

Los Gatos Birdwatcher



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Photo Presentation, Wildlife Around the World – Wildlife in Peril

Thursday, March 20, 2014 6:30 – 7:30pm (Note time change)

We will travel around the globe with Meggi Raeder and discuss the threats that many wildlife species are facing in a world where their habitat is continuously shrinking with ever increasing human-animal conflict. We will see common threats but will also hear success stories about how determined minds can create win-win situations in which wildlife and people can prosper.

No charge – Reservations Required



Photo Presentation, Explore the wildlife of Brazil with Judy Bingman

Thursday, April 17, 2014 6:30 – 7:30pm (Note time change)

The main objective of this trip was to photograph the illusive Jaguar in the Pantanal and to find other wildlife such as Cayman, Ocelot, Tapir, wild boar, river otter, crab eating fox, Agouti, Howler Monkey and giant AntEaters.

No charge – Reservations Required



Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center (WERC) visits Los Gatos Birdwatcher for annual fundraiser

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 12 from 11am – 2pm

Break into your piggy banks. Dig deep into your pockets. Bring what you can to help this great organization continue caring for injured and orphaned birds and wildlife. Amy Yee and friends will bring several of WERC's educational ambassadors for you to meet. Last year's guests included the Peregrine Falcon, Screech Owl, and, Clarabell, the Acorn Woodpecker.



Lisa Myers' Beginning Birding Workshop – Blackbird Family

Class: Thursday, April 24, 6:30 – 8:00pm

Field Trip: Saturday, April 26, 8:00 – 10:00am

Red-winged Blackbirds, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Tri-colored Blackbirds, Brewer's Blackbirds are just a few of the species that belong to the blackbird family known as the *Icterids*. Also included in this family are the Orioles and Meadowlarks. A diverse and beautiful family, many customers are fortunate to have Bullock's and Hooded Orioles feeding and nesting in their yards during spring and summer.

Fee: \$20 per person – Reservations Required

Bald Eagles in Campbell?!?

An excited phone call came in early February. "I'm looking at a pair of bald eagles just off White Oaks and Camden at the top of a redwood tree!" Over the years we have received several calls similar to this and the birds have turned out to be ospreys.



photo by: *Jim and Brian Hamilton*

So I very politely asked, prefacing my question with "not to make you wrong or doubt the sighting, but are you sure it isn't an osprey?" Luckily and happily, I recognized the caller as customer, Don Mason, and he wasn't upset. He is a good birder and it truly was a pair of bald eagles. The eagles were creating quite a stir in the neighborhood and I sent our resident expert, Lisa Myers, with a scope to share in the excitement. There were about eight people there who had seen Don outside with his camera. Everyone was thrilled to see the birds through the spotting scope! The eagles stayed in the tree for almost an hour before flying off towards the percolation ponds. During the following weekend and into the next week many people posted sightings of the pair at Vasona Lake. It's possible that because Vasona is still 63% full and Lexington's only 30% full that the fishing is better at the north end of their territory.

For at least the last year there have been a pair, and some observers think there may be four, at Lexington Reservoir. Our friends, Mercury and Rea Freedom, have photographed, and with the help of Bob Power, former Executive Director of Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, documented



photo by: *Mercury Freedom*



photo by: *Don Mason*

two adults and two immature bald eagles of different ages. The February 2014 issue of Mountain Network News has some beautiful photographs of these magnificent birds by Mercury Freedom, one of which is shown here. The pair's nesting site is unknown but it is surmised that the nest, or nests, is in the watershed area at the south end of Lexington Reservoir. Last summer another customer and his son, Jim and Brian Hamilton, saw one of the adults catching, then dropping, a fish near the boat dock at Anderson Reservoir. The photo was one of the highlighted photographs at our annual photo exhibit and included in this article. On our way to a birding field trip in Santa Cruz last summer, the folks in my car had a brief view of a bald eagle flying up the canyon on the "little" Lexington side of Highway 17.

In past years, our field trips have had to go to Paicines Reservoir outside of Hollister or up to Calaveras Reservoir behind Milpitas in hopes of seeing one, or at the most, two bald eagles. Now we have some close by. During the 1970's, the bald eagle numbers suffered a huge decline due to the effect of DDT on their eggs, as did other raptors.

Bald eagles are an interesting bird to observe, as they are very opportunistic when sharing habitat with ospreys, which they do at both Lexington and Vasona. Many times they will follow a hunting osprey and when the osprey catches a fish, the eagle swoops in to claim the prize as its own.



We're on Facebook.

