



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, DECEMBER 13 7:30 PM

Magical Madagascar:

Birds, Lemurs and the Concepts of Adaptive Radiation and Endemism
With Bob Lewis



Photo courtesy of Bob Lewis

Schlegel's Asity

Ninety million years ago, Madagascar broke away from the last fragments of Gondwana, the great southern continent. Since that time, life on the island has been evolving in its own unique way, isolated from Africa by 300 miles of the Mozambique Channel. There are 5 or 6 families of birds found only on this fourth-largest island, and over half of the world's chameleons live only here. Lemurs are found nowhere else. Join Bob Lewis as he considers the evolutionary concepts of endemism and adaptive radiation on this island laboratory, and illustrates Madagascar life with striking images taken on a recent trip. Meet Cuckoo-Rollers, Asities and other Malagasy birds, and discover some of the many species of lemurs that call the Madagascar forests home. To get in the right time zone, we'll spend a few minutes in Cape Town, South Africa, chasing the elusive Cape Rockjumper before departing for our ultimate destination.

Bob is a GGAS board member and an award-winning nature photographer who has seen over 4,000 of the world's 10,000 species of birds. He has taught birding classes for almost 20 years, and is a frequent speaker on bird-related subjects.

Come for cookies and conversation at 7:15 pm.

'Marine Vomit' in Drakes Estero Cause for Serious Concern

By Jude Stalker

Recent observations in Drakes Estero of the behavior of the invasive tunicate, *Didemnum vexillum*, aka Marine Vomit, along with the threat that it presents worldwide is cause for serious concern for such an ecologically valuable, anticipated federally protected marine wilderness area.

Didemnum vexillum (Dvex) is a highly invasive non-native colonial tunicate (sea squirt) that has a texture of wet leather. Each colony of Dvex consists of thousands of tiny soft-bodied individuals called zooids, embedded in a common membranous matrix. Dvex colonies are unpalatable to most other marine organisms or birds.

Dvex colonies grow subtidally in bays and coastal waters and readily attach to hard surfaces such as rocks, shell, gravel, boulders and all sorts of artificial structures. Dvex can reproduce sexually, releasing its larvae into the water where it will attach to a hard substrate and form a new colony. New colonies can also be produced through fragmentation. Lobes from a colony can break off, drift to a new site,



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

***Didemnum vexillum* growing on eelgrass at the bottom of Drakes Estero**

settle or become entangled in the bottom, and grow out over the substrate.

Because it rapidly overgrows hard surfaces, structures and shellfish, Dvex invasions across the country and the world have caused tremendous problems and concern over the past decade for both natural ecosystems and aquaculture operations. There are populations of Dvex on the East Coast that have infested huge areas of seabed, have smothered large numbers of native marine plants and animals, and have drastically changed the species composition of the benthic community. It has been well documented that the most important factor in controlling an invasion of Dvex is early detection and rapid response to the infestation such as took place in Sitka, Alaska in 2010.

No one knows for sure how or when this invader arrived in Drakes Estero from its native Japan. Many of the Pacific oysters cultivated by the Drakes Bay

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Breaking News

The hearing for the San Rafael Recreation Center before the San Rafael City Council is Monday, December 3, 2012 at 6 pm.

Attend and Testify in Opposition to Project:

San Rafael City Council Chambers
1400 Fifth Street, San Rafael

Comment in Writing:

San Rafael City Council
P.O. Box 151500
San Rafael, CA 94915-1560

Visit the MAS Web site for additional information at www.marinaudubon.org.

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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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Volunteer Coordinator	Bob Hinz, 383-8688
Property Management	Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
BAAC Recs	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. If you wish to attend please call 924-6057.

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.

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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

What a wonderful outcome! **Measure A** passed by a wide margin of 74%. Thanks to everyone who helped and, most of all, voted for the measure. It will benefit our wildlife and their habitats and public access to these resources. This does not mean our work is done, however. We will need to continue our oversight and input on decisions that will affect habitats, including habitats that need to be acquired and protected, where trails will go, and where trails should be removed. Any member who would like to work with us and help with these challenges, please let me know.

We will have lots of volunteer needs and opportunities during the coming months. With the coming of the rainy season also comes the time for planting in our Mediterranean climate. We have lots of planting to do on five of our properties. Thanks to grants and member donations, we have funding to purchase plants and to hire workers to do some planting. Due to insufficient funds, however, we have to depend on volunteers complete the planting work. Join us for our work days! You will learn about habitats, invasive and native plants and how to

plant them, and have fun, too! See page 6 for additional information about our Stewardship Program and these volunteer needs and how to volunteer.

