



Denise Greig, PhD

Castro red coats, harbor seals with an unusual coat color

Denise Greig is a marine biologist who works at the California Academy of Sciences, the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center, and The Marine Mammal Center. She studies marine mammal health and disease and is particularly interested in the reasons for marine mammal strandings and how strandings reflect trends in marine mammal health in the wild as well as changes in the ocean environment. In her presentation, Denise will provide updates on the ongoing mortality events affecting California sea lions and Guadalupe fur seals. She will also discuss harbor seals as a case study for understanding the human impacts on our only year-round resident marine mammal.

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



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Marin County Christmas Bird Counts

Cheep Thrills CBC

The 2015 Cheep Thrills Christmas Bird Count, centered on Mount Burdell, took place on December 17th. We were all in good spirits because El Niño gave us a break for the day and although it was freezing cold in the early morning hours, the welcome sunshine brought out plenty of birds later in the day. Over 80 volunteers participated and we counted about 50,000 birds of 159 species. The most unusual sightings were the **Grasshopper Sparrow** that Josiah Clark found at Simmons Slough after carefully combing through several hundred sparrows; over 1,000 **Glaucous-winged Gulls** seen by Lisa Hug, Barbara Salzman and Lowell Sykes at the Novato landfill; and a **Turkey Vulture** flying a few hundred feet while carrying a dead Coot.

The species countdown at the compilation dinner was led by Dave Shuford, a senior biologist at PRBO (d.b.a. Point Blue Conservation Science). Dave was the first Cheep Thrills compiler and he led the effort from 1978 through 1987, when the count was called “Cheep” not “Cheep.” The website “Who’s Who in California Birding” considers Dave “one of California’s leading experts on the State’s bird populations, their ecology, and our threatened and endangered species” and we’re grateful to have his help and expertise.

Final results for 2015 will be posted by the end of January on the Cheep Thrills blog, at <http://cheepthrillscbc.blogspot.com>. There you can download and study results for all the previous years that this count has been conducted.

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



Bob Hinz

The Ring Mountain/Strawberry team found few birds on the seminary this year.

Point Reyes CBC

The 46th annual Point Reyes Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by Point Blue and Marin Audubon, was held on 19 December, followed by the Compilation Dinner at the Dance Palace. Owlers started as early as 4 a.m., and by early morning 197 birders, organized into 27 groups, were in the field. One hundred ninety-nine species (unofficial count at this date) were

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MAS Needs You

It’s nominating time—we’re turning our attention to filling our Board with great folks to help us save and restore habitat and do all of the other work needed to keep us and our programs going. We will be having a few vacancies on our Board next year. We have a working board so each Director is responsible for a program or task area.

If you are interested in helping to protect wildlife, and have some time to devote to MAS, contact one of the members of the **Nominating Committee**: Phil Peterson, Jane Medley and Ed Nute.

We are looking for help with publicity, outreach and fundraising, too.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

President	Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Vice President	Lowell Sykes 388-2821
Secretary	Mariah Baird 456-3355
Treasurer	Josephine Kreider 707/230-3553
Finance Chair	Greg Block 479-8254
Conservation	Phil Peterson 828-4780 Barbara Salzman 924-6057
Field Trips	Vicky Van Meter 299-2514
Membership	Periann Wood 388-1516
Fundraising	Flinn Moore Rauck 892-7554
Speaker Series/Programs	Board Members
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 668-1242
Nominating	Phil Peterson 828-4780
Editor, <i>The Rail</i>	Bob Hinz, 383-8688
Volunteer Coordinator	Katy Zaremba, 847-9933
Property Management	Ed Nute 669-7710
Publicity	Martha Jarocki 461-3592
At Large Board Member	Jane Medley 559/760-1551
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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Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422
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Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing 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 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 grateful for your end-of-year donations to support and keep Marin Audubon operating for the coming year. Thanks to your generosity, we will be able to continue our Speaker Series programs and our field trips, and to add some new activities to benefit our members. It is not too late if you did not have a chance to donate before the first of the year. Just donate through Paypal or send a check—your gift will be tax-deductible for this year.

