



John Fowler (Wikimedia Commons)

**Steller's Jay**

The noisy, colorful Steller's Jay is instantly recognizable. Its dark blue plumage, shaggy black crest, squawking calls and boisterous behavior make it a conspicuous year-round resident of our wooded areas. Birders often ignore them and many people disdain them, but this common species has some hidden attributes that make it worth watching.

A member of the widespread corvid family, which includes jays, crows, ravens, magpies, and nutcrackers, the Steller's Jay is one of five namesakes of 18th-century German biologist, Georg Wilhelm Steller.

In this presentation you'll be treated to a living history "visit" by this lesser-known but important scientist, Dr. Steller. Dr. Steller will be brought back to life by Pete Devine, the Resident Naturalist with The Yosemite Conservancy. Pete Devine will describe Dr. Steller's life as a naturalist, his dramatic explorations of the North Pacific, and the life history of the remarkable bird that was named after him.

Devine has worked as a park ranger, river guide, archeologist, teacher and naturalist. For most of his years in Yosemite he directed the Yosemite Institute's education program for schools. He's also a birding enthusiast; his international life list of birds includes motmots, bulbuls, kakas and chiffchaffs.



# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## State of the Estuary Legacy Award



Caitlin Sweeney

**Barbara Salzman and Arthur Feinstein display their Legacy Awards with Sam Shukat, Executive Director of the State Coastal Conservancy who introduced the awardees.**

A very special honor, the Legacy Award, was bestowed on Arthur Feinstein and Marin Audubon President Barbara Salzman by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership at the recent State of the Estuary Conference. This was the first, and they say, only Legacy Award; it was granted for years of work for the Estuary. The award was presented by Sam Shukat, Executive Director of the State Coastal Conservancy. We and the audience were surprised to see Senator Diane Feinstein, via video, recognizing and thanking us for our work and speaking of her support for the Estuary.

Arthur and I got to know each other and worked together more than thirty years ago when he was with Golden Gate Audubon, before transferring to the Sierra Club. We have worked together on many regional boards and committees, the Estuary Partnership being one of them. More frequently than not, we have the same views and approach in our advocacy work and usually support each other's views. We were active with the Estuary Project/Partnership on preparing the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan which led to the establishment of the San Francisco Estuary

Partnership in 1993, and the San Francisco Estuary becoming part of the EPA's National Estuary Program. In my remarks, I urged folks, young and old, to be persistent, to stay involved, and always to speak up on behalf of the Estuary.

More on the State of the Estuary Conference in the President's Message on page 2.

### MAS Membership Secretary Needed!

Looking for a volunteer opportunity and have relational database experience? We would love to talk to you! Our current Membership Secretary will soon be retiring and we need a volunteer to take on the critical role of maintaining our membership list. If you would like to inquire about this role, please contact Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057, bsalzman@att.net; or William Legge at 415/307-2348, wgdlegge@aol.com.

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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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| Secretary               | Everett Clark 789-9224                             |
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| Editor, <i>The Rail</i> | Bob Hinz, 383-8688                                 |
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| Property Management     | Ed Nute 669-7710                                   |
| Publicity               | Barbara Freitas 497-4705                           |
| BAAC Reps               | Lowell Sykes 388-2821<br>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

It was a tremendous honor receiving the Legacy Award from the Estuary Partnership, and from folks I often disagreed with over the last 30 or so years. One often feels alone being an environmental advocate, even sometimes in a group of folks working toward the same end. There are often different ideas on a path to a goal and the relationships can get contentious. It has been most helpful, and even fun, working in tandem with Arthur Feinstein having another person speaking in agreement. Even though a legacy is something one leaves behind, in closing I noted that I am not going away but intend to continue to work to benefit the estuary.

**Our hearts go out to Sonoma, Solano, Napa and Lake County residents who are impacted by this horrendous fire.** Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bouverie Preserve has been hit hard with most of the buildings destroyed, and mountain lion project equipment was also destroyed. While the loss also of native mature woodland and grassland habitats is distressing, it is important to remind ourselves that our Mediterranean climate vegetation is fire-

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Parker addressed the importance of fire in maintaining woodland and forest habitats. Fires enhance biodiversity by allowing fire-dependent plants and mushrooms to regenerate, releasing nutrients, and reducing fuel loads.

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dependent. Vegetation may be destroyed, but, in the long term, fire has ecological benefits.