December is also the month for Christmas Bird Counts. This year we are sponsoring three counts: Southern Marin, Cheep Thrills in North Marin, and the Point Reyes Count in West Marin. Join a team and help count for a day or help out with one of the dinners. See page 5 for information on how to sign up.

MAS has lots of opportunities for you to give a gift for wildlife this year. We encourage you to donate generously to our Annual End-of-Year Appeal, which you will be receiving in the mail soon. All contributions to the appeal go to support our work for wildlife and their habitat. You can also give a gift membership to a friend or relative (see instructions on page 7). And, as you can see from the opportunities mentioned above, you also can benefit wildlife by volunteering to survey birds and/or joining us on a work day to help improve habitats on our properties.

On behalf of the Marin Audubon Board, I hope your holidays are healthy and happy.

Fall 2012 Field Trip Report Roundup

By Len Blumin and Vicky Van Meter

This has been a busy fall for field trips with four trips scheduled each month. Here are some highlights. Come join us!

Saturday and Sunday, October 6th – 7th

Monterey Bay pelagic and land trip with Terry Colborn

We had great weather and great birding on our fun weekend with Terry. Roger Wolfe, a well known pelagic birder, was along to help with the birding. Highlights of the pelagic trip included **Black-vented, Buller's, Pink-footed, and Sooty Shearwaters**. Other species included **Black-footed Albatross, Rhinoceros Auklet, Northern Fulmar, and Pomarine Jaeger**.

Sunday, October 21

Marta's Marsh with Roger Harris

Roger gave an excellent overview of the history and importance of the marsh, and Susan Kelly and Len Blumin helped with the birding. The stars were the shorebirds with scores of **Willetts** and **Black-bellied Plovers** and a good number of **Dunlins**. Others included **Black-necked Stilts**, plus **Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits, Greater Yellowlegs** and a **Least Sandpiper**. We also had a good selection of ducks, mostly dabblers, highlighted by a group of **Blue-winged Teal**.



Black Scoter

Saturday, October 27

Las Gallinas Creek with Barbara Salzman and Len Blumin

Barbara gave an excellent presentation about the adverse impacts that the proposed sporting complex at the San Rafael airport will have on the wildlife of the area, especially regarding the endangered California Clapper Rail. We then had a walk out along the trail adjacent to Gallinas Creek, with good views of a number of birds. Highlights were the raptors, including the **American Kestrel, White-tailed Kite, Red-tailed Hawk** and **Cooper's Hawk**, but a good variety of passerines posed nicely, including **Western Bluebirds, Black Phoebe, Song Sparrow** and **White-crowned Sparrow**. Other species of note were close views of **Great Blue Heron, Great Egret** and **Western Grebe**.

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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

GRAY LODGE & SACRAMENTO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Saturday & Sunday,
December 1-2, 2012
With Bruce Deuel

If you have never seen tens of thousands of waterfowl on the water and in the air, this is your chance. Meet at 10:30 AM Saturday at the large parking lot just beyond the small museum at the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area. For details see our Web site, the November *Clapper Rail* or contact Vicky Van Meter at Vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com or 415/299-2514.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursdays, December 6, 2012
and January 3, 2013
9 AM to 12 noon
With Susan Kelly and friends

Beginner birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds near McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and over 100 species have been reported over the course of a year. Winter is a busy time at the ponds and provides an opportunity to study ducks, geese and raptors.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 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 9:00 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

HAMILTON FIELD WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT NOVATO

Saturday, December 8, 2012
9 AM to 12 noon
With Eric Jolliffe

We will start our morning with a short presentation by Barbara Salzman, President of MAS, about the impact of the 78-acre sports complex proposed for construction at Hamilton. This is an important conservation issue for Marin. Eric Jolliffe, Biologist for the Army Corps of Engineers, then will lead us on a tour of one of the largest wetlands restoration projects in the country. Eric will provide background on the wetlands restoration project and conservation issues. December will be a great time to see the waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and other species that are now making these new wetlands their home. We will learn about the new vegetation that will be part of the various zones in the wetlands and visit the nursery where native plants are being grown. Bring your binoculars, scopes and cameras!

