



Madrone LEAVES

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Invasive Tunicate “Marine Vomit” in Drakes Estero Is Cause for Serious Concern

By Jude Stalker

(Reprinted with permission from *Marin Audubon*)

Recent observations in Drakes Estero of the behavior of the invasive tunicate *Didemnum vexillum* (aka marine vomit) along with the threat that it presents worldwide, are cause for serious concern for such an ecologically valuable, federally protected marine wilderness area.

Didemnum vexillum (Dvex) is a highly invasive non-native colonial tunicate (sea squirt) that has a texture of wet leather. Each colony of Dvex consists of thousands of tiny soft-bodied individuals called zooids embedded in a common membranous matrix. Dvex colonies are unpalatable to most other marine organisms or birds.

Dvex colonies grow subtidally in bays and coastal waters and readily attach to hard surfaces such as rocks, shell, gravel, boulders, and all sorts of artificial structures. Dvex can reproduce sexually, releasing its larvae into the water where it will attach to a hard substrate and form a new colony. New colonies can also be produced through fragmentation. Lobes from a colony can break off, drift to a new site, settle or become entangled in the bottom, and grow out over the substrate.

Because it rapidly overgrows hard surfaces, structures and shellfish, Dvex invasions across the country and the world have caused tremendous problems and concern over the past decade for both natural ecosystems and aquaculture operations. There are populations of Dvex on the East Coast that have infested huge areas of seabed, smothered large numbers of native marine plants and animals, and



Didemnum vexillum

Photo courtesy of Gerald Moore

GENERAL MEETINGS

First United Methodist Church
1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa

PLEASE NOTE: The February and March General Meetings will be held in the church sanctuary instead of the community room. Please remember to bring your own beverage cup (save paper!) to enjoy tea and coffee.

February Meeting “Restoration of the Farallon Islands” Monday February 18, 7:30 PM

Melissa Pitkin, Outreach and Education Group Director for PRBO Conservation Science will give us an update on activities related to the Farallones Islands restoration efforts by US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary hosts the largest breeding seabird colony in the contiguous US, but the islands' ecosystem is under threat from invasive species (particularly the house mouse). The USFWS plan to eradicate the mice over time will restore balance and protect the breeding sites of the Ashy Storm-petrel, a California Species of Special Concern. The project is controversial because this will affect the food supply for over-wintering Burrowing Owls (another Species of Special Concern) that prey on the mice and small seabirds. We will find out how the scientists are dealing with this delicate issue.

March Meeting “West County Hawk Watch” Monday March 18, 7:30 PM

Sonoma County raptor specialist Larry Broderick will give us a look at our resident and migrating hawks, with tips on identifying birds of prey, where to look for them, and some of their interesting habits. Larry has studied raptors for two decades. He co-founded West County Hawk Watch in 1990 for documenting migration, and studying Ferruginous Hawks and the resurging population of Bald Eagles in our county. He currently gives tours and workshops on Sonoma Land Trust properties and throughout Sonoma County.

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You will get your copy faster and help save paper.



MARINE VOMIT

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have drastically changed the species composition of the benthic community. It has been well documented that the most important factor in controlling an invasion of Dvex is through early detection and rapid response to the infestation, such as took place in Sitka, Alaska in 2010.

No one knows for sure how or when this invader arrived in Drakes Estero from its native Japan. Many of the Pacific oysters cultivated by the Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC) were originally imported from Japan and Dvex may have arrived as a “hitch hiker” years ago on the imported oysters. It can also spread by ocean currents and settle in new places that have adequate substrate for it to establish.



Didemnum vexillum
Photo courtesy of Gerald Moore

Since its arrival, it has been persisting and reproducing on the cultivated oyster shells and bags in Drakes Estero. The harvesting activities of DBOC cause fragmentation of the Dvex and facilitate the colonization of other areas of the Estero. A limited amount of it was found growing on natural solid mud and sandstone substrates and rocks at Bull Point in 2007, but until very recently many believed that it would not spread to the floor of the Estero or become attached to the eelgrass plants.

In 2010 Dr. Ted Grosholz, a researcher from UC Davis, conducted surveys of fouling invertebrates on some of the oyster racks in Drakes Estero and found that Dvex was prominent among them. He observed large colonies of Dvex growing on the leaf shoots of some of the native eelgrass. Until Dr. Grosholz’s surveys, it was thought to be very unlikely that Dvex would grow on eelgrass in Drakes Estero. His observations are of great ecological concern because eelgrass is one of the most highly productive habitats on the California Coast and plays a vital role in providing nursery habitat for many fish species and forage areas for Black Brant and other waterfowl. Research has shown that invasive colonial tunicates such as Dvex can have negative effects on eelgrass growth, survival, and light transmission.

Following this alarming discovery, we also observed large amounts of the tunicate while kayaking with the Dvex researchers in Drakes Estero this past August. It covered more than 50% of the cultivated oyster shells hanging from the Oyster Company’s racks and we were shocked to see significant amounts of the Dvex colonizing the floor of the eelgrass beds below and adjacent to the oyster racks. To my knowledge, this occurrence had not been reported before and was believed by many to be impossible.

