

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14 7:30 PM

Great Gray Owls

With Joe Medley



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

Remembering Jean Starkweather

Jean Starkweather, long-time active Marin Audubon Board member and my mentor, passed away on November 23. We in Marin owe a lot to Jean. She was Marin Audubon's President in 1976 and 1977, and Chair of our Conservation Committee in 1977 when I approached MAS for help fighting development of a regional shopping center in Larkspur. After the development was defeated, Jean invited me to join MAS's Conservation Committee.

Earlier, Jean was part of the effort to save Richardson Bay from development and to establish Audubon Canyon Ranch. We also can trace our success in saving baylands along San Pablo and San Francisco Bays back to Jean. Led by Jean and George Ellman, Marin Audubon had decided early in our 70-year history, to focus on wetlands; "no one else was paying attention to wetlands then", I remember Jean saying. She led the effort to map, (not using computers, you understand), the marshes along the Bay that needed protecting. The map we use today had its origins in that early map. Many of the marshes on it we've now saved.

Jean was always a wonderful teacher, patient, carefully showing and clearly explaining in understandable ways the importance of wetland habitats and wildlife. Under her guidance, members of Marin Audubon's Conservation Committee appeared at public hearings and educated the planning commissions and councils about the importance of wetlands. She worked diligently on projects all along the bay, but had a particular interest in the San Rafael bayfront.

We can thank Jean for the marshes that are left along the San Rafael bayfront, the MMWD, Spinnaker, Bayview and South Marshes. She served as the only environmentalist on a city committee to plan for the shoreline, and organized us to show up to fight to save the Spinnaker wetlands and lagoon. The dedication of the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park was a fitting tribute to Jean and her husband John's efforts.

Jean went on to serve on the Marin County Parks and Open Space Commission and on other organization boards including Audubon Canyon Ranch and Marin Conservation



Jean Starkweather (left) and Barbara Salzman (right) at the Bahia marsh restoration, one of the target sites on Jean's map for saving.

League. She maintained her love for birds and marshes. She was a San Rafael area leader for our Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count, did a 20-year-long bird survey along the San Rafael bayfront and always spoke out for wetlands and birds.

Although we've saved many of the wetlands on Jean's maps, there are still two more to protect in San Rafael. We're still working to save them and when we do, we will do it in honor of Jean.

To see interviews with Jean Starkweather go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuPuKsRHe1M or www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sNnlL5XOhA.



Joe Medley

Great Gray Owl

California Great Gray Owls are listed as State Endangered owing to their limited population size and specialized habitat requirements. The elusive Great Gray Owl is one of the most rare and sought after birds in the state. Only the most patient (or lucky) observers are rewarded with glimpsing them in their montane meadow habitat. Joe Medley, a UC Davis graduate student, will discuss Great Gray Owl life history, genetics, and his work in developing non-invasive methods for surveying and monitoring Great Gray Owls. He will share stories from his field work observing the owls, and his photography and recordings of the owls and other wildlife that he has captured throughout the course of his research.

Medley grew up in the Sierra Nevada foothills and has been studying Great Gray Owls in Yosemite National Park and the surrounding National Forest lands for the past nine years. Prior to his research on Great Grays, he studied hawk migration in Marin, Virginia and Costa Rica, and monitored Spotted Owls in Plumas National Forest. He only agreed to do this talk because his mother happens to be the coordinator for Marin Audubon guest speakers.

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

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Help Wanted

TREASURER We will be losing our treasurer in about a year and a half; the commute is getting to be too much for her. So we are beginning a search for this important position early. If anyone with accounting skills or interest wants to help Marin Audubon, please be in touch with Barbara Salzman.

COMPUTER We have several generous offers to help with our Facebook page. We also need help with data entry to keep our lists current. Contact Flinn Moore Rauck or Martha Jarocki.

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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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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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

This month we were saddened by the death of Jean Starkweather— dear friend and a stalwart of the environmental community. She was an important one of Marin Audubon's early leaders—see Remembering Jean on page 1.

