



Jill Hedgecock

Three rhinos are killed each day for their horns.

South Africa and Botswana are home to 829 and 550 bird species, respectively. Jill will share some of the amazing birds she viewed while on safari in 2015, including multi-colored lilac rollers, and vibrant bee-eaters. It was on this trip when Jill learned that three rhinos are killed each day fueled by the demand for their horns in Asian black markets as ingredient for traditional medicine. If the current rate of poaching is not curtailed, wild rhinoceros could become extinct within the next few decades. But recent developments offer hope for the species. She will also talk about conservation projects that she became involved in as a result of the publication of her coming-of-age suspense novel, *Rhino in the Room*, (signed copies available for purchase at the meeting).

Jill Hedgecock has deep roots with the Mount Diablo Audubon Society, serving as the International Conservation Coordinator in the early 1990s. She has a Master's Degree in Environmental Management from the University of San Francisco

NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER:

THURSDAY, MAY 9 7:30 PM

Birding Trinidad & Tobago from Asa Wright Nature Centre

By Martin Kenefick

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Watersheds Need Maintenance, Too



Bob Hinz

Marin Municipal Water District has more to maintain than pipes. Will its watershed and natural habitat suffer under the next budget? Pictured: Azalea Hill Trail and Alpine Lake

Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) has been struggling with aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance. The agency needs to raise rates to do the needed upgrades and to fund other operations. We're concerned that the proposed rate increase is less than is needed to fully address the needs of the Mt. Tam watershed. In fact, the new budget has some troubling cutbacks.

MMWD's current plan to address the needed funding is to raise rates on the bi-monthly water bills, with an approximate annual revenue increase of 4% over the next four years, and is shifting capital costs to a new category. Unfortunately, the proposed changes for the 2020 fiscal year budget reduce funding for watershed operations and maintenance and add money to the capital budget. It looks like the changes will mean less funding for watershed needs. MMWD is the only water district in California that receives most of its water supply from rainwater. Maintaining the watershed is critical not only for the wildlife that depend on it but to protect the quantity and quality of the water supply.

A major concern is that the MMWD is proposing to significantly reduce the budget for managing vegetation. This is alarming as the MMWD is already way behind in managing invasive plants, particularly the highly invasive broom. The MMWD's invasive vegetation removal program is severely limited by their internal restriction on the use of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to removing aggressive invasive plants. IPM is a strategy to remove highly invasive species that provides for using various control methods including herbicides where other options have been tried and found to be inadequate. MMWD now does not permit any use whatsoever of herbicides. As a result, vast acreages of broom have invaded the watershed and MMWD is losing the battle. Vegetative habitats in some areas are now significantly degraded and overgrown with weeds. And broom is not the only invasive. Other problem species include Harding grass, ice plant, thistle, and stinkwort. With cuts in the watershed program, this condition will only get worse.

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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.

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President	Lowell Sykes 388-2821
Secretary	Everett Clark 789-9224
Treasurer	Susan Winston 949/632-0908
Conservation	Phil Peterson 828-4780 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Jane Medley 559/760-1551
Membership	William Legge 388-7883
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Fundraising	Everett Clark 789-9224
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Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Phil Peterson 828-4780
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Bob Hinz 383-8688
Outreach, Website	
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Publicity	
Volunteer Coordinator	John Perone 279-6550
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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Website: www.marinaudubon.org

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$500 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species, and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

The power of one. How many times have you decided not to speak up for what you believe in, maybe concerned about how you would sound, look, too busy, somebody else will do it. How many times through the years have I seen decision-makers respond to public testimony, change their views or approach. The tragedy of the Paradise fires has brought out the best in people. Many individuals, both children and adults, have stepped forward to help victims with donations of cars, food, money and many other necessities. Each action that individuals take, each donation, would not happen if these individuals had decided not to act. Each person who speaks out for the environment, in written or verbal testimony at a hearing, acts to protect our natural resources. Each volunteer who plants a plant or removes invasive weeds or gives testimony is making a difference. This would not have happened if it were not for you. Even if others are doing the same thing if there is a group, you have helped to make the message stronger. It is more important now than ever to act for wildlife and our environment, to not depend on others to protect our earth. Step forward and make a difference.

With the **Las Gallinas Sanitary District beginning a major construction project** to upgrade its facilities, our monthly field trips will need to be suspended temporarily for the anticipated three-year construction period. The parking lot, access road and treatment facilities are being upgraded. **The last trip at Las Gallinas will be April 4. Be sure not to miss it.** Because there is a good variety of birds most of the time and the birds are close, it is a great place for beginning birders and birders of all levels. We are grateful that Las Gallinas has been welcoming for all the years we have been

having trips there. Our Field Trip Chair, Jane Medley, and the trip leaders, Bob and Sande Chilvers, are looking for an alternative location, and if they find one, will let you know. We're sorry about this gap, and hope that the Las Gallinas project proceeds speedily.

