

**Notes on Bay Area Council Meeting
April 12, 2008
Audubon Center at Richardson Bay**

Notes by Gary George and Mike Perlmutter

In attendance:

OHLONE: Evelyn Cormier; President; Jackie and Allan Bertillion

MARIN: Rick Johnson, Conservation Committee

SANTA CLARA: Nancy Teeter, Environmental Action Committee; Bob Powers, ED

NAPA-SOLANO – Cheryl Harris, President; Robin Leong, CBC Compiler; Jerry Karr,
Chapter Board Rep, Bay Area Council

MADRONE – Bob Speckles

GOLDEN GATE – Marge Blackwell, President; Eli Saddler, Conservation Director

MT. DIABLO – Hugh Harvey, Field Trip Chair

SEQUOIA – Robin Smith

AUDUBON CALIFORNIA - Garry George, Chapter Network Director; Mike Perlmutter –
Bay Area Conservation Coordinator

Agenda

- Chapter and State Board reports
- Important Bird Areas mapping – Mike Perlmutter, Audubon California
- California Marine Life Protection Act – Rick Johnson, Marin Audubon
- Introduction for Gary George, new Chapter Network Director – Gary George, Audubon California
- Together Green – Toyota/Audubon partnership – Gary George
- Update on Cosco Busan oil spill – legislation, mitigation, getting your projects funded through this and SF Joint Venture – Mike Perlmutter
- Other legislative updates – Mike Perlmutter
- Bay Area Upland Goals Project update and call for bird data – Mike Perlmutter
- Announcements – trainings, events, etc.
- Planning for future meetings

Chapter reports:

OHLONE AUDUBON, Evelyn Cormier; President; Jackie and Allan Bertillion

-Return of the swallow festival next Tuesday. Last year over 500 Barn swallows.

-Evelyn spoke about the Least Tern project on Alameda Bay.

-Three power plant projects are being planned on the Hayward shoreline.

-East Bay Regional Park District put out RFP on global warming impacts on shoreline levees

-South Bay Salt Pond Restoration is in discussion with Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge folks on inadequacies in EIS, EIR. Biggest concern by Refuge is that alternative sites were not considered that could provide wetland and upland habitat.

Citizen groups advocated for the Refuge but didn't advocate enough for upland habitat.

-Patterson Ranch next to Coyote Hills: there is a plan before city of Fremont, but it looks like development may not be stopped unless the water flooding can't be stopped. The water has to be pumped out.

-Oakland A's Ballpark issue is still up in the air but plan has been presented to city. There are vernal pools, etc. on the site. CNPS has a field trip to the vernal pools. Burrowing Owls are everywhere there. Rich Cimino is still working with BART to protect Burrowing Owls or to mitigate Burrowing Owl habitat.

-Assemblymembers Lieber and Hancock introduced AB2954 (sponsored by Save the Bay) which would establish a new agency for funding projects around the Bay. Concerns: governing Board is only four members (an alternative set up modeled after Bay Conservation and Development Commission board was suggested) and vulnerable for lobbying, too many loopholes; why create yet another agency rather than tie in to existing activities of Coastal Conservancy and San Francisco Bay Joint Venture? Arthur Feinstein has been authorized by Committees group to lobby for language amendments in this bill.

MARIN AUDUBON – Rick Johnson, Conservation Committee

-Chapter is sponsoring a three day (April 29-May 1) session of wetland ecology classes focused on Clapper Rail and saltmarsh vegetation. **See attached flyer for more information.**

-Chapter is still active in land preservation and restoration.

-The National Park Service at Point Reyes National Seashore is restoring the 560 acre Giacomini Ranch diked off from the southern end of Tomales Bay, back to tidal wetlands. A bridge between Inverness and Pt. Reyes Station across the site is proposed for hiking and biking access. Marin Audubon opposes the bridge. More info on the project at

http://www.nps.gov/pore/parkmgmt/planning_giacomini_wrp.htm

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON - Nancy Teeter, Environmental Action Committee

-near Gilroy is a plan for a new quarry in a semi-residential area near an IBA. Neighbors oppose it. Santa Clara is just starting to get involved and is considering partnering with other orgs to oppose.

