



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920
Information: 415/789-0703

This year the Speaker Series will be on the SECOND THURSDAY of the month at 7:30 pm.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13 7:30 PM

My Carbon-free BIG YEAR of Birding

With Keith Hansen



Photo courtesy of Richard Panek

American robin

Join Keith for a “wild ride” as he lays out for you his carbon-free Big Year in 2010 in Marin County. From January 1st to December 31st Keith saw 237 species of birds without the use of fossil fuels! On foot or on bike, Keith traveled West Marin filming video of nearly all the bird species that he discovered in this wild adventure of a Birding Big Year. The “rule” was simple: anything you can see without using a car!

Keith Hansen began drawing birds in 12th grade. Producing images for various groups, including Marin Audubon, and creating the artwork for 12 books, Keith has kept busy. Currently he is illustrating a Guide to the Sierra Nevada, written by Edward Beedy and Ed Pandolfino. Keith’s workspace, the Wildlife Gallery is located in Bolinas and is open to the public.

Come at 7:15 PM to socialize and have refreshments before this “visual feast” presentation!

Clapper Rail at Triangle Marsh!



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

The sharp-eyed Jude Stalker spied the first Clapper Rail observed at our Triangle Marsh property, a spectacular event given that the site was restored to tidal marsh just seven years ago. For many years before that it was upland, created by debris dumped into the historic tidal marsh.

It’s likely this Clapper Rail just stopped by—perhaps a young bird moving out from its nesting ground elsewhere in the Bay, but it would seem to show that the restored marsh is beginning to be suitable habitat for Rails. It looks good enough to the birds for them to stop and survey for food and cover.

Clapper Rails are often described as secretive birds and are commonly seen sneaking between blades of cordgrass that form their typical habitat. Clapper Rails spend their entire lives in tidal marshes, except during extreme high tides when they retreat to high ground to hide

under gumplant (*Grindelia*) or other native shrubs to protect themselves from raptors hunting overhead. Rails forage for crustaceans among marsh plants and probe in the mud for invertebrates. They build their nests in higher areas of the marsh, affixed to cordgrass, gumplant and sometimes other plants. The nests can move up and down with the tides—a fascinating adaptation.

We invite you enjoy Triangle Marsh from the overlook that is directly across from the entrance to the County’s Ring Mountain Preserve.

Please stay on the overlook, to ensure protection of the marsh and the native upland transition plants that provide the critical Rail habitat.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All phone numbers are in the 415 area code unless otherwise noted. Questions? Please contact the Board member.

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DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members.

7:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month
Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only)

Marin Audubon Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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

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

MISSION STATEMENT

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

We are saddened by the death of Ken Howard in early September. Ken was a long-time friend of Marin Audubon. He was an excellent birder and naturalist. His love for birds came from the days of his youth in England when he observed and even collected a few eggs he admitted. Ken was a MAS Board member from 1977 to 1988, and he was a regular attendee on our field trips during those years. His cheery personality, winning smile, sense of humor and bird identification skills made him a popular participant. After leaving the Board, he continued to volunteer as the leader of the Sausalito territory for our Christmas Bird Count. He got special joy during the years when the count coincided with the herring run and the Sausalito waterfront was covered with thousands of gulls and diving birds. He loved plants, too, and joined the Native Plant Society board after leaving ours. Some people you are just glad to know because they do good things and they are good to be with. Ken was such a special person. We will miss him.

Congratulations to former Board member Sharon Barnett for being chosen for this year's Terwilliger Nature Education Award. Sharon loves working with kids and was an excellent choice for this honor.

We are very pleased to be having two Christmas Bird Counts this year, thanks to Susan Kelly and Mark Forney who are reconstituting the "Cheap Thrills" count that

has been dormant for years. Many of our members have bemoaned the fact there was a large area along the Bay in North Marin that was not in any count. This is your chance to count those areas. See their article on page 7.