We are grateful to Jessica Schroeder who left a generous bequest to Marin Audubon in her will. It's easy to leave a gift to Marin Audubon as part of your estate. Just write us into your will. Your gift would be your legacy, helping us to protect our natural resources for years to come.

The slate of nominees for the MAS Board is below. New directors will be elected by members at our Annual Meeting coming up at our May Speaker Program.

Our Conservation Committee was treated to a presentation on the Proposed McInnis Marsh Restoration at our March meeting. The plan is to expand the tidal marsh and improve access in a location that will not impact the marsh and wildlife using it. You too can learn more about the project at an April 20 public meeting at 1 pm at the McInnis Golf Course Club House, and a nature walk on Tuesday May 21 beginning at the Skate Park.

We have two MAS events coming up: Mother's Day will soon be here. Your invitation to this year's Mother's Day Picnic is enclosed in this issue of *The Rail*. Do join us and bring your family and friends for a fun lunch and visit to Audubon Canyon Ranch's Volunteer Canyon. Enjoy the lunch, the trails, the wildlife and your friends. Find out more at <http://marinaudubon.org/events-mothers-day-picnic.php>.

Join us also on Give Back Monday May 6 at Iron Springs Public House in San Rafael for a social evening with Marin Audubon friends.

IRON SPRINGS PUBLIC HOUSE

Give Back Monday

MAY 6, 2019 4 TO 9:30 PM

901 4TH STREET, SAN RAFAEL

Come meet your fellow MAS supporters and help us raise some money for birds and conservation!

We will be taking part in *Give Back Mondays* at Iron Springs Public House on Monday, May 6, 2019, when 10% of all food and beverage sales will be donated to MAS from 4 PM until closing. So, reserve the date, and we hope to see you there for a delicious meal and great fun! Vegetarian offerings, too.

[HTTPS://IRONSPRINGSPUB.COM/PUBLICHOUSE](https://ironspringspub.com/publichouse)

Nominees for the Marin Audubon Society Board

- Dave Chenoweth
- Barbara Demeter
- Jude Stalker
- Ann Thomas
- Doug Waterman

Mother's Day Help Needed

Join other volunteers in making the Mother's Day picnic happen. We need helpers to serve and set up on the day of the picnic. Contact volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one-day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, snacks, water, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility, and weather check: Jane Medley, 559/760-1551, janermedley@gmail.com.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

THE PONDS AT LAS GALLINAS, San Rafael

Thursday, April 4, 2019

8:30 AM to noon

With Sande & Bob Chilvers

This will be the last trip to Las Gallinas for about three years. See explanation in the President's message.

Beginning birders are especially welcome for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas ponds. This winter's abundant rainfall led to a decrease in participants in our last two monthly trips, although waterfowl were thriving around the ponds and in the nearby flooded fields. Return this month to join Bob and Sande as we note wintering birds that may have departed and watch for spring arrivals.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels and help each other to find and identify the birds. If you are late, we spend the first 30-60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond, and the group is easy to find.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. and drive east on Smith Ranch Road toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about .5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot.

DYE CREEK & VINA PLAINS PRESERVE Southeast of Red Bluff

Saturday & Sunday, April 6-7, 2019

9 AM Saturday to 1 PM Sunday

With Kurt Rademacher

Pre-trip sign ups required – Open now

Located in the Lassen Foothills just southeast of Red Bluff, The Nature Conservancy's 37,000-acre **Dye Creek Preserve** is an expansive landscape of blue oak woodlands, volcanic buttes, and rolling wildflower fields. The landscape is dissected dramatically by Dye Creek Canyon with its vertical cliffs, dashing creek and rich riparian forests. Join naturalist Kurt Rademacher for a 3-mile round-trip hike up Dye Creek Canyon.

Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and **Canyon Wren** are among the possibilities, and wildflowers should be abundant. The trail is narrow, rocky, and steep in some places, with a possible stream crossing for those wishing a longer hike option. Sturdy boots are a must.

About 15 miles north of Chico, the **Vina Plains Preserve** is another Nature Conservancy project totaling 4,600 acres of grasslands riddled with numerous vernal pools. This is great habitat for shorebirds, grassland birds and raptors; plus, the spring wildflower displays can be quite amazing! We will take a 1- to 2-mile walk on flat, potentially muddy, terrain.

We plan to meet at Dye Creek Preserve

Saturday morning at 9 AM and finish there about 3 or 4 PM. On Sunday, we'll rendezvous at the Vina Plains Preserve at 9 AM and finish about 1 PM to allow for the return drive to Marin.

Pre-trip enrollment is required, with a limit of 20 participants. As both preserves are open only for guided tours, this is a special opportunity to explore these rather pristine, Early California landscapes. Please email Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net to reserve your spaces. Further directions and details regarding access will be provided following enrollment.

PACHECO POND, Novato

Thursday, April 11, 2019

9 AM to noon

With Bob and Sande Chilvers

Although perhaps unimpressive when compared to many of Marin's incredible natural areas, Pacheco Pond provides the best publicly accessible freshwaterish pond we have in Novato. It provides valuable habitat for a variety of ducks, **Black-crowned Night-Heron, Common Gallinule, Sora** and **Virginia Rail**.

