



# 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, MAY 7 8 PM**

**A Field Guide to the Bay Area**

*With John Muir Laws*

Jack has now done for the Bay Area what he previously did for the Sierra: created a guide to the plants and animals that you can find here. The guide comes in four foldout parts, each covering one of the following habitats: At the beach and the bay; Near creeks, rivers and ponds; On grassy hills and in fields; and Among the oaks and pines. He will show you his art and explain how it was accomplished.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 4 8 PM**

**Impressions of the Galapagos**

*With Jack Barclay*



*Photo courtesy of Jack Barclay*

**Blue-footed Booby**

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.

## Marin Audubon Society's Annual Meeting

Join us for Marin Audubon Society's Annual meeting on Friday, May 7, at 8 pm. This short Annual Meeting will include election of our new board members and a brief presentation on the highlights of MAS's work over the past year. The Annual meeting will be followed immediately by John Muir Law's impressive presentation on the Sierra Nevada and San Francisco Bay birds.

This is your opportunity as a Marin Audubon

member to vote on a slate of directors who will serve three-year terms, beginning June 2010, on our board. Nominations can also be made from the floor, with permission of the nominee.

The nominees are: Jude Stalker, Martha Olson Jarocki, Flinn Moore Rauch, and Mary Nealon.

Thank you to members of the Nominating Committee, Phil Peterson, Jo Kreider and Ed Nute, for their diligent work as members of this committee.

## Bolinas Bay Birding With Keith Hansen

*By Sande Chilvers*

On April 7, a spectacular only-in-Marin day 17 of us birders accompanied super birder/artist Keith Hansen to some of his favorite spots in and around Stinson Beach. At the Stinson Beach Overlook a flock of Surfbirds fed on rocks at the foot of the cliff with Black Turnstones not far away. As we stood searching for waterbirds a Bewick's Wren emerged from the bushes in front of us and took a dust bath. Offshore past the surf line floated a mixed raft of Red-necked Loons and Western Grebes. A lone Whimbrel probed the sand along the shore. Back in Stinson Beach we patrolled the post office parking lot and environs adding Pine Siskins, Orange-crowned Warblers, American Goldfinches, Northern Flickers and newly arrived Brown-headed Cowbirds to our lists. Cedar Waxwings flashed into a eucalyptus. A Downy Woodpecker and a Nuttall's Woodpecker perching in the same tree offered a good field mark comparison. Most unusual was an early-season juvenile Song Sparrow and his attentive parents. In Bolinas Lagoon adjoining the nursing Harbor Seal pups we spotted Horned Grebes in gaudy breeding plumage, Surf Scoters, a few Red-breasted Mergansers, Black-bellied Plovers and some late-lingering



*Photo courtesy of Bob Chilvers*

**Whimbrel**

Common Goldeneyes. From another vantage point on the lagoon we spied Green-winged Teals, American Wigeons, a Killdeer, a Spotted Sandpiper and Band-tailed Pigeons pecking around in the mud.

At Stinson Gulch the special treats were several Allen's Hummingbirds going all metallic *continued on page 2*

**IN THIS ISSUE**

President's Message	2
Field Trips	3
Conservation Report	4
Birdlog	7

## 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
Treasurer	Josephine Kreider 381-1910
Finance Chair	Greg Block 479-8254
Conservation	Phil Peterson 898-8400 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Earthshare	Jude Stalker 668-1242
Field Trips	Helen Lindqvist 789-0703
Membership	Bob Chilvers 444-0875
Fundraising	Richard Bohnet 331-3217
Programs	Tracy Corbin 722-6592
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 668-1242
Nominating	Phil Peterson 898-8400
Volunteers	Bob Hinz 383-8688
Property Management	Ed Nute 457-9241
Publicity	Barbara Ford 388-7233
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.

*The Clapper Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper. Edited by Bob Hinz [rbtrhzn@comcast.net](mailto:rbtrhzn@comcast.net), 383-8688; and assisted by other members of MAS. Deadline is the first of each month.

