have documented lethal effects of lead on California Condor, Bald and Golden Eagle, and other species that feed on carrion.

ANOTHER DELAY FOR MARIN COUNTY STREAM ORDINANCE

It was anticipated that the Supervisors would take action on the proposed stream ordinance at their September 26 meeting, but stream protection was dealt another delay. Marin County Council announced they had just been informed by the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) that three supervisors were ineligible to vote because they lived within 500 feet of a stream; the law presumes they have a financial interest in the outcome. The solution to make up a quorum would be for the three to pick straws to choose the one to vote.

Over the next few weeks, County Council will communicate with the FPPC and attempt to clarify possible actions or overcome the presumption of interest by clarifying the circumstances of the supervisors. A new hearing date is set for October 29.

In the meantime, the staff report issued for the September hearing presented a draft ordinance for the San Geronimo Valley, as had been requested by the Supervisors at the previous meeting, and also mentions their interest in adopting a countywide ordinance. A countywide ordinance has already been prepared and was presented at an earlier meeting.

Marin Audubon continues to support a countywide ordinance and opposes amending the Countywide Plan, which has been proposed.

PLEASE ATTEND HEARING.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS ON STATE WILDLIFE PLAN

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is holding public scoping meetings throughout the state on their updating of the State Wildlife Action Plan. The Plan studies the health of California's fish and wildlife with an emphasis on conservation before there are critical losses.

PLEASE ATTEND: Wednesday, November 6, 6 to 9 pm at the Laguna Environmental Center, 900 Sanford Road, Santa Rosa.

ATTEND HEARING ON PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S COAST

Assembly member Mark Levine is planning a public hearing focused on protecting California's coast. The hearing will cover existing processes to enforce the law, available resources and tools that would help the Commission carry out its mission. Members of the Coastal Commission have been invited to participate on a panel. Public comment is welcome.

PLEASE ATTEND: Wednesday, November 6, 10 am to 2 pm at the Romberg Tiburon Center, 3150 Paradise Drive, Tiburon.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

As of mid-October there hasn't been enough rain to soften the soil and none is on the horizon. Annuals may have germinated but none will be large enough to remove. For us that leaves the regular big problems such as fennel, Harding grass, a few bull thistles and some mustard. Cutting them off is easy; removing enough of the root to kill the plant will be tough until it rains more. Act locally and join us on a workday. 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.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: November 2, December 7

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: November 9, December 14

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 rbhrthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Kate Anderson, Judith E. Bell, Nancy Benjamin, Charles Bennett, G. Benson, Gretchen Bixby, Sean Lane Bortell, J. Bowen-Williams, Joyce Britt, June Cilurso, Marguerite Clark, Jason Crotty, Melissa Crowe, Elizabeth Davis, Marie Domeny, Richard A. Duncan, Melanie Facen, Karen Fenwick, Aileen Ferguson, Michael Ferranti, Claudia Gibson, Kelly Guyton, Hazel Hettrich, Hope Horton, Brooke Jackson, Nicole & Doug Jensen, Ann Jones, Amy Kahn, M Louise Kimbell, Ms. Ali Long, Christina Lonnholm, Helene Marsh, Tahirih Miks, Stephen Mizroch, Laurence Morgan, Jeffery S. Morshead, Julie Munro, Marion Nagashima, Lisa Nielsen, Gladis Nugent, Lynne Oberlander, Ken Rowles, Terry Salzer, Larry L. Scheibel, Carol Scialli, Barbara Selby, Jacqueline R. Slade, Genevieve Sorensen, Victoria Stich, Christy Swildens, Debbie Taylor, Valerie Tejjiero, Tracey Turner, Ryan Wallace, Sarvenaz Zand

This month Lowell Sykes has been busy checking the condition of our plants on the western peninsula and elsewhere at Bahia. The Watershed Nursery, which grows native plants for habitat restoration projects, designed and installed a special treatment program for the nine thickets on our property at the Bahia Western Peninsula. The plants were chosen to provide high tide cover habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail and other wildlife. Each thicket plant has three DriWater tubes, mulch and special soil amendment specially designed to overcome the difficulties plants roots have penetrating the dense clay bay-mud soil. The soil was dredged from the adjacent

marshes more than 30 years ago to create dry land on which to build houses. Because MAS bought the land, no houses were built. The special treatment seems to be working. The plants in the thickets are doing well.

Lowell has also been tending plants along our tidal pond at Bahia where we implemented a restoration project last winter, funded by the Novato Sanitary District through a program of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. We revegetated the pond edges and also used DriWater, this time one tube per plant. The DriWater has to be checked and the gel-like inserts replaced when they dry out, but they are making a real difference in the survival of our plants.