A timely article in the latest newsletter *Oaks of the California Oaks Foundation "Restoring biodiversity after fire: Report from the Sierra"* by Vivian Parker addressed the importance of fire in maintaining woodland and forest habitats. The message is that fires have many environmental benefits. They enhance biodiversity by allowing fire-dependent plants and mushrooms to regenerate, releasing nutrients, and reducing fuel loads.

For 30 years after wildfire and sometimes longer, habitat is optimal for early successional

plant species. Habitat elements needed by wildlife, cover, nesting areas, resting spots, denning locations, and forage, are available. Acorns, nuts, seeds, foliage and berries are plentiful. Structural components including snags and large down wood usually remain after fire. Ms. Parker reports that "Early successional habitat that sometimes develops following wildfire is optimal for many bird species (including neotropical migrants), game species and important ecological processes, such as nitrogen fixation."

What happens after a major fire is just as important as the fire itself. Unfortunately, many post-fire restoration efforts actually impede restoration of a natural forest habitat instead of advancing it. Important resources such as dead tree stumps are bulldozed and large down trees are logged, removing important resources. Tree replanting is often overly dense and herbicides are applied repeatedly, resulting in a monoculture of same-size trees.

Ms. Parker observes that "By creating such plantations we are essentially creating the conditions—the fuel—for the next uncharacteristic stand-replacement fire." She recommends leaving all or portions of wildfire-disturbed lands unsalvaged and unplanted to best ensure biodiversity and restoration of the natural forest community.

Early forests are the foundation of the forest foodweb. They need time to heal and grow, and will do it on their own without interference and produce a more resilient and diverse habitat. We humans are often impatient. Let's hope there is not a rush to clear and replant the burned areas in our North Bay fires, but that they are allowed to regenerate and grow as nature intended providing a plant community that is resilient to future fires and to climate change.

**Back here at MAS,** our long-time Membership Secretary Mark Forney is moving on to new challenges, so we are need of one or more volunteers to help with maintaining our membership list, communicating with members, sending renewal letters, etc. We express our great appreciation to Mark for his seven years of diligent service getting and keeping our membership lists in excellent working order. To keep it that way, we need the help of someone with computer skills. Membership is basic to our work. Our members support our work, are our eyes and ears in the community, give us standing in advocacy work and are a broad base to inform the community on environmental matters.

## 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, November 2, 2017

8:30 AM to noon – **NOTE EARLY START**  
With Bob Chilvers, Len & Patti Blumin

Beginning birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas ponds. Join our skilled leaders as we search for waterfowl, waders, songbirds, raptors, and shorebirds. With fall migration underway, we are likely to spot new arrivals and maybe even a rare, unexpected migrant such as the Palm Warbler seen by many in our group in October.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, so come assist in our search. The Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District reports that their current work on the Miller Creek project will not interfere with public access to the area, so we can continue to plan on the usual parking arrangements there.

**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.

### RODEO LAGOON ENCORE

#### Marin Headlands

Saturday, November 4, 2017

7:30 AM to noon

With William Legge and David Wiechers

Back by popular demand, William and David are offering another morning of fall birding at Rodeo Lagoon. This is their “patch” where we observed 63 species on our September walk. With large numbers of birds moving through the area this time of year it’s sure to be interesting with unusual sightings a definite possibility. We will be targeting scarcer late fall migrants. We will begin the morning with a Sea Watch at 7:30 AM. Those arriving later may join us at 8:30 AM for a circuit of the lagoon.

**DIRECTIONS:** Head south on Hwy 101 and take the last Sausalito exit just before the Golden Gate Bridge. At the exit stop sign, turn right, go under the freeway, then follow the road down to the left. Within 300 feet, turn left at the sign to the Marin Headlands (This is the only available left turn before you begin the descent into Sausalito). You should see the tunnel with the five-minute light. Proceed through the tunnel on Bunker Road to the Rodeo Lagoon Parking Lot at the end and meet by the bridge over the channel to the beach.

### LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA Sonoma County

Sunday, November 12, 2017

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 loops around a lovely pond. We may see White-tailed Kites, Red-shouldered Hawks, Lincoln’s Sparrows, Western Bluebirds, Pied-billed Grebes and any number of surprises.