The management of Marin County Open Space preserves is more often than not discussed or debated as needing to resolve conflicts between user groups. Marin Audubon's position is that the primary management objective should be protecting wildlife and the habitats that support them. Protecting these resources is the underlying reason why the preserves were acquired, why people are attracted to them, and why they are important for our future, particularly in the face of climate change. More on this next time.

As you can see from their reports, we sponsored three successful Christmas Bird Counts this year. I'm so impressed at the energy and dedication of all of the great birders who go out on count days, and many do multiple counts. The Point Reyes Count is always one of the highest in bird and participant numbers. Even more impressive, is the number of birds observed in our county and adjacent waters. This year we were unable to find a boat to go offshore for the Southern Marin Count. If anyone might consider supplying a boat for the offshore area next December, please contact any of us, even now: Barbara Salzman, the count compilers or

any Board member.

We especially thank each of our count compilers for the many hours and much effort they devoted to making these counts happen: Susan Kelly, John Longstreth and Tom Gaman, Ed Nute and Bob Hinz as well as all of the area leaders and the many folks who helped behind the scenes and are too numerous to mention.

A sad good-bye to Ron Misca, who is retiring from the Marin County Parks Department after 27 years. We first met up with Ron more than 20 years ago; that must have been not too long after he began working for the county. He was in charge of acquisitions. He was very helpful with our Triangle Marsh and Bahia acquisitions and was subsequently promoted to Assistant Director. We will miss his quiet persistence and support for open space protection, and wish him a happy, interesting and stress-free retirement.

Looking ahead for the new year, we are looking for members interested in working to save wildlife and habitat and being more involved with our Marin Audubon family by serving on our Board. We will have several positions that need to be filled and we welcome questions and expressions of interest from our members. There are lots of exciting opportunities and challenges facing us and we need YOU. See page 1.

Overwintering waterfowl and shorebirds will be with us for another several months so do take advantage of their overwintering in our Bay. Upland species and others are also surprising us. For at least four of weeks including the Christmas Count there was a bald eagle along Richardson Bay, of all places.

Christmas Bird Counts

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seen in the count circle during that day. The weather was clear and sunny—between rain storms. Judging from reports at the dinner, all groups enjoyed counting birds.

The total number of individual birds seen in 2015 was 92,462 vs. 95,615 in 2014 and a continuing decline—an overall a 25% drop from 2013. The most common bird in the count area this year is the **Bufflehead** (6394 seen) followed by the **Surf Scoter** (4895 seen). Interestingly there were 4855 **Common Murre** seen in the count area this year, a vast increase because Common Murre food supplies in the ocean seem to be vanishing. **American Wigeon** populations more than doubled from 1956 to 4232. **Greater Scaup** held constant. **Brants** were fewer, **Dunlins** were greatly increased. The

Common Loon population is up 6-fold.

White-crowned Sparrow and **Golden-crowned Sparrow** were the most common land birds and populations were up. The most rare of our regular “common” count birds were **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **Redhead**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Whimbrel**, **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Spotted Owl**, **Loggerhead Shrike**, **Wilson's Warbler** and **Swamp Sparrow** with one of each seen. Rarer birds seen included **Barrow's Goldeneye**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Black-vented Shearwater**, **Black Turnstone**, **Lapland Longspur**, **Tufted Duck**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Black-headed Grosbeak**, **Northern Waterthrush** and **Least Flycatcher**. Peter Pyle also saw several species of Shearwaters.

The data for all 2015 count areas are presently being compiled and will be available by early February. For prior count totals by area, maps,

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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, 415/299-2514, vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com or co-host, Jane Medley, 559/760-1551, janermedley@gmail.com.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS

San Rafael

Thursday, February 4, 2016

9 AM to Noon

With Susan Kelly, Len Blumin and friends

Join Susan and Len for a walk around the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds. Birders of all levels are welcome. Winter is a busy time at the ponds and provides an opportunity to study ducks and geese. Hawks are frequent and we see the graceful Northern Harrier on virtually every trip. River otters are often seen, too. Dress for all weather and bring water. We'll be walking about 2 miles on the levees that surround the ponds. Heavy rain cancels.