©2010 Marin Audubon Society

**Web site:** [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.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

Marin Audubon says a sad farewell to Don Neubacher, the now-former Superintendent of the Point Reyes National Seashore who has assumed the position of Superintendent of Yosemite National Park. We have known and worked with Don since he was an interpretive ranger at Point Reyes. He then served for a time at Golden Gate National Recreation Area before returning to Point Reyes as Superintendent. Don has been a true friend of wildlife and of protecting natural resources. He was always accessible and open. We wish him the best and will miss him. Yosemite is fortunate to have him.

We invite you to join us for this year's Mother's Day Barbecue on May 9, at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Volunteer Canyon. We again express our appreciation to Jude Stalker for coming forward to enable us to continue this event. A special thank you also to Jo Kreider who almost single-handedly stuffed the *The Clapper Rail* with flyers for the event. The Barbecue is an opportunity to enjoy the Ranch,

good food and Audubon friends and just to relax and have fun. We'd love to have you join us. Send in the reservation form right away, as spaces are limited.

Anne Merrifield and I will again be doing our Annual Birdathon for Marin Audubon Society on Sunday, May 2. A birdathon is a fun way to raise money; many Audubon chapters and National Audubon conduct birdathons as do other birding organizations. All you do is gather one or more other people that will comprise a team, ask your friends to support you with a donation per species, choose a day, and spend the day searching for birds. Anne and I, comprising Conservation Coos team, have been doing this for years. We usually raise about \$1,000 to support Marin Audubon's activities. If you are interested in setting up your own team, or sponsoring us, please let me know.

Please join us for our Annual Meeting which will take place at our Speaker Program on Friday, May 7; see article on the first page.

## Bolinas Bay Birding

*continued from page 1*



**Harbor Seals**

in good light, singing Black-headed Grosbeaks, a spiffy male Townsend's Warbler fueling up for his trek north, and a striking Spotted Towhee posing atop a bush. Among the willows our Marin-version Chestnut-backed Chickadees flitted. All around us we heard Purple Finches and in one spot a Warbling Vireo. Those who stayed for lunch joined Keith on his deck over the water in Bolinas. From this superb vantage point we watched a Common Loon and a Pelagic Cormorant diving for fish, Barn and Cliff



**Nuttall's Woodpecker**

Swallows zooming by at eye level, an Osprey with a fish onboard circling to gain altitude and Western Gulls squabbling below. A magnificent Hooded Oriole in a tree behind Keith's gallery capped the day. Total species observed: 84.

A special treat was a quick visit to Keith's art gallery in Bolinas where his bird illustrations are not to be missed.

Photos courtesy of Bob Chilvers

## 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

May 6  
8:30 AM to 12 noon  
With Len Blumin

Join Len on this Thursday morning birding walk at the Storage Ponds. We might still see a few of our winter visitors and most of the Neotropicals will have arrived. The birds should be in their distinctive breeding plumage!

From Hwy. 101 in San Rafael take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road to Las Gallinas Storage Ponds' parking lot. Meet the group at the bridge.

For information call Len 415/388-4990

### MINES ROAD/DEL PUERTO CANYON

Saturday and Sunday, May 1-2  
7:30 AM to 3:30 PM  
With Terry Colborn

Long recognized as one of the premier birding areas in the Bay Area to observe an array of resident species and Neotropicals migrants, the combination of Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon provides easy access to a number of different habitats. The bird list is quite impressive for this popular destination, and includes Wood Duck, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Yellow-billed Magpie, Rock and Canyon Wrens, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Hermit, Yellow and MacGillivray's Warblers, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole and Lawrence's Goldfinch, just to name a few. The elusive Greater Roadrunner is reported annually. We'll also visit Del Valle Regional Park (fee) and Frank Raines Park.

This weekend trek will start in Livermore (driving time from Marin approx. 1½ hours) on Saturday morning at 7:30 am, and will conclude on Sunday afternoon at 3:30 pm. Overnight hotel accommodations will be in Patterson, off of I-5, affording us an opportunity for an optional evening "owl prow" after dinner. There are still a few spots left on this interesting trip; sign-ups are required. Carpooling is a must as there is very limited space for vehicles to park on Mines Road. The meeting place and motel details will be given on sign-up. For this, send an e-mail to Terry Colborn at tlcgdc@aol.com, or call him at 530/758-0689.



**YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY**  
Saturday and Sunday, June 19-20  
With Phil and Pat Gordon

**RESERVE THE DATE** Phil 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) Look for details in the June/July/August RAIL. Campers usually stay at the Yuba Pass campground or lodging can be secured at Portola (Sleepy Pines, 530/832-4291); Blairsden (River Pines, 530/836-2552) and in Quincy or Sierra City (e.g. Harrington's Lodge 916/862-1151) Check your AAA book. For more information, e-mail Phil and Pat at pagpeg@aol.com or call 510/538-3550.

RESERVE TODAY

## MAS/ACR Mother's Day Barbecue

**Sunday, May 9, 2010**  
**Gates open: 11 am; Lunch: 12 noon – 2 pm**  
**Volunteer Canyon**  
**4800 Highway 1, Stinson Beach**

We sold out last year so don't wait. Reserve today! This is the only time Volunteer Canyon is open to the public. For more information call Mary Anne at 415/453-2216.

*Hope to see you there!*

Reserve your spot by sending a check payable to *Marin Audubon Society* to:

Mary Anne Cowperthwaite  
141 Oak Avenue  
San Anselmo, CA 94960

\$20 for adults, \$10 for kids 12 and under  
Indicate your choice of quiche or chicken for each person for whom you are paying.

*Remember to bring utensils, cups, bowls and plates. Non-disposable preferred.*

## Swallow Nesting

Swallows of all types have arrived and have set to work building nests under bridges, in eaves, ledges and overhangs of buildings, in tree holes and in rocky crevices.

These tiny birds travel thousands of miles to reach their nesting habitats and raise their young in Marin County. While here they will provide us with a great service; they will consume many thousands of insects. They are, of course, fun to watch.



Cliff Swallow

Photo courtesy of Richard Panek

Every year, we get calls that some store, business or residence is removing nests. Swallows are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It is illegal to remove their nests until nesting is over. But there are things you can do to live with these wonderfully beneficial birds. There are netting materials that can be installed, before nesting time, to prevent nesting. These must be carefully watched and kept in good repair as birds can become caught in tears or spaces. There are also materials that can be placed under the nesting areas to catch their droppings so they don't land underneath, which is often the reason for complaints. You can even install new ledges to attract the birds away from undesired locations such as Las Gallinas Sanitary District did several years ago.

Remember they are here because we have everything necessary for them to successfully raise their young: water, insects, natural areas, and places for nests to attach. They are here only until the end of summer; they benefit us while they are here. Take steps to help them raise their young successfully, and enjoy them.

## 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

We have some plants that may yet be planted but most of our effort now is to remove invasive non-native plants. Radish and thistles are the main early season targets. If you are interested in these work days please contact Bob Hinz at [rbhrthnz@comcast.net](mailto:rbhrthnz@comcast.net) or 415/383-8688.

#### Bahia:

Thursday, May 6, 10 AM – 1 PM  
Saturday, May 8, 10 AM – 1 PM  
Wednesday, May 12, 10 AM – 1 PM  
Thursday, May 20, 10 AM – 1 PM  
Wednesday, May 26, 10 AM – 1 PM

#### Triangle Marsh:

Saturday, May 1, 10 AM – 1 PM

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HOST AT AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

The Following dates are still available for hosting at Audubon Canyon Ranch:

May 22, May 23, June 5, June 6, July 3, and July 4

The four supporting Bay Area Audubon Chapters traditionally provide hosts during the time Audubon Canyon Ranch is open for public visitors. Hosting is an easy way to help out Audubon Canyon Ranch, meet nature-loving visitors, and enjoy a day outside with the birds. Hosting does not require any previous training or special skills.

Hosts welcome visitors to the Ranch, help them park, give them a map, and ask for donations, amongst other things. Hosts work from 9:15 am to 4:15 pm with breaks for lunch, hiking and visiting the heron rookery. What hosts really are, though, was perhaps best said by Audubon Canyon Ranch's first naturalist Clerin Zumwalt who wrote, "[Hosts] are the face of the Ranch, the first contact for most people, and they add an open friendliness to the Ranch".

