



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, APRIL 10 7:30 PM

**Birds, Butterflies and a Bit of Other
Wildlife of Southeast Arizona**

With Bob Stewart

Photo courtesy of Glenn Teple, gteple.phae.com



Crissal Thrasher

Southeast Arizona is biologically a very diverse region where bird watching is very different than in coastal California. Rain comes in summer. Early to mid-May is a great time because all the southern species migrating to Arizona are back and it is not really hot yet.

Bird watchers are attracted to this part of the country by hawks, warblers, a trogon and 16 species of hummingbirds, but the attractions are more than just birds. The array of habitats, the geology, common lizards and varied insects all become interests. The number of butterfly species in Arizona (341 plus) is second only to Texas. Because of the relative dryness, the flora are more spread out and are easily distinguished.

Bob Stewart has been a naturalist since 1962 as a teacher in the California public schools, a biologist/teacher at Point Reyes Bird Observatory and a naturalist for Marin County Open Space District. He has led innumerable outings in California, Arizona, Texas, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Trinidad and Tobago. He has self published two photographic butterfly books.

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

Mother's Day is Coming. Let's Celebrate!



Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz

Join family and friends at the Mother's Day Picnic in beautiful Volunteer Canyon at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Martin Griffin Preserve on May 11. See the inserted flyer or go to www.marinaudubon.org for details.

Final Step in Lawsuit to Protect Swallows

As the final step in resolving the lawsuit brought to protect nesting swallows on the Petaluma River Bridge, MAS and other plaintiffs have dismissed our claims against the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) "without prejudice." Dismissal "without prejudice" keeps our options open. We will be able to sue the DOT again to protect the swallows in the future, should the need arise.

Madrone Audubon Society took the lead in this law suit to stop Caltrans mismanagement that led to nest destruction and death of many swallows. Native Songbird Care and Conservation, the Center for Biological Diversity and Golden Gate Audubon Society

also joined in the suit against Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration.

Caltrans construction on the Petaluma River and the Lakeville Highway Bridges will continue this summer. Madrone Audubon folks will be watching closely to make sure they comply with the terms of our settlement, which require them to remove nets, use smooth surface material to which the swallows cannot attach their nests, and take other actions to protect the swallows.

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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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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

We invite all of our members to join us at our Mother's Day Picnic on May 11th. This is always a fun event in a special place—Audubon Canyon Ranch's (ACR) Volunteer Canyon. It is likely this year that the main canyon, Griffin Canyon, will be closed because of the failure of the heron rookery last year. In an effort to encourage the herons to return, ACR is eliminating all potential sources of disturbance including hiking on nearby trails and viewing from the overlook. Instead, ACR will be providing docents on Mother's Day to guide walks. This event is not just an opportunity for our members to get together and enjoy the outdoors; it is a fund-raiser benefitting ACR and MAS. We have raised prices a few dollars (to \$28) for adult meals due to rising costs. The price for children's meals will remain the same at \$12. You might also notice that we have changed the title to Mother's Day Picnic because we stopped barbecuing due to its being difficult logistically. Attendance is limited so sign up right away. Information on how to register is on the insert in this issue of *The Clapper Rail*.

We are pleased to welcome Jim White and Bob Battigan, both expert birders, who have generously volunteered to lead a series of birding field trips for MAS on the third Saturday of the month. The series aims to visit a birding hot spot by season, will begin in May and will

continue through next January. Most of the trips will be to local places, with a few to away locations. We are thrilled to have them leading trips and encourage all to attend.

A very special thank you to Susan Ives who is retiring from her volunteer job editing most of my conservation articles for *The Clapper Rail*. For the past seven years, Susan has donated her editing and writing skills to review and clarify my conservation articles. Thank you Susan for your good advice and countless hours contributed to making our newsletter informative and concise for our members. I'll miss you. Susan is the principal of Susan Ives Communications.

