

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 7:30 PM

Birds of Belize and Tikal

With Rich Cimino



The Rail

MARIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

MAS Annual Report, July 2015 - June 2016

It's been a busy and productive year. Our major accomplishment this year was completing the purchase of the property adjacent to the Corte Madera Ecological Reserve. We closed escrow in August 2015. Since then we've been working diligently to get to construction which requires preparing draft and final plans, passing environmental review and obtaining permits. (See page 6 for update). We also worked to acquire other properties in Novato and San Rafael. Unfortunately, none of these deals have worked out, but there is always hope that in the future they may.

At least 470 folks volunteered 9,267 hours making possible Marin Audubon's activities and successes:

RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITAT

We worked to restore, maintain and enhance habitats on the 518 acres we own. The habitats we own range from subtidal to upland, the latter of which requires maintenance. Our volunteers, Jude Stalker and Bob Hinz lead regular monthly work days at Bahia and Triangle Marsh. Other volunteers work behind the scenes: Lowell Sykes, Katy Zaremba, Debbie Ablin, Flinn Moore Rauck, Sharon McCloskey and many others. We also hire crews to complete maintenance work when our volunteers can't finish all the work in time.

EDUCATION: FIELD TRIPS, SPEAKER SERIES

- MAS sponsored many activities to introduce members to and inform them about birds and the natural world. We published 10 issues of *The Rail*, sponsored 49 field trips, 10 Speaker Series programs focused on birds and other natural resources, a Spring Bird Song class with Meryl Sundove and Roger Harris, and monthly field trips at the Las Gallinas Ponds with Susan Kelly and Len Blumin and at various local habitats with Jim White and Bob Battagin.
- Co-sponsored three Water Programs with Marin Conservation League: San Francisco Estuary Institute Executive Director, Warner Chabot; Steve Moore, State Water Quality Control Board Member and Carl Wilcox, Advisor to the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, both speaking on California water matters.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Sponsored three Christmas Bird Counts: Southern Marin (compilers Ed Nute and Bob Hinz), Cheep Thrills in Northern Marin County (compiler Susan Kelly) and Pt. Reyes Count in West Marin (compilers John Longstreth and Tom Gaman).

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Rich Cimino

Bat Falcon

This program will showcase the birds and maps of Belize and Tikal, Guatemala that Rich Cimino has seen and compiled through the years. Belize, in the Yucatan Peninsula, lies on the Caribbean and is bordered by Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the west. It is a lush country, home to many beautiful and fascinating tropical birds, and is a stopover for a number of the Bay Area's spring and summer migrant species.

Rich is from Marin County and is a long-time avid birder and a tour field guide on annual field trips to Belize and Guatemala. This is Rich's second presentation to Marin Audubon. Last year he presented on the Birds of Alaska. Rich is also the compiler for the eastern Alameda County CBC and is active in the Altamont Pass Wind Turbine repowering program, North Bay shorebird and heron rookery surveys, and other conservation initiatives.

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Marin Audubon is 60!

Join us in celebrating this milestone in our history. Enjoy other Marin Audubon folks, special speakers, tasty treats and beverages, and celebrate our many accomplishments and successes.

Saturday, October 15, 2016, 2 to 4 PM

Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary

376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, CA

Reserve your space right away. The Sanctuary limits the number of attendees.

Sign up on our website www.marinaudubon.org. Questions? Please contact Barbara Salzman.

Donations to help defray the costs of the event are welcome.

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	Vacancy
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
Membership	William Legge 388-7883
Fundraising	Everett Clark 789-9224
Speaker Series/Programs	Matthew Perry 734/904-7608
Special Projects	Jude Stalker 680-6291
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
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 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

I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer. We're busy planning the year's activities, including a celebration of the 60th Anniversary of our establishment. We are celebrating at the Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary, the place of our birth, and are limited to 120 folks. So be sure to sign up early.

We're also planning interesting field trips and programs and we'll continue working diligently to protect wildlife and their habitat throughout the county, and to maintain and enhance habitats on our property. One of our major efforts during the coming months will be working out a better process with the Open Space District to protect Northern Spotted Owls and their habitats and to review OSD trail projects, particularly projects that stand to impact habitat. We welcome members to help us protect the Spotted Owl and to join our Conservation Committee and help us protect habitats throughout the county. Call Phil Peterson or me for information.

