



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon
Information: 415/789-0703

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9 7:30 PM

Golden Eagles of the East Bay

With Douglas A. Bell



Photo courtesy of Joe DiDonato

Golden Eagle

The San Francisco East Bay Area still harbors one of the densest nesting populations of golden eagles in the world. But wind farm operations at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area take a high toll on golden eagles and account for an eagle mortality rate that is unsustainable. In essence, the Altamont represents a population sink to our local eagles. Doug will provide an overview of the golden eagles nesting in the East Bay and discuss efforts currently underway to better understand this population and to lessen the impacts of wind energy production on eagles. The latter will include studies incorporating flight behavior and digital elevation mapping to inform wind turbine siting, as well as preliminary results from GPS satellite tracking of golden eagles.

Doug Bell discovered birds early in his life and soon thereafter, raptors. He is the Wildlife Program Manager for the East Bay Regional Park District and is President of the Western Section of the Wildlife Society. His research currently focuses on the sustainability of golden eagles and other raptors. Doug received his Ph.D. from UC Berkeley. He is an Adjunct Professor at California State University Sacramento and a Research Associate of the California Academy of Sciences.

Come at 7:15 pm for refreshments. Meeting begins at 7:30 pm.

Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plans Released



Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz

Ring Mountain, preserved for its endemic plants and unique habitat, has a network of unauthorized trails

The Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) has released its *Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan* (VBMP) for public review. The VBMP divides the Open Space Preserves into zones based on vegetation: Legacy Zone supports unique remnants of natural diversity; Sustainable Natural Systems Zone has lands that are identified as valuable for ensuring resiliency of natural systems; Natural Landscape Zones lands support native plants and vegetation types that are not rare but

are typical of California landscapes; and the Highly Disturbed Zone areas are considered to be lands that provide services, such as fire protection and access.

Vegetation management activities are prioritized by zone, with the highest priority on protecting species in the legacy zone. Activities include collecting and assessing data, protecting and restoring high value plants, controlling invasive plants, reducing fire risk, and addressing climate change. But, as with the Road and Trails Management Plan (RTMP), the VBMP fails to include management activities to address the impacts of public use: pedestrians, on- and off-leash dogs, mountain bikes and horses.

We applaud the management activities that would restore native vegetation, remove and realign roads

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CORRECTION

We are so very sorry. In last month's newsletter, the name of the foundation that granted funds to remove the piles of concrete from the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve was incorrect – the letters were reversed. The grant came from the RHE Foundation. We apologize for the mistake and appreciate the grant funds which have helped greatly.

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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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Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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Members can receive *The Clapper Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by e-mailing joandbijou@sbcglobal.net

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 Clapper 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

Finally now we have had some rain. We hope to begin planting as soon as we can get the contractors scheduled. We have plants ordered for Simmons Slough, Bahia central peninsula, and Petaluma sites.

It's an exciting time. Our water birds are back filling the Bay and wetlands are bustling with shorebirds. And, there is another cause for excitement. It looks like we may be on our way to purchasing the property surrounded on three sides by the Ecological Reserve at the end of Industrial Way in Corte Madera north of The Village shopping mall. After 20+ years of interest in purchasing this property, we are talking seriously with the property owners about acquisition. We will be working for a successful purchase that will mean permanent protection for this important bayside property.

We're looking forward to our three Christmas Bird Counts and the status of the birds in

habitats throughout the county. By the time you get this newsletter, it may be too late for some counts but it may not be too late to sign up for the Southern Marin Count. Call or e-mail Ed Nute at smcbc.marinaudubon@google.com if you would like to sign up for a team. We expect to have reports on all three counts in our February 2014 newsletter.

Don't forget wildlife and their habitats this winter – give to MAS to support our habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement, and our education programs. If you have a special site or activity to which you would like to direct your donation, just let us know.

Many thanks to our members who have responded generously to our winter appeal. 100% of your gift goes to support our programs, activities and habitats on our properties. We could not do what we do without you!

Have a happy and healthy New Year!