As I write this we are getting the rain we have been yearning for. So I'm thrilled to say—**It's time to plant.** December and January are the best months to put plants in the ground. The wet soil is welcoming and the plants have a longer time in the ground before the dry summer months, giving them a better chance of survival—unless you're planning to irrigate. We've given a few suggestions for native plants in recent editions of *The Rail* and I'd like to recommend planting toyon and oaks—in spite of sudden oak death. Oaks are essential for many wildlife species (800 species of insects and wildlife depend on them for survival). Coast Live Oak or Black Oak are probably best suited for most suburban locations. Toyon is a very attractive small tree—birds love its bright red berries. Toyon will do best in areas that have about a half day or more of sun daily. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are saving water, expanding native habitat, benefitting native wildlife and helping to combat climate change.

It seems the value of vegetation is coming more into the mainstream of the public. To combat climate change, reducing reliance on oil,

driving alternative energy autos, reducing reliance on automobiles, and using clean energy are usually emphasized. A recent article in the journal *The Economist* notes that "Trees are carbon sinks. If you fell or burn them, they release carbon into the atmosphere. If you let them grow, they squirrel carbon away in their trunks . . ." The article focuses on tropical forests, which, after being greatly denuded, are now making a welcomed recovery as the value of the forests that have been lost is recognized. While forests may have the greatest carbon sequestration impact, each tree, or shrub or grass, for that matter, that we plant adds to the cumulative benefit—not only for wildlife, but the beauty and comfort and survival of our world. So, plant native trees and plants to sequester carbon and combat climate change!

Thank you all who have donated so far to our winter appeal. This year we mailed our letters earlier than we usually do. If you haven't donated, there is still plenty of time. We depend on our generous donors to keep Marin Audubon going.

Our Christmas Bird Counts are underway as we go to press. We will report on their success next month.

Do attend one of our field trips or get out on your own to enjoy those awesome birds that spend the winter with us in the Bay.

Happy New Year!

Bird Boxes for Simmons Slough's Nesting Tree Swallows

By Vicky Van Meter

Fifteen years ago, our tireless board member, Lowell Sykes, built and installed 33 nest boxes across our 144-acre Simmons Slough property in Novato. Over the years we have added six more. Originally intended for bluebirds, the boxes have proven popular with Tree Swallows, another cavity nester. These handsome birds with deep-blue iridescent backs and clean white fronts are a familiar sight in fields and wetlands across northern North America, ranging from Alaska to Mexico.

The swallows usually begin to arrive in Marin for breeding in February. Males are the first to arrive, followed by the females a few days later. Nests are built with a layer of grasses and lined with duck feathers collected in the marshes. Clutch size is usually 4 to 7. The eggs hatch in about two weeks and the young birds are ready to leave the nest in about a month. In winter and during migration, Tree Swallows can feed on berries, but during the nesting season feed on flying insects they chase in the air with acrobatic twists and turns. A nesting pair can consume 300,000 insects in a season. The parents pack insects they catch into a BB-sized ball, called a bolus, and bring them to their young. In the spring it is a delight to watch the swallows swooping over Simmons Slough and darting in

and out of the nest boxes. Tree Swallows even bathe in flight by flying low over the water and skimming their bodies against the surface, then rising quickly while shaking off droplets.

Every fall the nest boxes must be cleaned and repaired to be ready for spring. The old nesting material is removed and the box is scrubbed, rinsed and lined with a handful of wood shavings. Last year, Michael Blofeld with Novato Boy Scout Troop 42 built 14 bird boxes for his Eagle Scout project, and these were used to replace worn out boxes and add a few new ones. All of the boxes are used every year and add to the habitat value of this restored wetland.



Vicky Van Meter

Dave Herrema tends to one of the nest boxes in Simmons Slough

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, January 7, 2016

9 AM to 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. 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. 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 Hwy. 101 take the Smith Ranch Rd. exit, and go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go to the end of the road at the Las Gallinas Ponds parking lot. 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. There are rest room facilities only at the parking area.

BOLINAS LAGOON

No. 9, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, January 16, 2016

8:30 AM – mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

Bolinas Lagoon is an important bird area (IBA) since over 10,000 ducks and shorebirds winter there. We will look on and over the lagoon from the meeting area and from two or three other pullouts along the lagoon. Then we will drive three miles to the Duxbury Reef overlook to see what is happening on and over the ocean. The Bolinas mesa oxidation ponds are another good place for a bird walk. We will then have a lunch break in downtown Bolinas. With the lower tide after lunch we will look for shorebirds near the Pine Gulch Creek delta.