-global warming: There is a lot of groundswell for grass roots support for this issue by doing the simple, obvious things such as not using plastic bags, and other

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON – Bob Powers, ED

-Breeding Bird Atlas released Nov. Have sold a little over 300 copies. Break even is 600 copies. They have applied for a grant from Yahoo to distribute the breeding bird atlas to every high school, middle school and science school in Santa Clara County. As nice of a bird book it is, trying to market an atlas outside the birding group is very difficult. LA Audubon has copies for sale. ABA has copies for review and sale. **A suggestion was made for WESTERN BIRDS to review it.**

-SCVA launched a diversity workshop in February that was very well attended. The workshop talked about the aging white environmental movement and how to invigorate a younger more diverse population. All government and non-profit leadership in South Bay were invited. PG&E was sponsor. First panel talked about best practices: who is reaching out with success. Second panel was ethnic media with reps from diverse cultural newspapers. Commitment to diversity demands recruiting a diverse Board, diverse volunteers, diverse staff.

-Official launch of environmental advocate campaign to hire staff for three years to focus on environmental issues such as comment letters on EIRs. SCVA has set a fundraising goal of \$250,000 for the first three years of this effort.

-End of March to End of April is Birdathon with goal of raising \$50,000.

-\$70,000 in grants out there from a number of different foundations and corporate interests

-South Bay Salt Ponds restoration: Draft Compatibility ruling pending that public access recommendations works within F&W Service guidelines. **Open to public comment until May 1. More info at <http://www.southbayrestoration.org/announce-public-use-projects.html>.**

NAPA SOLANO – Cheryl Harris, President

-in 4th year of Breeding Bird Atlas

-John Muir Laws spoke recently at the chapter meeting and was a dynamic speaker and his new field guide to the Sierras is awesome.

NAPA-SOLANO – Robin Leong, CBC Compiler

-Solano County General Plan amendment coming up and chapter is anticipating commenting on it.

-Robin encouraged chapters to have a table at Flyway Festival, first weekend in February for chance to reach out to diverse audiences.

-Robin suggested that Marin write a paper on purchasing wetlands properties.

-Haire Ranch update: Haire Ranch is 1,100 acres of the 4,400 acre Skaggs Island. This diked bayland island in San Pablo Bay wetlands is a central habitat of the San Pablo Bay wetlands. A historic agreement with the Navy and property owner Jim Haire requires that the island remain dry through use of levees and pumps. This agreement is a major complication in transferring the Navy owned portions of Skaggs Island to the Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion into the Wildlife Refuge as the Service does not have the capacity to maintain the levees and pumping. Levee maintenance costs are over \$100,000k/year, and electricity to run the pumps costs over \$50,000/yr.

National Audubon Society solicited requests from the chapters to nominate sites to be purchased with Land Water Conservation Act funds (mitigation for offshore oil drilling). Robin and Mike submitted an application to National Audubon Society, which was accepted, meaning that National Audubon Society will lobby for federal appropriations to purchase Haire Ranch. No funds are projected to be available through this funding source for at least 1 year, possibly 2.

Next steps are to assess how willing a seller the property owner is. Can the property be obtained for “fair market value?”

Congress has told Audubon that no money will be available this year, but maybe next year. Robin is lobbying George Miller’s staff. Robin hopes to pattern the purchase on the Cullinan Ranch purchase.

NAPA SOLANO observed 80 kites roosting on the property.

MADRONE – Bob Speckles

-Seabird and fireworks study at Gualala point. Mendocino Coast and Madrone cooperated on this scientific effort. Nesting Brandt’s Cormorant nest on offshore island. During and after the fireworks nest failures increased according to the study. The study was reported to California Coastal Commission and PRBO. Coastal Commission has issued a cease and desist. From June 25-July 13 there will be monitoring of seabirds this year. *BAAC members asked if there was an alternate site that might be preferable?*

-MARIN and MADRONE sponsored a Smart Train debate over the local North-South rail line from Santa Rosa to Marin. It will come up again on a future ballot.

