


# Los Gatos Birdwatcher



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## With Love & Thanks for 20 Years

October 14, 2015, marked twenty years of "The Bird Store." When John and I decided to do this crazy thing called retail, we looked into two franchises for help in figuring it all out. We chose Wild Bird Centers of America (WBCA), which at the time was a dynamic company with lots of great products, seed mixes and ideas about kids' programs, bird walks, and outreach. It was a great match for many years, but things changed, and we disagreed with their direction. We changed the name of our store to "Los Gatos Birdwatcher"



and went independent in 2010. Except for the color of the counters and the walls, most customers didn't notice a thing, and that was the whole reason for our going independent – to keep our products, especially seed, of high quality and right for our birds found in the west. Through the years, we have had a great time teaching people about birds, learning from their experiences, and sharing their excitement when the feeders and seed we helped them choose brought in the birds! Photos and stories about special sightings, funny antics, and the joy of watching the birds have all been high points. Saturday morning birdwalks have always been a highlight in the



store's history and for me. Without them I probably would have been hunched over a computer and not connected to the birds and people that make everything worthwhile. I led the store's first walk in December 1995. I remember it vividly. It was attended by three people: Jan Aplustill, Beth McGillis and Jan

Winterfield who for years came out on my walks; all are gone now. Through the decades these walks have had regular attendees and we are always meeting new people

who come out to learn about birding. We've discovered and explored parks and "birdie spots" all over the county. As regular Matt Rode has said many times, "I've lived here for forty years, and I've never been to this place."

On the third Saturday of most months, guest field trip leaders took us to amazing places farther afield such as the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge, Santa Cruz's Nicene Marks and California's Central Valley for wintering waterfowl. Now, Lisa Myers (Let's Go Birding, Inc.) takes us in style and safety by professional tour bus with the "Birdaloo" in tow. We bird places such as Panoche Valley in search of Mountain Plovers, Merced for cranes, Big Sur for condors, and Mines Road and Lone Tree Road for migrants.

Educating the community about birds is an important goal of the store, but I have always been passionate in being able to also work with children to teach them about nature. As part of our outreach, "Miss Christine" and I designed children's programs that we conduct in area schools, and in the store. Last year we taught over 1400 local school children about nature. Students learned about the different kinds of birds, the benefit of bats, animal tracks, weather and much more. After John and I retire, and we get settled into our new home, I hope to be able to bring these programs to the children around Templeton.

I have also enjoyed getting to know many of you through the "Show and Tell" programs I have presented to organizations around the bay (Rotary, Kiwanis, PEO, SIRS, garden clubs, Live Oak Adult Day Services, etc.) In addition, experts have conducted educational workshops we have sponsored here at the store and next door in cooperation with The Terraces.



# Upcoming Events

All events are free, but please call to reserve your space 408-358-9453

## Ants! Swarm! Cuckoo! We're Going to Panama – Beth Hamel

Thursday Nov. 19, 6:30 – 7:30 PM at the Terraces

Experience the natural splendor of Central Panama through photos and stories from Beth Hamel. Beth and Tom Hamel are avid birders of the Bay Area. Beth retired in 2013, after spending 30 years in the software industry, to spend more time outdoors enjoying the natural world. This year the Hamels explored Panama with the Canopy Family group, and now you have an opportunity to enjoy Panama without the heat, mugginess, bugs, and exhaustion!

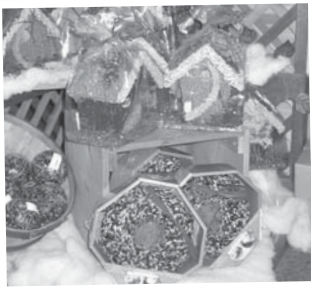


*Rufous-vented Cuckoo*

## November Ginger Seed House Workshop – Freddy Howell

Friday, November 27th, 3-4:30 PM

For the whole family: Join Freddy for a Los Gatos Birdwatcher after-



Thanksgiving tradition. Don't miss this special family activity as we build festive Ginger Seed houses out of seeds. You can then place your Ginger Seed house outside for the birds and squirrels in your neighborhood to enjoy. Watch as they enjoy their own Thanksgiving feast. We supply all the ingredients. You'll want to wear clothes that you don't mind getting grubby. *(Not appropriate if you have peanut allergies.)*