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 mi to the end of the road at the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. Late arrivals should easily be able to find the group. Rest room facilities are only at the parking area.

SACRAMENTO DELTA BOAT TRIP

Boat leaves from and returns to the Antioch Marina

Sunday, February 7, 2016

(Super Bowl Sunday)

8:15 AM – 4:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$105. Contact Vicky Van Meter at 415-299-2514 or vicky.vanmeter@gmail.com to see if space is available.

SKAGGS ISLAND AND HUDEMAN SLOUGH Sonoma County

Saturday, February 13, 2016

8:45 AM – mid-afternoon

With Murray Berner

Murray Berner has led trips for Napa-Solano Audubon for many years and is the author of the recently published Solano County Breeding Bird Atlas. Murray knows the marshes well and has access to Skaggs Island, which is closed to the general public. Skaggs Island, a former naval facility, was transferred to the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge and added more than 3,000 acres to the refuge. February is peak season for raptors, with lots of kites, harriers, red-tails, and always a few falcons, large and small. Short-eared Owl

and Burrowing Owl are winter residents. We will meet at the entrance to Skaggs Island off of Hwy 37 and travel by car across the island, stopping to bird along the way. We will then move on to Hudeman Slough in Carneros where we will bird on foot, a 1.5-mile walk to overlook flooded lowlands, grassland and interesting holding ponds. Expect Ferruginous Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike and large flocks of waterfowl. Dress in layers and sturdy shoes and bring lunch and water. Heavy rain cancels.

DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy 101 north to Hwy 37E. At the intersection with SR 121 (Sonoma Raceway), continue straight on Hwy 37 for 3.8 miles and turn left at Skaggs Island Road. Hudeman Slough is located at 25696 Ramal Road. No restrooms are available at either site.

SEARS POINT RANCH ON SAN PABLO BAY Reclamation Road, Sonoma County

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

9:30 AM – 1 PM

With Julian Meisler

Julian Meisler, the Bayland Program Manager for Sonoma Land Trust, will lead our trip to see the recently restored 1,000-acre tidal wetland at Sears Point. This excursion will highlight the latest design in tidal marsh restoration and provide wonderful opportunities for waterfowl and shorebird viewing.

DIRECTIONS: Exit U.S. 101 onto Highway 37, east toward Vallejo. The first stop light you encounter is at Lakeville Highway. Take a right here onto Reclamation Road. Parking area is on the left about ¼ mile down the road. Drive time from San Rafael approx. 25 minutes.

NICASIO RESERVOIR

No. 11, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, February 20, 2016

8:30 AM – mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

We will meet at the backstop to the baseball field in the small West Marin hamlet of Nicasio. There, riparian, open field, and wooded habitats are good for a nice variety of sparrows, gleaners, and woodpeckers. Then we'll head to nearby Nicasio Reservoir and make several stops along the shoreline. Many waterbird species hang out there, while raptors grace the sky and who knows what will be flitting around in the willows and shrubs that line the shore.

DIRECTIONS: The baseball field is in the center of Nicasio on Nicasio Valley Road.

Nicasio can be reached by taking Lucas Valley Road from 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.

CAPAY VALLEY

Yolo County

Saturday, March 12, 2016

8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

With Tim Fitzer

Terry Colborn, our leader on this annual trip for nearly 20 years, will be celebrating his mom's 90th birthday; his good friend, Tim Fitzer, will lead the trip in his absence. Tim will be assisted by Ann Burris, who lived in Capay Valley for several years. Join Tim and Ann for a delightful day birding Yolo County's scenic Capay Valley. The almond orchards should be at peak bloom, a precursor to the valley's upcoming spring season! Birding locations will include historic Capay Cemetery, Cache Creek County Park and several popular birding locations in tranquil Capay Valley. We'll seek out Yellow-billed Magpie, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Phainopepla and Western Bluebird as well as any lingering winter birds. We also hope to see a few raptors and perhaps early spring arrivals such as swallows and, with luck, perhaps a warbler species or two. Past trips have produced Golden and Bald Eagle, Western Kingbird, Prairie Falcon and Lawrence's Goldfinch, but every year is unique. We also expect to see some early spring wildflowers, as well as blooming Redbud, that very conspicuous flowering shrub along the roadside. Meet Tim and Ann at Community Park in Esparto at 8:30 AM. Participants will be encouraged to form carpools from there.