We plan to watch for signs of **Great Egrets** returning to their nesting colony at the east end of the pond. A number of raptors, including **Peregrine Falcon**, also occur regularly in this area.

DIRECTIONS: Take the Bel Marin Keys Blvd. exit from Hwy 101. Travel east on Bel Marin Keys Blvd. for 2 miles passing through a commercial/industrial section until arriving at a small parking area on the right, which faces the pond. We will meet in the parking area and walk to the trail a short distance up the road.

LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA, Sonoma County

Sunday, April 14, 2019

8:30 AM to noon

With Lisa Hug

We will join Lisa for a leisurely 2-mile loop walk starting at the Laguna de Santa Rosa Trailhead Parking Lot. The trail is fairly flat and goes through open meadow, abuts a riparian forest along the Laguna channel and around a lovely pond. We may see **White-tailed Kites, Red-shouldered Hawks, Lincoln's Sparrows, Western Bluebirds, Pied-billed Grebes,** and perhaps a few newly arrived spring migrants.

The walk should last about three and a half hours. We may explore a few other areas afterwards with people who want to continue birding. There is a restroom available.

DIRECTIONS: From Marin, take Hwy 101 North. Take Exit 488B to merge onto CA-12 toward Sebastopol. The Laguna de Santa Rosa Trailhead is on Hwy 12 near 6160 Sebastopol Ave. It is on the north side of the road one mile west of Llano Rd. and a half mile east of Sebastopol's Morris St.

SPRING BIRDS AND THEIR SONGS IN THE GARDEN

Registration Required

Marin Arts & Garden Center

30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd, Ross

Friday, April 19, 2019

8 to 10:30 AM for walk, 10:30 to 11 AM for tea

With Meryl Sundove

Ever wonder which birds you hear singing in your yard, garden, and neighborhood? Join Marin Audubon Society's **Spring Birds and Their Songs in the Garden** walk and tune into the varied chorus of birds nesting in Marin. Once you cue into bird songs, the enjoyment of spring will be forever heightened.

This bird walk takes place in a beautiful local garden — the Marin Art and Garden Center. The paths slope gently, the plantings are beautiful and varied, attracting a diversity of birds, many you might find in your own garden or neighborhood.

This slow walk is geared to help beginners or others ready to tune their listening skills to hearing spring bird songs. Come find out what we know about bird song and why birds sing in the spring.

After the walk we can sit in the garden and enjoy tea and a treat as we continue our discussion about birds and their spring songs. Heavy rain cancels.

This walk is co-sponsored with the Marin Art & Garden Center. Registration will be limited to 16 people due to the nature of the trails. You may register for this walk at www.magc.org. Under **2019 Events** scroll to our April 19 trip name, then click on **Register Here**.

MUIR BEACH, REDWOOD CREEK AND SLIDE RANCH

No. 4, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, April 20, 2019

8:30 AM to 3 PM

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Starting the morning at Muir Beach, we will scan the ocean where we usually find **Pigeon Guillemots, Common Murres, Pelagic** and **Brandt's Cormorants**, grebes, loons, and **Black Oystercatchers**. We will check out the restored riparian area at Muir Beach before birding along Redwood Creek where we hope to hear the beautiful songs of **Swainson's Thrushes, Black-headed Grosbeaks** and **Pacific Wrens**, along with **Warbling Vireos, Wilson's** and **Orange-crowned** (perhaps **MacGillivray's**) **Warblers**. Afternoon will find us at the Muir Beach Overlook before heading down to Slide Ranch with hopes of seeing a **Wandering Tattler** or **Surfbird**. We plan to walk three miles. Carpool if possible.

DIRECTIONS: We will meet at the Muir Beach parking lot. From Hwy 101 take the Mill Valley/Hwy 1/Stinson Beach Exit. Follow the signs to Hwy 1 and then to Muir Beach.

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MMWD BUDGET

continued from page 1

MMWD also is proposing to reduce the number of sheriff's deputies in the watershed from two to one. Two is already too few. With the significant unauthorized activity, including off-trail bike use, sheriff's deputies are essential to enforcing regulations and protecting the natural resources of the watershed. We are concerned that one deputy will have little impact on reducing illegal and environmentally damaging activities on the watershed.

Reducing the number of watershed aides and interns is also proposed. This loss may not seem significant, but it would exacerbate the proposed decrease in watershed management. Aides and interns perform important tasks on the watershed such as organizing volunteers, cleaning bathrooms, and biological monitoring. Without summer aides certain beneficial programs will have to be reduced.

As we go to press, the MMWD Board is still deliberating what to do, so the above approach may change. Whatever they decide, cutting back on the watershed funding is not the way to go. MMWD must make certain they have sufficient funding to repair and maintain its facilities as well as to restore and maintain a healthy and resilient watershed. MMWD should include in its rate increase sufficient funds to maintain its watershed program at a level that protects the watershed. We are concerned they may not do this.

