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Wilson's Warbler

The June Speaker Series program will be a Zoom meeting at 7:30 on June 11th. Visit the Speaker Series page on the Marin Audubon Society website for information on joining the Zoom meeting electronically.

This presentation will note dozens of bird and plant species, focusing on important resources that provide for local birds and wildlife. Josiah will share conservation-related information on the limiting factors for vulnerable and declining groups, including cup-nesting songbirds, precocial young and birds of open habitats. This presentation aims to help naturalists both find more species and become more informed conservation advocates.

Consulting ecologist Josiah Clark grew up steeped in the natural history of the Bay Area, where he has been birding for more than 20 years. Defining moments of birding experiences include: observation and mist-netting on Southeast Farallon Island; extensive travel, study, and tour-leading in Latin America; and a 24-hour birding and bicycling marathon in Marin County during which he spotted 158 species. Josiah owns Natures Acres Nursery and Habitat Potential Consulting. Both are dedicated to interpreting, preserving, and creating productive wildlife habitats in the human landscape.

Next speaker program:

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 7:30 PM

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The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Farallon Islands Mouse Eradication Plan

The Coastal Commission hearing in August will be what is called a Consistency Determination hearing. That means that the Commission will be determining or deciding whether the project is consistent with California's coastal zone management program. That program is made up of multiple laws with the California Coastal Act the foundation law. The basic goals of the Coastal Act are "aimed at protecting, enhancing, and restoring coastal environmental quality and resources...".

We need to tell the Commission that the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Mouse Eradication Project is essential to restoring the ecosystem of the unique Farallon Islands. See page 3 for information on commenting.

Since taking over the Farallon Islands 50 years ago, the USFWS, informed by monitoring data provided by Point Blue



Colin Grant, USFWS

An Ashy Storm-Petrel nesting crevice on South Farallon Island

Conservation Science whose biologists are a constant presence on the islands, has worked diligently to rid the Farallones of the many introduced species that have wreaked havoc *continued on page 3*

Congratulations and Welcome New Board Members

Doug Wallace

More than 50 years ago Doug discovered his love of birds and the natural world, but still has managed to be only a moderately proficient birder (his description). He recently retired from a 25-year career at East Bay Municipal Utility District as their environmental affairs officer, but maintains activism in climate change, and is active in yoga instruction, hospice support and other civic issues, and birds. Doug lives in Mill Valley.

Meghan Kehoe

Meghan has been working in the social services field for about 12 years primarily with organizations providing domestic violence help and services for youth. Currently with the Center for Domestic Peace she manages domestic violence programs and services for youth and young adults. Meghan's father,

a respected naturalist, instilled in her an appreciation of wildlife and a love of the outdoors. Her attachment to the natural world has led to an active desire to protect living things and the habitat that sustains them. Meghan lives in Kentfield.

Returning Board members who you know, quite well, are **Bob Hinz**, **Lowell Sykes** and **Elyse Omernick**. Bob, who has been our newsletter editor for the last 11 years will move to being Membership Chair. Elyse who has been our Membership Chair will be Outreach Chair, which includes our website and email list as well as Facebook, which she has been tending since coming onto our Board. New Board member Doug Wallace, who has had experience with publications, will be new editor of *The Rail*. Meghan Kehoe will be our Volunteer Coordinator.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Most 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	Ann Thomas 914-9559
Treasurer	Ann Thomas 914-9559
Conservation	Phil Peterson 828-4780 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Jane Medley 559/760-1551
Membership Chair	Bob Hinz 383-8688 Contact Bob for membership problems or questions.
Outreach, Social Media	Elyse Omernick 694-2320
Speaker Series	Doug Waterman 415/506-4675
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
Nominating	Doug Waterman 415/506-4675
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Doug Wallace 310-1693
Website	Elyse Omernick 694-2320
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Volunteer Coordinator	Meghan Kehoe 209-769-8862
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.

The Rail is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper; edited by Bob Hinz rbrthnz@comcast.net, 383-8688; assisted by other members of MAS; and designed by Studio NaCl (www.studionacl.com). Deadline is the first of each month.

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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 LETTER

By Barbara Salzman

Thanks to all who voted in our Board election. We are so pleased to have had such a positive response to our first-ever write-in ballot to elect our Board members. Almost 150 votes were received. Welcome to new Board members Meghan Kehoe and Doug Wallace, and glad to have you back to our returning Directors, Elyse Omernick, Lowell Sykes and Bob Hinz. (See page 1 for more information about our newly elected directors who will begin their three-year terms in June. Thank you to our Nominating Committee, Doug Waterman, Ann Thomas and Ed Nute.

