

# T H E ECHO

## October 2025



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BIRD OF THE MONTH: Summer Birds of the Northern Rockies

CALENDAR: October 2025

# Management Update

## Work completed

- Pruned the third round of 51 trees
- Built two retaining walls using this year's budget
- Finished defensible-space cutback of the Park perimeter
- Conducted bid walk for clubhouse roof replacement
- Received estimate for repairing dry rot/termite damage on the ground floor of the clubhouse

## Work in Progress

- Scheduled fourth and fifth rounds of tree pruning

- Beginning construction of a third retaining wall
- Reinstalling and landscaping Park bench in front of pump house 1
- Asphalt work is scheduled for September 26, 29, 30
- Beginning installation of two drainage tracks in existing driveways to prevent water intrusion under homes

  
**Matt Greenberg**  
 GENERAL MANAGER  
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 415-883-1971 Fax ■ 415-883-5911



## Check Your Name Off for the New Directory

by **ERMA WHEATLEY**

**Yes**, a new directory is coming. But first we need to know if all your information is correct. In the white notebook on the lobby counter, please check off **each section** that starts with your:

**LAST NAME • FIRST NAME • ADDRESS**

The sooner you check off your information in the three sections, the sooner we'll have a new directory.

### Directory Update

**New**  
**Sandy Sutherland**  
 22 Marin Valley Drive  
 530-317-7194  
[sandysuth@comcast.net](mailto:sandysuth@comcast.net)

### Echo Deadline to Submit Articles

Email articles by the **8<sup>th</sup>** of the month for the next month's issue with the subject "Echo" to Anila Manning at [anilahere99@gmail.com](mailto:anilahere99@gmail.com).

## THE ECHO 2025

**MARIN VALLEY MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB**  
 100 MARIN VALLEY DRIVE • NOVATO, CA 94949  
 415-883-5911 / 415-883-1971 FAX  
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### ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES

#### PAC BOARD

PRESIDENT **John Hansen 415-847-7155**  
 VP/DIRECTOR PARK OPERATIONS **Jay Shelfer 415-250-0375**  
 SECRETARY **Carol-Joy Harris 415-883-2824**  
 TREASURER **Stephen Plocher 415-302-9043**  
 AT LARGE **Brad Witherspoon 415-218-9583**

AD HOC NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE **John Hansen, Jay Shelfer**

STANDING COMMITTEES  
 CAPITAL PROJECTS **John Hansen, Jay Shelfer**

COMMUNICATIONS **Mary Currie, Chair; Carol-Joy Harris, Charlotte Weiser, Stephen Plocher, Chair**

FINANCE  
 FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEES  
 PRO FORMA (BUDGET MASTER-PLANNING) **Stephen Plocher, Greg & Sheri Smyth, Brad Witherspoon**

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE **Brad Witherspoon**

GRANTS AND LOW-INTEREST LOANS  
**Serena Fisher, Michele Rodriguez**

INTERNAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES **John Hansen, Sue Meyer, Brad Witherspoon**

MVEST **Bill Davis, Chair; Pauline Clucas, John Feld, David Gray, John Hansen, Pam Hyer, Stephen Plocher, Erma Wheatley, Brad Witherspoon**

POLICY **Serena Fisher, Alan Gump, John Hansen**

#### HOL BOARD

PRESIDENT **John Feld 510-495-4138**  
 1<sup>ST</sup> VICE PRESIDENT **Ed Collins 415-377-7696**  
 SECRETARY **Anne Lakota 415-713-4606**  
 TREASURER **Tara Plocher 415-302-5992**  
 EVENTS & ACTIVITIES **Janie Crocker 281-414-3984**  
 AT LARGE **Michale Dancer 415-519-3395**  
 AT LARGE **Sandy Zeichner 415-902-5143**  
 AT LARGE **Charlotte Kells 617-306-0265**  
 AT LARGE **Kamala Allen 415-306-6865**  
 AT LARGE **Jill Boland 415-827-3381**

STANDING COMMITTEE: PARK MARKET  
**Jill Boland, Chair; Lynda & Dave Baker, Ginger Christie, Mary Coyne, John Feld, Edgar Furlong, John Hansen, Sally Harris, Susan Hoff, Meg Jordan, Anne Lakota, Joan Leopold, Gary McClendon, Deb McNeil, Sue Meyer, Steve & Tara Plocher, Michael Theircof, Brad Witherspoon**