Bring binoculars, water, snacks, and layered clothing. There is a restroom available. The walk should last about three and a half hours. We may explore a few other areas afterwards for people who want to continue birding.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Marin, take Hwy 101 North to Exit 488B. Merge onto Hwy 12 toward Sebastopol. The Laguna de Santa Rosa Trailhead is on Hwy 12, about 1 mile east of Sebastopol between Llano Rd. and Morris St. on the north side of the road.

### LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS AND HAMILTON WETLANDS

#### No. 11, Birding in Marin (BIM) Series

Saturday, November 18, 2017

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

The Las Gallinas ponds are a great place for good views of many kinds of ducks and raptors. This is an easy 1.5-mile walk where many other species may be seen, including Ridgway’s Rail and Sora. After a lunch break we will go to the Hamilton Wetlands in Novato. This extensive wetland was recently reconnected to the Bay after two decades of planning and work, and the birds have repopulated the area in big numbers. We will see the waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and other species that have made these new wetlands their home.

**DIRECTIONS:** We will meet at Las Gallinas. From Hwy 101, take the Smith Ranch Rd. exit east toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and continue about 0.5 mile to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at the end of the road.

### SAN FRANCISCO BAY BOAT TRIP

#### Online Signups Now Underway

Sunday, November 19, 2017

Boat departs at 9 AM and returns

at 4 PM at Berkeley Marina

With John Klobas and Sarah Brooks

The San Francisco Bay complex comprises one of the largest and most important estuaries along the Pacific Flyway and is located in our backyard, but it remains relatively unvisited. Our appreciation of the dynamics of the bay can change dramatically in the course of a day from a new

perspective on the water. Join John Klobas and his daughter Sarah Brooks for a memorable day as we cruise the bay with Ronn Patterson of Dolphin Charters in search of natural and cultural history, birds, and marine mammals.

This trip is limited to MAS chapter-supporting members only at a cost of \$105. A membership with National Audubon Society does not qualify. Our “Members Only” field trips are a specific benefit we provide to MAS chapter-supporting members for their support of Marin Audubon and the work MAS undertakes in protecting and managing local habitats. **Registration and payment for the trip are now underway.** Register at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org). For Non-MAS members we invite you to join MAS at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org) to participate in this trip. Include the name, email address, and contact phone number of each participant. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Berkeley Marina and other instructions prior to the trip.

### HAMILTON WETLANDS Novato

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

8 AM to noon

With David Sexton and Bill Jones

In an annual trip to this fabulously restored habitat, David and Bill, both Hamilton Wetlands Volunteers, will lead us to view the wetlands and celebrate the return of shorebirds to this former flight line and landing strip. The trip will start with a stop at the nursery where Nursery and Restoration Manager, Christina McWhorter, will give a brief update on the restoration and replanting progress after which our group will be allowed to visit several portions of the wetlands not usually accessible to the public.

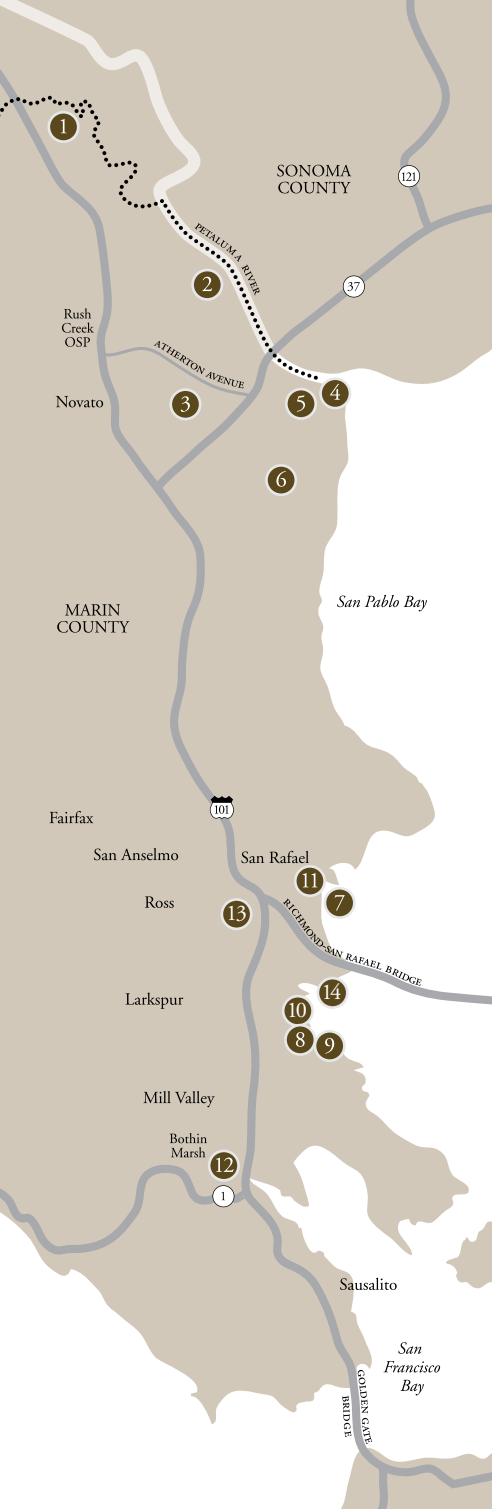
Our outing will cover both the east side and the southwest sides of the wetlands as we search for early returning shorebirds and ducks. We hope to see Sandpipers, Plovers, Yellowlegs, Willets, Long-billed Curlews, and Marbled Godwits. We may be fortunate enough to see Phalaropes, American Wigeons, Pintails, Ruddy Ducks, and Northern Shovelers of the fall migration as well as Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Herons, Grebes, Gulls and Terns.