NOVEMBER 10 FIELD TRIP

Abbott's Lagoon with John and Carolyn Longstreth

By Vicky Van Meter

The day was clear and warm when we met for a walk to Abbott's Lagoon with Carolyn and John Longstreth. **White-crowned Sparrows** flitted in the shrubs. John explained many were the sub-species *nutallii*. Extensive song studies have found a dozen distinct song groups in the Point Reyes Peninsula alone. These sparrows tend to stay within a few hundred yards of where they were hatched. A **Northern Harrier** glided by and a coyote slowly crossed the nearby field. A male Black-tailed Deer threw his head up while curling his upper lip as he tested the air for the readiness of a female. In the distance a **White-tailed Kite** perched on a post. We then spotted a **Burrowing Owl** in the plowed field. All this and we had proceeded hardly 100 yards down the trail.

The birds on our walk included **Bewick's Wren, Spotted Towhee, Pied-billed Grebe** and a scolding **Marsh Wren** at the Upper Pond. **American Pipits** foraged in the field and **Western Bluebirds** perched on the fence posts. At the Lower Pond we saw an assortment of waterfowl including **Northern Shovelers, Ring-necked and Northern Pintail Ducks, and Eared Grebes**. We also watched a river otter stir up a raft of **American Coots**.

As we arrived at the Lower Lagoon, thousands of **Ring-billed Gulls** took to the air. Remnants of the Marconi wireless antennae system were



Photo courtesy of Richard Panek

Northern Harrier

silhouetted along the dune. It was here that news of the attack on Pearl Harbor was received. John took a group of us out to the beach and we walked north toward Kehoe Beach where we saw 20 **Snowy Plovers**. Circling back to the lagoon we saw about 30 **Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlins, Least Sandpipers, and Ruddy Ducks**. We enjoyed our lunch near the bridge. One of the group remarked that she felt as if she was in another country on a special bird trip. John reminded us that Abbott's Lagoon and Point Reyes are always there for us to enjoy. On the return trip we spotted two **American Bittern** in the pennywort along the pond and three **Ferruginous Hawks** over the hills. We couldn't have conjured up a better day. Thank you to John and Carolyn.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Vicky Van Meter, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, January 2, 2014

9 AM to 12 PM

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

On the first Thursday of each month we meet for a birding walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds just north of McInnis Park, continuing a tradition started years ago by Bruce Bajema. Birders of all levels are welcome. Each month the avian cast of characters will change, and we'll try to keep track of newly arriving species. Winter is a busy time at the ponds and provides an opportunity to study ducks and geese. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. This is great way to start learning the raptors, waterfowl, and other bird families, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette. Try to bring a pair of binoculars, as well as some water. We'll be walking about 2 miles on the levees that surround the ponds.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then east on Smith Ranch Road toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks. Stay on Smith Ranch Rd. and go about a half mile to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 9:00 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group. There are restroom facilities only at the parking area.

COSUMNES RIVER PRESERVE & SUNSET CRANE 'FLY-IN'

Saturday, January 18, 2014

8:30 AM to 6 PM

With Terry Colborn

The Cosumnes River Preserve, managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), is one of the last remnants of a once vast riparian habitat in the Sacramento Valley. This is the only river from the Sierra that flows into the Delta and isn't dammed. Situated on the eastern edge of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, this 1,500-acre preserve of mixed oak woodlands, grasslands and wetlands hosts a nice array of wintering passerines and waterfowl, including numerous species of ducks, geese and Tundra Swan. The surrounding wetlands and flooded fields provide excellent refuge for many waterfowl, waders and Sandhill Cranes. The lush oak woodlands can often yield a number of passerines and wintering raptors. Past visits have even afforded views of river otters, an uncommon resident.

DIRECTIONS: We will meet at 8:30 AM at Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor's Center lower parking lot. From Marin County take Hwy 101 to Hwy 37 and then go east to I-80 east. At Fairfield/Suisun City turn onto Hwy 12 (southeast) and continue to Hwy I-5, near Lodi. Go north on Hwy I-5 approximately 13 miles to the Twin Cities Road exit. Travel 1 mile east; turn right (south) on Franklin Blvd and drive 1.7 miles to the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor's Center on your left. Travel time from Marin County is approximately 2 hrs.

