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## Staff Picks

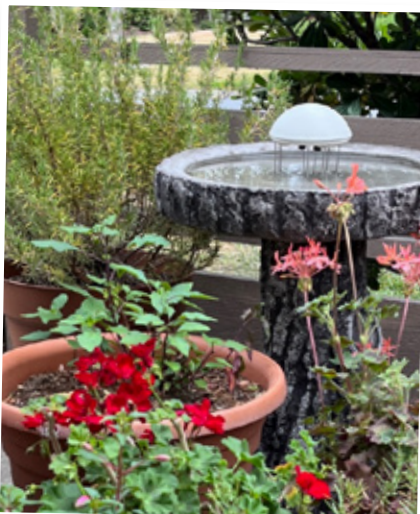
### Products we enjoy in our own yards

“I picked the **suet feeder** made out of real wood for my yard. It attracts many different species of birds. Chestnut-backed Chickadees and the Nuttall’s Woodpeckers are my personal favorite.” – **Lauri**



Lauri, Marcia & Amy

“I understand not everyone wants to deal with **dried mealworms**, but I like offering them to the insect eating birds in our yards. We put out a small amount every morning. I know when they are feeding young because they take beaks full and quickly fly out of sight only to return soon after.” – **Lisa**



Water wiggler

“I first got a **hummingbird feeder** to put in my window to give my indoor cats some entertainment. We all enjoyed it so much we got two more feeders. We live in the Santa Cruz Mountains and we now get both the Anna’s and Allen’s Hummingbirds at our window.” – **Marcia**

“I enjoy my **thistle feeder**. It is easy to maintain and looks great in my yard with the copper baffle. I get flocks of the Lesser Goldfinch and I keep an eye out for the not as common American Goldfinch.” – **Amy**

“I have been battling a squirrel at my seed feeder so I decided to try the **‘Flaming Squirrel’** spicy sauce. The recipe says to double it the first few times, so I did. The first day, I watched the squirrel come to the feeder, sniff the seed, then run back up the tree and sit there contemplating. It tried again, finally deciding to leave the seed alone. I now have many happy birds and the seed lasts more than an hour!” – **Jessica**



Cole's Flaming Squirrel hot sauce

“I love my **water wiggler** AND bird bath. If feeding is not an option, providing water is a great way to go because all birds have to drink and bathe. My daily visitors include California and Spotted Towhee, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, Western Bluebirds, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Mourning Doves.” – **Marjorie**

## Summer Coupon

Mention this coupon & take...

**15%**  
off one item



Excludes all food items or seed, sale or consignment items, excursions & optics. Not to be combined with any other offers.

EXPIRES SEPT. 30, 2023 #SUMMER2023

# Great Horned Owls, A Customer Favorite

Article and photos by Marcia Sivek

Everyone loves owls. Customers come into the store excited to share when they hear an owl in their yard or neighborhood or, even better, when they see one. Just this last spring we found two different families of Great-Horned Owls while out on our Let's Go Birding Saturday morning walks. Here is some Great-Horned Owl information we thought you would all enjoy.

Owls usually sleep during the day and hunt at night, so it's often just their call that lets us know an owl is near. Fortunately for us, each owl has its own distinctive vocalization making it easier to identify the species even in the dark. The call most associated with owls is the deep "who-hoo-hoo-who," of the Great-Horned Owl (GHO); the storybook call of an owl we all grew up with. Red-tailed Hawks are the most common daytime raptor weighing up to 2.5 pounds while a GHO can weigh up to 4 pounds and is the largest owl in our area. GHOs are pretty recognizable if you are fortunate to see one. A full-grown a GHO is 18–24 inches tall and has long tufted feathers standing vertically above its head, for which it was named. They also have large, piercing yellow eyes helping them hunt in the dark. Owls are well camouflaged and the GHO is no exception. They are gray-brown in color with a striped blotched pattern allowing them to blend into



**Adult female Great Horned Owl**

to mountain forests, swamps, open fields, and even deserts. They are the top predator successfully hunting other birds of prey such as Peregrine Falcons and Ospreys, plus smaller owls and hawks. They also dine on songbirds, frogs, insects, rodents, and even skunks. Depending on the weight, they can even take a small cat. Another good reason to keep your cats indoors.

Like all raptor species, the female GHO is approximately one-third larger than the male. She may also be distinguished from a male as she has a higher-pitched hoot than he. Mated pairs are monogamous and tend to stay in the same territory all year.