#### MAR VAL BOARD

PRESIDENT **Carolyn Corry 415-370-6403**  
 1<sup>ST</sup> VP, BAR MANAGER **Anne Glasscock 415-601-3047**  
 2<sup>ND</sup> VP/RESERVATIONS **Susan Hoff 707-365-9426**  
 SECRETARY **Connie Marelich 415-382-3350**  
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 DIRECTOR, HOSPITALITY **Larry Moore 415-883-0486**  
 DIRECTOR, LOGISTICS **Larry Cohen 415-883-7786**  
 CHAIR, LIBRARY **Sandee Duncan 415-883-3034**  
 CHAIR, PUB **Pat Thurston 415-884-0740**

# Letter to Residents

## PAC & MVC

### A Message from Your PAC and MVC Boards

by **JOHN HANSEN**

The journey toward resident ownership continues. I want to thank everyone who attended the City Council meetings on August 26 and September 9. Thank you for the colorful signs — and a big thank you to those of you who stood up and voiced our position. We are delivering our message, and we've received great media coverage.

As of this writing, we await the City of Novato's agreement to meet with us in person, so we can truly open discussions for a win-win negotiation.

We've all worked very hard to get to this point, with more than 83% of Marin Valley households having joined the Marin Valley Cooperative — a true signal that most residents want the Park to become resident-owned.

Yes, some misinformation has appeared in the news and been voiced by nonresidents at City Council meetings, but the City staff and Council know the truth.

We are ready to take charge of our own fate and remain an affordable, secure, and sustainable senior community. We just hope and pray the City Council can find their way to seeing this.

Keep the faith!





# Policy Committee Update

by **ALAN GUMP** and **SERENA FISHER**, MVC Policy Committee

**T**he Policy Committee's subcommittee working on the Operating Rules has completed its draft review and updates. In August, we convened another subcommittee to review the set of Bylaws provided by ROC USA in December 2024. That draft had been vetted by California attorneys and was considered compliant with state requirements. The Bylaws Subcommittee completed its review and proposed revisions in late August.

We are currently awaiting the MVC Board availability for their review before both the draft Operating Rules and draft Bylaws are forwarded to our attorney, Karen Tiedemann. Once her legal review is complete and any necessary corrections have been made, we will convene community workshops to vet the Operating Rules and Bylaws with the community before moving on to MVC Member votes on each of the drafts.

We will proceed with the first step, MVC Board review, once we have greater clarity on the status of our negotiations with the City. If it appears likely that a purchase

agreement can be reached, we will initiate the formal review and approval processes.

Please Note:

- The PAC currently operates under the existing PAC Bylaws and will continue to do so until ownership of the Park is transferred to MVC.
- The MVC Board will continue to operate under the MVC Interim Bylaws until the permanent Bylaws are approved by the MVC Board and ratified by the Membership, and the Park is formally transferred to MVC ownership.
- The community Rules that have been in force for several years remain unchanged. The new MVC Operating Rules will not take effect until the Park is transferred to MVC ownership.

The Policy Committee wishes to thank the community volunteers who dug into this process and added truly valuable insights and perspectives, significantly improving both the draft Operating Rules and draft Bylaws.



# Our Home, a Sweet Hive

by **BILL DAVIS**, MVEST Chair,  
Director, Novato Fire District

**W**e owe so much to honeybees. I think it was Einstein who said that if it weren't for bees, the human race would cease to exist. They're all around us — even in the most arid places, they're busy cross-pollinating flowers, bushes, and trees so that life can continue to regenerate. We owe so much to them, but we tend to forget about them. You might ignore them, but without them, our future would be bleak.

Seniors are much like bees. They're all around us, easily identified by their gray hair and leisurely way of walking — and, for that matter, driving. And, like bees, seniors have a strong sense of community and purpose. Mess with their hive, and they will swarm and come after you.

That happened at the Novato City Council meeting in August, when over 125 “bees” showed up to protest the ongoing mismanagement and uncertain

future of their hive — the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club community of senior citizens. They were there to make one thing perfectly clear: They want hive security in the last phase of their life. Their strength lies in numbers and in the mutual support of a community where — whether rich or poor, healthy or ill, hungry or well-fed — they care for each other. They're grateful to live out their lives in this wonderful country, state, and country, and they intend to do so with dignity and security.

So, yes, the future is bright. The Novato City Council has now been formally reminded of its responsibility to this senior community. It's not just about money; it's about shared values — security, health, and quality of life for all, including those over 55.