A perk of hosting is the opportunity to stay overnight at Volunteer Canyon. Please contact Claire Seda at ACR (415/868-9244, ext 22) before your host date, if you are interested in spending the night.

Contact Bob Hinz at 415/383-8688 to sign up or for more information.

### MAS SUPPORTS HAWK HILL TREE REMOVAL

Members of MAS's Conservation Committee and Board recently toured Hawk Hill, where park officials plan to remove Monterey cypress and Monterey pines. The plan was featured in a recent *Marin IJ* article. It is our assessment that the impacts of removing the trees will be minimal and will be far outweighed by its benefits to endangered species and native birds that will use the restored native habitat.

The purpose of the tree removal is to restore habitat for the endangered Mission Blue Butterfly which is found in habitat fragments in only three Bay Area counties – Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo. These small butterflies lay their eggs on three species of lupine that are the sole source of food for their caterpillars. The butterflies are weak fliers,

### The tree removal will aid in restoring the fragmented habitat for the endangered Mission Blue Butterfly

typically flying no more than 50 meters from the lupine where they emerge. Roads, trails, and dense stands of trees, such as exist at Hawk Hill, are barriers preventing them from finding additional lupines and mates. Removing the barrier of trees and re-vegetating the area with native plants will unite fragmented habitat and recreate seven acres of butterfly habitat

The Monterey pine and cypress are recent arrivals in this location. Monterey pines and Monterey cypress are native to the Monterey Peninsula. The native habitat for Monterey pines is somewhat broader, extending north to Santa Cruz and south to San Luis Obispo counties.

Historically the headlands were relatively treeless, as were many of Marin's hills. These particular trees can be seen in aerial photos taken in 1986, but not in 1956. The seeds that produced the trees were apparently brought in with soil imported by the military to cover the headlands' batteries.

Restoring these native habitats will also restore habitat for many native bird and wildlife species. The project also includes improvement of some trails and of an overlook used to observe migrating raptors.

### FERAL CATS COLONIES, WHOLE FOODS SAN RAFAEL

Last month, as *The Clapper Rail* went to press, we became aware that Whole Foods San Rafael

was offering customers an option of donating rebates, for bringing their own bags, to an organization that supports feral cat colonies. We are pleased to report that the store is no longer directing donations to this organization. Thank you to everyone who responded to our brief notice and expressed your displeasure to the store management.

Feral cat colonies have a profound effect on native birds. Scientists estimate that domestic cats kill at least one billion birds worldwide every year. Free-roaming cats are one of the most important drivers of bird extinctions, second only to habitat destruction.

Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) programs that return cats to the wild are part of the problem. Feral cat colonies near wetlands, where cats prey on shorebirds, including endangered species, are especially damaging. TNR advocates often claim the cat colonies don't contribute to the decline of native species, and that such programs effectively reduce cat populations. Scientific evidence contradicts these claims.

Studies of feeding habits of free-roaming domestic cats have been conducted in many countries over the last 55 years. Some free-roaming domestic cats have been known to kill as many as 100 animals each year. Feeding cats does not reduce bird kills because the hunting instinct is independent of the urge to eat. Visit the website of the American Bird Conservancy and click on "Cats Indoors" for science-based articles about the devastating impacts of roaming cats on native birds.

House cats are descendants of European and African cats that were domesticated 4,000 years ago. They are not part of our ecosystem. Our native wildlife have not evolved defenses against them. Native cats in the Western U.S. are mountain lions and bobcats.

### WHALERS' POINT CLEAN UP

During discussion at a recent Marin Board of Supervisors' meeting about the Whalers' Point clean-up, it was disclosed that a feral cat colony is maintained on the property adjacent to a tidal marsh on Richardson Bay. We raised objections, citing some of the information above. Supervisor McGlashan expressed concern, but no action was taken. The issue will likely come up again in June, when the Supervisors review the revised wording of the order to clean up the property.

