



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: 415/388-2821

FRIDAY, JUNE 4 8 PM

Impressions of the Galapagos

With Jack Barclay

Jack is a wildlife biologist with much experience in the effort to save endangered and special-status species. Perhaps that is why he was so impressed by all he saw in the Galapagos Islands, where everything is so special: the extraordinary tameness of the wildlife, the competition for resources causing specialization and speciation, the islands' geologic formation and the weather, and how these factors affect the wildlife. His daily travel log will inform you as to how to get around, where to go, and what to see, if you were to go there. You will want to go.

The next Speaker Series meeting will be October 1. The first Friday of September is before Labor Day.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Phil Peterson won first prize in Assemblyman Jared Huffman's "There Oughta Be a Law ... or Not" annual contest. This year Phil's proposal (and that of one other contestant) won over 143 other applicants. Phil's winning proposal, sparked by concern over the Dubai Starr incident that spilled between 400 and 800 gallons of bunker oil into San Francisco Bay, was for a law that would impose stricter regulations on oil transfers to keep our waters and coastline oil-free. In 2008 and 2009, there were 13 oil spills during vessel-to-vessel transfer operations. You can see the actual bill (AB 234) online.

Deepwater Horizon: Disaster in the Gulf of Mexico

This massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has been declared "a spill of national significance." As of this writing, every day since April 20 several thousand barrels (1000 barrels = 42,000 gallons) of crude oil have gushed out of a British Petroleum well more than a mile below the Gulf. Fishing has been banned in an area that covers 19% of the Gulf. Some oil has reached a current that could bring oil to the Gulf Stream. Oiled birds are showing up but officials note that they are only a small part of the effects of the oil spill.

The spill will impact the coastal ecosystem for decades to come, affecting birds and other wildlife, as well as people whose lives depend on these ecosystems. A number of Globally Important Bird Areas and 20 wildlife refuges are in the path of the advancing spill. Many other animals are at risk as well. While mature fish can swim away from oily waters, larvae and post-larvae cannot and are likely to consume oil directly or through the plankton and other food they eat. Dolphins and whales can get skin irritations, and sea turtles are susceptible to oil ingestion because they come to the surface to feed.

The Gulf Coast is rich in wetlands and wildlife. Many bird species are threatened including the Brown Pelican, recently removed from the endangered species list; beach-nesting terns and gulls (Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern, Least Tern, Laughing Gull, Black Skimmer); shorebirds and waders (American Oystercatcher, Wilson's Plover, Snowy Plover); ibises, egrets and herons (Coastal Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill); marsh birds (Mottled Duck, Clapper Rail, Black Rail, Seaside Sparrow), and marsh-dwelling songbirds. Migratory shorebirds may find no safe place to land or feed on their migration journeys. The first oil reached land (barrier islands) on May 6. Oiled pelicans are being seen on nests and going within the containment boom to feed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Volunteer

If you wish to go to the Gulf to help, you can contact a number of organizations for information:

The American Bird Conservancy:
866/448-5816, abcbirds.org

International Bird Rescue Research Center which is helping with bird rescue and rehabilitation and has daily updates:
310/514-2573, ibrrc.org

Oiled Wildlife Care Network: 530/752-4167, owcn.org

National Audubon Society is organizing volunteers to perform various activities including surveys; check their website to sign up: audubon.org.

Donate

Give to organizations working to help wildlife such as the above organizations or to the National Wildlife Refuge Association (refugeassociation.org, 202/292-2402). Wildlife Refuges depend greatly on their Friends organizations for critical support.

Support legislation

Senator Menendez (D-NJ) and six other senators have introduced legislation (S-3305), the Big Oil Bailout Prevention Liability Act of 2010, that would raise the liability cap for offshore drilling from \$75 million to \$10 billion, eliminate the \$500 million cap on natural resources damages, eliminate the \$1 billion per incident cap on claims against the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, and allow access to the fund for preparation
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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.

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President	Lowell Sykes 388-2821
Secretary	Mariah Baird 456-3355
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Programs	Helen Lindqvist 789-0703
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 668-1242
Nominating	Phil Peterson 898-8400
Volunteers	Bob Hinz 383-8688
Property Management	Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

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

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

Marin Audubon Society welcomes gifts of funds, stock, or property, and bequests in general, or in honor or memory of someone. Gifts may be directed to any MAS project. Unspecified gifts of more than \$100 will be placed in the Endowment Fund for conservation, the protection of wildlife species and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats. Since MAS is an all-volunteer organization, 100% of your donation goes to its projects. All gifts are tax deductible and will be acknowledged in *The Clapper Rail*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society. Checks should be made out and mailed to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

Our hearts go out to the people and wildlife that depend on the Gulf Coast for their survival. As this newsletter goes to press, there is still no certainty about when the flow of oil will be stopped. This tragic incident demonstrates the extreme fallacy of the notion that offshore drilling is safe and that we are prepared to deal with emergencies. See the article on page 1 for what you can do.