The rate setting process is governed by Proposition 218 which requires that rate payers be notified in writing of the proposed rate increase and of the date, time and location of a public hearing. The procedure is that you are considered to have voted YES unless you file a protest in writing. MMWD should look for their notice in the mail and read the instructions carefully.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

MMWD customers, in particular, but everyone who cares about Mt. Tam, customers should attend the public hearing on Tuesday, May 28, 7:30 PM and tell the Board you want them to increase rates sufficiently to assure the watershed habitats are adequately protected and enhanced. If you cannot attend the hearing, email or write Board Chair Larry Bragmann.

HIGHWAY 37 TOLL ROAD

There have been recent articles in the media about establishing a toll road on Highway 37 which is curious because there was no mention of focusing on the toll road at the most recent Policy Committee meeting, the committee that consists of elected officials from the four counties and that is moving short- and long-term improvements along. In fact, the meeting was the shortest ever because not much was discussed. There was a presentation from Caltrans on the flooding and repairs in the Marin segment. Even with this major flooding event, the only one along the length of the highway and one that affected commuters from the entire North Bay, there was no mention of including the Marin segment as part of the current planning for improvements. Fortunately, Supervisor Judy Arnold brought it up again, and again Caltrans said they would look into it. We'll see!

CENTRAL MARIN REGIONAL GAP CLOSURE PROJECT

The Central Marin Gap Closure project has long been a concern for MAS because of the adverse impacts to the endangered Ridgway's Rail and their Ecological Reserve habitats that would result from certain segments. The project is part of the Transportation Agency of Marin's (TAM) plan to provide a bike path from the north bank of Corte Madera Creek east of the freeway overpass south to and including Wornum Drive. The jurisdictions involved have divided the project into five sections based on jurisdictional boundaries, availability of funding and perhaps other reasons. A large grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has recently been awarded to Corte Madera for a segment that includes Nellen Avenue to the T-intersection with Wornum Drive and for the length of Wornum Drive from Tamal Vista to the Frontage Road. The Town has prepared an Initial Study (IS)/ Negative Declaration for this segment and found no significant environmental impacts.

This segment is not near wetlands or the Bay, but a number of trees will need to be removed, although how many is not identified. The IS reports that most of the trees in vicinity of the proposed improvements do not qualify as regulated trees in Corte Madera. The only native trees mentioned for removal are Coast Redwoods which are planted but apparently do not meet the size criteria. Native Coast Live Oaks on the DMV property could be

impacted. These would not be cut down but their roots could be damaged and that could eventually lead to the death of the tree. A mitigation identified is to slightly elevate the bike path to minimize disturbance to the root zone. The nonnative trees, some invasive, that would be impacted are eucalyptus, acacia, pine, and poplar. Any trees that are regulated would be replaced at a 1:1 ratio which would be too low for native trees.

There are three governmental jurisdictions in charge of different segments: 1) TAM is working on a segment that will widen the path adjacent to the freeway crossing Corte Madera Creek and extending south along the Redwood Highway adjacent to Highway 101 to Industrial Way (often referred to as the North/South Greenway Project). The City of Larkspur is responsible for two segments: 2) continuing the path along Redwood Highway extending from Industrial Way to Wornum Drive, and 3) a path extending from TAM's Frontage Road segment (the first segment above) through one of the trailer courts, and then south along the railroad right of way, and west along the north boundary of Shorebird Marsh to meet up with Wornum Drive. This is referred to as the North/South Greenway Southern Segment, potentially the most environmentally damaging segment. Its funds were diverted to the SMART path between Andersen Drive and Second Street in San Rafael. 4) Another crossing of Corte Madera Creek, a new bike/pedestrian bridge, is not being pursued now because it is cost prohibitive.

A real concern about this approach to the Gap Closure project is that by dividing the project area into segments, impacts may be minimized and the adverse cumulative impacts of all of the segments may not be identified and evaluated. This is why CEQA requires a cumulative impact analysis but only for projects requiring an EIR. By segmenting the project, the jurisdictions can avoid doing a cumulative impact analysis and significant adverse impacts may not be recognized.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Check out Town's description of the project at: <https://townofcortemadera.org/825/Project-Reports-and-or-Declarations>, and submit comments on the Initial Study project description and analysis by the April 4 deadline.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Members who follow our stewardship activities regularly hear that we are removing invasive plants, usually Harding grass, stinkweed, thistle, broom or ice plant, on one or more of our properties. “Invasive” means that they expand unchecked and take over, usually because climate and other conditions are right. There is nothing to keep them under control, no fungus, insect or animal to eat them because the invaders did not evolve here. They reproduce unchecked. Nature’s system is that among species that have evolved together some species prey on or eat other species. This creates a food web that generally balances and maintains populations of plants and animals, i.e., keeps them in check. When there are gaps or problems within the web, such as when large areas of native habitat are overtaken by an invasive plant or animal species, native species suffer because they are out-competed.

