



# 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 13 7:30 PM**

**Living with Mountain Lions**

*With Zara McDonald*



Photo courtesy of Mark Elbroch

**Mountain Lion**

The timing is ideal for this program as there have been credible lion sightings recently on the Tiburon Peninsula.

San Francisco-based and globally-working wild cat conservationist and naturalist Zara McDonald, Executive Director of Felidae Conservation Fund, gives an engaging and inspiring presentation about mountain lions and the work currently underway to study and protect them. Felidae Conservation Fund is a non-profit that aims to advance the conservation of wild cats and their habitats planet-wide through a combination of groundbreaking research, compelling education and cutting-edge technology. Felidae works in both North and South America on different mountain lion research and conservation projects. The flagship project is the Bay Area Puma Project ([www.bapp.org](http://www.bapp.org)). These keystone predators (also called pumas and cougars) play a critical role in maintaining the health and biodiversity of our ecosystems. However, expansion of human populations is causing increasing encounters and conflicts between humans and pumas, and growing tensions in our local communities. Zara discusses mountain lion ecology and history, the challenges of sharing the habitat with mountain lions, and offers essential tips for living and recreating without fear in puma habitat.

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

## State's Water Projects Under Review



Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz

**Can the Delta provide enough water to satisfy the demands of agriculture, wildlife and urban populations?**

The state has released for public comment: the Draft Bay Delta Conservation Plan (Plan), the environmental documents (the Draft EIR/EIS) reviewing the Plan and a Summary of these documents. The environmental review process is being conducted by four agencies: the California Department of Water Resources, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries). The EIR/EIS will inform decision-making by the state government on whether to adopt the Plan as currently crafted or whether to make changes, and inform decisions by state and federal agencies on whether to issue endangered species and other resource permits. The Plan would be implemented over 50 years and construction would take 10 years. So far, we have reviewed only the Project Summary but will be reviewing selected sections of the Draft EIR/EIS during the 120-day comment period.

The purpose of the Plan as stated is to “help restore fish and wildlife species in the Delta and to improve reliability of water supplies for human uses while minimizing impacts on Delta

communities and farms”. The Plan consists of new water conveyance facilities that will divert fresh water from the north Delta instead of the south Delta as occurs now; habitat protection and restoration activities including enhancement of fish habitat at the Yolo Bypass; protection of existing natural communities; and restoration of various habitats including tidal and non-tidal wetlands, riparian, grassland and vernal pool habitats, and inundated floodplains. The Plan’s water conveyance facilities consist of new pumps and pipes to divert water from the North Delta. Currently, pumping from the south Delta changes the natural water flow and traps and kills fish at the pumps.

Restoring fish and wildlife populations while supplying water for human purposes is a tall order. Many wonder if it is even possible to achieve these purposes—whether there is enough water to meet the sometimes conflicting goals of urban populations, agricultural and wildlife.

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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	
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

## 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.

*The Clapper Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper; edited by Bob Hinz rbrthnz@comcast.net, 383-8688; assisted by other members of MAS; and designed by Studio NaCl (www.studio-nacl.com). Deadline is the first of each month.

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

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

Two recent newspaper articles are very relevant to our habitat conservation and bird protection efforts. A January 3 article in the *Wall Street Journal* brings to national attention, the conflicts and problems generated by the use of bird song apps to attract birds. The front page article described what the authors viewed as an “otherwise peaceful pastime” now being “roiled with conflict” as digital field guides and song recordings are increasingly used to attract birds in natural habitats.

The use of audio methods to attract birds is not new—“pishing” has been used for a long time as have tapes (even National Audubon has a bird call app), but the misuse and overuse of these tools to attract birds appears to be increasing—at least the objections to their use are increasing.

The article describes protests against birders who are relying on these easy-to-use-and-abuse tools. The article mentions that birds could view the audio voices as territorial threats and leave habitats, but the focus is on disturbances to other birders. Users are admonished: “never use a playback ... where another birder might hear you, unless you have his permission.”

MAS Board has been concerned about playing recordings in habitats for some time, because of the potential adverse impacts to birds. Attracting birds into the open using recordings, disturbs their foraging, nesting and resting activities and could leave them vulnerable to increased predation. The article reports that National Park Service prohibits the use of bird call apps on its property considering it an intentional disturbance to bird behavior and biology. Good for the National Park Service!

