



Jonathan White

**Bedwell Rocks, Bay of Fundy**

After nearly losing his 65' wooden schooner in a large Alaskan tide, writer, sailor, and surfer Jonathan White vowed to understand the tide. He knew the moon had something to do with it, but what exactly? He read a book, then two. Ten years later, he had read three hundred books and criss-crossed the seven seas to see the largest, fastest, scariest, and most amazing tides in the world. At London's Royal Society, he dug into the earliest Western tide science, which preoccupied thinkers from Da Vinci to Galileo to Newton. With photographs, stories, and short readings, Jonathan takes his audiences on an enthralling journey into the surprising and poetic workings of the tide.

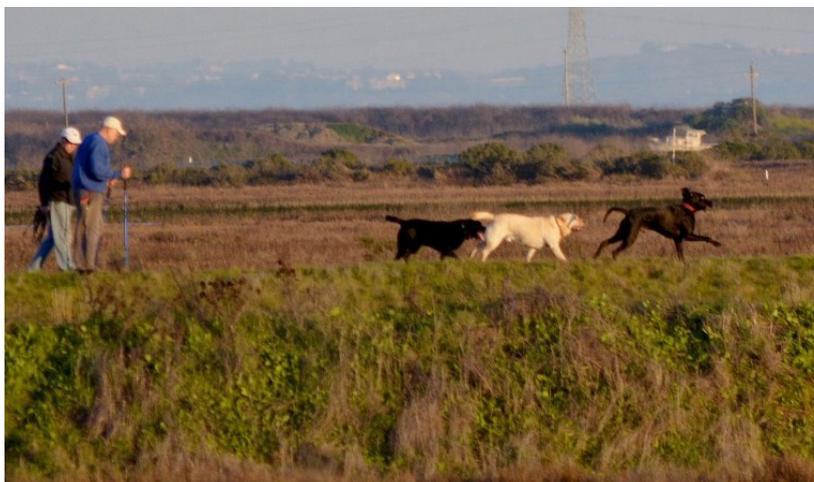
Jonathan White has written for the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Sierra*, *The Sun*, *Surfer's Journal*, *Orion*, and other publications. His first book, *Talking on the Water* (Sierra Club Books), is a collection of interviews exploring our relationship with nature. White is an active marine conservationist, holds an MFA in creative nonfiction, and lives with his wife and son on a small island in Washington State.



# The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## Problems at Bahia



Todd Plummer

**Off-leash dogs running loose at MAS's Bahia property. See directions below to video of the dogs chasing birds.**

Our thanks to MAS member Todd Plummer for informing us of an incident of blatant disregard for our signs and our well-publicized restrictions on access and on walking dogs on our property at Bahia. See Todd's video at [www.flickr.com/gp/9654503@N02/am113U](http://www.flickr.com/gp/9654503@N02/am113U) for a view of the loose dogs running in the water and flushing up a flock of birds.

Use restrictions at Bahia date back to our permits from regulatory agencies and a 2009 agreement with the Homeowners Association. These provide that dogs are to be on-leash at all times while on MAS property and that access is allowed only on the central peninsula and western, where it is to be on the lower path only. There are signs showing where access is allowed, and relevant sections of the agreement are published in the HOA's newsletter at least once a year. The eastern peninsula, closest to the Petaluma River and Black John Slough, is reserved for wildlife, in other words, it is closed to the public. The public can walk anywhere on the central peninsula and is restricted to a lower path near the HOA lagoon.

While many folks abide by the agreement, some do not. Those who are ignoring the limits are causing problems for wildlife and damaging our property. When we speak to folks we hear many excuses: "they live at Bahia so they can walk where they want," "earlier restrictions

are no longer valid," "Audubon changed the rules," "I didn't know," "you're taking away our access," "we've always been able to walk here." None of this is accurate. Prior to our purchase of the property in 2003, the western and central peninsulas were densely covered with invasive plants; making one's way through the thick and tangled plants was extremely difficult. The eastern peninsula in particular was bordered by a steep berm with a narrow top that made walking even more difficult. Public access for recreation was non-existent—if people had been walking, there would have been paths worn through the vegetation, but there were none. Our marsh restoration removed the vegetation in order to restore marsh and native habitat.

The rules governing our property have not changed. We've tried signs but people take them down. Several years ago someone shot holes in one of our signs. Last year we resorted to installing fencing, but users have destroyed the fencing. Whether it is just a few people or many, we do not know, but the fence has been cut, an entire section removed, and other parts twisted and damaged. While the message of the remaining pieces is clear, that the owners do not sanction access, the fence has been rendered ineffective as a deterrent. Now we have to spend more money to repair the fence using a sturdier material.

*continued on page 6*

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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.

