



THE Clapper Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SPEAKER SERIES

Free and Open to the public

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

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10 7:30 PM

Birds of Trinidad and Tobago

With Len Blumin



Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

Scarlet Ibis

The islands of Trinidad and Tobago, only 10 miles from the coast of Venezuela, host an array of tropical species that attract birders from all over the world. A good variety of Hummingbirds can be seen, as well as Tanagers and Honeycreepers, along with wonders such as the Bellbird and Oilbird. The Asa Wright Nature Centre hosts many colorful local species, and serves as a perfect hub for trips to see the Scarlet Ibis and other avian marvels. Len Blumin will explore the wonder and diversity of the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago with a presentation of images from a recent trip.

Len Blumin is an MAS member and trip leader, a retired physician who keeps busy watching and photographing birds.

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

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14 7:30 PM

Birds and Nature of the Southern Cone

With Alvaro Jaramillo

Protecting the Farallon Islands Ecosystem



Photo courtesy of Annie Schmidt, Point Blue

Ashy Storm-Petrels (shown on left) and Leach's Storm-Petrels would be the primary beneficiaries of the removal of non-native mice.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released its draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on eradicating introduced house mice on the South Farallon Islands. MAS supports eradication of the non-native house mice to restore the ecosystem of the Farallones. If action is not taken to rid the island of mice soon, all of the Ashy Storm-Petrels and probably Leach's Storm-Petrels could be lost.

The Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, 30 miles outside of the Golden Gate, is a seabird breeding habitat of worldwide significance. The Refuge comprises the largest nesting seabird colony in the contiguous U.S. outside of Alaska including half of the Ashy Storm-Petrels in the world and the world's largest breeding populations of Brandt's Cormorants and Western Gulls. Removing non-native mice would restore the island's ecosystem for native species. The primary beneficiaries would be Ashy and Leach's Storm-Petrels.

House mice originated in Asia and were brought to the islands, along with cats and rabbits, via ships during egg gathering and during lighthouse and military operations in the early 1900s. The cats and rabbits were removed in the 1970s, leaving the house mice as the only non-native mammals. Mice are omnivorous. On the island they eat the Maritime

goldfield, the endemic Farallon camel cricket and the Farallon arboreal salamander, reducing the populations of these native species and further disrupting the island ecosystem. Scientists have also found evidence of mice preying on petrels (missing toes and legs).

In spring on the South Farallones, house mice can reach plague-like densities of 490 mice per acre, among the highest found on any island in the world. Scientists have observed that it can appear as though the ground itself is moving.

Burrowing Owls are among 400 different landbird species recorded on the islands since 1968, when PRBO began to study birds on the islands. Most of the owls stop to rest and depart within a few days. Finding a ready source of food in the mice, however, some owls remain. When the mouse population naturally declines in December and January, the owls leave, die or shift their predation and diet to feed on the small Storm-Petrels.

Vulnerability of the petrels is heightened by the fact that they arrive at night when the owls are most active.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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BAAC Reps	Lowell Sykes 388-2821 Barbara Salzman 924-6057

DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Meetings open to members. If you wish to attend please call 924-6057.

6:30 PM, First Tuesday of the month
Richardson Bay Audubon Center
376 Greenwood Beach Road
Tiburon, California 94920

MAS telephone: 721-4271 (for messages only)

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

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Members can receive *The Clapper Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by e-mailing joandbijou@sbcglobal.net

DONATIONS APPRECIATED!

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

MISSION STATEMENT

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Barbara Salzman

Welcome to MAS's newest Board Member, Periann Wood. Periann is not new to Marin Audubon and our mission. She has been involved with Marin Baylands Advocates and helped out with acquisition efforts for years. She recently retired after 25 years with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and we are pleased that she wants to give some of her now free time to Marin Audubon. Periann and her husband Doug live in Mill Valley. She will be taking over as our Membership Chairperson.

One of the important issues we are dealing with this month is the plan to eradicate the non-native house mouse population on Southeast Farallon Island. Sometimes decisions we face are controversial. The USFWS, which oversees the Farallones, is considering using rodenticides specifically developed for conservation purposes. This has raised concerns, and opposition from some.