## A Look Back at Five Years of Los Gatos Birdwatcher Birding Tours – Lisa Myers

Thursday Jan. 21, 6:30 – 7:30 PM at the Terraces

The Los Gatos Birdwatcher has offered customers birding tours for the past 20 years. New owner Lisa Myers partnered with Freddy five years ago to provide folks with exciting adventures throughout California's birding hot spots. Lisa will look back in time and present images, memories and highlights taken from over 60 adventures organized through the store. From Big Sur to Point Reyes, Stockton to Panoche Valley and all the places in between.



*Continued from page 1...*

When we started the store, I knew the importance of being part of the Audubon community; I had been a member of Audubon since age 7, as part of my own parents' membership. After getting my store confidence level up, I volunteered on the Board of Directors for our wonderfully active Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. After five years on the Board, I decided my heart was with education and have spent many years on the Education Committee. This I will continue and will also continue to lead the monthly Sunnyvale walks with Allen Royer in retirement.

When I went to my first WBCA convention, one of the other storeowners told me "You will lose your life, but you will gain a family," and he was so right; we have gained such an extended family, including dogs! You have all been so generous and gracious in opening your lives to us. We have made friends, celebrated milestones, welcomed babies, watched children grow up, given hugs and shared tears in hard times, attended weddings, and grieved at funerals. After the first four years of my running the store on my own, John decided I was having much more fun than he, and he left the world of finance and high tech to join me. He has kept our DOS based point-of-sale system working through his magic, hauled innumerable tons of seed, and fitted countless customers with great binoculars. We have just celebrated 41 years of marriage and 16 years of working together! About three years ago, with the encouragement of our staff, we started taking two Wednesdays a month as a date day when we didn't come to the store, we didn't stay home, and we did something fun. It has been so successful that

we are planning many more "Date Days" in retirement.

Our next chapter will see us building a straw-bale house in Templeton, California (near Paso Robles) near my cousin and her husband. We have been working with the architect on our new house and think that the design is just right. That means all on one floor, a kitchen to meet all of John's specifications, gray water system, native landscaping, and a craft room for me, a workshop for John, and a guest room. The house will be built in about a year. We have always loved the Central Coast and are looking forward to birding Morro Bay, sipping wine in over 300 wineries and sampling the delicious food in the many great eateries. Until then we will be working on deferred projects at home. Also on the agenda is getting a new dog, or two, to keep us fit and active. And since this will be my first holiday in retirement, I'm going to see every production of the Nutcracker that I can find!

During the transition to Lisa's ownership, I have realized that I will miss the daily interaction with all of you. I will miss hearing a heartfelt "Good Morning, how are you?" I will miss hearing from people how much fun it is to come into the store and to see what's new. And, I will miss watching folks get excited when they purchase a new item that we received less than an hour before. It means I picked something people liked! Then there are all of the out of town family members my local customers bring in so they can share our store with their family, "This is the first place I wanted to come!". John and I will both miss all the customers with whom we have formed an attachment.

In addition to thanking all of our customers, I would also like to thank all our employees, past and present, for making the store what it has become. Pat Kelly and Elsie Drabek were early employees who taught me a great deal about what's important in running a successful store. Babs Gildersleeve broadened our jewelry selection, Joann Thompson kept me on the straight and narrow about HR rules, Joan Graham delighted in everyone's bird stories, Judy Bingman reconnected with all her students, and Jared Lockhart charmed everyone by giving his conyer "Cherry" her Sunday bath in a drinking cup. Some of the early "high schoolers" were Angie Adams, Carrie Awalt, Scott Robbins and Misty Buckley who are now all grown up, all married, two with kids of their own. We were sorry to see Laura Dangerfield go when she decided to move back to her home state of North Carolina. Julie Soule' took over some important ordering to free me up to do more of the outreach I love to do. Julie turned over that ordering to Kathleen Kawakami when



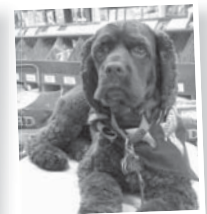
she moved to Pacific Grove, where she now works for Wild Bird Haven (another former WBCA store) owned by my dear friend, Jill Himonas. Kathleen has done a great job making sure that our greeting card selection is second to none. Linda Becker, KC Harris, Olivia Ady and Terra Freeman each bring something special to the store and have quite a following. John has had help and camaraderie from Al Lowder and recently Kyle Standish to haul in the multiple tons of seed we get each and every week. We also want to acknowledge our outstanding store dogs: Choca, Sage, and Marley, and part-time greeters Anna, Lucy and Augie.