The National Park Service (NPS) has been notified of this observation. What action they will take is unknown but the NPS Management Policies require removal of impacts that would cause “impairment” or “unacceptable impacts” to any key park resource, such as eelgrass and the associated benthic community in this case. Additionally, because Drakes Estero is designated as a potential wilderness area, the park managers are also required to “seek to sustain the natural distribution, numbers, population composition, and interaction of indigenous species” and to intervene to “correct past mistakes, the impacts of human use, and influences originating outside of wilderness boundaries”.

It is clear that to successfully manage this infestation all of the prime Dvex habitat that the DBOC infrastructure (racks, lines, shells, bags) provides should be removed.

I have been a biologist working with invasive species for many years and know too well the disastrous and costly ecological repercussions of delaying the removal of invasive species or not responding to them at all. I don’t think this is a risk worth taking with the Dvex invasion in Drakes Estero.

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Announcements

Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) - Year 3 - New Volunteer Orientation

We are entering our third and critical year of surveys for the 2nd edition of the Sonoma County BBA. There are still many available blocks. Volunteers are needed to help survey these blocks. Join us for this fun and rewarding Citizen Science project.

New Volunteer Orientation:
Saturday February 23, 10-2 PM
4300 Llano Road, Santa Rosa
Contact Veronica Bowers at vlbowers@gmail.com to sign up.

Calling all BBA volunteers. There are blocks that still need volunteers.

Native Songbird Care & Conservation - New Volunteer Orientation

Located in Sebastopol, Native Songbird Care & Conservation specializes in the care of native songbirds, with an emphasis on migratory insectivores. We receive over 700 songbirds each year and release approximately 75% of them back to the wild. From May through August, volunteers are needed to help feed and care for baby birds, transport birds to the hospital, respond to calls from the public, and assist with administrative tasks.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Continued from page 2

Together we can make a difference for Sonoma County's songbirds! Become a volunteer at NSCC and help us give injured, orphaned, and ill native songbirds a second chance to return to the wild and fly free again. For more information, please visit our website at www.nativesongbirdcare.org.

New Volunteer Orientation:

Saturday March 16, 10-Noon
4300 Llano Road, Santa Rosa
Registration required, call 484-6502

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Review of Renewable Energy Policy Begins

by Susan Kirks

The draft of Sonoma County's new Renewable Energy Policy has been reviewed by the Planning Commission and public input accepted. The Planning Commission's recommendations are anticipated to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors sometime in 2013.

Sonoma County's ordinance governing small Wind Energy Conversion Systems, adopted in 2002, is proposed to be revised and updated. Wind energy conversion systems with towers over 40 feet will require a Bird and Bat Study. Madrone also believes a mechanism for monitoring post installation is a significant part of an effective review and operations process, and made this request.

County Planning staff identified the "Petaluma Wind Gap" as a potential area for wind energy conversion systems. Per County Senior Planner Jane Riley, this area is "a geological break in the coastal range, from Bodega Bay/Estero Americano along the Sonoma-Marin County line, inland toward Rohnert Park/Petaluma and downwards toward San Pablo Bay." As the Petaluma Wind Gap is known to be used by raptors for breeding and over-wintering, along with

wintering waterfowl and shorebirds where standing water is available, this information, with an expression of concern, was provided in our testimony during the hearing process.

A vertical axis small wind energy system is being installed at the Cliff House Restaurant in San Francisco. The vertical axis system is designed to have less impact on the environment and be more flying-friendly. We invite members to observe this system in action once it's operating; please share your observations with us.

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Just when you thought you were finished with bird counts this winter...

Sixteenth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) February 15-18

This count is a joint project of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon. Participants include all levels of birders. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Here's what to do:

- 1) Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes during the four days. Count birds at as many places and on as many days as you like—just keep a separate list of counts for each day and/or location.
- 2) Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time, and write it down.
- 3) Enter your results at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Memorial and Honor Gifts

In memory of
Sharon Audiss
Richard McCarthy

In memory of
Mary and Bill Perry
Anne Perry

Are you a National Audubon member?

You're halfway there!
Become a full Sonoma County environmentalist! Join our local chapter, Madrone Audubon!
(see membership form, back page)

BIRD-A-THON 2013... 24 Hours for Fun and Profit!!

February is the month for Madrone's largest fundraiser, though some teams may dally a bit into March. Last year, we raised almost \$9,700, with all of the money going towards education and conservation projects.

Teams for the 2013 BAT:

"Feather Questers" with Diane Hichwa, Linda Lebovics, and Lisa Shiffrin

"The Roadrunners" with Betty Groce and Don McCarthy

"Wandering Tattlers" with Carol Zeidman and Barbara Arbunich

"The Zonotripias" with Bill Doyle and friends

"A Team of One" with Gene Hunn

"The Grey-headed Seersuckers" (hopefully) with Ken Wilson, Becky Olsen, and friends

PLEASE REMEMBER: We need your help. Your tax-deductible donation towards the team(s) of your choice will continue to make Junior Audubon, Lincoln School, Christmas Bird Count, and Audubon Adventures programs successful. Teams count species of birds for one day in February, asking sponsors (YOU) for donations...either per species or a set amount.