Bring lunch/snacks, liquids and sunscreen. Dress in layers and wear sturdy footwear, as we will do a little walking on flat roads. Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Tim Fitzer at 916/870-5207.

DIRECTIONS: To Esparto from Marin County, take Hwy 37 east to Vallejo then go east on I-80. Just past the Nut Tree Center in Vacaville take I-505 north for about 20 miles to the Route 16 exit then turn left (west). Esparto is located about 4 miles west on Route 16; the park is in the center of town. Driving time is about 1½ hours but allow a little extra time, as there may be early morning fog.

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.

THE BAYLANDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: WHAT WE CAN DO

The Baylands and Climate Change: WHAT WE CAN DO, the long-awaited Update of the now fifteen-year-old Baylands Habitat Goals Report, was released in November. More than 100 Bay scientists collaborated to update the status of the Bay ecosystem and wildlife and to make recommendations for the Bay's resources in the face of climate change. The clear message is that the time to ensure the Bay continues to support wildlife, provide clean water, and protect our communities from rising seas—IS NOW.

Climate Change was not considered in the first Baylands Report probably because it was not recognized as significant at the time. But climate change science has advanced greatly since then. Now we know differently. We know that climate change will and is already bringing rising seas, more frequent and intense storm events, change in water temperature and flooding.

The findings of the Update are clear—that restoring vibrant and functioning ecosystems is an urgent necessity not a luxury. Restoring natural systems will make our future shorelines more resilient to the stresses of climate change. Natural Baylands can adapt to environmental change while continuing to provide vital ecosystem functions. Natural systems can change and move. Engineered levees, bulkheads, and sea walls are static and would require more and more intense and expensive overhauls and rebuilds. Instead, the scientists encourage working with and using nature rather than fighting against it; instead of building hard walls and levees to keep the rising tides out, use wetlands to absorb excess water and reduce the intensity of waves, while at the same time supporting fish and wildlife and providing places for people to enjoy.

Meeting the uncertainties of climate change will require changing from a fixed approach to one that is dynamic and flexible, being willing to study and try new ideas, and the many local communities committing to collaborating for the long-term.

Recommended strategies to maintain healthy resilient baylands and the many benefits they provide include accelerating the restoration of complete bayland systems and ensuring that the many habitat types are interconnected (tidal marshes, freshwater marsh, transition zones, streams, and uplands) and function together. These strategies will benefit the Bay ecosystem and its fish and wildlife populations, as well as the Bay area economy and our quality of life.

The Update recommendations are guides for all communities, decision-makers, and all of us, to inform decisions on sea level rise, to reduce flooding moderate high tides and storm events. Counties, cities and towns will have to work together, to cooperate, because we are all connected, and we are all connected to the Baylands. If we plan without our neighbors, water will find its way through holes in the system.

The Update has information about all sections of the Bay, including recommended actions for all of South and Central Marin, the North Bay and all of the Bay Area. You can access the full report at www.baylandsgoals.org.

CONSERVATION UPDATES

CORTE MADERA INN REBUILD

The Town's review of the Corte Madera Inn Rebuild Project is progressing at a snail's pace. At the January 12 Planning Commission meeting, the project proponents spoke for a half hour before public comments were allowed. About 14 people spoke with most supporting keeping the pond or opposing the project for other reasons. In their subsequent discussion, the Commissioners discussed size of the building, coverage of the lot, paths, details about building materials and siding, etc. They never did get to talk about the pond. It seems discussing the fate of the pond first would have been a good approach because they would know the size of the lot the project needed to fit onto.