DIRECTIONS: From the south on Hwy 101 take the Nave Drive/Hamilton exit and from the north use the Ignacio Blvd exit. Nave Drive runs parallel to Hwy. 101 on the east side. Turn from Nave Drive onto Hamilton Pkwy. We will meet at the Skate Park parking lot on Hamilton Dr., which is on the left a quarter mile from Nave Dr.

Fall 2012 Field Trip Report

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Thursday, November 1

Las Gallinas Storage Ponds with Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

This popular walk convenes on the first Thursday of every month. It is a great trip for both beginning and experienced birders. The November trip featured beautiful weather and good birding. There were 12 species of ducks (best were **Greater Scaup** and **Ring-necked Duck**, plus a **Canvasback**). The raptors included good views of flying **White-tailed Kites** and a close **Cooper's Hawk**, plus **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and several **Northern Harriers**. Some saw a **Merlin** in flight and the **American Kestrel**. A good number of the usual sparrows and finches were seen, highlighted by a **White-throated Sparrow** on the ground between the solar panels rows. Another good sighting was a very cooperative **Bewick's Wren**, which posed and preened quite openly for nearly 5 minutes.

Saturday, November 3

Left of the Fault Big Day with Keith Hansen
Keith led an enthusiastic group of birders on a whirlwind Big Day at Point Reyes. Getting 106 species (give or take) was satisfying, especially since some common species did not make the list. The highlight was when Jude Stalker

spotted an unusual sparrow that Keith then identified as Marin's very first **Field Sparrow**. This is something all will remember as long as we are birding. Other finds were a male **Harlequin Duck** and a **Black Scoter**. Finishing the day was a handsome **California Quail**, a coyote being chased by cows and then a bobcat. Participants wondered if Keith had staged it, as it was too good to be real.

Wednesday, November 7

Cypress Grove and Tom's Point, Tomales Bay with John Kelly
Our day started at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Cypress Grove Research Center on Tomales Bay. We convened among the tall Monterey cypress hedges and beautiful white Victorian cottages on the shore of Tomales Bay. John explained the history of the area and then led us on a walk along the Bay, marshlands and meadows. We viewed rafts of **Surf Scoters** and were close enough to hear their characteristic "popping" noise. Drawing pictures in the sand, John explained how to differentiate the three species of loons we could see and then used a piece of driftwood to show the differences in cormorants in flight. A **Peregrine Falcon** posed for us in a meadow. After lunch we carpooled up to Tom's Point, another ACR property not open to the public. We hiked through the open grasslands and along Brazil Beach to end our great day.



Northern Harrier

Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

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.



MMWD DRAFT READY FOR COMMENT

December 3 is the deadline for scoping comments to the environmental impact report MMWD is preparing on the *Draft Wildfire Protection and Habitat Improvement Plan* (WPHIP). Formerly called the *Vegetation Management Plan*, the WPHIP will guide MMWD’s management of its lands on Mt. Tamalpais, Nicasio and Soulajule Reservoirs for the next 15 years, so it is important that they hear your concerns.

The goals of the plan are to minimize fire risk to lives, property and critical water infrastructure, while protecting and enhancing ecological functions and values. MMWD held an initial public hearing in mid-November on the plan.

How You Can Help: Submit concerns and questions you would like addressed in the EIR to the District at Dain Anderson, Environmental Coordinator, Marin Municipal Water District, 220 Nellen Avenue, Corte Madera, California by December 3, 2012.

HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED

RMH Development LLC is planning a massive sports project on approximately 78 acres at Hamilton, Novato. The area is north of Hamilton Parkway and the skateboard park. The project would be built on Landfill 26, which is owned by the US Army, and on lands owned by the City of Novato.

No application has been submitted for the development yet, but the developer has been showing conceptual plans around the community. The plans include eight baseball fields, one regulation size field, four soccer fields, an indoor sports complex building, a community building, a 130,000-square-foot lodge and bunkhouse, 40,000-square-foot club facility and 1,700 parking places. The buildings are all shown on city property.

The developers have managed to secure a lease for the Federal property for just \$10 — essentially a giveaway at a time when the Federal government is in dire financial straits.

The lease allows them to go ahead with this massive development with virtually no environmental restrictions other than complying with State and Federal water and air quality regulations and protecting the landfill remediation systems. A cap, containment walls and water treatment system were installed 20 years ago to clean up and contain hazardous wastes left from when Hamilton served as a military air base. There has been no

opportunity for public input. The Army is even committed to helping the developers get the required permits.