There is still room for more teams, so if you are interested, or have any questions, please contact: Marcia Johnson: owlsnesttwo@att.net or 829-3808.



Madrone Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count December 30, 2012

by Ken Wilson

The preliminary results for the Christmas Bird Count are in and looking encouraging. The count was carried out in good weather with clear skies and light winds, though it was cold in the shaded territories. Ocean conditions were good though waves were high and choppy, making for difficult identification at times. Unfortunately we were not able to put a boat on the water this year, which lowered our total number of species possible. If anybody has access to a boat or boat owner for next year's count, please let Veronica know.

Our unofficial total is 184 species, about the same as last year. Despite not having a boat we did find both Ancient and Marbled Murrelets and a single Black-legged Kittiwake was seen. Late in the afternoon of flock of approximately 350 Cackling Geese flew south along the coast, and a flock of approximately 800 Brant were spotted flying south by the Coleman Valley Road team.

Bald Eagles are increasing in numbers within the count area, with at least 3 adults, a 3rd year bird and at least one juvenile eagle being counted. Short-eared Owls were seen at two different locations and a Burrowing Owl was seen at Bodega Head. Two Tundra Swans were also counted and Red Crossbills were seen in several count areas. Numerous warblers were seen and counted including Hermit, Nashville, Palm, Yellow, Townsend's Yellow-rumped and Common Yellowthroat. A Swamp Sparrow was also counted. My apologies to all those species not mentioned here, a total list will be published at a latter date.

Teams reported sightings of several mammal species including two river otters, a badger, coyote, and 12 bobcats.

Many thanks to all those who contributed
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to the success of the count including Team Leaders, Counters, Dinner Setup/ Take-down Crew, and the Christmas Bird Count Committee and Compiler, Veronica Bowers.

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The Christmas Bird Count Dinner

by Susan Kirks

About 100 tired and hungry, yet peaceful birders gathered at the Sebastopol Culture and Community Center for Madrone's post-Christmas Bird Count dinner where birders and guests enjoyed soup, salad, lasagna, dessert, and beverages.



Peter Leveque reads the species list from the 2012 Christmas Bird Count

Results of the count will appear in a future issue. Madrone deeply appreciates all those who volunteered to count as well as those who helped make the counters comfortable and well fed.

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Winter/Spring Festivals

**The 17th Annual San Francisco Bay
Flyway Festival**

**February 8-10,
Mare Island, 500 Connolly Street,
Building 223, Vallejo CA**

The festival celebrates the annual wildlife migration through the San Francisco Bay Estuary. Friday is the opening reception with a film showing and outings throughout the area; however, the Birding and Wildlife Expo is Saturday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and Sunday, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Activities include family wildlife ex-

ploration, birdwatching outings, guided nature walks, boat tours, and tours to discover some of the best local wetlands, wild lands, open spaces, and historic sites in the Bay Area. There will be exhibits, live bird visits, educational presentations, art, photography, and optics. There will be docent-led tours at the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility, 9:30 to 11:30 AM on Friday and Saturday (call Bob at 763-2934). For more information: contact Myrna Hayes, Festival Coordinator: 557-9816, myrnahay@pacbell.net, or visit www.sfbayflywayfestival.com.

Migration Festival at Natural Bridges State Park

February 9, Saturday

Fly, swim, waddle, walk, bike, or drive as you migrate to Natural Bridges State Beach for a full day of activities, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM, celebrating the migration of whales, butterflies, birds, and the many creatures that travel. The park will host migratory animal talks, active kids' games, crafts, skits, live music by the nature-loving 5M's band, educational booths and displays, along with the now-famous habitat cake (free) served at the end of the event.

The event is geared toward families and children, but there is sure to be something for everyone, including adults. You can purchase a picnic at the park or bring your own. For more information call 831-423-4609 or visit <http://www.santacruzstateparks.org>. The park is located at 2531 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz CA.

Godwit Days, 17th annual event April 18-24

Come celebrate the Marbled Godwit on the beautiful and lush Redwood Coast. Observe many bird species and wildlife through a great selection of field trips, lectures, workshops, and boat excursions led by experienced local guides. Tour the expansive mudflats, wild river valleys, and the rocky ocean coast of this sector

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February 2013 calendar

All walks and meetings are open to the public. Bird walks are recreational and educational in purpose, and all levels of expertise are welcome. Bring field equipment and wear comfortable shoes and layered clothing for variable weather conditions. Please carpool whenever possible. Forecasted heavy rain cancels. There is no charge for activities unless otherwise specified, but some parks have day-use fees.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE exchanges information by phone and email as soon as possible when an issue surfaces. Please contact Diane Hichwa at 785-1922 or dhichwa@earthlink.net.