In 2012, MAS developed a Bird Ethics policy that calls for “Using recorded bird sounds with discretion to avoid inordinately affecting the bird's behavior. Recorded bird songs should not be used during nesting season.” Maybe it is time to review and strengthen this policy.

The second article was an excellent piece in the January 4 edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “Ecologists try in quiet ways to save planet” warns that economic growth is strangling natural systems on which life depends, creating wealth for some but at the same time filth, carbon pollution, deforestation and other environmental devastation for all of us. While mainstream economists reject the concept of growth limits, Stanford ecologist Gretchen Daily, one of the scientists leading the effort to “incorporate natural capital, the value of such things as water, top soil and genetic diversity into economic decision making,” is quoted as saying “The physical pressure that human activities put on the environment can't be sustained.” The

scientific efforts are largely behind the scenes now. We urge them to speak out loudly.

Marin Audubon works locally to protect wildlife habitat. Wildlife habitat is the same “natural capital” that supports us all. We depend on the same natural systems for clean water, clean air, fish to eat, healthy soil to grow food. Perhaps now that the scientific community is speaking out, some politicians will listen. We can't just continue to destroy habitats and cover our ecosystems with structures.

We thank all donors to our end-of-year appeal. Your generosity will enable us to continue our conservation and environmental education work. You make it all possible.

Normally the active time for planting, this winter's drought is a major problem for our habitat plantings and will be increasingly so for

Attracting birds into the open using recordings, disturbs their foraging, nesting and resting activities and could leave them vulnerable to increased predation.

all of us if it continues. We are, needless to say, hoping for rain during the last few months of our normally rainy season.

We sponsored three successful Bird Counts: Pt. Reyes again had the highest species count at 193, Southern Marin had 186 and our newest count in North Marin, Cheep Thrills, recorded 162. Volunteer participants were also in high numbers: 76 for Cheep Thrills, 117 for Southern Marin and 190 at Pt. Reyes. Many participated in two or all three of the counts. See the enclosed articles and the Birdlog for details on the individual counts. Thank you to all who volunteered to count. We especially thank the count compilers, John Longstreth, Tom Gaman, Susan Kelly, Ed Nute and Bob Hinz, who spent countless hours organizing the teams and entering the data; and Jo Kreider and Martha Jarocki for helping with the Southern Marin count.

January brought positive outcomes for the environment in two federal lawsuits. The lawsuit brought by Drake's Bay Oyster Company to allow them to remain in Drake's Estero and in the lawsuit brought by environmental groups to protect Cliff Swallows nesting on the Petaluma River Bridge. See articles on both on pages 5 and 6. These decisions attest to the importance of legal action as a last resort to protect habitats and species.

## 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, February 6, 2014

9 AM to 12 PM

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

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

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

### SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

Saturday, February 15, 2014

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

Antioch Marina

With David Wimpfheimer

Join us for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. The cost is \$95. Contact Vicky Van Meter at Vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com or 415/299-2514 to see if space is still available.

### HAMILTON FIELD WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT NOVATO

Saturday, February 22, 2014

9 AM to 12 PM

With Eric Jolliffe

Eric Jolliffe, Biologist for the Army Corps of Engineers, will lead us on a backstage tour of one of the largest wetlands restoration projects in the country. Eric will provide background on the restoration project and conservation issues. The plan is to breach the last of the dikes by early February, so late February should be a great time to see the wetland in its final configuration. We will see the waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and other species that are now making these new wetlands their home. Last year we enjoyed watching several Burrowing Owls. 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:** We will meet at the Skate Park parking lot at Hamilton. The address is 1200 N. Hamilton Parkway, located one block from Nave Drive. Nave Drive runs parallel to Hwy 101 on the east side. From the south on Hwy 101 take the Nave Drive/Hamilton exit and from the north use the Ignacio Blvd exit.