Habitat concerns include filling wetlands adjacent to the Hamilton marsh restoration, a wetland adjacent to Ammo Hill, and riparian wetlands associated with Pacheco Creek. The Pacheco Creek wetlands are known to support several special status species including Western Pond Turtle, San Pablo Song Sparrow and Saltmarsh Common Yellowthroat.

Express your objection to our Congressional representatives: Senator Barbara Boxer, Senator Diane Feinstein, and Congressman Jared Huffman.

ROAD AND TRAILS PLAN

Marin County Parks (MCP) released an early draft of its *Road and Trails Plan* at the end of October. The draft plan addresses existing conditions, current trail policies and proposed management policies, can be found online at www.marincounty.org/depts/pk/our-work/os-main-projects/rtmp. MCP will take public comments in November, revise the plan and then prepare an Environmental Impact Report.

MCP owns and maintains 34 open space preserves encompassing 15,000 acres. There are 250 miles of unpaved trails and roads on these lands. MCP has done an inventory and assessment of these roads and trails and it knows which ones the county constructed, those that existed prior to MCP acquiring the properties and unauthorized trails that were built by user groups. The information on the number and location of unauthorized trails, however, is not provided. It appears that MCP has decided to legitimize these trails.

The plan does a good job describing the technical aspects of trails noting tread, drainage, soils, grades, and problems with stream crossings. The plan also recognizes that MCP’s preserves support some of the most ecologically sensitive resources in the county, but it fails to ensure these resources will be protected. It focuses almost entirely on visitor access.

The draft plan is problematic in several ways:

1. It provides no assurance that most native habitats will be protected. Only large, “high-value” natural habitats will be, and there are only a few of these. There are just passing references to the impacts of trails on sensitive habitats and wildlife corridors, vegetation or wildlife.

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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	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



Marin Parks Director, Linda Dahl, addresses attendees at the Bahia Celebration, with the Bahia marsh in the background.

Conservation Report

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The County claims it doesn't have much information about the wildlife on their properties. Yet they have on their staff one of the most knowledgeable naturalists in the county, David Herlocker, who conducts field trips on MCP lands regularly. The MCP *Vegetation Management Plan* is relied on to protect vegetative habitats, however, this plan also does not adequately address wildlife and is not even adopted.

2. We could end up with significantly more authorized trails than we have now. The draft plan says that the County "may" decommission roads and trails, and has a zero tolerance for unauthorized trail construction. Elsewhere, however, it provides for building new trails and trail connections.

We have no problem retaining unauthorized trails if they are safer or less environmentally damaging than legal trails, but every new trail built or unauthorized trail approved to remain should be accompanied by the decommissioning of an equal segment of authorized trail. Otherwise, we will end up with many more authorized trails than we have now. MAS's long-standing policy is no net increase in trails.

Recommendations on which trails would remain, be decommissioned or be constructed would be made by a yet-to-be-appointed Road and Trail Committee consisting of two representatives from each of the following groups: environmental, mountain bike and equestrians, hikers, park staff and open space commissioners. The committee representation

is problematic because the hiking group would include people with significantly different, and perhaps antithetical, interests – hikers, dog walkers, photographers, and nature watchers.

BAHIA ACQUISITION CELEBRATION

Supervisor Judy Arnold, Marin County Parks Director Linda Dahl (pictured above) and naturalist David Herlocker were among the special speakers at the MCP Celebration of Bahia event last month. It was a wonderful event with beautiful weather and interesting speakers. David led a great nature walk; Jude Stalker discussed MAS's restoration activities; and Barbara Salzman recited the history of MAS's acquisition and restoration of Bahia marshlands.

CLAPPER RAIL STUDY IN MARIN

Should you see people in the Corte Madera marshes and marshes along Black John Slough north of Bahia beginning in November, don't be alarmed. They are likely to be scientists from USGS who will be beginning a two-year study of Clapper Rails here and at Carl's Marsh across the Petaluma River in Sonoma County.

USGS staff biologists will be entering the marshes, trapping rails, placing tiny radio transmitters on ten birds at each site and monitoring the marshes on a daily basis to track the movements of the rails.