We are looking forward to an exciting and challenging year with our new and continuing Board members. A warm welcome to our new Board members Martha Jarocki, Mary Nealon and Flinn Moore Rauck and to Jude Stalker who is returning for her third term with us.

Martha, a Marin native, has worked as a film and photo archivist for documentary films, performed communications and publications work for environmental non-profits, and is now writing mystery novels. Martha will take on the job of Publicity Chair.

Mary, an Argentina native and San Rafael resident, has lived in California for fifteen years. She currently works for the California Institute of Integral Studies and particularly enjoys helping students reach their educational goals. Five months ago Mary took over the role of Membership Secretary and she will become our Membership Chair.

Flinn lives in Novato and has been a faithful volunteer on our work days at Bahia. She also directs broadcast television programs and is a graduate of the Environmental Forum. Jude has

been a valued member of our board family. She has stepped forward to take on many challenges that have benefited MAS, our members and wildlife; monitoring vegetation and planting at our properties and chairing the Mother's Day Barbecue are just a few – all this in addition to her full time job with the Invasive Spartina Project.

And good-bye and a special thank you to current board members who will be stepping down: Richard Bohnet who did an exceptional job helping to set up our website, Tracy Corbin who has been co-chair of our Speakers Series, and Barbara Ford who has been Publicity Chair.

A huge thank you to Jude Stalker for chairing the Mother's Day Barbecue. In spite of a little rain, it was a wonderful day with great food and company.

Look for our spring appeal to arrive in early June. We keep our solicitations down to the minimum, but they are needed to keep us going. This appeal is dedicated to the support of habitat stewardship activities on our properties. We have planted more than 3,000 rhizomes in habitats on our Bahia property alone. We need your help to keep the weeds at bay and ensure the survival of our native species.

Our next newsletter will be the September issue. Other activities will continue throughout the summer (e.g. Lawson's Landing is scheduled for a July Coastal Commission meeting), as will our property stewardship activities and work days.

We hope everyone has a wonderful summer.

Mira Monte Update

We are continuing to seek funds to purchase this important 60-acre property east of Olompali State Park on the east side of Hwy 101 in northern Novato that includes tidal wetlands, diked seasonal wetlands, native oak-wooded hills, and diked lands. The closing date in our purchase agreement, September 30, is fast approaching. We will be submitting an application for state funds, as recent bond sales seem to have opened up some options, as well as continuing to seek private funding.

Our partner organization in the Campaign for Marin Baylands, Marin Baylands Advocates, has recently sent a letter soliciting donations for the Mira Monte purchase. Thank you to everyone who responded. If you did not receive a letter, you can donate directly by sending a check (payable to the Marin Baylands Fund) to Marin Community Foundation, 5 Hamilton Landing, Novato, CA 94949-8263.

Deepwater Horizon Disaster

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and mitigation upfront, rather than waiting for reimbursement later. Write Senators Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to express your support. Representative Rush Hold (NJ) has introduced a similar bill in the House (HR 5214). Express your support to Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey.

Keep Informed

Follow Capitol Hill hearings.

Watch Congressional hearings on C-SPAN.

Go to the websites of the above organizations and also of the Clean Water Network (cleanwaternet.org).

Long-term

Be an advocate for an energy program that promotes energy conservation and renewable technologies that do not harm the environment or wildlife.

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, weather check and accessibility: Helen Lindqvist at 415/789-0703 or 415/306-2325 (cell)

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS THURSDAY MORNING WALK

There will not be organized walks at Las Gallinas Storage Ponds during June – August as most of the migratory birds have left for nesting areas and the bird count is low. Walks will resume in September.

YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY

Saturday and Sunday, June 19-20

With Phil and Pat Gordon

Our leaders Phil and Pat are naturalists and conservationists; Phil is the compiler of the current Plumas-Eureka State Park Birdlist. They will lead this weekend trip for us again this year starting early on the Saturday morning. (Participants usually travel up on Friday afternoon – about 5 hours) Birding will begin both days at the Yuba Pass Sno-Park parking lot, 7:30 am on Saturday and 6:30 am on Sunday. Campers usually stay at the Yuba Pass campground (elev. near 7,000 feet); other campgrounds are available along Highway 49 to the West, at Plumas-Eureka State Park, and along Highway 89 between Truckee and Sierraville. Lodging can be secured at Portola (Sleepy Pines – 530/832-4291); Blairsden (River Pines – 530/836-2552); Quincy or Sierra City (e.g. Harrington's Lodge 916/862-1151) and Bassett's Station, Highway 49 X Gold Lake Rd. (530/862-1297, bassetts-station.com). Check your AAA book. For more information and a detailed itinerary, check the MAS website, email Phil and Pat at PAGPEG@aol.com or call 510/538-3550. Come join them for a great weekend trip where the bird count for the two days is always over 100 species!



FARALLON ISLANDS

August

ALERT! Possible pelagic trip to the Farallons in August! Please contact Helen at 415-789-0703 or helen_lindqvist@yahoo.com by July 5 to register an interest in this trip.

APRIL 17 FIELD TRIP

A Walk on Mt. Burdell

By Sande Chilvers

On a mild, blue-skied day twelve of us joined Neill Fogarty on Mt. Burdell. While we waited for the group to assemble, a **Black-headed Grosbeak** sounded in the pines across the way. Not long into the walk a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** posed long enough for good photos of this pint-sized stunner. A **Warbling Vireo** finally revealed himself after teasing us with his song. In the trees **Bushtits** and **Juncos** were busy; in the sky **Violet-green** and **Tree Swallows** swirled. A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** studied us from a dead branch. **Western Bluebirds** flitted along fence posts while a **Western Kingbird** crossed above us. On the path ahead a **Lark Sparrow** foraged and in the background a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** flew back and forth. **Acorn Woodpeckers** in a communal tree were squawking about a **Starling** who had moved in to a cavity below. Along the path we sighted **Ash-throated Flycatchers**, **Savannah Sparrows**, a quick glimpse of a **Prairie Falcon** streaking overhead and, later, a **Cooper's Hawk**. Second photo op of the day came courtesy of a vivid male **Bullock's Oriole**.



Photo courtesy of Bob Chilvers

Western Bluebird

House Wrens and **Orange-crowned Warblers** serenaded us throughout the walk. In Hidden Lake a few **American Wigeons** paddled. In the nearby willows a flock of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** with one Townsend's Warbler in the mix darted at neck-craning heights. At our feet a minute Tree Frog leaped from puddle to puddle. Further along in the trees several **Brown Creepers** and a **White-breasted Nuthatch** gave us a quick glimpse. While still in the trees we spied another Pacific-slope Flycatcher, a **Hutton's Vireo** and a **Northern Flicker** making a beeline to another grove. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** shrieked and circled overhead, and in a clearing a **Red-tailed Hawk** made lazy circles in the sky. In all we saw 48 species and heard 7 others. Many thanks to Neill for his expertise and skill in ordering up great weather.

SPRING BIRDSONG CLASS:

Adventures of Bird Song Learner

By Brenda Goeden

I am not sure what the family of **Great Horned Owls** thought. It must have been strange to see so many humans in total silence either sitting on the trail or standing in the dark of very early morning. But there they were, twenty or so of them sitting silently for so long just listening. The owls were busy bringing tasty rats and such to their owlets. For the humans, who had not yet noticed the owls, the morning was pure magic. The dawn chorus was all that was promised – the first singer, and by far the most prominent was the **American Robin**, *cheerily-cheer up-cheerily*, just as Meryl had taught us three weeks before in our evening study session. Then the burbling sounds of quails and the liquidy song of the **Swainson's Thrush**, complemented by the **Song Sparrow's** emphatic spring song. As the light of morning touched the branches of coyote brush and blooming lupine, the songs intensified and became more complex. The dawn chorus lasts only a couple of months in spring when the birds, bright in their breeding plumage, are busily singing out their territory or showing off for potential mates.

This was the final gathering in a series of three – first, to practice listening for songs, and then to experience them in two wonderful outings, where the goal was to hear as many birds' songs as possible, but not necessarily to see birds. Our second trip – not so early in the morning, was to Santa Rosa Creek – 52 birds were heard (and even seen) in under 3 hours. The company of fellow birders was grand – both beginners and those with a tuned ear and plenty of expertise to share. The series is an annual fundraiser for Marin Audubon Society hosted by Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris – both knowledgeable, patient and kind souls who are eager to share what they love.

