



Ed Harper

Gray Crowned-Crane

Our January gathering provides a heavy dose of stunning photography and informative narration featuring the wildlife of East Africa. Our speaker, Ed Harper, is a veteran of many trips to East Africa. Whether you are interested in seeing Mountain Gorilla or Shoebill from Uganda, Black Rhinoceros or Grevy's Zebra from Kenya, or Cheetah, Leopard, and Caracal from Tanzania, this program has it all! Of course there will be a plethora of birds, a life-long passion defining Ed Harper's life. Impressive birds of prey, colorful kingfishers, rollers, bee-eaters, sunbirds, weavers, and much more highlight this outstanding program. Ed Harper and his wife, Susan Scott, have over 20 visits to East Africa. Expect a dynamic presentation packed with informative natural history and jaw-dropping imagery.

Ed Harper is a retired mathematics professor from American River College in Sacramento. His interest in birds began during his early childhood in Montana. He has photographed over 800 species of birds in North America and many more elsewhere.

Ed first started leading bird tours for Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1980. Presently, he and his wife operate Sandpiper Journeys, a touring company specializing in small groups.



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Anchor Outs



Bob Hinz

A few of the more than 200 anchor-outs in Richardson Bay.

Applause to the Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) Board for approving an Enhanced Enforcement Plan at its December meeting, and to the City of Sausalito which, through its threat to withdraw from the RBRA, seems to have motivated the current approach. The Plan includes a \$20,000 increase in contributions of member cities and the county to fund: 1) removal of unoccupied marine debris; 2) removal of unattended moorings and floats, 3) additional enforcement of vessel registration requirements, and 4) increased budget allocation of \$10,000 for legal research and defense. Also approved was a recommendation that the RBRA Board hire a permanent Executive Director.

It is estimated that about 30 unoccupied vessels are in the category of unoccupied/unseaworthy, in other words marine debris, in addition to another 50-70 vessels that are already planned for removal with an existing grant. California law requires that all vessels be registered with the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, or federally registered. Police will intensify their efforts to remove 60 unattended mooring balls

and floats that have been illegally placed, and are a navigation hazard and an environmental risk. Coordination among RBRA member jurisdictions will continue. The staff report also recognizes that moving forward should include community outreach to work with housing services and other assistances for people living on the water.

Efforts to address occupied vessels or attended moorings would be delayed until an Executive Director is identified. We anticipate some difficulty when the question of dealing with occupied vessels is addressed because of the interest of some RBRA directors in approving long-term living on the bay by establishing a mooring field that boats can tie up to. Permanent living on the Bay, however, is a violation of the public trust doctrine which holds that public waters are reserved for public uses including navigation, fishing and commerce as well as wildlife habitat. Permanent residence on boats is a purely private use that precludes public trust uses of the waters they cover.

A recent letter from an attorney representing *continued on page 4*

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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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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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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 \$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 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

As we face the new year with uncertainty and perhaps trepidation, we need to work hard to keep our spirits up and have a positive approach for the future. With the recent appointment of Scott Pruitt as Head of the EPA, things are looking especially bad. I am reminded of the days of the anti-environmental Dept. of Interior Secretary James Watt. We survived his regime and so did our environment. I recall that it brought environmental groups to work closer together. So don't give up hope. Our environment is resilient, and so are we. Keep busy with focus on what is important to you and what you can do something about. Locally at least the election was a positive for the environment. There are many opportunities. And we need to work together to ensure we keep progressing forward. There are lots of organizations to work with. Marin Audubon offers conservation advocacy, bird protection as well as habitat restoration activities, and we welcome members to join with us. At least the weather is smiling on us—the rain has come, let's hope it continues.

We are saddened this month by the unexpected death of long-time Marin supervisor Gary Giacomini. Gary was an effective and powerful politician who worked for the environment and folks of other interests. He is rightfully credited with establishing A-60 zoning to protect Marin's agriculture. After

leaving office and working with a major law firm, he continued to be a powerful force. He was frequently seen at Supervisors' and other public meetings representing clients of varying interests. But we knew his heart was with us. He worked with us behind the scenes on efforts to protect several major baylands properties. He will be missed.