We have a newly-revised video of the Bahia restoration on our Web site, thanks to member, Jeff Martin. It features the birds, plants and habitats, and some of us who worked on the restoration explain how the project will benefit bay ecology. Do take a look! Thank you, Jeff.

With the recent rains, Southern Marin reservoirs are in pretty good shape. But this does not mean we should go back to old wasteful ways. We should all be conserving as insurance against future drought conditions and to protect fish populations downstream of our reservoirs and in rivers to the north. A large percentage of the water supply for both the North Marin Water District and Marin Municipal Water District comes from the Russian and Eel Rivers.

FEBRUARY 22 FIELD TRIP

Hamilton/Bel Marin Keys Wetland Restoration With Eric Jolliffe

By Vicky Van Meter

Eric Jolliffe, Biologist for the Army Corps of Engineers, led a large group of us on a tour of this complex restoration project nearing completion. The restoration is a joint project of the US Army Corps of Engineers and the State Coastal Conservancy. The 2600 acres in Novato on San Pablo Bay is the site of the former Hamilton Airfield and will include a complex system of both freshwater and saltwater habitats and seasonal and tidal wetlands. Also, 2.6 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail will soon be open along the edge of the project. Seven million tons of dredge material were pumped in to raise the subsided elevations to mean-higher-high water, which is the point at which marsh vegetation normally thrives. Eric first took us to the nursery where over 60,000 native plants have been grown to revegetate the site. Christina McWhorter, Nursery Manager, explained the

important role of volunteers in the program. The revegetation program is being carefully monitored to provide scientific data. Christina asked for volunteers for bird monitoring. Studies of bird populations before and after the final levee breach will help us understand the changes.

We then moved on to walk the levee along the south seasonal wetlands where we scoped ducks and shorebirds on the wetland side of the levee and upland birds in the trees, shrubs and grasslands on the other. The contrast between the elevation of the subsided hay fields and the restored marsh was striking. At least 30 non-native **Mute Swans** were spotted among the many native waterfowl. The species tally was 50 for the day.

If you would like to volunteer to monitor birds or help in the nursery, contact Christina at 1plantminded1@gmail.com.

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, April 3, May 1, 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. This is great way to start learning the raptors, waterfowl, and other bird families, as well as to get 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 go east on Smith Ranch Road toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch Road, and go about 0.5 mi to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There are rest room facilities only at the parking area.

BOUVERIE PRESERVE GLEN ELLEN, SONOMA COUNTY

Saturday, April 12, 2014
8:30 AM to 1 PM

With Hugh Helm

Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bouverie Preserve (egret.org/preserves_bouverie) is near Glen Ellen in Sonoma County's Valley of the Moon. The property was formerly the home of David Bouverie, an interesting figure, and MFK Fisher lived in a house on the property for 20 years. The 535-acre preserve includes diverse ecosystems of oak woodland, mixed evergreen forest, riparian woodland and chaparral. One hundred thirty species of birds and 350 species of flowering plants have been recorded, as well as bobcat, gray fox, coyote and mountain lion. Hugh Helm, a Bouverie docent and steward, will be our guide. Hugh, a retired attorney, is also a land monitor with the Sonoma Land Trust and is on the board of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation.

If you would like to attend, please e-mail Rona Weintraub at roweintraub@earthlink.net by Monday, April 7th. The Preserve needs a headcount to arrange for docents. Bring lunch, water, hat and sunscreen, and comfortable walking shoes.

DIRECTIONS: From Marin, take Highway 101 north to CA-37 toward Napa/Vallejo. Bear left at the Sears Point Raceway onto CA-121/Arnold Drive. Stay on Arnold Drive for about 12 miles. Turn right onto Agua Caliente Road and then left onto CA-12/Sonoma Highway. The Bouverie Preserve will be on your right. The address is 13935 Sonoma Highway, Glen Ellen.

Please plan to be at the Preserve by 8:30 AM as the gate will be closed shortly thereafter. If you can't get in, call Hugh at 707/481-6613 or Rona at 415/328-3138.