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.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Through the summer we will be controlling various invasive non-native plants including thistle, fennel and ice plant. We will also be tending the transplanted creeping rye grass which is now growing along the peninsulas. If you are interested in these work days please contact Bob Hinz at rbrthnz@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

Bahia:

Thursday June 3, Wednesday June 9, Saturday June 12, Thursday June 17, Wednesday June 23, Thursday July 1, Wednesday July 7, Saturday July 10, Thursday July 15, Wednesday July 21, Thursday July 29.

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

Triangle Marsh:

Saturday June 5, Saturday July 3; Saturday August 7.

Meet at 10 AM on Paradise Drive.

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE UPDATE

Some "No Dogs in Marsh" and "Do Not Enter Marsh" signs have been installed in the northern section, and, unfortunately, one already has been stolen from the northern boundary along the trailer courts in Corte Madera. The sign installation is a work in progress. Signs are still to be erected at the south end of the Reserve at Marta's Marsh and at the Greenbrae Boardwalk.

The stealing of the sign is very troubling. This Reserve was acquired and protected because of its importance as habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail. It is not for the private use of individuals whose interests are detrimental to the Clapper Rail.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT COMPILER NEEDED

We need a volunteer to coordinate next year's Christmas Bird Count. Count coordinators organize teams, generally oversee the event and compile data for National Audubon in their annual Bird Count publication. Please call Barbara Salzman at 415/924-6057 for more information if you are interested.

Thank you to last year's compiler, Dominik Mosur, who has accepted the volunteer position of Sub-regional editor for North American Birds, which will take up his time.

"680" TRAIL

Marin Audubon Society is sending a letter to the County Supervisors and Community Development staff with our concerns about and recommendations for the 680 Trail, prior to release of the environmental document. This trail would connect the Loma Alta and Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow Divide Open Space Preserves. Our primary interest is to ensure that adequate environmental review takes place to address the many environmental concerns and options. This requires that a Focused Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be prepared.

Our concerns about the current 2.5-mile-long, 5 to 7 foot-wide "preferred alternative" include the potential impacts on fresh-water seeps (wetlands), fragmentation of important hunting habitat for raptors and mammals including coyote and badger, and possible harm to endangered plants. In addition, the trail would cross an unstable hillside, which could lead to massive slope failure.

The county is currently processing this proposal using a Negative Declaration under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). With this approach, only the preferred alternative alignment will be evaluated, and cumulative impacts of building the trail will not be addressed. The Negative Declaration approach is appropriate only for simple projects with minimal potential environmental impacts or public controversy. Such is not the case with this trail proposal.

A Focused EIR is needed to ensure that potential adverse impacts are identified and the full range of alternatives and mitigation measures are considered – including identification and review of alternative segments that would avoid or significantly reduce potential adverse impacts to natural resources. A Focused EIR would allow for evaluation of various options, such as a "no construction option," that would be less environmentally damaging.

A Focused EIR also would address cumulative impacts, which would evaluate impacts of the proposed trail in relation to the many other trails in the vicinity, and allow for a more complete analysis of biological and geologic impacts. It would not require analysis of categories of impacts that would not be affected, such as transportation.

WIND ENERGY CONVERSION SYSTEM (WECS)

The Marin County Planning Commission held a hearing in late April on Wind Energy Conversion Systems, otherwise known as wind

turbines, but no final action was taken. Issues of noise, the ability of the public to comment on specific proposals, requirements of the approval process, and inconsistencies in the proposed ordinance were discussed. Some concerns MAS had raised, such as requirements for post-construction monitoring, were addressed, however, most other concerns were not.

Staff added some clarifying language about requirements for using the state's guidelines for minimizing impacts of WECS to birds and bats, but bird surveys in advance of approving a specific project are still not required. With no requirement for applicants to do surveys to determine what bird and bat species use the lands where the turbines would be located, it will be impossible to determine wind turbines' impacts on wildlife and appropriate mitigation.

Another Planning Commission meeting is set for June 14.

HELP STOP BIRD KILLS AT GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

In a recent Action Alert, the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) highlighted yet another threat to bird populations—government buildings that are frequently designed with glass exteriors and large windows. Birds fly into the buildings mistaking reflections of the sky, clouds and other habitats as the real habitat. The ABC estimates that millions of birds die each year from collisions with glass buildings—including skyscrapers and homes.

HR 4797, The Federal Bird-Safe Buildings Act of 2010 (Mike Quigley D-IL) would save the lives of millions of birds by requiring public buildings constructed, acquired or altered by the General Services Administration (GSA) to incorporate, to the maximum extent possible, bird-safe building materials and design features. To the extent practicable, the bill would require similar actions on existing buildings. A new fact sheet "You Can Save Birds from Flying Into Windows" offers homeowners tips on how they can make a difference. It can be downloaded at abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions_flyer.pdf. Write Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, 2263 Rayburn Building Washington, DC 20515 and urge her to support this bill.