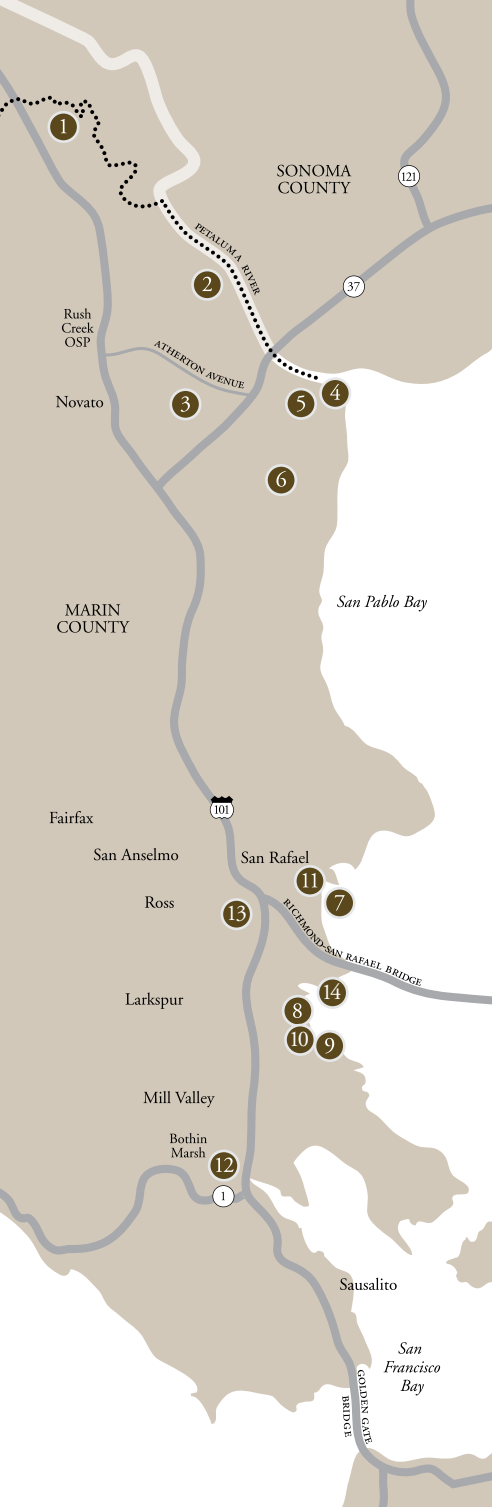
An update on the pond wildlife: On our Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count, the pond was a busy place. In this small (under an acre) pond, which some folks claim has no habitat value, observers found: 2 Mallard, 3 Bufflehead, 1 Gadwall, 1 Yellowlegs, 2 Black-necked Stilt, and 7 Black-crowned Night-Heron.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Email or send a letter to the Town Planning Commission opposing filling the pond or attend the next Planning Commission meeting. The Commission did not fix a date for their next meeting. We'll notify you either in the next *Rail* or via our email alert.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR LAGUNITAS CREEK HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

We have submitted scoping comments for the Environmental Assessment the National Park Service is about to prepare for a project that



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
13. Cal Park	<1 acre
14. Corte Madera Ecological Reserve Expansion Site	5.2 acres

will expand habitat for the endangered Coho Salmon and Steelhead on Pt. Reyes National Seashore lands along lower Lagunitas Creek.

CORTE MADERA CREEK FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT – NEXT PHASE

The Army Corps of Engineers and the Marin County Flood Control District are soliciting comments on issues to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement/Report they will be preparing for Phase 4 of Corte Madera Creek Flood Control Project. This phase extends from the upstream end of the concrete channel along Sir Francis Drake Blvd. to the border of Ross and San Anselmo.

The Public Notice identifies a number of project objectives: reduce the likelihood and consequences of flooding on human life and safety; reduce the risk of flood damages to infrastructure in the neighboring towns and cities; develop and implement environmentally sustainable flood risk management features consistent with natural processes and ecological functions of the project area; and use environmentally sustainable designs and construction methods to minimize

environmental impacts of future flooding.

The EIR/EIS will consider a range of issues including biological and cultural issues, noise, traffic, hazardous materials, greenhouse gases, and social and economic effects. Biological resources noted as important in the notice include fish passage for the threatened and endangered salmonids that migrate through the project area, and riparian habitat.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Find out more about the project and comment. Comments will be accepted until 4 pm on February 16: Steven M. Willis, Environmental Manager, US Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District, 1455 Market Street, 17th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103 or electronically Stephen.m.willis@usace.army.mil.