### CAPAY VALLEY

Saturday, March 1, 2014

8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

With Terry Colborn

Join Terry Colborn for a delightful day in Yolo County's picturesque Capay Valley. The almond orchards should be in bloom, signaling the coming of spring in the valley. 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 Bluebird as well as any lingering winter residents. We also hope to see some raptors and early spring arrivals such as Cliff, Barn, Rough-winged and Violet-green Swallows, and perhaps a warbler species or two. Past trips have produced Golden and Bald Eagle, Western Kingbird, Prairie Falcon and Lawrence's Goldfinch. We also expect to see some early spring wildflowers as well as Redbud, that very conspicuous flowering shrub along the roadside. Terry will meet everyone at Community Park in Esparto at 8:30 AM. Participants will be encouraged to form carpools from there.

**DIRECTIONS:** To Esparto from Marin County, take Hwy 37 east to Vallejo; go east on I-80. Just past the Nut Tree Center in Vacaville, take I-505 north for about 20 miles to the Route 16 exit; 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 hours but allow a little extra time, because there may be early morning fog.

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

### TOLAY LAKE REGIONAL PARK PETALUMA

Saturday, March 8, 2014

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Gene Hunn

This 1,700-acre park, located between the Petaluma River and Sonoma Valley, includes pristine farm and grasslands, ridges, a seasonal freshwater lake, ponds, wetlands, and many other natural resources. Except on guided hikes this area is not open to the general public without permits; Gene Hunn will be our guide. Gene led this trip for us last June and we look forward to visiting the area again.

We will meet at 8:30 AM at the boat launch parking lot next to Papa's Taverna (now closed) on Lakeville Hwy and then carpool on Cannon Drive to the Tolay Lake Regional Park. There is a \$7/day vehicle use fee at the Park. We will hike several miles to check all the available habitats at the park. We hope to see Barn and Great Horned Owls, resident raptors including Golden Eagle, Allen's Hummingbirds, woodpeckers, Loggerhead Shrikes, wrens, Lark and perhaps Rufous-crowned and Grasshopper Sparrows, and maybe Horned Larks. For those who wish to continue birding after lunch, we can visit the Ellis Creek ponds a few miles north at the south edge of Petaluma. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and be prepared to hike for several miles. Bring water, lunch, sunscreen, hat and dress in layers.

**DIRECTIONS:** The address of Papa's Taverna is 5688 Lakeville Hwy, Petaluma. From Marin take Hwy 101 north to CA-37 E toward Napa/Vallejo. Continue about 6 miles on Hwy 37 to Lakeville Hwy. Take a left on Lakeville and continue for another 6 miles. The entrance to the boat ramp will be on your left, the first drive just south of the Papa's entrance.

## 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.

### COURT RULES FOR WILDERNESS AT DRAKE'S ESTERO

On January 14, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals issued a ruling affirming the district court's denial of a preliminary injunction challenging the Secretary of Interior's allowing the Drake's Bay Oyster Company's (DBOC) permit for commercial oyster farming to expire. The court held that the Secretary had violated no legal mandate and that DBOC is not entitled to a preliminary injunction because it failed to raise a serious question about the Secretary's decision and because it had not shown that the legal question of equities weighed in its favor. The ruling denied the petition for rehearing and permitted no further petitions.

In its 38-page ruling, the Court rejected DBOC's contentions that Section 124 (a rider attached to an unrelated federal bill), NEPA and various federal regulations apply only to a decision to deny an extension, not to a decision to issue a permit. Instead, the court held that Congress left the decision in the Secretary's discretion to grant or deny an extension. Section 124 authorized, but did not require, the Secretary to extend the permit for DBOC to continue operations. The court evaluated DBOC's likelihood of success on the merits of its claims as being too remote to justify the extraordinary remedy of a preliminary injunction.

While DBOC claimed the National Environmental Policy (NEPA) document was deficient, the court found it adequate, but even if it was not, the Court asserted that any errors were harmless because the Secretary was not required to prepare an EIS. Rather, the Secretary undertook NEPA review in an effort to inform his decision, not because he was obligated to do so. Even assuming NEPA compliance was required, the Court found that DBOC is "not likely to succeed in showing that the final EIS was inadequate." NEPA requires only that an EIS contain reasonably thorough discussion of the significant aspects of the probable environmental consequences, and the EIR met that test. The ruling further noted that the Secretary's decision was consistent with the EIS that the removal of DBOC commercial operations "would result in long-term beneficial impacts to the Estero's natural environment."