Choca



Sage



Marley

The last thank you and acknowledgement goes to Lisa Myers. Lisa and I have known each other for almost as long as we have owned the store and without her the store would not be continuing. It truly is a great match. Through her company Let's Go Birding, Lisa has been leading our farther afield tours for years and providing workshops for adult birders. In addition to all that, Lisa brings a great marketing understanding to the store. She has done our Facebook page and Newsletters for years.

Lisa already knows many of you, she is also passionate about customer service, and she is fully invested in our local birding community. She also has a wicked sense of humor. As she learns more about the "retail" side of birding, I have been very impressed at her eye for products. Lisa is also bringing us into the post-DOS era with a new point-of-sale system. Yes, change is hard

BUT it can also be very exciting. My new mantra is a sign that I saw in a catalog: *It is what it is...but It becomes what you make of it!* Lisa's Los Gatos Birdwatcher will be different from Freddy and John's Los Gatos Birdwatcher, but the best news is that there will still be a Los Gatos Birdwatcher for you to find your quality seed, get the information you need and find wonderful new products.

With love and thanks for twenty years of "The Bird Store,"

Freddy and John Howell

# Let the Next Chapter Begin

*Hello from Lisa Myers*

I asked Freddy for an “Informational Interview” shortly after she opened the “bird store”. I had always wanted my career to involve nature and helping people learn about the environment and Freddy’s store epitomized that dream. She was kind enough to meet me and answer my questions about what it took to operate such a store. That was nearly 20 years ago. I realized it was going to be more than I could handle at that stage of my life, but after talking with Freddy, I was inspired and I also made a new friend. Although we did not know it at the time, that was also the beginning of a birding partnership.



In the following years I started my own birding tour company called Let’s Go Birding. My goal was to get adults outside to learn about birds and birding. I wanted to create a friendly environment where all birding levels were welcome. I also wanted to bring a little humor to a hobby that at times could get a bit intimidating. Folks could ask all kinds of questions without judgement. I wanted to make a positive impact on the environment and I wanted to help others do the same thing. Freddy felt the same way. We knew there was a population of birders that while they had a passion for nature and birds, they were not necessarily interested in memorizing the taxonomic order of all the birds found in the world. So we formed a partnership. I brainstormed with Freddy on ideas for her store and she taught me about her store. She also provided me with the opportunity to teach and I have led roughly 60 birding tours for the Los Gatos Birdwatcher to locations all over the greater Bay Area. Freddy reminded me that back in 2004 I told Freddy if she and John ever wanted to sell the store to please let me know. It would be a decade later when she shared with me that she and John were ready to retire and she would like me to take it over. Selling one’s business is not easy, but she also did not want to simply close the doors, leaving her customers without quality products and seed. I accepted the offer to purchase the Los Gatos Birdwatcher and my longtime dream of owning such a store would come true. And not just any store, one of the more successful nature stores in the nation!

I also know customers do not want to see Freddy and John go. I don’t want to see them go either, but they have worked really, really hard and they deserve to retire and start another chapter. They have agreed to help me however they can after the official transition date of December 1. And while John is working on their new custom house plans, Freddy plans to come birding with us. So please be patient with me as I learn the ropes. My partner Al, retired from the fire department years ago, has been helping around the store and he said he’d like to help me, so you’ll meet him too. I look forward to meeting all of you as the next chapter of the Los Gatos Birdwatcher begins.

## Small Business Saturday and Open House

**Saturday, November 28**



The Town of Los Gatos and King’s Court Center are participating in Small Business Saturday on Saturday, November 28. It is the day communities celebrate the Shop Small movement and support small businesses.