MINES ROAD AND DEL PUERTO CANYON

Saturday, April 19, 2014

This trip is FULL. Thank you!

MOUNT BURDELL

Sunday, May 4, 2014
8 AM to 11 AM

With Lisa Hug

Lisa is a well-known Bay Area naturalist and biologist who teaches birding classes at College of Marin and the Petaluma Adult School. Join Lisa for a field trip to the gentle slopes of Mt. Burdell where we'll listen to and observe the impressive variety of nesting songbirds that make this area their summertime home. Species we might see include Lark Sparrow, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole and Grasshopper Sparrow. This should be a fairly easy walk with some uphill. Bring comfortable walking shoes, layered clothing, water and snacks. We will meet at the end of San Andreas Drive in Novato.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 in Novato take the San Marin Drive/Atherton Avenue exit. At the end of the exit ramp, turn left (west) on San Marin Drive. Go roughly 2 miles down the road and turn right on San Andreas Drive. Drive to nearly the end of the road and park on the street. (No restrooms available).

GOLDEN GATE PARK SAN FRANCISCO

Saturday, May 17, 2014
8:30 AM to 12 PM

With Allan Ridley and
Helen McKenna Ridley

Join us as we explore the Chain of Lakes area at the western end of Golden Gate Park. The Chain of Lakes is named for three small ponds, North Lake, Middle Lake, and South Lake, and in spring is a great place to look for birds. Our guides will be Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna Ridley, who lead the first Sunday bird walks at the San Francisco Botanical Garden for Golden Gate Audubon. Allan taught biology and ornithology at the Urban School for many years and was the Chair of the Education Committee of the Golden Gate Audubon. Helen is a long time docent and trustee at the San Francisco Botanical Garden and a former biology teacher and high school principal. Allan and Helen have also led international birding and natural history trips.

We will meet at Middle Lake, where there is parking, and bird the area for about two hours. For those who wish to continue on our own, we will caravan to the Land's End Visitors Center above Sutro Baths where we can bird the restored habitats and also visit Sutro Heights Park. Bring water, snacks and sunscreen; dress in layers.

DIRECTIONS: Cross the Golden Gate Bridge, exit on 19th Avenue and continue south on Park Presidio. Turn right on Fulton Street. After about 1 mile, turn left at 36th Avenue. Turn slightly right onto John F. Kennedy Drive and finally go left onto Chain of Lakes Drive East. Middle Lake will be on the left. Parking is limited so carpooling is suggested.

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.

POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE TO DEVELOP MANAGEMENT PLAN

The National Park Service (NPS) will soon begin a process to develop a Comprehensive Management Plan (Plan) for the Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS). The Plan will address agriculture and other issues, including management of the Tule Elk.

The Management Plan will take up issues that fall under the lease permits for the dairy and beef ranches. Issues to be addressed include how the elk are impacting ranching operations, the carrying capacity of the lands for both elk and livestock, Best Management Practices for the leased ranch lands, and various measures to control the elk. MAS will be requesting that natural resources be addressed including the importance of elk to the ecosystem of the Park and also to visitors, and the protection of tree islands that provide habitat for vagrant birds that end up lost on our coast during migration.

It is expected that public scoping for issues to be addressed in the Plan will be initiated sometime in April, but a specific date has not yet been set. In the meantime, the NPS will be trying different fence designs in the hope of finding one that does a better job of keeping the elk out of the ranchlands.

Some have linked the pending closure of Drake's Bay Oyster Company with concern that dairy ranchers will be forced out of the PRNS. This is not an issue. The enabling legislation for PRNS makes specific provision for ranching to continue in the Seashore. Drake's Estero was stipulated to be returned to wilderness in 2012.

HAIRE RANCH IN SONOMA COUNTY PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

Cheers to the Sonoma Land Trust (SLT) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service for their diligent and successful efforts to acquire the 1,060-acre Haire ranch located near Highway 37 in southern Sonoma County. The negotiations leading to the purchase of these diked baylands from their long-time owners took more than two years.