- President Barbara Salzman 924-6057
- Vice President Lowell Sykes 388-2821
- Secretary Vacant
- Treasurer Susan Winston 949/632-0908
- Finance Chair Greg Block 717-6453
- Conservation Phil Peterson 828-4780  
Barbara Salzman 924-6057
- Field Trips Jane Medley 559/760-1551
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- Special Projects Jude Stalker 680-6291
- Nominating Phil Peterson 828-4780
- Editor, *The Rail* Bob Hinz, 383-8688
- Volunteer Coordinator Vacant
- Property Management Ed Nute 669-7710
- Publicity Barbara Demeter
- 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.

*The Rail* is published ten times a year by the Marin Audubon Society on 100% recycled paper; edited by Bob Hinz rbrthnz@comcast.net, 383-8688; assisted by other members of MAS; and designed by Studio NaCl (www.studio-nacl.com). Deadline is the first of each month.

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**Website:** www.marinaudubon.org  
Northern Calif. Bird Box: 681-7422  
(Provided by Golden Gate AS)

Members can receive *The Rail* electronically instead of a hard copy by emailing membershipsecretary@marinaudubon.org

**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're beginning to see information on TV news programs about what a wall along Mexican border would look like and stories of hardships people seeking a better life across the border endure. What are rarely even mentioned, are the impacts such a wall would have on wildlife. A wall stretching the length of the US. Mexican border might slow movement, but it would not stop people because they would just tunnel under it as they have been doing with existing segments of wall. But a wall along the entire border would be disastrous for wildlife. It would cut off major movement corridors for wildlife, segment habitats, and block access to water and food. It is a tragedy in the making for both people and wildlife.

We welcome Barbara Demeter to our Board. Barbara will be taking over the Publicity/Outreach position on our Board. Barbara has experience in the real estate and banking industries. She lives in San Rafael with her husband and together they have published several books on travel and another titled "*In Praise of Women*."

We still have space and need for a Board member. If you have some time, love wildlife, and are interested in participating on Marin Audubon's Board, contact one of our nominating committee members, Phil Peterson and Jude Stalker. We are especially interested in a Board member to help

build our volunteer program for our properties and for other needs as Volunteer Coordinator.

We've been reviewing our insurance and updating our coverage in recent months. We are happy to announce that we have a new policy with a new broker and insurance company, one that ensures coverage for all of our volunteers on all of our activities. We are now looking into molestation/sexual harassment insurance which we have been advised to get.

A huge thank you again to our generous donors who are enabling us to pursue protection of Northern Spotted Owl, protect our properties, update our bird checklist, expand field trip opportunities, and take care of some of our emergency needs.

We're pleased that Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris will be presenting their bird song class again in April. The announcement and sign up directions are below. Do register right away because the class usually fills up early. It's a wonderful experience.

A special event this month is "Blackbird and the Storm," a multimedia birdsong-inspired musical presentation incorporating nature field recordings, audio samples of extreme weather conditions. This event is part of the Audubon Concert Tour for this award-winning presentation. It will take place at Sweetwater on March 4. See www.blackbirdandthestorm.com.

## Spring Birds and Their Songs, April 20, 22 & May 6



Join the *Spring Birds and Their Songs* class and tune into the varied chorus of birds nesting in the Bay Area. Sign up early as this class fills quickly.

Naturalist Meryl

Sundove and wildlife biologist Roger Harris teach the class for beginning and intermediate bird watchers who want to use calls and songs to help find and identify birds. Jean Schulz, an experienced birding-by-ear birder, will be assisting.

The class consists of an evening classroom presentation with slides and recorded bird songs on Thursday, **April 20**, from 7-9 pm, at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center. Then early morning field trips on Saturday, **April 22** and a second on Saturday, **May 6**, are designed to get us outdoors practicing what we learned in class. The May 6th dawn chorus field trip starts a few minutes before dawn. If you have never experienced the spring dawn chorus, you are in for a treat.

For information, contact Meryl Sundove at 415/927-4115 or msundove@comcast.net.

- FEE:** \$75 non-Audubon members
- \$65 MAS chapter members
- \$120 2 MAS chapter members from same household

**TO REGISTER:** Send this form and a check made out to "Marin Audubon Society" to:

Marin Audubon Society, P.O. Box 599  
Mill Valley, CA 94942

*All proceeds go to MAS to support their conservation work Thank you and happy birding.*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Audubon member? Yes  No

## MAS FIELD TRIPS

Open to the public

No need to sign up for one-day trips, just join us. Bring lunch, snacks, water, field guide, and binoculars. For information, accessibility and weather check: Jane Medley, 559/760-1551, janermedley@gmail.com.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST RECENT UPDATES.