A few business items: the Board decided to move the date of the programs again in an attempt to avoid mishaps that occurred several times last year when the newsletter didn't get out in time. This year, the Speaker Series programs will be on the second Thursday.

And, in case you missed it in last month's *The Clapper Rail*, we are not having a bird seed sale this year. The company we purchased from went out of business and we cannot meet the requirements of the firm that bought them out. Hopefully we can find another company next year.

October is a magical month in the Bay Area—it is the month when the Bay changes most, when we welcome back migratory waterfowl returning to their Bay wintering grounds or stopping off on their journeys further south. And all of the shorebirds will have returned. There will again be large rafts of waterfowl in the Bay waters and shorebirds along the shoreline and mudflats at low tide. It is the beginning of a special time for birding.

The EPA has designated October 27 as King Tide day—a 6.7 foot tide is predicted. Mark your calendars. Marvel at how the Bay changes with such events.

SEPTEMBER II FIELD TRIP

Farallon Islands

By Juliet Grable

Early Sunday morning on September 11, some 30 stalwart birders, armed with binoculars and wrapped in layers, turned out for the ever-popular annual Pelagic Trip, led this year by David Wimpfheimer on Captain Mick Menigoz's boat *Superfish*.

We cast off from Sausalito's Clipper Harbor under heavy clouds and mist. Fortunately, it wasn't too cold or windy. The first birds of note we spied were Elegant Terns plunge-diving in the Central Bay. We also spotted Harbor Porpoises near the North Tower of the Golden Gate Bridge. We were hardly out the Gate when we started seeing Common Murres floating on the water; at this point a modest flock of Heerman's Gulls began following *Superfish*.

We made a beeline for the Southeast Farallon Islands, slowing down only for a Rhinoceros Auklet. Twenty-eight miles later we pulled into



Black-footed Albatross

one of the coves. The barren rocks may not be very hospitable for humans, but they're a refuge for resident seabirds as well as transient visitors. Some thirteen species nest on the islands, comprising the largest seabird colonies in the United States outside of Alaska and Hawaii. Over 400 species have been documented, some weary and/or disoriented migrants looking for a few days of rest.

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MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Vicky Van Meter at 415/299-2514

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, October 6, 2011

8:30 AM to 12 noon

With Susan Kelly and friends

Beginner birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds near McInnis Park. There is always something interesting to see and over 100 species have been reported over the course of a year. Fall is a good time to see many of the migrants that stop at the ponds. 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 groups, as well as getting tips on optics, birding books, and birding etiquette.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 8:30 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group.

ELLIS CREEK WETLANDS WALK

Petaluma

Sunday, October 9, 2011

8:30 AM to 1 PM

With Peter Colasanti

The new Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility came on line a few years ago and now much of the area is a wildlife sanctuary accessible via a 3-mile trail system. Good birding/nature-viewing places are around the polishing ponds/wetlands, seasonal wetlands (winter/spring), in the trees lining the edges of the property, and along the tidal marsh trail to the river (September 1–January 14). Bird sightings could include Blue-winged Teal, Great-tailed Grackle, White Pelican, moorhens, rails and good shorebirds like dowitchers. Also, the trip is well timed to hit a late wave of neotropical migrants if we're lucky. The walk may be extended over to Shollenberger Park.

DIRECTIONS: Going north on Hwy 101 from Marin, take the second Petaluma exit which is Rte 116 (Lakeville Hwy). Go east about one mile to South McDowell Blvd (4th traffic light) and turn right. At the curve turn right on Cypress and drive straight to the east end. Meet in the parking lot just past the gate.

BIRD WALK IN MARTA'S MARSH

Saturday, October 15, 2011

10 AM to 12:30 PM

With Meryl Sundove and

Roger Harris

Join Meryl and Roger on a bird walk in Marta's Marsh in Corte Madera. This field trip often affords a look at and a listen to the namesake of the Marin Audubon Society's newsletter, the endangered California Clapper Rail. Meryl and Roger have been studying the marsh for over twenty-five years.