The National Wildlife Federation defines invasive species as: “... plants and animals from other parts of the world that threaten native wildlife and ecosystems and are causing ecological havoc in many of our most sensitive habitats pushing many of our native plants and animals to the brink of extinction.”

Many non-native plants are not a problem — they stay put and do not expand. But many threaten our native plant and wildlife populations. Invasives cover vast acreages, destroying natural resources such as food and nesting habitats needed by our native species. This is an alarming problem now with so much habitat loss due to development and other causes. Our native wildlife also must deal with window collisions, predation by domestic cats, native and non-native predators, and climate change with its increasing storms, flooding and fire risks. Of particular note is that the introduced plant species that become invasive here, including eucalyptus, acacia, broom and pampas grass, are species that are adapted to Mediterranean climates with long dry seasons. Without natural checks they pose a much greater risk for fire than our native species do.

Wetland plants are not exempt even though they have special adaptations to deal with frequent inundation by salty tidal waters. Major tidal marsh invaders are *Lepidium*, *Limonium ramosissimum*, and four species of non-native cordgrass. Millions of dollars have been spent to

eliminate the invasive cordgrasses from San Francisco Bay to prevent our tidal marshes from being transformed into unsuitable habitat for our native species. California Invasive Plant Council has a focused effort, supported by MAS, to control/eliminate the non-native *Limonium ramosissimum*. There is no such effort for *Lepidium*, another highly invasive plant that is taking over some marshes. Japanese Knotweed is a highly invasive fresh water plant that has wreaked havoc in the England and is now threatening San Geronimo Creek and other Marin Creeks.

It is not just plants that are invasive; introduced animals also consume resources: plants, nuts, seeds, invertebrates and insects our native wildlife require to survive. Many readers will undoubtedly remember years ago when feral pigs were decimating Mt. Tam habitats, consuming rare plants and rooting in the soil. Fortunately, their impacts were recognized and they were eliminated.

Invasive species also are transforming marine habitats. Ships carrying cargo on the open ocean have to balance their loads. They do that by filling massive onboard ballast tanks with seawater at one port and discharging it at another, bringing thousands of foreign marine creatures into Bay waters.

Non-native species arrived in other ways. Grasses were brought in cargo ships hundreds of years ago. Some species have been intentionally introduced for a purpose, such as eucalyptus for windbreaks and lumber, and wild turkeys for hunting in West Marin. Mute Swans were introduced to the east coast for decorative purposes. The European green crab was intentionally introduced to the Delta for aquatic insect control where it consumes and competes with native fish, including the endangered Delta Smelt. It has now spread to San Francisco Bay and has been found on our Tiscornia Marsh property. Turkeys are now all over the place and some flocks have 50 or more individuals. They leave in their path disturbed soil structure, and they consume the acorns, seeds and grubs on which our native quail and other birds and mammals depend.

Mute swans, native to Eurasia, were introduced to New York in the late 1800s and have now made their way to California. These large aggressive birds disrupt nesting activity, chase native waterfowl from their nests, and reduce the usable areas for native species. Described by CDFW as voracious

feeders, they consume large quantities of submerged aquatic vegetation, robbing native species of food. They are found in Suisun Marsh, in Sonoma County, and recently in Marin where they have been observed at Bahia and our Simmons Slough properties. Neither Wild Turkeys nor Mute Swans have predators, unless they happen to cross paths with a coyote or mountain lion.

Perhaps our newest invasive threat is nutria, a 3-foot-long, 20-pound rodent native of South America, imported into the US more than a century ago for its fur. Nutria prefer wet habitats and are a serious problem in Louisiana and other states where feral populations have established, tearing up land, levees and vegetation. Fortunately, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is moving to address the threat.

Attempts to protect our native species and habitats by eliminating invasives are, unfortunately, often defeated by public sentiment advocating for keeping the non-native species or by not using effective removal methods. Many scientific studies have documented that domestic cats kill millions of native birds annually but that seems to make no difference to some.

For the sake of the ecosystems and our own health we need to ensure our native plants and animals survive. Each loss of habitat and species reduces the gene pool and the resilience of the ecosystem. If all we have is an uncontrolled preponderance of non-native species, our native ecosystems will not survive, and our own survival will be at risk.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Plant native species** in your yard – avoid invasives
- **Support the removal of invasive plants and animals** on public and private property
- **Remove invasive plants from your property** and participate in organized volunteer removal work
- **Join and support groups that are removing invasives** and restoring habitats, such as California Invasive Plant Council, Marin Audubon Society, and the Native Plant Society
- **Support local, state and federal legislation for funding** and other efforts to remove invasive plants and animals
- **Attend a MAS Conservation Committee meeting** for more information

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Stewardship on MAS property now turns to weed control; they are growing like the proverbial "weeds." Radish and Italian thistle are two of the earlier bloomers and seed producers. Now is the time to stop them. They are both pretty easily pulled from the wet soil. Rain will cancel our workdays.