A hearty thank you to everyone who has responded to our winter appeal letter with a donation. Contributions to this appeal all go to support the expenses of our organization: parcel taxes on our properties, rent to the Sanctuary for our meetings, honoraria for our field trip leaders, insurance for our members, etc. Our other direct mail appeal in spring appeal is for our properties. I emphasize that with no paid staff or office upkeep, ALL of your contributions directly go to support our organization so that we can continue to benefit wildlife and habitat and educate members about these resources.

We will still have one more Christmas Bird Count, the Southern Marin Count, which will take place January 31, New Year's Eve, after this newsletter comes out. Contact Ed Nute (smc.bc.marinaudubon@gmail.com) to participate.

You will find the second, and last, installment of Roger Harris' informative and upbeat speech at our 60th Anniversary on page 6.

Have a Happy New Year holiday!

ATTENTION eBIRD USERS!

Make Your Bird Sightings Count Twice to Protect Habitat

Submit your bird sightings, particularly of special status species such as Ridgway's Rail, not only to eBird, but send them to the California Natural Diversity Database as well. Lists of special status species as well as a link to the database are at www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/SSC.

The Natural Diversity Database is a database system run by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) that keeps track of species and their locations throughout the state. It is probably the main go-to source for consultants preparing EIRs. It can be accessed easily and at no cost so consultants don't have to do surveys themselves. Its data is cited in most EIRs as comprehensive and authoritative. In fact, it has been years behind in entering species observed.

Recently, CDFW invested more resources into upgrading and data entry so sightings

are now entered more quickly. The system, however, has a limited number of contributors which also limits its value as a resource to determine species populations and distributions. CDFW is encouraging contributions from experienced birders.

To contribute to protecting the birds you love to see, submit your sightings to the Natural Diversity Database. Information about how to submit your data is easy to find on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife website at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB>.

We're excited to be presenting a workshop of eBird this month. See page 5 for how to sign up to learn how to enter data and use eBird to enhance your own birding. Space is extremely limited so sign up *right now*.

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 THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD)

San Rafael

Thursday, January 5, 2016

9 AM to Noon

With Susan Kelly and David Sexton

The Las Gallinas ponds are the birding community's nickname for the treatment ponds and surrounding agricultural fields and tidal marsh at LGVSD's Wastewater Treatment Reclamation Project. The area includes two treated wastewater storage ponds, a freshwater pond with islands for nesting habitat, and several miles of flat levee trails. It attracts thousands of birds, including waterfowl, waders, songbirds and varied raptors. Our December field trip at this location tallied 53 species including Cackling Goose, Virginia Rail (heard only), the previously spotted Palm Warbler, and 9 duck species including 4 Ring-necked Ducks. Each month seems to yield an interesting, and often unexpected, species.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. Especially good for beginners, this casual walk on two miles of flat trails is fun and informative. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, and there are usually several experienced birders to assist. You don't even have to arrive on time because we spend the first 30-60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond and the group is easy to find. Heavy rain cancels.

WHAT TO BRING: Plenty of water and snacks, binoculars and bird guide if you have them.

FIELD CHECKLIST: If you'd like a copy of the eBird checklist for Las Gallinas, email Susan at quailfriend@yahoo.org.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd 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. There is an outhouse in the parking area for public use or you can use the bathrooms at nearby McInnis Park.