Our new fiscal year brings some additional changes to our Board: We are in the process of saying a sad farewell to our long-time treasurer, Jo Kreider, who has found the long commute from her new home in Santa Rosa to be too arduous. Many thanks go to Jo for her years of

service, her willingness to help with many other tasks, her upbeat approach and for diligently tending to our financial books. We are very fortunate to be able to welcome our new Treasurer, Susan Winston. Susan, moved to San Rafael recently from southern California, wanted to get involved with her new community and chose MAS. Susan is a CPA with years of experience with both her own company and also work with several non-profits. We look forward to a long relationship with Susan.

Our long-time secretary, Mariah Baird, has also retired after 16 years of dedicated service. We thank Mariah for all of her help, support and for her cogent and wise input through these many years. We will miss her. Of course, we now are looking for another secretary. Contact Barbara Salzman.

A very special thank you to all who responded to our Spring Appeal and donated to support our properties. Your contributions are enabling us to continue our work to plant, water and otherwise maintain and enhance the 518 acres of habitat we now own. And it's not too late to donate. If you have not contributed yet, you can send a check to our P.O. box or contribute by credit card through our website.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

State of Tomales Bay Conference September 22-24

Tomales Bay and its watershed host many migrating waterfowl and shore birds during fall and winter months as well as a wide variety of forest and grassland birds. The State of Tomales Bay Conference, to be held on Friday, September 23, will gather local scientists, policy makers and watershed stewards to discuss this unique resource, its habitat and its management. This year's conference is focused on the themes of Science, Policy and Practice in the watershed. In addition, on the 22nd there will be a field trip to MALT's newly acquired Millerton Creek Ranch and on the 24th Jules Evens will lead a canoe trip to the restored Giacomini Marsh, followed by a BBQ featuring local oysters and locally-sourced watershed food. Register now at www.tomalesbaywatershed.org/state-of-tomales-bay-2016.html

THANK YOU \$1000+ DONORS FOR THE CORTE MADERA PROPERTY ACQUISITION

This is the last month for publishing major donors to the purchase of Corte Madera marsh property. During our fundraising for purchase of the property, we committed to thanking major donors in our newsletter for a year.

Again, a special thank you to all of these major donors who were an important part of making this acquisition possible.

Anonymous, Barbara Benson, Richard Bergmann & Denise Filakosky, Susan & Howard Blair, Linda Brune, Michael & Priscilla Bull, California Alpine Club Foundation, California Coastal Conservancy, Corte Madera Beautification Committee, Corte Madera Community Foundation, John Crawford, Jim & Drusie Davis, David Eiseman, Michelle & Robert Friend Foundation, Barbara Ford, Anki & Larry Gelb, Greenbrae Improvement Club Inc., Sallie Griffith, Maureen Groper, Estate of Ken Howard, Joan & Eugene Jacks, Gardner Kent & Sarah Williamson, Nancy Kittle, KLS Fund, Harriet Lapin, LEF Foundation, Lincoln Financial Foundation Inc., Love Family Trust, Kathy Lowrey, Diane & Leslie Lynch, Maria Mangold, Marin Conservation League and its members, Marin County Fish & Wildlife Commission, Marin County Board of Supervisors/Open Space District, Marin Open Space Trust, Robert & Sandra Mauceli, Michelle & Robert Friend Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Russel Nelson, Warren & Marcia Nute, Pasadena Community Foundation, Thomas Peacock, Richard Plant, Joanne K. Powell, RHE Charitable Foundation, Harry Richards, Pamela Rickert & Brian Hertz, Lori H. Runnfeldt, Barbara & Jay Salzman, Mary Kent Schardt, E. C. & Shari Shute Jr., Dr. Jill Sideman, Springcreek Foundation/Glenda & Henry Corning, Charles & Jean Stewart, Town of Corte Madera, Rosemary Wakeham, Jay J. & Sigrid E. Wimberly Foundation through Audubon California

Read This First!

In a needed effort to fit all field trip offerings for the month on one page, we are experimenting with eliminating "Directions" from *The Rail*. Directions to the starting locations of all field trips will still be available with the field trip listings on MAS's website, marinaudubon.org. Please contact Jane Medley if this new arrangement creates a hardship for you.