There's an ever-present threat that a for-profit corporation could come in and purchase the Marin Valley Mobile Country Club, redirecting its future for the benefit of distant investors

in isolated boardrooms. To date, the City of Novato has not demonstrated effective stewardship of the Park. Could the senior residents — with their years of life experience and collective wisdom — do a better job if they owned and managed it themselves? Based on what was made clear at the last City Council meeting, the answer is a resounding yes.

Hive security is their top priority. These seniors have voiced loudly and clearly that they are ready to take responsibility. They believe they can manage the Park more effectively than the City, which has allowed years of deferred maintenance that now threatens residents' health and well-being.

After all, you don't get to be a senior citizen without learning something about how to live well with others — how to support your family, your community, and your neighbors — and how to build and sustain value for everyone. ■

## Beat the Heat

by **JOHN FELD**

**T**he worst of the summer heat seems to be behind us, but in case it decides to make a comeback, remember that the

clubhouse is your personal, air-conditioned haven. It stays cool even during power outages. You'll also find a spray mister in the breezeway, perfect for a quick cooldown.

Turn on the faucet, turn the valve up vertically, and set the timer for the appropriate amount of time. ■



# Message from MarVal

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Dear Friends,

Halloween, celebrated on October 31, is a holiday marked by trick-or-treating, jack-o'-lantern carving, and costume parties. While today's celebrations are primarily secular — focusing on fun, creativity, and community — the holiday has deep roots in ancient Celtic, Roman, and Christian traditions.

At its core, Halloween is a time to embrace the supernatural, mark the end of the harvest season, and honor those who have passed. Themes of death, spirits, and the afterlife remain central, as Halloween originated as a festival for the dead.

Mar Val will be celebrating Halloween this year with our annual Black Cat event on October 25. Prizes will be awarded for Best Costume in the following categories: Female, Male, Couple, and — new this year — Group. So get with your neighbors and start plotting a group costume! How about wearing different colors and being a box of crayons? Or donning leather jackets for some Hell's Angels? Perhaps yellow-and-black outfits to “bee” bumble bees — or dressing up as two trees holding a clothesline with real clothes. The possibilities are endless. Pick your group wisely.

Chef Larry will be serving up some delicious “Poodles 'n' Noodles” and “Guess This Mess” from the Park's newest eatery, the **Roadkill Café**. And once again, **Cherrie Dougherty** will be baking up a storm for our **Faboolous Bakery Boutique**, featuring pies, cakes, fudge, and cookies available for purchase — perfect for dessert at Black Cat or to take home.

This is an immense project, and we are asking our Park bakers to contribute something sweet to help make it a spooktacular success. A signup sheet will be on the clubhouse counter.

Please help make this event a grand success. All proceeds from Black Cat — Mar Val's only fundraiser — go toward the cost of our annual liquor license.

We look forward to seeing you at Black Cat!

Sincerely,



*Carolyn Corry*

**Carolyn Corry**  
**MAR VAL PRESIDENT**  
ckcorry@comcast.net  
415-370-6403



## **Black Cat Fundraiser** (*Mar Val's annual liquor license fundraiser*)

**Saturday, October 25**  
**5 pm Cocktails 6 pm Dinner**

## **Black Cat Spooky Costume Party** **Cash prizes for Best Costumes** **and FaBOOlus Bake Sale**

Featuring our new menu from Roadkill Cafe

*Poodles 'n' Noodles* (Meaty Macaroni)

or

*Guess This Mess* (Vegetarian Lasagna)

Salad & Garlic Toast

Bakery Treats for Sale

\$17 per person

**Reservation deadline: Wednesday, October 22 @ 5 pm**  
or when 110 reservations have been received.

Make checks payable to Mar Val

Questions – Call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426



# *Mar Val Thanksgiving Dinner*

**Saturday, November 22**

**5 pm Cocktails 6 pm Dinner**

## **Menu**

**Turkey and Dressing  
Sweet Potatoes  
Mashed Potatoes & Gravy  
Green Bean Casserole  
Cranberry Sauce  
Rolls  
Pumpkin Pie**

**Reservations: \$17 per meal**

**Limit: 2 persons per household**

**Reservation deadline, November 20 @ 5 pm**

**(or earlier, if 120 reservations are received before the deadline)**

**Reservations will NOT be accepted prior to November 1**

Even if you have generously volunteered,  
**YOU MUST STILL DEPOSIT A RESERVATION CHECK PRIOR TO THE DEADLINE**  
Questions? – Call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426

# Home Owners League Message

Greetings,

## Craft Market and Flea Market

Our next Craft Market is on Saturday, September 27 from 1 to 4 pm in the ballroom. This time, we're adding a new twist — a flea market! If you remember the charming rummage sales from earlier Mar Val Black Cat events, this will be similar.