DIRECTIONS: Please meet at 8:30 on Highway 1 at the Stinson/Bolinas primary school, which is 1.5 miles north of the central Stinson Beach stop sign.

CYPRESS GROVE/TOMS POINT ON TOMALES BAY

Cypress Grove Research Center

Thursday, January 21, 2016

9:30 AM – 2 PM

With John Kelly

John Kelly, Director of Conservation Science for Audubon Canyon Ranch, will lead our trip to see winter waterbirds and shorebirds on Tomales Bay. This excursion will highlight a visit to the Cypress Grove Research Center of Audubon Canyon Ranch, with field observations and discussions about the identification, conservation, and ecology of Tomales Bay birds. We also will learn about the history of the lovely house and grounds now used by the research staff. We will view waterbirds and shorebirds along the east shore of the bay, then carpool to ACR's remote Toms Point Preserve at the northern end of the bay where we will end our day.

DIRECTIONS: The Cypress Grove Research Center is on State Highway One, about ½ mile north of the town of Marshall. Marshall is 9 miles north of Point Reyes Station, or 7 miles south of Tomales. The entry gate is on the bay side of the road and marked with the address "20545." **Look for a small sign with ACR's green-and-white egret logo mounted on the gate pole.** Enter the gate, continue in on the entry road and take the left-hand fork to the parking area. Walk down the trail at the northwest corner of the parking area to the main buildings in the lawn area. The main office is in Cabin #2.

BIRDING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Tomales, Lawson's Landing, and Chileno Valley

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

9 AM – 3:30 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

This field trip will focus on some of the less familiar habitats in Marin near the town of Tomales. We will meet at the Tomales Bakery and our itinerary for the day will depend on where the birds are. Our first destination will be Lawson's Landing, a private resort near the mouth of Tomales Bay. Loons, grebes, ducks and Brant can be quite numerous here. Shorebirds are diverse here as well. After birding the coast, the rest of the day may be spent covering the open grasslands, wetlands and forests of this part of Marin. Chileno Valley can have Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, among the more common raptors.

DIRECTIONS: Meet at the Tomales Bakery at 9:00. Plan on arriving earlier to sample the delicious pastries. If the bakery is closed, the deli nearby has a nice variety of food and beverages. Check your map for your best route to Tomales. You can head west from Hwy 101 at Old Redwood Hwy in Petaluma or in Novato at San Marin Drive. The address of the bakery is 27000 Hwy 1, Tomales. Allow about an hour from Marin. Light rain will not cancel this trip, but a heavy storm will.

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

Join us aboard Dolphin Charters' *River Dolphin* for a wonderful day of exploring the richness of the California Delta with naturalist David Wimpfheimer as our guide. Ronn Patterson, a Bay Area historian and naturalist, is captain of the *River Dolphin* and owner of Dolphin Charters. The boat is very comfortable and the outer decks provide views over the levees of the amazing array of birds found in the Delta during the winter. This rich area hosts a wide variety of raptors including uncommon species such as Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and Great Horned Owl. Large numbers of shorebirds, Sandhill Crane, Tundra Swan, Snow, Canada and White-fronted Geese, ducks, as well as gulls, terns, bitterns and passerines make the cruise a highlight for birders. Uncommon mammals such as beaver, river otter, coyote and mink often add interest to the cruise. We also will learn about the history, ecology and politics of the levees and the Delta as we travel through its meandering channels.

The trip is limited to 25 participants and the cost is \$105. Deadline for reserving space and making payment is February 1, 2015. Register and pay online at www.marinaudubon.org. Online registration is preferred, but to register by mail, send a check to Marin Audubon at Box 599, Mill Valley, CA, 94942. **Include the name, email address and contact phone number of each participant.** Please write 'Delta Trip' on the envelope and check. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the Antioch Marina and other instructions the week before the trip.

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.

