



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, FEBRUARY 9 7:30 PM

Birds: The Most Amazing Animals on Earth

With Joe Mueller



Glen Tepke, photo.com/gepke

Clark's Nutcracker

Birds are exceptional in so many ways, their intelligence, migration, color, behavior and senses. Being able to see a mouse a mile away, migrating 40,000 miles in a year, remembering thousands of hiding places and many other feats, set birds apart from all other living beings. Join Joe for an evening of biological investigation of the most amazing animals on Earth. WARNING: you might find yourself embarrassed to be a mammal!

Joe Mueller directs the Natural History Program at College of Marin. He has taught there for more than 20 years, and of the 15 different courses, his subjects of particular interest include ornithology, ecology, marine biology and environmental science. Several MAS members have taken Joe's classes or been on field trips that he has led. Others know him as being the featured speaker at *An Evening with Owls* – the annual fundraiser of the Hungry Owl Project at WildCare. Prepare to learn and be entertained by this excellent teacher!

Come early for cookies and conversation.

THURSDAY, MARCH 8 7:30 PM

Restoring the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge

With Melissa Pitkin

2011 Christmas Bird Counts



Meadowlark: Glen Tepke, photo.com/gepke; White-breasted Nuthatch, Richard Pavek



Western Meadowlarks (left) were fewer, but more White-breasted Nuthatches (right) were counted on the revived Cheep Thrills CBC.

Marin Audubon volunteers organized two Christmas Bird Counts this year and both were wildly successful.

Sixty-nine volunteers joined us for the revived Cheep Thrills CBC (CACT) on December 15, including several birders who participated in the original count from 1978 through 1987: Dave Shuford, Rich Stallcup, Scott Carey, Peter Colasanti, Roger Harris, and David Wimpfheimer. Everyone had great fun and we managed to observe 164 species.

The 37th S. Marin CBC (CAMC) was conducted in fine weather and good company on December 31. Over 120 birders observed a total of 183 species, two more than the 36-year historical average. Participants reported several unusual species that were not observed in at least five of the previous ten CAMC counts: **Bald Eagle, Black Rail, Bullock's Oriole, Cackling Goose, Cassin's Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Palm Warbler, Prairie Falcon, Redhead, Red-naped Sapsucker, Rhinoceros Auklet, Short-billed Dowitcher, Summer Tanager, Violet-green Swallow, and Wilson's Warbler.**

CHEEP THRILLS – WHAT'S CHANGED?

Compared to the historical data, several species seemed to have increased in numbers. For instance, the 10-year average for **Canada Geese** was 291, with 670 being the highest number observed in any single year (1986). In 2011 we observed 1,947 of them. We counted at least three times as many of each of these species as the historical average: **Mallard, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawk, Black-necked Stilt, Western and Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Mourning Dove, Tree Swallow, and White-breasted Nuthatch.** The table on page 2 provides the details.

In the past there were no reported occurrences of **Mute Swans, Wild Turkeys, and Eurasian Collared-Doves** because they hadn't yet appeared on the scene. This year we counted 12 Mute Swans, 123 Wild Turkeys, and 94 Eurasian Collared-Doves.

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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.

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Web site: www.marinaudubon.org
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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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

As I write this, I am leaving for Antarctica shortly and have time just to say a special thank you to all of the volunteers who made possible our three Christmas Bird Counts in the county. Our long-standing Southern Marin count is yet to happen, but the Cheep Thrills Count which covers the Novato area, yielded 161 species, excellent for a count that has not taken place in 20 years and a circle with wide-open areas. This year MAS also sponsored the Point Reyes Count which found a whopping 205 species, one of the highest species totals on record.

A special thank you to Susan Kelly and Mark Forney, co-compilers of the Cheep Thrills and Southern Marin Counts, and to John

Longstreth and Tom Gaman, co-compilers of the Point Reyes Count. Congratulations on your great successes.

Thank you also to MAS's generous supporters who responded to our end-of-year appeal letter with a contribution. Most of what we do would not be possible were it not for our generous donors. Supporting Christmas Bird Counts, which are important citizen science projects that enable trends in bird populations to be identified, is one of the activities your contributions enable us to support.

I'll be back the end of January from my trip. I hope everyone is having a healthy and happy 2012.