The ruling also announced that the Department of Interior has deemed the position that California retained mineral and fishing rights to be inaccurate. The court also rejected DBOC's attempt to "shoehorn" itself into an "agricultural purpose" citing

that Congress limited the Secretary's leasing authority to "lands" rather than "lands, waters and submerged lands" as described in the statute.

Concerning the question of equity, the ruling reiterated that when it purchased the farm, DBOC was well aware of the potential wilderness designation and the 2012 expiration date for the lease. The Park Service even specifically informed Lunny that "based on their legal review, no new permit would be issued after that date." The court recognized that the public benefits both from wilderness and oysters but that "there is no basis upon which to weigh these values". The DBOC "refused to hear the message" of forewarning and, as a result, concluded that "they are largely responsible for their own harm."

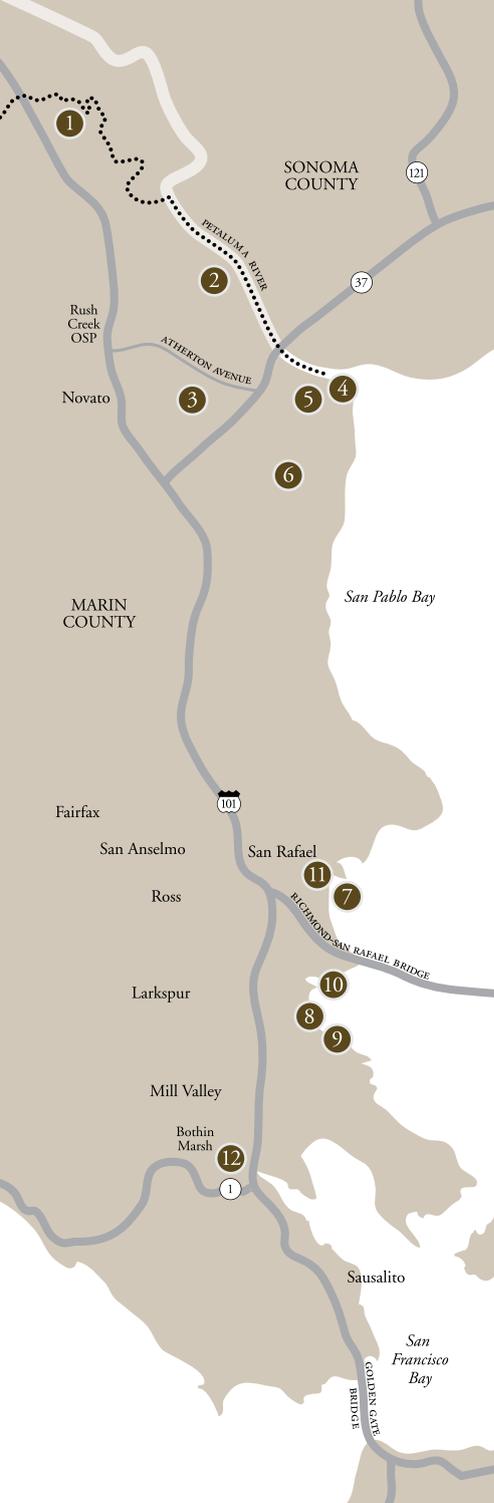
According to the Marin Independent Journal, DBOC intends to take its case to the US Supreme Court. We wonder who will be funding that effort.

### MUIR WOODS ACCESS PROBLEMS

In the ongoing effort to address congestion and other problems related to the popularity of Muir Woods National Monument, the Marin County Supervisors Kinsey and Sears are taking a pro-active approach. In addition to holding a community meeting, they have sent a letter to GGNRA Superintendent, Frank Dean, expressing support and suggestions for ways to address impacts on the adjacent communities, natural resources, and safety. Many of the comments in the Supervisors' letter were expressed by residents at the recent public meeting.