Our spring appeal letter has been mailed! We realize this is a difficult time financially for some members, but, for those for whom it is not, we hope you will donate to support habitats on our properties. As members, these are also your habitats.

We give you short updates on our habitat work in our newsletter; our spring appeal letters bring you up-to-date on our work during the past year and on what we are envisioning for the coming year.

Even though our activities will lessen in some areas, we'll be busy with conservation matters over the summer. With the passage of the fire measure, a group of environmental folks are meeting to follow the various

agency committees under the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority established by the ballot measure approved by voters last March. We want to provide input on potential impacts, particularly impacts of clearing on vegetative habitats and wildlife. In addition, we've been working on two other projects that may be completed during the summer: upgrading of Junior Birdwatchers, an online study guide and bird quiz for elementary school kids, and the redesign and upgrade of our website. We'll be announcing the new look of our website soon.

This is our last newsletter until fall. We usually have fewer field trips in summer, but due to the ongoing COVID-19 risk and associated uncertainties, we are suspending our field trips. As we go to press, conditions are changing and businesses and activities are beginning to open in some locations. By the end of the summer we will reassess when to resume our programs in person and our field trips.

We will be conducting our June speaker program on Zoom as we will the special program July 16 on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's project to eradicate mice from the Farallon Islands. Elsewhere, the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary is closed until June 30, as are all other Audubon Centers.

I hope everyone stays well over the summer.

Happy Birthday, Marty!

And a very, very special birthday it is. Dr. Martin Griffin turns 100 on July 23rd.

Marty's long and colorful history as a young physician with ties to local environmental leaders and Rosie Veral, the 'goat lady of Tiburon,' led to the successful preservation of the Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary lands and the establishment of the Marin Audubon Society in 1956.

While serving as president of MAS in 1961, he thwarted the plans for massive highway, urban and commercial development on and around the Bolinas Lagoon by strategically purchasing the 503-acre property along California Highway 1, now known as Audubon Canyon Ranch. With the support of others (including MAS and Golden Gate Audubon Society) he established Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR). In doing so he saved one of the largest heron rookeries on the West Coast and then continued to acquire parcels along the Bolinas Lagoon and Tomales Bay.

Marty's involvement locally included serving as chair of the Environmental Health

Committee for West Marin and as a director of the Marin Municipal Water District.

Marty took time off from Marin to live in Sonoma County for a while. In Sonoma, he not only owned and operated Hop Kiln Winery and served as the Public Health Director at the Sonoma State Hospital, he also worked diligently to save the Russian River from the destructive practices of the gravel mining industry. He founded the Russian River Task Force, the Russian River Environmental Forum, co-founded the Friends of the Russian River and together with his wife Joyce, established the Griffin Russian River Riparian Preserve.

The list of his attributes and accomplishments goes much further. Much of his history is memorialized in his book "Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast." He's still commenting on local issues.

Thanks for all that you've done, Marty. You are an Environmental Champion, a true hero and a great inspiration to us all! May you have many more birthdays and successes to come. We love you.

USFWS Farallones Restoration Plan

continued from page 1

on the island ecosystem. They successfully removed rabbits and domestic cats in the 1970s. House mice, likely left by 19th century sailing vessels, are the remaining non-native mammal on the islands. USFWS biologists have been working for almost 15 years to develop a science-based plan to free the island ecosystem of this destructive invasive species. It is now time to act on their Plan.

The presence of the mice permeates the islands. They eat Farallon Arboreal Salamanders, native vegetation and Farallon Camel Crickets. They attract Burrowing Owls, which land on the island during migration time, and entice them to remain whereas other species that stop during migration move on. Then, when the mouse population crashes in the winter and food on the island is scarce, the owls and the mice both turn to eating defenseless Ashy and Leach's Storm-Petrel chicks, trapped in their nest burrows, too young to fly. The presence of the mice sets up an unnatural condition enticing the owls to stay on the islands. Eradicating the mice will break up this unnatural chain.

Critics of the program spread misleading misinformation about potential impacts and possible alternatives to the eradication project. They claim there are other less toxic methods: mouse birth control, other chemicals, gene therapy. None of these other options have been successfully used to eradicate mice anywhere. Birth control and gene therapy may have promise, but would take years — if not decades — to test, evaluate and be approved for use. The product to be used to eradicate the mice, Brodifacoum-Conservation 25, has been approved by the US EPA specifically for conservation purposes in situations such as this.