2011 CBCs

continued from page 1

Species	10-year average (1978 – 1987)	Highest number observed in a single year from 1978 – 1987	2011 Cheep Thrills count
Canada Goose	291	670	1947
Mallard	229	605	848
Turkey Vulture	251	342	574
Red-shouldered Hawk	17	31	55
Red-tailed Hawk	88	147	161
Black-necked Stilt	20	55	156
American Avocet	101	240	445
Willet	203	340	508
Western Sandpiper	327	1219	3577
Least Sandpiper	456	1378	1908
Dunlin	768	1547	2298
Mourning Dove	81	168	285
Anna's Hummingbird	66	103	143
Tree Swallow	9	13	70
Oak Titmouse	106	148	216
White-breasted Nuthatch	31	54	99

Interestingly, we counted fewer **Starlings** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** than reported in the past (and I suspect nobody will complain). Other species that seemed to have declined include **Meadowlark**, **Brewer's Blackbird** and **Pine Siskin**. The table below provides the details.

Species	10-year average (1978 – 1987)	Smallest number observed in a single year from 1978 – 1987	2011 Cheep Thrills count
European Starling	9118	2344	1101
Meadowlark	1079	545	311
Brewer's Blackbird	6110	2952	1516
Brown-headed Cowbird	189	17	5
Pine Siskin	745	120	70

All of this comes with a caveat: The original Cheep Thrills count had only about 15 participants each year, and they may have covered the area very differently than we did in 2011. Also, we did not count a small section of the original circle that includes Shollenberger because several years ago it became part of the new Sonoma Valley count circle, and the CBC Director at National Audubon asked us not to cover the overlap area. Nonetheless, the results are interesting and worth examining.

For a fascinating look at how Rich Stallcup and Heather Cameron covered the Bahia area on the Cheep Thrills count, see this article that appeared in the Web edition of *Bay Nature: Reporter's Notebook: Two Birders, a Few Wastewater Ponds, 104 Species of Birds*, at <http://baynature.org/articles/web-only-articles/reporters-notebook-two-birders-a-few-sewage-ponds-104-species-of-birds>

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 info, accessibility and weather: Vicky Van Meter, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS SAN RAFAEL

Thursdays, February 2, March 1
8:30 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 and geese. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. This is a great way to start learning the raptors, waterfowl, and other groups, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette.

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 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 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

Sunday, February 5, 2012
8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
With David Wimpfheimer
TRIP IS FULL. WAIT LIST ONLY.

Join us for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the Delta. This area hosts a wide variety of raptors, large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Crane, Tundra Swan, geese and ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines. The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$95. Contact Vicky Van Meter by e-mail or phone for space availability. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions.

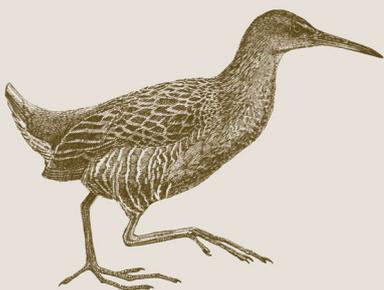
CAPAY VALLEY

Saturday, February 18, 2012
8:30 AM to 3 PM
With Terry Colborn

Join Terry Colborn for a delightful day in picturesque Capay Valley. As the valley's harbinger of the coming spring season, the almond orchards should be at peak bloom! Our stops will include historic Capay Cemetery, Cache Creek and several favorite birding spots in idyllic Capay Valley. We'll look for Yellow-billed Magpie, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Phainopepla, Western Bluebirds and resident raptors, as well as any lingering wintering raptors. We also hope to see some early spring arrivals such as Barn and Violet-green Swallows, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and perhaps a warbler species or two. Past trips have produced Golden and Bald Eagles, Western Kingbird and Prairie Falcon. We should also see some early spring wildflowers along with Redbud, that very conspicuous flowering shrub along the roadside. Terry will meet everyone at Community Park in Esparto at 8:30 am. Participants who wish may want to carpool from there.

DIRECTIONS: From Marin County, take Hwy 37 east to Vallejo then go east on I-80. Just past the new Nut Tree Center take I-505. Travel I-505 north for about 20 miles to the Route 16 exit and turn left (west). Esparto is located about 4 miles west on Route 16 - the park is in the center of town. Driving time is about 1½ hrs but allow a little extra time, as there may be early morning fog.