BIRDING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE Tomales, Lawson's Landing, & Chileno Valley

Friday, January 13, 2017

9 AM to 3:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

This field trip is a repeat of last year's popular exploration of the less familiar habitats in Marin near the town of Tomales. We will meet at the Tomales Bakery, and our itinerary for the day will depend on where the birds are. Our first destination will be Lawson's Landing, a private resort near the mouth of Tomales Bay. Loons, grebes (including Red-necked

Grebe), ducks, and Brant can be quite numerous here. Shorebirds are diverse here as well. After birding the coast, the rest of the day may be spent covering the open grasslands, wetlands, and forests of this part of Marin. Raptor sightings may include Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, and Merlin, and, if we are lucky, we may spot the now uncommon-in-Marin Loggerhead Shrike.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at the Tomales Bakery at 9 AM. Plan on arriving early to sample the delicious pastries. If the bakery is closed, the deli nearby has a nice variety of food and beverages. Check your map for your best route to Tomales. You can head west from Highway 101 at Old Redwood Hwy in Petaluma or from Novato at San Marin Dr. The address of the bakery is 27000 Hwy 1, Tomales. Allow about an hour from Marin. Light rain will not cancel this trip, but a heavy storm will.

RICHARDSON BAY/AUDUBON CENTER Tiburon

Thursday, January 19, 2017

9:00 AM to Noon

With Bob Hinz

We'll start with a walk through the Richardson Bay Audubon Center property to the "back beach" where with scopes we can see the eastern shores of the islands as well as the bay. After going over the Center's hill, we'll go down the street to the mudflats at Blackie's Pasture where we can expect shorebirds and gulls with grebes and ducks farther offshore.

DIRECTIONS: The Richardson Bay Audubon Center is at 376 Greenwood Beach Rd. Take the Tiburon Blvd. exit from Hwy 101 and drive about 0.8 mile to Greenwood Cove Rd. At the traffic light turn right toward the Audubon Center, that is about 0.5 mile farther.

BOLINAS LAGOON

No. 1, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, January 21, 2016

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Join us as we begin our fourth season of Birding in Marin with Jim and Bob. Last year for the first time, our group reached Jim's initial goal of spotting 200 bird species during the year! Now we invite you to help us break this 200 "ceiling" by participating in our 2017 trips to twelve of Marin's most productive birding hot spots.

Bolinas Lagoon, one of Marin's Important Bird Areas (IBA), is home to many resident bird species and also serves as a wintering ground for thousands of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. We will scan the lagoon from our meeting area and from two or three other pullouts along our route. Then we will drive 3 miles to the Duxbury

Reef overlook to see what is happening on and over the ocean. The Bolinas Mesa oxidation ponds often provide another good place to look for birds. We will then take a lunch break in downtown Bolinas. After lunch with the lower tide we will look for shorebirds near the Pine Gulch Creek delta.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at 8:30 AM on Hwy 1 at the Stinson/Bolinas Primary School, which is 1.5 miles north of the central Stinson Beach stop sign. Heavy rain cancels.

CYPRESS GROVE RESEARCH CENTER

Wednesday, January 25, 2017

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 feature 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 Hwy 1, about 1/2 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. Heavy rain cancels.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

► Trip Full – Wait List Only

Departure/return at Antioch Marina

Sunday, February 5, 2017

(Super Bowl Sunday)