Purchasing this property has been a priority not only because of its size but because of its proximity to Skaggs Island which was acquired by the US Fish and Wildlife Service last year. The Skaggs property, a former military communications center, could not be restored to tidal action due to deed restrictions requiring that levees be maintained on the Haire property. This purchase allows both the Skaggs and Haire

properties to be reopened to tidal action.

SLT purchased fee title to the property with its own funds along with easement funds from the Wetland Reserve Program and grants from the Coastal Conservancy and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Title to the property has been transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which will manage it as the Haire Ranch Unit of the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Hats off to all involved in this important success for the Bay and its wildlife!

DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR COMMENTS ON BAY DELTA PLAN

Lead state and federal agencies have extended the public comment period for the Draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and its Draft Environmental Impact Report and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The comment period is extended from April to June 13, 2014, giving a total of 180 days comment period. The address for comments is: BDCP Comments, Ryan Wulff, NMFS, 650 Capitol Mall Suite 5-100, Sacramento, CA 95814 or via e-mail to: BDCP.Comments@noaa.gov.

In our continuing review of the Bay Delta Plan and the draft EIS, we've found that the analysis of Preferred Alternative 4 does include some consideration of fresh water flows, not to San Francisco Bay but to Suisun Marsh. However the adequacy of these flows to maintain fish and other species, as well as the dependability of the flows is unclear. The three-tunnel intake facility proposed under Alternative 4 in the North Delta would divert up to 9,000 cubic feet per second of water away from the estuary. The actual amount of water released would depend upon a very complicated decision-making process that focuses on Spring and Fall operations. Water would be diverted to the south from the existing facilities in the South Delta but these are expected to decrease as diversions increase from the North Delta.

Since diversions are to be controlled by complex decision processes, there is an overall concern that operations could be changed during the 50-year operational period in ways that would contribute to the decline of fish species. The BDCP analysis of flow-related effects on eleven special status fish species, including the four runs of Chinook salmon, under the best of scenarios shows minimal benefit to spawning, rearing and migrating fish. The only benefits identified for fish would be reduced entrainment for three species, Delta Smelt, Spring Run



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

Chinook and Sacramento Splittail. It is acknowledged that there would be continued adverse impacts to spawning, rearing and migrating fish but these are evaluated as being either unknown, not adverse or not significant. Scientists are also raising questions about the validity of the models used to develop the management and decision-making process.

COURT SIDES WITH SPAWN

On March 5, the State Court of Appeals supported SPAWN's claim that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2007 Countywide Plan was deficient in its analysis of cumulative potential impacts to endangered Coho Salmon in Lagunitas Creek. The Appeals Court determined that the analysis provided in the EIR was insufficient to guide decision-makers about the potential impacts of development on the Coho Salmon. This decision reversed the decision of the lower court, and directed that the county prepare a Supplemental EIR that analyzes cumulative impacts and mitigation measures in conformity with CEQA guidelines.

Now the County will have to prepare a Supplemental EIR. In the short-term, the recently-approved Stream Ordinance is clearly nullified. But as this *Clapper Rail* goes to press, it is not yet clear what the court rejection of the 2007 Countywide Plan will mean to the San Geronimo Valley, and to the other watersheds in unincorporated Marin. The county will have to revert to stream policies in the 1994 Countywide Plan. We trust in the long term that the court's action will result in benefits for the endangered Salmon, and we will be working for that outcome.

EASTON POINT UPDATE

At the March 11 Board of Supervisors hearing, staff presented information the Supervisors had requested on traffic, access roads and need for a new water tank. Then, after 17 speakers testified in opposition to certifying the Environmental Impact Report, the Supervisors voted unanimously (with Supervisor Kinsey out of town) not to certify the EIR. The only speakers in favor of the project were two representatives of the property owner.