MAS's approach to conservation is to protect native habitats. Healthy ecosystems are the most certain way to protect species. We do not support unregulated and often unpermitted and unsupervised use of rodenticides that often results in adverse impacts to non-target species. But we do recognize that rodenticides are and have been an important management tool for the conservation and recovery of many

threatened island species around the world.

If there were another approach that would be as effective to rid the island of the mice, we would be among the first to support it. But no one, not scientists, not the Fish and Wildlife Service (which certainly would like to avoid controversy) and not the opponents of the project, has come up with another effective approach.

It would be irresponsible and contrary to our mission for MAS not to support action to remove the mice. Not removing the mice would allow them to destroy this rare and critically important marine ecosystem and possibly extirpate several nesting seabird species on the islands. It's regrettable, but this is what happens when people introduce invasive species to a habitat.

We have a field trip to the Farallones scheduled in early October. Observation from a boat is the only way the public can observe this special place and its diverse marine wildlife. There may be some space left on the boat when you receive this newsletter. If you are interested, check immediately.

We will be addressing several other controversial plans in the next few months: GGNRA's Dog Management Plan and the Marin County Open Space District's Vegetation Management Plan and their Road and Trails Plan.

SEPTEMBER 5 FIELD TRIP

Las Gallinas Ponds With Susan Kelly and Len Blumin

By Len Blumin

Almost 30 birders joined Susan Kelly and Len Blumin on the "First Thursday" Marin Audubon walk at the Las Gallinas treatment ponds. The warm day treated all well, and brought out swarms of the larger dragonflies, especially the **Blue-eyed Darners**. Pond #1 was chock full of eclipse plumage waterfowl. Several hundreds of **Northern Pintails** were joined by good number of **Gadwalls**, and lesser numbers of **American Wigeons** and **Mallards**. Mark Forney also saw a few **Northern Shovelers** and **Cinnamon Teal** there today. No luck with the Bittern, but we did have good numbers of juvenile and adult **Common Gallinules** (nee Common Moorhen), **White Pelicans** feeding cooperatively, **Pied-billed Grebes**, and a **Mute Swan**. Several **Great-tailed Grackles** remain, having bred there this past spring. The usual Ardeids were present, including several **Green Herons**. The best passerine was **Yellow Warbler** (3-4, on the north side both in the trees and in fennel). **Bushtits** were also about, as well as a female **Oriole** and some

Goldfinch species. **Kestrels** were the only falcons, and **Northern Harrier**, **White-tailed Kite** and **Red-tailed Hawks** were the only other raptors. There were lots of **swallows** (mostly adult and juvie **Violet-green**) and a single **Vaux's Swift**. The flock of **Ring-billed Gulls** loafing on pond #2 included a single **California Gull**. In the trees near the solar panels we puzzled over brief views of a silent Empidonax with an insignificant eye ring and light tan wingbars and concluded it was likely a **Willow Flycatcher**.



Blue-eyed Darner

Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

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

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

SAN RAFAEL

Thursday, October 3, 2013

9 AM to 12 PM

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

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

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 101 take the Smith Ranch Road exit, then go east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, staying on Smith Ranch Rd. and go about 0.5 mile to the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. The walk starts at 9:00 but late arrivals should easily be able to find the group. Rest room facilities only at the parking area.

FARALLON ISLANDS

BOAT TRIP

DEPART FROM CLIPPER

YACHT HARBOR, SAUSALITO

Sunday, October 6, 2013

7:30 AM to 4 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

Please contact Vicky Van Meter at vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com or 415/299-2514 to see if spots are available for this trip. The cost is \$110 per person.

For those who are already signed up, be prepared for any kind of weather with layered clothing. A rain jacket and pants are essential no matter what the weather on shore. Take seasick medication if needed. Bring lunch, snacks, water and plenty of sunscreen.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy. 101 to the Marin City/Sausalito exit and head south on Bridgeway; turn left on Harbor Drive and proceed to the parking area at the end. We will meet on the south side of the parking lot to check in before boarding.