-April 20 Migratory Bird Day with PRBO and Rich Stallcup will lead a bird walk.

GOLDEN GATE – Marge Blackwell, President

-just starting 3 year Strategic Planning process. One aspect is diversity, and focusing on North Richmond, Bayview Hunter’s Point, and Oakland based on GG’s Eco-Oakland success in East Oakland and other areas that are underserved. Goals: increase diverse membership by 10%, increase volunteers by 10%, and increase diverse representation on Board.

-moving offices and confronting this big issue. Hope to be near BART.

-GG is in mediation against Swan Terminal that is building a truck freight transfer near MLK Refuge at Arrowhead Marsh. EIR was not done. GG hopes to achieve a sound proof wall to protect species of birds (Clapper Rail, etc) from disturbance. It’s a location for Eco-Oakland trips for kids and families.

-Altamont is ongoing.

MT. DIABLO AUDUBON – Hugh Harvey, Field Trip Chair

-Sponsored a bird education program in Antioch, and voted to buy binoculars for kids and for program.

-Clean up at Martinez Regional Shoreline on May 3.

-Jean Richmond’s book Birding Northern California will be available online. Covers 72 sites and has not been updated since 80s.

SEQUOIA – Robin Smith

-Working with Redwood City library in Redwood Shores to set up displays of birds and get involved with kids.

-Responded to an email regarding poisoning of ground squirrels in Foster City and fear that the poisons will be ingested by raptors. The ground squirrels burrow into the

levee surrounding Foster City. Bait looks like rabbit pellets and they put it the bait in the burrows.

-Sequoia has Project Bay Cat in partnership with Homeless Cat Network and Foster City in TNR (Trap Neuter Return) program. Number of cats going down. Homeless Cat Network began to license the cat feeders.

-Sequoia asked for support from other chapter in keeping 1400 acres owned by Cargill as open space and so far has heard from Madrone and Mt Diablo. Other groups working to keep open space are Save the Bay, Friends of Redwood City, Committee for Green Foothills, Sierra Club, Committee to Complete the Refuge. Groups have decided to put an initiative on the ballot to keep the Open Space. www.redwoodcityopenspace.org. Save the Bay has a position statement and has a lot of information on their website. Sequoia board passed a resolution in support of keeping the salt ponds that were not sold as open space. **BAAC is hoping Audubon California might support the open space movement as well. Mike will re-send the Sequoia resolution to the Council.**

Report on Audubon California Board meeting

Jerry Karr, Chapter Board Rep, Bay Area Council

Jerry Karr, Bay Area Board rep, reported on meeting in Sacramento in March. Jerry distributed Executive Director Glenn Olson's report to the Board, which he will try to get electronically for distribution. A big issue was projection of the financial future in uncertain times. Jerry is also on the Conservation Committee, which is now chaired by Wendy Puling of PG&E. Jerry also handed out a current legislation report from Policy Director Dan Taylor, including oil spill bills. One bill (mentioned above) wants to include spills on land as well as in water. Jerry found AB2392 to declare California State Parks lands that are not being used to be sold, now it has been morphed into a bill to amend the Ridley-Tree Conservation act to take Madera County out of the lead ban in Condor country.

Field trip was to Roosevelt Ranch in Yolo County managed as waterfowl habitat for private hunting. Immediately adjacent is another property called Charter Ranch which Audubon is looking for funding, to turn it over to F&G for wetlands restoration and education purposes. Jerry says Chapter Committee is concerned about public access for chapters and public so that they can observe the waterfowl and habitat. There is also a Marketing and Membership Committee which is looking to revamp Audubon California membership.

Introduction of Garry George, new Chapter Network Director

Garry gave his background on Board of Los Angeles Audubon, as Executive Director of Los Angeles Audubon, and as Board member of Audubon California representing the Southern California chapters, and described some of his efforts in native plant gardens, endangered species monitoring and protection, grant funding, and diversity outreach.