### THE PONDS AT THE LAS GALLINAS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT (LGVSD)

#### San Rafael

Thursday, March 2, 2017

9 AM to noon

With Carolyn and John Longstreth

Beginning birders are especially welcome on the first Thursday of each month for a leisurely walk around the Las Gallinas ponds. The area includes two treated wastewater storage ponds, a freshwater pond with islands for nesting habitat, and several miles of flat levee trails. It attracts thousands of birds, including waterfowl such as ducks and geese; waders such as herons and egrets; songbirds; and varied raptors. Only three people showed up for our February trip—leaders Rich Cimino and Janet Bodle and MAS member Susan Janson. They were rewarded for enduring the rain and cold with multiple sightings of rails. Each month seems to yield an interesting, and often unexpected, species, so come see what March may reveal.

We welcome bird enthusiasts of all levels. We all help each other to find and identify the birds, and there are usually several experienced birders to assist. You don't even have to arrive on time because we spend the first 30-60 minutes studying the birds around the first pond and the group is easy to find. Heavy rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Hwy 101, exit at Smith Ranch Rd. Drive east on Smith Ranch Rd. toward McInnis Park. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and drive about .5 mile through the LGVSD gates and into the parking lot at the end of the road. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. There is an outhouse in the parking area for public use or you can use the bathrooms at nearby McInnis Park.

### TOMALES BAY TRAIL/GIACOMINI WETLANDS

#### Point Reyes Station

Saturday, March 4, 2017

8:30 AM to noon

With David Sexton and Bob Atwood

We will follow the Tomales Bay Trail from the grasslands along CA Highway 1 to bluffs overlooking the Giacomini Wetlands and Tomales Bay. Along the way are multiple habitats including creekside willows, stock ponds with freshwater wetlands, coastal oaks/mixed forest, grasslands, and tidal wetlands. These varied habitats provide the opportunity for our group to see a wide variety of birds, especially sparrows, raptors, shorebirds, and duck species. Also, plan on a visit to the Giacomini Wetlands view sites at Point Reyes Station. Heavy rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** From Point Reyes Station travel 1½ miles north on Hwy 1 to the trailhead parking lot on the left. No restrooms at this site. Public restrooms at Point Reyes Station at Mesa Rd. and Toby St.

### HALL RANCH TO HORSESHOE BAY Point Reyes National Seashore

Sunday, March 5, 2017

9:30 AM to 3 PM

With Kerry Wilcox

Join Kerry as we hike his Christmas Bird Count territory in our quest for birds, mammals, and some vigorous exercise. We will be hiking approximately four miles on relatively rough trails with a total elevation gain of some 500 feet, so come prepared with comfortable hiking shoes, layered clothing, and plenty to eat and drink.

We'll start our hike at the Hall Ranch (Barn Owl, Say's Phoebe, and American Kestrel possible), walk towards Horseshoe Bay (Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Burrowing Owl possible), bird at Horseshoe Bay and Beach (Surf Scoter, Brant, various grebes and loons all likely), and hike up towards Drake's Estero Overlook (varied shorebirds, cormorants, ducks, gulls, and American White Pelican probable). As you can surmise, our hike through these rich coastal habitats is likely to be pretty amazing!

**DIRECTIONS:** We will meet near the monument at the Drake's Beach parking area at 9:30 AM, and then carpool up the hill to our starting point. Follow Sir Francis Drake Blvd through Inverness out to Point Reyes National Seashore. Keep going until you get to the Drakes Beach Road where you'll bear left. Expect about a 35-minute drive from Point Reyes Station to Drakes Beach. Heavy rain cancels.

### TOLAY LAKE REGIONAL PARK

#### Petaluma

Saturday, March 25, 2017

8:45 AM to mid-afternoon

With Peter Colasanti

This 1,700-acre park, located between the Petaluma River and Sonoma Valley, includes pristine farm- and grasslands, ridges, a seasonal freshwater lake that has water this year, ponds, wetlands, and many other natural resources. This area is not open to the general public without permits, but we will be allowed access with our guide, Peter Colasanti.

We will meet at 8:45 AM at the gate at the top of Cannon Lane, which is off Lakeville Highway just south of and across from Papa's Taverna (restaurant now closed). WE WILL DEPART FROM THE GATE PROMPTLY AT 9 AM. Peter's permit requires that our group enter and leave the park together, and anyone arriving late will not be allowed to enter. There is a \$7/day vehicle use fee at the Park. We will hike several miles to check all the available habitats at the park: grassland, oak woodland, riparian corridors, ponds, ridgelines, and ranch buildings. For those who wish to continue birding after lunch, we can visit the Ellis Creek ponds a few miles north at the south edge of Petaluma. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and be prepared to hike for several miles. Bring water, lunch, sunscreen, hat and dress in layers. Heavy rain cancels.

**DIRECTIONS:** The address of Papa's Taverna is 5688 Lakeville Hwy, Petaluma. From Marin take Hwy 101 north to CA Hwy 37 toward Napa/Vallejo. Continue about 6 miles on Hwy 37 to Lakeville Hwy. Turn left on Lakeville and continue for another 6 miles. Take a right on Cannon Lane as Papa's comes into view on the left.

### MOUNT TAM/CORTE MADERA MARSH No. 3, Birding in Marin Series

Saturday, March 18, 2017

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

We will meet at 8:30 AM at the Bootjack Campground parking area where there is an \$8 parking fee for private vehicles, \$7 for seniors. Restrooms are available here. We will also be using the fee lot at Pantoll, and, yes, one fee will cover both locations. Heavy rain cancels.

Mount Tamalpais is a good area for seeing Pileated Woodpecker. We are hoping to find Red Crossbills (we did last year), Red-breasted Nuthatches, and a couple of early spring migrants like Western Tanager, Cassin's Vireo, and Black-throated Gray or Hermit Warbler. We will picnic on the mountain then visit the lowland marshes in Corte Madera during the afternoon with possible sightings of Blue-winged Teal, Ridgway's Rails, and the rare Nelson's Sparrow recently seen there by many birders.

**DIRECTIONS:** Bootjack is on Panoramic Hwy in Mt. Tamalpais State Park, 0.3 miles east of Pantoll or about 5 miles southeast of Stinson Beach. From Hwy 101 take Hwy 1 toward Stinson Beach and Muir Woods. Turn right on Panoramic Hwy. Parking for Bootjack is about 5 miles on the right.

### JEAN AND JOHN STARKWEATHER SHORELINE PARK

#### San Rafael

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

8:30 AM to 11:30 AM

With Rich Cimino & Janet Bodle

Join guides Rich Cimino and Janet Bodle for an easy bird walk during a high tide. We will bird the shoreline of San Pablo Bay for diving ducks, grebes, peeps, gulls, and terns. We will also look for the Puget Sound variety of White-crowned Sparrow. Bring your scope, water, and snacks. Restrooms are available at the bird walk halfway mark (Target Store). Meet in the parking lot for the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline trailhead. Heavy rain will cancel.

**DIRECTIONS:** From the north take Hwy 101 to the Francisco Blvd exit and Bellam Blvd or from the south to the Bellam Blvd exit. Turn left on Bellam then right on East Francisco Blvd, which parallels I-580. Head east (toward the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge) for about 1-1/2 miles. You will see a Bay Café sign at the Bay Park Center. Turn left on Pelican Way then right to the trailhead parking area. From the south you can take the exit to the San Rafael Bridge getting off at the last Marin exit, the San Quentin exit. For GPS, use the Bay Café address, 2165 Francisco Blvd, San Rafael.

# 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.

## URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES RENEWAL

Twenty years ago Novato citizens voted to approve an urban growth boundary to limit growth and avoid sprawl. Novato became, and still is, the only city in Marin to establish an Urban Growth Boundary. The term for this planning designation is expiring and the City Council will be deciding whether the boundary should be renewed, and, if so, whether to renew it by a vote of the council or the people. Novato is the only city in Marin that is bounded by large areas of land that are not in the jurisdiction of other cities. Urban Growth Boundaries provide important protections for wetlands, streams, and other natural resources that are on these lands.

Marin Audubon along with other environmental organizations, supports renewing the boundary by a vote of residents, as it was established in the first place. A vote by the council can be overturned by the council, while a vote by citizens can only be changed by a vote of the citizens. A vote by residents is more permanent, certain and dependable for the environment, for residents and for all of the county.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The item will be on the Novato City Council's agenda on March 7. Express your support by writing to the Novato City Council, 922 Machin Avenue, Novato, CA 94945 or with an email message.

- Wetland policies that proactively seek to protect wetlands by avoiding impacts be included. The current emphasis is entirely on mitigation and monitoring which sends the message that wetland loss is acceptable if it is mitigated.
- Baylands be broadly defined as including adjacent uplands which are critical components of wetland ecosystems.
- Tidal and other wetland areas be protected by City policies and ordinances and not just by relying on regulatory agencies.
- The already positive species and habitat protection policy be followed up with a policy that clearly requires that adverse impacts to special status and other native species and their habitats be avoided.
- Include policies that would clearly protect native trees. Young trees area also needed to replace old trees that will not last forever.
- The urban Growth Boundary be renewed.
- MAS properties in and near the City limits be identified as in our ownership on General Plan maps and be designated as for Conservation.

The revised Draft General Plan has been completed, and the City is now embarking on preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Now is an ideal time for Novato residents and others interested to comment on what they would like to see in the city's revised General Plan. View the suggested revisions to the General Plan on the city's website. the City Council will be discussing Land Use on March 7 and Environmental Resources on April 11.