**DIRECTIONS:** We will start at the Novato Skate Park at 1200 Hamilton Pkwy. From the north, take Exit 459 from Hwy 101 toward Ignacio Blvd, Bel Marin Keys Blvd. Turn right on Nave Dr, then left onto North Hamilton Pkwy. From the south, take exit 458 from Hwy 101 to merge onto Nave Dr toward Hamilton Field. Turn right onto Hamilton Pkwy. The skate park is on the left. We will carpool from there. We will finish at the south end of the wetlands with parking at the pool and ball fields on Hangar Ave.



## 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.



### MMWD AZALEA HILL TRAIL RESTORATION

MAS submitted comments on the Initial Study/Negative Declaration for the Azalea Hill Trail Restoration project. The project will eliminate 4.4 miles of unauthorized trails and consolidate use on a 1.5-mile-stretch of existing trail with some new segments. The project goals are to improve habitat on the 15.5-acre Azalea Hill area and protect its serpentine soils, forests, and grasslands; to improve visitor experience; and to make the trail sustainable. It appears the project is taking into consideration sensitive environmental resources so that the habitats will be improved in the overall. Our comments asked for more specific information on wetland and upland habitat impacts, specifically, the possibility of saving madrone and other native tree species, a discussion of ground-dwelling birds and impacts to seeps, wetlands and streams.

The major inadequacy of the project is the failure to address the potential adverse impacts of increased recreational use that will occur subsequent to construction of the new trail. This is the same issue that we have been addressing with the Marin County Open Space District with regard to the Hunt Camp and Contour Trails.

Unless the 4.4 miles of closure is not effective, after construction people will transfer their activities to the new trail which will result in a significant increase in use of the new Azalea Trail. Impacts of these uses include increased human presence, noise, litter, people and dogs going off trail and trampling nearby vegetation and disturbing or harming wildlife, and erosion of the trail surfaces. This trail will be open to walkers, horseback riders, cyclists and small ATV vehicles—quite a broad mix.

The Negative Declaration does not identify recreational use as an impact, therefore, it does not consider that mitigation is needed. But it is an impact. Mitigation should include monitoring of users' behavior and the resulting impacts to habitat and wildlife. Observed illegal behavior and adverse impacts should be followed up with enforcement. Enforcement should include citations for violators and trail closures if the impacts are great.

### METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION'S HIGHWAY 37 PLAN

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission has released *SR 37 Transportation and Sea Level Rise Corridor Improvement Plan* that presents

a brief analysis of conditions and identifies short-term, mid-term, and longer term possible scenarios for addressing the significant traffic congestion. Several short-term alternatives seem promising for some short-term relief: express bus service, park and ride lots and carpooling along with on-the-ground infrastructure improvements. Possible improvements include reconfiguring lanes, constructing roundabouts and adding structures to block tidal waters from specific low areas with sea walls, rock riprap and/or sheet pile walls (large heavy pieces of metal or vinyl that are pounded into the ground). The latter measures would have environmental impacts in the form of fill, usually rocks or earth. The list for long-term solutions focuses on Segment B (between Petaluma River and Sonoma Creek) and includes various options to accommodate multi-modal transportation: roadway elevated on an embankment (levee; elevated on a box-girder causeway; elevated on a slab-pier causeway box culvert); an embankment and causeway; roadway elevated on lightweight material; constructing the road on the north or south side of the existing Highway 37 leaving the existing berm. Wildlife migration would be provided by small openings for animal crossings if there is a solid barrier.