LAS GALLINAS STORAGE PONDS **300 Smith Ranch Road, San Rafael.** **Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot**

Thursday, September 1, 2016
9 AM to Noon

With Susan Kelly and Jim White

Susan has agreed to lead our Thursday walks again this year, continuing a tradition started years ago by Bruce Bajema. Each month she will be accompanied by a different local, knowledgeable birder who will help guide the large group that usually shows up for this popular monthly walk. This month's co-leader will be Jim White.

Birders of all levels are welcome. Each month the avian cast of characters will change, and we'll try to keep track of newly arriving species. Recently observed species include Peregrine Falcon, White Pelican (30 of them!), Ring-billed Gull, and Caspian Tern. Bring binoculars, as well as some water. We'll be walking about 2 miles on the levees surrounding the ponds.

BODEGA BAY **1600 Bayflat Road, Bodega Bay**

Tuesday, September 6, 2016
8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

With Lisa Hug

Celebrate World Shorebirds Day at Bodega Bay during the fall migration when just about anything can happen. We'll meet at the Rail Ponds at 8:30 AM. We will make some stops for shorebirds, then move on to Owl Canyon, Sonoma County's premier vagrant trap, and next to a sea watch at Bodega Head. From the Head we'll return clockwise around Bodega Harbor with likely stops at Campbell Cove, Owl Canyon again, Porto Bodega and wind up at Doran Park (entrance fee) where we sometimes find Snowy Plovers.

HAMILTON WETLANDS **1200 Hamilton Parkway, Novato**

Tuesday, September 13, 2016
8:30 AM to Noon

With David Sexton and Bill Jones

In our continuing salute to World Shorebirds this month, Hamilton Wetlands

Volunteers, David and Bill, will lead a trip to view the Hamilton Wetlands and celebrate the return of shorebirds to this former flight line and landing strip. The trip will start at the Novato Skate Park at 1200 Hamilton Parkway where we will arrange carpools. Next we will stop at the nursery where Nursery and Restoration Manager, Christina McWhorter, will give a brief update on the restoration and replanting progress. The outing will then cover both the east side and the southwest sides of the wetlands as we search for early returning shorebirds and ducks.

DRAKES BEACH AND THE FISH DOCKS **No. 9, Birding in Marin Series** **Meet at the Drakes Beach parking lot near the monument**

Saturday, September 17, 2016

8:30 AM to mid-afternoon

With Jim White and Bob Battagin

September is the most surprising month of birding here as many juvenile birds make their first migration south and west without the aid of Google. Some western migrants such as Nashville, Hermit and Black-throated Gray Warblers may be in the Point Reyes tree islands and we sometimes see more unusual Eastern species. Drakes Bay also begins to harbor wintering species like Red-necked Grebes, Marbled Murrelets and Loons. We will picnic early and then go to the Fish Docks and/or the Point Reyes Light House.

VAUX'S SWIFTS AT MCNEAR BRICK & BLOCK

1 Brickyard Road, San Rafael

Monday, September 19, 2016
6:30 PM to 7:40 PM depending on weather conditions

With Bob Hinz and Jane Medley

Join us at sunset for the opportunity to witness the Vaux's Swifts during their fall migration through Marin, which occurs in September and October. Dan McNear of McNear Brick & Block has kindly allowed access for our group to this remarkable site where smoke stacks no longer in use provide an important communal roosting spot for the swifts. We will have the opportunity to watch thousands of swifts as they descend into the stacks just before nightfall. At the peak of migration last year, over 29,000 swifts were counted in one evening! Sunset will be at 7:11 PM, so plan on arriving early to be ready. Bring scopes, binoculars, and, if desired, folding chairs for your seating comfort. It can be chilly at dusk. Please stay with our group and do not enter any of the private areas on this property. Turn in at the brickyard entrance and park by the side of the road.

OUTER POINT VAGRANTS **12100 Sir Francis Drake Blvd,** **Point Reyes Station**

Thursday, September 22, 2016
8:30 AM to Noon

With Peter Colasanti

We will meet Peter at White House Pool, and bird the area as the group gathers. Our itinerary for the day will depend on what has been happening in the area. This time of year, as Rich Stallcup said, "The O.P. never gets old. It's never the same. For some of us, a year made up of twelve Septembers would be nice."