MARIN COUNTY'S INCLUSIVE ACCESS PLAN

Marin County Parks produced an *Inclusive Access Plan* to comply with federal law requiring “public facilities and programs, when viewed in their entirety, be accessible to individuals with disabilities.” This does not mean access must be on every property. The county’s program is called Destination-Oriented Trails. It aims to provide varied user experiences broadly representative of the array of outdoor settings in the Open Space District Preserves.

Although there are some exceptions, the established accessibility standards include: firm and even surface, 48- to 60-inch minimum width, slope standards, amenities such as seating, picnic tables, bathrooms, water fountains, and public transit and/or accessible parking.

Several lists of trails are presented in the Plan along with evaluations of their suitability. The primary focus, for some unidentified reason, was on preserves—two parks were included but there was no discussion of the suitability of any others. Nineteen sites are managed by Marin County Parks as parks, i.e., they have more active uses and facilities, while the 32 preserves are in a natural condition, except for trails.

MAS supports disabled access but our comments emphasized that sites should be chosen that would require no impact to natural habitats. This is our position for all developments, and we believe it can be achieved while providing inclusive access at the same time. The major impacts would be from widening trails. To do this in most preserves, vegetative habitat along the trail edges would have to be removed. Safe and representative experiences can certainly be provided at both Marin County parks and preserves. A number of Marin County parks (McInnis Park and Stafford Lake) have important natural resources, namely, endangered species and a large pond that are suitable destinations, but neither of these is mentioned.

Trails that we found suitable for Destination-Oriented designation are: Hamilton, Indian Valley Fire Road, a portion of the Rush Creek Fire Road up to Cemetery Marsh, Roy’s Redwoods, the Escalon Trail with some surface improvements, and a short distance on Ring Mountain at the top only, although it is about 500 feet uphill from the on-street parking to the trail. Unacceptable trails, because habitat destruction would be needed in order to widen

them, are: the Bahia Trail, Deer Island Trail, Old St. Hilary’s, and Santa Margarita Island Trails. A few others are marginally suitable.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The County will be preparing an Initial Study in compliance with CEQA, so watch for notice of the comment time. It will probably be in January or February as Marin County Parks is planning to take the Plan to the Parks and Open Space Commission in the spring. You should check the Marin County Parks website and we will try to keep you informed as well.