Critics raise issues and show misleading photos of dead marine mammals claiming a connection with rodent eradication efforts nearby. There is no scientific data connecting dead marine mammals and nearby eradication programs.

Testing of waters adjacent to islands where brodifacoum has been used to eradicate rodents, specifically at Anacapa Island (part of the Channel Islands National Park in Southern California), revealed no impacts to water quality or marine species. Aerial broadcasting, the proposed application method, has been used effectively elsewhere and is necessary because the terrain prevents access by people. Although there will be some loss in non-target

species, primarily Western Gulls, that eat the mouse carcasses, no impact on the health of the gull population is expected. The losses would be minor compared to the ongoing losses resulting from the presence of these rodents. A hazing program has been designed and tested specifically for the Farallones to deter birds from landing during the rodenticide application.

Now is the time to protect the more than 300,000 birds of 13 species that nest on the Farallon Islands. Now is the time to protect this unique ecosystem with its endemic species.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

View the MAS special Farallones program July 16, 2020 at 7:30 PM on Zoom. A link to connect to the meeting will be provided on MAS's website and to our email list. See page 5 for more information on the program.

Attend the Coastal Commission hearing tentatively scheduled for September 9th to 11th (likely to be held on Zoom) and make a comment in support of the project.

If you can't attend, you can email the Commission: Larry.Simon@coastal.ca.gov or send a letter to: Larry Simon, CA Coastal Commission, 45 Fremont Street #1900, San Francisco, CA 94105. Include the phrase "Farallon Islands Restoration" in the subject line of your email. Your letter should support the project and point out that it is consistent with the state coastal program. Feel free to use any of the information above or one or more of the following points and put them in your own words to support the project:

- The Farallon Islands support a unique ecosystem, a vital natural resource, which must be saved.
- The project is consistent with the Coastal Act and Coastal Zone Management Program. It will remove an unnatural predator and allow nesting pelagic birds to thrive.
- Restoration is essential to protect this largest seabird nesting colony in the contiguous US.
- Extensive scientific study has demonstrated that the treatment method is effective and that measures to avoid unintended impacts have been designed to minimize adverse impacts.
- No other method has been proven effective at eliminating invasive mice except brodifacoum which has successfully removed rodents on more than 60 other islands throughout the world.
- MAS, and many other project supporters, oppose the chronic or unregulated use of this rodenticide on the mainland, but support this controlled, one-time application for a

conservation purpose.

- 100% eradication of the introduced mice is essential to restoring the island ecosystem.
- The hazing program has been developed and tested on the islands to keep non-target wildlife, particularly Western Gulls, from consuming carcasses.
- Delay will allow the continued loss of native birds and other native species, and for the mouse population to harm the ecosystem of these unique islands.

Rescheduled: Environmental Forum Sea Level Rise Program

Rising shorelines and high ground-water will require significant adaptation. Now is the time for Marin communities to develop and implement plans for adapting to sea-level and groundwater level rise. The Environmental Forum of Marin has rescheduled this program as a webinar on June 18; 6:30 – 8:30 PM. The link for registration is <https://marinefm.org/event-3729788>.

Experts from UC Berkeley and the Estuary & Ocean Science Center at San Francisco State University will present the latest recent research and information on how to support proposed solutions:

- Dr. Kristina Hill, Associate Professor, UC Berkeley will focus on the impact and implications of rising waters.
- Dr. Kathy Boyer, Professor, San Francisco State University, Estuary & Ocean Science Center will cover nature-based adaptation with examples of projects. The event will wrap up with a moderated Q&A discussion.

Register and join the webinar to learn about:

- The impact of sea-level rise on the Bay Area and Marin County
- How sea-level rise affects groundwater levels
- Adaptation strategies for urban and suburban areas
- Nature-based solutions
- Examples of recent Bay Area adaptation projects
- How you can make a difference!

CONSERVATION

RESPONSES FAVOR ELK

The number of comments on the National Park Service's (NPS) Point Reyes Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for ranching at Point Reyes National Seashore was a whopping 7,654 - an impressive number. The comments reflect a wide range of positions and feelings about Tule Elk, agriculture and native habitats/ecosystems. Elk have expanded into grazing lands where they are causing problems for ranchers (breaking fences, eating grasses).

