



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920
Information: 415/789-0703

THURSDAY, JUNE 2 7:30 PM

Birds of the Mariana Islands:

America's Forgotten Avifauna
With Jaan Lepson



Photo: Jaan Lepson

Nightingale Reed-Warbler

The Mariana Islands are part of Micronesia, a region in the western Pacific Ocean comprised of several groups of small scattered islands. Because they are outside of the ABA limits, only dedicated birders or biologists find their way to these tropical outposts.

The avifauna has been under assault since the islands were first settled by the Chamoru people thousands of years ago. Many of the birds are endemic; some have become rare and/or endangered. Jaan's talk will concentrate on a 2010 expedition to the uninhabited islands of Alamagan and Pagan where he surveyed endangered Micronesian Megapodes and Nightingale Reed-Warblers, and where he discovered that the best-laid plans can be thwarted by an ill-timed volcanic eruption!

Jaan Lepson grew up in Hawai'i, where he developed an abiding love of island birds. He studied an endangered Honeycreeper for his PhD in Zoology from the University of Hawai'i. His current research projects at UC Berkeley include using museum specimens to track the spread of alien disease in Hawaiian land birds. He has been fortunate to participate in surveys of endangered birds in the Marianas since 1994.

Arrive at 7:15 pm to socialize and have refreshments before the program.

The Speaker Series will resume in the Fall after a Summer break.

State of the Birds Report 2011

This year's *State of the Birds* report focuses on the importance of public lands to sustain our nation's wildlife. Thirty-six percent of U.S. lands are managed by more than one hundred state agencies and primarily eight federal agencies. Nearly 800 million acres of land and 3.5 million square miles of ocean are owned by the American people. These habitats are vital to the more than 800 bird species in the US – 251 of which are federally threatened, endangered or of conservation concern. The report provides the first assessment of the status of the nation's birds on public lands.

Wetlands are the only success story. The focus on acquisition and management of wetlands by many federal programs has contributed to a notable increase in wetland bird populations in the past 40 years. Millions of ducks, geese and shorebirds have benefitted from the network of 150 million acres.

Grasslands, on the other hand, are among the nation's most declining habitats with only 2% of the nation's grasslands publicly owned and managed primarily for conservation. Not surprisingly, 48% of the nation's grassland breeding bird species are of conservation concern. The lack of protections for oak woodlands in Pacific states is recognized as a significant concern affecting birds and many other animal and plant species.

Coastal and ocean ecosystems also have fared poorly. U.S. marine waters are home to 86 ocean bird species and 173 coastal species. Seabird and shorebird populations are declining indicating that these ecosystems are in stress. Ashy Storm-Petrel and Pelagic Cormorant, which depend on island nest sites and on ocean ecosystems, are among the colonial nesting seabird species of concern listed in the report.

Although comprising less than 10% of our nation's land area, coastal beaches, intertidal mudflats, estuaries, salt marshes and other coastal wetlands are the resources on which 173 bird species depend. Open beaches and intertidal



Photo courtesy of David McDonald

Ashy Storm-Petrel

mudflats are critical habitat for migrating and wintering shorebirds such as Sanderling and Western Sandpiper. Wildlife has to compete for beaches with public recreation and development interests, and wildlife are usually the losers. Off-road vehicles, unrestricted public access and people and their dogs and cats are ongoing management problems.

The report emphasizes that being in public ownership is not enough. Increased protections and more effective management of habitats and bird populations are more important than ever before. To succeed, natural processes must be restored and agencies will need additional resources and greater public support to increase land protection and management. The report recognizes ongoing ecosystem threats from increasing demands for energy from public land and offshore waters, invasive species including dogs and cats, recreation activities and diseases. Invasive animals and plants are responsible for the loss of millions of nesting sea birds every year. Mammals including rats, mice (such as are inhabiting the Farallon Islands), foxes, feral pigs, feral goats and feral cats are especially lethal on islands.

The report suggests five ways you can influence conservation on public lands:

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the Board member.

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DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members.

7:30 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 Clapper Rail is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper. Edited by Bob Hinz rbthnz@comcast.net, 383-8688; and assisted by other members of MAS. Deadline is the first of each month.