This is your chance to turn your clutter into cash. Whether it's a vacuum cleaner, a food mixer, your father's old watch, your grandmother's jewelry, or clothing you no longer need — bring them to sell. We'll provide a table, and you're welcome to stay until your items are sold, bartered, or given away. There will also be a table for donated items such as furniture, vases, and other household goods. You don't have to stay, but if you do, you can savor the wonderful baked goods from **Karen Muhly** and **Cherrie Dougherty**! Invite your friends and family to donate, sell, and join the fun. Contact **Tara Plocher** ([taraplocher@gmail.com](mailto:taraplocher@gmail.com)) to reserve a table. Setup is 12-1 pm.

## A Big Thank You to Suzie Lahr

**Suzie Lahr** has been curating the clubhouse art for many years. Due to health concerns, she has decided to step back from her gallery duties. All of us — and especially the artists among us — are deeply grateful for the dedication and care Suzie has put into the many changing exhibits. The rotating gallery exhibits have displayed, and will continue to display, a magnificent collection of resident art, and they stand as a testament to her artistic talents and tireless commitment. Thank you, Suzie, for all you have done.

## New Gallery Hanging October 5

On that note: Artists, get your creations ready for the next gallery exhibit installation on Sunday October 5. We are excited to welcome **David Gray** as our new gallery coordinator, along with support team **Anne Lakota** and **Jae Tillinghast**. They will be checking in art between 10 am and noon. If you currently have a piece on display, please plan to pick it up at 10 am on October 5, or arrange for someone else to collect it for you. We do not have a place to store art safely.

## Dump Run

**Ed Collins** and his trusty team of volunteers will host the next dump run on October 25. If you have items to get rid of, email or text Ed well in advance ([mretc@hotmail.com](mailto:mretc@hotmail.com); 415-377-7696). He is already receiving requests, so don't wait too long to reserve your spot. If you're looking for some exercise and a fun time, Ed is also looking for volunteers to help load and unload. A healthy back, a pair of gloves, and a couple of hours are all you need. (See p. 10.)

## New Refrigerator

Thanks to **Jill Boland**, who so wonderfully organizes our fabulous free food program, we're getting a major upgrade. Jill submitted her first-ever proposal — for a new fridge — to the Extra Food organization, which administers the food distribution program. Her proposal was accepted, and a brand-new industrial fridge and freezer should already be installed by the time you read this.

We are incredibly grateful to Jill and Extra Food for making this happen

and improving our Park Market.

Once this new item is in place, we will be looking for an additional energy-efficient refrigerator/freezer.

## Vaudeville Show

The Marin Valley Players, the creative group behind our last two hugely successful plays, are back with a Vaudeville Show! We are looking for local entertainers to perform short acts. This is a chance to show off your talent, whether it's stand-up comedy, singing, magic, or even plate-spinning. Don't be afraid to be a little silly or even ridiculous — we want to be entertained! To audition, come to the ballroom either Wednesday, October 15, at 6:30-8:30 pm or Thursday, October 16, at 2-4 pm. (See p. 13.) Contact **Sandy Zeichner, Michale Dancer**, or **Janie Klimes**, ([zeichbea@gmail.com](mailto:zeichbea@gmail.com)), ([michale@stilllifegifts.com](mailto:michale@stilllifegifts.com)), or ([janieklimes1948@gmail.com](mailto:janieklimes1948@gmail.com))

## New Sound System

John Hansen has generously donated a new amplifier and speaker for events in the Fireside Room and other spaces. This easy-to-use sound system has a microphone for presentations and Bluetooth capabilities for playing music directly from your phone. It will be stored in the HOL shed near the breezeway. If you'd like to borrow it for your event, just ask any HOL board member to get it for you, and please remember to return it promptly. Contact me if you need a quick lesson on how to use it.



# Ed Collins and Park Dump Runs

**October 25 • 9 am – 4 pm**

**S**ince the fall of 2020, **Ed Collins** has been providing a simple but invaluable service for the residents of our Park: dump runs.

## From Overflowing Dumpsters to a Better Way

Before Ed stepped in, the Park rented large Dumpsters a few times a year for oversized items that didn't fit in weekly garbage cans. While the idea was good, in practice it became a problem. People dropped items off before the Dumpster arrived, piled trash to overflowing, and left junk scattered on the ground. Even nonresidents took advantage. Eventually, the system was discontinued due to misuse and the mess it created.