In the letter, the Supervisors encouraged an overall shift away from dependence on the automobile and supported a reservation system with a cap on daily, weekly and annual visitation with no overall increase in visitor numbers. They also encouraged expanding existing transit services with visitor collection closer to the points of origin, reduction of parking at Muir Woods and charging for parking with some parking revenues used to offset costs of increased transit services. They conveyed local residents' concerns about safety, particularly during emergencies, and unpermitted parking along Franks Valley Road, and recommended that visitation levels be based on an independent, science-based analysis of the carrying capacity of Muir Woods.

To better protect the unique natural resources of Muir Woods, MAS urges the GGNRA to reduce the daily, weekly and annual visitation numbers and to ensure that any analysis of carrying capacity be based primarily on protecting the ecosystem of this National Monument.



#### 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

## SWALLOWS BETTER PROTECTED

At a January 9 public hearing, Caltrans announced its intent to improve protections for nesting Cliff Swallows during the ongoing construction of improvements to the bridge over the Petaluma River. Concurrently conservation groups and Caltrans reached a settlement in the lawsuit to protect the nesting Cliff Swallows.

In the settlement agreement, Caltrans agreed not to use exclusionary netting except as a last resort; to remove nests that birds start to build in the construction zone before young are in the nests; wherever feasible to use a smooth plastic material to which birds will not be able to attach nest material; to do no demolition during nesting season; and to leave limited areas

on the bridge, along the outside of the bridge and outside the work zone, open as nesting sites for the swallows. Caltrans also agreed to fund public outreach to educate the public about Cliff Swallows, and meet with interested parties as the work progresses.

The public meeting was scheduled as a result of a requirement inserted into the state budget by Assemblyman Mark Levine that Caltrans meet with and update agencies and local conservation organizations on measures to protect the birds during the Sonoma Narrows project. The bridge work is part of the Sonoma/Marin Narrows project which is widening Highway 101. Caltrans will be working on the Petaluma River and the Lakeville Overpass Bridges during 2014.

When it was discovered last nesting season,

that many Cliff Swallows were being trapped and were dying in the netting intended to exclude them from nesting, Madrone Audubon initiated a law suit brought in federal court based on failure to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Madrone Audubon was joined in the suit by Marin and Golden Gate Audubon Societies, the Center for Biological Diversity and Sonoma Bird Rescue. The Animal Legal Defense Fund filed the suit with assistance from the Washington, D.C., law firm Meyer, Glitzenstein & Crystal. Agreement by federal agencies is pending. The lawsuit is continuing in federal court.

## State's Water Projects Under Review

*continued from page 1*

The Summary reports that the Draft EIR/EIS presents and evaluates a range of alternatives including the Plan, which is Alternative 4, and 14 other Alternatives one of which is "no action." The alternatives include various water management scenarios, various water conveyance facilities (i.e. pumps and pipes or channels) in different locations and configurations, operating criteria, and conservation measures such as habitat restoration and protection, and measures to avoid or minimize impacts. The DEIR/EIS analyzes impacts to migratory fish and aquatic and terrestrial resources, water quality, water supply, other impact areas typically addressed in EIRs. Operation of the facilities would be governed by "criteria" covering a range of water flow conditions. So-called "environmental commitments" are incorporated into the Plan alternatives to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

Upon preliminary review of the Plan Summary, our concern is the potential impacts on fish and other wildlife. Eleven endangered and special status fish would be at risk for substantial adverse impacts through reduction of spawning, egg incubation and rearing habitats, entrainment and adverse effects on migration conditions. The environmental documents claim that none of the activities would adversely affect special status species because of avoidance and minimization measures. Beneficial effects for some species also are claimed. One hundred fifty-four thousand acres of habitat could be created, which are cited as "improving opportunities for wildlife and habitat connectivity."

Neither the Plan nor any of the DEIR/EIS alternatives consider impacts on the San Francisco Bay ecosystem. The project

boundaries end at Suisun Marsh. The impacts of the alternatives to the Bay's ecology are simply ignored despite the fact that flows from the Delta to and through the Bay are critical to support anadromous fish, distribute nutrients, flush dilute pollutants and to hold back salt water to maintain the Delta as a fresh water resource and provide an area of brackish marsh between the Bay and Delta.