The Plan considers wetland resources, however, it proposes to deal with them by identifying mitigation in advance through off- or on-site restoration, possibly through contribution to ongoing restorations. The mitigation approach is the Regional Advanced Mitigation Planning (RAMP) process which would identify mitigation early, probably before the design is completed. This is contrary to CEQA which calls for avoidance of impacts as the preferred approach to be considered before other types of mitigations.

An overriding concern is that looking at this regional congestion problem by just looking at fixing the bottleneck by widening Highway 37, is a piecemeal approach that will have negative impacts on travel in other locations. Particularly if Highway 37 is converted to a toll road, people would decide to drive via other routes, Highways 121, 101 or 80. A broader approach of looking at traffic problems in the North Bay is needed.

### CORTE MADERA GAP CLOSURE

Another in a series of public meetings, this is the third or fourth, to plan pedestrian and bicycle access from Corte Madera Creek

#### 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  |

## CALLING ALL BIRDERS!

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WORKSHOP

#### Novato

Sunday, November 26, 2017

1 to 4 PM

With David Sexton & Susan Kelly

If you're thinking about participating in one or more of the three Christmas Bird Counts that Marin Audubon sponsors or just wondering what they're all about, join David Sexton and Susan Kelly for a hands-on training and information session. David and Susan are the organizers and compilers of the Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count in northern Marin, which will take place on Thursday, December 14th. The schedule for the Point

Reyes Count and the Southern Marin Count is on the right.

For our practice we'll meet at the picnic tables in the South Hamilton Park at 1:00 PM and spend about 30 minutes talking about the process. The talk will cover how we:

- Divide the count circle into areas and cover each area with a team of two to ten, including one or more experienced leaders.
- Record all birds seen and/or heard and explain how the birds are tallied, in taxonomic order. Each participant will receive a copy of the checklist we use for the Cheep Thrills count.
- Have one volunteer from each team record the bird counts and other important data, including the time we spend and miles we cover as we search for birds while walking, driving, bicycling, canoeing, or driving through a golf course in a cart (which David does at the Marin Country Club every year!).
- Estimate the number of birds in large flocks, skills you'll need for counting large groups of ducks, geese, shorebirds, and even robins (David once counted more than 5,000 in a flock).

After the short discussion we'll walk out on the trail to the wetlands and count birds, recording them on the checklist for practice.

Please bring binoculars, water, snacks, and a pen or pencil to record the birds you count. Dress in layers, including waterproof jackets and pants if the weather is threatening. Heavy rain will cancel this event.

**DIRECTIONS:** From south Marin: Take Hwy 101 north to Nave Drive (the first exit in Novato). Follow Nave Drive for .5 mile and at the second stoplight turn right onto Main Gate Road. Follow Main Gate Road for about .5 mile until you come to the City of Novato Arts Center (just past the Unity of Marin Church, which will be on your left). At this Y-intersection, keep to the right on S. Palm Drive (following the signs to the History Museum). Drive to the end of S. Palm Drive and then turn right onto Hangar Avenue. Stay on Hangar Ave. for .5 mile, driving past the Coast Guard Hangar, and turn right into the parking lot near Maybeck St. with a big sign that says "South Hamilton Park". Park here and walk to the playground, where you'll find us at the picnic tables.

From north of Hamilton: Take Hwy 101 south to the Bel Marin Keys/Hamilton Pkwy exit. Turn right as you exit the freeway, then turn right at the next stoplight. Drive down the frontage road past the shopping center (Safeway, etc.) to the first stoplight, which is at Hamilton Pkwy. Turn left onto Hamilton Pkwy. Follow Hamilton Pkwy to the stop sign at S. Palm Dr. Turn left onto S. Palm Dr. From here the directions are the same as from the north.

south to connect to Wornum Drive in Corte Madera. The last meeting focused on an alignment along the Frontage Road, this one made it clear that an alignment along the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve, even though it would be redundant, exorbitantly expensive and environmentally damaging, is still being considered. The Bay Trail and biking enthusiasts still want to go adjacent to the marsh regardless of expense and impacts. Interestingly, the rendering of this path shows it in a depression flanked by the train (which SMART wants to keep as an option) and a wall on the west side. Hardly provides a good view.