UPDATE ON STATE PARKS BOND

As you may recall, Governor Schwarzenegger's 2010-11 draft budgets proposed to eliminate core funding for California's 278 state parks

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Bird of the Month

By Meryl Sundove and Roger D. Harris

Legend has it that the bird of the month remains mute all its life until the final moments, when it bursts into a devastatingly beautiful song before passing on. In fact, its vocalizations range from grunts and hisses to whistles and bugles. Further, it makes a loud rhythmic throbbing sound with its wings, which serves as a flight contact “call” to its flock mates. A fiercely territorial species, it also makes a loud foot slapping display to warn off intruders.

One of the heaviest flying birds found in Marin at 20 pounds, its wings span to 75 inches. Males and females look generally alike with the male about 10% larger. As with many birds where the sexes look alike, the bird of month is reported to mate for life. However, ever practical, they will re-mate when a partner dies. If the male loses his mate and his new mate is a young female, she will join him on his territory. If instead his new mate is older, they use her territory. If the female loses her mate, she quickly re-mates, often choosing a younger male.

Although the female does most of the incubating, both parents help care for the young once they hatch. The babies are called cygnets; the female, a pen; and the male, a cob.

Our birds prefer to nest near shallow coastal

ponds or estuaries and streams flowing into lakes. They can adapt to partially polluted wetlands, especially with rank aquatic vegetation. Our birds eat mostly submerged aquatic plants.

Its long neck helps it reach deeper than most other waterfowl to get the plants underwater. The bird can also dip and up-end in the water, submerging its entire body except its tail and feet. The edge of its beak is coarse, which allows it to tear vegetation creating bite-sized pieces. A large nail at the end of the beak and the spiny surface of the tongue help it grasp food items. Our birds use their large webbed feet not only for paddling but also for energetically raking the substrate to loosen plants. In high concentrations our species can over-graze an area.

The bird of the month is considered a waterfowl. The term waterfowl is used for species of ducks, geese, and swans, all of which are in the family *Anatidae*. The closest North American native waterfowl relatives of our bird are the Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) and Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*).

Tundra Swans winter in California and are smaller than our bird of the month, the Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*). The larger Trumpeter Swan is not often found in California and winters north in states like Oregon and Washington. Hybrids of Mute Swans with these two native swans have been reported.

The Mute Swan is believed by most scientists to have been introduced from its native Eurasia to North America from domestic birds in aviculturists’ collections, which either were released or escaped into the wild. However, some animal rights groups, such as Save Our Swans, contend that our bird flew unaided across the Bering Strait from the Russian Far East to the New World. Regardless, records indicate that Mute Swans first established feral populations in the eastern US as early as the 1880s and have only recently been found in the U.S. Northwest and even more recently in California.

Considered one of the most achingly beautiful birds in the world – though as a chick it was an “ugly duckling” to Hans Christian Anderson – many conservationists regard it as a pest and a danger to native birds and their habitats. The definitive Birds of North America species account (Ciaranca et al. 1997) charges Mute Swans with over-grazing aquatic vegetation and displacing and even killing

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MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS DONATIONS:
Barbara Dwyer, Nancy Hanson

IN HONOR OF:
Janet Callow from Joanna Callow

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:
Debbie Ablin, Liz Bailey, Heidi Bajurin, Bob Bundy, Ansel Burk, Jared Burk, Edith Cacciatore, Bob Hinz, Jordan Loftin, Elsie Loftin, Mike Loftin, Trevor Loftin, Elliot Miller, David Nakashima, Ed Nute, Flinn Moore Rauck, Ashley Salinas, Barbara Salzman, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vicky Van Meter

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS MOTHER’S DAY BBQ DONATIONS
Bolin’s Market, Bovine Bakery, Lagunitas Brewery, Marin Brewing Company, Judy’s Breadsticks, Clover Stornetta, United Markets, Sunnyside Nursery, Safeway (Mill Valley, Corte Madera & Strawberry), Whole Foods (Mill Valley), Saintsbury Vineyards, North Coast Corporation (Novato Disposal), Point Reyes Nation.

THANKS TO OUR BBQ VOLUNTEERS
A huge THANK YOU goes out to all of the volunteers of this year’s Mother’s Day BBQ. The work and time that they gave is much appreciated and made the event a huge success.