Is one of our project areas in your neighborhood? Act locally and join us on a workday. Witness restoration first-hand and be a part of it. We all make a difference.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: April 6, May 4

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Dr. directly across from the main Ring Mountain trailhead near the Montessori School.

Bahia, Novato:

If you'd like to help, please contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: April 13, May 11

Meet at the end of Industrial Way (near Cost Plus Plaza).

Contact Martha Jarocki, marthajarocki@gmail.com or phone 415/461-3592.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Dave Chenoweth, Bob Hinz, John Perone, Lowell Sykes

THANK YOU, DONORS

Joanne M. Arauzo, Benevity Community Impact Fund, William A. Clarke, Ruth Collins, M. Geoffrey Cutler, Dell Giving (employee), Karen Guasco, Peter Hensel, Roger Hooper, Lawrence Lossing & Ann Elston, Sarah Martin, Patricia Minor, Deborah Piattelli, Alison Quoyeser, Retirement Capital Strategies, Marianna Riser, Richard W. Scott, Virginia Soper, John & Jill Templeton, Christine Wood

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

James Cleaves, Jane Cooper, Rowena DeMayo, JF Garcia, Valerie Hetherington, Bette Lombardi, Achilles W Malet III, Sharon Miller, Warren Perry, Deborah Piattelli, Beatrice Screve, Pamela Shandrick, William Solomon, Linda Zercher

MAS EVENTS BY EMAIL

Subscribe to Marin Audubon's online mailing list to receive one email per month on the first day of the month listing field trips, workshops, and the speaker series presentation for the month. To subscribe, go to MAS's home page, www.marinaudubon.org, click the SUBSCRIBE button on the right side.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

NORTON POND

Last month we reported on a possible blocked culvert adjacent to a pond MAS owns along Norton Avenue at Black Point. Based on engineering advice, we have decided to wait until summer, when the waters have receded and we can see what is going on with the culvert. Right now, with so much water in the pond, if the pipe were cleared, there is a risk of causing significant erosion of the slough. The risk of flooding adjacent properties is low because there is some flow from the pond through the culvert, and the pond can expand onto a floodplain to the east.

We are keeping an eye on conditions and communicating with the neighbors, trying to get them all involved. Four of the six property owners have agreed to participate in a joint effort to clear the culvert, should that need to be done.

NEW PROPERTY AT BLACK POINT

When we purchased the 2.6-acre property last fall near Bayview Avenue at Black Point, it had a large swath of French Broom at the base of the hills. The area was too big for us to clear with volunteers, so we contracted with the Center for Environmental and Social Sustainability to pull the broom by hand. The crew of five began pulling on March 7 and, with pleasant weather, were finished rather quickly on March 12. The cleared area now

looks great. The removal left some bare ground but also freed some native plants. Of particular note is Poison Oak, a native vine/shrub that is wonderful habitat for native wildlife. The crew had an interesting encounter with a native skunk who was apparently hiding in a broom patch and they had to run to escape its spray.

Now that the land looks great, we have to monitor and remove the broom seedlings that undoubtedly will sprout. We also will be scattering seeds of native grass in the hopes of minimizing return of the broom and planting native grasses.

CORTE MADERA

Our plants at Corte Madera are loving the rain. They will be establishing their root systems without the March help of our volunteers in removing the competing non-natives, though. The scheduled workday was rained out, but we are looking forward to a rain-free April workday.

TRIANGLE MARSH

Volunteers removed some invasive plants in the previous two years' Purple Needlegrass plantings in a very abbreviated workday on the rainy first Saturday of the month. After that, volunteers had a make up workday and finished transplanting the remainder of the Purple Needlegrass plugs.

MARIN BIRDLOG: FEBRUARY 2019

By Noah Arthur

February is the last month of true winter in Marin, and is often highlighted by herring spawns and accompanying rare gulls and waterfowl. This year, many rarities that were found earlier in the winter continued into February, including the **Little Blue Heron** in San Rafael, several **Cattle Egret** at McInnis Park near Las Gallinas, two **Black-headed Grosbeaks** in Inverness, the **Red Fox Sparrow** in Marshall, at least one **Townsend's Solitaire** on Mt. Tam, and wintering **Caspian Terns** at various locations. The long-staying **Black Vulture** also made a few appearances around Bolinas.

There were relatively few new rare finds this month, most being waterfowl. The first was a male hybrid **Scaup X Tufted Duck** at the Richardson Bay herring spawn on the 2nd (DDS); it was initially thought to be a pure Tufted Duck and caused some excitement and discussion.

A pair of **Redheads** were on the Bay near Pickleweed Park on the 5th (LH).

An unusual find on the 11th was a **Ring-necked Pheasant** calling at Hamilton Wetlands (DW).

On the 12th, a **Palm Warbler** was at Las Gallinas, possibly one of the same ones seen



Cattle Egrets

William Legge

there early in the winter (JCS).