Little environmental information was provided to the audience. There was mention of the marsh but no information about the endangered Ridgway's Rail. One new bit of information is that the owners of the adjacent trailer court, which is being eyed for through access, are not interested in giving up some of their property so that a bike path can be on it. There is insufficient space on the existing north-south right-of-way to ensure the marsh habitat

would be protected and to construct a 12-foot-wide trail with a one-foot buffer on either side (total 14 feet) which would require raising the levee. It is also unclear how, or if, sea level rise is being considered in the planning for this path. It would be right in the way of sea level rise.

### ACQUISITION OF SAN GERONIMO GOLF COURSE

The Board of Supervisors is considering working with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to acquire the San Geronimo Golf Course located along Sir Francis Drake Blvd. in San Geronimo. After a deal to sell to a private entity fell through, the county and TPL stepped in. Larsen Creek flows through the property; it is a headwater of Lagunitas Creek which is a major spawning habitat for Coho Salmon and Steelhead in California. Marin Audubon's position is that the property and the creek should be restored to natural habitat and become part of Open Space District's Roy's Redwoods Preserve or one of the other Preserves in the area.

## 2017 Christmas Bird Counts

The 118th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season is coming at the end of the year. Administered by the National Audubon Society, CBCs are the longest-running citizen science program in the world. The Marin Audubon Society sponsors three counts with hundreds of participants from novice to expert who count every bird they encounter:

### Thursday, December 14

#### ► Cheep Thrills/Northern Marin

Sign up at <http://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>

### Saturday, December 19

#### ► Point Reyes

### Saturday, December 30

#### ► Southern Marin

Sign up at [www.marinaudubon.org/cbc\\_form.php](http://www.marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php)

More information next month in *The Rail* or for more information about CBCs go to [www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count) or <http://marinaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count.php>.

Everyone is encouraged to participate.

### NOVATO RESIDENTS



On Tuesday, November 7, vote **YES** on **Measure E**

to fund needed flood control and habitat restoration for Novato.

### TIME TO TRIM TREES NOW!

Many folks trim trees in Spring which is the worst time for nesting birds. Instead, do your tree trimming or cutting during winter months to avoid harming nests and young birds in their nests.

### BENEFIT MAS

Make your next Amazon order through AmazonSmile and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to MAS. For information, visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/94-6076664>.

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

October is looking drier than average and warm, too, so it is too soon to be planting. All the invasive non-native plants have bloomed by now but not all the seeds have matured or dispersed so we can still remove cocklebur and stinkweed, for example. Removal of bull thistle, a biennial, and Harding grass, a perennial, would be steps in the right direction for the establishment of more native plants.

Act locally and join us on a workday. Witness restoration first-hand and be a part of it.

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

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

#### Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: November 4, December 2

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

#### Bahia, Novato:

Monthly workdays are continuing but on a more irregular schedule. If you would like to help, please contact Jude at judestalker@gmail.com.

### THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Marin chapter of the National Charities League, Debbie Ablin, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Ed Nute, Flinn Moore Rauck, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

### THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Thomas Delebo M.D., The Endurance Fund, Judith & Harold Lichterman, Russell Nelson

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Richard & Lorna Ackley, Eileen Angotti, Chloe Bowers, Christine Chalk, Carolyn Ciampi, Sharon Esterkyn, Richard Feldon, Kathryn Fleming, Meredith Heather, Mary Daniel Hobson, Edmund Jacobitti, Steve Kenyon, Michelle Kitlas, Jane Lott, Karen Mainini, Carol McDonnell, Sandra Mussey, Brittany Panos, Roderic H. Pibbs, David Quady, Sam Safran, Jon Snyder, Ian Souza-Cole, Barbara I. Stanley, Sue D. Stephens, Jesse Wippert, Susan M. Wittenmyer, Bonnie Woodburn

### BAHIA

In September Jude Stalker led a group of about thirty mothers and daughters from the Marin chapter of the National Charities League who pulled a pile of cocklebur. Then, in October the regular volunteers pulled still more cocklebur.

### CORTE MADERA MARSH RESTORATION

We are on our way to constructing the tidal marsh on our property behind Cost Plus Plaza. We held an on-site meeting for prospective bidders, received bids and, as this newsletter goes to press, we are evaluating bidders. We expect to begin construction in mid-November. The project will take about six weeks, unless we are delayed by rain. It is next to impossible to excavate and place dirt in extreme rain conditions.