Seven volunteers from the Resource Renewal Institute, using methodology reviewed by an independent consultant, analyzed the responses. The volunteers separated the comments into categories: for elk remaining or expanding their habitats, for restoring native ecosystems, or retaining agriculture because it is a historic use, or important economic use; allowing or not allowing diversification, and eliminating agriculture because it is damaging to native habitats, or is inappropriate in a national park. Some framed their input as pro or con the NPS Preferred Alternative, which is to cull the Drake's Bay Tule Elk herd to maintain it at 120 animals, have agriculture continue with 20-year leases and allow ranchers to diversify, i.e., to grow row crops such as artichokes and to keep farm animals such as chickens and pigs, etc. Alternative F would end ranching and allow the elk herd to expand.

The comments were submitted by park visitors, both local and from out of the state and out of the country, conservationists, wildlife experts, scientists, animal advocates, local residents, ranchers, and organizations pro and con.

The vast majority of commenters, 91.4%, supported Tule Elk being allowed to expand and/or opposed ranching at the seashore. The reasons were varied: some want agriculture removed altogether because it is inappropriate in a national park and/or it is causing environmental damage to the water quality and habitats of the Seashore; some strongly favored keeping Tule Elk and allowing them to expand onto what are now ranchlands because they are native species, beautiful creatures, but others are okay with culling; some point out impacts of cows on the land. A few supported hunting with fewer yet wanting to do the hunting. Some wanted the ranches eliminated gradually (MAS's position) by attrition.

Approximately 2.35% of the comments were in support of agriculture. The support was divided with some in favor of agriculture remaining but not diversifying and others for expanding agriculture through diversification. Some stressed the importance of park ranches to agriculture in the region and to Marin's

economy, and others supported the historic values of ranches.

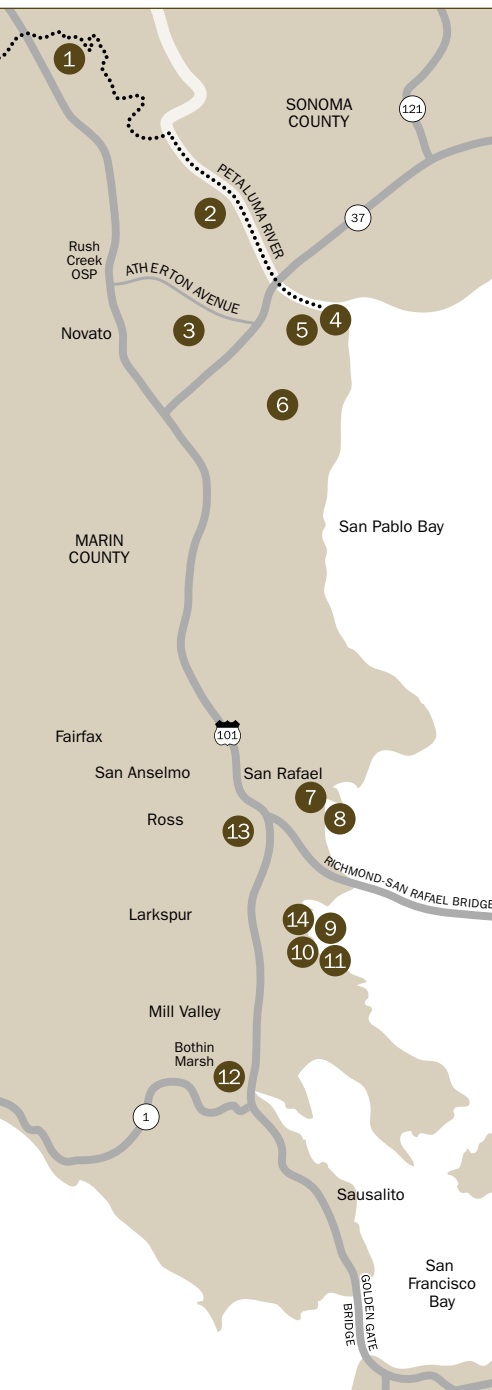
Our review indicated that the vast majority of the comments were the result of organized efforts by multiple environmental organizations including the Resource Renewal Institute, Natural Heritage Institute, Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, PETA, In Animal Defense of Animals and We Care about Animals. Comments supporting Alternative B came from individual ranchers, MALT, Farm Bureau, and Marin Conservation League. Many people just signed and submitted a form letter, others personalized the comments to various degrees and either did or did not mention the organization. A few showed that they did not really understand the circumstances - saying, for example, don't eliminate the elk, which is not being considered or saying that the NPS wants to remove all of the elk. Such misunderstanding is a risk with mass influencing.

Some of the comments addressed other issues of interest to MAS: comments pro and con hunting to control elk and 478 comments supporting more access for bikes. The latter appeared to come primarily from Marin County Bicycle Coalition supporters wanting more bike trails.