Bring lunch, liquids and dress in layers and wear sturdy footwear, as we will do a little walking. Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Terry at: 916/705-8991 or www.tlcbirding.com



DECEMBER 10 FIELD TRIP

West Coast Water Birds

With Jim White

By Dave Herrema

Jim shared his knowledge and experience and expertly led twenty of us at Stinson Beach and around Bolinas Lagoon. All levels of birding expertise were represented, several spotting scopes were available, and everyone enjoyed the beautiful day. Of the sixty-



Photo courtesy of Len Blumkin

Whimbrel

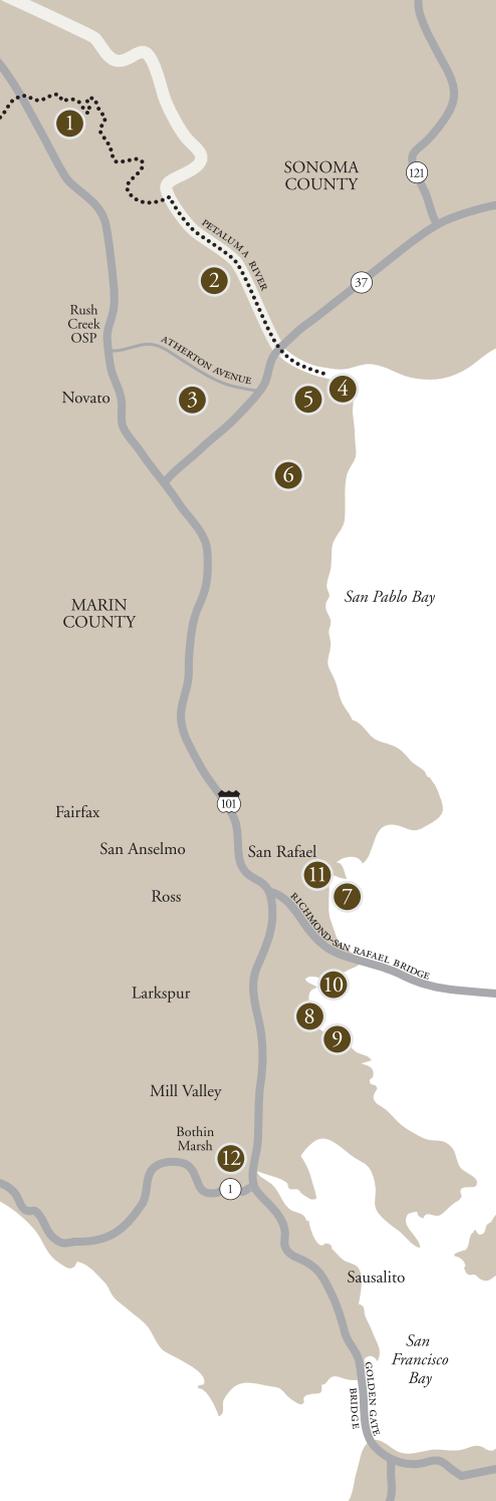
plus species seen on the day, two-thirds were waterbirds: ducks, loons and grebes, herons and egrets, shorebirds, and gulls. It was a nice cross section of birds found in this aquatic habitat. An unusual sighting was a leucistic hen duck (probably **Northern Pintail**). Leucism is caused by a developmental or genetic abnormality that reduces the amount of pigment deposited in some or all of the feathers. This duck was not white but definitely light-colored overall. Another highlight that day was a **Peregrine Falcon** that flew closely overhead and perched 200 feet away for a nice view.

eBIRD.ORG

Are you disappointed that you couldn't make the Southern Marin CBC New Year's Eve? Have your own mini 'makeup count.' Invite a friend. Go birding. Report your bird observations at www.eBird.org

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.



GNOSS FIELD EXPANSION

Last month we reported on the proposal to extend the runway at Marin County’s Gness Field Airport by adding 1,100 feet to the northwest which would result in a total runway length of 4,400 feet. This is the preferred Alternative B in the environmental documents. Gness Field is located north of Rush Creek wetlands and south of Redwood Landfill.

The stated reasons for the project are to ensure safety and efficient use. The project would allow existing aircraft to operate at maximum gross take-off weight under adverse conditions such as hot weather. Currently under some conditions, aircraft have to operate with a reduced fuel load in order to lighten the plane and allow it to land more safely on the shorter runway.

Three other alternatives are presented and discussed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/S): Alternative A is the No Project Alternative which would continue with the existing 3,300 foot-long runway; Alternative C would lengthen the runway to the southeast for a total of 4,400 feet; and Alternative D would extend the runway to the southeast by 240 feet and to the northwest by 860 feet for a total of 4,400 feet.