OCTOBER 6 FIELD TRIP

Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary Pelagic Trip With David Wimpfheimer

By Vicky Van Meter

It isn't often one can be 35 miles out from the Golden Gate on glassy seas wearing a t-shirt, but that is what we enjoyed on our annual trip to the Farallon Islands and offshore waters. We travelled aboard the comfortable *Outer Limits* with Captain Jim Robertson as our skipper and David Wimpfheimer as our guide. The birds were plentiful and we spotted **Parasitic Jaeger**, **Pelagic Cormorants**, grebes, **Black Turnstones** and **Oystercatchers**, among others, before passing Point Bonita Lighthouse. As we moved past the point we picked up **Brandt's Cormorant** and the first of many **Common Murre**. As we arrived at the South Bar, the water depth decreased to only 44 feet, and we began to see rafts of birds and, in the distance, a **Humpback Whale**. We enjoyed moderately good views of this animal as it spouted several times and showed its fluke before diving. Captain Robertson said the birds were attracted to the fish that pile up against the bar. We had excellent views of **Surf Scoters** and **Pink-footed** and **Buller's Shearwaters**.

As the Farallones came into view, David told us of the history of the islands and of the 30,000 Northern Fur Seals killed and the 14 million murre eggs collected before the islands were protected. Sharp-eyed Logan Kahle spotted the **Blue-footed Booby** on the islet called Sugarloaf. It was sitting with a group of **Brown Pelicans**. A **Peregrine Falcon** was also spotted. We enjoyed seeing, hearing and smelling the **Northern Fur Seals**, **California** and **Steller Sea Lions** on the rocks. As we passed by the huge rock arch on the south end of the islands, David explained how important the iconic landmark

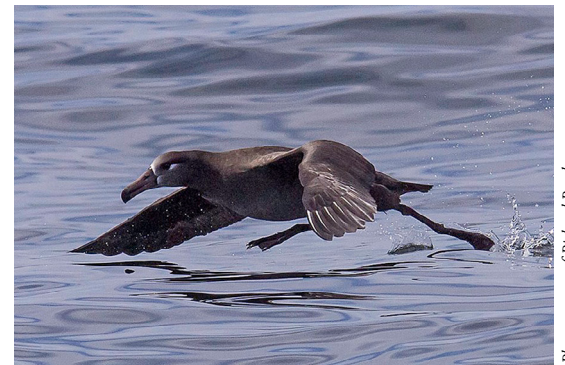


Photo courtesy of Richard Pawek

Black-footed Albatross

was to early travelers, artists and photographers. Once out past the islands we encountered **Sabine's Gulls**, **Cassin's** and **Rhinoceros Auklets**, and **Northern Fulmar**. Shearwaters flew in close to the boat. Although we saw three species during the day, there were only a few Sootys, usually the most common by far. We had amazing views of **Black-footed Albatrosses** flying and sitting on the water. Many birds were attracted to the dead fish discarded by **Black Cod** longliners fishing in the area. A **South Polar Skua** flew in to challenge gulls to the feast. Probably the most unlikely sighting was a small flock of **Vaux's Swifts** passing overhead, 35 miles out to sea.

We saw only one whale on our trip, but had great views of many **Harbor Porpoise**. It's not always easy finding cetaceans in our vast ocean, but the birds and incredible weather more than made up for that. We enjoyed the return trip back to Sausalito where the bay was busy with kayakers and bikini-clad, stand-up paddle boarders enjoying the fine weather.

By Josiah Clark

Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, gtepk@phs.com



Black-throated Gray Warbler

actually bred at this location for a short period. A **Blackpoll Warbler** (PRBO) captured there around the same time is one of the only observations for this otherwise expected fall vagrant. A shortage of good vagrant conditions was compounded by the closure of outer Pt. Reyes and other federally controlled public lands. Many have expressed that eastern vagrant songbirds were as scarce this fall as any in the last 30+ years. Western migrant songbirds, on the other hand, appeared more abundant than usual.

Down the road from Palomarin, Bolinas's Wildlife Gallery continues to pump out what appears to be Marin's most overlooked hummingbird, where 3 more individuals rounded out the season total of **Black-chinned Hummingbird** to six. There are now 15 records for this spot. That is half of all the records for Marin! This phenomenal fact says as much about the observer as it does about the effect of at least 9 well-tended feeders (KH). The breeding of this species also appears to be expanding in suburban areas in counties to the east.