You can find out more about the project at: www.marinwatersheds.org/documents_and_reports/USACECorteMaderaCreekProject.html.

Carbon Sequestration and Wetlands

Trees are often considered the experts at pulling carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it in their trunks long term. They have thousands of years of experience sequestering carbon. But then again, wetlands have long experience also.

One reason coastal wetlands are good at storing carbon is because wetland soils are largely anaerobic, i.e., they lack oxygen. Usually only a thin layer of wetland soils on the surface is aerated by tidal waters. The remainder of the wetland soils are covered with sediments that are deposited by tidal waters and permanently submerged. Once in the soil, carbon is deeply buried (stored), often for hundreds or even thousands of years.

The oxygen-poor environment of wetland soils is ideal for storing carbon because saturated (wet) soils have little oxygen present. Decomposition of plant material is much

slower when there is no oxygen, so the organic matter remains largely intact rather than being broken down by microbes which send carbon dioxide back to the environment. As a result, wetlands are very good at sequestering and storing carbon for long periods.

Unfortunately thousands of acres of tidal marsh were diked, filled and lost in the San Francisco Estuary. It is now our task to restore what we can to encourage carbon to again be sequestered. Industry is also getting into the act—looking for opportunities to sequester carbon dioxide or other forms of carbon to mitigate or slow the atmospheric or marine accumulation of greenhouse gases from their burning of fossil fuels.

What is the problem with carbon in the atmosphere? Not much as long as it is not produced in excess, but excess production is exactly what is happening because of our reliance on fossil fuels. So much so that carbon dioxide and other even more impactful gases, carbon monoxide and methane, are transforming the protective atmosphere around the earth into a dense blanket that is trapping heat inside. The result is warming of the earth, climate change.

It is too late to stop global warming, but we can slow its progress by reducing dependence on and use of fossil fuels, reducing energy consumption, practicing sustainable forestry, planting and preserving native trees, and protecting and restoring wetlands.

What Is Carbon Sequestration?

Carbon sequestration refers to the uptake (or sequestration) and holding of carbon dioxide by plants. Plants use carbon dioxide to grow. Some carbon is stored in plant roots, leaves and branches—some is lost back into the atmosphere. As plants decline and die, their roots, branches and leaves containing carbon are buried (sequestered) in the soil.

Marin Baylands Fund at Marin Community Foundation

Marin Baylands Advocates (MBA) and Marin Audubon Society (MAS) announce that as of mid-January MBA will no longer have a fund at the Marin Community Foundation. Donations to MBA will now be deposited in the MBA account at the Bank of Marin and will continue to be tax-deductible under the MAS's 501(c)(3) status. MAS is the fiscal agent for the MBA since its inception.

For more than 25 years MBA, our partner in purchasing properties, has had a donor-directed fund, the Marin Baylands Fund, at the Marin Community Foundation and has paid a modest fee for the Foundation to manage the fund. They were true partners at the beginning. The Foundation needed funds coming to them from the community and the donations helped purchase baylands. We all benefitted from the shared publicity: the Foundation received public support and the Bay resources were protected by the Foundation's facilitating donations into the Fund.

MBA was recently informed that the Foundation would be raising its annual fee for managing the Marin Baylands Fund to \$2,500 which is far in excess of what MBA can justify. The Foundation reported that it is expensive for them and they are not equipped to process a lot of checks, which they consider to be more than 12 to 25 annually. Other organizations in the same circumstances were similarly advised.

MBA and MAS are sorry about this change. Both organizations want to assure supporters of acquiring baylands that all donations made to MBA will continue to be dedicated to the protection and acquisition of baylands and will continue to be tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Donations made to the Marin Baylands Fund at the Foundation in the interim period will be transferred to MBA and deposited in their bank account.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

January was the planting month, but a rainout for volunteers put planting at Bahia in the hands of a hired crew. There might be more planting at Bahia in February, but if not, we will be mulching January's plantings. At Triangle we will be back to removal of invasive plants with perhaps a new tactic for Harding grass. Italian thistle is on its way and it may be large enough that we will give some of it a very short season. It's a welcome situation to think that rain might cancel a stewardship day.

