

Store Hours

Monday–Saturday **10AM–5:00PM**
Open late on Tuesday **until 7:00PM**
Closed Sundays

Bird Banding and Why It's Done

by Jessica Guenther

This past Spring the store scheduled a special event to take a group out to the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) in Milpitas. This is a field station where birds are banded. The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) has been banding birds there for the past 40 years. The group watched the staff and volunteers from SFBBO do their research and had a fantastic time observing so we thought you would like to learn about bird banding too.

What exactly is bird banding? Bird banding is a way scientists can identify and track birds. Bird banding stations are strategically located all over the world. At a banding station, mist nets are set up in areas the researchers have determined are favored flight paths used by the birds. At CCFS the nets are placed along Coyote Creek where there is a lot of songbird activity. The mist nets are placed just before sunrise with the goal of having birds fly into the nets. These specially made mist-nets do not harm the birds but do keep them from being able to escape. The nets are checked frequently throughout the morning, about every 30 minutes. Trained volunteers safely extract the birds from the nets, and carefully place them in small cloth bags. The cloth bags allow for less handling, provide shelter, and help the birds from getting too stressed. They are then taken to the next person known as the bird bander. This person confirms the species and is trained to gather specific information about the bird like its weight, wing length, breeding information, plumage condition, if it is a male or a female, etc. Banders then refer to a reference guide that tells them what size band should be used on which species.



SFBBO bander recording data of a Swainson's Thrush



Jessica carefully removes a Common Yellowthroat from the mist-net

A correctly fitted aluminum band, with a unique number given by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), will then be attached to one of the bird's legs. With all the data collected and the bird banded the bird is then released. The hope is that the banded bird will be caught again at another banding station, and its band number will be recorded giving scientists information on where the bird has traveled, its migration, and/or dispersal data. Taking measurements and recording information about each bird gives us insight into a bird's life span, survival rates, migration routes, and reproductive success.

As technology advances, tracking birds is becoming easier by using radio transmitters attached to birds. These radio transmitters are small and do not weigh more than 3% of a bird's body weight. There are different types of transmitters. SFBBO uses the system called MOTUS and is using MOTUS tags for their current research on Swainson's Thrush. Whenever they get a Swainson's Thrush in the nets they fit it for a radio transmitter. On the morning the Los Gatos Birdwatcher was there, the banding station was excited to get a Swainson's Thrush in their nets! We all watched them fit a tiny transmitter onto the patient

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Saving Great-horned Owls at Vasona

by Lisa Myers | Photos by Helen Daley

At the end of April, a customer who is also a birder observed a professional arborist in the early process of removing a row of huge eucalyptus trees that border Vasona County Park off University Ave. This tree removal activity was a concern because Great-horned Owls are known to nest in this location. In fact, birders have been observing these owls for years. The pair had successfully raised two owlets in 2022 and one owlet in 2023. Besides the owls, several other



The arborist high up in these Eucalyptus Trees caught the attention of many

species like orioles, Anna's Hummingbirds, flycatchers, woodpeckers, and more also nest in those trees, and taking them down in April was the worst of timing.

On this morning the mated pair of Great-horned Owls were present in the area at the time the tree trimming was underway. Some emergency phone calls were made, including a call to the store asking why trees were being

removed in the middle of the breeding season. The arborist stopped cutting as soon as they were aware there were nesting owls. Our local Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society sent out volunteers to better understand why the trees were being removed during the breeding season and conversations with the Santa Clara County Park service also took place.



Adult Great-horned Owl bringing a mouse back to the nest

What some people may not know is that Bay Area birders are out every day. They observe and record their bird finds for their own record keeping or to report to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology through a worldwide database called eBird. The nesting season takes place between April - August and for

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bird. Once released the transmitter will send out signals every few seconds. If the bird flies close enough to a MOTUS receiver or tower, its signal will be picked up allowing for its movements to be tracked. Most of the tiny tags only last a few months and are made to eventually fall off. Before they do fall off SFBBO will monitor all the Swainson's Thrush they were able to tag. The information they receive will be shared with organizations that can benefit from this research.