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Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

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

Congratulations to our newly elected Board members Mariah Baird, Greg Block, Bob Hinz, Jo Kreider, and Lowell Sykes. All have been serving Marin Audubon well. They have carried us through some difficult problems and financial times, and we look forward to working together during the next three years. Congratulations to you all!

We had a wonderful Mother's Day Barbecue. The food was delicious and the weather was perfect, except for a few gusts of wind now and then. By all accounts, a great time was had by all. A special thank you to our new Chair this year, Martha Jarocki. Martha did an exceptional job organizing and managing the many needs and issues before and during the event. And thank you to all of our hard-working volunteers, our donors and guests. You all helped to make the event a success. All of the proceeds go to support Audubon Canyon Ranch and Marin Audubon Society and our programs.

By now, all members should have received Marin Audubon's spring fund-raising appeal. It is one of only two appeal letters we send every year. All the funds we raise through this appeal are used to enhance and restore our properties. They help us purchase native plants, hire workers when we do not have enough volunteers to remove invasive species and plant native plants, maintain our growing beds, and support our volunteer program.

We are pleased to announce that the Marin Community Foundation has awarded us \$15,000 for planting and monitoring at our Petaluma Marsh site.

Ann Merrifield and I identified 98 species on our MAS Bird-a-thon. We always aim for

100, but in some years, (like this one), we don't quite get there. Some of our highlights were at the Marin Headlands where a huge flock of Brown Pelicans cruised just above our heads. Also at the Headlands a flock of Swifts flitted about – we could actually hear them chatting each other. Our last bird of the day was a Clapper Rail seen slipping into a side channel of Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. Bird-a-thons are major fundraisers for some Audubon Chapters, with many teams and many sponsors who pledge to donate based on the number of species sighted, or just to support those of us who head out to bird for the day, however many species we spot. In the past we had two to three teams of birders, but we have been down to one in the last few years. And this will be the last Bird-a-thon together for Ann and me, as Ann is retiring and moving to Montana. I'll miss her and our annual birding together.

A reminder with summer almost here that this will be your last issue of *The Clapper Rail* until September. Also our last Speaker Series program will be in June at the usual location. The Speaker Series will not resume until October because Labor Day is late this year.

On the topic of Speaker Programs, we understand that some newsletters arrived after our May Program meeting and for that we apologize. We thought they were mailed early enough, but sometimes with bulk mail they are delayed at the local post office. Remember you can always check our web site for information on programs and field trips.

Again this year we will be having a Farallon trip. They are always special, so sign up early. We hope you can join us.

Have a wonderful summer!

COMMENTARY

By Barbara Salzman

The State of the Birds report brings into focus the broader perspective and the connections between the two conservation issues that Bay Area residents are struggling with currently – dogs on coastal beaches and grasslands and non-native species on coastal islands – and the national and worldwide declining bird populations.

For many of us restricting dogs on beaches and removing non-native species are personal matters, involving the way we live and what we hold dear and important. We often don't see what happens close to home as being part of the larger picture. Yet decisions made on these issues affect more than our personal lives and recreational uses in the region.

Threats from dogs in habitats and introduced species on remote islands are at the core of the national decline in bird populations. These activities together with similar struggles taking place around the nation, are reducing shorebird and seabird populations. With reduced foraging and nesting habitat on beaches shorebirds cannot breed successfully, and nesting seabirds have no defense against the invasive species.

We must challenge ourselves to understand that we are part of the broader world, and to do our part to save the species dependent on these ecosystems. The improvement in wetland bird populations shows that species benefit with attention to their habitat needs.

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 at 415/299-2514

BREEDING BIRDS OF POINT REYES

Meet at Bear Valley Visitor Center
Wednesday, June 1, 2011
9 AM to 4 PM
With David Wimpfheimer

Join us as we enjoy a day of birding to focus on the breeding birds of forest, wetlands, coastal scrub and ocean habitats. Weather conditions and recent sightings will determine the exact sites we visit. Vocalizations of breeding warblers, woodpeckers, flycatchers, thrushes and other species will also be covered.

DIRECTIONS: From Point Reyes Station, continue 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 0.5 mile. Look for a big red barn on the left and a sign for "Visitor Center" on the right. Meet at the bathrooms at the far end of the parking lot opposite the Bear Valley Visitor Center.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, June 2, 2011
8:30 AM to 12 noon
With Len Blumin

All are welcome to join Len Blumin on the first Thursday of June for a walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds at McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and this walk is great for all levels of birders. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. Over 100 bird species have been reported as likely to be seen over the course of a year.