## How the Dump Runs Started

Ed's idea came after one of his summer rafting trips. He realized that the trailer he used for boats and gear could also be used to haul junk. He started by cleaning up his own property, then offered to take a few items for

neighbors. From there, the concept of community dump runs was born.

Instead of using one central Dumpster, residents now place their items neatly in their own driveways. Ed and a small team of volunteers collect and haul them away. This simple shift eliminated the mess and misuse, while giving everyone a reliable way to clear out unwanted items.

## How It Works Today

Five years later, the dump runs are an established part of Park life. Each run typically serves 30–35 homes, with a morning run and an afternoon run. Residents simply text or email Ed to be added to the list. On dump day, Ed is joined by four or five community volunteers. Recent helpers include **Deb McNeil**, **Kevin Mulvany**,

**Charles Watson**, and **Paul Weinberger**, among others who have pitched in over the years.

The program is supported by HOL, which covers truck and trailer rental costs as well as dump fees. Resident donations typically cover about half the cost. Almost anything can be hauled away, with a few exceptions: no pressure-treated wood, cardboard, paint, oil, or other toxic materials. Electronics should be taken to an electronic recycling center, and oil to a hazardous waste center. A fee of \$25 is charged for large items such as appliances or mattresses — if they fit.

## Looking Ahead

What started as three runs a year has now settled into two, with the option of adding a third if another volunteer organizer steps forward. The next dump run will take place on October 25.

If you'd like to "play garbage hauler," there's plenty of time to get involved — and it's more fun than you might think! Volunteers are welcome to join for the morning, the afternoon, or both. ■



PLEASE NOTE

Time change for the Rollin' Root in October — **Noon-1 pm**



# How to Have Difficult Conversations WORKSHOP

by **MICHAEL HAGERTY**

**Thursday, October 16**

**Fireside Room • 4-5:30 pm**



**Want to ask a noisy neighbor to keep it down at night?**

**Hoping for a holiday dinner without a political argument with that opinionated uncle?**

**Worried your concerns about the Park purchase are not being heard?**

**C**ome for another engaging training session with **Ed Collins** and **Michael Hagerty** on navigating tough conversations. You'll learn how to diffuse anger and appeal to others' own deeply held values — without compromising your own.

We'll share proven techniques inspired by Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication* and Harvard Negotiation Project's *Getting to YES* by Roger Fisher and William Ury.

By the end of the session, you'll have some great tips on how to build bridges instead of walls. ■

Introducing a new column — **The Art and Science of Living Well** by Nan Watanabe, who teaches our Group Strength Training class every Sunday from noon to 1 pm in the Bamboo Room.



# Why Strength Training Matters at Every Age

by **NAN WATANABE**

**S**trength training isn't just for athletes — it's essential for healthy aging. As we grow older, we naturally lose muscle mass and strength, a condition known as sarcopenia. This decline can lead to weakness, balance issues, and an increased risk of falls. Strength training helps slow this process, helping seniors maintain independence and vitality.

Studies show that regular resistance training helps preserve muscle mass, bone health, and confidence in movement. ■

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Source: *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.*

# Gary McClendon

by **MARTY GELMAN**

**Monday, October 27 • 4:30 pm • Fireside Room**

**W**e are pleased to introduce one of our residents, **Gary McClendon**, who has had an exciting career spanning over 40 years in the entertainment lighting industry. His expertise has led him to work on feature films, the Super Bowl, the World Series, and live entertainment. Many of our residents are likely to have seen his accomplishments firsthand. We hope you enjoy his presentation. ■



THE MARIN VALLEY PLAYERS PRESENTS

# VAUDEVILLE

A Tribute to the Past



## AUDITIONS

Wed, Oct 15 • 6:30–8:30 PM  
Thu, Oct 16 • 2:00–4:00 PM

Come prepared with your act!  
Auditions last 10–20 minutes per act.  
Show us your performance and explain  
how you envision costumes, props, or  
special touches.



## PERFORMANCES

Sat, May 16 • 7:00 PM  
Sun, May 17 • 2:00 PM

All talent welcome – the quirkier the better

SPONSORED BY  
HOL

QUESTIONS? 415-902-5143

## Auditions

**Wednesday, October 15**  
6:30–8:30 pm

**Thursday, October 16**  
2–4 pm

**Come prepared with your act!**

**Auditions last 10–20 minutes per act. Show us your performance and explain how you envision costumes, props, or special touches.**

**All talent welcome – the quirkier the better.**

## Performances

**Saturday, May 16 • 7 pm**  
**Sunday, May 17 • 2 pm**

# Fallen Leaf Summer Potluck

by **MICHELE RODRIGUEZ** and **KC CASEY**

**T**he Fallen Leaf neighbors held their second annual summer potluck party on Sunday, September 7 at 5 pm, post-49'er game! It was a beautiful day for an outdoor gathering, and 23 longtime and newer neighbors, including **Donya Drummond** and **Sheri & Greg Smyth**, attended.