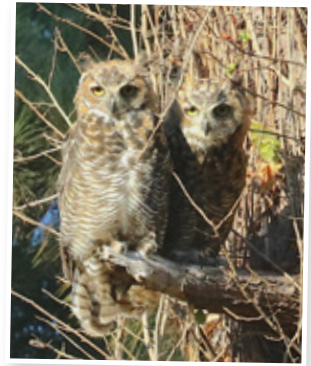
**Owl pair**

their surroundings. The upper chest is white and they have a facial disk that directs all sounds into their ears. Their legs and large talons are covered in pale whitish feathers that almost look like fur.

They are fierce successful hunters and are highly adaptive to finding food in various habitats from our Bay Area neighborhoods

If you find an active raptor nest it is with respect to the breeding pair, and part of the understood birding ethics not to share the location. Too many people showing up to view/ photograph the nest could disturb the situation causing nest failure. But

some nests are away from a trail and high enough to be viewed without causing problems to the owls. The nesting owls pictured here are a familiar sight in Santa Cruz. Their courtship starts in the fall and includes various posturing, bobbing, bowing, allopreening, vocalizations, and eventually copulation which hopefully results in the female laying fertile eggs. GHOs do not build their own nests but take over nests already built by other large birds. They will also use hollowed-out tree stumps, holes in cliffs, or build nests in abandoned structures. They do not have to hide their nests as few other birds will mess with nesting GHOs.



**2 Great Horned Owl Chicks**

The female alone incubates the 1-2 eggs for about 4.5 weeks while the male hunts and brings her food. Once the eggs hatch the near-naked hatchlings take about 40-42 days to grow big enough to fledge from the nest. As the owls grow they will move out to nearby branches and rely on their parents for food. Newly fledged owls make a begging call that sounds like a witch screaming; very different than their adult parents.

Once the young GHOs learn to hunt on their own they have to find their own territory. This typically happens in the fall around September. Then it is time for the parents to start the whole courting cycle again. Barring any harm to them, the pair will stay together for life. If there is no injury, human interference, etc, these owls can live 20-30 years. Depending on the species of owl, they can eat 1-3 rats per day, and even more mice. In California, the conservation status of the GHO is good with a healthy population. However, because they are so adaptable to various habitats close to humans, this makes them more vulnerable to car strikes and rodenticide (rat) poisoning. If an owl gets a rat that has been poisoned, it will also kill the owl. If we could let raptors do their job we may not need to add such toxins to our environment.



**RAPTORS ARE THE SOLUTION**

Raptors Are the Solution (RATS) educates the public about the dangers of rat and rodent poisons in the food web and inform people about the ecological role of wild birds of prey, and work to eliminate toxic rodenticides to prevent further poisonings of wildlife, children, and pets. They envision a healthy, functioning

food web in which every organism remains poison free. Rodent poisons undermine a critical piece of this system: the predator/prey relationship. RATS is a fiscally-sponsored project of Earth Island Institute, rated a Four Star Charity by Charity Navigator and partner with environmental nonprofits, agencies, scientists, cities, and others to work toward eliminating toxic rodenticides from the food web.

On September 29, 2020, Governor Newsom signed AB 1788 into law. The law, which went into effect January 1, 2021, puts a moratorium on second generation anticoagulant use (*with a few exemptions*) until the CA Dept. of Pesticide Regulation finishes reevaluating these dangerous products. RATS is proud to be a co-sponsor of this effort.

To report a violation of this law, you are encourage to first review their chart of poisons to make sure the poison you see is actually a second gen anticoagulant (all boxes must be labeled). If it is, take a photo of the label and contact your local county AG commissioner. If you find an unlabeled box, please report that as well. You can also report violations to the CA Department of Pesticide Regulation.

We understand that our customers want to do the right thing by nature. For more information please visit their web site [www.raptorsarethesolution.org](http://www.raptorsarethesolution.org)



**Red-tailed Hawk eating a rodent**  
- Garrett Lau



**Let's Go Birding is the tour division of the Los Gatos Birdwatcher.**

Let's Go Birding tours get you out of your yard and into different habitats where you can experience a variety of species not found at home.