DIRECTIONS: From Hwy. 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 8:30 AM but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY

Saturday and Sunday
June 18-19, 2011
With Phil and Pat Gordon

On Saturday, June 18, we will begin our bird explorations at the almost 7,000 ft elevation of the Sierras. We will meet at 7:30 AM at the Yuba Pass Sno-Park Parking Lot (also the entrance to the Yuba Pass Campground) along Hwy. 49. There may still be snow on the ground this year, so dress accordingly. If lucky, we'll see species rarely found at lower elevations including Williamson's Sapsucker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Calliope Hummingbird and Mountain Chickadee.

The leaders may include a visit to S.F. State's Field Station, Bassett's Store (hummingbird feeders), Gold Lakes Road with Sand Pond Marsh boardwalk, and points between. The caravan route back to camping/lodging will be at the leaders' discretion.

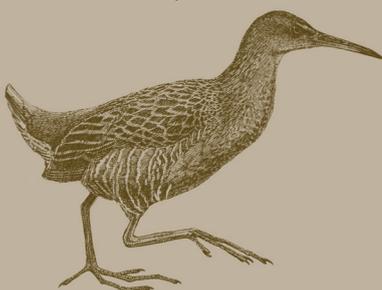
On Sunday, June 19, we will meet at 6:30 AM at the same Yuba Pass Sno-Park Parking Lot. From here we will travel to the graveled Mountain Quail Road. There we will enter the Great Basin Sage and Jeffrey Pine mix where our quarry becomes the Common Nighthawk, Gray Flycatcher, Black-billed Magpie, and Spotted and Green-tailed Towhees.

We plan to lunch in the Loyalton Area to search the old forest burn area for nesting Lewis's Woodpecker and Mountain Bluebird. The trip will end early enough to allow either exploration of other nearby areas or an early return home.

Lodging can be secured in Portola (Sleepy Pines, 530/832-4291), Blairsden (River Pines, 530/836-2552) and in Sierra City (e.g., Herrington's Sierra Pines Lodge, www.herringtonssierrapines.com, 800/682-9848). Also, new owners will continue providing lodging at Bassett's Station, Hwy. 49 X Gold Lake Rd. (530/862-1297, www.bassetts-station.com). Campgrounds are available at Yuba Pass, along Hwy. 49 to the west, at Plumas-Eureka State Park, and along Hwy. 89 between Truckee and Sierraville. Driving time from the Bay Area to Yuba Pass is just under 5 hours. Access is both by Hwy. 80 and Hwy. 70 (up to one hour longer).

FARALLON ISLANDS PELAGIC TRIP

Depart from Clipper Yacht Harbor,
Sausalito
Sunday, September 11, 2011
Arrive at marina by 7:20 AM
Boat leaves at 8 AM and returns
by 4 PM
With David Wimpfheimer