Although the value of form letters is often minimized, it should be recognized that they do reflect the position of the submitter, as long as they understand the issues. One can assign more value to responses composed by commenters that took time to formulate the issues in their own words, provide thoughtful even scientifically-informed input, over simply applying a signature. But they all reflect a view.

WHAT'S NEXT

The adoption of a General Management Plan that will guide uses on the National Seashore land is a federal action along the California Coast and, therefore, will be considered by the Coastal Commission for a Consistency Determination, just as is the Farallons Mouse Eradication Project. From the information we have now, NPS will be going forward with the preferred Alternative B. The Commission will have to decide whether the Preferred Alternative is consistent with the state's Coastal Protection Program, whether the Preferred Alternative will protect, enhance and restore the resources of the Park, public land and coastal habitats. We don't see how the commission or the NPS can ignore the overwhelming number of pro-elk comments many of which make valid, informed, science-based, thoughtful, and/or heartfelt points in support of eliminating or reducing ranching.



MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

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

RICHARDSON BAY ANCHOR-OUTS

Richardson's Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) meetings are now being held via Zoom. The latest one, on May 14, focused on finances and budget. The Board approved an audit of their finances and a budget for the coming year. A legal action was discussed in closed session, with the report out being no report.

A transition plan to comply with Bay Conservation and Development Commission's (BCDC) Enforcement Committee requirements is scheduled to be presented to the Committee meeting on July 9. At their June 11 meeting, the RBRA will be discussing what they will be presenting to BCDC. The discussion in the staff report describes efforts to bring vessels into compliance with RBRA requirements through their Safe and Seaworthy program, that includes social benefits and removal of vessels that do not comply. In addition, the 2020-2021 budget eliminates the Executive Director position and expands the Harbor Master duties to include those currently performed by the Executive Director. His title will be changed to Harbor

Administrator, and an Assistant Harbor Master has been hired to handle the expanding enforcement tasks including enforcing the 72-hour limit.

A collaborative partnership was announced between RBRA, Sausalito, County Supervisor Kate Sears, and Senator McGuire's office to look for on-shore housing and to promote eelgrass restoration. BCDC declined to be part of the partnership citing their regulatory role. We agree it would be inappropriate for BCDC to participate.

Nothing in the staff report or at the Board meeting assured that the RBRA is preparing to comply with the BCDC Enforcement Committee's requirement that their transition plan has the goal of removing all of the anchor-outs from the bay in 5 to 10 years, preferably 5 years. Removing unoccupied and unseaworthy vessels and ensuring that the anchor-out residents are capable mariners are important, but this is not all the Committee wants. Nor is it all that will ensure that the habitats of the Bay waters are restored. All of the anchor-outs must be removed.

Las Gallinas Trails Open on a Conditional Basis

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District has opened its reclamation area parking lot and trails to the public for the purpose of engaging in Essential Activities as defined in the Marin County Shelter-in-Place Order, including outdoor exercise. This access is on a trial basis, contingent on compliance with social distancing practices when visiting.

Per the Public Health Order, at its discretion the District is permitted to allow, limit, or prohibit motorized access in order to prevent crowds that cannot feasibly comply with social distancing. The District notes that the reclamation area parking lot and trails may still be periodically closed for the public's safety due to the ongoing construction of the Secondary Treatment Plant Upgrade & Recycled Water Expansion Project. The northerly "Hamilton" access will remain open. All access on those days can resume until sunset after the closure ends.

Please check the District website at www.lgvsd.org frequently for updates. Please visit the Marin County Health and Human Services website at www.marin-hhs.org for more information about the latest health orders.

SAVE THE DATE - SPECIAL MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY PROGRAM

Restoring the Farallones – Removing Introduced Mice

Thursday, July 16, 7:30 – 9 PM
Presented via Zoom

We will post the connection link to this Zoom program on our website and send it to our mailing list a week or so before the date of the program – July 16. Check our website on a regular basis and/or sign up to our email list to have the connection information sent right to your computer or other device.

The Farallon Islands host the largest seabird rookery in the lower 48 states and have a unique biological value. Twenty-five percent of California's breeding seabirds, more than 300,000 individuals of 13 species, breed here. The Farallones wildlife has suffered many human-inflicted abuses, but the USFWS has successfully recovered the **Northern Fur Seal**, **Northern Elephant Seal**, **Rhinoceros Auklet**, and **Common Murre** populations and removed most introduced species.