The purpose of the study is to better understand how Clapper Rails move within and among marshes to inform future Clapper Rail restoration and management plans. Little is known about the movement of Clapper Rails in the North Bay, whereas South Bay Clapper Rail populations have been extensively studied as part of the invasive *Spartina* removal effort.

SIGN UP FOR THE 2012 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS AND COMPILATION DINNER

CHEEP THRILLS CBC:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20

This is the second year Marin Audubon has conducted this count in north San Rafael, Novato, Nicasio, and southwest Petaluma. To participate, contact compilers Susan and Mark at: cbc@marinaudubon.org.

COMPILATION DINNER. PLEASE MAKE ADVANCE RESERVATIONS

A vegetarian pizza dinner will be held on December 20 from 5 - 8:30 PM at the Novato Horsemens Club, 600 Bugeia Lane in Novato. The cost is \$10 per person. While you can pay at the door (cash preferred) we need your reservation in advance to know how much pizza and salad to order. To reserve a dinner, e-mail Susan Kelly at cbc@marinaudubon.org by December 19th and indicate how many people in your party will be purchasing dinner. We encourage CBC participants to attend even if you aren't purchasing a dinner.

SOUTHERN MARIN CBC:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29

Marin Audubon has been conducting this CBC since 1975 and it covers Bolinas Lagoon, Audubon Canyon, Stinson Beach, Muir Beach, Fort Cronkhite, Muir Woods, Tennessee Valley, Sausalito, Tiburon, Ring Mountain, Mill Valley, Corte Madera, Larkspur, Alpine Lake, Bon Tempe, Phoenix Lake, Rock Springs, Fairfax, and parts of San Rafael.

To participate, sign up by December 19 using our online form: marinaudubon.org/cbc_form.php or send an e-mail to the compilers, Susan and Mark, at: cbc@marinaudubon.org

COMPILATION DINNER. RESERVATIONS AND ADVANCE PAYMENT REQUIRED.

Our traditional vegetarian dinner will be held on December 29th from 5 - 8:30 PM at the Tamalpais Valley Community Center at 203 Marin Avenue, Mill Valley. We encourage you to attend even if you aren't purchasing a dinner.

You will not be able to purchase a dinner at the event. Instead, you must pay by check and mail it in advance. Make your check for \$14 per person payable to "Marin Audubon Society" and mail it by December 20th to Marin Audubon, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA, 94942-0599. Please include the following information: Name(s) of the individuals you are paying for, a contact e-mail and mailing address, and phone number. Please bring your own beverages, plate, cup, cutlery, and napkin and a dessert to share.

POINT REYES CBC:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15

This count is in its 43rd year. MAS is a co-sponsor. For information and to register visit www.forestdata.com/cbc/.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Some rain has fallen by mid-November and the planting season is on track both at Bahia and at Triangle Marsh. Planting at Bahia will begin in December where volunteers and hired crews will share the work. At Triangle there will be one more chance to remove fennel and others of that ilk. Plants will go into the ground in January and volunteers will do it all. Join us on a workday. We are making progress. 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: December 1, January 5

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: December 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 rbrthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Shelley Baptiste, Dolores Braun, Robert Callahan, Kay Cash-Smith, Shirley G. Cook, Margaret Diener, Lillian Dreyer, Ali Duerr, Patricia Dumond, Heather P. English, Trombla Family, Howard Folker, Gary O. Hea, Josefa A. Heifetz, Mary M. Hofmann, Molly Hynes, Ellen J. Killebrew, Leo Kostelnik, Philip Lawrence, Bruce MacPhee, Mylon Marshall, Don Martin, Joan McPhaul, Douglas Mickey, John Nommensen, Lawrence L. Robbins, Jay Ruskin, Emma & Samuel Schnee, Rishi Schweig, Tom & Ann Shores, Patrick Smith, Kim Springer, David Steinberg, Elizabeth D. Sutcliffe, Anne C. Willcutt, Laraine Woitke

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS

E. Hubbard Buell, Henry & Glenda Corning, Wendy and William Dreskin, Kim and Linda Hudson (In Memory of Elmer Riekema), Lincoln Financial Foundation, Inc. (Donor match), Jean Moore (In Memory of Elmer Riekema), Jane Piel, RHE Foundation, the Springcreek Foundation, the Lubersky Living Trust, Suellen Sullivan (In Memory of Elmer Riekema)

THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Jack Gedney, Bob Hinz, Charles Lewis, Mike Linvill, Linda Nicoletto, Genoa Provencio, Jamie Randolph, Flinn Moore Rauck, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes

FUNDING APPROVED FOR MAS PROJECTS:

Grant from HRE Foundation approved. We are pleased to announce that MAS has received a \$15,000 grant from the HRE Foundation for the Corte Madera marshes. We expect to use the grant in combination with other funds to enhance tidal marsh habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rails. Our thank you to the HRE Board for supporting our work.