If you are ever interested in banding or want to volunteer you can apply at SFBBO, or look into the other area banding stations, one is in Santa Cruz, as well as Point Blue up north in Point Reyes. The most active times for banding are usually during spring and fall migration but seeing different types of birds at every point of the year is a lot of fun. If you ever have the opportunity to check out a station, please do!



Participants watch as SFBBO volunteers remove a bird from the mist-nets

this reason, we advise folks to hold off with extreme hedge trimming, or the removal of trees during those months. Too often in our attempt to clean up our yards, bird nests are destroyed. And for some species, the nest that was destroyed may have been their only opportunity in the year to reproduce.

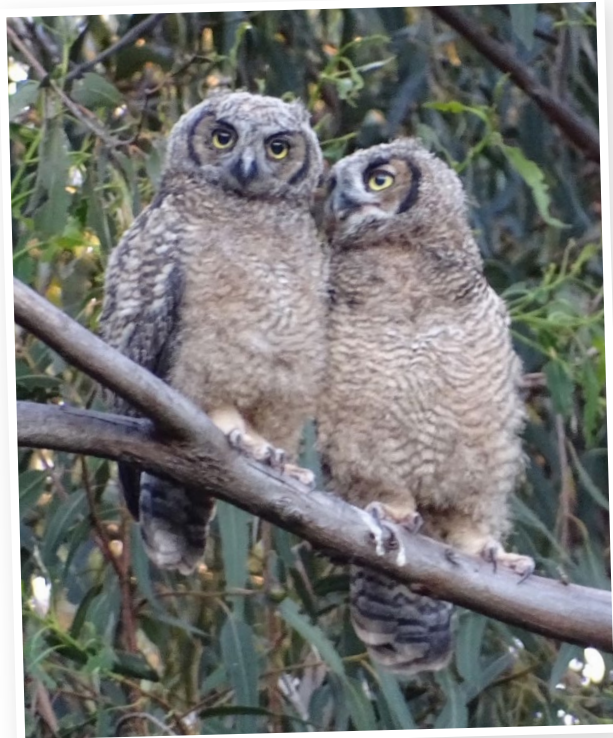
If they are not successful the species numbers decline. The news reports are already in that we are down millions of birds in North America alone as a result of negative human impact.

It was soon learned that the property owner above Vasona and along University Ave. was responsible for the trees. It was their goal to remove the trees so no harm from falling branches would take place to the people who work and park under those trees. The property owner was trying to do the right thing, however, the timing was not good for the birds. After conversations between all parties, it was determined that the tree cutting could wait until after the Great-horned Owls were done nesting and rearing their young, which can take 3-4 months. Once out of the nest, the parents will continue to feed the owlets for a while. Postponing the tree removal would benefit the family of owls and all the other species that nest in those trees.

After the nesting season comes to an end and the young owlets leave the area to find their own territory, the trees are forecast to come down. Vasona County



Well camouflaged, most will walk right past these three owlets and never see them



Too big to remain in the nest these two owlets await food from a parent

Park is very close to the Los Gatos Birdwatcher and those of you who visit the park will notice when those trees come down. It is our hope that enough trees will remain that this pair of owls will still be around to breed again next year. They are an important part of the park's ecosystem. Great-horned Owls will eat up to 12 mice per day, and with a nest full of babies one family of owls can really help with the reduction of rodents. They'll even take prey as large as skunks!

Birders are out every day in pursuit of their hobby and are aware of the various species nesting throughout the area. We hope in the future birders will be invited to come check out a tree ahead of time to see if there are any special species that might be impacted by its removal. Sometimes all it takes is a little tweak in the schedule and the wildlife will be spared.

Since that emergency halt to the tree removal last April, we are pleased to report that the owls were successful in rearing three owlets this year! With the cooperation of many concerned and educated participants, the nesting birds were saved this time. It takes a village!



Let's go Birding

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 every month. Dates and locations are listed below and on our website. Unless it is a special workshop, these walks are free and open to all birding levels, but pre-registration is required. Unless otherwise stated, walks start on-site at 8:30 AM and end around 10:00 AM. Space is limited. Please call the store to register at 408-358-9453.