The Supervisors cited many reasons for their vote: uncertain feasibility of mitigation for impacts to endangered Red-legged Frog and endangered plants, because it is not clear that the habitat loss could be mitigated on-site or even off-site; inability to ensure sufficient water pressure for personal and fire fighting uses, except by having the water tank elevated 580 feet in the air; public safety related to lack of water pressure; and unsafe road configuration and traffic.

The Supervisors want a project where the mitigation measures are feasible and enforceable. They want to proceed with review of the

project before they certify the EIR (usually that process is reversed), and they want the project to come back to them rather than remanding it to the Planning Commission.

The 43-unit Easton Point Project proposed for a large hillside property along Paradise Drive in Tiburon has been the subject of litigation and public opposition about the adequacy of the environmental analyses and concern about the adverse environmental impacts for more than 20 years.

COMMENTS ON COMMERCIAL DOG WALKING INVITED AND OTHER DOG MANAGEMENT ISSUES

GGNRA together with the Presidio Trust have announced the intent to establish an interim permit requirement for commercial dog walkers walking four or more dogs at time with a limit of six dogs on GGNRA lands in San Francisco and Marin County. This permit requirement would remain in effect until a final special regulation addressing dog walking is finalized which is expected in late 2015. Questions, concerns and comments should be addressed to: Superintendent, National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Attn: Commercial Dog Walking, Fort Mason Building 201, San Francisco, CA 94123; or on-line at parkplanning.nps.gov/commercialdogwalking – click on “Document List” on the left side, select “Interim Compendium Amendment for Commercial Dog Walking” and click on “Comment on Document.”

Check the MAS Web site for a link to Golden Gate Audubon's position on GGNRA's Dog Management Plan (Plan) or GGAS's Web site directly, (www.goldengateaudubon.org). GGAS took a different but valid approach to the Plan by recommending that off-leash areas be defined by a physical barrier, that more opportunities be provided for visitors who do not want to interact with dogs; that commercial dog walking not be included as a component of the Preferred Alternative; that visitors be limited to two dogs per visitor; and that a simple violation reporting system be established whereby visitors can effectively report non-compliant behavior. These recommendations were developed for the more urban environment of San Francisco, but many are relevant to Marin. Marin has several areas, for a no-dog experience, including the south end of Rodeo, Stinson Beach and the internal trails at the Headlands but these should be increased. The only off-leash area in Marin would be at Rodeo Beach which might be hard to enclose with a physical barrier. Marin wildlife would benefit from limiting visitors to two dogs and not allowing commercial dog walking, both of which would be allowed on many Marin trails. An easy and efficient system whereby visitors

can report dog infractions should be a top priority, along with speedy enforcement.

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AT CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

As part of MAS's ongoing efforts to improve habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail, we planted native vegetation at the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve this month.

Using grant funds from the RHE Foundation, MAS contracted with two native plant nurseries to grow plants, and last month we hired Shelterbelt Builders, a company that specializes in building habitats, to plant them. A crew of three from Shelterbelt planted 360 native plants, Coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and creeping-wild rye (*Elymus triticoides*).

MAS's previous restoration work at this Ecological Reserve included excavating a channel to restore marsh and isolate a habitat island, and recently removing slabs of dumped concrete and asphalt from the tidal marsh and adjacent upland. The rails depend on the adjacent uplands for refuge from avian predators during high tides.

More work is yet to be done to the highly disturbed artificial upland section of this important marsh habitat to make it beneficial for Clapper Rails.

650 SAN PEDRO ROAD PROPERTY PROTECTED

Thanks to an anonymous donor and the diligence of community activist, Jack West, the 650 San Pedro Road property has been permanently protected. An anonymous donor has come forward, purchased the property and will be donating it to the Marin County Open Space District.