Saturday February 2, 8:30 AM - Noon

HUDEMANS SLOUGH. Beginners Bird Walk. Meet at the Sonoma County Water Agency property on the northern edge of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes. From the town of Sonoma, drive south on Highway 12/121. Turn south onto Ramal Road and drive approximately 2.4 miles until you reach the entrance to Hudeman Slough. There is a large hay barn on the right and a parking lot in front of the barn. To carpool, please arrive by 7:30 AM at our Santa Rosa meeting place, the Safeway parking lot at the northeast corner of Highway 12 and Calistoga Road. We will park at the edge of the parking lot, bordering on Calistoga Road. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 829-9017 and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.

Saturday February 2, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

MAYACAMAS PRESERVE. Access orientation. For orientation, we'll start at Pine Flat Road & Red Winery Road, just east of Highway 128 and about 7 miles northeast of Healdsburg. From there, we'll carpool up to Pine Flat at the Little Sulphur Creek Bridge (near the top of the Preserve). The orientation session is outdoors, bring a chair or cushion to sit on if you like. There is no hiking during the orientation, but you are welcome to stay afterwards to hike independently or join me as I explore some nearby areas (if you're staying to hike, you'll want to bring a lunch and water). Contact: David Self, david.self@egret.org. Heavy rain cancels, light sprinkles/drizzle and the outing is on. If in doubt, call the office at 431-8184; there will be an outgoing message posted by 7 PM the evening prior letting you know if the outing will take place.

Sunday February 3, 1:00 - 4:00 PM

MAYACAMAS PRESERVE. Hike. We'll start at Pine Flat Road and Red Winery Road, just east of Highway 128 and about 7 miles northeast of Healdsburg. From there, we'll carpool up to Pine Flat at the Little Sulphur Creek Bridge (near the top of the Preserve). If it's clear, we'll hike from the bridge up to the top of the sanctuary on Red Hill for some spectacular views. If cloudy, we'll visit the nearby serpentine to meet some unique plants. Either way, we'll talk of the roles of fire and people in the ecology and history of the area. Contact: David Self, david.self@egret.org. Heavy rain cancels, light sprinkles/drizzle and the outing is on. If in doubt, call the office at 431-8184; there will be an outgoing message posted by 7 PM the evening prior letting you know if the outing will take place.

Wednesday February 6, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

HUICHICA CREEK UNIT OF NAPA-SONOMA MARSHES/HUDEMANS SLOUGH. Bird Walk. Meet at the Huichica Creek Unit parking lot. From Sonoma, take Highway 12 (Carneros Highway) toward Napa, turn right (south) onto Duhig Road, left on Las Amigas Road, and right onto Buchli Station Road, which leads to the wildlife area. We will bird the Hudeman area in the afternoon. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Wednesday February 6, 7:00 PM

BOARD MEETING. Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55-A Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.

Saturday February 9, 9:00 AM

SHOLLENBERGER PARK. Petaluma Wetlands Alliance/Madrone leads a nature walk. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. Contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577.

Thursday February 14, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

BODEGA BAY. Bird Walk. From the center of the town of Bodega Bay, drive north on Highway 1, turn left at Eastshore Road (the Bodega Head turnoff), right at the stop sign, and continue 0.3 mile to the unpaved parking lot on the right. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Saturday February 16, 10:00 AM

SHOLLENBERGER PARK. Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads two children/family nature walks. One to two hours, depending on age of children. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. For the children/family walk in English, contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577; for the walk in Spanish, contact Connie Peabody at 338-2237.

Saturday February 16, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

MAYACAMAS PRESERVE. Hike. We'll start at Pine Flat Road and Red Winery Road, just east of Highway 128 and about 7 miles northeast of Healdsburg. From there, we'll carpool up to Rob Roy Flat, for a 2-mile hike along the Ridge Road (a dirt road) and back. The return is uphill, but I will take it at a nice leisurely pace. If it's clear, we'll have some great views. Contact: David Self, david.self@egret.org. Heavy rain cancels, light sprinkles/drizzle and the outing is on. If in doubt, call the office at 431-8184; there will be an outgoing message posted by 7 PM the evening prior letting you know if the outing will take place.

Saturday February 16, 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM

PUTAH CREEK/LAKE SOLANO. Meet at Lake Solano Park, 8685 Pleasants Valley Road, Winters, CA at 9:30 AM. Take Calistoga Road (becomes Petrified Forest Road) to Highway 128. Turn right onto Highway 128, left onto Deer Park Road, right onto Silverado Trail North, and then turn left onto Sage Canyon Road/128. Follow Highway 128 until you reach County Road 86/Pleasants Valley road, and turn right. The park is immediately over the bridge to your left. There is a \$5 day use fee at Lake Solano Park. To car pool, please arrive by 7:30 AM at our Santa Rosa meeting place, the Safeway parking lot at the northeast corner of Highway 12 and Calistoga Road. We will park at the edge of the parking lot bordering on Calistoga Road. Bring lunch. Rain cancels. Leaders: Bill Doyle, 483-8773, and Helen Kochenderfer, 484-2479.