NICASIO RESERVOIR

Thursday, October 10, 2013

9 AM to 12 PM

With Bob Battagin and Adam Donkin

We will meet at the backstop to the baseball field in Nicasio. We start with a meander around the very small but birdy town of Nicasio, then head over to nearby Nicasio Reservoir to look for resident and migrant waterbirds and raptors. In the last three years the September through October shorebird/raptor migration window at Nicasio Reservoir has yielded 15 raptor species and 20 shorebird species.

DIRECTIONS: The baseball field is in the center of Nicasio on Nicasio Valley Road. Nicasio can be reached by taking Lucas Valley Road off of Hwy 101 to the end and then taking a right on Nicasio Valley Road. Those coming from the south can take Nicasio Valley Road through Fairfax and San Geronimo. For GPS, the address of the Rancho Nicasio Restaurant across from the ball field is 1 Old Rancheria Rd, Nicasio.

MARTA'S MARSH

CORTE MADERA

Sunday, October 20, 2013

9 AM to 12 PM

With Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris

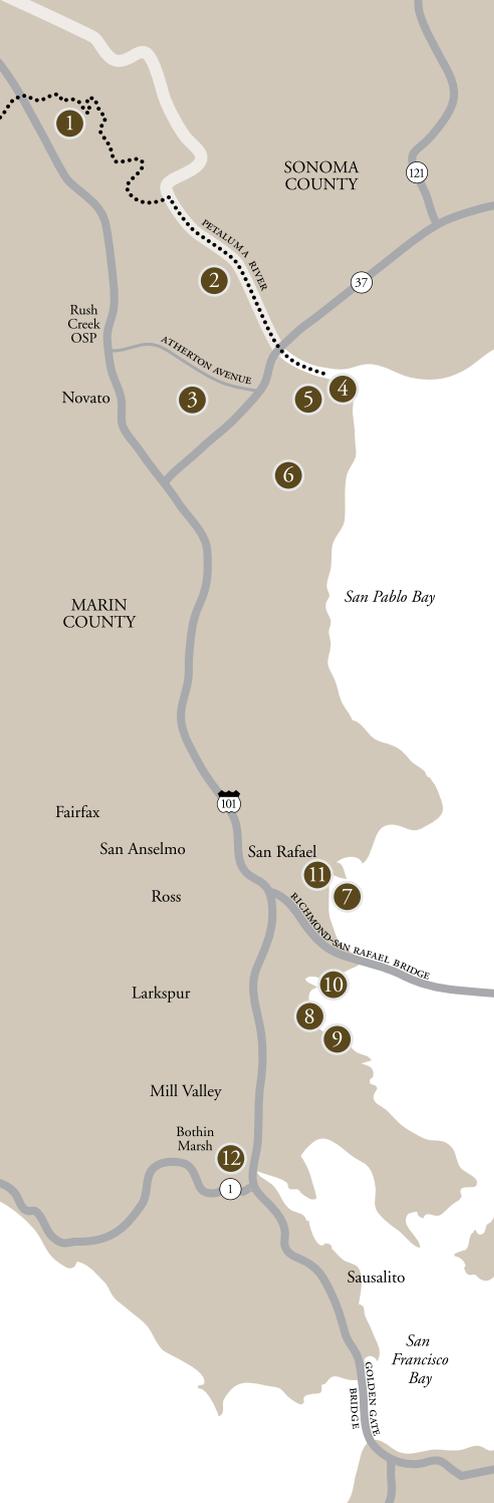
Join Meryl and Roger on a bird walk in Marta's Marsh in eastern Corte Madera. This field trip often affords a look at and a listen to the namesake of the Marin Audubon Society's newsletter, the endangered California Clapper Rail. Meryl and Roger have been studying the marsh for over twenty-five years.

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 (a 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. Come east toward the Bay and then curve right going past the Highway Patrol office. At the second stop light, turn left on Harbor Drive, then right on Yolo, and left on Channel, a dead end road. Park at the end of Channel.

Field Trips continued on page 5



CONSERVATION

ONE MORE STEP TOWARD DRAKES BAY HABITAT PROTECTION

On September 3, three judges of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court's ruling denying Drakes Bay Oyster Company's request for a preliminary injunction to continue to operate in the wilderness area of Point Reyes National Seashore. The court affirmed that Interior Secretary Ken Salazar had full discretion to let the oyster operation permit expire and honor the 1976 wilderness designation for Drakes Estero.

In 1972, the federal government issued a lease for the oyster operation. The current operator, Kevin Lunny, purchased the lease in 2004 knowing it would expire in 2012.

Lunny needed a temporary injunction to continue to operate until his lawsuit challenging the closure is heard in federal court.

We applaud this court decision, which supports the Estero as full federal wilderness with the many protections this designation carries. Lunny has said he will appeal this decision. He wants to have his case heard by the full court of eleven justices.

SCHEDULE CHANGE FOR COUNTY STREAM ORDINANCE HEARING

The public hearing at the Board of Supervisors on the Stream Ordinance has been rescheduled from September 17 to October 1 because the hearing on the housing element needed to come first and that was delayed. The hearing will be at 1:30 in the Board of Supervisors Chambers on the third floor of the Civic Center.

We urge members to attend, send a letter or email with the message: 1) do not amend the Countywide Plan and 2) pass the ordinance recommended by the Planning Commission and staff for the entire county.

Your comments are important to protecting Marin habitats. Many thanks.

PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULES

A reminder to always check on the time and dates for public meetings, particularly local government meetings, because they are subject to change for a variety of reasons.

WETLAND MITIGATION BANK PROPOSED FOR NORTH OF BAHIA

Rio Marin Partners has submitted an application to construct a 32-acre tidal wetland and open-water mitigation bank on a diked bayland peninsula along Black John Slough, just north of Bahia.

MAS is opposed to mitigation banks because they make it much easier for developers to fill wetlands. It gives them a ready and easy way of mitigating for their projects. All they have to do is purchase credits in a bank, instead of finding their own mitigation.

MAS has other objections to this proposal

including: The plan proposes to allow developers to use the bank to mitigate for filling wetlands throughout the entire north and central Bay, from the Carquinez Bridge to the Bay Bridge, and for filling wetlands that are endangered species habitat. A bank along the Petaluma River would have no benefit for species that lose habitat at North Bay locations many miles away. Endangered species habitat should not be lost and mitigated at a bank in a different watershed.

We have doubts about the availability of sediment that would be needed to restore wetlands. Possible adverse impacts to our nearby Bahia restoration project are also a concern.

We are sorry we did not have sufficient notice to encourage our members to submit comments, but we had only a two-week window in which to submit our comments in response to the Army Corps of Engineers public notice.

GREENBRAE INTERCHANGE

During a five-hour meeting on August 26, the Greenbrae Interchange Working Group agreed on a series of recommendations to submit to the Board of the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM). The recommendations included eliminating a huge "flyover" and walls; changes to the freeway design; and improvements to city streets. The group also recommended a new bridge over Corte Madera Creek and a so-called "greenway." We have dubbed this an "Ungreenway" because the proposal is for a 12- to 16-foot-wide multiuse path to be along the former railroad right-of-way immediately adjacent to the tidal marsh of the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve where it would impact the marsh and its breeding population of endangered California Clapper Rails.

Such a multiuse path should be located on streets or other developed areas away from sensitive habitats. Any development adjacent to the marsh needs to provide a 100-foot or wider gradually sloping transition zone/refugia for the rails that would also accommodate sea level rise. If there is not enough space for the marsh to migrate landward, we will lose even more marsh to the rising seas. Without damaging the marsh habitat there isn't room to construct a wall or levee wide enough for a bike path.

For years, cyclists have been lobbying for a southbound bike path along the former rail right-of-way. Proponents of the Ungreenway cite safety and convenience getting to the shopping centers. There are less environmentally damaging locations where a safe trail can be designed. We believe protecting endangered species should be paramount, even if it means that some members of the community may be inconvenienced.

The TAM Board will be voting on the many components of the plan at their meeting on September 26.

MARIN AUDUBON PROPERTIES

1. Petaluma Marsh	180 acres
2. Bahia	60 acres
3. Simmons Slough	144 acres
4. Norton Avenue Pond	4 parcels
5. Black Point Parcels	2 parcels
6. Arroyo San Jose	2 parcels
7. Tidelands at Murphy's Rock	34 acres
8. Corte Madera Marsh	1.8 acres
9. Triangle Marsh	31 acres
10. San Clemente Creek	4.34 acres
11. Tiscornia Marsh	20 acres
12. Arroyo Corte Madera del Presidio	2 acres

By Josiah Clark

Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, gepke.phaz.com



Great-tailed Grackle

earliest return records for fall. A hatch year female **Townsend's Warbler** was captured by interns at the Palomarin Field Station. A group of **Cedar Waxwings** on August 10 at Rodeo Lagoon also appears to be an earliest return. Some speculate these early arrivals could be linked to an earlier breeding season and drier than normal conditions. A **Bank Swallow** at the Rodeo Lagoon patch, not early but always uncommon in Marin, was present there that same day (WL).

Over on the east side a **Wilson's Phalarope** on Corte Madera Marsh August 3rd was a rare visitor (SB). The Las Gallinas sewage ponds continue to stand alone as the only reliable spot in Marin for several freshwater wetland-loving species. This is true for Marin's breeding **Great-tailed Grackles**, which numbered at least 8 on September 9 (JC).

Outer Pt. Reyes is heating up for vagrant season, with the latest highlight a **Painted Bunting** sleuthed out at the Fish Docks by a handful of persistent observers starting September 7 (DH, JCH). A **California Towhee** was an apparent first Outer Point record, this sedentary landlubber has yet to make it to SE Farallon (DM, LK). A **Blue-footed Booby** seen briefly at the lighthouse roosting with cormorants on 9/11 constituted a first Marin County record (MB, RH).



Wilson's Phalarope

Photo courtesy of Glenn Tepke, gepke.phaz.com

Observers and Acronyms **DH:** Derrick Heinz, **JCH:** Jim Chiropoulos, **DM:** Dominik Mosur, **JC:** Josiah Clark, **LK** Logan Kahle, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **RH:** Roger Harshaw, **SB:** Steven Bauer, **MB:** Mark Butler, **WL:** William Legge.

MAS FIELD TRIPS *Continued from page 3*

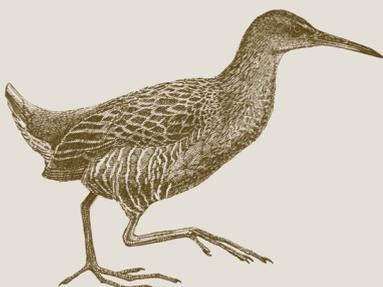
LEFT OF THE FAULT POINT REYES BIG PACIFIC PLATE DAY

POINT REYES STATION
Saturday, November 2, 2013
7:30 AM to 4 or 5 PM
With Keith Hansen

Join Keith Hansen for a full, fine-feathered day of late fall birding at Point Reyes. Sometimes thought of as "too late" for fall migrants, November is often an underappreciated time for finding rare birds. We will attempt to see at least 100 species "West of the San Andreas Fault"! Those who are signed up will meet at the Bovine Bakery on A Street in the town of Point Reyes Station at 7:30 AM, where folks can get coffee and a pastry and find rest rooms. From there, we'll carpool out to the outer point hitting as many of the migrant traps as is possible. Time permitting we'll increase the list by hitting the Teal Ponds, Heart's Desire Beach, and maybe Bear Valley and Five Brooks.

This is an all-day trip that is not for the faint of heart or those just looking for a leisurely bird walk. Bring a lunch and plenty of liquids. Be dressed for good, to less than good weather. Feel free to bring a scope. Only a big storm will cause us to cancel.

Sign-up is required, as the number of participants is limited. Contact Len Blumin from noon to 6 PM on October 9th if you wish to sign up: Email LBlumin@aol.com (or call 415/388-4990). At 6 PM that day participants will be chosen randomly if the trip is oversubscribed. Any vacant slots after that will be allotted in the order that requests are received.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Daniela Alecosima, Ann Alwyn, Sherry Ruth Anderson, Mario Aquilino, Courtney Aragon, Amy Arenberg, Amy Arenberg, Loretta Armstrong, Paul B. Aronowitz, Brodie Auld, Helen G. Bacon, Melissa Bain, Pam Baker, Steve Baskin, Judith Bell, Mary S. Bell, Jack Benham, Barbara Bennett, Norma J. Bennett, Sue Benvenuti, Randy Biehler, Mary & James Birle, Jackie Boccabella, Janine Boneparth, Elizabeth Boyd, Vickie Boyle, Kris T. Bradley, Patricia Bradley, Kenneth L. Briggs, Louis N. Brown, Lori Brunette, Sherry Burchert, Robin M. Bush, Maureen Cantor, Beth Celani, Barbara Cerruti, Clarence R. Clements, Rachel Cohen, Katy Colletto, Gray Cruickshank, H. Degroot, Neal Dineen, Deborah Dohm, Angelo Douvos, David Dupont, Daniel Edelstein, Christine Edmond, Rita Emami, Lawrence Fahn, Sharon Farrell, Arthur Feidler, Kimberly Fiek, Stephen M. Fisch, Dean Folk, Jeanne Foreman, F. P. Fromhagen, Teri Fruchtmann, Marilyn D. Fye, Tessa Gaddis, Virginia D. Glover, Suzanne Grady, Bruce A. Grant, Mahtab Habibian, Michael Hanrahan, Jack Hanson, Mary R. Harper, Victoria Harvey, Sarah G. Herrmann, H. R. Hill, Diane Holzer, Charles Hoyez, Sherry Huckabay, Amy Jacobs, Vernon A. Jacobs, Elizabeth & Ray Jacques, Calvin L. Janzen, Antony W. Johnson, Heather Johnson, Shamm Kelly, Jacqueline D. Kiesewetter, Takeshi Kinoshita, Jeanne Kline, Marilyn Knight, Francesca Koumarios, Marykae Krause, Jeanine Kuhrt, Joanne Lee, Carol Lehmkuhl, Moly Light, Jeffrey Lomas, Mariana Longstreth, E. Lowe, Robert J. Mahoney, Jane Manning, Van Marshall, Tom Martz, Robert Mauceli, Linda S. McManis, Fiona McMillan, Aria & Brooks McMillan, Jeri Mearns, Scott G. Merrick, Michelle Miller, Casey Misuraca, Michael Mooney, John Mosher, Sundew Mosher, Gerald M. Moskowitz, Daniel Murnane, Anne F. Murphy, Bonnie Nackley, Debra Newman, Kathlyn Nolan, Gail Odgers, Hilly V. Oest, Olive Ridge Maintenance Assn, Rob Ortner, Carla Parkinson, Matthew Perry, John R. Petrovsky, Elaine Pettengill, William Plaskon, Stephen L. Polito, Kelli Radcliffe, L. Reilly, Patricia A. Rice, Robert J. Saxton, Jessica Schroeder, Susanne Schneider, John & Naomi Seward, Harold Silen, Sylvia Singh, Carroll D. Smith, Donald & Genevieve Sollivan, Robert Spatz, Linda Spediacci, Sally Sprinkle, Bob Stein, James Stoker, Marcia B. Stover, Rebecca Suggs, Jeanie Sundquist, Joseph Surdyka, Beverly Thomey, Nancy Thomson, Debra Tibbs, Bibit H. Traut, Patricia Tunnard, Chera Van Burg, Alfia Wallace, Peter Ward, Kathy Warnick, Ceili Warren, Brigitte Waterbury, Mieke Watkins, Jorge Werbin, Kenlynn Wilson, Catherine Wood, Marisa Woodley, Daniel Zeiger, M. S. Zeno

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP



Photo courtesy of Bob Hinz



Photo courtesy of Jude Stalker

Four of the seven *Dittrichia*-pulling volunteers at Petaluma Marsh. Left to right, Jude Stalker, Vicky Van Meter, Flinn Moore Rauck, Barbara Salzman. Not pictured: Bob Hinz; and Bill and Helen Lindqvist

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Unless substantial rain falls before our workdays, our most productive activity will probably be watering last winter's plantings. Only a few invasive nonnative plants, such as *Dittrichia*, mustard and fennel, are still green and producing seeds. This will be the last time to find *Dittrichia* before its seeds ripen. It was first found in California in 1984 and has spread very rapidly to 36 counties. We may also remove some Harding grass, a perennial; getting it now means we'll trample less vegetation next spring. Act locally and join us on a workday. You would make a difference.

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

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: October 5, November 2

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: October 12, November 9

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

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

The Board had a very successful workday at our Petaluma Marsh property. The marsh is looking wonderful as is the new access road graded by Redwood Landfill. We thank their staff for their good work. The road had been unusable since a fire on the Corda ranch several years ago.

Special recognition is due this month to Lowell Sykes, who worked diligently replacing gel packs (DriWater) around the pond at Bahia and supervising the work of the students and

other volunteers during work days at Bahia.

We removed highly invasive stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) that we first noticed on our levee a few years ago. Last year we removed quite a large crop. Our efforts paid off. This year we were very pleasantly surprised to see that the stinkwort had decreased considerably. Seven volunteers, shown in photo on the left, were able to remove the invasives easily in a few hours work. We enjoyed working in such a lovely place.

GGNRA Tackles Muir Woods Access Problem

At a September 18 meeting attended by more than 100 people, Golden Gate National Recreation Area staff began a public process to address problems associated with the tremendous increase in visitors. A range of transportation and operational changes, including a new parking lot as well as some facility improvements, were presented. Staff emphasized that they want input from the public. The clear message from the boisterous crowd was—don't put any parking lot on Panoramic Highway.

Visitors to the Muir Woods National Monument have increased to 6,000 a day on peak summer days resulting in substantial traffic congestion and parking along unimproved road shoulders, causing safety concerns. Some visitors have to walk long distances along the two lane road that is lined with parked vehicles which force them to walk in the street. Possible solutions included a reservation system and increased shuttle service from a new parking area on Panoramic Highway and Muir Woods Road.

Other improvements being considered are updating aging and undersized visitor support facilities including restrooms, extending trail connections and improving parking lots.

Attendees generally supported a reservation system and shuttles, but were adamantly opposed to a new parking lot. Many people supported a shuttle service departing from point of origin locations instead of using a

staging area in a new parking lot. Some asked why people should be encouraged to drive even part way. Staff explained that visitors come from many disparate locations.

MAS also supports a reservation system as well as limiting the number of visitors. These measures would both protect the park's natural resources and provide a better visitor experience. It is not possible to get a quality experience in a redwood forest with thousands of other people. We are also opposed to constructing new parking lots on grassland habitats, and have an established position against constructing new trails.

Another public meeting is scheduled for November 20 at which staff will update the range of alternatives after considering comments received from the public. Questions and comments from the public will be addressed in an environmental document.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Tell them your views in writing: GGNRA, Attn: Muir Woods Transportation Projects, Building 201, Fort Mason, San Francisco or online <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/goga> and/or attend the hearing which will be held at Tam Valley Elementary School, 350 Bell Lane, off Tennessee Valley Road in the Tam Junction Area at 6:30 – 8:30 PM. Comments will be accepted through October 4.

Protecting the Farallons

continued from page 1

Owl predation on storm-petrels is well documented. Storm-petrels show up in owl pellets in January after the mouse population crashes. In recent years some 90 percent of the owl pellets collected after February 1 contained storm-petrel remains. Surveys show that the owls consumed an average of 225 Storm-Petrels annually. Predation has increased in recent years.