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

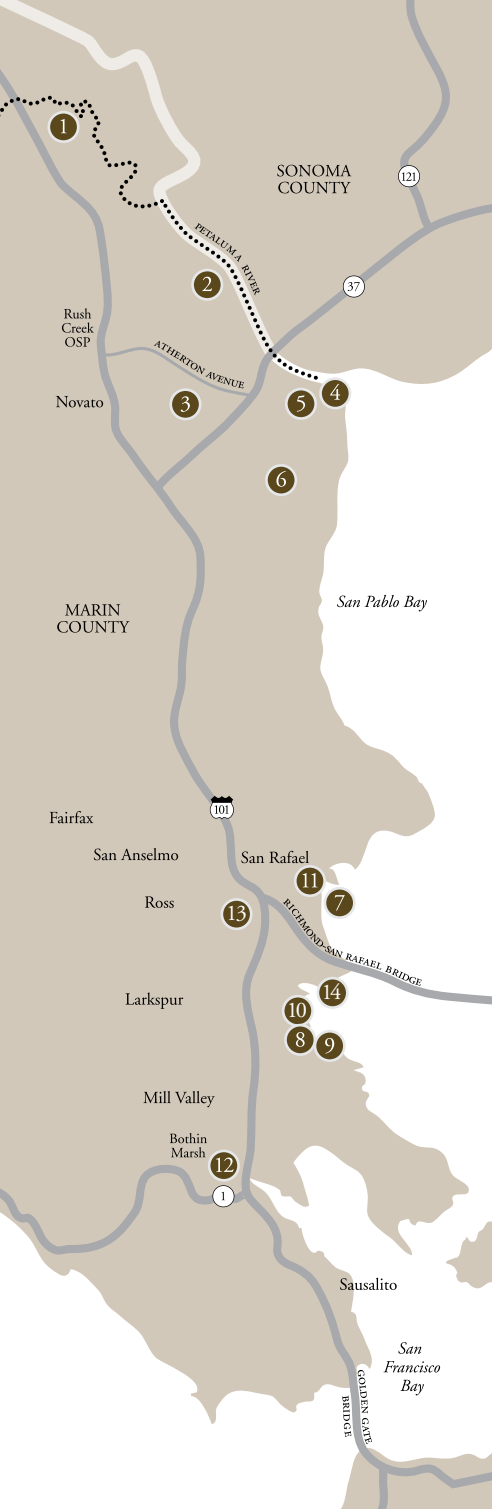
With David Wimpfheimer

All available spaces on this boat trip were filled by mid-afternoon on the first day of registration! Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions the week before the trip. If you wish to be included on the wait list for this outing, contact Jane Medley at janermedley@gmail.com. Be sure to include the name, email address, and phone number for each possible passenger.

For a complete description of this trip, consult our December *Rail*, available at www.marinaudubon.org.

CONSERVATION

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



ANCHOR OUTS

continued from page 1

Schoonmaker Marina to the RBRA conveyed problems the marina is having with anchor-outs. The problems include anchor-outs using Schoonmaker facilities as if they were their “private rest stop,” stealing water, dumping garbage, and repeated incidents of boats coming off moorings. The letter gave formal notice that Schoonmaker will “hold the RBRA, as well as any other applicable agency legally responsible and liable for any bodily injury and property damage that occurs ... from their failure to enforce the current laws and ordinances ...”

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Residents of Sausalito, Mill Valley, Tiburon and Belvedere and County sections of Richardson Bay should let their councils and the county supervisor know that you approve of the recent approach and support strong enforcement to move all permanent residents from Richardson Bay.

NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL UPDATE

Our Case Management conference was held on December 12 during which dates were agreed upon. Our first settlement conference was held on December 20 and negotiations continue.

GGNRA RELEASES DOG MANAGEMENT FEIS

On December 8, Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) with Preferred Alternative for Dog Management. The chosen alternative, informed by the 4,100 comments that were received over the course of the four year planning process, is basically the same as the Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS with some changes. In Marin there is only one change – the addition of an on-leash loop at Kaashi Loop trail at Muir Woods. There are five other changes: a new voice and sight control area and dog-free areas at Crissy Field, realigned and expanded on-leash area at Baker Beach, an additional on- and off-leash trail at Fort Funston, and several other expanded dog areas further south.

We commend GGNRA staff for this difficult and complex task of coming up with a management plan that will be more protective of

wildlife than the conditions that exist now, yet one that, we think, provides more than generous access for dogs both on- and off-leash. To our knowledge, it excludes areas with endangered and special status species, mission blue butterfly and snowy plover habitat, from damaging dog use while still allowing on- and off-leash dogs in less environmentally damaging areas. Wildlife is expected to be more protected as dog conflicts will be reduced. The park is home to more endangered and threatened species than Yosemite, Yellowstone, and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks combined.

Dog-free areas are also identified, so there will be more areas where people can enjoy nature without dogs around, and fewer conflicts between user groups should be expected.

The National Park Service will now publish a record of decision in the Federal Register in January 2017, and publication of the Final Rule, that will specify an effective date, will follow. Implementation of the Plan will include outreach, education and signage.