Supplemental Environmental Projects

Two restoration projects on MAS's properties have been approved for Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) funding. The project is being undertaken as part of the settlement of an enforcement action by the Regional Water Quality Control Board against the settling respondent, the Novato Sanitary District. As part of the settlement agreement, the Novato Sanitary District is applying some of the fine monies for discharges from their facilities onto two MAS-owned habitats that were directly impacted by the spills.

The SEP funds will benefit portions of our Bahia and Simmons Slough properties where spills from the District's sewage treatment facilities occurred last year.

At Bahia we will hire the Conservation Corps North Bay to remove non-native ice plant and plant native plants along the banks of a 2-acre tidal pond. Some of the funds will be used for monitoring the larger Bahia restoration project that was completed in 2008 and which we are responsible to monitor for 11 more years.

At our 184-acre Simmons Slough, we will use the money to remove cocklebur and to

plant native wetland plants in the location of the spill.

We are pleased to be working with the Sanitary District and to have SEP funding to restore and enhance our two properties.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR PLANTING DAYS

With the rain comes the planting season. We have six major planting efforts ahead of us and we sure could use some volunteers to help.

We will be planting more than a thousand native plants at our properties at Bahia, Petaluma Marsh property, Triangle Marsh and along Simmons Slough at Atherton Avenue. The Simmons Slough site is part of our Natural Resource Conservation Service project. We will be removing invasives like cocklebur and replacing them with native wetland plants at the south end of our Simmons Slough property that borders Olive and Atherton Avenues in Novato. Funding for the Bahia restorations is coming from the SEP (see above), our EPA grant through the SF Estuary Partnership and the Mead Foundation. Triangle Marsh funding is a grant from National Audubon, and for Petaluma Marsh plants were purchased with a grant from the Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Thanks to these grants and member donations, we have the money to purchase all of these plants and to hire the Watershed Nursery and Conservation Corps North Bay to do much of the planting.

However, we do not have enough money to plant all of the plants. We need and welcome your help – to volunteer contact Bob Hinz at rbrthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

Didemnum vexillum in Drakes Estero *continued from page 1*

Oyster Company (DBOC) were originally imported from Japan and Dvex may have arrived as a "hitchhiker" years ago on the imported oysters. It can also spread by ocean currents and settle in new places that have adequate substrate for it to establish.

Since its arrival, Dvex has been persisting and reproducing on the cultivated oyster shells and bags in Drakes Estero. The harvesting activities of DBOC cause fragmentation of the Dvex and facilitate the colonization of other areas of the Estero. A limited amount of it was found growing on natural solid mud and sandstone substrates and rocks at Bull Point in 2007, but until very recently many believed that it would not spread to the floor of the Estero or become attached to the eelgrass plants.

In 2010 Dr. Ted Grosholz, a researcher

from UC Davis, conducted surveys of fouling invertebrates on some of the oyster racks in Drakes Estero and found that Dvex was prominent among them. He observed large colonies of Dvex growing on the leaf shoots of some of the native eelgrass. Until Dr. Grosholz's surveys, it was thought to be very unlikely that Dvex would grow on eelgrass in Drakes Estero.

His observations are of great ecological concern because eelgrass is one of the most highly productive habitats on the California Coast and plays a vital role in providing nursery habitat for many fish species and forage areas for Black Brant and other waterfowl. Research has shown that invasive colonial tunicates such as Dvex can have negative effects on eelgrass growth, survival, and light transmission.

Following this alarming discovery, while kayaking with Dvex researchers in Drakes Estero this past August, we also observed large

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MARIN BIRDLOG – OCTOBER 2012

By Rich Stallcup

A female **Brown Booby** on a seastack off the end of Point Reyes 10/13 (KH+) was only the second ever documented in Marin County. The first was an after-second year male at the same spot June 7, 1998 (m.ob).