FREE



July 13	Guadalupe River Park, San Jose
July 27	Alum Rock Park, East San Jose (longer morning)
Aug. 10	We'll wait to see what is being reported
Aug. 17	Quarry Park, Saratoga
Sept. 14	Palo Alto Baylands
Sept. 28	Sunset Birding to Welcome in fall

Bird ID Workshops

FREE

Open to all levels, these free workshops help customers learn how to identify four species of birds found in the Bay Area each season. We review behaviors, vocalizations, food, and habitat preferences. Workshops take place at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher outside in the back parking lot from 5:30–6:30 PM.

July 16 – Blue Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak

Aug. 20 – Rock Pigeon, Band-tailed Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, White-winged Dove

Sept. 17 – Yellow-throated Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Grace's Warbler

Please bring your own folding chair and field guide with you. Limited to 30 people. Call to reserve your spot **408-358-9453**.



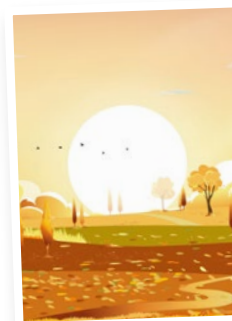
White-winged Dove
– Photographed in Arizona by John Scharpen

Birding into the Sunset to Welcome Fall

Saturday, Sept. 28, Meet in Los Gatos at 3:00 PM • Sunset is at 7:55 PM
Fee: \$40 plus park fees

Let's Go Birding with Lisa Myers to San Bruno Mountain. Located at the northern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains and is the 1300-foot peak visible throughout the San Francisco peninsula. The mountain is home to a 2,378-acre park with 360-degree panoramic views of the entire Bay Area.

This high mountain habitat is also a great place to look for fall migration activity. As birds work their way south for the winter they often take refuge in this open space high above the heavily populated cities below. Once on top of the mountain, we'll be walking trails as we look for migrants and any owls that may come out at sunset. We'll head back to Los Gatos arriving around 9:00 PM. Carpooling will be an option.



Summer Birding Fun for Kids



For ages 5-14



Birding Field Trip for Kids

Saturday, July 20 • 8:30 – 9:30 AM
FREE

Staff member and biologist Jessica Guenther will lead this bird walk just for kids. Our time in the field will be about finding the birds, where to look, what we hear, and what they eat. We will meet at Belgatos Park in Los Gatos. Binoculars will be available to borrow.

Each participant will go home with our final species list. Family members are welcome to join.

Call the store to pre-register **408-358-9453**. *There is no fee for this adventure but space is limited.*



All About Owls for Kids

Tuesday, August 6 • 3:30 – 4:30 PM
FEE: \$10

At the Los Gatos Birdwatcher Owls are a favorite bird but they are hard to find. For the most part, we never see them because they sleep all day and hunt at night, but sometimes we can hear them go hoot!

This workshop is for kids who are interested in nature and want to have some fun. Come learn with us about owls and what they eat by dissecting your own owl pellet. Who knows what you will find! We will learn how owls find their food and what they eat.

To sign-up call the store and register **408-358-9453**.



Products for Summertime Fun



Laurel Burch

The talented Laurel Burch is as popular today as she ever was. We have a new selection of her totes and bags to brighten up your summer



Cards

People love our cards and comment that our selection is their favorite. We have new lines coming in all the time



Binoculars

Maybe it's time you get yourself a nice pair of optics in time for summer fun.



Hats

We have a variety of summertime hats from embroidered caps to hats with UPF fabrics.



Protection

Farmer's Defense protective arm sleeves protect your arms in the garden, out birding or even fishing off the dock in Topsail Beach, North Carolina!



Tulia Mobiles

We have a wonderful selection of mobiles from Tulia's Artisan Gallery of Columbia

Talks at the Terraces

Thursday, August 15 • 7:00 PM – Free

The Los Gatos Birdwatcher is proud to partner again with our neighbors at The Terraces to bring you entertaining and educational presentations. Presentations will take place next door at The Terraces located behind the Los Gatos Birdwatcher. Presentations start at 7:00 PM inside the theater located through the main entrance. You are welcome to park at the Kings Court parking lot and take the short walk next door. These presentations are free and there is no need to pre-register.