Only house mice remain to continue to threaten and prey on native species including seabirds, salamanders, crickets and native plants. The mice induce **Burrowing Owls** to remain on the islands, but after the mouse population seasonally crashes, the owls prey on **Ashy** and **Leach's Storm-Petrels** and put the storm-petrels on a population trajectory towards extinction.

Next Steps:

1) Attend our July 16 program to learn more about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Plan to eradicate mice from the island. Eliminating the mice will allow the ecosystem of the globally important Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge to recover.

The program panel consists of scientists with long experience with the Farallones:

- **Gerry McChesney**, Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge Manager;
- **Winston Vickers**, DVM, MPVM, University of California, Davis;
- **Peter Warzybok**, Farallones Program Leader, Point Blue Conservation Science;
- **Roger Harris**, Certified Wildlife Biologist, Oceanic Society.
- **Anna Weinstein**, Director of Ocean Resources, National Audubon Society, as Master of Ceremonies.

2) Comment to the California Coastal Commission in support of the Mouse Eradication Plan. The Commission hearing is currently scheduled for September 9-11 and may be via Zoom. The meeting will determine the consistency of the Plan with California's Coastal Zone Management Program. Comments are needed, either in person or in writing, supporting restoration of this unique ecosystem. The only sure way to do that is by eliminating the mice. The Service's Mouse Eradication Plan is clearly consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Program's basic goal of "protecting, enhancing and restoring coastal resources ...".

Send comments to: Larry.Simon@coastal.ca.gov or Larry Simon, California Coastal Commission, 45 Fremont St #1900, San Francisco, CA 94105. Be sure to put the name of the project in the subject line, e.g.: "Farallon Islands Mouse Project" or "Farallon Islands Restoration."

THANK YOU, DONORS

Alpine Club Foundation, Christine Anastasi, Margot Avery, Andria Benner, Janice Bennett, Judi Bersaglieri, Tessa & Fred Cherniss, William Clarke, Laura Disterhoft, Audrey Earl, MaryAnne Flett, Robert & Michelle Friend, Christine Geiger, William Gonda, Steve Grayson & Barbara Kris, Sallie Griffith, Michael Gross, James Harrison, Stephanie Hom, Roger Hooper III, Richard Jennings, Mary Wood Johnides, Sarah Karste, Rich & Nancy Keaton, David Kimball, Kathleen Lowrey, Douglas Martin, Sarah Martin, Doyleen McMurtry, Gerald Mitchell, Mike Moser, Catherine Plevin, Marianna Riser, Richard Scott, Eugene Sechser, Norman Sperber, Helen Stoddard, Ruth Thompson, Martha Wickliffe, Donna Williams

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

With restrictions on outdoor activities likely to be eased, our volunteer days remain on the schedule for now. Staying a healthy distance apart from others on our volunteer days is easy. Parking has been something of a problem, but that will likely become easier in the weeks ahead if we all continue to follow advice from health authorities.

The invasive non-native plants of spring are mostly finished for the season. The perennials (for example, Harding grass, fennel) and some other long-lived 'weeds' (bristly ox-tongue, birdsfoot trefoil) are our native plants' competitors to be focused on.

Late spring is also the time when Jude Stalker (judestalker@gmail.com) organizes a volunteer effort to remove (pull) invasive sea lavender (*Limonium* sp.) on several days, both from Marin Audubon's property and from various other areas at the edge of the bay. Maybe that appeals to you?

Extra time on your hands? Act locally and join us on a workday. We all make a difference.

Volunteer Workdays

Triangle Marsh, East Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: June 6, July 4, August 1

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

Corte Madera Ecological Reserve:

Second Saturdays: June 13, July 11, August 8

Meet at the end of Industrial Way. With or without pandemic restrictions, parking on Industrial Way is now limited to just a few spots by a new gate built by Corte Madera. Parking at the Cost Plus shopping center is possible, but it might be subject to some limitations.

For up-to-date information, contact Martha Jarocki, marthajarocki@gmail.com or phone 415/461-3592.

Bahia, Novato:

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

THANK YOU, STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Katharine Cagney, Bob Hinz, Gerry and Martha Jarocki, Ed Nute, Alison Pence, Flinn Rauck, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

BAHIA

Marin Audubon volunteer Lowell Sykes has continued watering and weeding, this month on the levee sides for the plants planted last winter.

CORTE MADERA

Martha Jarocki's Second Saturday workday has been canceled due to the pandemic, however, several volunteers including Martha, her husband Gerry and Bob Hinz are working independently. If you would like to work, alone or with a friend, on one of our properties, contact Martha Jarocki, marthajarocki@gmail.com.