## NOVATO GENERAL PLAN UPDATE UNDERWAY

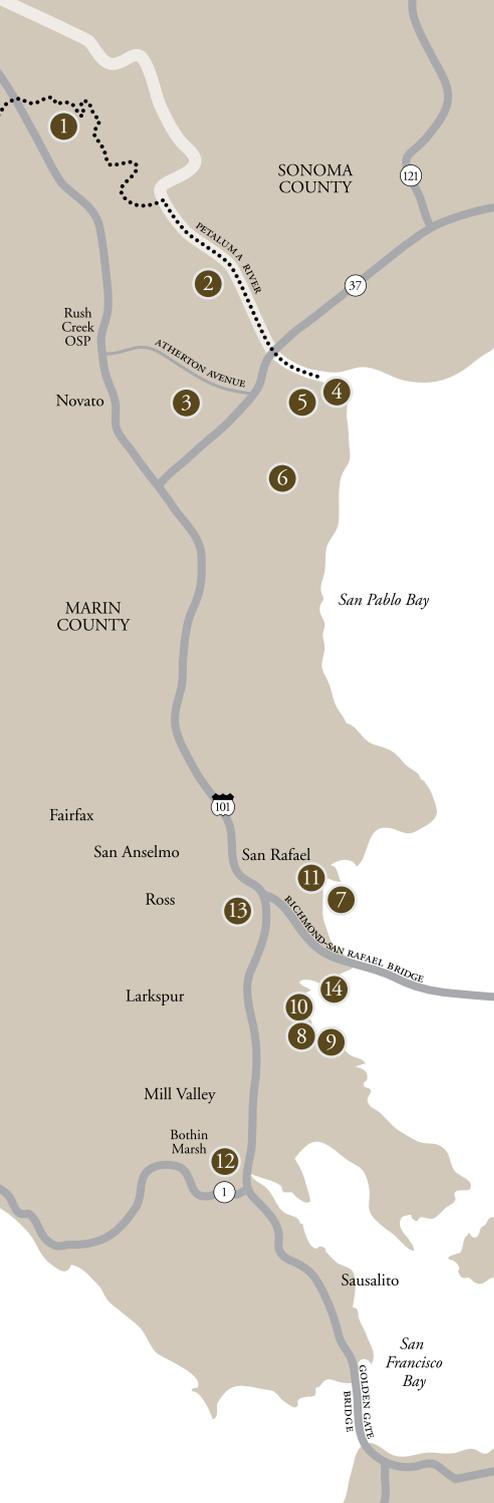
The City of Novato has begun a process of updating its General Plan, a process that is required by state law to take place every 10 years. The focus of this revision is on the City as a sustainable community, so the plan addresses aspects that will make the developed environment more livable for people. Recreation, access to healthy food (e.g., community gardens) and cultural activities are emphasized. As members know, MAS's focus is always on protecting natural habitats and wildlife. Natural habitats contribute to making us healthy because they contribute to clean air and clean water, provide opportunities for recreation and lift our spirits.

Our comments address policies protecting baylands, wetlands and other habitat types. We specifically ask that:

## GGNRA DOG MANAGEMENT

Some members may have seen the response to our IJ Op Ed about dogs in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). Cutting through comments about recent and past history, the main point is that both the GGNRA staff and MAS are biased against dogs.

Speaking for MAS, we are not at all biased against dogs, we are biased in favor of native wildlife and habitats. We are biased for native wildlife being able to have habitats free of non-native predators (dogs and cats). Our native wildlife have a hard enough time finding food and avoiding native predators to survive and raise their young without having to deal with non-native predators on public lands that are supposed to be protected for them.



### 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

While we cannot speak for the Park Service, we expect their bias is also protection of the park's natural resources, its native plants and animals, endangered and other special status species. At least that's what it should be—that is their charge.

The author argues that off-leash dogs are legal at GGNRA. Suffice it to repeat that GGNRA has allowed unleashed dogs for more than 20 years during which it was against federal regulations. No other National Park allows unleashed dogs now nor did it then. Now GGNRA is trying to make things right. Four years of environmental documents and public meetings is hardly rushing. We applaud GGNRA for taking on this hard task. They should have done it years ago.

In the bigger picture, we want to ensure that GGNRA's habitats and the species that depend on them survive to be enjoyed by our grandchildren as well as future generations of wildlife.

To repeat, dogs are great in their place but that does not have to be everywhere their owners or walkers want.

## UPDATES

### Anchor-outs

At the February Richardson Bay Regional Agency (RBRA) meeting, county staff and the harbor master reported on efforts to deal with damage from the storms. They also reported that, as of January 31, 28 unattended mooring balls and floats were removed, 16 unoccupied marine debris vessels were disposed, 15 registration notices or violations were issued. In total this year 65 vessels have been removed to date, however, in answer to a question by

the Sausalito representative, it was revealed that number of anchor-outs in the Bay has not changed. This means that new anchor-outs continue to come into the Bay. It also means that the reporting method is flawed at best because it conveys that significant progress is being made when, in fact, it is not. To accurately convey the status and success of the program, the staff report needs also to include the number of anchor-outs, mooring balls and marine debris that remain in the Bay after their work.