Store Owner and birder Lisa Myers will be the first post-COVID presenter at The Terraces. Recently The Terraces General Manager Peter Morris asked the Los Gatos Birdwatcher to help their community become more bird-friendly. You can now find bird feeders in each of their four formal gardens. Lisa will share how The Terraces and anyone else can make their yard more attractive and safe for the birds, and what birds we can hope to attract. It's good for the birds and great for the soul!



Front entrance to The Terraces

What Is Happening at the King's Court

Some of you have been asking about the changes you have noticed around the King's Court Center. Some storefronts are now empty. Well, it's kind of complicated but on August 1, 2024, the property management responsibilities will change. All store owners knew this was happening because our leases had to be re-negotiated. Some store owners decided with their lease coming to an end it was a good time to retire or close shop. It will now be the goal of the new property managers to fill any empty storefronts.

We also hope the new property management company will give the 40-year-old shopping center a little TLC. The town of Los Gatos has future plans for developing Los Gatos Blvd, but for now, we are here to stay and look forward to doing business with you.



Services Available from the Los Gatos Birdwatcher

- **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, or drop by the store and show your photo to our staff.

- **Backyard Bird Consulting Program**

– We will come out to your home (15-mile radius) 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**.

- **Frequent Buyer Program**

– Buy 10 of the same seed bags of 20# or higher at full price and **get the 11th bag free**. Coupons do not apply.

Changes to Our Feeder Cleaning Service

As birds gather close together at feeders one sick bird can make other birds sick too. To help prevent the spread of disease it is important to clean bird feeders regularly. For years the Los Gatos Birdwatcher has helped our bird-feeding community by cleaning your bird feeders, but at the end of the summer, we will no longer be able to provide this free service. We know this will disappoint those who bring their dirty feeders into the store to be cleaned, but we will be happy to show you how to clean your own feeders. Simply call the store at 408-358-9453 to make an appointment. We'll spend time to show you how to take your feeder apart and put it back together.



Squirrel Buster cleaning tutorials are available to watch on YouTube

Some brands are quite easy to clean, and for many feeder brands you can now find how-to-tutorials on YouTube. If your feeder is too complicated maybe it's time for a new feeder; one that you can more easily maintain. We will continue to sell the products that will help you to keep your feeders clean and continue to service broken feeders for brands that we support. Many will ask why we have made this decision. Finding a person to add to the payroll to clean feeders has proven very difficult, so we want to teach you how to clean your own feeders. As they say, if you give a person a fish he/she eats for a day, teach the same person to fish and he/she eats for a lifetime!



King's Court Center
792 Blossom Hill Road, Los Gatos, CA 95032
408/358-9453
email: info@losgatosbirdwatcher.com
website: www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com

Find us on Facebook
and Instagram



Dates to Remember

- July 4** – Independence Day (closed)
- July 13** – Guadalupe River Park bird walk
- July 16** – Bird ID Workshop
- July 20** – Kids Birding Field Trip
- July 27** – Alum Rock Park bird walk
- Aug 10** – Saturday Morning Walk TBD
- Aug 6** – All About Owls Kids Class
- Aug 15** – Talk at The Terraces
- Aug 17** – Quarry Park bird walk
- Aug 20** – Bird ID Workshop
- Sept 2** – Labor Day (closed)
- Sept 14** – Palo Alto Baylands bird walk
- Sept 17** – Bird ID Workshop
- Sept 28** – San Bruno Sunset Bird Walk



Loyal Customer Spring Discounts

Loyal Customers are in our store database and receive a monthly email.

15% Off Seed

Loyal Customers mention this coupon and get 15% off one item. Excludes consignment items, Haikubox, sales items, excursions, optics.

15% Off One Item (not seed)

Loyal Customers mention this coupon and get 15% off one item. Excludes bird seed & chicken feed, consignment and sale items, Haikubox, excursions, and optics.

One coupon per customer. Not to be combined with other offers.

Coupons Expire September 30, 2024

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