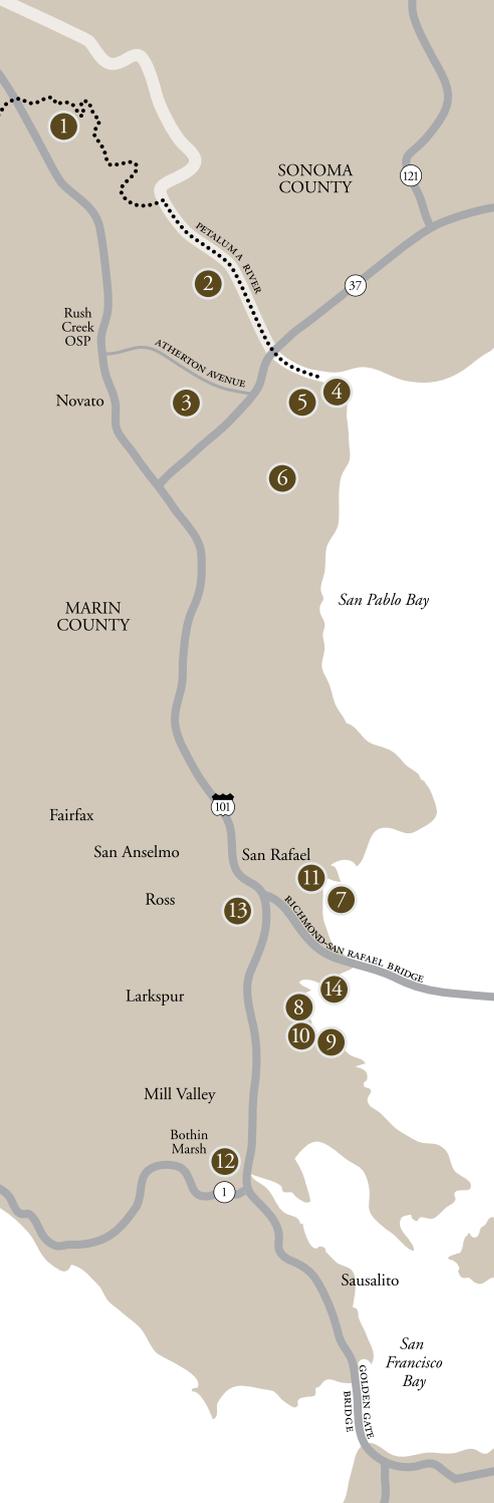
CORTE MADERA INN REBUILD

The Final Environmental Impact Report was published and a public hearing was held on the project in early December. The proposed project is the same as it has been—expand the current 104 rooms to 187, make some of the rooms for extended stay, remove the pond, swimming pool and restaurant, expand parking and add a fountain and other amenities. Various alternatives for keeping the pond were developed by the EIR consultants in response to comments on the Draft EIR. These were: Alternative 2, which reduces the number of units and keeps the pond and Alternative 4, which includes the 187 units the developer wants and locates them along Tamal Vista Boulevard.

Marin Audubon’s position remains the same: any rebuild improvements for the Inn should retain the pond and adjacent vegetation and gradually replace the non-native plants with natives. The pond is habitat for wildlife and provides flood water retention benefits, although the Town minimizes its importance.

The third environmental document, the Final EIR presents 119 comment letters and emails from members of the public and organizations, the vast majority of which oppose the project or some component of the project (only seven supported the project or some portion of the design submitted by the applicant).

Many commenters advocated retaining the pond; some did not want increased traffic, some wanted improved walking and traffic conditions, and some did not want three stories, which are shown in Alternative 4.



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

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Attend the next scheduled Planning Commission hearing on January 12, at 7:30 PM in at the Recreation Center and/or send a letter or email message to the Town supporting retention of the pond. The Corte Madera Town Council will have the final say in what project is approved.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Attend the regular Richardson Bay Regional Agency meeting usually on the second Tuesday of each month in Sausalito's Council Chambers. The next meeting will be February 20, after Sausalito considers funding. Also, communicate your opposition to the Sausalito city council especially if you live in Sausalito.

ANCHOR-OUTS

A community meeting conducted by the Richardson Bay Regional Agency was held in mid-November to present a proposal for a Stakeholder Advisory Group. The purpose of the Group would be to come up with recommendations for how to deal with the anchor-outs. The meeting was attended by about 100 folks (some reports say 200), and most of those speaking favored keeping the anchor-outs on the bay for many different reasons: they have nowhere else to go or can't afford to pay; they like living there, believe it is their right, and/or claim they are maintaining a culture. One of the problems with these meetings (even those 20 years ago) is that people who want the anchor-outs removed from the Bay are often afraid to speak because they feel intimidated by the crowd.

One point that is often misunderstood, even in the recent Independent Journal editorial, is that the designation of the Bay waters as a federal navigation anchorage does not support maintaining anchor-outs in the Bay. The purpose of a navigation anchorage is just what the name indicates, i.e., to ensure that people traveling on the water have a place to stop and anchor. It could be compared to parking places or campsites for on-land travelers. Anchor-outs are boats used by people for their permanent living quarters. They are using public waters for their private use. They are not traveling anywhere. It is akin to people living in our public lands, our parks, wetlands, etc. Furthermore, if the number of anchor-outs continues to increase, there won't be much space left for boats that are navigating or for wildlife.

Many anchor-outs *can* afford to live elsewhere—they are just getting free rent courtesy of taxpayers. Some anchor-outs can probably not afford rent, but we have agencies to help folks that need a place to live.

The next step is for the city of Sausalito to approve contributing their share of the funding needed to set up the Advisory Group. The other members of the Agency, Marin County, Mill Valley, Tiburon and Belvedere, have already agreed to contribute a share. Sausalito City Council reportedly will be considering the funding in January.

BIRD-FRIENDLY LIGHTING

Following on last month's article about protecting birds around your home, this write-up discusses ways to protect birds that are attracted to night lighting around our homes or offices. Lights around tall buildings attract and result in the deaths of large numbers of migrating birds, and lighting around our homes can also be lethal. Lights are particularly damaging to birds when they are migrating. Birds are attracted to the lights which interrupts their circadian rhythm, causing them to go off course, collide with windows or just become exhausted and die.