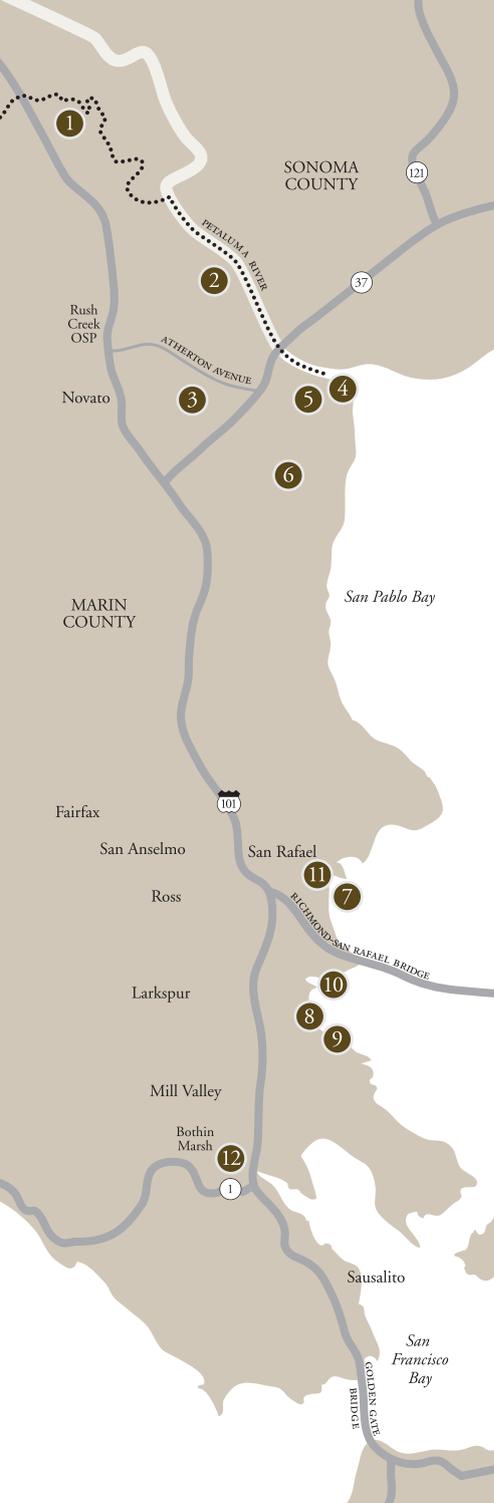
Walking the levee around the marsh makes it possible to get good looks at a variety of shore and water birds. This walk is timed with the incoming tide that pushes feeding shorebirds off exposed Bay mudflats into mudflats in the marsh for closer views. Marta's Marsh is a great place to learn about marsh processes, watch shorebird behavior, and practice identifying the birds. Beginners welcome!

Depending on the weather the levee can be damp so wear appropriate shoes, bring layers of clothes, and, of course, a bird book and binoculars (scope if you have one). There are no bathroom facilities at the marsh. Steady rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Corte Madera Paradise Drive exit. Go east toward the Bay and then curve right coming past the Highway Patrol office. At the second stop light, turn left on Harbor Drive, then right on Yolo, and left on Channel Drive, a dead end road. Park at the end of Channel.

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.



YOUR COMMENTS NEEDED

Your opportunity to comment on the Local Coastal Plan (LCP) is coming up in October. Each coastal county in California is required to have an LCP to guide development and resource protection along the coast. LCPs must comply with the California Coastal Act and be approved by the California Coastal Commission.

The Marin LCP consists of policies to protect agriculture and habitats in the Natural Resource section, and addresses the Built Environment and Socioeconomics in those sections. So far there have been several hearings on the codes that define procedures for evaluating and implementing the LCP policies. After approval by the Planning Commission, the LCP will go to the Board of Supervisors and then to the Coastal Commission for final approval.

