Field Trip Report: What’s So Special About Bahia?
February 4, 2017
Trip Leaders: Jude Stalker and Shannon Burke

Jude Stalker, Wetland Ecologist and Marin Audubon Board Member, and Shannon Burke, Naturalist with Marin County Parks, presented numerous fascinating details about the importance and uniqueness of Bahia as we toured the wetland and upland habitats there. This trip was scheduled in honor of World Wetlands Day, and no one seemed bothered by the light rainfall.

Shannon focused on the connectivity of the woodland and wetland habitats giving numerous examples of wildlife that utilize and depend on both. Birds such as swallows, herons, and egrets forage in the wetlands and roost in the woodlands, taking advantage of the close proximity to several habitats, which is particularly helpful to animals raising their young. We walked through the oak woodland, not obviously unique to untrained eyes but definitely unique botanically speaking, because almost all of the oaks here are hybrids of Oregon Oak, Valley Oak, and Blue Oak. This has created what is known to scientists as a “hybrid swarm.”
Jude focused on the history of this area—how a developer planned to build 2,200 homes there and how, led by Marin Audubon, a variety of community organizations and private citizens rallied to purchase the land and save it from development. Due to great effort on the part of Marin Audubon, several levees were breached to allow tidal water back in, new seasonal wetlands and upland habitats were created, and extensive planting is being done to encourage the return and growth of native vegetation and habitat. On our walk we saw impressive results of this extensive restoration work that has been going on now for ten years.

Report by Jude Stalker
Oak Woodlands, Nutthall’s Woodpecker and Bluebirds photos by Chera Van Burg