

March 21 Field Trip
Woodpecker Trail, Bear Valley, with Rich Cimino
By Vicky Van Meter

About 15 of us enjoyed a walk through the meadows and oak woodlands along the Woodpecker Trail with Rich Cimino. This trail starts just south of the Bear Valley Visitor Center in the Point Reyes National Seashore in West Marin. The day was sunny and cool but rain the day before made the woods damp and perfect for birding. As we gathered in the parking lot we watched the violet green and tree swallows darting about. Entering a grove of old Douglas Firs at the beginning of the trail, the Acorn Woodpeckers were busy, as evidenced by the tens of thousands of holes in a granary in a huge Douglas Fir. Another tree was filled with the neat rows of well holes made by Red-breasted Sapsuckers. Sapsuckers feed on the sap and the insects attracted to it. Varied Thrush are moving north at this time of year and we spotted one in the tangled underbrush. We also heard or spotted American Robin, Spotted Towhee, Bewick's Wren, Hermit Thrush, and Stellar and Scrub Jays. As we entered an open meadow we spotted a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers overhead. We continued to hear these birds as we continued our walk but did not get another look. A pair of Western Bluebirds perched on a coyote bush glowed in the sun. Entering the oak woodland we discovered a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets, then we were entertained by the long songs of several Pacific Wrens chatting in the trees. Other species included Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Pine Siskins, Golden-crowned Sparrows, and California Towhees. As we ended our day, we spotted two Hutton's Vireos out in the open sunlight in a Bay Tree near the picnic area. Rich is a knowledgeable and engaging leader and we enjoyed our spring day in West Marin.