Together Green – Toyota/Audubon partnership

Garry talked about the three components of the grants: Fellows, Innovation Grants, Volunteer Days, and the importance of chapters applying for grants. **The request for proposals will be announced week of April 14th.**

Important Bird Areas mapping – Mike Perlmutter, Audubon California

Mike urged chapters to look at the Important Bird Area maps on the web: <http://ca.audubon.org/iba/ibamaps/> and comment on the map boundaries and site descriptions (looking for all comments by the end of April!). Instructions and forms are online. Mike cautioned that maps are bare bones but he is working on more detailed maps. **If you need more information on the maps (ex: roads, creeks, urban boundaries, etc.) just ask Mike for the information and he will send you or post updated maps.**

Mike explained that there are known gaps in Important Bird Area coverage. These will be targeted in a future nomination process, but prior to that information on existing sites will be refined through mapping and data updates.

Audubon California is also currently evaluating the state, national or international significance of the Important Bird Areas as well.

Some Important Bird Areas were shown as “slated for action” on a California map. These are sites where Audubon California is actively working because of identified imminent threats or partnerships with local Audubon chapters and other partners. For instance: conservation planning at Owens Lake, restoration in San Pablo Bay Wetlands, etc.

California Marine Life Protection Act – Rick Johnson, Marin Audubon

Rick reported on the collaboration between environmental groups, fishing groups, etc to create marine reserves following the passage of the Marine Life Protection Act in 1999. Marine reserve sites will first be delineated in the Northern coast, following will be the Southern and Central Coasts. Less than 1% of the reserves on the coast are protected.

Marin Audubon is a member of Regional Stakeholder Group which has developed four proposals. Proposal 4 is sponsored by conservation groups and Marin Audubon endorses proposal 4, as does California Department of Parks & Rec. All proposals agree that Marine Protected Areas should be three miles off coast and 3 miles around islands like Farrallons. All proposals protect Farallons. Northern area starts at Point Arena and goes south to Ano Nuevo. Marin headlands (esp. murre colony) would be reserved although it will be difficult to protect the straits between the headlands and the Farallons. Some dispute about Half Moon Bay. Area of Gualala was contentious between conservation groups and fishing groups. Proposal 4 includes State Marine Park. California State Parks & Recreation has come out in support for Proposal 4.

What is impact of salmon fishery closings? Eli Saddler of Golden Gate Audubon felt that the dialogue was about fishing or not fishing and not enough time spent on birds. Rick explained that there was a discussion about protecting prey for Marbled Murrelet but a connection couldn't be drawn between the fish/prey and the fishing enough to protect the foraging area from fishing.

Marin Audubon asked for support leaders from other chapter leaders. Rick asked that chapters ask for more protections for foraging areas for birds, and some other important comments. Comment letters to Blue Ribbon task force by April 17th. Meeting will be at 9:30 am, Tuesday April 22nd at the Embassy Suites hotel, 101 McInnis Parkway, San Rafael. See attachments for sample letter and more background information.

Update on Cosco Busan oil spill – legislation, mitigation, getting your projects funded through this and SF Joint Venture – Mike Perlmutter

Legislation:

Mike reported on the many bills in state Assembly Board. Audubon California has been tracking and responding to these bills, submitting comment letters and attending hearings. Below are abstracts of key points in the proposed legislation:

AB2547 - Allocates funds to developing new spill prevention and response technologies. Requires that responders be located close to main harbors of CA and that these responders demonstrate their preparedness in drills, including unannounced ones. Mandates a minimum response in the event of a spill in poor visibility conditions.

AB2911 – Increases resources of the oiled wildlife care network for emergency wildlife search and rescue, including volunteers

AB2912 - Adds protection for inland waters. Removes 42 gallon minimum for definition of a "spill." Spill would now mean any discharge. Adds additional funds and regulatory duties.

AB2032 - New definitions for "tank" and "nontank" vessels. Increases (approx. doubles) funds available for response and increases funds annually based on inflation

AB2441 - Requires tugboat escort for vessels carrying hazmat in and out of harbors.

AB2031 - Local government training and certification program of local emergency responders (including volunteers); notification of local governments of oil spills.