Bring binoculars and scope, lunch/snacks and liquids. Wear comfortable footgear and dress in layers. Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Terry at 916-705-8991, www.TLCBirding.com.

MUDDY HOLLOW AND LIMANTOUR BEACH POINT REYES

Saturday, January 25, 2014

9 AM to 2 PM

With Jules Evens

Join Jules for a walk in West Marin. We will meet in the big lot at the Bear Valley Visitors Center where bathrooms are available and we can arrange carpools. We will then carpool to the Muddy Hollow trailhead. We will bird along the 1.8 mile trail to the dunes of Limantour Beach where we will bird the shoreline and the outer beach. It will be a rather low tide that day and time, which may require some walking out the spit to get closer to shorebirds. We will return back along the trail. If the weather looks too blustery we may pick an alternative destination such as Five Brooks or Giacomini Wetlands, but our meeting place will be the same. Be prepared for any kind of weather and bring lunch and water.

DIRECTIONS: From Point Reyes Station, go south on Hwy 1 about 2.5 miles. Look for a brown 'Point Reyes National Seashore' sign just beyond the Olema RV Resort & Campground. If you get to a flashing red light, you've gone 100 yards too far. Turn right onto Bear Valley Road and head west about one-half mile. Look for a big red barn on the left and a 'Visitor Center' sign on the right. Meet at the Bear Valley Visitor Center.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