Act locally and join us on a workday. You would make a difference.

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

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturdays: February 6, March 5

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: February 13, March 12

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

If you would like to help, contact Katy Zaremba at 415/847-9933 or volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org for more information.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Dave Chenoweth, Bob Hinz, Lowell Sykes

MUIR WOODS ACCESS

Following years of study and planning, the National Park Service has initiated parking restrictions and a shuttle reservation system to protect Redwood Creek, to address overcrowding, traffic congestion and neighbor complaints, and to improve the experience of visitors.

Parking modifications are beginning to be installed and will be phased in over seven years. The Reservation system will be implemented in 2017. You can always access Muir Woods from trails entering from the top.

eBIRD.ORG

Do you or did you record bird observations in a series of notebooks? Can you find all those notebooks? Make it easy on yourself and at the same time share your sightings with science. Submit observations to www.eBird.org.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

Our habitats are happy with the rains that have finally arrived.

BAHIA

Good news—for some years now the Marin County Open Space District signs have been vandalized. We are pleased to report that, finally, the vandal has been identified and tracked down. The violation is now in the hands of the Novato police department.

Shelterbelt Builders also planted about 300 native wetland plants on our Central Bahia peninsula. Species planted included *Ambrosia psilostachya*, clustered field sedge (*Carex praegracilis*), Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), spikerush (*Eleocharis macrostachis*), purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*), and creeping wildrye (*Elymus triticoides*). We hired a crew to help plant because we were uncertain we would have enough volunteers to get the plants into the

Christmas Bird Counts

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and count details please visit www.forestdata.com/cbc and click on the data links where the historic bird data, compiled 1970-2014, are available for download.

Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count

The 2015 South Marin Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 26. This count has been conducted since 1975. The South Marin count circle is centered in Corte Madera and extends from Terra Linda on the north to the Marin headlands on the south, the Tiburon peninsula and Sausalito on the east and Bolinas Lagoon on the west and includes parts of San Francisco Bay and the ocean outside the Golden Gate. This circle includes exceptionally diverse habitats ranging from ocean and bay waters to marshes, uplands, chaparral, and the top of Mt. Tamalpais as well as urban development.

Despite being a supposedly wet El Niño year the count day was clear but cold and windy in the morning. There were more than 130 volunteers who ventured out for the day to survey 22 of 23 count areas. This year we were not able to secure a boat for the ocean count area, which is outside the Golden Gate. Baykeepers was kind enough to provide a boat for Peter Colasanti to count the birds on the bay from San Rafael to Sausalito.

We were fortunate to have five young bird enthusiasts participating in the count, thanks to Wendy Dreskin and kids from several families including two vacationing families, one from Chicago and the other from Hawaii. These young people were very knowledgeable

and eager. Colin Morita, the young man from Honolulu, succeeded in seeing a **Pileated Woodpecker** in the Fairfax count area, which was a life bird for him—they don't have woodpeckers in Hawaii. It is encouraging to see young people becoming interested in birding as so many of us become old-timers.

SIMMONS SLOUGH

Shelterbelt Builders spent two days digging out Harding grass at our Simmons Slough property along Atherton Avenue. Our efforts to get rid of it during several years with NRCS help were only temporarily effective. Now we are trying other methods to keep this highly invasive plant from expanding. We are having the crew dig out large plants, planting baccharis in most of the holes, and also using cardboard and mulch to discourage sprouts of new plants.

TRIANGLE MARSH

On the first Saturday of January Bob Hinz and his volunteers planted purple needlegrass on the upland berm at various locations.

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During the morning of the count there appeared to be a herring run in Richardson Bay which attracted large rafts of ducks and gulls, presumably feasting on the roe. **Scaup sp., Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye** and **Ruddy Ducks** were all far more numerous than last year. The rare one was a **Long-tailed Duck**, the first ever for the Strawberry count. However, after four years of drought the numbers and variety of land birds appeared to be somewhat low. This may be due to a lack of insects and fresh plant growth. However, there were about 7,400 **American Robins**, almost double last year's total, feasting on red toyon berries. **Varied Thrushes** were far fewer this year than last.