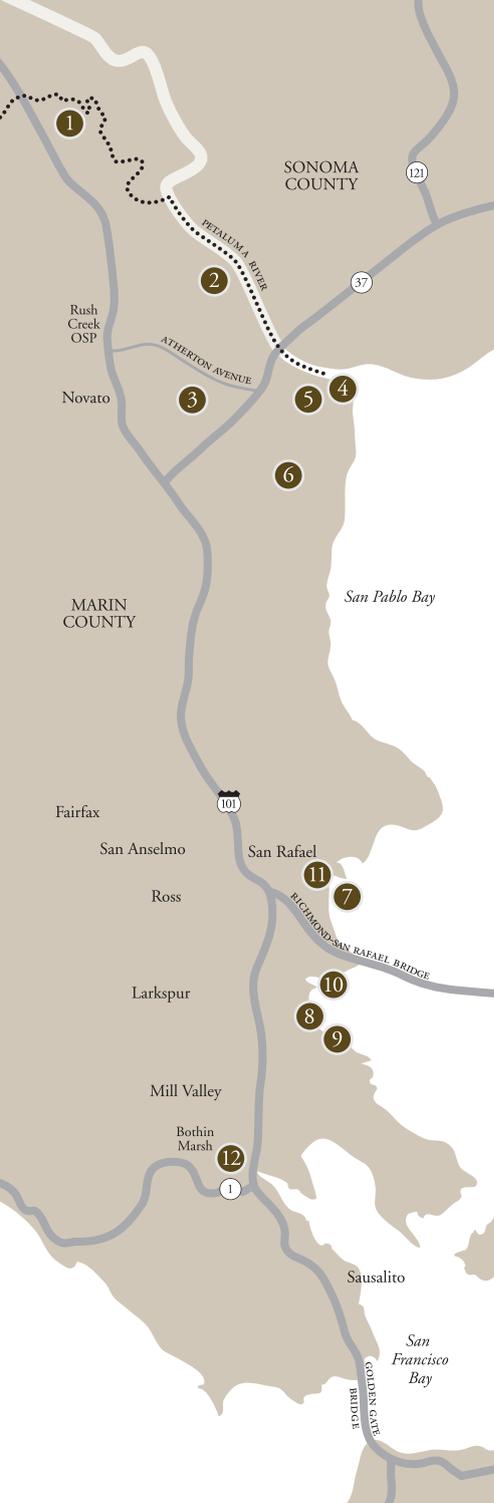
Join us on our fourth annual day of seabird and marine mammal watching as we head out to the Farallon Islands and offshore waters. The outing will be led by naturalist David Wimpfheimer aboard Mick Menigoz's 65-foot fishing boat, Superfish. On past trips more than fourteen pelagic bird species, including albatross, shearwaters and auklets have been sighted, as well as many sea lions, porpoises, dolphins and whales. We will get an up close look at the islands and learn about their interesting natural and human history. This is a trip that both experienced and first-time birders and nature lovers will enjoy. The cost will be \$95 per person.

To register, please send a check to Marin Audubon at Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942. Please write Farallones on the envelope and check. It is best to sign up early, as we will limit the number of participants to make for a comfortable trip. Also, please email or phone Vicky Van Meter with your contact phone number – Vicky.VanMeter@gmail.com, 415/299-2514 (cell). There is always a chance the trip may need to be rescheduled at the last minute due to sea conditions, so we need to be able to reach participants. Be prepared for any kind of weather with layered clothing. Rain jacket and pants are essential no matter what the weather on shore. Take seasick medication if needed. Bring lunch, snacks, water and plenty of sunscreen.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy. 101 to the Marin City/Sausalito exit, head south on Bridgeway, take a left on Harbor Drive and proceed to the parking area at the end. We will meet on the south side of the parking lot to check in before boarding.

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.



LAWSON'S LANDING

The Coastal Commission hearing for the Lawson's Landing project will be sometime between July 13 and July 15, the period during which the Commission's next series of hearings will be held. We have no new information on what the Commission staff will be recommending, and will not have another newsletter before the scheduled dates. Please check our web site for additional information closer to the dates.

How you can help: Attend the hearing which will be held in Santa Rosa at the Board of Supervisors' chambers at 575 Administration Drive. You can get an updated agenda closer to the meeting dates on the Commission's website.

Submit written comments to: California Coastal Commission, 45 Fremont Street, #2000, San Francisco, CA 94104-2219.

We recommend that you urge the following: that camping be out of the wetlands and that the wetlands be protected with adequate buffers; that buffers be established around all wetlands; that all of the dunes be protected with no formal trails through them; that habitat for the endangered Snowy Plover be protected; and that a management plan that protects habitats for sensitive species is prepared and implemented.

PLAN TO REMOVE NON-NATIVE RODENTS FROM THE FARALLON ISLANDS BEING CONSIDERED

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has initiated environmental review for a project to protect breeding seabirds by removing non-native mice from the Farallon Islands. Twenty-seven miles off the California coast, the Farallons became part of the federal refuge system in 1969. They are jointly managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and PRBO Conservation Science, which maintains a small staff on the islands to monitor wildlife.