Watch for Lisa Myers' weekly updates on both Los Gatos Birdwatcher and Let's Go Birding. Be sure to "Like" Los Gatos Birdwatcher so that you can keep current on our weekly updates about new products, upcoming events, and what we saw on our Saturday morning birdwalks.

“Dead” Crow Program Update

When I mention our “Dead” Crow Program, I get some very strange looks! In the September/October 2013 newsletter I wrote an article titled *Got Crow Woes?* that introduced the idea that if you put a fake crow out in your yard so that it looks dead (feet up in the air) that the crows would mourn the bird and leave. The response over the last six months has been very positive. Sometimes it takes more than one “dose” to send the crows on their way, but most people have had one to two months without crows before having to put one out again.

We did have one poignant story from the Atwoods. They had been inundated with forty to fifty crows and had put out our “dead” crow. Things went very well and they all left for several weeks. Then the crows started to return so they put it back out. Our proxy did the trick but before they could retrieve it, a red-tailed hawk swooped in the picked it up. I felt so badly for the hawk that it would get a nasty shock when it tried to eat the plastic body.

Another customer brought in a video, with sound, showing a good two minutes of the deafening “funeral” that the crows put on for their fallen comrade. In early February, a crow met its demise on the berm bordering the Terraces at Blossom Hill Road. Previously, as Marley and I walked this section, we would be squawked at and, twice, pooped on. Since the real dead crow has been there, not a sign of one crow. Where there seems to be less success is when there is a large roosting contingent



in the neighborhood. With this situation I would recommend the shared purchase of one of the “dead” crows by the neighborhood and have the crow rotate from house to house randomly. Sure it isn’t 100%, but it is certainly better than it was previously.

We know that some people like the crows because they are very smart and their antics are quite entertaining. Some people feed them peanuts but if you want other birds to be in your yard for feeding and nesting, feeding crows is at cross purposes. They are very adaptable and are truly omnivorous. They eat everything that we throw away. They eat eggs and baby birds of the songbirds in your yard. They are very social within their flock and their babies will stay around the following year to help raise the current year’s offspring.

If you would like to try out this program we have some for sale at \$35.99 for people who have lots of crows and rental crows for \$10/7days.

New Mobile Birding App

There is a new spiffy app for birders called *Merlin* that is now available from Cornell University. According to the Cornell website, *Merlin* is: “When people notice a new bird, the first question they often ask is, “What bird did I see?” We’re building *Merlin* to help people find the answer. *Merlin* will be a new kind of bird identification tool – one that combines artificial intelligence with input from real-life bird watchers to produce an online “wizard” that helps people ID birds quickly and connects them to more information. To build *Merlin*, we need to know how thousands of people remember and describe birds. You can help us through online activities that gather the information to help *Merlin* understand what bird watchers see. The more you play, the more you’ll help *Merlin* become a true bird ID wizard. This project is funded by the National Science Foundation.”

In the Winter 2014 issue of Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s magazine, *Living Bird*, Jessie Barry, *Merlin*’s project leader, answered questions about *Merlin* and introduced the reader to all the features of this new, FREE, app! According to the article, “Right now *Merlin* makes recommendations for 285 species, so these are the most common birds found throughout the mainland United States and Canada. We’re in the process of adding about 100 more species, and there will be more developments coming. Plus, *Merlin* will be constantly improving itself.” Currently, it works on iOS devices with iOS7, but soon they will be releasing an Android version.

September 2013 Field Trip to California Raptor Center at University of California, Davis

We have visited the little known California Raptor Center (CRC) many times over the years. This time was special, as one of our original birdwalkers, Beth McGillis, who just turned ninety, wanted to go. Beth's granddaughter, Alexandra, is a student staffer at the Center and is in her senior year so Beth wanted to go see her working before Alexandra graduated. Los Gatos Birdwatcher and Let's Go Birding teamed up for the trip and we had thirteen participants.

The day did not start out well as we got stuck in a five-mile traffic jam and lost an hour. Then the heavens broke loose with that wild unseasonable rainstorm. However, it couldn't have worked out better. Sallie Reynolds, our fascinating docent, was giving three other visitors an overview of the Center and birds in general when we arrived. Instead of standing in the rain at the bird enclosures, we all sat, nice and dry, in the conference room

and the birds were brought to us. Six volunteers brought in a male and female kestrel, a red-tailed and a red-shouldered hawk, a great-horned owl and a Swainson's hawk. Alexandra's bird was a northern saw-whet owl. Each bird had a story of injury or imprinting and a journey to the Center where they were rehabilitated and "tamed" as educational ambassadors.