The City of Sausalito renewed its request for the RBRA to begin to discuss governance as a way of avoiding their leaving the RBRA, but the other members expressed only weak support. The RBRA delayed discussion of governance until the summer claiming that it is too complex a matter. Sausalito is concerned about having to put up most of the funding, while utilizing their own police for enforcement. The procedure for members to withdraw from the RBRA has certain time restrictions as to when applications can be submitted. If Sausalito does not give notification of their intent to withdraw now, they have to wait another 18 months.

### Corte Madera Inn

In a letter dated February 3, the Regional Water Quality Control Board has informed the applicant via letter that their Federal 401 application for water quality certification is incomplete and does not currently provide sufficient information to determine whether the project complies with water quality standards. The letter lists five reasons the application is incomplete: the Alternatives Analysis is inadequate and needs to be revised

(reasons listed included that cost estimates are outdated and that the basic project purpose is too narrowly defined); failure to enroll under the national Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit because the site is larger than 5 acres; the proposed mitigation does not replace the lost functions and habitat provided by the pond; a CEQA document has not been certified; and the application fee submitted is not adequate. When, or whether, the application will or can satisfactorily provide the requested information is questionable.

## PETALUMA RIVER BOAT TRIP

MARIN AUDUBON MEMBERS ONLY

**Online Signups Begin**

**Wednesday, March 15, 2017**

Boat leaves from and returns to Petaluma Turning Basin

Thursday, April 13, 2017

8:15 AM to 1:30 PM

*With Peter Colasanti*

Dolphin Charters will take us through a small salt water estuary off San Pablo Bay that runs about ten miles through some of the last (mostly untouched) salt water marshes in the Bay Area. Cruising down the Petaluma River and meandering past sloughs, oxbows, and marshes, participants will experience these vital aquatic links in our natural world. Boating makes accessible an intimate experience of this backwater, riparian world. Our boat will continue out into San Pablo Bay at low tide where grebes, ducks, and terns can be seen in the shallow water habitat. In addition, the extensive mud flats along the edge of San Pablo Bay often host large numbers of shorebirds as well as the raptors that feed on them.

The trip is limited to 25 MAS members, and the cost is \$90. (Of course, you can become a Marin Audubon member and join us on the trip.) Registration will begin on March 15 at [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org). **Book your space on March 15 or soon thereafter as our boat trips often sell out on the first day.** Those confirmed will receive directions and other instructions prior to the trip.

## FISH LOSS

One sad result of this badly-needed rain is that the flow in Lagunitas Creek has been so high that most of the salmon and steelhead redds have been washed out of the creek.

FEBRUARY 4, 2017 FIELD TRIP

## What's So Special About Bahia?

*With Shannon Burke and Jude Stalker*

Jude Stalker, Wetland Ecologist and Marin Audubon Board Member, and Shannon Burke, Naturalist with Marin County Parks, presented numerous fascinating details about the importance and uniqueness of Bahia as we toured the wetland and upland habitats. No one seemed bothered by the light rainfall.

Shannon focused on the connectivity of the woodland and wetland habitats giving numerous examples of wildlife that utilize and depend on both. Birds such as swallows, herons, and egrets forage in the wetlands and roost in the woodlands, taking advantage of the close proximity of several habitats, which is particularly helpful to animals raising their young. We walked through the unique oak woodland, unique botanically because almost all of the oaks here are hybrids of Oregon Oak,

Valley Oak, and Blue Oak. This has created what is known to scientists as a "hybrid swarm."

Jude focused on the history of this area—how a developer planned to build 2,200 homes on marshland and how, led by Marin Audubon, a variety of community organizations and private citizens rallied to purchase the land and save it from development.

Due to great effort by Marin Audubon, several levees were breached to allow tidal water back in, new seasonal wetlands and upland habitats were created, and extensive planting is well underway to return native vegetation and habitat.



*Van Burg*

**Mockingbird**

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Abundant rain continues to fall giving even late plantings the chance to do well this year. The other result of late rain is that we needn't worry about mulching for water retention this month. Sheet mulching, though, for killing Harding grass, et al. is the plan for Triangle Marsh in March. The invasive annual species like radish and various thistles are large enough to catch our attention now and, if we don't pull them, they will be blooming in another month.

Do you know anyone who needs to earn community service hours? Our restoration projects would fit the bill. Act locally and join us on a workday. Witness restoration first-hand and be a part of it.

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

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

#### Triangle Marsh, Corte Madera:

First Saturday: March 4, April 1

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

#### Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturdays: March 11, April 8

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

If you would like to help, please contact Jude, volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org or 415/680-6291 for more information.

### THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Katherine Cagney, McKay & Samantha Hawthorne, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Tiffany Nicolescu, Ed Nute, Flinn Rauck, Jude Stalker, Ann & Ellie Sutro, Lowell Sykes

### MAS IS UNITED MARKETS' 'CHARITY OF THE MONTH'

MAS will be March's "Charity of the Month" at United Markets in San Rafael and San Anselmo. Customers who bring their own shopping bags get a nickel credit for each bag. The nickels can be credited to your bill, or donated to Marin Audubon. So please consider donating.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jeff Abend, Emily Adcock, Donna Allen, Tyson Appel, Elizabeth Atkinson, Marianne Bertuccelli, Barbara Boucke, Donna Brennan, Ken Brott, Andrea Brower, Shannon Burke, Susannah Clark, Julie Coyle, Kathleen Defever, David Donnenfield, Beverly Dresden, Richard Gordon, Bonnie Gosliner, Shannon A. Griffin, James Hardy, Joan Kaul, Karen Laffey, Chin Liu, Rebecca Matsubara, Michael McDaniel & Jean O'Korn, Tamara Oei, Open Space Sausalito, Deborah Quinn, Blanche Rubin, John Sawyer, Janet Souza, Kyle Sterling, Steve Sulmeyer, Sandra Swanson, Tim Tribble, Tristan Warren, Paula Westdahl

## HABITAT STEWARDSHIP



Ed Nute

**MAS's Simmons Slough property is now flooded as expected during winter.**

### Problems at Bahia

*continued from page 1*

Violators don't seem to care that they are breaking the law. Destroying the property of others is illegal. In other words, the people destroying our fence are committing a crime. We are in the process of arranging for enforcement which needs to be done by authorities who have the police power which we do not have.

We are not about to let our property be destroyed and to have the wildlife, for which we are committed to provide habitat, ignored. Marin Audubon spent years trying to permanently protect the Bahia property, restore its wetlands to tidal marsh and protect its forests for wildlife. Our efforts included fighting off development for 20 years and then finding \$16 million to purchase the 632-acre property. Even though a property will not be developed, that does not mean it is protected from impacts that threaten wildlife and damage and degrade their habitat. Property ownership is not easy and as evidenced by our Bahia experience, it requires constant vigilance and action which we are pursuing.

As required by our 2009 agreement, we had our annual meeting with the Bahia Homeowners Association (HOA) Board at the end of January. The purpose of our meeting is to discuss general compliance with the

provisions of an agreement our two organizations signed when MAS restored the property to marsh. At the meeting we explained the access and vandalism problems that have been occurring. The Board recommended that the best way to communicate the issues with residents is to put a letter in the HOA newsletter presenting our problems, which we will be doing.

### SIMMONS SLOUGH

MAS's Simmons Slough property at Olive and Atherton Avenues has been fully flooded for the most part during the record-breaking storms. The water levels have fluctuated because the pump being used for Highway 37 also draws water from our Simmons Slough property. It is used to prevent, or at least try to prevent, Highway 37 and Atherton and Olive Avenues from flooding. The water levels have fluctuated depending on whether the pump can keep pace with the rain. In recent years, we have been concerned about too much water being pumped leading to the wetlands drying up too fast. The county will be purchasing a new pump and will be preparing a Water Management Plan that will include our Simmons property. We want to ensure that there is enough water remaining on our property to sustain wildlife through the spring months during which birds are migrating.

FEBRUARY 5, 2017 FIELD TRIP

## Sacramento Delta Boat Trip

*With David Wimpfheimer*

The 27 participants on this popular annual field trip experienced a rain-free day as our boat meandered through the Delta waterways. We enjoyed dramatic views of large flocks of wintering birds usually not seen on our Marin trips such as **Snow Geese**, **Greater Sandhill Cranes**, and **Tundra Swans**. With David Wimpfheimer as our leader and excellent viewing conditions from the top deck of the

boat, we identified 64 species of birds including 14 species of waterfowl and 8 species of raptors.



**Tundra Swans**

Robert Olin

# MARIN BIRDLOG: JANUARY 2017

By Noah Arthur

Rain is good! Or so they say. It doesn't seem so good when you're trying to bird in it. But a rainy January brought some nice winter rarities to Marin, as well as what I like to think of as the last warbler of fall and the first hummer of spring.

Continuing at Las Gallinas was the **Harris's Sparrow** found in December, frequenting the (wet) parking lot with other sparrows. On the 5th of January, another interesting bird was found at Las Gallinas (LB): an apparently intersex **Northern Pintail** showing markings intermediate between males and females.



Glen Topke, gtopke@basac.com

## Harlequin Duck

intergrade with Iceland (NA, BA), but no definitive rarities surfaced.

The best gull—and perhaps the best bird—of the month was found on the 14th, and (predictably, given the species) not at a herring spawn: an adult **Franklin's Gull** discovered in flooded fields in Novato (MF). This numerous Great Plains-breeding small gull, which normally winters on South American coasts, has an interesting pattern of showing up as a vagrant in California fields in deep winter, far to the north of the latitude at which it would normally spend the nonbreeding months.