Supporters said the colony is needed to kill rats on the property. Of course, if the junk were



Photo courtesy of Brad Rippe

**Two coyotes on the proposed trail route in the Loma Alta Open Space Reserve.**

removed, there would be no habitat for the rats. Furthermore, there are other methods to remove rats, specifically, the old-fashioned rat trap baited with peanut butter.

We also expressed concern about the possible pollution of marsh and groundwater from oil and gas dripping from the heavy equipment and vehicles stored on the property. The supervisors did not consider this to be a concern at this time. On the positive side, they required monitoring of activities on the site, to be paid for by the property owner.

**“680” TRAIL**

At a late-February Board of Supervisors meeting, the Marin County Open Space District (OSD) staff recommended approval of funding for the environmental review and construction of a 3-mile trail to connect Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow and Loma Alta Open

**MAS’s long-standing opinion is there are enough trails in Marin County and no more should be built.**

Space Preserve. This “680” trail was intended to replace a connection blocked by a fence erected by Metallica rock star, James Hetfield, to keep hikers off his property.

When information about the location and the impact of the “680 Trail” became more widely known, environmental groups and members of the public opposed it. As a result, the recommendation to approve funding for trail construction was dropped and funding for only the environmental review was approved.

One of the forces behind the public outcry was San Anselmo resident, Brad Rippe, who wrote in a letter to the Supervisors, “From any standpoint it is extremely difficult to see the need for, or value in, such an extensive and expensive trail, especially when a network of trails and fire roads already exists. My greatest concern is the loss of habitat and the desecration of one of the most beautiful grassland slopes in Marin.” Brad goes on to describe a recent hike when “... [he] saw two very healthy coyotes (right on the proposed trail route), deer, osprey, and many hunting hawks. These animals survive in a delicate and shrinking balance between their world and ours. The open grassland face of Loma Alta is their world and is visible for miles. It is one of the largest unbroken grasslands in Marin absolutely wild in nature. It would be a crime to carve a huge swath across it.”

Marin Audubon testified against constructing the trail. It has been MAS’s long-standing position that there are enough trails in Marin County and no more should be built. There are at least 800 miles of authorized trails and fire roads on Marin OSD lands alone.

The OSD staff held a meeting on April 13 at which a new alignment for the trail and the schedule for the environmental review were presented. The new trail is shorter, 2.5 miles compared to more than 3 miles long for the earlier alignment. It is not clear, however, whether a shorter length means less environmental damage. A number of commenters expressed concern about sections going through pristine habitat and wetland/seeps. The OSD is planning to approve the project with a Negative Declaration which is anticipated to be released for review in June. Construction could begin this summer or fall.

**MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS DONATIONS:**

- Peter Mason
- Judy Bloch and H. Spencer
- Giselle Block
- Frank and Lois Noonan
- Meryl Sundove
- Jett Walker
- Ann Williams

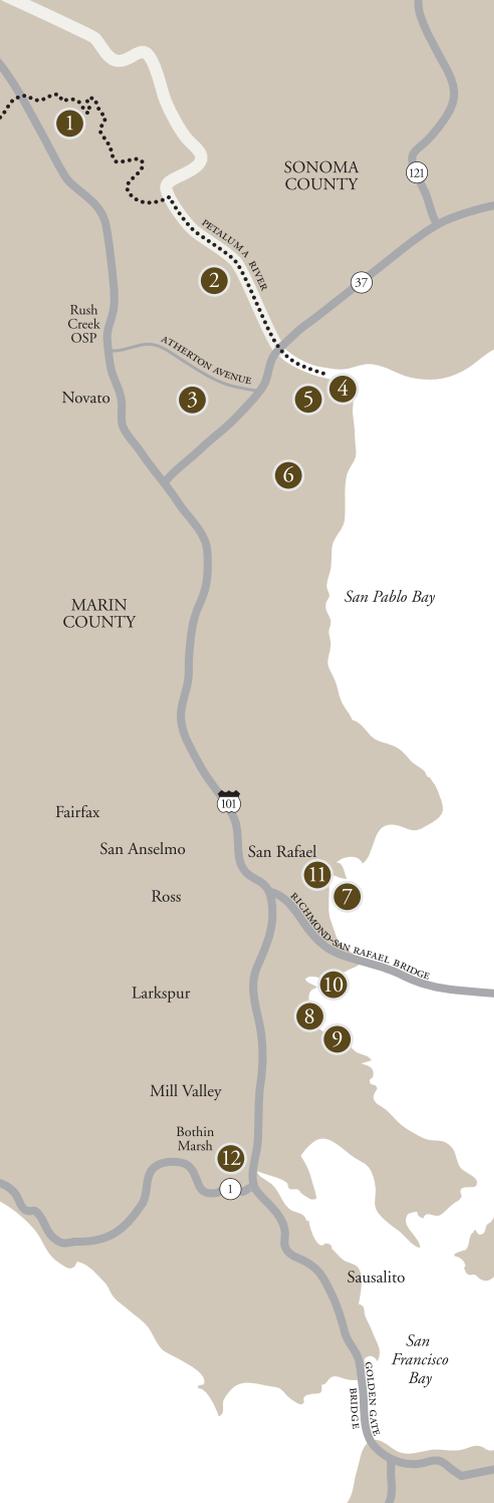
**THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS:**

- Debbie Ablin, Prem McMurdo, Flinn Moore Rauck, Linda Nicoletto, Bob Bundy, Jo Kreider, Helen Lindqvist, Bob Hinz, Barbara Salzman, Lowell Sykes,

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:**

- Helen Anawalt, W. Anderson, Joan Aquilano, Guy T. Armstrong, Sandra Armstrong, Louis Baesel. Jean Ballestero, Paula H. Beard, Richard Berenter, Doug Berry, Joy Boehm, Alan & Helen Bonapart, Sheila Bond, Mary Bost, Pamela Bouchard, Janet Braff, Andre Brewster, Lucinda Brisbane, Ruth B. Britton, Pegan Brooke, John & Mary Lynne Cammidge, Frances Capper, Ruth C. Castellow, Ingrid C. Chase, B. D. Clark, Gloria Conradi, Carolyn L Coque, John Crawford, Leslie Culhane, George Cunha, Nancy Curran, Michael G. Deverell, Gitte Dobrer, Peg Duggan, Charlene Dunn, Pinsker V. Famil, The Family, Thomas S. Fischer, Theresa Fisher, Josephine E. Flohr, Robert Flynn, Janet F. Foster, Barbara Framm, Charles Francis, Julia Frank, Ellen Gardner, Susan Gentry, Michael Getas, Gerard C. Gianni, Jane Gorski, Candy Gratto, Raven Gray, Dr. Leon & Florence Graybill, Margaret R. Guglielmo, Muriel Hammond, Kathleen Hannah, Charlotte Irvine, Carolyn S. Jenkins, Margaret Johnson, Spencer Johnston, Thomas Keefe, Alice Knutson, Roberta K. Koss, Lisa Kubiak, Vicki Lamborn, Will Lieb, Patricia Littlefield, Carolyn & John Longstreth, Sarah Lynch, Sharon Mantle, Teresa Marley, Stephen McArthur, Claire McAuliffe, Marilyn H. McGovern, Lynette McLamb, Kenneth Meislin, Barbara Meschi, Hideyo Minagi, Ken & Ellen Minami, Jean S. Moore, Adrienne Moran, Bernice R. Nelson, Chip G. Nielsen Jr., Meg Newcomer, Edward O’Neill, A. Parker, Nancy Philie, David J. Picchi, Jeanne Pinto, Rosemary Rae, Barbara Randall, Arno Rayner, Maria A. Riconscente, Andrew Ross, Mark A. Ruyak, William Sagar, Helen A. Salyers, Tamayo Sato, Herbert Schmidt, Anne Schwarzer, Pat Seymour, Dhana Shamini, Ellen Shehadeh, Marilyn Skaff, Mrs. Kay Slade, Cindy Stameroff, Charles E. Stedwell, John Strait, Jill Tardy, Lindy Trocki, Lee B. Turner, J. M. Urahoney, Jon Wells, Ann West, Charles C. Worth, Frank Yee, Caroline Youmans

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP



A fence and sign erected by the Marin Open Space District to protect the wildlife using the levee along the new tidal area in Bahia.

Photo courtesy of Jude Stalder

### BAHIA

Thank you again to the Marin County Open Space District for erecting fencing and signs informing trail users that the levee along the new tidal area at the base of the hills is not open to public access. Marin Audubon is supplying the signs. As discussed previously in this column, this levee was planned as habitat to allow unimpeded movement of wildlife between the new tidal marsh and seasonal wetlands. People using the trail disturb wildlife and wear away vegetation, which removes cover and exposes wildlife to predation.

### SIMMONS SLOUGH PROPERTIES

The Natural Resource Conservation Service,

the federal agency that holds a conservation easement on our 140 acres at Olive and Atherton Avenues, has approved the restoration plan prepared by consultants, Wetlands and Water Resources. Our property surrounds the Greenpoint Nursery property on the corner.

Our plan includes excavating to widen and deepen the shallow areas that collect water in winter in order to expand seasonal wetlands as habitat for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. We also will be working to restore native plants and eliminate non-native plants. We will be investigating the use of sheep to control non-native plants and will be researching costs for different components of the project.

## Mira Monte – Purchase Update

This month the State Coastal Conservancy submitted a grant application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) for \$950,000 – half the purchase price for the Mira Monte property. This federal grant program requires that applications come from the designated state contact, which is the Conservancy. MAS is turning to private foundations, other government sources and individuals to raise the other half of the purchase price and for funding to restore habitat. Marin Audubon has a purchase agreement to purchase the property for \$1.85 million by the end of September.

The Mira Monte property is on San Antonio Creek at its confluence with the Petaluma River. The property consists of tidal marsh, seasonal wetland and an oak-wooded knoll known as Burdell Island. These habitats support endangered California Clapper Rail and special status

species including Black Rail, Chinook Salmon, California Coast Steelhead and Green Sturgeon.

We're thankful to Sue Wilson for her impressive work producing a video about Mira Monte, and to Doug Wilson for his help. The video, "Mira Monte Project," can be found on YouTube. The link is [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_9g3W3kTrqs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9g3W3kTrqs).

You can help protect this spectacular property by sending your contribution to the Marin Baylands Fund at the Marin Community Foundation, #5 Hamilton Landing, Novato, CA 94949. Past donors to the Marin Baylands Fund will be receiving an appeal letter for Mira Monte sent by Marin Baylands Advocates, the organization that partners with Marin Audubon in its purchase of properties. The Marin Baylands Fund is a donor-advised fund of the Marin Baylands Advocates. Your donation to that fund can only be used for the purchase of baylands.

### 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 – MARCH 2010

By Rich Stallcup

Except for the absolutely predictable arrivals of tropical migrants back to their nesting territories, March 2010 was still about as cold (and rainy) as winter ... but April will be an awesome month with literally millions of migrating birds involved.

Of very local interest only, **Horned Grebes** (while common in winter on all saltwater surrounding Marin) have been found rarely in the past on fresh water, only at Stafford Lake. One, with *Aechmophorus* Grebes on Nicasio Reservoir 3/8/10 (JE) was new to that place.

Drake's Bay is the southernmost point for high numbers of wintering **Red-necked Grebes** along the California coast and they no doubt are present annually there in the low hundreds of individuals. Because they usually stay farther from the beach than the other grebes, familiarity with their *shape* is crucial to detecting their presence. Twelve from the end of the Chimney Rock Trail 3/4 and 22 (from only two scoping positions) off Limantour 3/23 (both NB,RS) point to their real numbers.

Two **Harlequin Ducks** were found ... a female 3/11 at Chimney Rock (NB) and a male at Marshall on Tomales Bay 3/13 (BB).