The project raises a number of issues, the most important of which to MAS is the potential impact on wetland habitats. The alternative that is the most environmentally damaging is C because it would extend the runway to the south and require filling of tidal marsh along Black John Slough. Black John Slough is habitat for the endangered Clapper Rail as well as the threatened Black Rail.

Alternatives B and C would both fill seasonal wetlands. According to DEIR/S calculations, the preferred alternative would permanently impact 11.83 acres of seasonal wetlands for which mitigation would be required. Only 0.77 acres would be mitigated by on-site replacement. The DEIR/S only addresses impacts of the project on endangered species, birds and plants, but not on migratory birds.

The DEIR/S reviews options for mitigating wetland impacts at a mitigation bank or other alternative sites, most of which are too far from the wetlands that would be lost to be acceptable. Mitigation options include Federal Wildlife Refuge projects at Cullinan Ranch and Sonoma Creek, and Sonoma Land Trust projects. These projects are all on the east side

of the Petaluma River. The DEIR/S mentions contacting a private property owner regarding a parcel of land that is approximately 7,500 feet from the Airport, but the location is not specified beyond that. Because adjacent lands are diked historic baylands or currently tidal marsh, there appear to be ample opportunities for mitigation in the immediate vicinity to the south and west of the Airport. While the California Department of Fish and Game owns the baylands to the north and east of the Airport, properties to the south and west are in private ownership. All or portions of these properties could be purchased, permanently protected and restored to wetlands as mitigation. We will recommend this in our comments. We would strongly oppose the use of a mitigation bank.

Other issues that have been raised relating to the project include noise impacts to nearby residents, increased use by small jets, which are noisier, and an overall increase in the numbers of planes landing and taking off.

The DEIR/S assessment is that the aviation activity is expected to be modest and to continue at the current level in the near and long term with the preferred project. The DEIR/S states that the proposed extension of the runway would not attract aircraft that are notably larger (e.g., commuter aircraft) due to limitations of the strength of the runway pavements...” and other design limitations. Whether these limiting conditions would change in the future is not known. Risk of bird strikes would be the same as it is currently if the DEIR/S assessment be correct. Should the DEIR/S assessment be wrong, and more planes do use the airport, then the risk of bird strikes would be expected to increase.

The deadline for written comments is February 6. You can find the DEIR/S at www.gnessfeldeis-eir.com.

HISTORIC BAYLANDS AT RISK

Yet another assault on baylands habitat is taking shape in the form of a project that threatens to fill over 500 acres of diked historic tidal marsh along the Petaluma River in Sonoma County. Last July, the owners of the Port Sonoma Marina along Highway 37 sought approvals allowing up to 20 million cubic yards of dredge material taken from any number of locations in the Bay to be trucked directly or off-loaded by barge at the Port and pumped to their adjacent property, the Carneros Ranch.

While outside the borders of our own

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

County of Marin, the potential impacts from this plan would not stop at some arbitrary line on a map but extend into wildlife habitat within Marin. Despite obvious potentially significant environmental impacts and numerous requests for a full environmental review, the Sonoma County Board of Zoning Adjustments was poised to finalize a permit based on a Mitigated Negative Declaration of Impacts instead of a thorough analysis provided by an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Fortunately, the Sonoma Group of the Sierra Club appealed the Board's decision, and the project has been halted until the Sonoma Board of Supervisors presides over an appeal hearing. Marin Audubon, along with every other entity or individual in Marin, including our Board of Supervisors, was unaware of this project due to

Perhaps the most unfortunate outcome of this project would be that by raising the elevation of this property, any future opportunities to return it to tidal marsh would be lost.

a lack of notification. Because the letter of the law requires that only neighboring properties within 300 feet of a project be notified, no one in the community of Black Point, which lies directly across the river, had any notion of what was about to unfold in their front yard

How We Got Here

In the mid-1800s large areas of the San Francisco Bay Estuary's tidal marshes and mudflats were diked and drained for farming or were filled for development. Port Sonoma and the Carneros Ranch were part of a vast tidal marsh complex, the Petaluma Marsh, which today is considered the largest intact tidal marsh system within the estuary. As a result of diking, most of these lands have since subsided to elevations that are near one foot below sea level. The proposed project will effectively raise the 528-acre ranch to an elevation of 7 feet above sea level. To give you a better idea of the scale of this project, keep in mind that Novato's Redwood Landfill is projected to end its operations sometime around 2024 when it reaches 25 million cubic yards of garbage.