This property is across San Pedro Road from Bucks Landing and was the subject of an extensive and contentious environmental review of a proposal to build multiple houses. The property has native oaks on hills, a heron rookery and fresh water pond. It also connects with a trail along the ridge.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Now that there has been significant rain, everything, native or not, is growing. Our latest plants won't need watering for a while so we will give more attention to their competitors, especially Harding grass and thistles. Radish and mustard might be large enough to be pulled before they flower and produce seeds. 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: April 5, May 3

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: April 12, May 10

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

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

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Cristine Albert, Mai Billaud, Bob Bundy, Sharon Donovan, Garbo and Paul Gan, Lein Harper, Louis Henry, Bob Hinz, Paul & Andrew Jakab, Sharon McCloskey, Zach Moore, Kelly Nguyen, Sierra Still, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Anton Timms

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Nina Anderson, Debora Babe, Virginia Baker, Rita Bernardi, Michael Blum, John Bowers, Deborah Buehler, David R. Buller, Helen Chen, Susan Connelly, Dr. Philip Darney, Lisa Doran, Terrie Duane, Tacy Dunham, Dave Dupont, Brett Elebash, Richard M. Funamura, Sharon R. Fusco, Jo A. Gabel, Michael Garcia, Armelle Holt, Christina Jaqua, Trudy Kirschenfeld, William Klemme, Jackie Littee, Victoria Manuel, John McCabe, Laura McCormick, Gale McKee, Sara McMillen, Ross Mitchell, Emiko Moore, Wendy Parfrey, Gemia Pascale, Dean J. Pasvankias, Barbara Peracca, Sarah Perry, Margaret Petrie, Yvonne Postelle, Suzanne Rude, Gini Savage, Zen Sawyer, Kathleen Seaman, Jean Simmons, Rebecca R. Simon, Carol Smith, Dierdre Stull, Renate Vogel, Gerald Wright, Oleg Zenzin



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

Lowell Sykes and the Shelterbelt Builders crew mulch newly planted natives beside the relatively barren “bench” at MAS’s Petaluma Marsh property.

The Plants are in the Ground!

With such a dry period for so much of the usual wet (planting) season, we had to work quickly to get many native plants into the ground this year.

With the great work of the hired crew from Shelterbelt Builders, Inc., we planted and mulched 176 native plants (coyote brush, marsh Baccharis, western goldenrod and marsh gumplant) along the shoreline and a levee at the MAS Petaluma Marsh property. This property was restored in 2006 and the tidal marsh vegetation is filling in beautifully. Because the “bench area” adjacent to the marsh was constructed from dredged, anoxic sediment, it was initially very acidic with a high sulfide concentration, and none of the plants that we originally planted in that area survived. We have held off on planting again for seven years to allow the rains to leach the soil and make it more amenable to native plantings. Some previous plantings of Coyote brush and creeping wildrye (along with the non-native wild radish) have survived along the levee, and portions of the barren “bench” area are supporting a spurry so we thought that some native plants might now grow there. Let's hope these recent plantings are successful and that we get some upland refugia (cover) plants established adjacent to the marsh for the benefit of the birds and other animals using the marsh.

At Bahia the Shelterbelt crew added another 528 rushes and sedges (Arctic rush, Field sedge and alkali bulrush) to the seasonal pond on the central peninsula. This pond was constructed as part of the larger restoration project at Bahia and quickly became inundated with non-native

invasive plants. We hope that these newly planted wetland plants will spread out along the edges of the pond and fend off the invasives.

The final 120 rushes and sedges (Arctic rush, Field sedge and Santa Barbara sedge) were planted in the same seasonal pond by twelve hard-working volunteers during our regular “Second Saturday Stewardship Day” on March 8th, marking the end of the 2014 planting season with a total of 796 plants planted this year in the seasonal pond. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who came out to help!

We will continue to monitor and water these plants and to remove the invasive plants that threaten their survival.

Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival



The 2014 Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival will be April 25th through 27th.

Online registration and ticket sales for the festival are now open. Please go to www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org and click on “Festival Schedule” to register and purchase tickets.

The Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival is a project of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin, a grassroots group founded in 1971 to protect West Marin's natural environment and rural character.