We continue to have concerns about compliance, enforcement and precedent set by the Plan. This is the only park within the National Park system that allows dogs to be off-leash. Of the 22 locations open for dog walking at GGNRA, six allow dogs under voice and sight control (off-leash). The GGNRA Plan is likely to open the door for other parks to weaken regulations protecting wildlife by allowing dogs off-leash.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Write to the local press and to GGNRA that you support GGNRA's preferred alternative and why. GGNRA is receiving many objections from dog-owners. It is important that they hear from supporters of protecting habitats.

CORTE MADERA INN RECIRCULATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (REIR)

A REMINDER that the comment period for the Corte Madera Inn Recirculated EIR ends on January 3. The recirculated EIR was commissioned to address the new information that widgeon grass, an indicator species for wetlands, is present at the on-site pond.

While the REIR acknowledges the presence of widgeon grass and reports that it is identified as a “sensitive species” by the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, it discounts the value of

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Petaluma Marsh | 180 acres |
| 2. Bahia | 60 acres |
| 3. Simmons Slough | 144 acres |
| 4. Norton Avenue Pond | 4 parcels |
| 5. Black Point Parcels | 2 parcels |
| 6. Arroyo San Jose | 2 parcels |
| 7. Tidelands at Murphy's Rock | 34 acres |
| 8. Corte Madera Marsh | 1.8 acres |
| 9. Triangle Marsh | 31 acres |
| 10. San Clemente Creek | 4.34 acres |
| 11. Tiscornia Marsh | 20 acres |
| 12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio | 2 acres |
| 13. Cal Park | <1 acre |
| 14. Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion Site | 5.2 acres |

the pond's widgeon grass by saying that the site is disturbed and there are other places locally where the plant exists. Similarly, the REIR says there are other places where the Black-crowned Night-Herons can go, so the on-site roost is not important. The consultants also claim the loss of the pond would be adequately mitigated.

The Town needs to hear that the community DOES think that the pond and the Black-crowned Night-Heron roost are important. You can tell them, in your own words, that even if a site is disturbed and because there may be other possible roost sites, does not mean that this pond should be filled. If those other roost sites were so desirable, the herons would be using them now. Further, there is no evidence that the proposed mitigation, which is 20 miles away and a different wetland type, would in any way mitigate for the loss of this pond in Corte Madera.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Submit comments by January 3 via email or letter to the Town of Corte Madera. Your comments should address any or all of the issues in the paragraph above. To be most effective, put your concerns in your own words. You can view the REIR on the Town's website at <http://www.ci.corte-madera.ca.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=91> and comment on specific sections.

MAS CORTE MADERA RESTORATION PROJECT

On November 29 the Corte Madera Planning Commission unanimously approved MAS's restoration project on the property we purchased at the end of Industrial Way. The Commission sent the project on to the Town Council with recommendations to certify the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and to approve the project and requested zoning and land use designation changes.

At the hearing, we emphasized that the primary project goal is to restore tidal marsh, that another important goal is to remove the damaging public access from the marsh habitat, and that the project is a habitat restoration project, not a recreation project.

There was one speaker who enthusiastically supported our project. Several written comments came from folks who wanted more access, specifically through the northwest corner of our property. That area is part of the transition zone/refugia habitat we plan for endangered species and other wildlife, and an area where marshes can migrate landward with sea level rise. The transition zone, which would be located on the western half of MAS's property, will be raised 6-8 feet, graded into a

gradual slope and vegetated with native plants. It will be suitable to provide cover for Ridgway's Rails when they must leave the marsh during high tides and hide to avoid being caught by raptors. A path through this habitat is incompatible with use as high tide refuge habitat for wildlife. There are other obstacles to providing this access: tidal marsh would have to be filled to connect a trail to the SMART right-of-way and we do not have license from SMART to direct people onto their property.