The Farallon Islands support the largest seabird-breeding colony on the North American continent outside of Hawaii and Alaska. They are home to 25 percent of California's breeding seabirds, estimated at more than 300,000 individuals of 13 species. Breeding birds include Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin's Auklet, Brandt's, Pelagic and Double-crested Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Murre, Black Oystercatcher, Western Gull, Tufted Puffin, and the world's largest breeding population of Ashy Storm-petrel, listed as a Species of Management Concern by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and as Endangered

by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Five species of marine mammals and two species found nowhere else in the world, the Farallon Arboreal Salamander and the Farallon Camel Cricket, also inhabit the islands.

Probably brought by humans collecting eggs or trapping marine mammals, the non-native house mice on the islands are threatening this globally significant seabird colony, as well as the two endemic species.

Perhaps an even greater impact is the alteration of the food web on the Farallones that has enabled Burrowing Owls to become unnaturally resident on the islands. Every year, as many as 12 percent of the Ashy Storm-petrel eggs and chicks are predated by Burrowing Owls. Because the islands' mouse population cyclically declines in winter, these owls turn to seabirds for their diet. By spring, hundreds of Ashy Storm-petrels have been killed. The irony is that most of the Burrowing Owls die from starvation anyway. The mice also feed on native invertebrates and spread invasive plant seeds.

The goals of the project are to remove the invasive mice and restore the natural ecosystem. The project is being undertaken with Island Conservation, a consulting firm that has worked with the USFWS to protect 263 species on 35 islands.

The USFWS is examining alternative actions to accomplish the project goals with minimal impacts. Three alternatives are being considered:

- **Alternative A:** No Action
- **Alternative B:** Aerial broadcast of the rodenticides "Brodifacoum-25 Conservation," as the primary technique
- **Alternative C:** Phased aerial broadcast of "Brodifacoum-25 Conservation" Under this alternative different islands would be treated at different times ranging from days to weeks.

The preferred plan involves capturing and relocating the Burrowing Owls followed by a one-time application of the rodenticides when the rodent and bird populations are low (Alternative B). The alternatives are subject to change as a result of public input.

Unfortunately some of the publicity that is emerging about this project is erroneous and inflammatory. The well-meaning but poorly informed approach of trying to stop this program offers no solution to an admittedly difficult problem. Apparently they think nothing should be done. In that case we will lose seabird populations.

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MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	162 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	3 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

Mother's Day Barbecue 2011

Our Mother's Day BBQ took place on a glorious, sunny day with a smattering of spring winds to remind us of our luck with the weather. We had attendance of nearly 250, a lively children's art table, a nature hike so well attended it was nearly a parade, and even a fawn sighting near the back tables.

The food won praises, especially Carol Stalker's beans, the green salad, and the famous Salzman quiches. Thanks to the kitchen crew for a job well done.

The event raises funds for the educational programs of both ACR and Marin Audubon Society. Every year we depend on donations from sponsors and help from volunteers to make this traditional event a success. We received support from businesses all over Marin and even in Sonoma and Napa Counties, as well as a team of loyal volunteers. Many, many

thanks to all of you. We look forward to seeing you again next year!

These businesses donated to our BBQ; please thank them for us when you shop: **Larkspur:** Marin Brewing Co.; **Mill Valley:** Judy's Breadsticks, Safeway, Sloat Garden Center, Whole Foods; **Napa:** Saintsbury Winery; **Novato:** Moylan's Brewery and Restaurant, Safeway, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods; **Petaluma:** Clover Stornetta Dairy, Lagunitas Brewing Co.; **Pt. Reyes Station:** Bovine Bakery, Brickmaiden Breads, Pt. Reyes Nation; Redwood Empire Disposal/North Bay Corp.; **Sonoma:** Don Sebastiani Winery, Ravenswood Winery; **San Anselmo:** Sunnyside Nursery, United Markets; **San Rafael:** United Markets, Whole Foods; **Strawberry:** Safeway.

Martha Jarocki & Jude Stalker, BBQ Co-chairs



Photos courtesy of Jude Stalker

THANKS TO OUR MOTHER'S DAY BARBECUE VOLUNTEERS:

Oudi Baavour, Mariah Baird, Greg Block, Mary Ann Buckley, Lisa Cassidy, John Charckon, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, Wendy Dreskin, Heather Foote, Dave and Garth Herrema, Bob Hinz, Jo Kreider, Mardi Leland, Helen Lindqvist, Linda Nicoletto, Ed Nute, Ruth Pratt, Barbara and Jay Salzman, Rick and Shirley Soldavini and family, Carol Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vicky Van Meter, and, from the ACR Staff, Jorge Magana, Yvonne Pierce, Leslie Sproul, as well as others.