Port Sonoma has on more than one occasion, been the focus of controversy when various owners strategized on how to profit from its location at the expense of wildlife. Several years ago MAS participated in the Water Transit Authority's process to expand ferry service in the San Francisco Bay and was instrumental in their conclusion that the port was not a viable

candidate for service due to environmental constraints. Another proposal called for a mixed residential and commercial development that was later shelved. The current scheme is arguably inconsistent with the port's present zoning designation which allows for "recreation and visitor-serving" purposes.

What Are The Impacts?

So what's the big deal about a 20-year project that will deliver 20 million cubic yards of dredge material from either barges or trucks? The quick answer is that we don't know. If this project is exempted from a full environmental analysis afforded by an EIR, we can only cross our fingers and trust the developer's consultants that their plan has everyone's interest at heart.

Clearly, wildlife will not be afforded an opportunity to vote on this issue. If they could, they would have serious concerns about loss of seasonal wetlands on the ranch, water quality, disruption to feeding and nesting, dust control, noise from trucks, barges and commercial dredge pumps, as well as air quality impacts from both diesel barges and trucks. Then add in potential impacts to endangered species (Clapper Rail, Salt Marsh Harvest Mice), recreational boating, fishing and birdwatching impacts on the Petaluma River, erosion from wakes, aesthetic impacts and the growth-inducing effects of an industrial operation near a major highway and rail line. By the way, there is no plan to continue the use of the site for its original purpose of providing a public marina.

Perhaps the most unfortunate outcome of this project would be that by raising the elevation of this property, any future opportunities to return it to tidal marsh would be lost. Situated between the Sonoma Baylands project, Carl's Marsh, and MAS's Bahia project, the Carneros Ranch provides an important link in what could be a continuous marsh ecosystem. Bringing dredge material from one part of the Bay in order to dump it on what were former tidelands sounds a lot like what got us to where we are today with 95% of our wetlands lost. It would certainly be at odds with the current investment of public funds which have restored and enhanced wetlands in this area and others.

What's Next?

The Marin Audubon Society, along with the Marin Conservation League, the Black Point Improvement Club, both Marin and Sonoma Sierra Club groups, the Sonoma Water Coalition and others have joined forces to ask the Sonoma Board of Supervisors to assure the public that this enormous project will have proper environmental review through an EIR. Since the appeal will be heard on January 24th, you will be reading this article shortly after the Board convenes. We will update you on the Supervisors' decision.