There was plenty of good food, conversation, laughter, and shared hope. It felt so good to be together. The waning days of summer seemed the perfect time to celebrate our satisfaction with life in Marin Valley and the friendships we've made. ■



# My Time in San Quentin

by **LORNA SASS**



**B**efore I moved to California, San Quentin felt like a distant, mythical, and very scary place. This infamous prison had been on my radar even while I was still living in NYC, as my dear friend, literary agent Sarah Jane Freymann, had helped one of the prisoners, Jarvis Jay Masters, get his memoir published.

Masters lived in solitary confinement on death row in SQ for 21 years, as punishment for a crime there is substantial evidence he did not commit. I joined the Free Jarvis (<http://www.freejarvis.org>) movement to link with lawyers and other concerned citizens committed to setting him free.

During his time on death row, Jarvis became a Buddhist and wrote his memoir, *That Bird Has My Wings: The Autobiography of an Innocent Man on Death Row*. The book was Oprah's Book Club selection in September 2022, and his story is also the subject of *The Buddhist on Death Row* by David Sheff.

When I'm driving around locally here in Northern California, I am always astonished by how the tall, expansive San Quentin complex dominates parts of the San Francisco skyline. I was dismayed to learn that, despite the prison's magnificent location overlooking San Francisco Bay, the windows in the cells were purposely placed so high that inmates couldn't see the view — lest it lift their spirits.

As a sensitive soul, every time San Quentin came into view, I would feel sorrow for Jarvis and for everyone else stuck behind those walls. I spontaneously started sending blessings to the prisoners and praying that those in charge of our dreadful prison system would find more benevolent ways to treat people — many of whom, for lack of receiving the love they needed — committed crimes out of anger or despair.

For many years, I've been singing every Sunday afternoon in the Joyful Noise Gospel Choir at St.

Stephen's Episcopal Church in Sebastopol. I've loved how within minutes our extraordinary director, Benjamin Mertz, has us singing in harmony — clapping and dancing along to his toe-tapping, syncopated piano accompaniment.

One day, Benjamin announced that we had the opportunity to sing for SQ inmates celebrating their graduation from various educational programs. I was thrilled at this chance to bring musical joy into the prison, but very quickly I seized up in fear. You see, dear reader, my body remembered how awful it felt to visit my schizophrenic brother in various snake-pit mental institutions. When the door closed behind me during visits, I was locked inside with the terror that I might never get out.

But this chance to celebrate with the SQ prisoners was too joy-filled for me to resist, so I calmed myself down, signed on to join the group, and went through the required clearance process.

On the day of the recital, I arrived in the prison parking lot with a pounding heart. The heavy iron gates were imposing. After a while, the guards began checking us in one by one — about 20 of us, all white folks. But wait, our amazing Black choir director, Benjamin, was denied entrance. What? Somehow his clearance was mysteriously not clear enough to allow him to fulfill his role.

We all felt the need to stand behind Benjamin in solidarity and cancel our performance, but with great dignity he encouraged us to go ahead with it for the benefit of the prisoners. So we did. The only problem was, we weren't allowed to bring in pencils or paper, and the longtime choir member Benjamin had put in charge was frantically trying to recall which songs we had rehearsed.

After about ten minutes of disorientation, a prisoner in the audience stated loudly in a

mellifluous, preacherly voice, "There is no need for concern. The Lord is the best choir director there is, and He will take care of everything!"

We all let out a sigh. It struck me that this devout man — who, I later learned, had spent 40 years behind bars — had found transcendent freedom while still in bondage.

Our substitute choir director, though culturally Jewish, clearly took in those words. She visibly relaxed, organized us into our places, and began leading us confidently in song. Slowly, the audience responded, swaying with the music, some of them standing up and singing along while clapping. It grew into an hour of unabashed joy, a shared feeling of harmony and unity among us all.

When we finished and received a standing ovation, I felt sad to leave. I wanted to talk with the prisoners, but we had been instructed not to. Benjamin was waiting outside the gates, and together we sang a few more gospel tunes — many of us with tears rolling down our cheeks.