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Marc Alciati, James Birmingham, Miriam, James & Sarah Campos; Shelley Clark, Shayne Decent, Sianna Decent, Kelly, Grace & Bill Donahue, Cindy Foster, Lori Haralambidis, Bob Hinz, Hedi Katz, Kris Klein, Linda Nicoletto, David Ranghiasi, Mike Rorro, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Mark Toepfer, Vicky Van Meter, Michael Wong, Natasha Wood, Dean Zerbe

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

James Wintersteen, Gary & Karen Whitten, Rex Thompson, Barbara Searles, David & Cathryn Perotti, Kathleen & Chin-Tzu Peng, Linda Peltzman, Barbara Nyland MD, Philip Nonneman, Benjamin Negrete & Victoria Fernandez, Alexander & Johee Muromcew, Virginia & Daniel Mardesich, Philip J. Marcus, Kellie Magee, Mark Lindberg, William Lary, Everdina Lampe, Beverly Jensen, Bruce Horn, Scott Holt, Dr. Milton Hollenberg, Barbara & Robert Himi, Lillian & Donald Hanahan, Gary & Barbara Haber, Maureen Groper, Daphne D. Greene, Lewis Fredrickson, Carol Fraker, Brenda Foster, Mark H. Forney, Katherine Cuneo, Mary Connors, Neil Brandt, Dewitt Bowman, James Bennett, Bud Alderson

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

They are still coming, those invasive non-natives, Harding grass, thistles and radish, but there aren't as many as there were a while ago! Help us get them before they produce mature seeds. Please join us on a work day beside the bay this summer. We have the tools and gloves. 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: June 4, July 2, and August 6

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

Bahia, Novato:

Wednesdays: June 29, July 27

Second Saturdays: June 11, July 9, and August 13

We will meet at 10 AM at the end of Topaz Drive near Bolero Court and the tennis courts.

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

eBIRD.ORG

from the State of the Birds report
"Our understanding of bird distributions has greatly improved thanks to the thousands of bird watchers who have contributed observations to eBird (ebird.org). This effort is especially important for tracking seasonal and fine-scale changes in bird distributions, which is not possible with other bird-monitoring programs. ... We urge birders to submit more observations to eBird from public refuges, parks, forests, and wilderness areas."

STATE PARK CLOSURES

Unfortunately, with the defeat of the state parks ballot measure and with the ongoing financial crisis, the state has followed through with plans to close many parks. The recently released list includes almost all parks in Marin: Tomales Bay State Park, China Camp, Olompali, and Samuel P. Taylor State Parks. Only Mt. Tamalpais and Angel Island will remain open. Reports are that they will stay open through the summer and close in the fall.

Our on the ground work continues. Jude has completed the monitoring required at Bahia by our EPA/Estuary 2100 Grant. Volunteers from the Center for Volunteer and Non-profit Leadership and our member-volunteers continue to pull weeds.

We have had no news about the person

Conservation

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Direct comments to: South Farallon Islands NEPA Scoping, c/o Gerry McChesney, Farallon NWR Manager, 9500 Thornton Ave., Newark CA 94560; or fax (510) 745-9285, or email sfbaynwrcc@fws.gov. Comments are invited on the scope of the issues and range of alternatives that should be considered in the EIS.

GOLD MINING AGAIN IN CALIFORNIA?

The answer is YES, if the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) adopts a permit program for suction dredging in the state's rivers and streams. Dredging for gold is a hobby for a limited number of people. On average, DFG issued 3,600 (420 to non-residents) permits per year until a moratorium was established in 2009, as a result of lawsuits brought by the Karuk Indians and others. Currently suction dredge mining is prohibited until DFG completes an environmental impact report (EIR), updates its dredging regulations, and gains approval from the Alameda County Superior Court.

The EIR evaluates the impacts of the suction dredging program defined by DFG. The proposed program would issue up to 4,000 permits annually to suction dredge for gold in streams, rivers, and other water bodies throughout California. Three creeks in Marin – Gallinas, San Clemente, and San Rafael – are included in the list of creeks to be open to dredging from July 31 through January 31.