Marin Audubon's review of the LCP has focused on Natural Resource protection. Many policies address the protection of sensitive habitats. Wetlands in particular are called out for protection. Some of the proposed policies, however, are weak and would contribute to destruction of wetland habitats. We object to the following provisions in the Natural Resource chapters:

- Acceptable purposes for filling wetlands (Policy C-Bio-16) include "nature study, aquaculture or similar activities." None of these uses justifies the filling of wetlands.
- A 100-foot wetland buffer width (Policy CC-BIO-20) should not be reduced. The proposed buffer is too small.
- In lieu fees should not be acceptable as mitigation for impacts to wetlands (Policy C-BIO-21).

Other issues of concern:

- Trees and other upland habitats should be recognized as resources needing protection. Native habitats are important not only for wildlife but also to maintain water and air quality. While there is mention of trees in the discussion of several specific communities (Inverness and the east shore of Tomales Bay), the only overall recognition of upland plant species policies is with regard to their scenic and visual value (policy C-DES-8). Policies should be included to protect native trees and other native upland habitats, such as grasslands and chaparral throughout West Marin for their ecological value.

- Proposed policy C-MAR-2, encouraging mariculture in parklands (National Park Service policies are specifically referenced) should be deleted. This is clearly a reference to Drake's Estero, is inappropriate and should be deleted. Marin County does not have jurisdiction over Federal lands.
- The focus in the Coastal Public Access section is on developing trails. MAS's position is that the hundreds of miles of trails that exist in Marin are sufficient. Trails destroy and fragment habitat. If any new trails are deemed essential, a similar length of nearby existing trail should be decommissioned.

The Natural Resources section currently is scheduled to be heard by the Planning Commission on October 24. You should send comments before then or attend the meeting. The hearing schedule has been revised several times, and the environmental organizations are requesting that the hearing schedule be slowed down (we are feeling overwhelmed). So check beforehand. The full hearing schedule is on the Community Development Agency's Web site. We encourage you to attend meetings at the Marin County Civic Center or send comments to Jack Leibster, Marin County Community Development Agency, 3501 Civic Center Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903.

FEDS TO PREPARE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR AIR TOURS

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) will be preparing Air Tour Management Plans (ATMP) for GGNRA and Point Reyes National Seashore. Separate plans would be prepared for each park. Muir Woods National Monument, Fort Point National Historic Site and the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, an independently managed national park unit adjacent to GGNRA, will also be addressed. The ATMPs will apply to all commercial air tour operations in the airspace below 5,000 feet over the parks and to a half-mile buffer zone surrounding the park's boundary. Take-offs, landings and emergency operations would be exempted.

The objective of ATMPs is to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or prevent the significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial air tour operations on the natural and cultural resources and visitor experiences within or abutting GGNRA and

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	162 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	3 parcels
5. Black Point Parcels	2 parcels
6. Arroyo San Jose	2 parcels
7. Tidelands at Murphy's Rock	34 acres
8. Corte Madera Marsh	1.8 acres
9. Triangle Marsh	31 acres
10. San Clemente Creek	4.34 acres
11. Tiscornia Marsh	20 acres
12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio	2 acres

the Seashore.

The National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000 directs the FAA, in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS), to establish an ATMP for any national park or tribal land for which such a plan is not in effect whenever a person applies for authority to conduct such tours. The Act specifically requires that environmental impacts associated with the establishment of an ATMP be assessed under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Currently, two tour companies, the San Francisco Helicopter Tours and San Francisco Seaplane Tours, have been granted interim authority to conduct up to 5,090 flights per year over each of the sites of interest. It does not appear they are actually flying that number now. Park areas that are advertised by tour operators include the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz Island, Angel Island, Muir Woods and the scenic coastline along the Pacific Ocean.