Saturday February 16, 10:00 AM 0 2:00 PM

JUNIOR AUDUBON. Join Scott Campbell to look for birds in the Sonoma Baylands at the wetlands restoration. Registration is necessary, so that the van doesn't leave without you. For details about this adventure, contact Scott at campbesk@gmail.com or 530-828-6115.

Monday February 18, 7:30 PM

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

Melissa Pitkin, Outreach and Education Group Director for PRBO Conservation Science, will give us an update on activities related to the Farallones Islands restoration efforts by US Fish and Wildlife Service. First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa. Please see the front-page announcement. The public is always invited to attend these programs.

Wednesday February 20, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

GRIZZLY ISLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA. Bird Walk. Meet at McDonald's in the Sunset Shopping Center in Suisun City at the intersection of Highway 12 and Grizzly Island Road. Bring lunch. Driving time to meeting point from Santa Rosa is approximately 1.25 hours. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Saturday February 23, 9:00 AM

ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY, PETALUMA. Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads a walk at the Ellis Creek ponds. Go to the end of Cypress Drive and through the gates. Parking lot is on the left. Rain cancels. Information: Bob Dyer at 763-2934.

Thursday February 28, 8:30 AM - Noon

SPRING LAKE REGIONAL PARK. Bird Walk. Parking fee (\$7) for non-permit holders. From Summerfield Road in Santa Rosa, go east on Hoen Avenue, left on Newanga Avenue, right inside the park entrance gate, and meet in the parking lot near the restrooms at the top of the hill. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.



March 2013 calendar

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE exchanges information by phone and email as soon as possible when an issue surfaces. Please contact Diane Hichwa at 785-1922 or dhichwa@earthlink.net.

Saturday March 2, 8:30 AM - Noon

ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY and SHOLLENBERGER PONDS. Meet at Ellis Creek promptly at 8:30; the group may go to Shollenberger. From Highway 101 in Petaluma, head east on Highway 116 (Lakeville Highway), right on Pine View Way, left on Cypress Drive. Go to the end of the road and through the gates. We will meet in the parking lot, near the bathroom. Bring a scope if you have one. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 829-9017, and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.

Wednesday March 6, 7:00 PM

BOARD MEETING. Sonoma County Environmental Center, 55-A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa. For agenda information, contact Susan Kirks at susankirks@sbcglobal.net.

Wednesday March 6, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

SONOMA COAST: DUNCAN'S LANDING TO GOAT ROCK. Bird Walk. Meet at Duncan's Landing (within the Sonoma Coast State Beach), approximately three miles south of the Russian River on Highway 1. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Saturday March 9, 9:00 AM

SHOLLENBERGER PARK. Petaluma Wetlands Alliance/Madrone leads a nature walk. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. Contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577.

Thursday March 14, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

SHOLLENBERGER PARK/ELLIS CREEK. Bird Walk. Search for wintering birds at the Shollenberger Park ponds and wetlands in Petaluma. After lunch, we will bird the wetlands of the adjacent Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility. Meet at Shollenberger Park parking lot. From Santa Rosa, take the Highway 116 exit (Lakeville Highway), go left under Highway 101, turn right at the South McDowell traffic light, proceed to the City Park sign and turn right into the park lot. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Saturday March 16, 10:00 AM

SHOLLENBERGER PARK. Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads two children/family nature walks. One to two hours, depending on age of children. Meet at the first kiosk. Rain cancels. For the children/family walk in English, contact Gerald Moore at 763-3577; for the walk in Spanish, contact Connie Peabody at 338-2237.

Saturday March 16, 8:30 AM - Noon

LAS GALLINAS PONDS. Meet at the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. From Highway 101 in northern San Rafael, take the Smith Ranch Road exit, go east to the McInnis Park entrance, turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks, and go to the lot at the end of the road. Informal carpools meet at 7:30 AM at the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Office, 747 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa. The parking lot is behind the office (access from Carillo Street). Please arrive at 7:35 AM to carpool. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 829-9017, and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.

Monday March 18, 7:30 PM

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

Sonoma County raptor specialist Larry Broderick will give us a look at our resident and migrating hawks, with tips on identifying birds of prey, where to look for them, and some of their interesting habits. Larry has studied raptors for 2 decades. First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Drive, Santa Rosa. Please see the front-page announcement. The public is always invited to attend these programs.

Wednesday March 20, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

POINT REYES. Bird Walk. Meet in the parking lot across from the Bear Valley Visitor Center, which is just west of Olema. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Saturday March 23, 9:00 AM

ELLIS CREEK WATER RECYCLING FACILITY, PETALUMA. Petaluma Wetlands Alliance leads a walk at the Ellis Creek ponds. Go to the end of Cypress Drive and through the gates. Parking lot is on the left. Rain cancels. Information: Bob Dyer at 763-2934.