RODEO LAGOON **Bunker Road, Sausalito**

Saturday, September 24, 2016
8 AM to Noon

With William Legge and David Wiechers

Join William and David for a morning of birding at Rodeo Lagoon. This is their "patch" and we are likely to see over 60 species. With large numbers of birds moving through the area this time of year, it's sure to be interesting with unusual sightings a definite possibility. We will be targeting Parasitic Jaeger, migrating shorebirds, warblers and other passerines. Meet by the bridge over the channel to the beach near the Rodeo Lagoon parking lot. We will begin the morning with a sea watch at 8 AM. Those arriving late may join us at 9 AM for a circuit of the Lagoon.

FARALLON ISLANDS **310 Harbor Drive, Clipper Yacht** **Harbor, Sausalito**

Sunday, October 2, 2016
7:30 AM to 4 PM

With David Wimpfheimer

Join us for our annual day of seabird and marine mammal watching as we cruise through offshore waters to the Farallon Islands. The outing will be led by Naturalist David Wimpfheimer aboard Jim Robertson's power catamaran *Outer Limits*. On past trips we have sighted more than fourteen pelagic bird species, including albatrosses, shearwaters and auklets, as well as sea lions, porpoises, dolphins and whales. We will get an up close look at the islands and learn about their interesting natural and human history. This is a trip that both experienced and first-time birders and nature lovers will enjoy. If you get seasick easily, this is not the trip for you.

The cost is \$120 per person. **Online registration for this trip is now underway.** Register at www.marinaudubon.org. **Include the name, email address and contact phone number of each participant.** There is always a chance the trip may need to be rescheduled at the last minute due to sea conditions, so we need to be able to reach participants. We will send an email to participants a few days before the trip.

TICKETS
AVAILABLE

Annual Report *continued from page 1*

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Continued to serve as fiscal agent for Marin Baylands Advocates, our partner in acquiring baylands; served on Boards and advisory committees: Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR), San Francisco Estuary Institute, San Francisco Estuary Partnership, San Francisco Joint Venture, MMWD's Lagunitas Creek Advisory Committee, and partnered with other organizations in the Community Marin Action Committee; as an owner of considerable acreage along San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, participated in the Marin County Public Works Department's Advisory Committee for BayWave, the effort to address vulnerabilities to sea level rise; sponsored the Mother's Day Picnic to benefit MAS and ACR and all attendees.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

- **Herbicides** Supported having the option to use herbicides as a last resort using an Integrated Pest Management approach to control invasive plants on MMWD and Marin County Open Space District lands to preserve native habitats in the face of pressure to stop all use of herbicides.
- **Pacheco Valley Open Space** Supported the County's not mowing Pacheco Valle open space area (except for 10 feet next to road) to protect natural resources, which is how other open space lands are managed.
- **Muir Woods** Supported establishing a reservation system as a means to reduce traffic and parking problems.
- **Marin County Open Space District's Inclusive Access Plan** Submitted comments focused on protecting habitats in response to this plan, the purpose of which is intended to expand handicapped access to Open Space District lands. We made suggestions for less environmentally damaging alternatives.
- **Corte Madera Inn Pond** Attended many hearings and submitted multiple written comments in opposition to filling the tidal pond and its associated wetlands at the Corte Madera Inn.
- **Sausalito** Supported protecting bay resources, in particular a rock outcropping and rocky shoreline, from being covered by a private boat dock.
- **Hamilton Sports Complex** Our Conservation Committee had a presentation from the applicant proposing to develop multiple fields and other facilities on city property and the former landfill, and a separate presentation from neighbors opposed to the development. The developer reported that they had reduced the size of the project. It was reported later that the developer has withdrawn the application for the project.
- **GGNRA Dog Management Plan** Voiced, in letter and at several public hearings, support

for limiting off-leash dog use to protect wildlife and their habitats.