See more about the BBQ in the next edition of *The Clapper Rail*.

Jude Stalker, Jo Kreider, Mary & Stephen Nealon, Oudi Baavour, Mariah Baird, Sharon Barnett, Greg & Nicholas Block, Richard Bohnet, Tom Bradner, Lisa Cassidy, Tracy Corbin, Mary Anne Cowperthwaite, Wendy Dreskin, Liz Gluck, Dave Herrema, Brook Herrema, Bob Hinz, Fred & Andy Holden, Martha Jarocki, Callie Kindrish, Mardi Leland, Helen Lindqvist, Linda Nicoletto, Phil & Samantha Peterson, Ruth Pratt, Louise Rush, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Shirley & Rich Soldavini & family, Carol Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vicky Van Meter

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:
Piper Adee, Paula Ananda, Debra Andelin, James Ballantyne, David Brown, Kathy Bucedi, Beverly Epp, Goodman, Gary & Barbara Haber, Laura Hamlin, Lee & John Howard, Ellie Leswing, Martha Maricle, Nancy Marshall, Mary McLachlan, Marianne Nannestad, Kim Nipomnick, Judith Pekarsky, Suzi Peterson, Miriam Rimkeit, Lucy Saroyan, Jautrite Savage, Stan Schilz, Sally Sloan, Sue Turner, Woody, Howard S. Wynn

Please Do Not Feed Water Birds

Feeding water birds is such fun. How could it possibly be harming the birds?

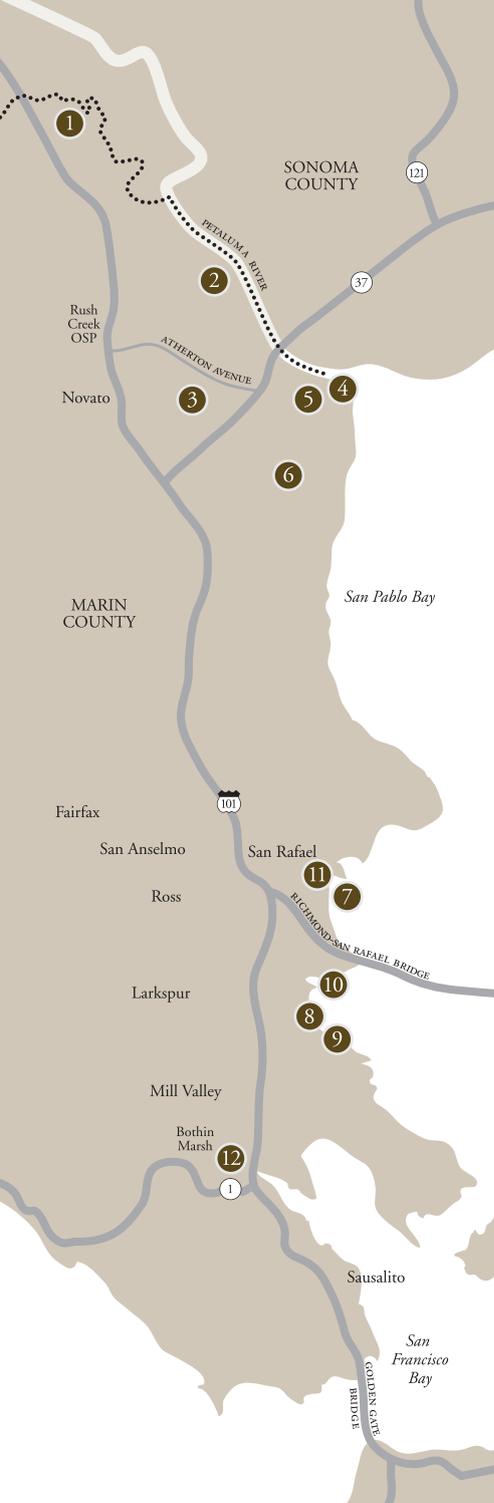
It favors aggressive non-native waterfowl such as Mute Swans and domestic Mallards, which displace native waterfowl.

It creates an unnatural dependence on people. Wild birds fed by people can lose their fear of people and become more vulnerable to being shot or harmed by dogs or cats.

It can cause pollution. Excess nutrients from bird droppings and left-over food causes water quality problems such as noxious algae blooms and higher coliform levels, which can be dangerous to humans.

It can cause overcrowding.

Concentrating birds around an unnatural food source can lead to stresses and transmission of diseases such as cholera, duck plague, and avian botulism.



HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

BAHIA

We were inundated with wild radish. It seems the late rains caused the highly invasive radish plants to proliferate, far beyond the ability of our hand laborers to remove it. We had to hire a commercial company, Cagwin and Dorward, which we previously hired for hydroseeding. In addition, we are continuing to use workers from The Watershed Nursery. Lowell Sykes continues to work right along with them on most days, and our volunteers help on work days. Also, thanks to Lowell Sykes, Vicki Van Meter and Debbie Ablin, the new nursery beds have been constructed and planted with rhizomes.

We have a lot to do and will be continuing to host workdays during the summer. We need to keep removing invasive plants, water the plants in our propagation beds and those we have planted into the habitats, and keep the water tank full. Please check the Habitat Stewardship section or the MAS website for our workdays through June and July and join us for a weekday or weekend Volunteer Day.

We are thrilled that the North Bay Conservation Corps will be giving us some workdays as part of their summer program, Project Regeneration. We had their crews last year, and look forward to working with

them again this year. The Conservation Corps provides education, work experience and opportunities for youth.

TRIANGLE MARSH

A recent unpleasant incident occurred on the Triangle Marsh property near the Marin Country Day School. Some unknown “stuff” that looked like cat or dog food was dumped at the top of the viewpoint. If anyone observes people dumping, please let us know.

Bob Hinz will continue his first Saturday workdays during the summer. There are still Harding Grass and other non-native plants to remove, but it looks great.

SIMMONS SLOUGH PROPERTIES

We have received our 401-Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board for the excavation in our 19-acre property at the intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues (next to the veterinarian). The main purpose of this project is to remove concrete and other construction debris that had been reportedly dumped on the marsh during widening of Highway 101 some years ago. We are awaiting the grading permit from the county.

Bird of the Month

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native waterfowl. During the breeding season, adults will also attack and sometimes kill chicks of their own species that are not their own and which wander into their territory.

The Mute Swan is protected in some states, but not others. Some states are attempting to control Mute Swan numbers. In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to drastically reduce Mute Swan numbers back East to “minimize environmental damages.” The proposal was supported by all 13 state wildlife agencies along the Atlantic Flyway and 43 bird conservation organizations, but was stymied by a firestorm of animal rightist opposition. The California Department of Fish and Game recognizes the Mute Swan as a pest species, but does not currently conduct control operations. It is illegal to import Mute Swans into California.

Mute Swans have not yet been recorded on the Southern Marin Christmas Bird. However, Rich Stallcup (March 2010 *The Clapper Rail*) has been tracking Mute Swans in the Marin/Sonoma area since 1985 when he first spotted



Photo courtesy of Richard Pauck

Mute Swans

a feral pair with partially grown cygnets on a farm pond near Two Rock. He has watched their spread ever since to a current estimated population of 110-140. The Mute Swans tend to concentrate at the Chileno Valley Reservoir and the Rush Creek wetlands, although they have been seen in other areas of Marin as well. They can be found at Shollenberger Park and the Petaluma wetlands.

Mute Swans do not appear on *A Checklist of the Birds of Marin County California* (2009) apparently awaiting a ruling by the California Bird Records Committee that the birds have become “established exotics.” The test is consistent yearly nesting over a 15-year period.

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Petaluma Marsh | 180 acres |
| 2. Bahia | 60 acres |
| 3. Simmons Slough | 162 acres |
| 4. Norton Avenue Pond | 2 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 BIRDLOG – APRIL 2010

By Rich Stallcup

April equals motion for most native birds at our latitudes.

Tens of millions of landbirds moving up the top half of the earth, South and Central America to Mexico – Mexico to the United States and the U.S. to Canada and beyond.

Millions of *Anseriformes* and waders pile out of valley wetlands bound for prairie-potholes and tundra-tarns while a bazillion loons, grebes, scoters and Brant row north along the coast as if it were a never ending parade.

There aren't as many birds in the northerly April migration as there are in the southerly September migration because winter mortality cuts down many of the young, but the vernal flow is more concentrated and birds seem to know exactly where they are going. A couple of million shorebirds pass through the San Francisco Bay systems within six days late in the month...and then they are GONE! Most humans miss the whole show.

The first Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival was large and field trips turned up some rarities. The Festival pelagic trip 4/28 produced Marin County's second (and Sonoma County's first-same bird following the boat) **Greater Shearwater** north of the north peaks at Cordell Bank. **Northern Fulmars** were way fewer than expected.

An active **Bald Eagle** nest at Kent Lake was observed on the same snag as the previous two years 4/29 (JE).