The NPS and FAA are inviting public input and comments regarding issues and concern in preparation for developing an Environmental Assessment. These scoping comments are solicited to find the range of issues and alternatives to be addressed. The Draft Environmental Assessment and Tour Management Plan will evaluate impacts to environmental and community resources. A Preferred Alternative, which will include flight routes and operating parameters, will be included in the Final Environmental Assessment and Plan.

MAS is concerned about adverse impacts to wildlife due to the significantly increased noise, particularly from helicopters. Breeding birds,

in particular, would be adversely impacted. Many species depend on hearing to develop pair bonds. In addition to wildlife impacts, overhead noises are disturbing to recreational users, and residents of nearby neighborhoods would also be affected.

The comment deadline is September 28. Comments may be submitted on-line http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BayArea_ATMP or by mail to: Keith Lusk, Special Programs Staff, Western Pacific Office, Federal Aviation Administration, P.O. Box 92007, Los Angeles, CA 90009-2007

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE UPDATE

We have been working with regulatory agencies on a plan to remove the damaging trails that have been worn through the former Heerdt marsh, the northern section of the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. The trails have been worn by kiteboarders, dog walkers and other members of the public. Applications to regulatory agencies have been submitted. One recent change resulted from a meeting with kiteboarders who do not feel they need the end of the levee to be lowered because they have worked out a trail down the side of the levee that works for them to access the bay waters.

Most of the kiteboarders are now using the levee instead of going through the marsh to access the Bay with their equipment, although a few are still walking through the marsh. We hope that installing a low fence will protect the tidal marsh from foot traffic. We are also in communication with the adjacent private property owner about possible use of their property to access the trail.

Double Your Donation

Did you know that many employers will match the charitable donations made by their employees? If your employer has a Matching Charitable Gift Program, your donation to Marin Audubon Society could be worth double without any extra cost to you. That is a nice way to get 100% "return on your investment/donation", while doing good for natural ecosystems, birds, and other wildlife.

Helping Marin Audubon Society receive your company's matching donation is as easy as:

1. Asking your Human Resources/Benefits department whether the company has a Matching Charitable Donation Program (if they do not, you should request they start one).
2. Obtaining and completing the company's matching donation form, which can be sent to us if verification of your donation is required.

3. Making your personal donation to Marin Audubon Society.
4. Submitting the matching donation verification form to your company.

Your employer may want to know that Marin Audubon Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our tax identification number is 94-6076664. We are a volunteer organization with no paid employees, which helps us maximize the environmental benefit for every dollar you donate.

If you have questions about how to make a donation that will trigger a Matching Charitable Donation from your employer, please call our Finance Chairman, Greg Block, at (415) 717-6453.

Donations should be sent to:
Marin Audubon Society
P.O. Box 599
Mill Valley, CA 94942-0599

STELLER SEA LION, FARALLON ISLANDS



Photo courtesy of Richard Pace

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Andrew Allen, Vivian Berliner, Barbara Braithwaite, Marshall Bush, Donna Crawford, Cynthia & Ainsley Dahl, Andres Edwards, Nicole Faidi, Y. Fairbairn, Viviane E. Ghammache, Jean Gilbert, Tamara Grammer, Margaret Griffith, Valerie Harrison, Janie Lee, Kathy Lowrey, Heather Lupa, Craig Marezki, Robert A. McCaskill, Cat Morgan, Grenn Nemhauser, Anna O'Neill, Diane Ongaro, Richard Paillon, Toni Arkoosh Pinsky, Mr. & Mrs. Ram Rao, Sarah Scheetz, Linda Waddington

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS:

Carlo Gardin, Sheila Hershon, Richard Jennings, Josephine Kreider, Mary Lynn Kunkel, Clifford Lardinois, Mark Lindberg, Peter Mason, Jordan Rinker, Hans Roenau, Barbara Salzman, Christine Wood