Invasive *Limonium* Jude Stalker, along with a few volunteers, got at least four big bags of the invasive *Limonium* removed from Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. At the time of this writing, Jude reports there is still some needing to be removed.

Contact Jude, jude.stalker@gmail.com, to see if she still needs help at Corte Madera or at her next sites along the Sausalito waterfront.

SIMMONS SLOUGH

STRAW staff weeded on May 12th and May 14th and again on June 3rd and 4th where they planted last winter and also removed some weeds elsewhere on the property. We were pleased to hear that throughout the site most plants were green and growing! The *Carex praegracilis* and *Juncus balticus* are vigorous growers and adapting well to the site. In addition, now that we are into summer, lots of other native perennial grasses are



Bob Hinz

An invasive non-native *Limonium*

showing throughout the site (mainly *Hordeum brachyantherum* and *Elymus triticoides*). STRAW will be sending weekly emails on their comings and goings on our Simmons property.

TRIANGLE MARSH

Parking has been prohibited on Paradise Drive because it provides access to Ring Mountain across the road from Triangle Marsh so the monthly workday was canceled. A volunteer did weed and add more mulch around last year's elderberry plantings. The invasive Italian thistles did not do well in the low rainfall over the winter, but they did not disappear. A volunteer cut and pulled some of them with a parking OK from the local police.

Habitat Preservation Benefits More Than Birds

By W. Edward Nute

This magnificent three-foot-plus long California Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis californicae*) was observed at Marin Audubon Society's Bahia property in May. The California Kingsnake is non-venomous but is a strong constrictor and kills its prey by suffocation. They are called "king" because they will kill and eat other snakes including the venomous rattlesnake. The California Kingsnakes are naturally resistant to rattlesnake venom.

The Bahia property was once destined to be a housing development adjacent to the existing Bahia subdivision in eastern Novato. Eventually, with the generosity of many agencies, groups and individuals, Marin Audubon purchased 632 acres from the developer in January 2003. After the purchase most of the property was deeded to the Marin County Open Space District and California Fish and Wildlife. Marin Audubon retained 62 acres. In 2009 construction restored tidal and seasonal wetlands on the parcels owned by Fish and Wildlife and Marin Audubon.

Many bird species as well as amphibians, reptiles, and mammals make use of the restored



Ed Nute

California Kingsnake

habitat at Bahia. The endangered Ridgway's Rail regularly inhabits the salt water marshes at Bahia. The nearby estuaries, lagoons and marshes of the large Petaluma River Marsh Wildlife Area provide additional habitat. The presence of the kingsnake at Bahia attests to the diverse habitat and wildlife use of this property some eleven years after its restoration.

Origin of the Name *Las Gallinas*

By W. Edward Nute

The creek running through the Terra Linda area north of downtown San Rafael is named Gallinas Creek. *Gallinas* is Spanish for female chickens, i.e., hens. Where did this name come from?

Mission San Rafael was founded in 1817 and served as a hospital to treat the sick, since the weather there was much better than in the San Francisco mission. In late May 1819 Luis Arguello, Father Gil and Father Payeras passed through San Rafael to investigate a more northerly mission site. They traveled to a tract of land north of Point San Pedro which Fr. Payeras mentioned as *sitio de las Gallinas* i.e., place of the hens. The place name “Las Gallinas” is used to this day.

So how did this area get named after chickens? Chickens are not indigenous birds and it is very unlikely that the local Miwoks raised domesticated chickens. Perhaps there was a population of a type of bird that reminded the Spanish missionaries of chicken. In those years the Spanish were mostly interested in sheep, cattle and keeping the Russians in Sonoma County (Fort Ross) at bay.

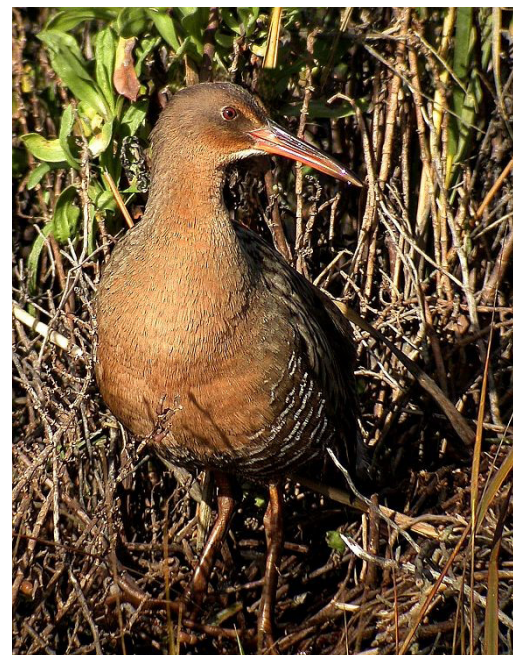
Much of the travel around San Francisco was by boat so the group would have likely encountered rails such as coots and possibly Ridgway's rails in the marshes. Coots mostly swim and don't look much like chickens,

which don't usually swim. One can only imagine the abundance of wildlife in those days.