When the excavation and grading work is completed, we will immediately move into a planting mode. We are looking for volunteers to plant the transition zone. Please contact Barbara Salzman for information and/or to volunteer.

### PETALUMA MARSH

This past month volunteers Lowell Sykes and Ed Nute removed the highly invasive stinkweed (*Dittrichia*) from the levee at Petaluma Marsh. Unfortunately, this relatively new invasive has now colonized the new SMART berm which is immediately adjacent to our property. We grimly acknowledge that the uncontrolled SMART population, which did not exist until

the recent work to install the trail, will be an ongoing source of seeds that will drift to our property.

### TISCORNIA MARSH

On October 6, members of "Resilience by Design" teams visited the San Rafael bayfront and walked from Pickleweed Community Center to Spinnaker Lagoon. This section includes our Tiscornia property and the adjacent diked baylands owned by the city of San Rafael. The teams are visiting most of the sites around the bay that have been submitted for project consideration.

Resilience by Design is a planning effort funded by a major grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. It is supporting 10 teams of planners, architects and engineers which will choose sites for which they will develop designs to protect communities from sea level rise. It is not yet decided whether this section of the San Rafael Bayfront will be chosen from among the approximately 80 sites along the Bay for which proposals have been submitted. It is also not clear how environmentally sensitive the teams' design plans will be, as many of the teams do not have biologists or engineers who have experience restoring tidal marshes in San Francisco Bay.

### TRIANGLE MARSH

Volunteers found and removed a few more stinkweed plants, the last ones here we hope, and pulled an area of *Salsola*.

## MARIN BIRDLOG: SEPTEMBER 2017

By Noah Arthur

September is many Marin birders' favorite month of the year, as it is eastern vagrant month. Point Reyes comes alive with colorful migrants from half a continent away, misoriented westwards on their flight to the tropics.

As usual for September, there were far too many sightings of uncommon eastern migrants to comfortably fit into one birdlog. Several eastern "rarities" are quite regular on the Outer Point and elsewhere along the coast—in fact, quite a bit more common than some of our western migrants—so I'm summarizing sightings of these species here: **Tennessee**

**Warblers** were seen on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 2nd (DS) and 17th (MS), and at Vision Rd. on the 24th (MS). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were seen on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 2nd (RO), 9th (ML; two together), 12th (JM) and 13th (MS), and at Rodeo Lagoon on the 5th (WL). **Blackpoll Warblers**—a seemingly declining migrant that now seems as rare as Blackburnian and other rarer migrants—were found on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 12th (DS) and 23rd (JB). **American Redstarts** were discovered at Rodeo Lagoon on the 2nd



Blackpoll Warbler

Donna Deubner, USFWS

continued on page 7

## MARIN BIRDLOG, SEPTEMBER 2017

continued from page 6

(WL), on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 6th (BB), 12th (JM) and 13th (MS), at China Camp State Park on the 11th (LH), and in Corte Madera on the 11th (NW). **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found at Giacomini Marsh on the 12th (PP) and on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 17th (WA).

In terms of birds rarer than those common rare warblers, a spectacular showing of 60 **Black Swifts** at Bolinas on the 1st got the month off to a good start (DH).

A much rarer eastern migrant, and one of the best birds of the month, was an immature male **Baltimore Oriole** at Mendoza Ranch on the Outer Point on the 3rd (JB).

A superlative western migrant for the Outer Point was a **Cassin's Vireo** spotted at the Lighthouse on the 6th (BB). On the 8th, another exceedingly rare eastern vagrant visited the Outer Point, a young **Painted Bunting** (DS).

One of the best warblers of the month was a **Mourning Warbler** at the Fish Docks on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 11th (AL), which stayed around for quite a while and was seen by many.



Brewer's Sparrow

Much rarer than the Clay-colored sparrow it accompanied was a **Brewer's Sparrow** at Giacomini Wetlands on the 12th(PP).

September is not known for its gulls, but an unhealthy **Sabine's Gull** at Rodeo Lagoon on the 13th was a surprise (WL).

Only slightly less rare than the continuing Mourning Warbler was a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at the Fish Docks on the 13th (MS). A different **Mourning Warbler** was at Drakes Beach on Outer Pt. Reyes on the 15th (KK). Two more rare Interior West sparrows put in appearances at the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse, a **Black-throated Sparrow** on the 16th (AM), and a **Green-tailed Towhee** on the 17th (CA).