Additional concerns are:

- The 50-year time line for the project is far too long. The world will undoubtedly be a much different place by then and the management regime should not be fixed for that long.
- What is to stop future water managers from increasing water diversions to the increasing detriment of wildlife?
- While proposed habitat restorations could benefit some wildlife species, it is unclear whether these projects would actually mitigate for the negative impacts of the water diversions and facilities.

Reviewing the more than 38,000 pages of the Plan and the accompanying environmental documents is a daunting task, even for seasoned reviewers of EIR/EISs. Nevertheless, we encourage all to take a look at least at the Summary. We will undoubtedly have other concerns and questions once we more thoroughly review the documents. You can access the documents by googling "Bay Delta Conservation Plan."

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** The comment period ends on April 14, 2014. Interested parties are invited to submit comments via US Mail to: BDCP Comments, Ryan Wulff, NMFS, 650 Capitol Mall Ste 5-100, Sacramento, CA 95814 or via e-mail to: BDCP.Comments@noaa.gov.



Golden Eagle

### ALTAMONT GOLDEN EAGLE MORTALITY

Our January Speaker Series program featured Douglas A. Bell, biologist with the East Bay Regional Park District, who spends much of his time studying raptors and the impact of the hundreds of wind turbines at Altamont on the bird populations.

He presented estimates of birds killed by the turbines each year: Red-tailed Hawks 250, American Kestrel 475, Burrowing Owl 700, Golden Eagles 50, other raptors 1,475 and all birds 10,000. Most distressing to learn was that only 230,000 households are provided electricity by these turbines. That the electricity generated by these hundreds of turbines is serving such a limited number of residences makes the carnage even more distressing.

© Christopher Taylor, www.kiuphotos.com

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

### HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

No plants, native or not, are putting on much growth in this extraordinarily dry weather. Mulching and watering our newer plantings will give them a chance at becoming established enough to survive till the rains come. The invasive annuals aren't much competition, yet, this winter. We'll continue to remove the hardiest invasive non-natives such as broom and Harding grass. 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: February 1, March 1

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

#### Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: February 8, February 8

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

If you would like to help, please contact Bob Hinz at [rbthznz@comcast.net](mailto:rbthznz@comcast.net) or 415/383-8688.

### THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Bob Bundy, Dave Chenoweth, Kacie Cox, Cameron & Steve Gregory, Louis Henry, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Flinn Rauck, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vickie Vann

Thank you Ponsford's Place Bakery for pastries for the Bahia volunteers and to Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District, North Marin Water District, and Novato Sanitary District for their contributions.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Avocet Research Assoc. LLC, Stephen Beecroft, Mimi Calpestri, Michael Concannon, Lisa Connor, Jason A. Crotty, Cathy Damazio, Christine De Kirby, Antoinetta Dimeo, Edward Elmendorf, Kathryn C. Gallagher, Todd Garrett, Morgan Genelly, Williams R. Gorenfeld, Heather C. Hawkins, Katherine L. Hunting, Peg Curran & Josh Sale, Jacques Leslie, William P. Linnane, Joan Loberg, Janet MacKenzie, Paul & Barbara Maku, Gregory McClanahan, Patricia Minor, Ann T. Morrison, Shirley L. Morrison, Starr E. Naines, Dolly Nave, Ian Noah, George Peterson, Carla Ruff, Anita Ryser, Leslie Sarfert, Susan J. Shapira, Carol & Hal Sherley, Greg Shore, Timothy Shore, Tom Silk, Don S. Slack, Gwendolyn Toney, David Troleman, Taylor Valentino, Elaine Walsh, Michael Whitt, Lane Yee

## PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

**Simmons Slough** We were able to schedule Shelterbelt Builders, a firm that specializes on constructing habitats, to plant 1,500 plants on a four-acre section of our property along Simmons Slough that abuts Deer Island. The planting was at the location of a sewage spill by the Novato Sanitary District several years ago. We were able secure funds through a program of the State Water Resources Control Board that allows violators to contribute to projects that benefit the environment. The plants were grown by the Watershed Nursery and were planted on December 23 and 24. The species planted included field sedge, spikerush, arctic rush, and alkali bulrush.