### Saturday Morning Local Bird Walks



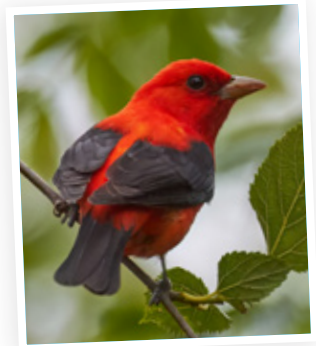
The Los Gatos Birdwatcher sponsors Saturday morning bird walks per month. Dates and locations are listed below and on our web page. These walks are free and open to all birding levels, but pre-registration is required. Call the store to register 408-358-9453. Walks fill at 20 people. Walks start on-site at 8:30 AM and end around 10:00 AM.

<b>July 8</b>	Belgatos, Los Gatos
<b>July 15</b>	Sanborn County Park, Saratoga
<b>August 5</b>	Special night hike, details below
<b>August 19</b>	Mount Umunhum, San Jose
<b>September 9</b>	To be announced closer to the date
<b>September 30</b>	Ulistac Natural Area, Santa Clara

## Bird ID Workshops

**Open to all levels**

Open to all levels these free workshops help customers learn how to identify four different species of birds found in the Bay Area per season. Workshops will take place at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher outside in our back parking lot from 5:30 – 6:30 PM. We'll go over each species and review behaviors, food and habitat preferences plus vocalizations. We ask that you bring your own folding chair and field guide with you.



Scarlet Tanager  
– Brooke Miller

Workshop is limited to 30 people. Call the store to save your spot. 408-358-9453.

- July 18** – Forster's Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, California Least Tern
- August 15** – Western Tanager, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Hepatic Tanager
- September 12** – Juvenile Raptors, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk

## Birding Into The Dark

**Saturday, August 5 • 6:30 – 9:00 PM**  
**Leaders Lisa Myers & Jessica Guenther**

This bird walk is planned specifically to find Common Poorwills. This species is part of the nightjar family, meaning they are nocturnal coming out to feed at night. In North America there are 10 different species that fall into this family, however this is the only nightjar we find in Silicon Valley. We'll be walking a trail known to have poorwills in the surrounding area.



They sleep during the day and come out to feed at sunset and we'll hope to at least hear their call. Under ideal conditions we may observe one coming out to feed. While we look for poorwills we'll keep an eye out for the other species of birds tucking away for the night, and owls that may be coming out to hunt. Participants will meet at the Calero Creek Trail, San Jose. We'll be walking on level dirt trails. Total distance approximately 1 mile. You have to be prepared to be out after dark, have a flashlight, be prepared for possible mosquitos. Details will be provided. Sunset is 8:13 PM **Fee: \$25 Limited to 10 people**

# Haikubox Birdsong Identifier

## – A new way to learn about birds

We just learned about this product based on modern technology. So many customers are eager to learn bird song and about the birds in their yards, we thought we should share it with you. Per their website, *“Haikubox is the smart device that brings you 24/7 real time alerts, sound recordings, and loads of information about your birds.”*



**Northern Mockingbird singing**  
– Tony Woo

**Listen** – To identify birds using sound, Haikubox uses bird net, a proprietary neural net trained on thousands of bird recordings. Haikubox listens round the clock for every Birdsong and chirp flying near, and shares what it finds on the Haikubox app.

**Learn** – Using the Haikubox app or website users learn about each bird, it’s migration and nesting patterns, see images of the visiting birds, listen to the recorded songs and view Spectrograms of each song. Users also can easily reference the Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird and All About Birds website.

**Contribute** – Each Haikubox owner becomes a community scientist sharing information with researchers at the K. Lisa Yang Center for conservation bioacoustics at Cornell Lab of Ornithology which is dedicated to the collection and study of the natural sounds. The data will become part of a shared global effort to map bird behavior and effects of climate change.



The Haikubox costs roughly \$400.00. If you want to learn more just visit their website. <https://haikubox.com>. They are quick to answer. We hope to order a Haikubox for the store and we’ll all learn about the birds flying over the King’s Court Center day and night!

# We Have A New Line of T-shirts

## Helping to prevent wildfire

California is no stranger to wildfires. We have all seen the news reports when communities and forests are impacted by flames. These destructive flames hit very close to home as many of our customers suffered greatly from the wildfires that occurred along the Mtn. Hamilton Range and the Santa Cruz Mountains. When we learned about the clothing line designed by the Landmark Project we thought it would appeal to our local residents.



This line represents past adventures and those yet to come with artwork that tells a story about beloved wild locations. There is another line commemorating Smokey Bear. Smokey Bear is an American campaign and advertising icon for the U.S. Forest Service.