The easiest way to avoid light impacts is to remove unnecessary lighting or turn off your lights, especially during migration, mid-February to the end of May and again from mid-August to the end of November. Here are some other methods to use when turning off lights is not possible or even in conjunction with turning off lights:

- Use shielded instead of globe fixtures that spew light everywhere.
- Direct lights downward instead of into the night sky. This is also more aesthetic, more efficient and cheaper to operate.
- Use motion sensors to avoid steady burning lights.
- Use timers to ensure lights aren't on longer than necessary.
- Control the color of the light coming from your home. Red and white lights (which contain visible long wavelength radiation) disrupt the birds' electromagnetic orientation while green and blue lights contain less long wavelength radiation and are much less disorienting.
- Look for products that have been approved by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), an environmental organization that works to protect the night environment through environmentally responsible night lighting. The Association's website, <http://darksky.org/>, has a list of IDA-approved fixtures.

From an article by Jennifer Horton, "Bird Friendly Lighting," in *BirdWatching* magazine.

BAYWAVE – MARIN COUNTY'S BAY WATERFRONT VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

Flooding associated with high tides and storms is already occurring, impacting infrastructure and disrupting lives, and is expected to increase in frequency and severity as sea level rises. Rising seas will also drown wetlands, creeks, beaches and other natural resources. With county funds and a grant from the Coastal Conservancy, the County has just initiated a process, called BayWAVE, to address these pending adversities along San Francisco and San Pablo Bay. The coast is being addressed in a separate effort that began a few months ago.

BayWAVE will assess the vulnerability of the Marin shoreline from the Golden Gate Bridge to the end of Novato. The goal of BayWAVE is to increase awareness and prepare for future sea level rise impacts through a coordinated multi-jurisdictional assessment. To accomplish this goal, BayWAVE will identify assets, evaluate the sensitivity of the assets and the adaptability of selected assets, and work with local cities and towns to develop strategies to address this vulnerability, and implement the strategies.

The work of BayWAVE will be undertaken by Marin County Public Works staff through three committees: Executive, Policy and Technical Committees.

- Executive Steering Committee will provide direction and guidance to staff and will consist of two Supervisors, three elected officials, representing town and city councils, and a representative from city and county staff.
- The Policy Group consists of one elected official representing each municipality in east Marin and two Supervisors. Its task is to help support the project, communicate progress to the local governments, and carry information, ideas and concerns from their constituents.
- The Technical Committee is charged with advising staff, reviewing products, communicating with jurisdictions' staff and engaging the community. Marin Audubon Society was invited to join the Technical Committee because of our extensive land holdings along the Bay. All other Technical Committee members are engineers and planners representing each of the towns, cities and sanitary districts; it has a membership of about 30.

BayWAVE is the first phase of an anticipated long-term planning effort. A final report with recommendations is expected in March of 2017. A second phase is expected to continue planning and response based on the Vulnerability Assessment of Phase 1.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

During a month of inactivity for our volunteers the December rains have been preparing the soil for a welcome change in our efforts and more rain is forecast. We'll be putting some native grasses, rushes and sedges into the ground at Bahia and Triangle Marsh. During the year we do this only a few times in winter, the rainy season, so this is the time for you to get the satisfaction of planting native plants. Come help us.