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Ablin Family Fund, Bud Alderson, Diane Aldrich, Winifred & Harry Allen Foundation, Thomas Anderson, Robert & Jeanne Atkinson, Gary & Beverly Austin, Barbara Banthien, Phyllis Barry, Bob Battagin, Helen & Eldon Beck, Timothy Behr, Mark Bennett, Barbara Benson, LaVonne Blasche, Patricia & Leonard Blumin, Andrew Bollen, Ann Boren, Frederic Bost, E. Hubbard Buell, Priscilla & Michael H. Bull, Jean Burns, Helen K. Cahill, Patricia Campbell, Lois Cannady, Lance Carnes, William Carney, Mary Sue Cave, Samuel Chase, Rosalind Colver, Peter & Lynne Cowperthwaite, Christine Cuccia, Deborah K. Daly, Ken & Ann Davis, Thomas Delebo, Nona Dennis, David & Kristine Donadio, William Donahoe & Kristin Klein, Dempster & Sylvia Drowley, Bette F. Durham, Athalia & Peter Esty, Lisa & Robert Farnham, Tamara S. Galanter, Betty Gandel, Kay Gillis, Mary Gleim, Elizabeth & Jon Goerke, Gloria Goldsmith, Jane Gorski, Jeff Grey, Maureen Groper, Joan Halverson & Chris Nakashima, Douglas Hanford, Kathleen M. Hannah, Dolores Hansen, Robert Hinz, Louis & Faye Hinze, Julien I. E. Hoffman, Elizabeth Huning, Martha & Gerry Jarocki, Richard Jenkins, Richard Jennings, Lowden Jessup, Brandon Jewett-Hall, Lorraine Johnson, Diana & Ted Jorgenson, John Kane, James & Joan Kelly, Susan B. Kelly, Mark & Shawn Klender, Nancy Williams Koors, Sandra Lamke, Laurie Cohen Fund, William Legge, Richard Leonards, Linda Levey, David MacKenzie, Marjorie Macris, Kellie Magee, Ron & Amanda Mallory, Michael & Sharon Marron, Jeffery Martin, Katherine Martinez, James Jr. & Lucile Masson, Vivian Mazur, Donald W. McLeod, Barbara & Gerald Meral, Bernard Meyers, Don Miller, Lynn Milliman & Leonard Charles, Lois & Bruce Moody, Eileen Murray, Patrick Murray, Warren & Marcia Nute, Mary Erin O'Leary, Barbara O'Toole, Geraldine Owens, Thomas Peacock, Michael Phelps, Joy Phoenix, Purple Lady/Barbara J. Meislin Fund, Flinn Moore Rauck, Donald Reinberg, Bill Remick, Russell Ridge, Diane Rosenberger, Georg Roth, Nicholas Roth, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Kim R. Sams, Donald Samson, Margaret Saulsberry, Rolf & Charlotte Scherman, Elizabeth Schiff, David & Julie Schnapf, Sue Severin, David Sexton, Joanne Shaw, Susan Shea, Stuart Siegel, Dianne Sierra, Todd Steiner & Lynette McLamb, Jon & Sandra Stern, Edward Stevens, Roger Stoll, Peter & Donna Svirsky, Mark H. Swoislin, Cheryl Tanasovich, Rex Thompson, Evelyn Topper, Terrence & Lorraine Vall, Ronald L. Vestal, Triva Von Klark, Rona Weintraub, James & Joanne Willcox, Donna Williams, Dora D. Williams, Kathryn Wilson, Lucy Wilson, Hilary Winslow, Janice Wright, Sarah & Melvyn Wright, Thomas Yarish & Laure Campbell, Catherine & John Yee, Suzanne Zimmerman, Diane Ziola

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Because eight nearly rainless weeks have left the soil dry at mid-winter, weeding and mulching are important for helping our native plants survive and grow. Watering recent plantings would be difficult but in some limited areas it might be possible. Help us remove radishes, thin the thistles and move mulch.

We have the tools and gloves ... and snacks! We generally work until about 1 PM, but even an hour is valuable help. Everyone is welcome. Steady rain cancels.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: February 4, March 3

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: February 11

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 rbthzn@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS:

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Beverlee Block, Brooke Cole, Cynthia Fatura, Nick Froehlich, Sydney Goodman, Bob Hinz, Kevin Johnson, Drew Loganbill, Prem McMurdo, Lynette Niebrugge, Andrea Schilling, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Lisa Velasquez, Kiara Wade

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Darell Arnold, Ethelynn Bates, Ron Bennett, Nanette M. Biers, Linda Billinger, Stephen Boeri, Mela Bolotoff, William Brostoff, Stockton Buck, Nancy Claggett, Bonnie D. Clark, Marjorie A. Cook, Germaine & Wayne Cooper, Nora Lee Cornett, Peter & Lynne Cowperthwaite, George Cruys, Deborah K. Daly, Dean Dietrich, Paul T. Eaton, Brett Ferry, Russell Fleming, Wiene Frans, Charlene Gale, Mack Gambrell, Rita George, Paul Gilbert, Kay Gillis, Terry Gordy, James Grant, Donna Greyling, Diane Hansen, Alison H. Hess, Suzanne Himmelwright, Brandon Jewett-Hall, Howard Kanter, Martin Katz, Suraya Keating, Susan V. Keulen, Mary Khan, George & Barbara Klein, Gunter Kollner, Christine Lindner, Jacqueline Littman, David MacKenzie, Lawrence Manning, Nancy Merritt, Anne Miller, Kathie Moore, Barbara Moran, George R. Peck, Lisa Pender, David J. Picchi, Curt Ries, Peta Sanderson, Bea Seidler, David Sexton, Sylvie Silverstein, Amy Skewes-Cox, Thomas Teixeira, Alan N. Thompson, Renee Villiere, Cheryl V. Waal

We had lots of planting done in December by the Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB). CCNB teams removed cocklebur and spread meadow barley and mulch in a ditch along the Eastern Peninsula at Bahia. Also on the Eastern Peninsula, the CCNB team planted Coast Live Oak, Toyon and Goldenrod to refresh thickets that we planted last year and planted Marsh Baccharis along the marsh edge.