Where are the divers? Diving Ducks like Ring-necked, scaup, scoters, and even Canvasbacks are usually piling-in around here by mid-October but here it's 11/2 and there are very few. What's up with that?

Of at least six **Harlequin Ducks** that summered along the Point Reyes peninsula, two males (still present) at the Fish Docks thrilled hundreds of birders.

During a scientific study 10/15, two **Black Rails** and a **Yellow Rail** were captured and released unharmed at the south end of Tomales Bay (fide JE).

A **Black-necked Stilt** was at Bolinas Lagoon 10/5 (KH) and two were at Stafford Lake 9/8/12 (RS). This species is very rare on the Pacific slope of Marin.

After a virtual absence of several winters along the outer coast, **Rough-legged Hawks** may have one of their irruptive years as one dark-morph bird and one light were seen together on the O.P. 10/28 (MR, MB). The birds didn't linger and flew east.

On 10/9, 12 birders were knocked breathless as a young **Golden Eagle** flew right past them then back towards the mainland as they stood at the end of Point Reyes. Migrating raptors that have lost their way make an abrupt 180 when they get to the end of the point and are over nothing but water.

Four **Tropical Kingbirds** scattered along the coast is average for October, but fourteen species of wood warblers (most in the first week of the month and including western kinds) is not statistically useful because each October brings different unruly weather. Northwest wind keeps migrants from reaching the outer coast. If the breezes are favorable most of the warblers found are very expectable, the exception being a young female **Black-throated Green** at the Fish Docks 10/20 to 10/22 (MB, MR, +). There are only about seven fall records for Marin, all mid-October into December. Any report of one in August or September should be scrutinized as a possible Townsend's X Hermit hybrid.

A **Sage Thrasher** was reported at Battery Mendell in the Marin Headlands 10/16 (DS). This species was a far more frequent find during autumn in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

A flyover **Townsend's Solitaire** 10/5 at the Wildlife Gallery in Bolinas was a new bird for what may be the most thoroughly birded patch on the continent (KH).

Another good find was a **Black-throated Sparrow** quite late in the year on 10/15 (LG,JF) near Rodeo Lagoon in the Marin Headlands.

The 2012 fall migration was "mighty average" (MP) with no brain-numbing rarities, only two "high-end" warblers and one vireo (Philadelphia 9/27). Since I wrote this, Marin's first **Field Sparrow** was well-documented on the O.P. 11/3 (KH +).

Observers Bob Battagin, Dave Bengston, Tony Briggs, Heather Cameron, Kate Carolan, Adam and Devon Donkin, Erick Enbody, Jules Evens, Jeff Fairelough, fide — according to, Deborah Fitzpatrick, Laurie Graham, Keith Hansen, m.ob – many observers, Jeff Miller, O.P. – Outer Point Reyes, Mike Parmeter, Desert Peach, PRBO Conservation Science, Mary Anne Rotella and Mark Butler, Dan Singer, Rich Stallcup, Kerry Wilcox

Didemnum vexillum in Drakes Estero continued from page 6

amounts of Dvex covering more than 50% of the cultivated oyster shells hanging from the Oyster Company's racks and were shocked to see significant amounts of the Dvex colonizing the floor of the eelgrass beds below and adjacent to the oyster racks. To my knowledge, this occurrence had not been reported before and was believed by many to be impossible.

The National Park Service (NPS) has been notified of this observation. What action they will take is unknown but the NPS Management Policies require removal of impacts that would cause "impairment" or "unacceptable impacts" to any key park resource, such as eelgrass and the associated benthic community in this case. Additionally, because Drakes Estero is designated

as a potential wilderness area, the park managers are also required to "seek to sustain the natural distribution, numbers, population composition, and interaction of indigenous species" and to intervene to "correct past mistakes, the impacts of human use, and influences originating outside of wilderness boundaries."

It is clear that to successfully manage this infestation all of the prime Dvex habitat that the DBOC infrastructure (racks, lines, shells, bags) provides should be removed.

I have been a biologist working with invasive species for many years and know too well the disastrous and costly ecological repercussions of delaying the removal of invasive species or not responding to them at all. I don't think this is a risk worth taking with the Dvex invasion in Drakes Estero.

Sage Thrasher



Photo courtesy of Glen Tipton, photo.com/gecpeke

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- January 19 **Field Trip: Cosumnes Preserve**
With Terry Colborn
- February 3 **Field Trip: Delta Boat Trip**
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