Our entire site is being restored to habitat, except for the public access path we are planning along the north boundary of our property. A path in this location will allow visitors to view the marsh without damaging it and disturbing its wildlife. Visitors can move from our property onto the CDFW property where we will improve conditions on the entry road by filling the ruts and grading to an even surface.

We again thank Marge Macris for her work producing the Initial Study.

We have also been busy working on the joint application to regulatory agencies (Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board and Bay Conservation and Development Commission) for permits needed to implement our restoration project. We are aiming to submit the application by the end of December.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Send a letter of support to the Corte Madera Town Council or attend the hearing on January 17 on the Restoration Project at the Corte Madera Town Council.

Waterbird Festival January 21

Celebrate scaups, scoters, cormorants and more! Visit Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary for naturalist-led bird walks, exclusive field trips, and fun bird-themed activities. Bring a pair of binoculars or use our spotting scopes to see the waterbirds that call Richardson Bay home.

These are some of the things planned:

- **Peter Pyle** Gull identification bird walk
- **John Muir 'Jack' Laws** sketching class
- **Rich Cimino** Birding Basics
- Bay boat trip on the **Outer Limits**
- Kayak and paddleboard trip on Richardson Bay/Aramburu Isle
- Photo exhibit of Audubon Magazine's **2016 Photography Award winners**
- Speakers, including **John Kelly** (Audubon Canyon Ranch) and **Wendy Schackwitz** (Napa-Solano Audubon)

See <http://richardsonbay.audubon.org/programs/waterbird-festival> for the festival schedule, more details and registration.

GOOD NEWS FOR SALMON

The MMWD fish biologist reports salmon observations in Lagunitas Creek have increased significantly this year. So far this season, in Lagunitas Creek 44 coho redds (gravel nests) and 24 Chinook redds, the most since 2006, have been seen. Also observed have been 86 coho and 23 coho redds in San Geronimo Creek, and 42 coho and 14 redds in Devil's Gulch. On one day a school of at least 60 coho were observed milling about in Samuel P. Taylor State Park. This is the largest school of coho seen in the watershed since 2004.

On a less positive note, the December 15 storm brought flooding large enough to scour the streambeds and wash away many of the salmon eggs laid so far. It is hoped that there will be many more salmon spawning during the next month to compensate for the potential loss.

eBIRD WORKSHOP

**Richardson Bay Audubon Center
Tiburon**

Saturday, January 28, 2017
8:30 AM to noon

This workshop will introduce you to eBird and offer hands-on instruction for entering data, guidance on best practices, and suggestions on how to make use of eBird data to enhance your own birding. The class will include a bird walk for collecting and entering data, both in the field and in the classroom. Much of the class will be devoted to a question and answer period where your questions and concerns can be addressed. **Be sure to bring your laptop and/or handheld device.**

Our instructor will be Dan Singer, an avid eBird user and an eBird reviewer of checklists and records for San Francisco, Marin, and Sonoma Counties. Class size is limited to 15 people with advance registration required. Contact Jane Medley at janermedley@gmail.com to register. Please include your name and phone number.

The fee for this workshop will be \$5 for Marin Audubon members and \$10 for non-members, payable at the door. If you are not already a MAS member, we invite you to join at this event. We will meet in the Audubon Center classroom where Marin Audubon's monthly Speaker Series programs are held.

Beverages and healthy snacks will be served.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

There is plenty of moisture in the soil for new and old plants. We will likely be planting at both Triangle Marsh and Bahia. The soil has plenty of moisture, of course, to help new plants establish themselves before summer. Removing invasive non-native plants is never far from our minds, but it is the new native plants that mean our removal of one weed species will not just provide an opportunity for different non-natives to grow.

Do you know anyone who needs to earn community service hours? Our restoration projects would fit the bill. 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 Saturday: January 7, February 4
Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive directly across from the main Ring Mountain trailhead.