Thursday March 28, 8:30 AM - 2:30 PM

BODEGA BAY. Bird Walk. From the center of the town of Bodega Bay, drive north on Highway 1, turn left at Eastshore Road (the Bodega Head turnoff), right at the stop sign, and continue 0.3 mile to the unpaved parking lot on the right. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Wednesday April 3, 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM

BOLINAS LAGOON IN MARIN COUNTY. Bird Walk. Note 9:00 AM starting time. Meet at the first large turnout south of the Bolinas turnout on Highway 1. Bring lunch. Information: Tom McCuller, sisyphus@sonic.net, 546-1812.

Saturday April 6, 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

BODEGA BAY. From the center of the town of Bodega Bay, drive north on Highway 1. Turn left at Eastshore Road (the Bodega Head turnoff), then right at the stop sign and continue 0.3 mile to the large dirt parking lot on the right. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers of clothing. Rain cancels. Leaders: Gordon Beebe, 829-9017, and Bill Doyle, 483-8773.



Brown Pelican, Bodega Bay

Photo by Tom Reynolds



FESTIVALS

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of the Klamath bioregion in northwest California. For more information: www.godwitdays.org.

Fourth Annual Bird Festival at the Lincoln Elementary School, Santa Rosa May 2

This festival event, organized by Madrone volunteers and former third grade Lincoln schoolteacher Kathie Noguchi, is a half-day of outdoor activities, art projects, and presentations. Look for details in the April-May Leaves. For many students the highlight of the day is getting a closeup look at their neighborhood birds – the herons and egrets nesting in the middle of West Ninth Street, a block from the school. Volunteers are needed, especially those with scopes who will help at the rookery. Call Janeann Erickson at 795-2498 and let her know you'll help.

Points Reyes Bird & Nature Festival April 27-29

The Point Reyes region is endowed with unique geography and extensive wild lands and ranches. Its pristine coastline, beaches, dunes, mudflats, bays, estuaries, freshwater wetlands, forests, grasslands, coastal bluffs, and chaparral together support one of the highest levels of bird diversity in the country. As home base for some of the nation's top birders and naturalists, it offers the ideal setting for a spring festival for bird and nature enthusiasts of all levels.

Festival participants take part in fabulous bird walks guided by top birders. There is a tremendous camaraderie among the attendees. As a whole, it is not unusual for the festival outings to tally a cumulative total of 200 species of birds (not to mention dozens of mammals, butterflies, marine mammals, and other wildlife) in western Marin and Sonoma Counties.

The 2013 festival website and registration will go live in mid-February. Last year, nearly every walk and outing sold out well before the festival weekend, so before you forget, send an email to prbn-festival@gmail.com requesting to be notified when registration opens. For more information, visit www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org.

The festival benefits the habitat conservation work of the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC). You can read about some of EAC's conservation work at www.eacmarin.org.



A Pied-billed Grebe for Rich Stallcup

Rich Stallcup, birder and naturalist extraordinaire, died last month after a lengthy illness. I was fortunate to have attended his "bird school" at PRBO and especially enjoyed being on the field trips—watching birds and watching Rich watch birds. There are hundreds of thoughtful words about Rich compiled from thoughtful friends on the PRBO



Photo courtesy of Len Blumin

website, but for me Len Blumin's quote captures some of the spirit of those days in the field: "I wanted to send a 'special' photo to mark Rich's passing, but as you may know Rich felt every bird was special, whether Pied-billed Grebe or Blackbird." As Rich might say, "I know you've seen many Pied-billed Grebes before, but you've never seen *this* Pied-billed Grebe."

-Denise Kelly

And the winner is...



Photo by Stephan A. Wolfe

Sandhill Crane named Audubon California's 2012 Bird of the Year

Published: Dec 10, 2012

Emeryville, CA - One of California's favorite bird species today was named the 2012 Audubon California Bird of the Year. The Sandhill Crane received the designation after winning 43 percent of votes cast during an online poll this fall. Although the bird was a nominee for the past three years, it experienced a surge in popularity this year, going from 234 votes in 2009 to 5053 in 2012.

The Sandhill Crane is one of North America's largest waterbirds and certainly one of the most magnificent. It provides great viewing for even the most novice birder.

"Cranes are a great bird to get into," said Bridgid McCormack, managing director of Audubon California. "They are easy to spot in the flooded fields of the Central Valley because of their large size and unique courtship dance."

Sandhill Cranes were once common throughout the west and especially in the California Central Valley. However their populations declined drastically as a result of unregulated hunting and habitat loss during settlement of the region. In California, the breeding population was reduced to fewer than five pairs by the 1940s. Fortunately, all populations of Sandhill Cranes have increased, and in 2000 an estimated 465 pairs were breeding in California. Nonetheless, much of their historic range remains vacant and the population remains far below historic numbers.

Continued on page 8



SANDHILL CRANE

Continued from page 7

Audubon California is increasing the amount of Sandhill Crane habitat in California by partnering with private landowners. As part of the Migratory Bird Conservation Partnership, Audubon (along with PRBO Conservation Science and The Nature Conservancy) has an opportunity to take specific action targeting conservation in the Central Valley. In 2008, the Partnership negotiated easements in Surprise Valley and the Modoc Plateau to increase the amount of farmland in the Central Valley that is managed specifically for Sandhill Cranes.