Although the dredge equipment being considered is much smaller than that used during gold rush, there still is potential to generate significant impacts.

The EIR evaluates three impacts as being significant and unavoidable: impact on passerine species due to light, noise, damage to shoreline habitats, alteration of prey base and nest disturbance; cumulative water quality impacts from turbidity; and resuspension and discharge of mercury and trace elements to waters of the state.

Many biological impacts are identified, including impacts from dredging in spawning habitats, removing streambank vegetation and woody debris, smothering invertebrates, destabilizing streambanks, destroying instream habitats, and dewatering and diverting water. To reduce all of these potentially significant

impacts to less than significant, the EIR recommends adopting regulations requiring dredgers to identify the location they intend to dredge, and prohibiting various activities such as the use of motorized equipment in streams, cutting, removal or destabilization of woody debris, and removal of streamside vegetation. In our comments, MAS disputed the effectiveness of this mitigation because relying solely on regulations would not be effective. People cannot be depended upon to comply with regulations without monitoring and enforcement. We observe people all the time ignoring signs that are right in front of them. Furthermore, DFG has no funds for monitoring and inadequate funding to enforce even the current regulations. To make matters worse, the program must be funded by fees that are set by state codes and statutes, and cannot be raised. So unless the law changes, which the EIR does not recommend, there is no hope of adequate funding for an effective program. The only reduced alternative being considered is to lowering the number of permits issued from 4,000 to 1,500. This might be somewhat better, but would still cause unacceptable impacts. In case DFG does adopt a suction dredge program, we recommended eliminating the three streams in Marin, primarily because of potential impacts to the endangered California Clapper Rail and other species, as well as all streams/rivers in the state that support special status species. While the deadline for comments on the Draft EIR is past, we encourage you to express your views to CA Dept. of Fish and Game, Attn: Mark Stopher, 601 Locust St., Redding, CA 96001

responsible for spraying herbicides along the berm. Anyone who may find out any information on the person(s) responsible spraying herbicide at Bahia should contact Johanna Good in the Marin County Agricultural Commissioner's office (499-6700). I got the name wrong last issue.

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State of the Birds

continued from page 1

- Provide public input on proposed management plans (i.e. for the Farallons) advocating for the conservation of birds and other native wildlife.
- Support initiatives and policies that help manage for the benefit of birds and their habitat.
- Participate in citizen science such as eBird and Christmas Bird Counts that help inventory birds.
- Support organizations that help conservation efforts on public lands.
- Purchase federal duck stamps that help fund habitat acquisition.

MARIN BIRDLOG – APRIL 2011

By Rich Stallcup

April 2011 was typical of spring with departing and arriving migrants doing so on time. Some continuing rarities were present as always and a few fresh ones were detected especially during the Point Reyes Bird Festival. Obnoxious northwest winds howled away at the coast and though irritating to birders and beachwatchers, they cause upwelling nutrients just over the edge of the continental shelf which is excellent for the propagation of nesting colonial seabirds. So, next time you are chasing your hat the wrong way down the beach think about the magical beauty of a Cassin's Auklet chick.

Two male and a female **Eurasian Wigeon** were at the Rush Creek wetlands in Novato 4/17 (HC), and one remained until 4/30 and was part of the PRBF. In April 2009, I was fortunate to witness three male Eurasians around one female performing a "lek" as several American Wigeons paddled around oblivious. It renewed my confidence in the species concept (RS). The male **Tufted Duck** at Stafford Lake remained until at least 4/30 (RS) and it, or another was with lingering scap at the south end of Tomales Bay (JC,m.ob) during the PRBF.

The last week of April and the first week of May is the spring window for several rare sandpipers. A **Solitary Sandpiper** at Point Reyes Station 4/30 became two sandpipers on 5/1 (RS, HC). The basic adult **Laughing Gull** successfully finished out the winter at the Marin Civic Center pond (m.ob) and was still lounging with the Ring-billed Gulls 4/30 (CL).



Photo courtesy of Len Blumrin

Solitary Sandpiper

with a species list of 408!) was a **Pileated Woodpecker** at the "Fish Docks" 4/29 (BH) and again 4/30 (JC,PRBF). Three Pileateds were reported in April from Pine Canyon, Mt. Diablo where the species is not resident. What are these big *Piciformes* doing, crossing open ground (and vast urban areas) when there is no forest fire to send them out in panic?