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: January 2, February 6

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: January 9, February 13

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

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

THANK YOU FOR DONATIONS

Julie Allecta, Jane A. Allen, Dean Anderson, Sara Arnaud, Patricia Arrigoni, Holly A. Bacuzzi, Mariah Baird, Greg & Giselle Block, Andrew Bollen, Robert & Linda Bundy, John & Mary Lynne Cammidge, Chris Coleman, Rosalind Colver, Orrin Douglas Cook, Rudolph De May, Lillian B. Dreyer, Earth Share of California, Daniel Edelstein, Charles & Norma Flanik, Wilma & William Follette, Mark H. Forney, Brenda Foster, Lewis Fredrickson, Catherine & Peter Gowdy, Dolores Hansen, Joan Haukom, Susan & Philip Henry, Victoria Jackson, Elizabeth & Raymond Jacques, Susan L. Janson, Richard Jennings, Marilyn V. Knight, Josephine Kreider, Ann Linder, Diane Lynch, Ron & Amanda Mallory, Prem & John McMurdo, Jane R. Medley, Gene F. Moore, Frederick W. Muller Testamentary Trust, Larry Mulryan, Eileen Murray, Nute Engineering, PG&E Corporation Foundation, Alison & Keith Pinto, Norma Pomerance, Jerrold B. Reilly, Delanna Schneider, Virginia & William Schultz, David & Maria Scott, Emily E. Shibata, Charles & Carla Stedwell, Michael Steiner, J. Dietrich Stroeh, Tim Suggs, Mary Margaret Sullivan, Shirley Trimble, Mary S. Webster, J. Arthur Weinberg, Michael & Barbara Whitt, Chris & Teri Wills, Caroline K. Youmans, Jerald & Sharon Young

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

Our workdays at Bahia and Triangle were cancelled in December due to holiday commitments. Nevertheless we had a few things going on:

ARROYO DE CORTE MADERA, MILL VALLEY

Members of our Property Management Committee continued our work removing new sprouting shoots of acacia trees from our property adjacent to The Redwoods. This is our third visit removing these highly invasive plants. We still need at least one more which we plan to do in December.

NOVEMBER 21 FIELD TRIP

Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds and Hamilton Wetlands

By Jim White



Richard Panek

Long-billed Curlew

Our group of twenty met at the Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds this fine Saturday morning and visited the Hamilton Wetlands after lunch. Countering the usual human tendency to use the best places for homes, cities, highways, airports, shopping centers, etc., these two areas have been returned to nature and the birds certainly appreciate it. We saw 86 species (around 3,000 birds) this day, and 28 were new to our year list.

We humans make a lot of water dirty, very dirty, before we flush it away. To clean it up with nature's help is the function of the Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds, designed by Ed Nute, retired President of Nute Engineering and one of our Marin Audubon Board members. Among the ducks that find a winter home here and can be readily studied are **Canvasbacks, Bufflehead, Ruddy Ducks, Pintails, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Shovelers** and **Green-winged Teal**. Our bright young birder, Lucas, got us all on a handsome **Eurasian Wigeon**, a flyover Wilson's Snipe (another was seen later by all lurking on the shore), and a **Merlin** which zoomed by our picnic table. Beautiful **Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall**, and a single female **Ring-necked Duck** were

SIMMONS SEP, NOVATO

Staff from Shelterbelt Builders and The Watershed Nursery got in just before the rain this month to survey the *Juncus arcticus* and *Carex praegracilis* we planted over the last two winters. This site fills with water as soon as there is a significant storm event and once that happens one can't see the plants. We were concerned the consultants would again not get to us in time to monitor this year, but fortunately they did. We were supposed to have monitored each year but have missed monitoring this site every year because it was underwater.

with the numerous **Mallards**. We saw two **Cackling Geese** with the many **Canada Geese**.

Black-crowned Night-Herons roost on the islands of Pond #1 while **Great** and **Snowy Egrets** forage around the edges. **Bitterns** remained undetected, but some sharp eyes saw **Soras** and **Virginia Rails**. **Ridgway's Rails** occasionally grunt from the surrounding salt marsh, and **Common Gallinules** have become common here. **Great-tailed Grackles** and **Eurasian Collared-Doves** have also taken up residence, and **Mew Gulls** have arrived for the winter. Two delicate **Bonaparte's Gulls** foraged from the air, and a **Herring Gull** rested on the floating pipe. **Harriers, Kites, Redtails, Kestrels**, and **Red-shouldered Hawks** are more numerous in the winter. **Sparrows, finches, mockingbirds, blackbirds**, and **California Quail** were joined by **Say's Phoebe, Yellow-rumped Warblers**, and an **American Pipit** on this fall day at Las Gallinas.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Coastal Conservancy have done a terrific job restoring the Hamilton Air Force Base Airfield back into a tidal wetland bordered by the Bay Trail. In its second year since importing approximately 8 million cubic yards of bay dredge spoils carefully contoured to accept high tides and rising sea level, the area is hosting a few thousand shorebirds and ducks. We saw **Black-necked Stilts, Avocets, Greater Yellowlegs, Long-billed Curlews, Dunlin, Dowitchers, Semipalmated** (that means that they have partially webbed toes) **Plovers**, and **Black-bellied Plovers**. With the receding tide pretty far out, a scope was necessary to see the two female **Common Goldeneyes**. Fortunately our December trip to Bahia will provide us with fine views of both **Barrow's** and **Common Goldeneyes**.