On the 24th, a '**Eurasian' Green-winged Teal** was found at Las Gallinas (BA). Also on the 24th, a **Long-tailed Duck** was with Surf Scoters on the sea offshore of Abbotts Lagoon (BH). On the 27th, three **Tundra Swans** were in a flooded field along Olive Ave. in Novato, before flying off towards Highway 37 (LC).

Observers and Acronyms **BA:** Bob Atwood, **BH:** Burr Heneman, **DDS:** Dave DeSante, **DW:** Dave Weber, **JCS:** Juan-Carlos Solis, **LC:** Lucas Corneliussen, **LH:** Lisa Hug

PINE MOUNTAIN & KENT LAKE BIRDING HIKE

Marin Municipal Water District

Friday, May 3, 2019

9 AM to 3:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

The chaparral hillsides, grasslands, riparian and oak forests between Pine Mountain and Kent Lake are some of the least visited lands in Marin. On this moderately challenging eight-mile hike we will explore these habitats in search of some of the less common breeding birds in the county including **Ash-throated Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Black-throated Gray Warbler and Rufous-crowned Sparrow**. Our loop hike will involve a car shuttle and may include a visit to Carson Falls and Pine Mountain, the second highest point in Marin. Besides the varied birds here, the botanical display in the serpentine soils is rich as well.

Participants should have sturdy foot wear.

DIRECTIONS: From downtown Fairfax take the Bolinas-Fairfax Rd. for approximately 8 miles to Alpine Dam. We will meet at the north end of the dam at 9 AM. Allow 1/2 hour for the drive from Fairfax.

BEST OF MITCHELL CANYON

Contra Costa County

Saturday, May 4, 2019

8 AM to 12 Noon

With Bruce Mast

Mitchell Canyon, on Mount Diablo's northern flank is one of the best examples of mid-elevation riparian habitat in the East Bay. Along with numerous avian residents, spring brings an assortment of neotropical migrants. The canyon is also famous for its spring butterflies and wildflowers, including the rare endemic Mount Diablo globe lily (also called fairy lantern).

Join us for a spring birding walk along Mitchell Canyon and Red Road trails. We will walk about 4 miles through oak savannah, mixed woodland, riparian habitats, and a little way up into chaparral/sage scrub. The route has some ups and downs and a total elevation increase of up to 500 feet, depending on how far up Red Road Trail we go.

Meet at the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center at 8 AM. We will bird until noon. You may wish to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy back at the Visitor Center.

DIRECTIONS: The address for the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center is 96 Mitchell Canyon Rd., Clayton, CA 94517. There are several possible routes to our destination. Check Google Maps for the latest traffic conditions, and allow plenty of time for your drive.

MIX CANYON MIGRATION

Blue Ridge, Solano & Napa Counties

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

7:30 AM to 2 PM

With Peter Colasanti & Luanna Helfman

Everybody talks about spring migration, but who ever really sees it happening? You might at the top of Mix Canyon the

first week of May. If conditions are right, there's sometimes a torrent of passerines crossing low over the ridge from their Central Valley flyway in Solano towards forested regions in Napa and beyond for a two-county birding experience you're not likely to forget. Peter will be on site by 6:30 AM where we'll stay in place until folks show up. Last year the migration peaked at about 7:45 AM and included over 400 birds. Possibilities include **Calliope Hummingbird** and **Bell's Sparrow**.

Later we'll visit Rockville Park for a short hike. This park has a \$3 Day Use Fee per person.

DIRECTIONS: From I-80 east toward Sacramento take Exit 51A for Lagoon Valley Road toward Cherry Glen Rd. Go left/north on 179/Pleasant Valley Rd. Go 7.5 miles to a left on Mix Canyon Rd. At the top of the ridge take a right on Blue Ridge Rd. driving north. At about mile 6.0 (there are mileposts) the road goes through forest. We'll meet in the low saddle just past the end of this forest.

Be sure to watch for cyclists on the steep and narrow sections of this road. Mix Canyon is a popular destination for riders who want to be challenged. With an average grade of 10.3%, the road contains California's steepest mile at a 15.8% grade.

SIERRA VALLEY OVERNIGHT TRIP

Highway 89 North of Truckee

Registration & MAS Chapter-Supporting Membership Required

Registration Opens April 15, 2019

June 21-22, 2019

With Rich Cimino

The valley floor of this popular Sierra birding destination is covered with sagebrush scrub, broken by freshwater marshes, grasslands and riparian woodland. The western portion of Sierra Valley supports unique vernal pools and the entire edge of the valley supports coniferous forest and chaparral, protecting the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. For a list of birds seen in this Important Bird Area (IBA), check out both Plumas and Sierra County checklists <https://ebird.org/printableList?regionCode=L1007569&yr=last10&m=5> and <https://ebird.org/printableList?regionCode=L109258&yr=last10&m=5>. Many of the birds on these lists will be present at the time of our visit.