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: January 14, February 11
Meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Drive near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.
If you would like to help, contact Jude Stalker at 415/680-6291 or volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org for more information and to be sure you can be informed about possible changes.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Dave Chenoweth, Bob Hinz, Lowell Sykes, Sam Vogel

MARIN AUDUBON IS ON FACEBOOK



Visit our Facebook page for interesting stories and events. Submit your own happenings and photos. "Like us" so that more people learn of MAS.

BENEFIT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Make your next Amazon order through AmazonSmile. For information, visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/94-6076664>.

Finally, we have early rains and it's time to plant.

BAHIA We hired Shelterbelt to plant the creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*) on the Central Peninsula. Jude Stalker's Saturday work day was cancelled due to rain.

SIMMONS SLOUGH Ed Nute and Lowell Sykes scattered native grass seed and Lowell planted coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) on the two small hills we constructed several years ago when we excavated areas so that ponds could form. We also hired Shelterbelt to plant *Elymus triticoides* and *Eleocharis macrostachya* (spikerush). Lowell also mowed Harding Grass near our gate on Atherton Avenue. We are making a specific effort to improve habitat at Simmons.

December marks the end for our Simmons Slough Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP). The project began in 2013 and has involved the mowing of invasive cocklebur and planting of several thousand rush and sedge plugs which are expected to outcompete the invasive species. Although the target goal of 50-60% cover of planted species has not been

reached, the final report indicates that many of the plants installed are "large enough to indicate successful establishment and continued future spread." This is expected to take place over the next seven or so years. *Carex praegracilis* and *Juncus articus* were most successful of the four species planted.

Funding for this SEP project was provided by the Novato Sanitary District for a spill into this property, though a program administered by the State Water Quality Control Board. The end report prepared by The Watershed Nursery and Shelterbelt Builders, Inc. is being finalized as we go to press, and will be submitted by the end of December.

TRIANGLE MARSH Volunteers planted coastal sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), Pacific aster (*Symphotrichum chilense*) and *Elymus triticoides* on the first Saturday work day. A separate area that is vegetated with non-native species, mostly Harding grass, was mowed in preparation for sheet mulching that is intended to kill the invasive plants.

Celebrating Conservation Successes: Part 2 Roger Harris' Presentation at the Marin Audubon Society's 60th Anniversary Celebration

Birds Return to Marin

Back in the 1880s, wild birds were being hunted for meat and plumes. Some like the Passenger Pigeon were hunted to extinction. In reaction, a conservation movement arose. One branch became the Audubon Societies of which we are the direct historical descendants.

Back here in Marin, although much of our environmentally valuable wetlands and uplands have been lost to development and some to invasive plants, much has also been preserved due to the efforts of citizen activists. If birds are any indication, the protection, enhancement, and re-creation of Marin's natural lands have been a conservation success story.

Hunting for bird plumes in the late 1800s and early 1900s for the millinery trade had extirpated Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, and Great Blue Herons from the Bay Area. Under protection, these showy species were making a spectacular comeback by the mid-twentieth century.

Nesting Black-necked Stilts first returned to our marshes in the mid-1960s, followed by American Avocets in 1984. In 1996, Forster's



Black-necked stilt at a nest

Terns nested for the first time in Marin County.

Canada Geese, the wild goose of yore and the scourge of golf courses of present, first nested in Marin in 1982. Common Merganser became a common nester in the county after construction of the MMWD reservoirs.

While suburban development in Marin has generally destroyed natural areas, it has also

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MARIN BIRDLOG: NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2016

By Josiah Clark

By November everything starts feeling like a Christmas Bird Count. Any remaining summer migrants are rare, big flocks of ducks and sparrows are common and the days have become noticeably shorter and colder.

It makes sense that altitudinal migrants from the mountains tend to descend from the coldest areas when the first big storms arrive, as presumably happened to two **Mountain Bluebirds** at Drake's Corner in Outer Point Reyes on 12/2 (DS).

Another winter bird from the state's interior that has been getting more common in recent years is **Sandhill Crane**. One of these showed up at the northeast boundary of the county at Laguna Lake on 11/26 and stuck around for at least several days (TB, JM).