THANKS TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

Jose & Olga Zaladon, Kiara Wade, Sarah VanDine, Unity of Marin Group (Jeanne Sutter, Thomas Stevens, Flaria Patino, Nancy Foster, A. M. Foley, Bridget Donahoe-Duffy, Maureen Donahoe, A. C. Copper, Kyle Cato), Mark Toepfer, Lowell Sykes, Idalia Sullivan, Jude Stalker, Jenny Soriano, Joe Sher, Barbara Salzman, Genevieve Rauck, Ed Nute, Flinn Moore Rauck, Wiley Peppel, Tyler Peppel, Christina Pelfini, Bruce Nance, John Martin, Shane Marble, Helen Lindqvist, Molly Lazarus, Katerina Kakkis, Jeff Johnson, Martha Jarocki, Bob Hinz, Meg Feil, Vera De Ferrari, Chas De Ferrari, Craig Burke, Kyla Burke-Lazarus, Yelana & Amelia Borinshteyn, Julia Bell, Julia Bell, Cristine Albert, Debbie Ablin

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

It is a tough plant that is growing at this time of the year, and our properties have some tough invasive 'foreigners' including bull thistle, yellow star thistle, *Dittrichia* and, of course, Harding grass. Our volunteers' efforts have greatly reduced *Dittrichia* and Harding grass. On the other hand, the native coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) also does very well. Help us eliminate its non-native competitors on one of our work days. We have the tools and gloves. 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 Saturday: October 1, November 5

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: October 8

Wednesdays, October 5, October 19

Thursdays, October 13, October 27

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

If you would like to help, please contact Bob Hinz at rbhrhzn@comcast.net or 415/383-8688.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WORKSHOP DECEMBER 3

CBC compilers Mark and Susan will be conducting an informational workshop for CBC volunteers at 10 a.m. on Saturday, December 3 at Richardson Bay Audubon Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road in Tiburon. It will include an indoor presentation and discussion and an optional field trip where we'll practice identifying common birds. Details will be available in the next Clapper Rail and posted on Marin Audubon's Web site.

2011 CBC DATES

Cheep Thrills, Northern Marin CBC: Thursday, December 15, 2011

Southern Marin CBC:

Saturday, December 31, 2011

We held two work days to remove stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) from our property on San Antonio Creek adjacent to the Petaluma marsh. This restoration is evolving to be a beautiful marsh. The upland bench we constructed between the marsh and the levee, however, is recovering slowly from a high saline soil problem. Because the material used to construct the bench came from deep below the marsh surface, it has had an extremely high sulfide content which has inhibited plants from growing. Plants have just begun to colonize this year. We would like to wait another year before doing some vegetation with native plants.

At Bahia we have removed yellow star thistle and Scotch thistle as well as fennel. Triangle Marsh work days have focused on removing Harding grass and lesser amounts of fennel and bull thistle.

We have also been working on the application to regulatory agencies for a seasonal wetland enhancement project on the Simmons

Slough properties in Novato on which the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) holds a conservation easement. Planning the enhancement work on these properties is requiring lots of coordination with the NRCS about species to plant and where to plant them.

We also are planning our winter planting program at both Bahia, funded by our Estuary Partnership grant, and at Simmons Slough which is funded by NRCS. We will need help to both remove invasive plants in preparation for planting and put native species in the ground as soon as the rains begin. Do join us!

We have ordered a power mower, thanks to a generous grant from the California Alpine Club Foundation and generous donors to our spring appeal. This should make timely weed removal easier. For our nursery beds we are also pleased to report that Lowell Sykes completely filled our 500-gallon tank with water – all by himself! Thank you, Lowell.

Farallon Islands Field Trip

continued from page 2

While David gave us a brief history, we took in the sights. We spotted several Tufted Puffins floating in the water, along with Rhinoceros and Cassin's Auklets. Brandt's Cormorants and Brown Pelicans dotted the cliffs with a Peregrine Falcon watching from a high perch, and the lower regions were covered with pinnipeds: Steller and California sea lions and the darker northern fur seals. The fur seal colony only began to rebuild in the mid-1990s, after a long hiatus at the hands of hunters.