I still send blessings and prayers whenever San Quentin comes to mind, and I feel so grateful to have had the opportunity to bring a spark of joy to those locked inside. Like most gifts we give, I received back double or triple what I offered. ■

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P.S.: The Gospel choir has now moved to Petaluma, where we sing twice a month on Saturdays at the First Presbyterian Church from 2–3:30 pm. If you'd like to join the mailing list, contact [joyfulnoisegospelsingers@gmail.com](mailto:joyfulnoisegospelsingers@gmail.com)

Here's a link if you'd like to read more about Jarvis Jay Masters: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jarvis\\_Jay\\_Masters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jarvis_Jay_Masters)

# Summer Birds of the Northern Rockies

Text and Photography by **DAVID GRAY**



**M**y kestrel article in the September 2025 *Echo* focused on just one of the species of birds we observed while visiting the Continental Divide in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. But I would be remiss in not fleshing out some of the other species we encountered, particularly at the Harriman State Park in Idaho, about 40 miles west of Yellowstone and Grand Tetons National Parks. All of these species are ones we also see in or around our Park!

The belted kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) ranges across all of North America up to the Arctic Circle, plus Central America and the Caribbean. We see them on the coast and along the rivers and streams of California, and this male sat still just long enough for me to capture his portrait.

Numerous waterfowl dotted Harriman State Park, including this Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), which was hunting — soaring and hovering above Silver Lake.



A male yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*) was foraging for insects in the evergreens — seen here contemplating his next leap. Their range is similar to the belted kingfisher's, only larger, extending down into northern South America.



A small flock of migrating Cedar waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) were enjoying berries in the bushes along the shores of Henry's Fork of the Salmon River, where I also discovered a favorite bathing area of several species, including this damp Western tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*).



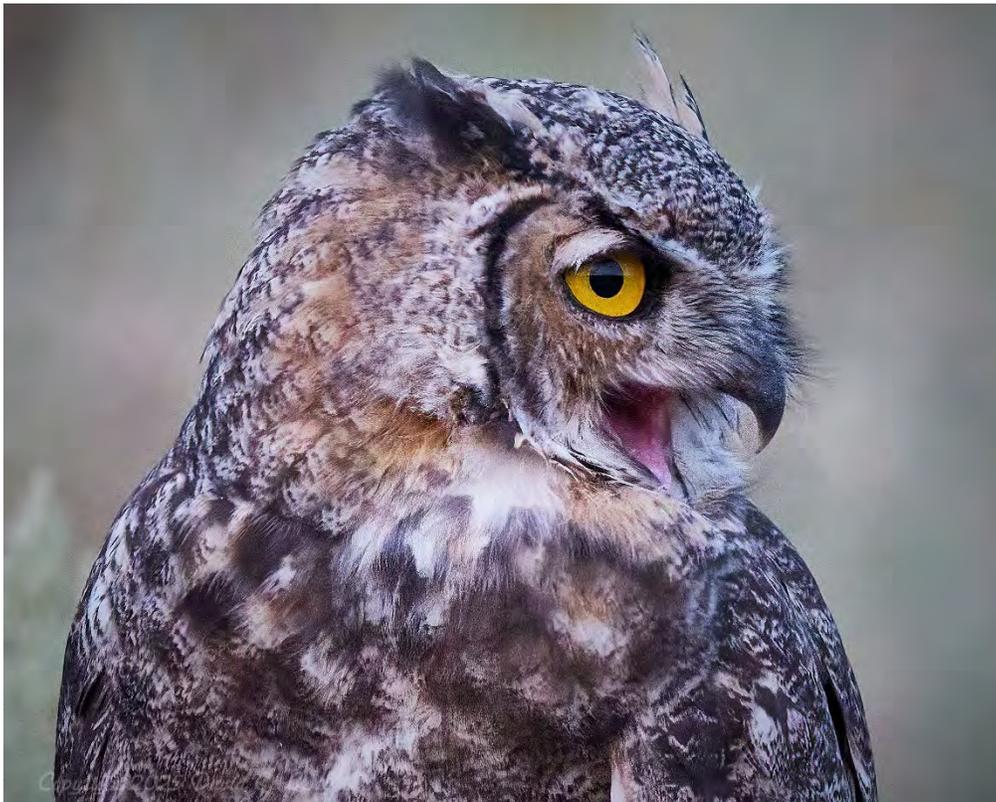
A downed tree allowed fresh water to flow in, while its bare branches served as perches where birds queued up to bathe or dried themselves afterward.