If house mice were no longer present, it is anticipated that the owls arriving during the fall, when the storm-petrels are either present in very low numbers or not at all, would have little motivation to stay.

The USFWS considered forty-nine alternatives to address the problem. It determined that the broad-scale application of rodenticides is the only proven method to rid a large island such as Southeast Farallon of the house mice. Rodents have been successfully removed from 500 islands worldwide; more than 90% of the removals used rodenticides.

The EIS analyzed three alternatives:

- A. No project alternative which would have no benefit to the island ecosystem.
- B. Use of bait with Brodifacoum-25D Conservation.
- C. Use of bait with Diphacinone-50 Conservation.

These anticoagulants are registered with the EPA for conservation use. They vary in the length of time to take effect, their potency, and half-life in the environment. Brodifacoum was developed for drier climates such as the Farallones.

Diphacinone has been used on a number of other islands but not for mice. Application would be in the form of pellets made up of grains.

The USFS has not yet decided on a preferred alternative.

The program proposed by the USFWS includes precautionary and mitigation measures. Application would be timed for when the seabird population is at its lowest, between August and January, most likely early November. Seed would be broadcast with helicopters rigged with special bait buckets to direct pellets to target locations and with motorboats for areas that can only be reached by water. Bait release stations would be used around houses and for hard to reach places such as steep cliffs. Only qualified persons would apply the bait.

Tested hazing methods would be used to scare away Western Gulls, the species most at risk. Methods would include lasers, spotlights, air cannons, and predator calls. Seabirds are not



Photo courtesy of US Coast Guard

Southeast Farallon Island

at risk because they eat fish, not grain.

Burrowing Owls would be trapped and relocated to the mainland. Native salamanders would be collected until the risk of exposure is over. Carcasses would be removed to avoid the threat of exposure to non-target species. Any remaining bait pellets would be crushed or removed. Bait would be deposited away from the water line. Studies have shown that even if some bait drifts into the ocean, the levels would be undetectable and not harmful to other wildlife species.

Monitoring for mice would go on for several years afterward. Measures to prevent the reintroduction of the mice to the island will be implemented and will include using traps, requiring use of mouse-proof containers, and inspecting all vessels landing on the islands.

The DEIS shows that the Fish and Wildlife Service's process has been careful, thorough and based on the best available science to determine how best to remove the mice and restore the Farallones with as minimal damage to the environment as possible.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Please review the South Farallon Islands Invasive House Mouse Eradication Project; Draft Environmental Impact Statement found at www.regulations.gov docket number **FWS-R8-NWRS-20113-0036** and submit comments by the **September 30 deadline**.

Comments can be submitted electronically:

Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://regulations.gov>. In the Search box enter the docket number above; then click on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Notices link to locate this document.

Or send a hard copy addressed to: Public Comment Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-NWRS-2013-0036; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203

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. When National Audubon discontinued the program, Marin Audubon assumed sponsorship and Wendy Dreskin continues as the instructor. Wendy conducts the program in elementary school classrooms in several schools. For more information about the program please visit "Junior Birdwatchers" under the "Birds" tab on our Web site at www.marinaudubon.org or contact Wendy at 415/457-3949.



Lucas Corneliusen, a 4th grade student at the Novato Charter School, passed the Junior Bird Watcher test at 5th grade level! Two years ago when Lucas passed his Junior Bird Watcher test he said he wanted to see a Golden Eagle. He has continued birding, and is thrilled to report he has now seen three—a pair nesting in a redwood at Tresch Dairy Farm in Petaluma, and one at Rodeo Lagoon when he was in camp this summer!

Thank You!

MARIN AUDUBON THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR DONATIONS

Dolores Hansen, Wingham Liddell, Mark Lindberg, Catherine Moreno, Roger Stoll, Jean & Timothy Storrs, Redwood Landfill

THANKS TO OUR MAS VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Cristine Albert, Garbo & Giacheng Gan, Louis Henry, Bob Hinz, Helen & Bill Lindqvist, Sharon McCloskey, Demetrius Rauck, Flinn Moore Rauck, Barbara Salzman, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Vicky Van Meter



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

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

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