



# ***WEST MARIN WILD***

**By Jeff Miller**

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I'm a lifelong Bay Area resident, who after decades of venturing from the East Bay to West Marin to explore, hike, mountain bike, bodysurf and enjoy wildlife, finally made the move to Bolinas this summer. Partly as a way of connecting with my new home and getting to know and inhabit this amazing place on the edge of the continent, I'm hoping to write a sporadic column for the Hearsay News on the wildlife of West Marin.

I'm not a biologist, but I've been rambling through the wildlands and open spaces of the Bay Area for four decades now, seeking out hidden places and searching for glimpses of interesting and unusual animals.

I spend my productive hours as the Bay Area Wildlands Coordinator with the Center for Biological Diversity ([www.biologicaldiversity.org](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org)), a national non-profit conservation organization that works to protect endangered species and wild places around the world, through effective use of science, education, policy and environmental law. The Center, essentially the most kick-ass enviro group around, has gained protection for imperiled Marin species such as the California Red-legged Frog, Coho Salmon, Western Snowy Plover, Yellow Larkspur and Marin Dwarf Flax.

I have also spent the last decade as Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance ([www.alamedacreek.org](http://www.alamedacreek.org)), building momentum to restore Steelhead Trout and salmon to Alameda Creek, the largest creek flowing into S.F. Bay. I hope to channel some of my passion for fish, endangered species and wildlife in general into an occasional column, including profiles and stories about the fascinating animals living here in West Marin, when and where to see them, and their habits and personality traits that will amuse and amaze you.

I also want to highlight our rare and endangered species as well as endemics (species that live nowhere else on earth), and share some musings, observations and information about the notable critters of the season. Since I got hooked on birding this year, our feathered friends may be featured prominently. My goal is a column that educates, entertains, inspires and sparks interest in protecting our wildlife and its native habitat.

The 120 days I've lived here have already been filled with memorable wildlife encounters. A pilgrimage to view spawning Coho Salmon in Lagunitas Creek. Leopard Sharks and Bat Rays darting under my kayak in Drake's Estero. Ghost-like Fallow Deer appearing out of the fog along Highway 1. A truly stunning flock of several thousand Elegant Terns wheeling over the lagoon and diving on anchovies, their cacophonous cries resembling a deranged orchestra of squeaky toys. Ravens and vultures lackadaisically picking apart a dead King Salmon on Bolinas Beach. Precise squadrons of pelicans riding the wave troughs at sunset. Encountering a dying Sea Lion on RCA Beach. The same three Belted Kingfishers reliably perched at their usual spots on the telephone wires, patiently fishing the lagoon. An endless parade of Monarch Butterflies flitting past my front porch. And recently at dusk, while trying to grok an insane orange sunset blazing in the west and an impossibly full harvest moon rising simultaneously in the east, a large owl swooping down to check me out. This place truly is paradise.

*West Marin Wild* hopes to be a sporadic column on the wildlife and natural world of West Marin. Please send wildlife sightings, interesting animal stories or encounters, topic suggestions, questions or corrections to Box 111, Bolinas.