Other Bolinas birds included a **Chimney Swift** October 6 (PP), 2 **Clay-colored Sparrows**, a **Tropical Kingbird** also in town and a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** October 12 at Pine Gulch Creek (KH). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** made their biggest showing ever remembered at this location, with 25 observed (KH) on October 5. This bird of dry woods may have just made the most of California's hottest, driest year on record.

October 4 was a big day for birds and birders alike. Howling warm NE winds delivered Marin's only **Sandhill Cranes** folks could remember since the '80s. Cranes were observed at multiple locations including Pine Gulch Creek (JM) and Marin Headlands (DW, JW, JTC, RF, LK, HC). A pair remained the following day, observed at Rodeo Lagoon along with a persistent **Pectoral Sandpiper** (WL). At least two **White-faced Ibis** were in the county that day, one on the Bolinas Mesa (SH) and one very tired one sleeping in the pickleweed at Richardson's Bay Pohono St. Marsh (RF, JTC, JW, DW). Fifteen **White-fronted Geese** and at least 2 **Broad-winged Hawks** were observed by the preceding observers group. A **Prairie Falcon** crossed over from Marin and was identified as it crossed into San Francisco airspace (LK, HC).

But what would this last month be without boobies? **Blue-footed Boobies**, that is, a species that was just added to Marin's impressive species list last month. At least 2-3 individuals were observed in multiple locations including fleeting sightings of single birds off Tomales Point (SA) and offshore of Pt. Bonita as part of a feeding frenzy (JTC, MP). The most enduring roost, however, was just north of Muir Beach at Gull Rock, where 1-2 birds were seen by dozens of observers scoring a new county bird.

Observers and Acronyms **DW:** David Wimpfheimer, **HC:** Hugh Cotter, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **JM:** Jeff Miller, **JW:** Jim White, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **LK:** Logan Kahle, **MP:** Michael Park, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **RF:** Rob Furrow, **SA:** Scott Anderson, **SH:** Steve Howl, **WL:** William Legge.

By October blackberries are getting hard to find, madrones start to bear fruit and oak trees hit their stride, pumping out acorns by the ton. Most of the insect-eating warblers, flycatchers and tanagers have already passed. With forbs now dry, seeds abundant and winter not far away, October is sparrow month.

In the third week of September a **Black-chinned Sparrow** was captured up in scrub by banders at the Palomarin field station. This phantom-like sparrow has scarcely been detected anywhere along the north coast in recent years, but decades ago this species



Sandhill Cranes

Photo courtesy of Richard Vanek

Changes at California Audubon

Bridget McCormack, who has been running the day-to-day operations of Audubon California as Audubon California's Managing Director, has been promoted to Executive Director. Mike Sutton, who has been serving as Executive Director, will concentrate on the Pacific Flyway as Vice President.

Bridget, who joined Audubon in 2012, has spent her professional career in the non-profit sector. She last served as VP for ClimateWorks Foundation, a global network that supports public policy to prevent climate change.

Dan Taylor has served in various capacities on the Audubon staff for 35 years and will be retiring in October. He served as Executive Director and, more recently, Public Policy Director which involved working with the legislature to get wildlife-friendly bills passed. The lead ammunition ban legislation (AB 711) was his latest effort.

Audubon is conducting a recruitment search for the Policy Director position. If you or anyone you know is interested, you may contact me (bsalzman@att.net) for a job description.

Thank you ...

FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Earth Share of California, Barbeau & Alison Engh, Richard Jennings, Jordan Rinker, Suzanne Zimmerman

TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Lyla Albert, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Linda Nicoletto, Flinn Rauck, Victor Sowa, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

REQUEST FOR BIRD SURVEYORS

The Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary is looking for experienced birders to help with shorebird and waterbird surveys on Richardson Bay, as well as on San Pablo Bay NWR. For more information, contact Kerry Wilcox at kwilcox@audubon.org, 415-388-2524 x101.



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www.2013cvbs.org
- December 7 **Field Trip: Skaggs Island Huichica Creek**
With Daniel Edelstein
- Dec 14 to Jan. 5 **Christmas Bird Count period**
www.natureali.org/cbcs.htm

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The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter supporting members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*, which you will receive as a MAS member. To better ensure we can continue our programs on the local level, MAS offers a separate chapter membership. Your membership in MAS will help us protect local habitats, resident and migratory birds and provide you with educational and enjoyable programs as well.

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.

You can also join or make a donation on our Web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to www.marinaudubon.org.

JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and the chapter. With this joint membership, you will receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits, however, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. We will receive, however, a portion of any new memberships that are generated by MAS, the local chapter. So we request that you send all checks for new National memberships to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

For NAS membership renewals, send your check directly to NAS.

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