In addition, we began work on the Olive

Avenue site with CCNB planting native species, Oaks, Toyon and Coyote Bush, intended to block the movement of seeds of invasive plants coming from the road. Our thanks to the San Pablo National Wildlife Refuge for donating Coyote Bush to help make up for our shortfall of this species.

Now that we have so many newly-planted plants in the ground we are hoping for rain soon.

Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine: Field Ornithology in a Spectacular Setting

By Susan Kelly

With early childhood and family connections to the east coast, as soon as I read the NBB posting about the Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine, I was intrigued. Once I clicked on the link and saw the photos, I knew I had to go. And I wasn't disappointed. The scenery was lovely, fellow attendees were wonderful, the instructors were first rate, and even the food was good.

Here's how the Field Ornithology session was described: "Take a week of riveting field trips to habitats as diverse as offshore puffin islands, windswept blueberry barrens, lush grasslands, and sphagnum bog forests. Add some of the most respected bird experts in the country, and you have Field Ornithology on Hog Island – a layman's exploration of all things avian, from basic bird biology to nesting behavior, songs, migration and conservation." When I read it, I had visions of lolling about in fields of ripe blueberries, exotic warblers flitting all about; the reality, albeit different, was just as good.

Hog Island is an Audubon Sanctuary with a long and interesting history that dates back 75 years.

Hog Island is an Audubon Sanctuary with a long and interesting history that dates back 75 years. Roger Tory Peterson and Allan D. Cruickshank regularly taught there. Our instructors were Kenn Kaufman and his wife Kimberly, Scott Weidensaul, Lang Elliott, Sara Morris, Stephen Kress, and several others. All of them were excellent field guides, accessible and knowledgeable, and genuinely nice people.

There were two groups attending that week, adults and teens. During the day we went on field trips (adult and teen groups were segregated) and each evening after dinner one



Atlantic Puffin

of the instructors gave a presentation that everyone attended. Field trips included hikes on the island, boat rides to remote islands, and trips to the mainland.

We could literally immerse ourselves in birding from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. each day without worrying about mundane matters like food. The chef, himself a vegetarian, made sure everyone's dietary restrictions were accommodated, including the vegetarians and vegans. When it comes to eating I'm as fussy as any Marin foodie, and even I was happy.

If you're a birder who's interested in studying ornithology and spending a week with convivial birders and outstanding instructors, you'll enjoy this immensely. If you're more interested in adding new birds to your list, it won't be particularly satisfying. I did add a dozen or so birds to mine, including **Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Ovenbird, Black Guillemots, Laughing Gull, Razorbills, Common Eider, Arctic Terns, Common Terns, and Roseate Terns**, but I'm afraid I forgot to make a list and have forgotten some already.

Needless to say, I really enjoyed my experience at this summer camp for bird lovers. The total cost for the session, which lasted from Sunday through Friday, was about \$1,000 (excluding transportation costs). To learn more, visit: www.projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.html

Photo courtesy of Thomas Gansow

By Rich Stallcup

December 2011 was the third driest in recorded history. There were only traces of rain and no freezes on the Pacific Slope of the outer coast range. Many rare passerine insectivores spiced-up birding, mostly on Christmas Counts (CBCs). Emphasizing this point were seven species of eastern or unseasonal wood warblers and an unprecedented count of fifty-eight **Orange-crowned Warblers** between Stinson Beach and Bolinas on 12/31.

A **Red-throated Loon** in the moat that loops on the eastern border of the Village Mall 12/19 was a definite highlight of that day! (RS, HC). I know of 12 Red-throated Loons from Marin's "interior" and only three Common Loons. This is reverse the trend anywhere in California.



Glen Tepke, phae.com/gepke

Ross's Goose

White Warbler at White House Pool 12/10 (JD, RS) was refound nearby on the PRCBC 12/17 (S + LT) and the male **Prairie Warbler** at the Fish Docks since September (MR, MB) delighted many through at least 12/8 (m.ob), amazing for the O.P. mid-winter. In the same "amazing" category was the beautiful (though sometimes elusive) **Dickcissel** found at Nunes Ranch 11/29 (BB et al.) through at least 12/4 (m.ob).