This popular trip will fill quickly, so sign up right away if you want to join our group. The trip will be limited to 15 participants. Although there is no charge, you must be a Chapter-Supporting Member of Marin Audubon to participate. To sign up for the trip, email Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net. Be sure to provide your name(s), email address and phone number.

If you are not yet a Marin Audubon Chapter-Supporting Member, please sign up at www.marinaudubon.org prior to registering for this trip. Participants will be responsible for their own lodging or camping arrangements in the Sierraville, Truckee or Portola areas. Plan to arrive in the area by the evening of June 20. Those confirmed on the trip will receive additional information and instructions prior to the trip.

SPRING BIRD SONGS CLASSES

Registration now open

Five Brooks – Thursday, May 9

Big Rock – Tuesday, May 14

Mount Burdell – Thursday, May 16

7:30 to 11:30 AM

With Lisa Hug

Spring is the best time of year to hear and learn bird songs. Males are full of hormones and bursting with song. Many neotropical migrants are returning and vying for mates and territories. It is a very exciting time of year, so even if you dislike getting up early, it might be worth your while to join one or more of these classes. Participants will be asked to stay quiet to enable us to listen to the myriad of bird sounds.

There will be a \$10 fee for each class, or you may enroll at the first class for all three sessions at a discounted price of \$25.

We will collect payment at the beginning of each class and request payment by check or exact amount of cash. Each class will be limited to 15 participants. To sign up for one or more of these classes, email Jeanine Starritt at jeanineis@comcast.net. Be sure to include the name(s) of the session(s) you wish to join and your phone number. Participants will be contacted to confirm registration, and a wait list will be created if registration exceeds available space. Please be sure to notify us if you are unable to attend as planned.

DIRECTIONS TO FIVE BROOKS: From

Fairfax, take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. approximately 15 miles. Turn left on Hwy 1. Turn right at Five Brooks in 3.5 miles. We will meet at the Five Brooks parking area. Restrooms available.

DIRECTIONS TO BIG ROCK TRAILHEAD:

From Hwy 101 in San Rafael, take the exit for Lucas Valley Rd. west approximately 5.5 miles (look for the big rock on the left). The trailhead is on the south side of Lucas Valley Rd. No restrooms available.

DIRECTIONS TO MOUNT BURDELL: Take

Hwy 101 to Novato. Exit at San Marin Dr./Atherton Ave. At the end of the exit ramp, turn west (left) on San Marin Dr. Go approximately 2 miles and turn right on San Andreas Dr. Park on the street near the end of the road. No restrooms available.



The Rail

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SAVE THE DATE

- May 3 **Field Trip:** Pine Mountain & Kent Lake
With David Wimpfheimer
- May 4 **Field Trip:** Best of Mitchell Canyon
With Bruce Mast
- May 7 **Field Trip:** Mix Canyon Migration
With Peter Colasanti & Luanna Helfman
- May 9 **Class:** Bird Songs at Five Brooks
With Lisa Hug
- May 12 **MAS Mother's Day Picnic**
- May 18 **Field Trip:** Mount Burdell & Stafford Lake
With Jim White & Bob Battagin
- June 21-22 **Overnight Field Trip:** Sierra Valley
Registration opens April 15, 2019
With Rich Cimino

Check website for updates and details

♻️ Printed on 100% recycled paper

SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

We invite you to become a Chapter-supporting member of Marin Audubon Society (MAS) to support our important habitat protection and restoration work, conservation advocacy, our full calendar of birding field trips and speakers and our newsletter, *The Rail*. Marin Audubon is a chapter of National Audubon (NAS). However, becoming a **Chapter-Supporting Member** of MAS is separate and distinct from a membership in NAS. While MAS works with NAS on issues of mutual concern, we are a separate non-profit Section 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization. Marin-based NAS members do receive this MAS newsletter, *The Rail*, however we encourage all NAS members to also become Chapter-supporting members of MAS to support our local work. Very little of our funding comes from NAS, and we rely on our MAS Chapter-supporting members and donors to help us fund our land acquisitions, restorations, habitat protection, conservation advocacy, this newsletter and our local programs.

If you're not already a Chapter-supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors and relatives to join us, too.

You can join MAS or make a donation on our website using your credit card or PayPal by going to www.marinaudubon.org. Alternatively, you can join by filling out this form and sending us your payment by mail.

ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO JOIN NATIONAL AUDUBON FOR THE FIRST TIME.

MAS will receive 100% of your initial membership if you enter **MAS's chapter code C04** on your application. To join, go to www.audubon.org/join.

The best option for the birds: Join MAS **and** NAS.

Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

- Enroll me as a Chapter-Supporting Member
- Renewal
- New Member
- \$25 Annual rate for students (18 years and under) and seniors (65 and over)
- \$35 Basic
- \$50 Sponsor
- \$500 Patron
- \$100 Sustaining
- \$1,000 Benefactor
- Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ _____

- Master Card
- Visa

Fill out form and mail to:
Membership Secretary
Marin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 599
Mill Valley, CA 94942

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