We are proud of our small business and we are proud to support our community through tax revenue and through our extensive outreach and donation policy. We felt this was also the perfect day for a holiday “Open House”. ***During the Open House we are giving a 15% discount on your purchase of any holiday merchandise.*** And we are also giving a free give away to all that make a purchase in the store Nov. 28.

## Thanks for Giving Week

**– Nov 17 through Nov 23**



Los Gatos Birdwatcher is partnering with Los Gatos Magazine and Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo

Counties to bring hope, relief and security to our neighbors struggling with hunger. Our food drive will help the Food Bank stock their pantries for Thanksgiving and the upcoming holidays. We will have a collection bin ready to receive your donation of meals in a can (stew, chili, soup), peanut butter, 100% fruit juices, low sugar cereals, tuna or canned meat and canned fruits and vegetables. ***Everyone who brings in a food donation will receive a coupon valued at \$5.00 off any purchase of \$10 or more to be used by the end of 2015.***

# Tips for the Season

## Fall and Winter Feeding – Changes for the Wet and Cold Season

Picture by:  
Ellen Bateman

Now is a time that feeding birds takes on a more life supporting role, and if we get the amount of rain we are supposed to, we want to help you to be prepared. Monitoring the seed you have in your feeders is especially important, because when seed gets wet and sits it becomes susceptible to diseases that birds can get and then pass on to each other.



When you do refill your feeders, be sure to empty out the leftovers on the bottom. If left over time it becomes hard to clean and the old seed that accumulates can eventually grow mold.

Add baffles/rain guards to minimize the amount of rain that reaches the seed, thus helping to keep the seed dry and reducing the waste of seed due to mold.

With mesh Nyjer/thistle feeders, shake the seed up and down in the feeder on a daily basis when it's raining. This moves the seed around and gets air into the feeder.

Another tip for Nyjer/thistle feeders is to increase the number of feeders

you have in your yard. This will help to spread the birds out throughout your yard. American and Lesser Goldfinches and Pine Siskins often flock onto the Nyjer/thistle feeders during the winter. Because of this flockiness, they are susceptible to diseases like salmonella. By spreading out several feeders you can reduce the spread of disease.

No matter which type of feeder you have, it is important to clean up any seed that accumulates under the feeder. This means your ground feeders won't end up eating old, wet seed.

Remember to keep your feeders clean. You can do this yourself or bring them into the store and we'd be happy to clean them. See services listed below.

If you have tube feeders, only fill them **half as full** so the birds rotate through the seed more quickly. You would then fill them **twice as often** and your birds will thank you. If you use any "hulled" (without shell) seed or mixes you may want to switch to seeds *with* shells. Seeds without a shell covering are more susceptible to absorbing moisture.

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## Services Available from the Los Gatos Birdwatcher

- **Feeder Cleaning** – Drop off your feeders any day of the week. We clean on Mondays and Thursdays, asking only a donation to one of six charities (Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center, Nike Animal Rescue Foundation, Friends of San Martin Animal Shelter, Injured and Orphaned Wildlife, and Henry W. Coe State Park Bat Project.). If possible, please bring your feeders in early in the day. We will call you by closing for pickup.

- **Frequent Buyer Program**, buy 9 bags 20# or higher of the same seed and get the 10th one free. Coupons do not apply.

- **Outreach to community organizations** about birding. We have birding and "Show and Tell" programs ideal for gardening and other service groups.

- **Backyard Bird Consulting Program** - Lisa will come out and see what you have, what you want, and what might work. The consultation is about an hour and the cost is \$20, which will be applied to any purchase of new feeders, seed, baths, or hardware.

- We offer **Gift Certificates** and our popular "**Drop a Hint**" cards that allow you to choose a selection of gifts you would like (wish list) to be considered and when the gift giver comes in with the list, we know exactly what you want.

- 15% off one item Coupon is available every two months. You don't have to bring in the physical coupon, but you do have to let us know at the time of the sale that you would like to use it. We do not apply the coupon automatically. The coupon excludes optics, trips and sale items.

Coupon does not apply to Frequent Buy purchases.