After circling the island, we picked up speed again and headed northwest towards the continental shelf. As luck would have it, we passed a commercial fishing vessel and its wake of scavenging birds. Many of them peeled off and began to follow *Superfish*. Here we saw Heermann's, Western and California gulls, as well as a rarity, a single Sabine's Gull. We also saw Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters, the impressive Black-footed Albatross, and Northern Fulmar. A few lucky (and keen-eyed) birders spotted a lone Buller's Shearwater. Perhaps the strangest avian sighting of the day was an errant Townsend's Warbler, obviously well off-course. The songbird fluttered around the boat but never landed.

Some of the trip's mammalian highlights included two Humpback Whales and over a dozen Pacific White-sided Dolphins that decided to escort *Superfish* for a few miles. The dolphins rode the bow wave and several swam

right alongside the boat, giving us a thrilling view. A dolphin's top speed is about 17 knots; they had no trouble keeping up.

Mid-afternoon we approached the Northern Farallon Islands and began making our way back to the mainland. From this vantage, the Southeast Farallons resembled a jagged gray fist pushing out of the water in the distance. On our return the sun finally popped out, lighting the pale cliffs south of Point Reyes. We saw several Red-necked Phalaropes, more murrelets, and the odd ocean sunfish, or *Mola mola*, which lies on its side near the water's surface so seabirds can clean parasites off its body. For a final treat, a parasitic jaeger bullied its way into the cloud of Western and California Gulls that had been tailing us. Leader David Wimpfheimer explained how to distinguish jaegers from gulls: their wingbeats are more emphatic, and they often swoop in from the side "like pirates," harassing other birds into dropping food items. David's knowledge and enthusiasm definitely added depth to the trip experience.

The Pelagic trip is always popular; be sure to RSVP well in advance next year!

Highlights, courtesy of David Wimpfheimer, included: **Black-footed Albatross** 16, **Northern Fulmar** 18, **Buller's Shearwater** 1, **Sooty Shearwater** 120, **Pink-footed Shearwater** 40, **Red-necked Phalarope** 30, **South Polar Skua** 1, **Pomarine Jaeger** 2, **Parasitic Jaeger** 3, **Sabine's Gull** 1, **Tufted Puffin** 7, **Rhinoceros Auklet** 22, **Cassin's Auklet** 18.

MARIN BIRDLOG – AUGUST 2011

By Rich Stallcup

Far outshining any single rare bird report this fall in Marin is the resurrection of an entire ecosystem. After five autumns of low presence for migratory shorebirds, Abbott's Lagoon is its good old self. From mid-July on, flocks and singles of a fine diversity of species would arrive, *and stay!* Rare species like **Pacific Golden-Plover**, and **Ruff, Buff-breasted, Stilt, Pectoral, Baird's** and **Semipalmated Sandpipers** (most staying 2-3 days before moving on) delighted many birders.

Another **Pacific Golden Plover** was briefly present at Rodeo Beach, soon to be chased off by dogs.

Most unusual on the local level was a young **Common Tern** at Nicasio Reservoir at the very end of the month!

SAVE THESE DATES: DECEMBER 15 AND DECEMBER 31

Marin Audubon Conducting Two Christmas Bird Counts in 2011

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is one of the Marin Audubon's favorite traditions and this year we're conducting two: Our popular Southern Marin count (CAMC) and the newly resurrected "Cheep Thrills" count.

The S. Marin count has been held every year since the 1970s. It covers these areas: Bolinas Lagoon, Audubon Canyon, Stinson Beach, Muir Beach, Fort Cronkite, Muir Woods, Tennessee Valley, Sausalito, Tiburon, Ring Mountain, Mill Valley, Corte Madera, Larkspur, Alpine Lake, Bon Tempe, Phoenix Lake, Rock Springs, Fairfax, and some sections of San Rafael, including Terra Linda. Last year we had 128 participants and our species total was 178. Always held on the Saturday between Christmas and New Year's, our date for this year is December 31. What a great way to spend New Year's Eve!