The last bird to visit us was Sullivan, a golden eagle. What a regal bird! His handler is a Sacramento Sheriff Deputy who had come in for the previous three days to make sure Sullivan was ready for our group. He had rigged up an arm stand on which he supported his arm that held 8.5 pound Sullivan. Sullivan was found near Chular, unable to fly and very thin. Veterinarians discovered a badly broken left wing and had to amputate the wingtip in order to save his life. He was brought to



CRC for rehabilitation, and in time, the decision whether or not he could adjust to life in captivity. By how calmly he sat on the glove for a half-hour presentation, I would say he has adjusted magnificently. Los Gatos Birdwatcher and Let's Go Birding donated enough to "adopt" Sullivan and received a lovely certificate and some photos of Sullivan. Beth was so enraptured by Sullivan, we gave her one of the photos. Sadly, Beth passed away on January 24, 2014 having fulfilled her wish to see Alexandra and the birds of the Raptor Center. We are so thankful for the lovely memory of our special visit.

It's Mealworm time again

The store refrigerator is stocked with mealworms again! Last year, we had families of titmice and acorn woodpeckers that made fast work of every offering. Many customers were feeding Bewick's wrens, robins and chickadees. Western Bluebirds are showing up in more and more backyards which has increased the excitement in feeding mealworms. Mealworms are small, one-inch long, black beetle larva. They are sold in small plastic cups with snap-on lids and plenty of air holes. The worms sit in wheat bran and can be stored in a refrigerator for up to two months, even though they will get eaten faster than that, with just a slice of carrot added every week or so. We have been having great response to our 100 and 500 count tubs with some folks feeding mealworms all year.

The easiest way to present mealworms is in a shallow straight-sided dish. It can be one our domed feeders where the dome can be adjusted to keep out the larger birds or it can be the bottom part of a satellite hummingbird feeder that you are no longer using. Another popular feeder for mealworms is small hanging dishes that hold just enough. If you are just trying it for the first time, a shallow Pyrex or glass baking dish will also work (just something that won't blow away in the wind). Try to keep whatever you use out of the direct sun. Some customers have actually trained the birds to come when they whistle. The key is to whistle, ring a bell or make some noise consistently and put out the meal worms at approximately the same time everyday. Early morning and towards dusk are two opportune times.





Pouches and magnets by local artist using vinyl banner leftovers.



Jabebo Earrings made of recycled cereal boxes
- lots of our local birds, beautiful graphics



Bench and pillows
- something pretty for the patio.



Night Lights
by Ibis & Orchid

New Nightlights from Ibis & Orchid



Sock-it-to-me knee-highs and other socks



Customer Request
Suet balls and their feeders.

Tree Trimming - Watching out for Wildlife

By Jackie Turner, Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley

Each year local wildlife rehabilitation centers receive large numbers of baby birds and squirrels that have been injured or orphaned by tree trimming. Tragically many of them do not survive. Most of these patients arrive in the spring, which is the worst time to prune a tree for both the tree and the wildlife living in it.

By following a few simple guidelines you can help reduce the number of baby birds and squirrels injured, orphaned, and killed by tree trimming.

In the past, arborists believed the best way to maintain a tree was to cut out about a third of its interior branches every few years, ostensibly to let light into the canopy and to “tidy up” the tree. But then research in tree care showed that pruning can actually harm trees. Not only does it traumatize them, causing them to expend a great deal of energy to recover, but it also makes them susceptible to disease. For these reasons, tree care researchers now say that the best pruning is none at all. Arborists recommend that you prune only to remove dead or diseased wood or branches that may injure the tree by chafing against each other. For aesthetics, you may also cut branches that cross the center of the tree, but otherwise, just leave the tree as Mother Nature intended.

If you absolutely have to prune a tree, be sure to check the area for squirrel and bird nests first. Squirrels nest twice a year from February to May, then again from July to September, and their nests look like a big clump of leaves and twigs caught in the junction of two branches (either near the trunk or farther out on the limb).

Bird nests are smaller and harder to find, especially hummingbird nests, which are about the size of eggcups, so just look for a dark spot tucked among the smaller branches. If you find a nest filled with eggs or babies, leave it alone. Moving a nest can severely hurt the babies’ chance of survival, and it may even be against the law. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, it’s illegal to harm or remove the nests of all migratory and native birds, and most songbirds. So to be absolutely safe, put off pruning until the babies have fledged.

Keep in mind that some seasons are better for pruning than others. Arborists recommend pruning in the winter when trees have the greatest reserves of energy stored in their tissues and can cope with the shock of pruning or in the fall, just after deciduous trees have lost their leaves. In California, trees don’t lose their leaves until December, so that’s generally accepted to be the best time to prune. By then, baby squirrels and birds have reached self-sufficiency and their parents have wrapped up their procreation activities for the year. The worst time to prune a tree is in the spring. That’s the height of the nesting season for most birds and squirrels, and it’s also the time when a tree is directing all of its energy into producing new growth. Pruning in the springtime can not only impede a tree’s growth, but also increase its chances of becoming diseased.