The preliminary final tally was 180 species and over 90,000 individuals. This was over 20% more birds than last year. One or more **Bald Eagles** were notable observations from several of the count areas, including one perched in some tall trees at the end of the Tiburon Peninsula. Although no one observed them feeding, the Bald Eagles may be snatching ducks off the bay or stealing fish from Osprey's or Cormorants. A **Mute Swan** was a new species for the count area; unfortunately these swans are non-native and aggressive toward our native waterfowl.

Christmas bird counts are conducted by the National Audubon Society and are the longest running Citizen Science survey in the world and provide valuable information on bird populations and trends.

MARIN BIRDLOG: DECEMBER 2015

By Josiah Clark

December brings the shortest days. But with the county's three Christmas Bird Counts, it also brings the most thorough coverage and longest birding days of the year. On the North Marin Christmas Bird Count on December 17, two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were among nearly 600 mixed sparrows in fields purchased by Marin Audubon. This is just east of Atherton off Olive Avenue (JTC, AMc). Over 200 swallows was a notably high number for winter and included both **Tree** and **Violet-green Swallows**. Even more surprising for this time of year in Marin is the continuing presence of **Vaux's Swifts** at Las Gallinas and nearby locations (SK).

Meanwhile further south the herring spawn action was heating up in the deeper parts of Richardson Bay. Among the building numbers of bay ducks, the scheduled waterfowl survey turned up a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** (12/18, LB, RW). Nearby in Mill Valley's Bothin Marsh, the Eurasian form of **Green-winged Teal**, aka "Common Teal," was found among its American counterparts (12/19, AM).



Mountain Bluebird

Glen Tapke, gopkr@pbac.com

Highlights from the Point Reyes CBC on December 19 included **Northern Waterthrush** and **Least Flycatcher** from Olema Marsh (ST, LT, HC, KH), a **Mountain Bluebird** (BT, NA) in the pickleweed at the mouth of Walker Creek, **Tufted Duck**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, and an unseasonal **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Inverness (SC, RM). Out over the ocean several **Black-vented Shearwaters** and **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were among the oceanic highlights (PP, LK).

On the South Marin Christmas Bird Count the day after Christmas, Bolinas counters spied a few rarities including two **Swamp Sparrows** at Pine Gulch Creek,



Black-legged Kittiwake

Glen Tapke, gopkr@pbac.com

a **Bullock's Oriole** on the Mesa, a lone **Blue-winged Teal** (seen also in Corte Madera Marsh) and **Barrow's Goldeneye** on the lagoon (other Barrow's were found in the Larkspur area), a fly-by **Red-necked Grebe** at Duxbury Reef and a **Ferruginous Hawk** over Paradise Valley (DD, DK, PP, IS, JTC, KH, PS, RF). **Red Crossbills** of several tribes have been especially numerous this season around the county but nowhere more so than on Mt. Tamalpais, where they have been observed by many over recent months. Also on "Tam" was a wintering **Townsend's Solitaire** among the Sargeant Cypress at Barth's Retreat (DS). A couple of ridges east of there an unseasonal **Chipping Sparrow** was at the Meadow Club Golf Course above Fairfax (LKg).

Observers and Acronyms **AMc**: Andrew Mcgann, **AM**: Alex Merritt, **BT**: Brian Turner, **DD**: Dave Desante, **DK**: Durrel Kapan, **DS**: David Sexton, **HC**: Heather Cameron, **IS**: Ivan Samuels, **JTC**: Josiah Clark, **NA**: Noah Arthur, **LT**: Lindal Terrill, **KH**: Keith Hansen, **LB**: Len Blumin, **LK**: Logan Kahle, **LKg**: Lucas Kerling, **PP**: Peter Pyle, **PS**: Paul Saraceni, **RF**: Rob Furrow, **RM**: Ron Mallory, **RW**: Rudy Wallen, **SC**: Scott Carey, **SK**: Susan Kelly, **ST**: Scott Terrill

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