Lastly, as we headed home through Indian Springs, Idaho, Nancy and I were walking at dusk after a soak in the hot springs when the familiar screech of an

immature great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) rang out. (GHOs develop their signature "who-who-who" calls as adults.) Looking around in the fading light, I found it sitting atop an old wooden fence post. I speed walked back to the campervan — taking care not to spook the owl — grabbed my camera and super-telephoto lens, and speed walked back behind some trees. From about 25 yards away, I approached slowly, taking a few quiet steps closer each time it looked away. It never seemed concerned about my presence — and never flew away.

Screech!

Wishing you all a very happy October! ■



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>OCTOBER 2025</h1>			<b>1</b> 7:30-9 Taiji <i>Deck/ David MacLam</i>	<b>2</b> 7:30-9 Taiji <i>Deck/ David MacLam</i>	<b>3</b> 7:30-9 Taiji <i>Deck/ David MacLam</i>	<b>4</b>
			10-11 Water Aerobics <i>Pool</i>	12-1 Rollin' Root 	10-11 Water Aerobics <i>Pool</i>	4:30 HOL Board Meeting <i>Fireside Room</i>
<b>5</b> 7:30-9 Taiji <i>Deck/ David MacLam</i>	<b>6</b> Trash  7:30-9 Taiji <i>Deck/David MacLam</i>	<b>7</b> 7:30-9 Taiji <i>Deck/ David MacLam</i>	<b>8</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>9</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>10</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>11</b>
12-1 Group Strength Training <i>Bamboo Room/Nan Watanabe</i>	10-11 Water Aerobics <i>Pool</i>	10:30-11:30 Craft & Chat  11-12 Chair Yoga <i>Fireside Room</i>	10-11 Water Aerobics  5 Mar Val Board Meeting <i>Ballroom</i>	12-1 Rollin' Root 	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong	6 Dancing
5 PAC Board Meeting <i>Ballroom/Zoom</i>	<b>12</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>13</b> 6 Trash	<b>14</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>15</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>16</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>17</b> 7:30-9 Taiji
12-1 Group Strength Training	7:30-9 Taiji  10-11 Water Aerobics	10:30-11:30 Craft & Chat  11-12 Chair Yoga	10-11 Water Aerobics  11 Ladies Bridge <i>Private, Fireside Room</i>	12-1 Rollin' Root 	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong	6 Dancing
5 MVC Meeting <i>Ballroom/Zoom</i>	<b>19</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>20</b> 6 Trash	<b>21</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>22</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>23</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>24</b> 7:30-9 Taiji
6 City Council <i>City Hall</i>	12-1 Group Strength Training	7:30-9 Taiji  10-11 Water Aerobics	10:30 Craft & Chat 11:30 Chair Yoga	10-11 Water Aerobics  5 Black Cat reservation deadline	12-1 Rollin' Root 	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong
6 Vaudeville audition <i>Ballroom</i>	<b>18</b> 6 Dancing	<b>25</b> 9-4 Dump Run <i>contact Ed Collins</i>	<b>26</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>27</b> 6 Trash	<b>28</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>29</b> 7:30-9 Taiji
4:30-5:30 Difficult Conversations <i>Fireside Room</i>	5-7 Pub	5 Mar Val Black Cat Fundraiser <i>Ballroom</i>	12-1 Group Strength Training	7:30-9 Taiji  10-11 Water Aerobics	10:30-11:30 Craft & Chat  11-12 Chair Yoga	10-11 Water Aerobics  4 Book Club <i>contact Carol-Joy Harris</i>
<b>25</b> 6 Dancing	<b>31</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>30</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>31</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>1</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>2</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>3</b> 7:30-9 Taiji
5-7 Pub	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong	12-1 Rollin' Root 	10-11 Water Aerobics  6 City Council	12-1 Group Strength Training	7:30-9 Taiji  10-11 Water Aerobics	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong
<b>26</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>27</b> 6 Trash	<b>28</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>29</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>30</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>31</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>1</b> 7:30-9 Taiji
12-1 Group Strength Training	7:30-9 Taiji  10-11 Water Aerobics  4:30 Last Monday Lectures: Gary McClendon	10:30-11:30 Craft & Chat  11-12 Chair Yoga	10-11 Water Aerobics  4 Book Club <i>contact Carol-Joy Harris</i>	12-1 Rollin' Root 	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong	10-11 Water Aerobics  12 Mahjong
5-7 Pub	<b>2</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>3</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>4</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>5</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>6</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>7</b> 7:30-9 Taiji