Boat leaves from and returns to the Antioch Marina

Saturday, February 15, 2014

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

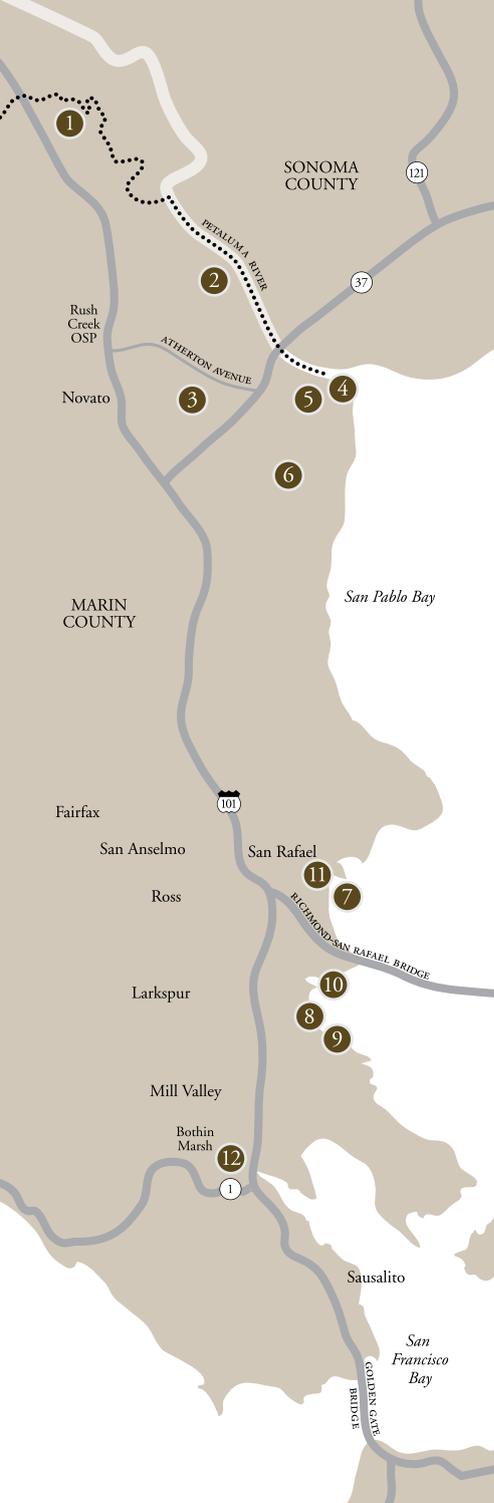
With David Wimpfheimer

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' *Delphinus* for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. Ronn Patterson, a Bay Area historian and naturalist, is captain of the *Delphinus* and owner of Dolphin Charters. The boat is very comfortable and the outer decks provide views over the levees of the amazing array of birds found in the Delta during the winter. This rich area hosts a wide variety of raptors including uncommon species such as Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and Great Horned Owl. Large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Crane, Tundra Swan, Snow, Canada and White-fronted Geese, ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines make the cruise a highlight for birders. Uncommon mammals such as beaver, river otter, coyote and mink often add interest to the cruise. We also will learn about the history, ecology and politics of the levees and the Delta as we travel through its meandering channels.

The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$95. Deadline for reserving space and making payment is February 1, 2014. To register, please send a check for \$95 per person to Marin Audubon at Box 599, Mill Valley, CA, 94942. Please write Delta Trip on the envelope and check. Please include the name, e-mail address and phone number of each participant. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions.

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.



LARKSPUR STATION AREA PLAN'S HUGE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The City of Larkspur unveiled its Station Area Plan for a “Transit Neighborhood” in the Ferry Terminal/Larkspur Landing area. The Plan describes “a land use and circulation vision for the area surrounding the future SMART station” that would substantially increase development and intensify the urban character of the area.

The plan was developed with a grant of \$480,000 from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). It calls for 920 new residential units – 300 units at the Ferry Terminal site, 250 at the Sanitary District site, 300 at the Marin Country Mart and 70 on the west side of Highway 101 at Drakes Landing. Also proposed is additional office development – 40,000 square feet at Drake’s Landing, 50,000 square feet at Larkspur Landing, and 12,500 square feet at the Sanitary District. In addition, the plan sites retail development – 40,000 square feet more at Country Mart, 2,500 square feet at the Ferry Terminal site, and 35,000 square feet at Larkspur Landing.

The development above would be in addition to the existing development/uses including the ferry terminal and its parking and the cinema. Adoption of the plan, or any numbers larger than in Larkspur’s current General Plan, would trigger a process to amend the General Plan to allow the higher densities.

The plan’s proposed growth, if ultimately built, undoubtedly would require major expansion of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to accommodate increased traffic. The traffic is already gridlocked at commute hours. A plan to widen that major artery would undoubtedly include fill in the Bay and adjacent wetlands.

ABAG’s target range for existing and projected housing units in “Transit Neighborhoods” is 1,500 to 4,000. The Larkspur Station Area currently has 1,456 built and/or approved housing units – only 44 short of the minimum 1,500. We ask why did the Steering Committee come up with a plan for 920 units? It appears the Larkspur Landing area already is a Transit Neighborhood.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: The city expects the Plan and Draft EIR to be released in early January. Check the city's Web site and/or call Planner Julia Capazio at 415/927-5025. Send comments to: City of Larkspur, 400 Magnolia Avenue, Larkspur, CA 94939

FARALLON ISLANDS MOUSE ERADICATION PLAN EIS

We’ve reviewed the changes and additions made to the EIS and found them to provide data and analyses that supplement and support the recommendation made in the Draft EIS. In our view, there is no need to make any changes in the current recommendation to eradicate the house mice, nor do we see any reason to make any other revisions.

MAS BOARD ENDORSES TIBURON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE PLAN

MAS has endorsed the efforts and plan by the Tiburon Open Space Committee to purchase the 110-acre Martha property, currently undergoing environmental review at the county for development of up to 43 houses. The Committee proposes combining the Martha property with other important open space areas in the vicinity, including the Old St. Hilary’s site, to achieve a combined protected open space area of 292 acres.

As previously reported, the environmental review has been going on for about five years and is tied up with legal questions, inadequate environmental analysis and information about special status species, and threats to natural resources and other constraints. The EIR is still not certified. Additional information requested by the Supervisors at their last hearing in October was supposed to be presented on December 3, but has been delayed to a date uncertain.

GNOSS FIELD EXPANSION

Marin Audubon submitted comments in November on the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Expansion of Gness Field, the Marin County airport located on land between Redwood Landfill and Rush Creek wetlands. Our comments focused on the impacts to the wetland and needed mitigations. The FEIR describes a range of wetland mitigation options including using San Pablo Bay Refuge lands, Sonoma Land Trust lands, a mitigation bank, in lieu fees and private lands surrounding the airport. We continue to object to using mitigation alternatives other than on properties near the airport in Marin County. There are a number of properties to the south, southeast and southwest that are potential mitigation sites and should be evaluated. Concern was expressed about the EIR’s failure to provide an adequate analysis of alternatives to the project.

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

STREAM ORDINANCE UPDATE

As reported briefly last month, SPAWN and the Center for Biological Diversity sued the county over the Stream Conservation Area Ordinance that was adopted by the Supervisors in November. Per a so-called “poison-pill” provision in the adopted ordinance, the ordinance remains in place, but the county will not be enforcing it. County Planning staff, however, will proceed with the work plan that includes preparing stream maps, studying ephemeral streams and developing an outreach program the purpose of which is to educate residents living near streams and help the stream-side community with project planning and permitting to improve their streamside habitats.

MUIR WOODS PARKING PROBLEMS

On December 9, Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Kate Sears conducted a public meeting to discuss and allow the community to express their views on the access problems caused by the overwhelming popularity of Muir Woods. Residents urged the supervisors to help and

offered many suggestions and opinions on what was needed.

Almost 200 people were in attendance. Speaker after speaker expressed their views about the negative impact on their lives of the gridlock conditions on weekends, huge buses, and many parked cars along roads. Many opinions were expressed, including reducing the number of cars and restricting the size of buses. The most prevalent view was that the number of visitors should be limited. Several speakers pointed out that the county is in charge of the roads and could take some action. In response to requests that the size of buses be limited, Supervisor Kinsey pointed out that regulating buses is the responsibility of the state, not the county. Some expressed concern about adverse effect of all the traffic and visitor use on wildlife and the woods themselves. The Supervisors expressed the intent to help, exactly how is unclear.

Supervisor Kinsey reported at the hearing that GGNRA announced that day that they are no longer pursuing the option of building a parking lot at Panorama Highway.

Management Plans Revealed

continued from page 1

and trails away from high value habitats, and address climate change. The plan focuses on managing to adapt natural systems to climate change by implementing restoration projects that sequester carbon and by reducing so-called stressors, i.e., conditions that cause impacts. The stressors discussed in the VBMP are invasive species, wildfires, forest health, and threats to biological diversity and ecological functions. Pedestrian, mountain bike and horse use are also stressors, but, again, the impacts of these stressors on natural resources are not addressed.

The VBMP falls short of being a Biodiversity Management Plan because it gives little attention to wildlife and their place in the ecological system. Wildlife populations are integral to biological systems. As they go about their life cycles, wildlife provide many different services to natural habitats, such as fertilizing plants, enriching and aerating soils and aquatic habitats, dispersing seeds, and trimming plants when foraging and grazing. Some species depend on non-vegetated habitats such as rock outcroppings, rocky shorelines, and mudflats. Focusing on vegetation alone is simply not enough.

To ensure our wildlife populations are protected, it is important to know how their habitats would be protected. The VBMP contains a list of special status species and a few paragraphs that discuss the importance of providing connection corridors between

habitats, but where these corridors would be and which habitats they would connect, are not discussed.

In 2010, the Point Reyes Bird Observatory conducted a study that evaluated species at risk on MCOSD lands. The study found that, in general, vegetation structure is more important than specific plant species and that landbird species showing evidence of decline on MCOSD lands occurred in most habitat types – riparian, scrub, grassland and hardwoods. The most avian species in decline are found in hardwood forests, i.e., California Bay Laurel, oak and Tanoak vegetation types. How the MCOSD used the data to identify the zones and habitats to be protected, was not clarified. Neither is it clear how the VBMP and the RTMP would be integrated. Both plans cover the same habitats, but there is no discussion in either document as to how the plans would function together.

The MCOSD will be preparing a Draft EIR. Scoping comments, including questions and recommendations for matters to be addressed in the DEIR, will be accepted until January 21.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: View the Plan on Marin County Parks' Web site www.marincounty.org/Home/Depts/PK/Our%20Work/OS%20Main%20Projects/VMP and submit scoping comments to: James Raives, Marin County Parks, 3501 Civic Center Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903.

Skaggs Island and Hudeman Slough with Daniel Edelstein

By Dave Herrema



Photo courtesy of Richard Panek

Northern Harrier

Twenty very hardy birders joined Daniel on a cold and windy visit to Skaggs Island north of Highway 37. Daniel explained the finer points of identifying **Least** and **Western Sandpipers** and **Dunlins**, and a **Peregrine Falcon** kept things moving around. Besides the ubiquitous **Red-tailed Hawks**,



Photo courtesy of Len Blatman

Dunlin

we were rewarded with an adult and a juvenile **Golden Eagle**, two soaring **Rough-legged Hawks** and a perched **Merlin**.

We then headed off to Hudeman Slough in search of a wayward **Ruff** and **Stilt Sandpiper** that had been recently reported in the area. No luck there, but we got a good look at **Lesser Yellowlegs** and close looks at **American Pipit** and **Wilson's Snipe**. Daniel is an informative and entertaining leader and we enjoyed our day.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

January, if not December, is the heart of planting season and we have plenty of transplanting to do at Bahia. We may need to water in the new plants as we put them in the ground. At Triangle Marsh we will continue to shrink the fennel patches and Harding grass especially toward the Mariner's Cove neighborhood. 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 Saturdays: January 4, February 1

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: January 11, February 8

Meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Dr. near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

If you would like to help, please contact Bob Hinz at rbhrtnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Bob Bundy, Deirdre Shepard, Bob Hinz, Linda Nicoletto, Logan Peters and Lowell Sykes

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jeanine Aguerre, Peter Anderson, Marty Barry, Kazuko Benjamin, Susan R. Crutchfield, David Dugan, Kathleen Forstner, George Gilfillan, Jeanne & Ed Griffiths, Jeanne M. Grumet, Mr. & Mrs. James H. Hampton, Robert Johnston, Carol Kronenwetter, Henri K. Lese, Jeremy Littman, Joanne Ludvigson, Bonnie Marks, Richard Mellott, Donald J. Miller, John Serena, The Redwoods, Mary C. Vetromile, Karen Vinton, Ute E. Waldman, Jenny Winterling, Damon Wolfe, John Young, Susie Zipp

JOIN MAS E-GRAM

We are creating an e-mail notification list for important Conservation Action Alerts, Restoration Workdays and schedule changes for Field Trips, Speaker Series, and other activities. To receive our notices, visit www.marinaudubon.org and click on the E-Gram button.

As always, we promise not to share your e-mail address. You may unsubscribe from our list at any time.

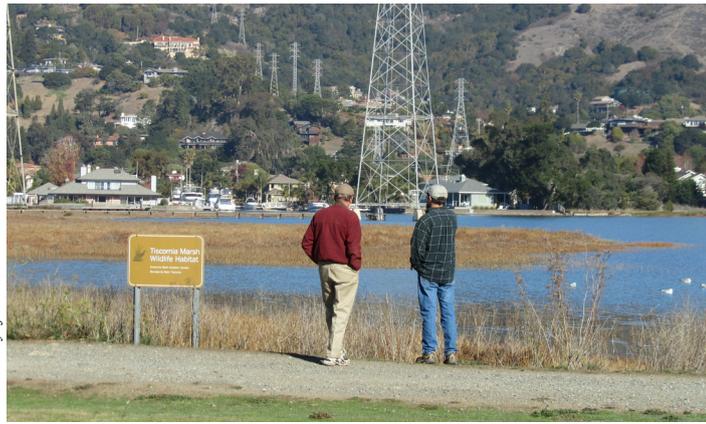


Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz

On the MAS Board's tour of MAS's properties Lowell Sykes and Greg Block consider the condition of Tiscornia Marsh near Pickleweed Park in San Rafael

BOARD MAKES ANNUAL VISIT TO MAS PROPERTIES

This month the Marin Audubon Board went on its annual field trip to properties MAS owns. Generally, we found them to be in good condition. An overview of our observations: At Triangle Marsh along Paradise Drive, we admired the wonderful tidal marsh and transition zone vegetated with native species. We also discussed fencing we are planning to install and an interpretive sign with funding from the Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission and with our own funds paying for any overages. At Tiscornia in San Rafael we found the upland refuge habitat along the edges needs improvement. The highly invasive *Lepidium*, or pepperweed, is growing on our property and on the adjacent uplands owned by the city where there are also large cleared areas with no vegetative cover at all. At Simmons Slough in Novato we discussed when to plant and at Bahia we discussed the need for signs and admired the results of our work removing *Myoporum*. At our Petaluma property we discussed when to plant, because of the residual sulfides in the soil.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAY UPDATES

Bahia The last few months have been very busy at Bahia. With the help of 48 volunteers during three habitat stewardship workdays, we were able to remove and chip an entire 270-foot stand of non-native and diseased *Myoporum* shrubs from the area adjacent to the MAS nursery beds creating a spectacular view from the homes at Bahia out across the newly restored marsh. The many native oaks that have been planted (and have come naturally) in this area will grow much better and faster with the additional sunlight and replace the *Myoporum* as habitat for native wildlife.

We also removed hundreds of invasive cocklebur plants (*Xanthium strumarium*) from the freshwater swale along the eastern peninsula. These plants were invading an area in the swale where we planted native meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*) two years ago. This effort will allow the meadow barley to

continue to thrive.

A huge thanks to everyone who came to help us have such a productive and successful month.

Triangle Marsh This month at Triangle Marsh we added mulch and watered some of the newer plants. We also cut fennel and removed mustard and Harding grass.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AT BAHIA

Interpretive Signs and Fencing We appreciate the Marin County Parks staff fixing the fence at the Bahia trailhead. The broken fence allowed cyclists and others to easily access habitat areas that are off-limits. The Marin County Parks rangers also installed an informational sign with a clapper rail asking people to stay out of the habitat area. Within the first two weeks after it was installed, the sign was ripped off twice by vandals.

More Vandalism at Bahia Some teenagers dismantled our stack of straw bales that we use for mulch. They were trying to construct a baseball field. A harmless prank, but it was problematic for us because the bales are heavy and few of us have the strength to pick them up and move them back into a pile. If they are not stacked and covered, they will become waterlogged in the rain, then rot and be useless as mulch. They cost between \$15 and \$20 each so we cannot just ignore their loss. Thanks to our strong volunteer Phil Peterson for getting them back into a pile and covering them.

Hunting There have also been several instances of hunters shooting very close to houses. After we notified the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) that the hunting map on their Web site was in error, they changed the map to clarify that hunting is not allowed at Bahia. But apparently some of the hunters had an old map that showed the area as open to hunting. We have met with the Novato police and clarified the relevant boundaries. We learned that the city depends on the CDFW to enforce hunting because they do not have a boat to get out on the water nor do they have enough officers to answer calls promptly.

MARIN BIRDLOG – NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 9, 2013

By Josiah Clark

Though the solstice is still ahead, winter is truly here. One of the coldest periods in recent decades has wintering birds flocking and foraging in full force to retain the energy they need to fight off the feather-piercing chill. When it comes to wintering land birds, the fruit eaters have it relatively easy; with many concentrating on Madrone, Toyon and Bay Laurel, they are set for months. Seed-eaters may have to scratch a bit harder and wait a bit later to sort through the frosty earth, but contend well with the cold. It is the insectivores, however, that will have the toughest time in the months ahead. Indications of food stress have set in with many more birds than usual moving into exotic ornamentals and alternate habitats. As often happens, the toughest times for birds can be the best for the birders who pursue them. No better time to get close looks and photos of those wintering warblers than when they are feeding on the ground as they have been.

A **Winter Wren** in the willows along the Giacomini Wetlands might sound seasonally appropriate, but, of course, it is darn rare. The relatively recent split has in-the-know birders now taking extra note and listening for those funny sounding wrens, which might once have escaped detection. If this is not a first documented county record, it's close (TE). Not far away on 11/21, an apparent **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was in one of their traditional hideouts, waiting to be counted on the upcoming CBC.

Vesper Sparrow is always a good bird in Marin, but by 11/13 it is even better. Nearby at the Teal Pond a wayward coastal **Ross's Goose** stuck it out alone, as if in protest to the deafening mobs now gathered in the Central Valley (DS). Proving productive ground, the fields of Pierce Point Road continued to get combed over. On 12/3 a **Mountain Plover** was discovered there, very rare anytime, anywhere along our shores (MDe). Further looking on 12/9 revealed at least four **Pacific Golden Plovers**, 11 **Lapland Longspurs** and the continuing, roving presence of **Rough-legged** and **Ferruginous Hawks** (DM, LK).

Further out on the Point and late 11/23, was a **Blackburnian Warbler** at the Fish Docks, which may have been continuing there undetected from weeks previous (MDo). On this same day, the loyal patch birders of Rodeo Lagoon continued to rip it up, with the



Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, gtepk@pbac.com

Red-naped Sapsucker

prize a **Rusty Blackbird** (WL, DW). Also there were a pair of **Redhead** and the oft times fickle male **Barrow's Goldeneye**. A sighting of this species on 11/23 off of Agate Beach, Bolinas might explain where this Rodeo bird disappears to (MD, NS).

No better place to watch birds on a cold day than from home. Backyard highlights include a **Red-naped Sapsucker** in Inverness 12/4 (TP), and a very interesting keen observation of a Slate-colored **Fox Sparrow** in Lagunitas, perhaps descending from the rare traditional wintering grounds of Chamise Chaparral located not far upslope from there 11/27 (CS).

On 12/1 a **Rock Wren** and 9 wintering **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were observed on trails above Gerbode Valley in the Marin Headlands, not easy, nor unexpected for birders ready to hike for it. Oh yes, they saw the continuing **Blue-footed Booby**, too (AL, JY). Coming up on three months this mega-rarity is almost like yesterday's news.

Observers and Acronyms **AL:** Amy Lauterbach, **CS:** Chloe Scott, **DS:** Dan Singer, **DF:** Dea Freid, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **LK:** Logan Kahle, **MDe:** Mark Dettling, **MDo:** Matthew Dodder, **TE:** Todd Easterla, **TP:** Todd Plummer, **WL:** William Legge, **DW:** Dave Wiechers, **JY:** James Yurchenco

FLYWAY FESTIVAL FIELD TRIP

BIRDING AT BAHIA, A FLYWAY FESTIVAL EVENT

Rare blue oak woodlands bordering salt marsh habitat
Saturday, February 8, 2014
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With Lowell Sykes,
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Shallow, newly restored fresh water ponds and tidal marshes provide excellent habitat for a diverse assemblage of birds. Expect to see migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, diving birds and raptors, as well as land birds on the adjacent oak woodlands and grasslands. All levels welcome.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy 101 in Novato, take Atherton Ave exit, go east, and turn left onto Bugeia Drive, which becomes Bahia Drive. Park at the end of Bahia Drive.

From Hwy 37, take Atherton Ave. exit, travel north on Atherton Ave. and follow the directions above but with a right turn onto Bugeia Drive. Heavy rain cancels. For information, call 415/388-2821.

Rough-legged Hawk



Photo courtesy of Richard Tanek

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With Terry Colborn
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www.winterwingsfest.org
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