Last summer and fall we mowed the thick growth of cocklebur that had proliferated as a result of the nutrients from the spill. The duff

was left in place as mulch and the plants planted among it. The mix of the species was planted in patches in the areas that have the most ponding—when it rains that is.

Thanks to the North Marin Water District we got reclaimed water that enabled us to water right after planting. This should give the plants a better chance of surviving. The Water District also loaned us a water tank that helped facilitate the watering. We greatly appreciate the North Marin Water District's cooperation and help on this project.

The planting plan, species used and planting methods were guided by the *Vegetation Management Plan for the Simmons Slough Corridor* by Plant Ecologist Peter Baye Ph.D. It is expected that the plants will grow outward and eventually coalesce.

## Marin's Christmas Bird Counts

### Cheep Thrills CBC

December 19, 2013

By Susan Kelly, compiler

With 76 participants and sunny weather we counted 37,745 birds, down slightly from the two previous years (39,972 in 2012 and 41,496 in 2011). The species count was 162. The most unusual bird was a Harris's Sparrow, found by Gene Hunn and Peter Colasanti in the Lakeville area. Other notable sightings included a Red-necked Grebe found in the wetlands behind the Target store in Novato and a Swamp Sparrow that Dave Shuford and Scott Carey found on the Indian Valley Golf Course.

Cheep Thrills is dedicated to the memory of our great friend and teacher, Rich Stallcup, who generously shared his astounding knowledge of birds, dragonflies, and all natural creatures, and who also taught us the importance of striving to be what he called "good humans".

Final results for 2013 and previous years are posted at <http://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>.

### THE 44TH POINT REYES PENINSULA CBC

December 21, 2013

By Tom Gaman and John Longstreth, compilers

The day started foggy and cool, but by afternoon the fog generally cleared and the temperatures were in the 60s in Point Reyes Station. The 190 participants found 198 species (the same as the five year average). More importantly the 122,921 individual birds seen, was somewhat higher than the 5-year average of 117,716 and significantly higher than last year's 101,670. This was something of a surprise because of the recent cold, dry weather, and the anecdotal discussions of low sightings at the

compilation dinner.

A number of species saw significant increases against the average of the previous five years: Brant (+38%), American Wigeon (+30%), Green-winged Teal (+133%), Greater Scaup (+20% making a nice recovery from last year's low numbers), Ruddy Ducks (+74%), Horned Grebes (+90%), White Pelican(+33%), Snowy Plovers (+81%), Least Sandpipers (+85%). Dunlin (+107%) and Golden-crowned Sparrows (+180%).

Other species were down: Surf Scoter for the second year were down (-60%), California Quail (-23%), Brown Pelican (-82%), American Coot (-36%), Black-bellied Plovers (-47%), Marsh Wrens (-43%), and Pine Siskins (-45%).

To add evidence to the general feeling a number of birders have had, Eurasian Collared-doves have increased (+125%) seemingly at the expense of Mourning Doves (-46%).

The most unusual rarity this year was a Manx Shearwater seen by Pete Pyle. Other species not usually seen on this count were Yellow Warbler, American Avocets (common in Bolinas Lagoon, but only the second time in 10 years for this count), Mute Swans on Tomales Bay for a second year, and Tufted Duck which has now been seen for the past three years. On the Thursday before the count, a Black Rail popped up in west Giacomini Marsh.

Many thanks to our sponsors, Marin Audubon and Point Blue.



Photo courtesy of Jocelyn Knight

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

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By Josiah Clark

With or without the rain, winter must go on. And with winter come three different Christmas Bird Counts in Marin County, which is as many as any Bay Area county. These counts' circles are East Marin, Pt. Reyes and South Marin. They host over 300 hundred participants, logging thousands of birding hours in the county during the month of December

December 19 was the Cheep Thrills Count, representing east and north parts of the county. Highlights from the Deer Valley Golf course included eight species of sparrow including **Swamp** and **White-throated** (DS). A **Burrowing Owl** (LK) on Loma Alta ridge was an only for the count. Single **Rock Wrens** were noted on the remote ridges east of Big Rock trailhead (JTC) and on private property above Nicasio (EN). Not far from the countdown dinner in Novato, a bright male **Western Tanager** was observed in a front yard (JTC, RF, LK).