By Josiah Clark

February was the wettest month of the driest winter in California's history, and Marin was lucky to get more rain than most Bay Area counties. Across the landscape the response was immediate. Brown hills became green and oaks put out tender new growth, attracting hatching insects and the migrant songbirds that feed on them.

Early February brought the last of the herring runs in a year when commercial fishermen packed up their nets with 200 tons of quota left uncaught. Despite what was considered a disappointing herring run, dedicated counters tallied over 9,000 birds on 3/3 out on Richardson Bay, with most there to feed on herring roe. Four thousand one hundred **Greater Scaup** was an impressive count, with a **Long-tailed Duck** also observed (KW, LL). A Black Scoter there on 2/19 was also a rare observation for any part of the Marin bayshore (KW, LL).



Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, getpeke.photocam.com

Pacific Slope Flycatcher

The long anticipated arrival of the first **Wilson's Warbler** was on 3/13 at Phoenix Lake, and a **Warbling Vireo** was not far behind on 3/15 at Cascade Canyon (DE). Phoenix Lake also showed off a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** on 3/11 (RC).

Observers and Acronyms **DE:** Daniel Edelstein, **DS:** Dave Shuford, **KW:** Kerry Wilcox, **LL:** Liz Lewis, **RC:** Renee Cormier, **ME:** Megan Elrod, **RD:** Ryan Digaudio, **WL:** William Legge,

FEBRUARY 15 FIELD TRIP

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Boat Trip With David Wimpfheimer

By Vicky Van Meter

River Otters and a **Sora** entertained us as we waited to board our boat, appropriately named the *River Otter*, for our trip up the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Skies were overcast but the rain held off and we enjoyed the views over the levees from the large top deck of the boat. David was our guide to the birds and wildlife, and Captain Ronn Patterson and Barbara Fitzgerald provided insight into the history, politics and geography of the Delta's channels, islands, and hidden corners.

Our day had many highlights. We passed a large **Great Blue Heron** rookery in a stand of Fremont Cottonwoods, a mixed **Double-crested Cormorant** and GBH rookery in a eucalyptus stand, and several active **Great Horned Owl** nests. David explained that the owls often use old Red-tailed Hawk nests for their own. Additional sightings included waterfowl of all sorts, three **Swainson's Hawks**, a **Peregrine Falcon** on the Hwy. 160 bridge, five **American Bittern**, hundreds of **Sandhill Cranes**, and tens of thousands of **Snow** and **White-fronted Geese**. **Red-tailed Hawks** were everywhere, with five in one tree silhouetted against Mt.



Photo by George Ende

Snow Geese

Diablo in the distance. We watched a mink scurry across the face of a levee and saw more river otters frolicking on an abandoned float.

Ronn explained that pumping water is the largest use of electricity in the state and talked about the complex electric grid that connects power from Shasta Dam with the US Northwest and Canada. We heard about the history of old ships, surveyed Barron Hilton's Venice Island property, and toured Tinsley Island, owned by the St. Francis Yacht Club. The lighthouse on the property was once located on San Francisco Bay. The species tally for the day was 74.

Short-eared Owl



Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, getpeke.photocam.com

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 at 415/457-3949.



Brody Orlick is in first grade at Bacich Elementary School. He would like to see a cassowary and a kiwi!

Ethan Stark is also in first grade at Bacich Elementary School. His favorite birds are American Crows and Common Ravens because he likes the color black.



Jake Hecht is in first grade at Bacich Elementary School. Jake would like to see a Bald Eagle.

Lucy Kraham is a kindergarten student at St. Rita School. She would like to see a Brown Pelican which is one of the 10 kindergarten birds she studied. She says she'd especially like to see one eat a fish!



THE Clapper Rail

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The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter supporting members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. 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 supporting member, we urge you to join MAS and urge your friends, neighbors, relatives to join us, too.

You can also join or make a donation on our Web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to www.marinaudubon.org.

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