Also on the eastern edge of the county were two apparently wintering **Caspian Terns** at Rush Creek on 12/1 (JTC). These are remarkably rare in winter in the Bay Area, though this year less so with perhaps a dozen or so scattered around SF Bay.

Just south of there on 12/3 things got much more interesting with a very rare photo documentation of a "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** at Las Gallinas Valley Wastewater Treatment Facility, a bird that apparently may have shown up at other locations as well (NA, JH).

By 11/17 few fall vagrant hounds are out looking for eastern warblers. Palomarin banders found just that, however, upon the capture of a young female **Blackburnian Warbler** at the Palomarin Field Station (RC).

And just when the period was almost up on 12/9, the first sighting of "The" **Northern Gannet** transpired on Marin's Bayside as it surveyed for baitfish before moving on (DA).



Paul Hurtado

Blackburnian Warbler

Observers and Acronyms DA: David Armstrong, DS: Dan Singer, JTC: Josiah Clark, JH: Jack Hayden, JM: Joseph Morlan, NA: Noah Arthur, RC: Renee Cormier, TB: Tony Briggs

Conservation Successes

continued from page 6

created new food sources and habitats for birds that have adapted as commensals with humans. Hooded Orioles first nested here in 1941 in ornamental palm trees. Northern Mockingbirds first nested in Marin in 1956, a beneficiary of ornamental planting of berry bushes such as *Pyracantha* and *Cotoneaster*. White-throated Swifts have benefited from nest sites created by Spanish-tiled roofs, while the construction of highway overpasses has been a boon to nesting Cliff Swallows.

After the banning of DDT use in the US in 1972, which caused egg shell thinning, numbers of Brown Pelicans have increased while Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons have returned as breeding species in Marin. All three species have recovered and have been removed from the Endangered Species list.

Also recovering from the effects of DDT was the Osprey, now a common breeding species in the county. White-tailed Kites, former victims of DDT and shootings, have made a comeback.

The dean of California ornithology, Joseph

Grinnell, wrote in 1915 that Ridgway's Rail "seems destined to early extinction." The rail is Marin Audubon's logo bird. Our conservation advocacy efforts to preserve, create, and enhance native marsh habitat for the rail has made Grinnell's prediction of a century ago at least premature.

Writing in 1927, Grinnell counted Northern Spotted Owl, Northern Saw-Whet Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, and Red-breasted Nuthatch as absent, although they may have been breeding somewhere in Marin in very low numbers. As the native forests have regenerated under the protection of park, open space, and watershed designations, these species have returned as regular breeders.

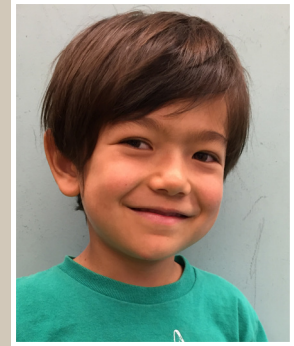
Take Home Message

Today due to conservation measures protecting natural lands and sensitive species, more bird species breed in Marin than a century ago and no regularly breeding bird species has been lost. This is due in part to the conservation efforts of the Marin Audubon Society and, by extension, all of us.

Junior Bird Watchers

By Wendy Dreskin

Junior Bird Watchers is an in-school program designed to teach elementary school children to identify birds in their neighborhoods. If you would like more information about the program please visit "Junior Birdwatchers" under the "Birds" tab on our website at www.marinaudubon.org or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



Kyle Sterling is a first grader but he passed the Junior Bird Watcher test at third grade level! The drawings in his bird journal, which he brought with him when he was tested, are awesome! He would like to see a Prairie Falcon.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

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- February 18 **Field Trip:** Nicasio/Tomaes Bay
With Jim White & Bob Battagin

Check website for updates and details

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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. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Rail*. 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 because all of your chapter-supporting dues stay with MAS.

If you're 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 website using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to www.marinaudubon.org.

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A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and chapters. With this joint membership, you receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits. However, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues.

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