## During December we have expanded our store hours!

Saturday, December 19 | 9am – 6:30pm  
Sunday, December 20 | 11am – 5:00pm  
Monday, December 21 – Wednesday Dec. 23 | 9:00am – 6:30pm  
Christmas Eve – Thursday, Dec. 24 | 9am – 4:00pm  
Saturday, December 26 | Back to normal store hours  
New Year's Eve, Thursday Dec. 31 | 10am – 4pm  
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day

## Holiday Discounts

**15% off**  
All clothing  
*including hats, gloves,  
socks & scarves.*  
December 10–16.



### Warm Wollies

– Hats, scarves, jackets and very fun fingerless mittens in several designs.

**25% off**  
all Holiday Items  
December 19–24



### Mr. Bird gift ideas

– Houses, wreaths, Santas, cookies, bells, all made of seed and ready to hang outside



### Home Décor

– Mugs, plates, napkins, towels and even beautiful matches !



### Prevent Bird Strikes

–A new line of window decals that go on the inside of your window

### Birds of the Bay Area Coffee Mug

– Exclusive design for the Los Gatos Birdwatcher by Robin Lazzara



Los Gatos Birdwatcher  
King's Court Center  
792 Blossom Hill Road  
Los Gatos, CA 95032

##C1215

2015

Pay to the order of Our Loyal Customer  
**15% Off One Item**

Memo: Expires Dec. 31, 2015

One coupon per customer, please.

Excludes sale items, excursions, and optics.

Please mention or bring in. Frequent Buyer does not apply. Not to be combined with any other offers.

## Field Trips & Outings

### UPDATE! Saturday Morning Local Bird Walks

Dates and locations of our bird walks will now be listed in the newsletter and on our web page.

Join us most Saturday mornings for an enjoyable bird walk. You can meet at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher at 8:00 AM and drive over together, or meet at the trip location by 8:15 am. Walks end by 10:00AM. These two hour Saturday walks are open to all who are interested in birding. Rain cancels.

**No Charge.**

- Nov. 7** bird with Freddy at BelGatos park in Los Gatos.
- Nov. 14** bird with Freddy at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park.
- Nov. 21 and Nov. 28** there will be no local walks.
- Dec. 5** bird with Lisa at Vasona Park.

*Meet at the upper Wildwood Picnic area. You can walk in from University Ave. using Pepper Tree Lane.*

- Dec. 12** bird with Lisa at Los Gatos Creek Park  
*Meet at the park entrance off Dell Ave., Campbell*
- Jan. 2** bird with Lisa at Charleston Slough  
*Meet off Terminal Blvd. in Mountain View.*

### Sunnyvale Audubon walks – First Wednesday of the month

Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6 Noon to 1pm. Freddy will continue to lead this walk for Santa Clara Valley Audubon on the First Wednesday of the month. Birding walks are listed at [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org). 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.

**No Charge.**

### Let's Go Birding – Merced NWF

**Sat. Nov. 21, 2015. 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM**

**– Currently taking a wait list**

The Merced National Wildlife Refuge includes 10,258 acres of wetlands, native grasslands, vernal pools, and riparian areas and hosts the largest wintering population of lesser Sandhill cranes and Ross' geese along the Pacific Flyway

**Fee: \$60 Includes transportation.**

**There will be no Let's Go Birding all day tour in the month of December because everyone is really busy with the holidays.**

### Let's Go Birding – Central Valley Raptor Tour

**Sat. Jan. 16, 2016 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM**

We are excited to have Wildlife Biologist and raptor expert Ryan Phillips co-leading the first tour of 2016. Ryan and Lisa will design this tour to hot spots around Davis where we know wintering raptors like to hunt. This is an exciting time to look for raptors as some species are only found here during the winter. We will also take time to enjoy the many other species of birds found throughout our day. Very little walking on this tour.

**Fee: \$60 Includes transportation.**

# Los Gatos Birdwatcher



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website: [www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com](http://www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com)



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*The Let's Go Birding Half Moon Bay weekend in October was a wonderful success and included this gorgeous ocean sunset.*



## Special Holiday Hours

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26  
Holiday Open House Saturday Nov. 28  
Saturday, Dec. 19 9am – 6:30pm  
Sunday Dec. 20 11am – 5:00pm  
Monday – Wednesday 9:00am – 6:30pm  
Christmas Eve – Thursday, Dec. 24 9am – 4:00pm  
New Year's Eve – Thursday Dec. 31 10am – 4pm  
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day

## Store Hours

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