A golden-plover found at Mendoza Ranch (DF) and identified as a Pacific was re-

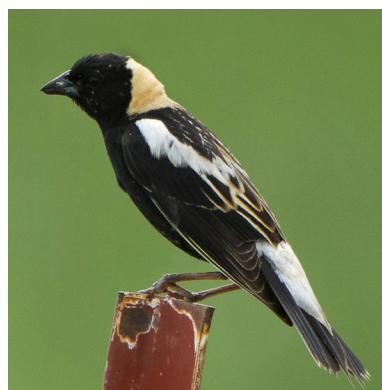
identified as an **American Golden-plover** on the 18th, after close scrutiny (SH, others).

Another very unusual western migrant for the immediate coast was a **Townsend's Solitaire** at Mendoza Ranch on the 23rd (JB).

Meanwhile, another group on Pt. Reyes on the 23rd, led by WA, discovered some very nice eastern rarities including **Bobolink**, **Gray-cheeked Thrush**, and **Northern Parula**, which is one of Marin's few eastern migrant warblers that is much rarer in fall than in spring. Another Parula was accompanied by a **Blackburnian Warbler** and a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Vision Rd. on the 24th (MS). By the 30th, two Parulas were at Vision Rd., along with a **Red-eyed Vireo**.

On the 25th, a Marin Audubon field trip ventured to the Farallons, where highlights included **Blue-footed** and **Brown Boobies** (DW).

The most spectacular influx of eastern warblers occurred late in the month. **Blackburnian Warblers** seem to be increasing in frequency as a fall migrant on the Marin coast, and another was found at the Fish Docks on the 27th, along with an even rarer **Cape May Warbler** (MS). At Nunes Ranch on the same day were **Prairie** and **Magnolia Warblers** (DK). Conspicuously absent up to this point in the month, a **Palm Warbler** was at Las Gallinas on the 27th as well (DW), followed up by another **Prairie Warbler** in Inverness (DF) and an **Ovenbird** at Muir Beach (RC) on the 28th. On subsequent days **Prairie** and **Magnolia Warblers** turned up at other cypress groves on the Outer Point, either representing newly-arriving birds or the same individuals doing a little sightseeing on their California vacation.



Bobolink

Observers and Acronyms **AL:** Albert Linkowski, **AM:** Alex Merritt, **BB:** Bob Battagin, **CA:** Carlo Arreglor, **DF:** Dea Freid, **DH:** Diana Humple, **DK:** Durrell Kapan, **DS:** Dan Singer, **DW:** David Wimpfheimer, **JB:** Jonah Benningfield, **JM:** Jean Myers, **KK:** Keith Kwan, **LH:** Lisa Hug, **ML:** Matt Lau, **NW:** Nick Whelan, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **RC:** Renee Cormier, **RO:** Rob O'Donnell, **SH:** Steve Howell, **WA:** Will Anderson

## Why not give a Marin Audubon Gift Membership This Holiday Season?

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## IRA Charitable Rollover Gifts

If you reached age 70 1/2 this year, you may already know that you will be joining the ranks of those who may be required to take a taxable minimum distribution from your traditional IRA.

You can, however, turn your required minimum distribution from a traditional IRA into a tax-favored charitable gift. You can give up to \$100,000 annually from your IRA directly to a qualified charity such as Marin Audubon without paying income taxes on the withdrawal.

To qualify as a tax-free gift, the donation must come directly from the IRA to Marin Audubon or other charity. To request an IRA charitable rollover to Marin Audubon, please contact your IRA administrator or custodian (the bank or broker that holds your IRA) and request that they initiate the transfer, and process a check to Marin Audubon Society.

Please consider celebrating your Half Birthday by making a charitable gift to help Marin Audubon protect birds and other wildlife.



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- December 2 **Field Trip:** Bahia and Rush Creek  
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  - December 7 **Field Trip:** Las Gallinas  
*With Sande & Bob Chilvers*
  - December 14 **Cheep Thrills**  
**Christmas Bird Count**
  - December 16 **Point Reyes**  
**Christmas Bird Count**
  - December 30 **Southern Marin**  
**Christmas Bird Count**
- Check website for updates and details

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## SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

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](http://www.marinaudubon.org).

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