Established in 1950, Smokey is the longest running public service announcement in US history. Here at the store, we offer a selection of these designs that show enthusiasm for wild places and an appreciation for the anti-fire icon, Smokey the Bear. Smokey never looked so good! For every Smokey Bear product sold The Landmark Project donates 10% to the US Forest Service for Wildfire Prevention Education. We invite you to come see this new line. We even have some Landmark Project vinyl stickers.



# Leucistic

## – What does that mean?

by Jessica Guenther

Have you seen birds that look familiar, but the colors seem wrong? Or maybe you saw a photo where the bird had white feathers where there should be color?



**Dark-eyed Junco**  
– John Scharpen

Does your mystery bird have white spots where it shouldn't, or is it almost all white? This plumage variation is called leucism. Leucistic birds often have patchy white feathers which are due to mutations in the cells that produce color, called melanin cells.

This mutation causes the melanin cells to progressively become less productive and the pigment goes away resulting in white. There are different levels of leucism so some birds may seem whiter than others for example, partially leucistic birds will still have some color, often their bills and legs will look normal. Leucism is not the same as albinism. Albinism is a rare genetic condition where birds are born without the color producing melanin cells resulting in a total lack of color in feathers, eyes, and skin, whereas leucism does not affect the eyes and many times does not affect all the feathers.



**American Robin observed in Saratoga**

Leucism is heritable, so if a parent is leucistic their chicks may also end up with splashes of white coloration as part of its feathering. Maybe you have noticed birds with some white coming to your feeders. You can more easily recognize them season after season, and perhaps their offspring too.



**Bald Eagle at Vasona**  
– *photographer not known*

However, leucism is currently used as an “umbrella” term for other discolorations that are hard to distinguish from one another. There are other irregularities that also result in white feathers, for example progressive graying and dilution. Progressive graying involves feathers turning white after a bird turns a certain age, and more and more feathers turn white after each molt. Dilution is a condition that the color seems washed out, not as much as leucism but less color than normal.



**Leucistic Anna's Hummingbird in staffer Kathleen's own yard**

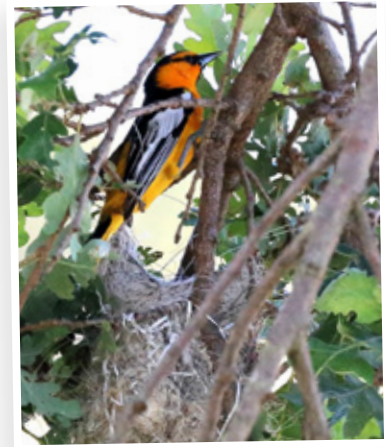
So if you are out birding and you see an individual that lacks the normal color, try to take a photograph, or a note when and where. It is fun to note and have that knowledge in case you see it again.

# Orioles are a Summer Favorite

by Lisa Myers

Even if you are not a baseball fan, you have probably heard of the Baltimore Orioles. The team was named after a bird that we do not get out here in the Bay Area. We do however get two other orioles, the Hooded and Bullock's. Both species winter in Southern California, Mexico, and parts of Central America and return to the Bay Area for the breeding season. Orioles are part of the blackbird family and are rather shy, but they are also quite chatty and we often hear them even if we do not see one. We find Bullock's Orioles in the more open spaces outside of our neighborhoods.

If you are hiking at Belgatos Park or Joseph Grant County Park you may see one flying overhead. Males are very colorful and if you can follow it to its nest you will see a carefully constructed nest/pouch made of plant fibers woven into the branches of its host tree. Bullock's Orioles are known to use fibers from man-made materials like fishing line, string or even plastic tarps. With the summer here, we are well into the breeding season so you may see either the adults or the fledged young.



**Bullocks Oriole at nest**  
– Tony Woo



**Fledged Hooded Orioles at Oriole Feeder**  
– Tony Woo

The Hooded Orioles are a different story. If you have a palm tree in your yard or neighborhood you can get Hooded Orioles nesting too. Another reminder to hold off trimming your palm trees until late September. Using palm fibers, a female Hooded Oriole actually weaves her nest into the palm fronds. It's truly a work of art. We have a few samples in the store. The nest hangs suspended in the air high above the ground. The male Hooded Orioles are brightly colored and can be seen taking food back and forth to the nesting female.