Harlequins used to be more regular and common in Marin County. *Grinnell and Wythe* reported, "Large numbers observed in scattering flocks on Tomales Bay ... in the fall of 1913; others seen at the same time on the ocean off Tomales [Pierce] Point: numbers seen on ocean beyond the surf at Point Reyes ... in JUNE 1880." !!! Small numbers of **White-winged Scoters** (14 total) were found on Tomales, Drakes and Richardson's Bays – far fewer than fifteen years ago but far more than any one winter in the last ten.



Photo courtesy of Paul Higgins

Harlequin Duck



Photo courtesy of Joseph V. Higbee

Pacific-slope Flycatcher

in the pictures, had an oddly graduated tail (a feature that might point to either an escaped cage bird or a far-flung vagrant) and splotches of black and orange. Four of us following the first views had suspicions but wished the images would have been clean (of rain streaked window disruption). We concluded with the old standard "BVD" or better view desired. When the same photos went to the internet, there were many comments suggesting many solutions including Brambling, Black-headed Grosbeak, Rufous-collared Sparrow, Smith's Longspur, Spotted Towhee (with haywire coloration), and Japanese Reed Bunting. An orangey White-crowned Sparrow made the guess list as did ... Horned Lark. It was all pretty funny.

**SPRING ARRIVALS:** Each species of "neo" tropical migrant is on-the-clock for northbound travel and, over time, we have pinned down *average* arrival dates for each at our latitude. If climate change continues we will see these birds, across-the board, earlier and earlier. A ♂ **Rufous Hummingbird** stayed two days at an east Novato feeder beginning 3/12 ... one day earlier than last year but – then this guy was on-the-move. A **Wilson's Warbler** in a Bolinas yard 3/7 (DH) was about six days early. **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were present at Olema 3/16 and **Warbling Vireos** arrived en masse between 3/18 (when there were none) and 3/22 (when there were many) at White House Pool.

The most intriguing bird in March 2010, got away unidentified. One rainy day mid-month, JM took pictures through a window of a passerine bird on a deck in Bolinas. It was smaller than the *Zonotrichia* sparrows

**Observers and Acronyms** **KW:** Kerry Wilcox, **NW:** Nick Whelan, **RS:** Rich Stallcup, **PRBO:** PRBO Conservation Science, **NB:** Native Birds Group, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **JM:** Jeff Miller, **SL:** Stephen Long, **WK:** William Legge, **BK:** Bill Keener, **DH:** Diana Humple, **LH:** Luanna Helfman, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **JE:** Jules Evens, **KC:** Kate Carolan, **HC:** Heather Cameron, **BB:** Bob Battagin.

## Junior Bird Watchers Corner

By Wendy Dreskin

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



Audrey Hettleman

is a second grader at Bacich Elementary School in Kentfield. She was a Junior Bird Watcher last year as a first grader and continues her interest.



Eric Gustafson

is in kindergarten at St. Rita School in Fairfax. He loves birds but here he was checking out an insect in the magnifier.



# THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SAN RAFAEL, CA  
PERMIT NO. 87

Box 599 | MILL VALLEY, CA 94942-0599

Return Service Requested

Time Value

## SAVE THE DATE

- May 9 **MAS/ACR Mother's Day BBQ**  
Gates open at 11 AM  
Lunch from 12 noon to 2 PM
- May 8 **International Migratory Bird Day**  
Muir Woods
- June 19 – 20 **Yuba Pass, Sierra and Plumas Counties**

Printed on 100% recycled paper

## SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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 Web site using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to [marinaudubon.org](http://marinaudubon.org).

## NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

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](http://audubon.org) or contact National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212/979-3000.

## Join or Donate to the Marin Audubon Society

Please fill in this form and mail to the address below. If you are paying by check, please make it payable to **Marin Audubon Society**.

Enroll me as a Local Chapter Member

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

New Member

\$1,000 Benefactor

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

\$500 Patron

\$100 Sustaining

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Sponsor

\$25 Basic

This is a Gift Membership from: \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me *The Clapper Rail* by e-mail only.

Master Card

### PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD:

Visa

NAME ON CREDIT CARD \_\_\_\_\_

Fill out form and mail to:  
**Membership Secretary**  
**Marin Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 599**  
**Mill Valley, CA 94942**

CREDIT CARD NO. \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRATION DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_