Christmas Counts: Three CBCs were run in Marin in 2011. The long-running **Point Reyes Peninsula (PRCBC)** count logged 206 species and will be in the top six in the United States and Canada for avian diversity ... there are hundreds of count circles. **Marin County Southern (MCSCBC)** includes Bolinas, Mount Tam, Marin Headlands and the bay side north to the Marin Civic Center. Following a request in this column in early 2011, the **Cheap Thrills Count (CTCBC)** was resurrected after twenty years of dormancy and was renamed **Cheep Thrills**. It covers the northeast corner of Marin.

UNUSUAL BIRDS ON MARIN COUNTY CBCs 2011

Cheep Thrills 12/15

A tight flock of "other geese" among the Honkers at the Novato Sanitation Ponds included: 1 (**Aleutian**) **Cackling**; 1 **White-fronted**; three **Ross's** and a **Snow!** Over 100 **Common Mergansers** at Stafford Lake was amazing, and a **Glaucous Gull** was in the flock near Redwood Landfill. Thanks MAS, Susan, Mark and Barbara for causing this CBC to chirp once again.

PRCBC – 12/17

Rare birds listed without comment: **Tufted**, **Long-tailed** and **Harlequin Ducks**, **Swainson's Hawk**, **Red-naped Sapsucker**, "**Western**" **Flycatcher**, **Cassin's Vireo**, **Black and White**, **Nashville**, **Palm**, **Cape May**, **MacGillivray's** and **Wilson's Warblers**. Thanks to John and Tom for all their hard work on this one!

MCSCBC – 12/31

Vaux's Swift, **Cassin's Vireo**, **Nashville**, **Palm** and **Wilson's Warblers**, **Summer** and **Western Tanagers**, and **Bullock's Oriole**. Thanks Susan, Mark and Harrison, and of course, MAS.

OBSERVERS: Lishka Arata, Bob Battagin, Tim Behr, Len and Patti Blumin, Mark Butler, Heather Cameron, Scott Carey, Josiah Clark, Jack Dineen, Jules Evans, Deborah Fitzpatrick, Mark Forney, Keith Hansen, Harrison Karr, Susan Kelly, Deborah Maier, MAS = Marin Audubon, m.bo. – many observers, Jeff Miller, Ed Nute, O.P. – outer Point Reyes, PRBO Conservation Science, Don Reinberg, Mary Anne Rotella, Jen Roth, Maggie Rufo, Barbara Salzman, Rich Stallcup, Scott and Linda Terrill, Amy Trainer, Kerry Wilcox, Hilary Winslow ... and 200 others!.

2012 Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival

www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org

The Point Reyes region is endowed with unique geography and extensive wildlands and ranches. Its pristine coastline, beaches, dunes, mudflats, bays, estuaries, freshwater wetlands, forests, grasslands, coastal bluffs and chaparral together support one of the highest levels of bird diversity in the country. As home base for some of the nation's top birders and naturalists, it offers the ideal setting for a spring festival for bird and nature enthusiasts of all levels.

Last year, Festival participants took part in over 70 fabulous bird walks guided by such top birders as **Jules Evens**, **Lisa Hug**, **David Wimpfheimer**, **Alvaro Jaramillo**, **Peter Pyle**, **Joe Morlan**, **Sarah Allen** and **Keith Hansen**. All enjoyed the tremendous camaraderie experienced by the more than 500 people who attended. As a whole, Festival outings tallied a cumulative total of 200 species of birds (not to mention dozens of mammals, butterflies, marine mammals, and other wildlife!) in Western Marin and Sonoma Counties.

This year the Festival will again offer a lineup of over 70 outings and presentations, with events for beginners and kids. This year's roster also includes **Rich Stallcup**, **Allen Fish** and **John Muir Laws**, who will give the keynote address at the Saturday evening banquet.

Last year, nearly every walk and outing sold out well before the Festival weekend, so, before you forget, send an e-mail to prbnfestival@gmail.com requesting to be notified when registration opens! The 2012 Festival Web site and registration will go live in mid-February.

The Festival benefits the habitat conservation work of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC). Read about some of EAC's conservation work at www.eacmarin.org.



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Mare Island
- February 17-20 **The Great Backyard Bird Count**
www.birdsource.org/gbbc
- March 14 **Field Trip:**
Del Valle Regional Park
With Rich Cimino
Livermore
- March 17 **Field Trip:** Hudeman Slough
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Sonoma
- April 19, 21 **Spring Birds and Their Songs**
May 5, 12 With Meryl Sundove
msundove@comcast.net

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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 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.

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