Hooded Orioles will also come to hummingbird feeders, or oriole feeders to take advantage of the offered sugar water. It's the same mix used for hummingbirds of 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Only use regular white table sugar. (*Honey, brown sugar, and organic sugar is not good for the birds.*) Hooded Orioles will also go after berry jelly. Some people say Concord Grape is their favorite. Our favorite oriole feeders have a place for you to put the jelly. Keep an eye out for orioles as they will be here throughout the summer. All will migrate out of our area by mid-September. You can continue to leave an oriole feeder up all year if you like because the hummingbirds will use it.

## Services Available from the Los Gatos Birdwatcher

- **Feeder Cleaning** – We want to help you maintain a healthy environment for your backyard birds. That is why we offer this service to clean feeders on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Bring your feeder into the store in the morning and we'll have it ready before closing. While we clean feeders for free we do ask that you consider making a minimum donation of \$5 per feeder to one of the Bay Area charities we support. You'll find collection boxes at the store.
- **Frequent Buyer Program** – Buy 10 of the same seed bags of 20# or high at full price and get the 11th bag free. Coupons do not apply.
- **Help you to ID your birds** – We can help you ID that mystery bird in your yard. Just take a photo using your cell phone and email it to [info@losgatosbirdwatcher.com](mailto:info@losgatosbirdwatcher.com), or drop by the store and show your photo to our staff.
- **Backyard Bird Consulting Program** – We will come out to your home and talk about what you can do to attract more birds to your yard. What species you can attract, where to set-up feeders, bird baths and nest boxes are just some of the topics we'll cover. There is a \$50 consultation fee per visit. With your visit you'll receive a \$25 Los Gatos Birdwatcher gift certificate.

# Are Birds Tapping at Your Window?

We get calls all the time from people asking why a bird in their yard is attacking their windows. These calls always come during the breeding season. In the bird world, the breeding season brings on an increased level of hormones and behaviors in defending territories. The birds are pumped and primed to do all the things needed to find a mate, build a nest, lay eggs, incubate, and raise young. Loaded with hormones, the bird attacking your window is seeing its own reflection. In those moments your bird thinks it is attacking an intruder that has entered its territory.



**Dark-eyed Junco attacking his reflection**  
– Tony Woo

You may also observe this behavior around mirrors. Looking into the rear-view mirror of this parked car, the male Dark-eyed Junco (pictured here) is going after what he thinks is another male. And it's not that birds are "stupid." Birds evolved on this Earth millions of years ago, while mirrors and windows have only been here for a blip in time. Birds simply do not understand how mirrors and windows work, and thus some attack their own reflection. California and Spotted Towhees seem to do this the most, but a customer shared their photo of a Western Bluebird attacking his reflection in the sliding glass door. We also know of a California Towhee that spent a lot of energy bouncing up at its reflection in the hubcap of the family car parked in the driveway. So how do you get through the breeding season with a bird tapping on your windows? Some folks simply admire the bird working hard to defend its territory. Others, who don't want to experience this behavior, place paper, or easy-to-remove cling wrap on the outside of their window. Place it in the area where the bird is tapping. This will block the view of its reflection. Do know that this behavior is temporary and is part of us sharing our world with nature. By early September the birds will move onto other matters of importance.



LOS GATOS

Birdwatcher

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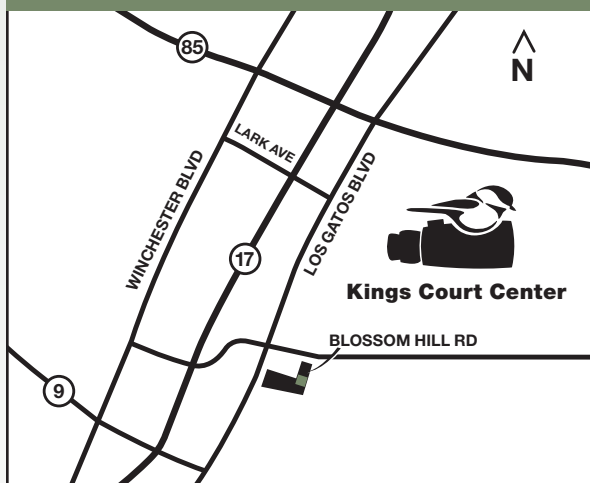
## Dates to Remember

- July 4 – Independence Day (Closed)
- Aug. 5 – Sunset bird walk
- Sept. 4 – Labor Day (Closed)
- Sept. 10 – Grandparents day
- Sept. 22 – First Day of Fall

Closed Sundays

## Store Hours

Please visit: [www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com](http://www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com)



LOS GATOS  
Birdwatcher

*Loyal Customer Discount*

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