More likely, Fr. Payeras would have observed Ridgway's Rails which could very well remind a person of skinny chickens. They are rather tall, stand upright like chickens and prefer to walk rather than fly. If Ridgway's Rails were, in fact, observed by Fr. Payeras in 1819, there must have been sufficient numbers to warrant calling it *sitio de las Gallinas*. During high tides rails move to higher ground where they are more exposed and can be more easily observed from land.

The name “Gallinas” stuck. The Mexican land grant north of San Rafael given to Timothy Murphy in 1844 was called *Rancho San Pedro Santa Margarita y Las Gallinas*. Murphy, an Irishman, was the administrator of the San Rafael Mission and later served as San Rafael's *alcalde* (mayor) and justice of the peace. “Gallinas Canal” is shown on the State of California Map No. 3 of Salt Marsh and Tide Lands survey of 1871.

The Gallinas Creek environs are now extensively developed as Terra Linda and Santa Venetia. On the modern-day Christmas Bird Counts sponsored by the Marin Audubon Society, Ridgway's Rails are often heard and even observed around Santa Margarita Island in Santa Venetia as well in



Len Blumrin

Ridgway's Rail

other marsh remnants along Gallinas Creek. Could these birds be descendants of the birds that Fr. Payeras called hens, i.e., *Las Gallinas*?

The Ridgway's Rail (*Rallus obsoletus*) is state and federally listed as an endangered species and is protected. It is important that the remaining marshes of Gallinas Creek be protected as habitat for the rails as well as the other birds and wildlife that use them. We certainly don't want to lose this possible intriguing connection to Marin's early history.

The Time is Drawing Nigh (For Volunteers)

By Juan F. García

The first Marin County Breeding Bird Survey, supervised by Bob Stewart and Dave Shuford in the late '70s and early '80s, relied on scores of volunteers to conduct field work. Marin Audubon's work on the re-study for a new atlas will be no different in this respect.

Although our field survey will not begin until the spring of 2021 (and continue over four breeding seasons), preliminary work on this grand project will begin in earnest this month, with the first phase of preparations. In organizing any such effort, it is important to ascertain what related studies are being carried out in the area, so as to minimize the duplication of efforts. For that reason, we'll first look into the efforts of other local researchers who might share insights or even data. Toward the end of the summer, we'll have a pretty clear idea of what resources lie at our disposal.

Much of this work, then, will take place behind the scenes over the next two months, as we form alliances with conservation

groups, government agencies, and seasoned observers of Marin's avifauna.

So, to all you volunteer-minded birders: keep your eye out, come August, for a general call for volunteers, to be followed later in the fall (dates TBD) by trainings in the basics of breeding bird study. The first call will appear toward the beginning of August on Marin Audubon's website. Another will be issued a few weeks later in *The Rail*.

Like all scientific observation, field work in biology and conservation leans heavily on the care taken by previous investigators. You can help right now. As mentioned in the last issue of *The Rail*, it's certainly not too early to start thinking about the breeding habits of our county's birds. Already the breeding season for North American birds is underway. While the preparations for our atlas project continue, you can record your observations of breeding behavior right away on eBird. If you do not already make it a habit to use the breeding codes for each species you

observe in appropriate habitat, consider learning to do so and making it part of your routine. (eBird provides prompts for breeding behavior associated with each species entry.) When the time comes, volunteers can gain a quick orientation in their survey area by checking to see what breeding records have already been recorded. Shuford's *Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas* (1993), is, of course, the first resource, and eBird records can also supplement these data.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Christina Anastasi, Patricia Becker, Andria Benner, Yvonne Blackburn, Dana Conklin, Valerie K Cramer, Michael Gross, Karen Hamblett, Meghan Kehoe, Gary Larsen, M.D. Levine, Diane Liu, Douglas Martin, Bruce Mast, Barbara McHugh, Peter Schmidt, Anne Strugnell, Ruth & David Thompson



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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.

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