Just outside the count circle at Las Gallinas on January 7, an **American Bittern** was briefly observed (LB) and few apparent overwintering **Vaux's Swifts** were flying up with an unseasonably large group of **Tree Swallows** (JTC). More recently on 1/14 at Bolero Court in Novato, a **Pacific Golden Plover** was a good find, along with two female **Barrow's Goldeneye** for good measure (DE).

December 21 was the Pt. Reyes Count, one of the nation's most well-attended counts that usually scores within the top 10 for the nation. Highlights included the continuing **Winter Wren** near Inverness (TE, MF), the returning **Tufted Duck** at Abbot's Lagoon (AT, DM) and a **Yellow Warbler** by some keen-eyed team members at Muddy Hollow. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was the rare bird from Olema Marsh (IS, OJ). The biggest surprise was a **Manx Shearwater** spotted from Elephant Rock. Other highlights from the impressive seawatch included **Black-legged Kittiwake**, **Cassin's Auklet**, **Red Phalarope** and over 80 **Ancient Murrelets** (PP). The **Mountain Plover** was observed count week but not observed on the day or since (DD).

## Western Screech Owl

December 28 was the South Marin Count. Highlights included both **Red-naped** (TP) and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (DW) in Fairfax and **Redhead** and **Swamp Sparrow** down at Rodeo Lagoon (DM). Bolinas counters observed two Swamp Sparrows at the mouth of Pine Gulch Creek (CD, KJ, JTC). Through the nearby neighborhoods were two **Nashville Warblers** encrusted with Eucalyptus gum, 11 **White-throated Sparrows** and two **Slate-colored Juncos**. A **Barrow's Goldeneye** and two **Blue-winged Teal** were among thousands of ducks on the lagoon (DD, RM). A **Western Screech Owl** seen along the lagoon predawn was the most coastal observation of its kind I have heard of for the county and very noteworthy (DD). The most prized bird on the count was likely a **Harris's Sparrow**, found in downtown Bolinas first thing count day and was eventually seen by dozens of birders (KH). The **Blue-footed Booby** was last seen on its Gull Rock post a week before the count (JW).

In more recent events, the Pacific Herring are running! That means the best time all year to study gulls. The gull disciples have been summoned to the scene and from 1/8-1/11 found one and then two adult **Slaty-backed Gulls**, a species that has only a few records for the county (NA, TE).

Observers and Acronyms **AT:** Amy Trainer, **CD:** Cedric Dunhale, **DD:** Dave Desante, **DE:** Daniel Edelstein, **DM:** Dom Mosur, **DS:** David Schuford, **EN:** Ed Nute, **IS:** Ivan Samuels, **JTC:** Josiah Clark, **JW:** Jim White, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **KJ:** Kimberly Janarone, **LB:** Len Blumin, **LK:** Logan Kahle, **MF:** MaryAnne Flett, **NA:** Noah Arthur, **OJ:** Oliver James, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **RF:** Rob Furrow, **RM:** Rick Misuraca, **TP:** Todd Plummer, **TE:** Todd Easterla

## Marin's Christmas Bird Counts

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### THE 39TH SOUTHERN MARIN CBC

December 28, 2013

By Ed Nute and Bob Hinz, compilers

The South Marin count circle is centered in Corte Madera and includes exceptionally diverse habitats ranging from ocean and bay waters to marshes, uplands, chaparral as well as urban development.

Nearly 95,000 birds of 186 species were counted in the South Marin count circle. That

is the third highest number of birds in the last 23 years. The Bolinas Lagoon team, led by Josiah Clark, recorded 148 species. Rarities included a Harris's Sparrow found in Bolinas, American Bittern in Rodeo Lagoon, and Red-naped Sapsuckers in Fairfax and Sausalito. Other uncommon birds counted included a Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Red Knot, Surfbirds, Rhinoceros Auklet, Glaucous Gull and Ancient Murrelets. A total of 7 Clapper Rails, 3 Sora, 1 Black Rail, 1 Red-necked Grebe and 19 Snowy Plovers were also counted. Once counted annually, no Loggerhead Shrikes were found.

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