On the 16th several good birds turned up, including a **Prairie Merlin** over Bolinas Ridge and a couple of **Caspian Terns** on Tomales Bay, continuing this winter's trend of wintering Caspians in the Bay Area (DM).

A nearly solid six days of rain began on the 18th, during which time a distinctly wintry bird was spotted, a male **Harlequin Duck** on the rocks at San Quentin Prison on the 20th (CB). In Bolinas, during another brief break in the rain on the 21st, a gummy-billed **Lucy's Warbler** that had presumably been foraging in eucalyptus trees was reported (RD)—an exceptional midwinter record of this very rare warbler that usually occurs as a fall vagrant. This bird had apparently been present since mid-December and was/is probably wintering in the area.

Deep dark winter is the time for rare ducks, and a probable female **Tufted Duck** was spotted at Stafford Lake on the 28th (MS). But, with the previous week's rains gone, one might also say that spring sprung on the morning of the 28th when the first **Allen's Hummingbird** of the season visited ML's yard.

Las Gallinas put on another great show on the 30th and 31st, with two **American Bitterns** and a **Red-necked Grebe** (BB) as well as a male **Common Teal** (TP, m.ob.), perhaps the same bird found in December (DE).

Finally, on the 31st a **Nelson's Sparrow**, the other candidate for Marin's best bird of the month, was found at Corte Madera Marsh (MS). This secretive little bird has continued through mid-February.



Andy Reago and Chrissy McClarren

## Nelson's Sparrow

Observers and Acronyms **BA**: Bob Atwood, **BB**: Bob Battagin, **CB**: Courtney Buechert, **DE**: Daniel Edelstein, **DM**: Dominik Mosur, **JW**: Jim White, **LB**: Len Blumin, **MF**: Mark Forney, **ML**: Margareta Luff, **m.ob**: many observers, **MS**: Mark Stephenson, **RD**: Ryan DiGaudio, **TP**: Todd Plummer

JANUARY 21, 2017 FIELD TRIP

# Bolinas Lagoon in January: Birding in Marin

With Jim White



Len Blumin

## Eurasian Wigeon

We had an excellent beginning to our fourth season of monthly birding field trips with 15 participants finding 88 species on our January 21 field trip around Bolinas. We can thank early Marin Audubon Society members for successfully saving Bolinas Lagoon from state plans to build a freeway through the area and local developer plans to dredge a harbor and to build a marina on the lagoon. Today the lagoon is one of California's Important Birding Areas (IBA) and has been designated as a "Wetland of International Significance".

Fitting nicely between rain storms, high tides, and raging surf, our group observed 8 gull species including **Thayer's** and **Herring Gulls** at the Pine Gulch Creek delta, 13 kinds of ducks with a bright-headed **Eurasian Wigeon** on the west side of Bolinas Lagoon, and a **Burrowing Owl** in the pasture south of Commonweal. A **Bald Eagle**, a flying **Virginia Rail**, and a **Swamp Sparrow** offered fine views for the few willing to have wet and muddy shoes and a full day.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Jane A. Allen, Gay & Tim Cain, Frederick W. Goff, Richard Gordon, John & Paula Granucci, Roger Hooper, Just Give, Robert & Karen Kustel, Lincoln Financial Foundation, Inc., Robert & Sandra Mauceli, Barbara Mitchell, J. Morrow Otis, Roger & Dorothy Roberts, Jillian Robinson, Michael Satris, Maija & Barton Schaefer



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- April 6 **Field Trip:** Las Gallinas  
*With Peter Colasanti & Susan Kelly*
  - April 10 **Field Trip:** Abbotts Lagoon  
*With Carolyn & John Longstreth*
  - April 13 **Boat Trip:** Petaluma River  
Online Signups Start March 15  
*With Peter Colasanti*
  - April 15 **Field Trip:** Mount Burdell  
*With Jim White & Bob Battagin*
  - April 19 **Field Trip:** Lower Mines Road  
Lake Del Valle  
*With Rich Cimino & Janet Bodle*
  - April 19–25 **Godwit Days Bird Festival, Arcata**  
[www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org)
  - April 28–30 **Point Reyes Birding Festival**  
[www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org](http://www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org)
- Check website for updates and details

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## SUPPORT MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY — BECOME A CHAPTER-SUPPORTING MEMBER

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. We receive a fixed amount based on our 2001 membership. MAS relies on local support for our habitat protection efforts, conservation advocacy, birding field trips, educational speakers series, and publication of *The Rail*. 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 because all of your chapter-supporting dues stay with MAS.

If you're 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 website using your credit card or PayPal. Please go to [www.marinaudubon.org](http://www.marinaudubon.org).

## JOINT NAS-MAS MEMBERSHIP

A National Audubon Society Membership is a joint membership with National and chapters. With this joint membership, you receive our newsletter and other chapter benefits. However, MAS receives no portion of your National Audubon Membership dues.

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

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