- **Anchor-Outs** Continued to voice objection to anchor-outs at the Richardson Bay Regional Agency's meetings and in letters. Permanent living on the Bay is a violation of the public trust which holds that waters of the state are reserved for public use including navigation, fish and wildlife habitat, and not places for people to take up residence, which is a purely private use.
- **Point Reyes National Seashore Elk** Had a presentation by Point Reyes National Seashore staff at the beginning of the process to develop a plan to address elk at the seashore. Ranchers complain elk are damaging their fences and eating grasses needed by their cows.
- **Marin/Sonoma Mosquito Abatement EIR** Submitted comments on the EIR for the mosquito abatement program in the two counties. We raised questions about the impact of physical and pesticide treatments used to treat mosquitos on habitats and on the food web, i.e., insects, birds, etc.
- **Marin Catholic Lighted Fields** Submitted comments on the school's proposal to install night lighting. We raised concerns about impacts to species that depend on the adjacent Creekside Marsh, particularly Ridgway's Rails. No hearing date has been set.
- **Marin County Open Space District Trails** Met many times with MCOSD staff to address their failure to consider impacts to threatened Northern Spotted Owl in locating trails that are to be added to the system, in particular the Fairway Trail (see Legal on page 5) in the Camino Alto Preserve. Trails added to the approved system, have signed trailheads and are publicized on the county's website which attracts more users.
- **SMART Path in Novato** Submitted comments to the Regional Water Quality Control Board on two segments of the path: near Rush Creek and another further south in Novato. Bicyclists have pressured for a path along the rail line. This path and the adjacent fence will impede wildlife movement between habitats.
- **SMART Path in San Rafael** Commented to San Rafael, which is taking the lead on this segment, that wetlands that were not recognized in the environmental document will be impacted by the project.
- **Larkspur Dog Park** Commented on the need for a buffer between the relocated dog park and the tidal marsh.
- **Noxious Weed Ordinance** Submitted two letters supporting this ordinance to encourage removal of invasives and increase the effectiveness of the ordinance.
- **Gross Field Runway Modifications** Commented in support of reducing the size

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Marin Audubon Society
Statement of Financial Position
As of June 30, 2016

ASSETS	
Current Assets – Checking Accounts	
Unrestricted Accounts	76,174
Restricted Accounts	144,644
Total Current Assets	220,818
Fixed Assets – Real Estate	4,504,372
Other Assets – Endowment	1,022,859
TOTAL ASSETS	\$5,748,049

Marin Audubon Society
Statement of Activities
July 2015 through June 2016

REVENUE & SUPPORT	
Donations (cash)	219,727
Events & Activities	8,291
Interest Earned	102
Marin Baylands Advocates Income	32,542
Membership	36,799
Grant Income for Property Enhancement/Acquisition	759,887
Endowment Investment Earnings	17,037
TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT	\$1,074,385

EXPENSES	
Insurance	8,747
Marin Baylands Advocates Expense	3,701
Miscellaneous	2,704
Office Supplies & Printing	24,877
Permits & Fees	150
Postage & Shipping	4,905
Professional Services	13,624
Program Expenses	8,912
Property Management Expenses	3,267
Property & Sales Taxes	25,329
Rent	580
Website	2,134
Property Enhancement	67,846
Endowment Advisory Fees	1,613
TOTAL EXPENSES	168,389

CHANGE IN ASSETS **\$905,996***

ASSETS BEGINNING OF YEAR **4,842,053**

ASSETS END OF YEAR **\$5,748,049**

*Includes acquisition of Corte Madera Ecological Reserve

Annual Report *continued from page 4*

of the project in order to reduce adverse impacts to wetlands. We asked that the Supplemental EIR fully explain the revised project and its impacts. The project has been reduced because the FAA determined that the conditions at Gnos, namely the types of aircraft and number of users, do not warrant as long a runway as previously proposed.

- **Lagunitas Creek Bridge** Commented to Marin County Public Works with suggestions for minimizing adverse impacts of a new bridge.
- **Larkspur Access** Submitted comments on the plan for bike and pedestrian access throughout the city. We objected to increasing access at open space trailheads because more parking would cover habitats.
- **Niebuhr Residence** Testified to oppose removing 198 native oaks for an access road for a single family house. The proposal was unanimously denied by the Planning Commission.

LEGISLATION

We commented on the following legislation and asked our members to do the same:

- **California National Coastal Monument**

Expansion Act (Boxer) Supported this federal legislation to protect rocky shorelines and islands to ensure habitat for pelagic species.

- **Measure AA** Supported this bill to raise funds for wetland restoration projects throughout the Bay Area and establish a Restoration Authority to administer the funds. We donated \$500 to support it.
- **AB 2087** (Levine) Objected to components of this bill that promoted the use of mitigation banks. California Audubon succeeded in having the bill amended to cover large public projects only.
- **AB 2148** (Levine) Supported this bill which would limit the use of drones at wildlife refuges.

LEGAL

- **Petaluma River Bridge Swallows** This was the final year for the settlement of the law suit brought by Madrone Audubon Society (joined by Marin and Golden Gate Audubon Societies, Native Songbird Care and Conservation, and the Center for Biological Diversity) against Caltrans to protect the Cliff Swallow nesting colony from impacts of reconstructing the bridge over the Petaluma River. Our settlement set forth certain conditions

which Caltrans generally followed but there were incidents of non-compliance. Ensuring Caltrans compliance has required extensive oversight by Madrone Audubon volunteers. The reconstruction is finally over and the colony was back in full swing this nesting season.

- **Altamont Wind Turbines** Supported Golden Gate Audubon in efforts opposing NextEra's appeal to repower 324 wind turbines at Altamont that they had committed to retire. Committed \$2,000.
- **Fairway Trail, Camino Alto Preserve** Hired the law firm of Lozeau and Drury to convey our strong objections to moving forward with the Fairway Trail because of its proximity to Northern Spotted Owl nests and the resultant adverse impacts of increased, ongoing use of the trail by bikers, including riding at night, and walkers, many with dogs. The proposed improvements included constructing a new trailhead on a heavily-used fire road and a new segment through natural habitat, grading, widening the existing social trail, removing vegetation and tree roots which could result in loss of trees and publicizing on county media. (See "Marin County Trail Projects" below for more information.)

CONSERVATION

WORKING TO PROTECT NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

As *The Rail* goes to press, we are still working with the County Open Space District (OSD) to resolve the issue of social trails that have the potential to adversely impact Northern Spotted Owls in the Camino Alto and Giacomini Preserves. Some of them are proposed for adoption as part of the managed trail system. As a result of input from our attorneys, Lozeau and Drury, and biological consultant Shawn Smallwood Ph.D., the OSD agreed to not implement trail improvements on the Fairway Trail, and to only implement the Valle Vista section of this trail complex. Should they decide to revisit opening the Fairway Trail, the OSD agreed, at minimum, to recirculate a revised Negative Declaration.

Adopting the Fairway Trail as part of the trail system would involve constructing a new trail through undisturbed habitat and a new entrance on the second-most used and highest dog use fire road in the entire open space preserve system, trail widening and increased publicity, all of which would most certainly increase use. The Fairway Trail travels through a redwood canyon that is ideal habitat for Spotted Owl. We are pleased to

have been able to work out this compromise, even though it may be temporary and will require constant vigilance to ensure.

We are still negotiating with the County about environmental review for social trails proposed for adoption in the Giacomini Preserve. Several of the Giacomini trails to be improved and included as system trails are near spotted owl nests. In early August, the OSD released concurrently an Initial Study (IS), a Notice of Determination (NOD) and an announcement that work would begin on the Giacomini trails five days later. Two of those days were a weekend. There was no ability for the public to comment. It appeared that our only recourse is to go to court because the county has no appeal process to cover this action. We advised the county that we don't want to go to court but there needs to be a means to assure protection for the owls and there needs to be an open public process. We continue to work with the law firm of Lozeau and Drury to resolve this matter.

WETLANDS FILL POLICY REVIEW

The State Water Resources Control Board completed public review of its Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Materials to Waters of the State, or, in other words, their procedures addressing the filling of wetlands.

While some of the proposed changes would be positive, others are questionable and potentially problematic. The draft Procedures recognize and build on the federal 404 guidelines and the Corp of Engineers' regulatory process for implementing the guidelines. They attempt to address those wetlands that are no longer regulated by the Corps due to recent court cases, i.e., wetlands that do not have clear hydrologic connection to a larger water body. The changes also intend to define and include waters of the state.

The proposed wetland definition is a step forward from that used by the Army Corps of Engineers because it requires only two parameters while the Corps requires three, the presence of water, hydric soil and wetland vegetation. However, areas that would be defined as waters of the state are left for case-by-case decisions by the different Regional Boards. This, and other provisions, would result in loss of wetlands which would violate the state's "no net loss" of wetlands.

The proposed mitigation ratio requirement, one acre of replacement wetland for each acre of wetland filled, is too low. It would not compensate for temporal losses and possible failure. Further, a lower acreage

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HABITAT STEWARDSHIP

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Watering and weeding have been our activities through the summer and though most of the weed species are changed, our September activities are the same. Despite shorter daylight hours it will still be warm and dry in September so our watering will continue. Harding grass, a perennial, is a year-round target, but in September we also look for stinkweed (*Dittrichia graveolens*), an annual that blooms this month but which we have almost eliminated at both Bahia and Triangle. Nonnative mustard continues to bloom even in September.

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 Saturday: September 3

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

Bahia, Novato:

Second Saturday: September 10

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 Zarembo at 415/847-9933 or volunteercoordinator@marinaudubon.org for more information.

THANK YOU TO OUR STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Debbie Ablin, Bud Alderson, Greg and Nick Block, Dave Chenoweth, Zofie and Lukas Haulena, David Head, Bob Hinz, Sharon McCloskey, Alax Neuburge, Phil Nonneman, Ruth Pratt, Flinn and Demetrius Rauck, Jude Stalker, Lowell Sykes, Katy Zarembo

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RECOGNITION

The Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count was recognized recently in *Marin Magazine* for sponsoring the long-running (since 1975) Southern Marin Christmas Bird Count. This Count, as well as the two others we sponsor, are part of the larger National Audubon Society census of Western Hemisphere birds. The data collected helps scientists track and evaluate trends in bird populations.

BAHIA Our Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) from the Novato Sanitary District through a State Water Quality Control Board program ended in July. The transition zone on the levee surrounding the pond is now well vegetated with the high marsh plant species, and the ice plant that had covered the levee is now gone. Native plants including creeping wild rye, California sage, sticky monkeyflower and coyote bush are well established mature plants which are flowering, fruiting and/or spreading vegetatively. In compliance with our agreement, we had The Watershed Nursery survey the vegetation, in the area where we had removed invasives and planted with natives, and analyze the results. They calculated that the plant survival rate is 50% to 60% over most of the site. Plants were planted in two years, with the more recent plants having a higher survival rate possibly because DriWater (a watering system using gel material that slowly releases water) was used and because plants were planted higher on the levee. The lowest survival rate was in a small section that is at the lowest elevation and so is inundated more frequently.

Volunteers on this summer's work days watered and filled the DriWater tubes for all of the thicket plants and removed a large patch of yellow star thistle on the Western Peninsula.

On the August workday five volunteers successfully removed Yellow Star Thistle and Cocklebur. Thank you all!

Users continue to damage the fence we installed to protect the eastern peninsula. They seem to be taking an approach of doing a bit of damage at a time. So it appears that protecting this levee for wildlife may require us to repair the fence on a regular basis.

SIMMONS SLOUGH This SEP still has five more months to go for this project which involved clearing nonnatives and planting native

marsh plants at the south end of the property adjacent to Deer Island. We are responsible to provide a monitoring report for the termination of this project also. We plan to have the surveys done in summer when the marsh plants are easier to find. Also, we completed restoration of the fence around the project site, thanks in large part to a grant from the Marin County Fish and Wildlife Commission. The grant covers most of the cost of the fence.

TRIANGLE MARSH On this summer's work days volunteers watered the native purple needlegrass planted last winter, cut off bull thistle and continued the battle against Harding grass by cutting off seedheads, cutting down entire plants and digging up some plants. The needlegrass is generally doing well.

CORTE MADERA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

RESTORATION SITE We've submitted information to the Wetlands Conservation Board, the funding arm for projects of interest to the state, for funding to cover the costs of adding approximately one acre of California Department of Fish and Wildlife Ecological Reserve land to our project. The revised Initial Study-Negative Declaration has been submitted to the Town of Corte Madera for review and distribution, and we are awaiting receipt of the agreement from the Coastal Conservancy to receive our federal funding for planning and design of the project. The Conservancy is managing the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant awarded to the project, and the Conservancy Board approved the first phase of the funding at their last meeting in early June.

Thanks to the work of our volunteer, Lowell Sykes, new signs have been installed explaining that Marin Audubon owns the property, and we are planning a marsh restoration project on the property. Lowell also mowed the Harding grass which was overtaking the site.

Conservation *continued from page 5*

would be allowed if the project provides buffer zones and/or is covered by a watershed plan. There are no wetland plans, in the Bay Area at least, that provide adequate guidance for mitigation placement. Moreover, all wetlands should have buffers for wildlife and for accommodating climate change and sea level rise. The Procedures also favor mitigation banks and indicate that they should be locating mitigation in the same watershed of the wetland loss. However, how watersheds would be defined is not clear. All of the San Francisco Estuary, for example, is a watershed. Unless banks are required to be located in local watersheds,

mitigation would be located many miles from the site of loss resulting in the loss of all of the benefits of the wetlands to the current wildlife and people.

So, while the intent of revising the procedures is to more broadly define and regulate wetland losses, the Procedures have a way to go before they reach that goal. A major problem is that the nine Regional Boards throughout the state vary in their wetland regulation practices, with the San Francisco Bay Region being one of the strongest and most comprehensive. We want the regulatory procedures of the Water Boards to be broadened and strengthened, not weakened by these amendments. Our comments addressed all of the above issues.

MARIN BIRDLOG: JUNE – AUGUST 2016

By Josiah Clark

August is an exciting time for birders in Marin County as many of the rarest birds are just starting to show up. Looking way back to June, vagrant conditions were poor and the late spring migration produced relatively few rare songbirds. The summer is the slack tide of the migration, with few birds on the move. The breeding season seemed to be productive for many species with decent rains and moisture late in the spring yielding abundant food as young were fledging. In a year of record heat elsewhere in the country, Marin has been actually been cooler and windier than average.

In local conservation news, a once widespread breeding species that apparently has experienced major declines in the county is **Western Wood-Pewee**. Several longstanding observers have reported the absence of this species in their usual haunts. On June 22 just one loner was observed singing along the bike path of Lagunitas Creek by Samuel P. Taylor State Park, a spot where there are usually several (IS).

Breeding **Least Bitterns** remained elusive at the Las Gallinas sewage ponds and were among the most chased birds in the county, present at least until July 10 (JTC). This is only the third breeding attempt in the county and the second attempt for this location. Birders are reminded not to play recordings for this locally rare and listed species.



Alan Vernon

Least Tern

Up in the northwestern portion of the county a **Sandhill Crane**, very rare anytime of year in the county, was a surprise at the Teal Pond near Abbotts Lagoon (JW). Over by Limantour Estero on 8/11 a calling **Golden Plover** of some sort escaped positive certain identification as it flew overhead (PP).

With so many great birders and habitats all crammed together, its no wonder Bolinas often hosts some of the rarest birds of the period. A **Least Tern** on 8/7 hovering around the masses of arriving **Elegant Terns** was an exceptional sighting, for while they breed not far away, there are perhaps only a few observations in the entire county over the last decade (PP).

Also with the Elegant Terns on 8/2 were two **Black Skimmers**, which have become more regular visitors to the county in recent years as they appear to be moving north (SL). Rarest of all, however, is another bird that showed up this month on Bolinas Lagoon. A lone worn adult female **Bar-tailed Godwit** was discovered with hundreds of **Marbled Godwits** near the seal observation area. This bird has already been seen by dozens of birders and represents one of only a handful of records for nearby coastal counties.



Glen Topke, gtopke@phase.com

Western Wood-Pewee

Down in the southern part of the county, patch birders did not miss a beat even during the summer doldrums. On 8/7 they were rewarded with an **Indigo Bunting** at Rodeo Lagoon (DW, WL). This species appears to breed locally in very small numbers; one returning male individual at Loma Alta in the central county has been observed for years. This year it apparently bred with a female **Lazuli Bunting** again.

Observers and Acronyms **DW**: David Wiechers, **IS**: Ivan Samuels, **JTC**: Josiah Clark, **JW**: Jim White, **PP**: Peter Pyle, **SL**: Sami LaRocca, **WL**: William Legge

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