Nearly 12,000 votes were cast in this year's Bird of the Year poll. The Sandhill Crane took the title with a late surge after the

second-place Burrowing Owl raced off to an early start. Ultimately, the owl finished with 22.3 percent. Coming in third for the second year in a row was the Western Snowy Plover with 9.8 percent, while the Tricolored Blackbird followed with 8.1 percent.

While the Sandhill Crane wins the designation of 2012 Bird of the Year, McCormack emphasized that Audubon California's work on behalf of other California birds, nominated or not, will continue.

"Every species nominated was a focus of our conservation work," said McCormack. "Our hope is that the attention this award brings to the Sandhill Crane will help raise awareness of the conservation needs of all birds throughout the state."

About Audubon California

Audubon California is building a better future for California by bringing people together to appreciate, enjoy and protect our spectacular outdoor treasures. With more than 50,000 members in California and an affiliated 48 local Audubon chapters, Audubon California is a field program of the National Audubon Society.



Male Ruby-crowned Kinglet on common tule at Spring Lake.

Photo by Thomas Reynolds

MADRONE AUDUBON SOCIETY											
FUNDS STATEMENT											
Twelve months ended June 30, 2012											
	BOARD DESIGNATED FUNDS								RESTRICTED FUNDS		
	Operating	Sanctuary	Les & Evelyn Bowen	Conservation and Education	Land Acquisition	Bently Smith	Memorial	Total	PWA	Stewardship Task Force	Total
Balances -June 30, 2011	\$ 1,024.49	\$ 6,489.07	\$ 1,278.47	\$ 60,815.61	\$ 2,195.80	\$ 2,094.74	\$ 5,238.24	\$ 79,136.42	\$ 30,396.50	\$ 8,557.14	\$ 118,090.06
Revenues:											
Friends dues	14,887.00							14,887.00	1,230.00		16,117.00
Donations	4,655.59			45.00				4,700.59	2,384.00	519.75	7,604.34
Burridge award gift				500.00				500.00			500.00
Bird-A-Thon				9,687.03				9,687.03			9,687.03
Grants								-	4,275.00	14,000.00	18,275.00
NAS Sharing	5,500.75							5,500.75			5,500.75
Breeding Bird Atlas	15.00							15.00			15.00
Docent manuals								-	200.00		200.00
Miscellaneous income	281.14							281.14			281.14
Merchandise sales	232.41							232.41			232.41
Investment income	15.16	96.03	18.92	899.97	32.49	31.00	77.52	1,171.09	449.82	24.50	1,645.41
	25,587.05	96.03	18.92	11,132.00	32.49	31.00	77.52	36,975.01	8,538.82	14,544.25	60,058.08
Disbursements:											
Christmas Bird Count	1,241.43										1,241.43
Conservation				4,228.00							4,228.00
Education				3,572.70							3,572.70
Leaves	14,241.39										14,241.39
Migratory Bird Day											-
MMAS		300.00									300.00
Outreach											-
Junior Audubon				200.00							200.00
General Meetings	2,207.93										2,207.93
Publicity											-
Walkabouts/Field Trips											-
Website											-
Breeding Bird Atlas	2,094.48										2,094.48
PWA									4,903.61		4,903.61
Stewardship Task Force										150.00	150.00
Administrative	2,428.26										2,428.26
Membership	1,465.67										1,465.67
Fund Raising	1,005.82										1,005.82
Total Disbursements	24,684.98	300.00	-	8,000.70	-	-	-	-	4,903.61	150.00	38,039.29
Excess (Deficit) Revenue Over Disbursements	902.07	(203.97)	18.92	3,131.30	32.49	31.00	77.52	3,989.33	3,635.21	14,394.25	22,018.79
Interfund Transfers	1.24	-	-	500.00	-	(500.00)	-	1.24	-	-	1.24
Balance at end of period	\$ 1,927.80	\$ 6,285.10	\$ 1,297.39	\$ 64,446.91	\$ 2,228.29	\$ 1,625.74	\$ 5,315.76	\$ 83,126.99	\$ 34,031.71	\$ 22,951.39	\$ 140,110.09