The "Arroyo Cheap Thrills" count was conducted from 1978 to 1987. It covered several important areas that are not in our S. Marin CBC circle, including Mount Burdell, Stafford Lake, Bahia, Rush Creek, Indian

Valley, and some of the Nicasio Reservoir. The southern edge of this circle is at the intersection of Nicasio Valley Road and Lucas Valley Road and the center is on Mount Burdell, so this count will include some of San Rafael, all of Novato, and a chunk of west Marin. We're restarting it this year under the slightly revised name "Cheep Thrills" and conducting it on Thursday, December 15.

Both counts will be followed by compilation dinners.

More details will be available in next month's *The Clapper Rail* and at marinaudubon.org. You can also contact the CBC compilers, Mark Forney and Susan Kelly, at cbc@marinaudubon.org.

Interested in participating but unsure of your skills? If you can recognize most of the species listed below by sight or sound, then you can identify over half of the 67,612 individual birds observed last year on the Christmas Bird Count. The only other skill you need is the ability to count!

SPECIES	# OBSERVED	SPECIES	# OBSERVED
American Robin	3,913	House Finch	918
Double-Crested Cormorant	3,455	Cedar Waxwing	886
Western Grebe	2,541	Rock Pigeon	882
American Crow	2,499	Ruddy Duck	821
Bufflehead	1,927	Willet	794
Dark-Eyed Junco	1,910	Marbled Godwit	776
American Wigeon	1,666	Chestnut-Backed Chickadee	728
Western Gull	1,580	Brewer's Blackbird	683
White-Crowned Sparrow	1,477	Song Sparrow	666
American Coot	1,131	Mallard	616
Golden-Crowned Sparrow	1,082	Canada Goose	613
Bushtit	1,042	Western Scrub-Jay	608
Starling	995	TOTAL	34,209

Junior Bird Watchers

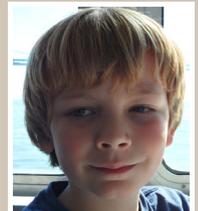
By Wendy Dreskin

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 web site at marinaudubon.org, or contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.



Lucas Corneliusen, second grader at Good Shepherd Lutheran School, passed the Junior Bird Watcher test at third grade level. His wish is to see a Golden Eagle!

Jack Calderon is a first grader at St. Rita School. The bird he would most like to see is a Bald Eagle.



Robert Burston, now in the fourth grade at Bacich Elementary School, started Nature Detectives in first grade. Last year he was a third grade Junior Bird Watcher.

Hudson Guerro, second grader at Bacich Elementary School, passed at 4th grade level last year, and is continuing to study nature as a third grader! On one birding field trip he was thrilled to see a Peregrine Falcon.



THE Clapper Rail

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- November 4-6 **Sandhill Crane Festival**
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- November 13 **Field Trip**
Abbott's Lagoon
With John and Carolyn Longstreth
- December 15 **Northern Marin Christmas Bird Count**
- December 31 **Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count**

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SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

The success of Marin Audubon Society's (MAS) work depends greatly on its chapter members. We work collaboratively with the National Audubon Society (NAS) on issues of mutual concern, but very little of our funding comes from NAS. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Clapper Rail*, which you will receive as a MAS member. To better ensure we can continue our programs on the local level, MAS offers a separate chapter membership. Your membership in MAS will help us protect local habitats, resident and migratory birds and provide you with educational and enjoyable programs as well.

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

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

JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and the chapter. With this joint membership, you will receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits, however, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. We will receive, however, a portion of any new memberships that are generated by MAS, the local chapter. So we request that you send all checks for new National memberships to: Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

For NAS membership renewals, send your check directly to NAS.

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