MARIN BIRDLOG: NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2015

By Josiah Clark

With November arrives the first real dose of winter, and birds are among the first to notice. Migration has all but ceased and food resources become scarce. The flocks that recently held and welcomed passing migrants from out of town are now quite locked up and orderly.

With insects dormant and most fruit gone, there is only so much food around, and with so many slots in the flock, the pecking order becomes more ruthless. Oddballs, loners and smaller birds are kicked to the side or driven off completely.

Seasoned Christmas Bird Counters know that Bushtit flocks hold a disproportionate number of winter vagrants—likely because they are small, diminutive and on the bottom of the totem poles themselves.



LeConte's Sparrow

Glen Tipler, gtipke@plase.com

Out at Abbotts Lagoon it is a flock of **Savannah Sparrows** that for the second winter is holding Marin's first **LeConte's Sparrow**; found by Christmas Bird Counters last year, it was seen again on 12/4 (JW, RC). On 12/4 a **Red Knot** and continuing **Tufted Duck** were also worthy of note (MD).



Len Blamin

Red Knot

Hawk Hill had one of its biggest migration days every witnessed earlier this fall, but on 11/25 a **Northern Goshawk** was captured by GGRO banders in the Marin Headlands. This was at least the second of this species observed from this location this fall.

It's always a good time for a rare bird in Bolinas, where in late November a **White-winged Dove** and an **Orange-Bishop** appeared to have made a visit to the wildlife gallery from areas to the south (KH). Perhaps of greater significance, the **Swainson's Thrush** found on the Christmas Count last year appears to be back this year (PP).

On 11/21 a **Black Tern** over San Francisco Bay was seen with **Elegant Terns** by a Golden Gate Audubon field trip. This is especially rare this late in the year, and it was probably the least expected bird of the period (DA).

Observers and Acronyms **DA:** David Assman, **GGRO:** Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, **JW:** Jim White, **KH:** Keith Hansen, **MD:** Mark Dettling, **PP:** Peter Pyle, **RC:** Rich Cimino

THANK YOU TO THESE \$1000+ DONORS TO THE CORTE MADERA PROPERTY

You'll be seeing the following list regularly during the coming months because we promised to recognize donors of more than \$1,000 to our Corte Madera acquisition in our newsletter and on the property for a year. The list below includes donors to both Marin Audubon and Marin Baylands Advocates. Our thanks to everyone who contributed to make this purchase possible.

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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. If you would like more information, contact Wendy Dreskin at 415/457-3949.

The first five of this month's Junior Bird Watchers were fourth graders at Ross School last year when they passed their birdwatching exam.



Jack Little would like to see a Western Tanager.

Ryan Herbst "I like being a Junior Bird Watcher because I didn't know any birds and now I know a lot of birds! I like Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows."



Lulu Baker "I really want to see the Cedar Waxwing because it's really pretty and gets drunk on fermented berries."

Delilah Marrocco says, "I would like to see a Marbled Godwit because I think the long beak is really cool!"



Olivia Ripple would like to see a Red-Winged Blackbird.

Isabella Babb was a second grader at Bacich School. "I like being a Junior Bird Watcher because now I can teach people about the birds around us. The red-shouldered hawk is my favorite!"



The Rail

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- February 11-14 Winter Wings Festival
Klamath Falls
<http://winterwingsfest.org>
- February 12-15 Great Backyard Bird Count
<http://gbbc.birdcount.org>
- February 16 **Field Trip:** Sears Point
With Julian Meisler
- February 19-21 San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival
www.sfbayflywayfestival.com

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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.

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