Three **Golden Plovers** (most probably *P. fulva* by date) flew south over Bolinas Lagoon 4/4 (KH). On 4/11, twenty-two **Surfbirds** crouched behind parking curbs in the parking lot at Drakes's Beach in 60 knots of southeast wind. These were migrants.

On the Festival Big Day 4/25 a Big surprise was five **Baird's Sandpipers** at Schooner Bay, Drakes's Estero (RS, m.ob). Baird's are very rare in California in spring and I only know of previous single birds in Marin with an all-time total of about three.

A **Turkey Vulture** nest was located beneath a rocky outcrop near Nicasio 4/9 (JY) and abandoned soon after. These birds are very sensitive to disturbance when incubating. I know of fewer than ten such nesting attempts in Marin, ever.

A **Rock Wren** at Ring Mountain was seen to carry a small Western Fence Lizard into a rock crevice (probably a nest cavity containing chicks) 4/19 (BN).

On another Festival field trip, an apparently territorial **Yellow Warbler** was found at Nicasio Reservoir (BP, m.ob). Yellow Warblers have been virtually (or actually) extirpated as a nesting species in Marin since 2005. If anyone can confirm breeding in the county, please report.

Black-chinned Sparrows are always rare and irregular in locality in the Bay Area. When detected as territorial, it is usually at least the second week of May. Thus, a singing individual above San Geronimo Valley 4/9 (BN) was startling.

White-throated Sparrows which have wintered at Marin feeders often stay longer than the last Golden and White-crowned Sparrows. While the western species (*Z.l.nuttallii* is an exception) are cleared out by May first, White-throats often linger until the eighth or even the tenth. Three different individuals were present – one day only – at an east Novato feeder (HC) and were obviously migrants.

Nearby in Sonoma County – A hatch-year **Red-throated Loon** was salvaged as a specimen road kill on San Antonia Road just north of the Marin/Sonoma line 4/11 (RJR).

On the Festival Big Day, we slid by the Lucchesi Pond in Petaluma to bag (figuratively) the **Ross' Goose** now in its 13th year ... and were very impressed with another bird there that was an apparent ♂ **Mallard x Wood Duck!**

Observers and Acronyms LA: Lishka Arata, HC: Heather Cameron, JC: Josiah Clark, JE: Jules Evens, KH: Keith Hansen, WL: William Legge, M.OB: many observers, JM: Jeff Miller, DM: Dominik Mosur, BN: Bill Noble, MP: Melissa Pitkin, BP: Bob Power, PRBO: PRBO Conservation Science, RJR: R. Jay Roberts, IS: Ivan Samuels, RS: Rich Stallcup, JT: Janice Tweedy, HW: Hilary Winslow, MW: Missy Wipf, JY: James Yuchenco.

Conservation

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and replace it with funds from the yet-to-be-approved offshore oil-drilling project. After learning of the devastation in the Gulf of Mexico, however, the governor announced he no longer supports offshore oil drilling and withdrew his proposal (the Tranquillon Ridge Proposal) thereby removing all general funding for state parks in the budget.

Fortunately, more than 760,000 signatures were collected throughout the state, virtually ensuring that the 433,931 needed to place the issue on the ballot will be validated. Officials have until June 24 to certify the measure for the November 2 election. Now we need to get the bond measure passed.

Junior Bird Watchers

By Wendy Dreskin

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



Zachary Berston is a first grader who passed second grade birds at Bacich Elementary School in Greenbrae. His favorite bird, so far, is the scrub jay "because it looks so cool." The same day he passed his test he saw a snowy egret, two Canada geese, and a female mallard with ten ducklings in the wetland by the school!

Robert Berston, a second grader, says his favorite bird is the Western grebe because in its mating display "it walks on water."



Hudson Guerro is a first grader at Bacich Elementary School in Greenbrae. The bird he's longing to see is a great-horned owl.

Erik Gustafson (pictured last month) is a kindergartner at St. Rita School in Fairfax. He's been spotting the California towhees, scrub jays, Anna's hummingbirds, turkey vultures and red-tailed hawks around his school.



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The success of Marin Audubon Society's work depends greatly on its chapter members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from the 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*. Chapter members also have the opportunity to support and participate in the acquisition, restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat which will be protected in perpetuity. Our members help us shape our agenda and carry out our goals and mission.

If you are not already a local chapter member, please consider joining MAS, and urge your friends, neighbors and relatives to join us too.

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

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Membership in Marin Audubon Society does not include membership in National Audubon Society. For more information about and/or to join the NAS, visit to audubon.org or contact National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212/979-3000.

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