Averaging only 1-2 per year in Marin, a **Bank Swallow** was identified at Rodeo Lagoon 4/23 (WL). It was either a foraging bird from the small nesting colony at Fort Funston, San Francisco or a migrant passing to the north. No vagrant birds made it to Southeast Farallon Island in April so a **Townsend's Solitaire** at the end of Point Reyes 4/30 (JC,PRBF) was unexpected. The only territorial **Yellow Warbler** known to be present in Marin County returned to the riparian patch at the northeast corner of Nicasio Reservoir by 4/20 (BB).

A "gray" **Fox Sparrow** stopped briefly to refuel at an east Novato feeder 5/1 (HC). Gray Fox Sparrows winter in small numbers in Marin in chamise chaparral on serpentine ridges of Mount Tamalpais where few birders go. Otherwise it is a rare bird in the county. Most of us have heard about a probable taxonomic split in the Fox Sparrow complex. Three emerging species would come from the "red" group, the "brown" group and the "gray" group. New names are already in common usage and while "Red" is fine, "Sooty" (which means gray to most) is the new name for the brown group and the "Slate-colored" (that invites confusion with Juncos) is that for the gray group. So, if a member of the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Taxonomy and Nomenclature asks what you want to call the splits, please say "Red, Brown and Gray" – Red Fox, Brown Fox, Gray Fox.

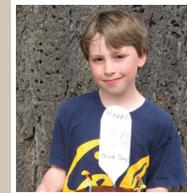
Zonotrichia sparrows departed according to their orderly, on-time schedule with most *pugetensis* White-crowns pulling out in mid-April (they are only going as far as coastal British Columbia and can begin nesting in early May). Golden-crowns and White-throated Sparrows can still be numerous here in the last week of April but GONE by May second. For them it was business as usual in the spring of 2011.

Observers Sara Acosta, Bob Battagin, Len & Patti Blumrin, Mark Butler, Heather Cameron, Josiah Clark, Jules Evens, Tom Gardali, Keith Hansen, Burr Heneman, Harrison Karr, William Legge, Calvin Lou, Dominik Mosur, O.P. – outer Point Reyes, Gary Page, PRBF – Point Reyes Bird Festival, PRBF – PRBO Conservation Science, Don Reinburg, Mary Anne Rotella, Maggie Rufo, Rich Stallcup, Lynne Stenzel, Kerry Wilcox.

Junior Bird Watchers

By Wendy Dreskin

Junior Bird Watchers is an in-school program designed to teach elementary school children to identify birds in their neighborhoods. The program was developed by National Audubon Society (NAS). When NAS discontinued the program, Marin Audubon assumed sponsorship and Wendy Dreskin continues as the instructor, conducting the program in classrooms at several elementary schools. If you would like more information, please visit "Junior Birdwatchers" under the "Birds" tab on our web site at marinaudubon.org, or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



Callaway Allen, a third grader at Bacich, celebrated his 50 Bird Day at Bear Valley, where he saw his first Acorn Woodpecker.

Devon Caron, a Bacich 4th grader, is now a Junior Birdwatcher. He is holding the photo of a bird he'd really like to see, the Northern Flicker.

Genevieve Schlick, is a second grader at Bacich Elementary School. Her favorite bird is one she often sees around the school — an Anna's hummingbird.

Zachary Berston, a Bacich second grader, is a third grade Junior Bird Watcher. He has been busy identifying birds around his school including black phoebes and ring-billed gulls.



Sydney Sarraan second grader at St. Rita, is a Junior Bird Watcher for the third year in a row! She would like to see her state bird, a California quail.

Lucas Winter is a kindergartner at St. Rita School. His favorite bird is the Great Blue Heron.



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The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*, which you will receive as a MAS member. 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 as well.

If you are not already a chapter 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 web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to marinaudubon.org.

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A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and the chapter. With this joint membership, you will receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits, however, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. We will receive, however, a portion of any new memberships that are generated by MAS, the local chapter. So we request that you send all checks for new National memberships to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

For NAS membership renewals, send your check directly to NAS.

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Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**. For more information, please contact Ruth Pratt, Membership Chair at 415/453-2989.

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