Observations

Late Fall/Winter • Dan Nelson • 479-2918 • birdsurf64@sbcglobal.net

Northern Pintail (20+)	12/30	Southbound, off Bodega Head	BDP, DN
Eurasian Wigeon (1)	12/29	Doran Park entrance pond	RR
Falcatad Duck (return)	12/2	Colusa NWR	TR
Tufted Duck	12/6	Tomales Bay, east of Inverness	JE
Redhead	11/5	Salmon Creek pond	LB
Redhead	11/18	Marin Civic Center pond	DM
Redhead (5)	11/19	Ellis Creek pond	R. Storey
Long-tailed Duck	11/23	Flying south off Bodega Head	SC
Harlequin Duck (male)	12/29	Marin Rod & Gun Club pier	HK
Barrow's Goldeneye (2)	12/4	Petaluma River at Port Sonoma	BD
Hooded Merganser (12)	12/1	Sanford Road at Laguna	BD
Tundra Swan (1)	1/2	Guerneville Road, East of Laguna	BD
Rhinoceros Auklet (1)	11/14	Off Bodega Head	SC
Cassin's Auklet (1)	11/23	Off Bodega Head	SC
Ancient Murrelet (19)	11/23	Off Bodega Head	SC
Brown Booby	10/12	Rocks below Pt. Reyes lighthouse	KH, et al.
Glaucous Gull (1st winter)	11/24	Goat Rock beach	NA
Black-legged Kittiwake (1)	12/30	Doran Jetty fly-by	RR, et al.
Black Tern	11/17	Rodeo Lagoon, Marin	WL
Red-necked Grebe (3)	11/29	Duncan's Landing	LK
Clapper Rail (2)	11/23	Limantour Marsh	JC
Rough-legged Hawk	11/11	Shollenberger Park, Petaluma River	LH, et al.
Rough-legged Hawk	11/30	Skaggs Island Road	BH, CH
Rough-legged Hawk (3)	12/28	Tolay Creek	JC
Ferruginous Hawk (dk.)	Nov.	East Railroad Avenue	AW, M.Ob
Red-tailed Hawk (leuc.)	12/26	Branscombe Road, Solano County, previously at Infineon Raceway?	RM
Northern Goshawk (ad.)	10/29	Mt. St. Helena summit at Lake County line	GH
Short-eared Owl	11/22	Fort Ross Road at Seaview Road	BO'C
Short-eared Owl	12/19	Laguna Trail, Sebastopol	DB
Burrowing Owl	12/30	Bodega Head near ocean overlook parking lot;	DH, et al
Common Poorwill	11/9	Lower Willow Creek Road	BO'C, OO'C
Lewis' Woodpecker	12/20	East end of Neil's Island, via canoe ride from Tule Slough	GH, PC
Red-naped Sapsucker	11/23	Kentfield residence, Marin	BL, PL
Red-naped Sapsucker	12/29	General Vallejo home, Sonoma	AC
Red-naped S. "hybrid"	10/17	Continuing at Spring Lake peninsula, north end of lake	RO'D, TR
Black-chinned Hummingbird	10/30	Guerneville residence	B. Grummer
Costa's Hummingbird (male)	12/14	Kentfield residence, Marin	PL, BL
Eastern Phoebe	12/12	Hwy 1, just north of Pt. Reyes Station	TG
Eastern Phoebe	12/28	Tolay Creek area, Sonoma Valley	CBC JC
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	11/19	Pt. Reyes, RCA Station	DS
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	12/6	Pt. Reyes Fish Docks (same bird as previous?)	KW, et al
Sage Thrasher	10/23-24	Bodega Bay Marine Lab, 3rd county record	JS, DN, DH, BDP
Black-throated Green Warbler	10/22-24	Pt. Reyes Fish Docks	JM
Painted Redstart	11/12-13	Pt. Reyes, Mendoza Ranch	DS, et al.
Nashville Warbler (2)	12/30	Diekmann's Store, Bodega Bay	RR, et al.
Palm Warbler (2)	12/30	Doran Park beach	RR, DF, et al.
Yellow Warbler	12/30	Diekmann's Store, Bodega Bay	RR, et al.
Lucy's Warbler	12/15	Upper reaches of Walker Creek, Marin	JC, LK, et al.
Summer Tanager (imm.)	12/17	Bolinas Post Office, Marin	KH
Summer Tanager	12/29	Woodacre, Marin	DW
Clay-colored Sparrow	10/1	Carmody Road, north end	AW
White-throated Sparrow (6)	1/2	Willowside trail, good number seen together	KH
Harris' Sparrow	12/18	Business Center, Green Valley Road, Solano County	MH, R. Leong
Field Sparrow	11/4-6	Pt. Reyes, Nunes Ranch, 1st Marin County record	KH, et al.
Swamp Sparrow	11/14	A Place-to-Play, Santa Rosa	CT
Swamp Sparrow	11/23	Sebastopol Community Center	SC
Swamp Sparrow	1/1	Spring Lake, southwest corner	BO, KW
Red Crossbill (2-3)	12/18	Fountaingrove Parkway	AW
Evening Grosbeak (3)	12/26	Sebastopol Community Center	VB

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Madrone Audubon Society

Post Office Box 1911
Santa Rosa, California 95402

February/March 2013

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MADRONE LEAVES



Madrone Audubon Society meets on the third Monday of each month, except in June, July, August, and December. Meetings start at 7:30 PM at First United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. All meetings and walks are open to the public. Information: telephone answering service - 546-7492, e-mail - madroneaudubon@um.att.com.

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Please complete this form if you wish to join Madrone Audubon, renew your Madrone membership or make a contribution to Madrone.

Please note: We are a chapter of National Audubon, but membership in and donations to Madrone Audubon are separate and support our local chapter. Membership and donations are tax deductible.

- I am a new member I am renewing my Madrone membership
 - Senior \$15 Basic Member \$20 Family \$30
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