As always, there are exceptions to the rule. Dead wood can be removed anytime of the year, and weak shoots that sprout out of existing limbs or old wounds should be pruned in the later summer, after the tree has finished its growth spurt. Just be sure to check

the area for nests before you cut. Most fruit trees are pruned annually, but again the best time to do this is while they are dormant in the winter.

And for the sake of your trees and the wildlife living in them, don’t cover the stubs of freshly cut limbs with those black wound dressings. Birds can foul their feathers by brushing up against the goo, and the dressings can make your tree vulnerable to widespread damage by covering up early signs of bacterial infection. Just make a clean cut and leave it at that. Your trees will heal the cuts themselves and your wildlife will be healthier for it.

If the worst happens and you find baby birds or squirrels on the ground either in their nest or outside of it, don’t panic. Wildlife rehabilitators have had great success reuniting babies with their mothers in recent years. Poke holes in a shoebox and place the babies inside on a soft cloth to keep them safe and warm. Do not attempt to feed them or give them water. Call your local wildlife center (such as Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley 408-929-WILD) and they can advise you on whether reuniting is possible and if so, how to do it. Contrary to the popular myth, baby birds and squirrels are not rejected by their moms if they “smell of humans.” If the babies are injured, the wildlife center will advise you on how to transport them to a rehabilitation facility.

Jackie Turner is a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator at the Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley and a master gardener. With acknowledgements to Wildlife Rescue of Palo Alto/Peninsula Humane Society and Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, San Jose

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Field Trips & Outings

Saturday Morning Local Bird Walks

Join us every Saturday morning for an enjoyable meander looking for birds. Call the store Friday nights after 7pm to find out where we are going the next morning. Except for our once a month all-day field trips, we go on a local bird walk from 8 to 10 am and return for bagels and shade grown coffee. Some of the nearby places we go to are Oka Ponds, Guadalupe Oak Grove Park, BelGatos Park, Almaden Lake Park, Shoreline and Charleston Slough.

No Charge.



Let's Go Birding with Lisa Myers to Fremont Peak

Saturday, April 19, 8:00am to 4:00pm

Rising above San Juan Bautista, Fremont Peak has a lot of history surrounding it as far back as 1847 when Army Captain John C. Fremont selected this 3,169 foot peak on which to raise the American flag. Once at the top one can see Mt. Hamilton, the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and the Pacific Ocean. The breeding season will be underway so we'll be hearing bird song and we'll be looking for species returning and resident species in breeding plumage.

Fee: \$30 + share of gas

Sunnyvale Audubon walks

First Wednesday of the month

March 5, April 2, May 7

Noon to 1pm

Bring your binoculars (loaners are available) and meet Freddy at the **Sunnyvale Pollution Control Plant** where Borregas and Caribbean meet off of 237. After entering the plant turn left at the first stop sign and continue to the end of the parking area. We will see raptors, shorebirds, and lots of ducks.

No Charge.

Let's Go Birding with Lisa Myers to Mines Road on the eastern side of Mt. Hamilton

Saturday, May 17, 8:00am to 4:00pm

Mines Road is an annual event for most birdwatchers. This remote rural road allows for many pullouts as we look for golden eagles, Lewis's woodpeckers, phainopepla, Lawrence's goldfinch, lark sparrow and many more species we don't often find in Santa Clara County. We never know what to expect and that is one reason this day is always an adventure. This trip is where the Birdaloo earns high marks.

Fee: \$30 + share of gas

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Adventures with Marley

*Augie, did you
get skunked
too?*



Marley got skunked!! Mommy didn't have any peroxide so she had to have THREE baths!

Remember to have 32oz bottle of peroxide, ¼ cup of baking soda and 1 tsp. of Dawn dishwashing liquid on hand at all times. Mix it together and cover the skunkee in it. It's really cold so hurry! Rinse, then shampoo with regular doggie shampoo and rinse again. Towel dry. Nature's Miracle's Skunk Odor Remover works to get the order out of clothes and towels. It was less successful on Marley, hence the third bath in peroxide.

Dates to Remember

3/9 Daylight saving begins – spring ahead
3/17 St. Patrick's Day
4/14 Passover
4/20 Easter (Closed)
4/22 Earth Day

Store Hours

Monday – Saturday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sunday: 12 noon to 5 p.m.