AB2935 - Requires 4 hour maximum hazmat training for volunteers. Annual training update for volunteers. Establishes a database of where response personnel and equipment are. Coordination with local and regional agencies, plus the creation of local response programs.

Mitigation

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) following Cosco Busan. Damages to key resource groups (birds, mammals, fish, rocky intertidal, sandy beach habitat, saltmarsh habitat, eelgrass habitat, and human use) are being assessed. Assessments are limited by lack of adequate baseline data and long term datasets. Assessments are also limited by difficulty of collecting data in the field. This surfaces in media reports of number of birds killed by the spill, which is often given as ~2000. This number however is probably only 10% of the actual # since many dead birds are not recovered. Damage assessment however is using more conservative numbers based on modeling.

These assessments will be used to determine the mitigation to repair damages (including projected population gains had deaths not occurred). The Trustees in the case are soliciting project ideas for mitigation. **The form is available online at Information Sheet. <http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/southwest/cosco/public.html> or email natalie.c-manning@noaa.gov or fax 707-575-6094.** Being in the database might be helpful for funding that comes later.

Mike also talked about San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, an organization that identifies funding for conservation and restoration funding in SF Bay. Mike, Eli (GG) and Barbara Salzman (Marin) attend Joint Venture meeting. They also maintain a database that lists all projects and potential projects in the Bay. This database will be consulted for mitigation, and is often used to match funding to projects. **Your bay restoration and acquisition projects should be in this database! If you have projects please let Mike know so that they can get in the database.**

Bay Area Upland Goals Project update and call for bird data – Mike Perlmutter

A process to guide conservation of the next one million acres of Bay Area upland habitat! Nancy Schaefer has reached out to BAAC about this project sponsored by the Bay Area Open Space Council. The idea is to evaluate biological resources and plan for their conservation in a coordinated, scientifically driven process across the entire Bay Area to ensure protection of special status species, wildlife corridors, rare plant and animal communities, and adequate amounts of everything else

A map of vegetation community conservation targets has been created through modeling. Focus groups (fish, amphibians, riparian, birds, etc.) are meeting to evaluate this map and identify gaps in coverage for conservation of focal group targets. The bird focus group is about to have it's third and probably last meeting this Thursday, April 17th, 2008. Robin and Mike have been attending the meetings. **Last minute input of locations to include could be routed through Mike.**

Next steps

Mike asked BAAC members if the current meeting structure was meeting their needs. We talked a bit about the evolution of the meeting, which Robin mentioned, originally had more of an emphasis on trip coordination between chapters (to prevent multiple chapters from scheduling their field trips to the same places simultaneously). It seems like chapter reports might need 2 hours. Also, there was interest in addressing key questions faced by all the chapters with special sessions (ex: feral cats, diversifying membership, fundraising, purchasing land for conservation through tax sales [Marin Audubon is leader on this], etc.). **Mike will work with chapters to make this happen.**

Mike has invited Bob Batha of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and Jane Hicks from the Army Corps of Engineers to speak to the Council about the

public comment process and what aspects are key and the most persuasive. **If you have further input on what Bob and Jane should discuss, please send it to Mike.**

Upcoming Events

EARTH DAY, April 19, at Pier 94 in SF – Golden Gate Audubon

Richardson Bay Earth Day- April 19th 9-noon

MOTHERS DAY, May 11, barbeque at Audubon Canyon Ranch

50th ANNIVERSARY, Mountain View Sanitary, Martinez – May 17th

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY, May 10 – Mike will participate at Muir Woods event

EARTH DAY, April 19, with Tri-City Ecology Center, Ohlone Audubon

WETLAND ECOLOGY CLASS (April 29-May 1), sponsored by Marin Audubon. **See attached flyer for more information.**

Statewide Tricolored Blackbird survey April 25-27, additional help needed for Contra Costa, San Mateo, and San Benito Counties, contact Rodd Kelsey for more info,

Rkelsey@audubon.org, (916) 662-4085

Next meeting: Saturday June 14, 9-2 Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary.