

# THE SANDERLING

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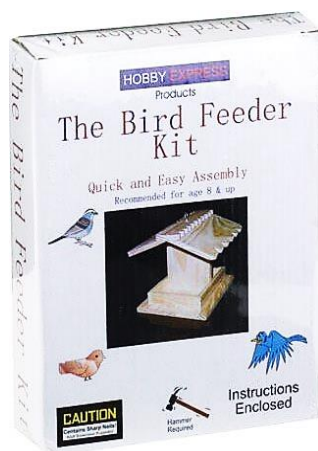
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To Feed,

Or Not To Feed:

Is There An Answer?



Whether someone has a "bird life list", or doesn't know anything more beyond "geese and seagulls", whether they are into saving birds, or hunting them for recreation, it is generally agreed that sipping iced tea on the patio on a Spring day is more fulfilling when watching bright colored birds coming to your backyard feeder. But the contradictions, and controversy, start when we look beyond the backyard.

Wild bird feeding has become a booming business. At almost \$4 billion per year in just the U.S., the trade for bird seed globally has become a significant cash crop. Although there are almost a dozen countries that produce Nyjer seed, the largest U.S. import of the specialty crop comes from India with an average of 100,000 tons per year, or roughly \$80 million, representing only a fraction of the industry. With such large financial numbers, along with an increase in demand by over 300% in the last decade, it has justified putting bird seed firmly in the trading hands of the world's stock markets. There are no firm numbers to go on, but one study put a close approximation to more than 55 million Americans who have backyard feeders. However sales of bird seed and feeders from many businesses put solid support to a number closer to 3 times that, or roughly 50% of all Americans engaging in some kind of wild bird feeding. Now rated the #2 biggest hobby in America and Canada (Gardening is #1), it's a big enough business that millions of dollars have been spent on marketing and research of wild bird seed, including a recent \$1 million study, Project Wildbird by Millikin University in Illinois, on what type of seed birds like to eat. But like other high dollar commodities though, it brings questions to the practice, as innocent a practice it may seem.

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Imagine a couple sitting on a bench in New York Central Park. They sprinkle out old bread crumbs to the pigeons that form a rioting mass in front of them. Down the path a few yards, another person is doing the same. The couple's children sit next to them where they take turns learning how to feed the birds. Hundreds of people walk by understanding this is "normal", it happens every day, and all over the world. The same couple is then sitting at a picnic table in Yosemite Park when a Jay hops over to them. Just like Central Park, the children throw bread crumbs to it. However, this time they are in violation of Federal law and not only does the Park Ranger tell them to stop, but they receive disapproving looks from other visitors. So why the contradiction? What reasons are there to support this discrepancy? And is there really any validity to these reasons?

The short answer; Yes, and No. There IS a contradiction in practices, there ARE reasons to support the discrepancy, but there are, and are not, valid reasons.

According to State Park Ranger Erik Landry of Pt. Lobos State Reserve, the goal of the laws (see insert) are to "not interfere with the natural environment". He stated there were many reasons for the law. Among the common sense ones were; visitor safety and feeding junk food is bad for the animals. It would seem obvious that feeding bears and squirrels will get someone bit, but is a bird really that dangerous? If you think of the speed and aggressiveness of a gull or goose, or the hook on a Pelican, some can be. And feeding a bird a piece of chocolate bar, or the remnants of French fries, is not exactly what nature had in mind in the way of nutrition for birds. But after calls to other Rangers and Game Wardens, what caught my attention to needing more investigation was a discrepancy in the *facts* behind the reasons. Facts like, "changing their behavior", "altering their migration pattern", "spreading disease", "malnutrition" and others. Although these all seemed legitimate, the facts seemed to vary from one person to the next and some facts even seemed contradictory to bird behavior. The discrepancy seemed to lie with official training. According to all officials I spoke with, there is no formal training on the *facts* behind the reasons, and most gained their knowledge from being passed down or learned during lectures and classes. This opened the door to finding out if there was any true science behind these claims.

To get more facts I turned to Wesley Hochachka, Assistant Director of Bird Population Studies at Cornell Lab of Ornithology. With over 15 years in bird behavioral ecology, hands on work with bird disease, and a major player with eBird, if anyone had the facts, he did. As one would suspect though, there were more theories than facts. Plain and simple, the studying of birds and feeders has far too many variables to get any hard science on whether feeding birds is of benefit or liability to them. But the known facts were quite interesting and the information supporting the theories was educational.

According to Hochachka, birds are more rigid in their "survivability genetics" than many animals. In other words, unlike land animals that might be able to barely survive a harsh winter, there's not much gray area for a bird surviving 200 miles out at sea finding out they didn't eat enough, ate the wrong food, or left too late. Some aspects of bird behavior can be "hard-wired". One aspect is the length of daylight, which is more important for determining when to leave than any abundant food source, such as a feeder. Another is getting fat for migration and feeders are the 'fast food' of nature, often meaning the difference between life and death in severe weather. Although feeder food, and even "junk food" (issue of chemicals and preservatives aside), may be nutritionally imbalanced, it can be high in energy-rich fats which can mean the difference between freezing to death and living until morning. However, is this fast food compromising their health? Because of their survivability genetics, the answer is a flat "No". They know that their survival is ultimately dependent on a nutritionally balanced diet that includes other sources of food in the wild. An example of this can be seen with hummingbirds found at a location year-round, but not frequenting feeders year-round and instead feeding on insects and other wild nectar sources. Therefore, *feeders and junk food do not act as the sole source of food and therefore do not compromise a bird's nutritional health*. But it can compromise their health in other ways, especially when large numbers gather in close proximity.

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#### **Feeding animal laws:**

It is against the law to feed any wildlife in any National or California State Park or Recreation area. Code of Federal Regulations Title 36 states, "The feeding, touching, teasing, frightening or intentional disturbing of wildlife nesting, breeding or other activities is prohibited". The California Code of Regulations Title 14 states, "In units or portions thereof where posted, no person shall feed any wildlife or feral animal listed on such posting."

**Trivia Fact - Migration "Fallout":** Many species of birds, called neotropical migrants, travel long distances twice per year between wintering grounds in Latin America and spring nesting locations in North America. In early March, migrants reach the Yucatan Peninsula, and when the weather seems favorable, they head North 600 miles across the Gulf of Mexico arriving at the Texas coast 18 hours later. Sometimes, a strong, fast-moving cold front moves into the Gulf of Mexico. The North winds and rains slow the migrating birds down causing them to rapidly use up their stored energy reserves. This triggers a phenomenon called "Fallout", when thousands of tired migrants are forced to seek immediate shelter and food. **High Island** in Texas is one of the first places they reach. This is one of the best places in North America to see the event and view a long list of the 173 species, with some people recording over 100 species in a day. You can find out more at: [houstonaudubon.org](http://houstonaudubon.org) [birdinghighisland.com](http://birdinghighisland.com)



## To Feed or Not To Feed cont'd...

With the recent report estimating that as many as 3.7 **billion** birds are being killed by cats annually, the threat of predators flocking to these areas of prey concentrations is real. There are no hard numbers on how many more are killed by other predators (such as hawks, foxes) and windows, but adding in the spreading of disease through feeders and the tally could be up into several billions of birds being killed, primarily, but indirectly, through backyard feeding.



Goldfinch  
w/ conjunctivitis  
-Linda Edwards



Sharp-shinned Hawk chases a Steller's Jay – Jeff Bleam

Of course these numbers are approximations, but even the low end of a couple billion birds is significant. Although currently unstudied, parasitic behavior may also be a factor with artificial food sources attracting parasitic species like Cowbirds to congregate near migratory species, decimating local populations with nest parasitism. And the non-bird species are affected as well. Squirrel populations have risen dramatically and seem to correspond with feeders, as have certain rodents. Gophers and ground squirrel populations will definitely increase anywhere droppings from feeders land. People have reported an increase in their ant problems after having nectar feeders and the spread of non-native plants from seed taken and dropped can also pose a problem to the environment. Even further adding to the argument against feeding is the potential for altering a bird's behavior. ...continued on page 4



Squirrels in feeders – Burns Fisher / Becky Washburn

## Making Your Habitat More Bird-Friendly



Black-headed Grosbeaks on Tube Feeder – Jeff Bleam

Monterey County is home to an amazing variety of bird species due to its many “micro habitats”. Chaparral/Lowlands, Coastal Scrub, Coniferous Forest, Oak Woodlands and Suburban Gardens are a few examples. But bird-friendly habitats are shrinking due to development. The birds you're most likely to attract to a feeder live and may breed nearby. By understanding their needs you can enhance your environment to offer a friendly solution to their search for survival habitat.

Like humans, birds have three basic needs: **shelter, water, and food**. Providing these features creates a bird-friendly environment. It is also the way to ensure a healthy diversity of bird species at your feeders and the promise of more bird generations to come.

### Shelter for the birds

Shelter means protection from predators and the promise of safe nesting sites. It is one of the essentials that brings birds to your feeding station. Providing shelter is easier than you may think. No construction is necessary - just a simple, low maintenance plan that takes the birds' needs into account. From the birds' point of view, the less manicured the more protection. Start by creating a mix of plant sizes and heights. This works even on a balcony with potted plants. If space allows, brush piles, vines, and areas of leaf mulch offer protection and food for many species. Where possible, introduce nest boxes to encourage birds to nest in your habitat. And remember, when adding or replacing plantings, introduce native plants that offer protection and natural food sources for native birds. Native trees bring shelter and nesting places; native ornamental grasses and flowers produce seed, and native shrubs offer cover and seasonal berries!

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### **Bird-friendly Habitat cont'd:**

Be sure to use natural fertilizers and avoid pesticides to prevent birds' exposure to poison and to maintain a healthy insect population. Insects are an important source of food for many bird species.

Providing shelter also means keeping your birds safe. Birds will use the shrubs and tree cover you provide to hide from bird-eating hawks. If a hawk takes up residence in your bird feeding area, take the feeders down for at least a week to discourage the hawk and force it to seek nourishment elsewhere. The birds will return when you reinstate the feeders. Hang feeders and birdbaths higher than cats can jump to minimize predation from wandering felines and don't forget to prevent them from colliding with windows (see below).

### **Water for the Birds**

Perhaps the most important element in a bird-friendly environment is water. Yet, it is often overlooked. Water is needed by all living creatures. For birds, frequent hydration is essential. Moving air takes moisture from their lung tissues when birds fly, and feathers must be cleaned of natural oils to minimize body weight for flight.



Northern Flicker  
(red-shafted)  
at birdbath  
– Stan Dryden

A clean birdbath with fresh water will attract a variety of birds – even some who do not frequent bird feeders. Water may also attract visiting birds during migration – a chance to observe something unusual or even something rare! Providing water for birds need not take a large space. A wide range of commercial bird baths are available, but a plant saucer approximately 16 inches in diameter with a large, flat stone for perching in the middle will do the job. Create movement in the water with a drip system or a Water Wiggler and you'll have a true bird magnet.

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**Watch Your Windows!** Research by Ornithologist Daniel Klem Jr. in the 90's found over one billion birds are killed each year flying into windows. Not all windows need collision prevention and you should assess your window's reflectivity to properly add preventative measures. The idea is to either reduce reflectivity or add objects that indicate a barrier, and a range of items can be used to do this; decals, window flower pots, vines adding shadows, and suction cup décor. Check with your local backyard bird specialty store to find out more about what may be available.

### **To Feed or Not To Feed cont'd...**

According to Hochachka, although "migration" is hard-wired into birds, this wiring can change. A study of a European warbler, the Blackcap, found some interesting discoveries in migration. The genetics of migration seem to be passed down generationally. Thus, if a bird is hard-wired with a "migration error" (such as incorrect direction or over-wintering instead of migrating) and survives to provide offspring, there is a good chance those offspring will inherit the navigational errors and eventually lead to a population following the different programming. The effects of feeding on migration hard-wiring is being seen in multiple ways; growing numbers of western hummingbirds are being documented overwintering in the southeastern U.S. at places they normally might not be able to and over the last 50 years Cardinals and Tufted Titmouse populations have expanded their ranges northward in the eastern U.S. Although it cannot be said that feeders are the ultimate reason, it is the most logical reason. In some areas, geese have been seen to alter their migration routes to correspond with agricultural crops. Although these geese are not involved with backyard feeding, it does show another example of how a food source can alter migration.

Migrating  
Ridgway's Cackling,  
Aleutian Cackling,  
& Snow Geese  
w/ resident Canada Goose  
at Pt. Lobos  
– Chris Hartzell



But which birds will modify their migration and which will not? No one knows, and the chances of ever finding out are slim. There are just too many factors involved. But most birds do use some kind of artificial food source, like ag-fields and backyard feeders, as a way to fatten up faster and be better ready to leave when the time comes.

To properly weigh all the pros and cons though, we have to also look at the bigger picture. Tropical storms are occurring out of season more regularly affecting migration survivability, Arctic conditions are changing and affecting food sources, over-industrialization is taking away millions of acres of habitat, and over-consumption is robbing birds of their natural food sources more and more. Not to mention short term, but large scale events people are responsible for; like the Exxon Oil Spill that killed between 90,000-270,000 birds and other events like the 5,000 Blackbirds found dead after fireworks in Arkansas. The demand for green power has pushed the wind turbine industry, but it comes with a price of around half a million bird lives per year.

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## Annual U.S. Bird Mortality (appx. in millions of birds)

Fishing by-catch = 0.1 (USFWS 2010)

Wind turbines = 0.5 (ABC 2012)

Pesticides = 0.6 (USFWS 2011)

Oil waste pits = 2 (David Sibley 2003)

Communication towers = 5-50 (USFWS 2012)

Cars = 60-100 (USFWS 2012)

High tension lines = 70-170 (USFWS 2011)

Hunting = 200 (permitted kills – USFWS 2012)

Buildings & windows = 100-1 billion (USFWS 2011)

Cats = 1.4-3.7 Billion (USFWS 2012)

USFWS: U.S. Fish & Wildlife, ABC: American Bird Conservancy

### To Feed or Not To Feed cont'd...

That's not even touching on the issue of hunting, which can take an additional hundreds of millions of birds per year. This all adds up to some very big death numbers that we the people are directly responsible for.

If we are killing so many directly, isn't it okay that we are artificially helping them? It would seem so, because providing designated protected habitats, artificial nesting and nesting protections, hunting restrictions, and many laws, are saving billions of birds that would otherwise be killed. We are clearly helping birds with artificial methods, as seen with the classic example of the California Condor which would be extinct if not for artificial means, including artificial feeding in the wild. So ultimately, responsible artificial feeding may actually help more birds survive, despite the cons.

The list of pros and cons is long on both sides and each have too many subjective factors to give us a clear answer. So after all this, do we have an answer to "is feeding birds good or bad"? Kind of. The number of birds killed because of our impacts may be offset by the birds saved by our intervention, including artificially feeding them. This means as interesting as the list of pros and cons is, it leaves the final answer up to the beliefs of YOU, the individual.

A rough survey on feeding birds got some interesting results that may represent that final answer. Over 100 people responded and the reasons varied from aesthetic to religious to scientific and more. But there was an interesting contradiction along with all the informative reasons; although it was almost a 50/50 split on whether people felt feeding birds was good or bad (listing circumstances they felt it was okay or not), over 90% of the same respondents do feed birds in some way. There was only 1 person who doesn't feed birds purposefully due to their beliefs. All the others who don't feed birds stated it was due to things like cost, don't have a feeder, bad area, etc. The reasons why someone was either for or against feeding were just as varied.

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## Bird-friendly Habitat cont'd:

### Food Preferences and Feeding Behaviors

Knowing what kind of food to use and how to offer it can make the difference between a successful feeding station and one that is visited less often.

It helps to know that bird species can be grouped by their feeding behaviors in the wild: **what they eat and how they eat.** For instance, quail, juncos, sparrows and towhees typically feed on the ground where they find their food in the wild. Finches, chickadees and titmice will readily perch and feed on a tube feeder hanging in a tree because they are accustomed to foraging in shrubbery and trees for their food. Many bird species, including warblers, phoebes and woodpeckers, are primarily insectivores. They dine on flying insects, beetles, ants, worms, caterpillars, or grubs and are not always interested in seed. But here's where that brush pile and leaf mulch help out by attracting these protein-filled foods. And fortunately, most of these species can be attracted by fruit, suet, mealworms, or a water source.

Some species change their food preferences seasonally to meet their nutritional needs. For example, seed-eating chickadees favor insects during spring and summer because they need more protein during the breeding season, but focus on seed during the winter to keep their energy and fat stores up. Other birds have special food preferences, such as nectar for hummingbirds, fruit and nectar for orioles, and peanuts for nuthatches.



Female Hooded Oriole at oriole feeder modified for a post and zip-tied to a fence.

– Chris Hartzell

### Bird Food Is Best When Fresh!

It is important to remember that birds prefer seed and grain that is fresh, clean, and dry. Food that has been sitting too long in a warehouse or on a store shelf may have lost its nutritional value, and its attraction for the birds! Make it a point to read the ingredient label before you purchase. Discount birdseed blends are cheap for a reason; they are often full of "wheat products" and "Milo" which are fillers and should be avoided, unless you are interested in a yard filled with pigeons, doves, turkeys, and blackbirds. Most birds dislike these fillers and will empty your feeders quickly, shoveling out the fillers to get to the good stuff, defeating the purpose of saving money in the first place. Picking specialized blends optimizes both your dollar and the species at your feeder.

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**Backyard Listing:** You can keep a backyard bird list for yourself, recording just the birds you see or hear within your yard. You can track your results on eBird and [Surfbirds.com](http://Surfbirds.com) has a backyard records list. Monterey County is a great place to have a backyard bird list and according to Surfbirds, even has California's 5<sup>th</sup> highest backyard record with a list of 135 in the Carmel Highlands.

## To Feed or Not To Feed cont'd...

Some felt it's not okay to feed non-native, or feral species like pigeons because they lack predators, while some felt there is no harm in feeding them in city parks and cited examples of a hundred years of feeding pigeons in Europe with seemingly no long term harm (other than a lot of bird droppings). Some responses were religious, citing that birds are part of the earth and put here solely for humans to enjoy as we desire, while some said they are God's creatures and should be cared for by being left untouched and unaltered. Another reason given was for identification. Some people saw species in their yard that they otherwise wouldn't necessarily get a good look at. Along the same lines were those who couldn't physically go out and see birds, therefore feeders were their primary way of seeing them. Overall a majority of respondents did acknowledge the big picture of how many birds were being killed by human impacts, therefore felt okay in helping birds as a means of giving back. Some felt so strongly as to say they would feel guilty if they did not help birds after all the wrong we do to them.

Regardless of the details provided in the reasons, there were 3 obvious conclusions that were made by the end of my investigation;

- 1) There seems to be a lack of education and knowledge about all the pros, cons, and *facts* regarding feeding birds. Although fairly accurate, many answers were based on theories, assumptions, stories, and incorrect science, which reflects how subjective and difficult it is to acquire data on the topic.
- 2) Feeding birds will not be a single significant factor in the extinction or proliferation of any one species.
- 3) The most important conclusion I found was a common ideal that 99% of respondents agreed upon; *the emotional side of enjoying feeding birds is the driving force behind people's reason for feeding birds.*

The list of pros and cons for feeding birds is long and subjective and the algorithm for determining if it's harmful or helpful is too complex and too close to be defined, let alone be definitive. The argument for feeding birds could go either way, and like many similar issues, whether or not to feed birds will ultimately be left up to the beliefs of the person feeding them. Regardless of whether the reason is wrong or right, in a world growing with physical and mental stress impacts, enjoying birds by feeding them is clearly a form of relaxation and stress relief and a person could hardly be faulted when attempting to smile a little and drop the blood pressure a few points by having some feathered entertainment.

-Chris Hartzell

## Bird-friendly Habitat cont'd:

### Favorite Foods

Project Wildbird (see cover story), a research study which was sponsored by the Wild Bird Feeding Industry, points out that the backyard birds' favorite foods are Black Oil Sunflower, Hulled Black Oil Sunflower Chips, Nyjer and White Proso Millet. The study showed that chickadees and larger finches preferred Black Oil Sunflower while smaller finches preferred Nyjer and Sunflower Chips. Sparrows and other ground feeding birds preferred White Proso Millet.



In addition to being included among the top seeds preferred by feeder birds, Hulled Sunflower will not sprout – making it a favorite of those individuals who enjoy birds as well as gardening. It's a no-mess choice that the birds love! Hang a tube feeder filled with one or more of the winning seed options near a tree or leafy shrub and enjoy visits from perching birds like chickadees, titmice, house finches and more.

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### IMPORTANT NOTE

Peanuts & Sunflower seeds for birds are not for human consumption!

Rose-breasted Grosbeak at tube feeder – Steve Rovell



## The Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

**February 14-17, 2014**

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day International event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Checklists are accepted from anywhere in the world. Everyone is welcome, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy - and it helps the birds! You can find out more at [Birdsource.org/gbbc](http://Birdsource.org/gbbc).



## Bird-friendly Habitat cont'd: Grain & Grass Eaters



Multi-feeder station. Hopper feeder (top), squirrel resistant tube feeder (left), metal Nyjer feeder (middle), wood tube feeder (right), oriole feeder (bottom right), suet cage feeder (bottom).  
– Chris Hartzell

Most often the birds who eat grain and wild grasses are ground feeders like quail, doves and sparrows. These birds enjoy White Proso Millet and Cracked Corn. Placing seed and grain on the ground may seem like an easy way to feed these species, but this method creates problems; damp weather can spoil the seed, predators have easy access to the birds, and other critters can eat the food you meant for the birds. A platform feeder raised above the ground is a safe way to offer food to ground feeders and keep it drained in the rainy season. Platform feeders look like a four-walled tray with a flat screen in the bottom for drainage.

In addition to platform feeders, seed feeders come in two other types; tube and hopper, in various sizes. Hoppers look like houses with a perching ledge while tube feeders are slender and tall with perches.

### Specialized Feeder for Nyjer

To attract our local goldfinches and Pine Siskins, use a Nyjer feeder filled with Nyjer seed alone or a Nyjer and Hulled Sunflower mix. Nyjer feeders typically come in two types; fabric feeders shaped like a sock, and more durable metal mesh. These feeders have tiny openings that allow the birds to pull out the Nyjer while holding on with their feet. This capability makes it possible to designate the Nyjer feeder as a goldfinch/Pine Siskin-only destination, since other Nyjer-loving birds don't have the same perching ability.

### Suet for Quick Energy

High in calories, suet is a specialty food that can attract those birds that would otherwise not appear at the feeder. And, it is a great energy source when the weather turns chilly. Suet is made from rendered beef fat and comes in a variety of mixes that can include millet, peanut butter, dried fruit, or even insects. It is pressed into a block about 5"x5"x2" and is served in a simple caged suet feeder. This feeder can also hold seed cakes sized to match its specifications.

### Nectar for Hummingbirds and Orioles

Hummingbirds and orioles require nectar to fuel their high-energy demands. Even the smallest bird feeding location can make room for a hummingbird feeder. We can provide them a nectar source by using a mix of water and table sugar. Do not substitute artificial sweeteners, agave, or honey for the sugar in the recipe as it can cause health problems for the birds. Boil one part sugar to four parts water and cool before serving in a feeder. The use of red dye or any other additive is not required and not recommended again for health reasons; the red of the feeder is more than enough color to attract them. Nectar feeders come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Look for feeders that are easy to clean. Feeders should be placed in an area that is visible to hummingbirds zipping by overhead. Multiple feeders should be placed far apart so dominant hummers can't monopolize them and keep others away.

Orioles will enjoy the same nectar formula in a feeder of their own, usually orange-colored with larger perches that are more appropriate for their size. Orioles are also attracted to orange halves and grape jelly served on a fruit feeder.



American Goldfinches on Nyjer feeders metal (left) and fabric (right)  
– Chris Hartzell



Band-tailed Pigeons at combination Hopper feeder (seed & suet)  
– Chris Hartzell



Hummingbirds at large nectar feeder  
– Jeff Bleam

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**Trivia Fact:** You don't need a colored feeder (i.e. yellow Nyjer, red hummingbird, and orange oriole feeders) to attract birds, but they can be useful to attract high-flying birds if you have a feeding area that is secluded, hidden, or covered.

## Bird-friendly Habitat cont'd:

### Food Preferences

#### Whole corn

jays, crows,  
turkeys, squirrels

#### Cracked corn

doves, quail,  
juncos,  
sparrows, turkeys

#### Suet, Fruit, Raisins

robins, warblers,  
tanagers, wrens,  
kinglets

#### Safflower

nuthatches, titmice,  
chickadees

#### Whole peanuts

jays, crows,  
woodpeckers,  
squirrels

#### Hulled peanuts

chickadees,  
nuthatches,  
titmice,  
woodpeckers

#### Striped sunflower

jays, crows, squirrels

#### Black oil/hulled sunflower

finches, sparrows,  
jays,  
juncos, grosbeaks,  
chickadees, titmice,  
doves, woodpeckers

#### White Proso Millet

doves, pigeons, quail,  
juncos, sparrows,  
towhees, turkeys,  
blackbirds, cowbirds,  
House Sparrows

#### Nyjer

goldfinches,  
Pine Siskins

### Problem Birds

Blackbirds, cowbirds, crows, House Sparrows, pigeons, and turkeys can become a nuisance. Eliminating corn and millet can help keep these birds away.

### Cleaning Feeders

Protect the birds from diseases by cleaning the feeders and bird baths regularly. Baths should be cleaned whenever bird droppings get in the water and when mineral deposits build up. Seed feeders should be cleaned approximately once a month or whenever they look dirty or moldy. Discard moldy food and rake below the feeding area as needed. If sick or dead birds are found, the feeders should be cleaned and taken down for 2-4 weeks to let sick birds leave the area.

Hummingbird feeders should be cleaned at least once a week, otherwise mold may develop inside the feeder and this can be harmful. Use hot water to clean a feeder, vinegar and a brush for harder spots or to get difficult to reach areas. If bleach must be used, make a 1 part bleach to 10 parts water solution and be sure to thoroughly rinse the feeder. Dry feeders thoroughly before refilling.

\*\*\*\*\*

Whether your personal bird sanctuary is a backyard, patio, or just a balcony, all can be enlivened with visiting birds by providing the few essentials they seek. In return you'll gain the opportunity to observe closely and connect deeply with wild nature!

- Jill Himonas

You can find out more about backyard birds and feeding here  
[wildbirdhaven.net](http://wildbirdhaven.net) (FAQs) [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org) [projectwildbird.org](http://projectwildbird.org)



This Brown Thrasher set a Monterey County and California record when it arrived at a Carmel Highlands backyard feeder in 2005 – Chris Hartzell

**About the Author:** Born and raised in New York City, Jill Himonas credits Central Park as the first place responsible for her appreciation of birds and nature. It was not until she moved to Los Angeles, where she continued a busy career in marketing and advertising, that she set up a bird feeder and bath and became hooked on birds. In 2001, Jill opened her bird specialty store in Monterey, Wild Bird Haven, where she introduces bird lovers to the joys and responsibilities of backyard birding.

## Monterey Audubon Society's Annual Birdathon - 2013

Our annual Monterey Audubon *Birdathon* occurred over the final weekend of April: 4 pm on Friday, April 26 to 4 pm on Saturday, April 27. Teams of observers scattered throughout Monterey County, and the weather was good - possibly too good! It seemed that wintering waterbirds had left the week or two before, and the diversity of ducks, gulls, seabirds and waders was well down. The rarest finds were: **White-winged Dove** – Paloma Creek at Arroyo Seco River, **Cassin's Finch** - Nacimiento-Ferguson Rd, **Redhead** - Zmudowski, **Ridgway's Cackling Goose**, **Cattle Egret**, and 9 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** - Moonglow Dairy, **White-faced Ibis** - Castroville, 3 **Swainson's Hawks** - Ft. Hunter-Liggett, and a **Gray Flycatcher** - MTY side of Fremont Peak. The final group total for the 24 hours was **226 species** - just one more than our lowest Birdathon total ever (225 in 2012). Yet the team effort raised funds for Monterey Audubon's *May Gong-Tenney Youth Scholarship* fund (see page 9). As always, many thanks go to Jill Himonas and staff of the Wild Bird Haven in Del Monte Center for hosting the countdown and awards event, while Whole Foods Market served a delicious meal. - Don Roberson



Birdathon countdown and dinner at Wild Bird Haven - Toni Kimple



## 'May-Gong Tenney' Youth Scholarship Award

May-Gong Tenney was a long time part of the Monterey Audubon Society. Both a member and active participant on the Board, she was responsible for the formation of the MAS Scholarship Committee, which has been responsible for helping many youth in pursuing their education. In honor of her dedication, Monterey Audubon named the scholarship the *May Gong-Tenney Youth Scholarship Award*. For the last four years the Monterey Audubon Society's Birdathon has been funding these scholarships awarded to Monterey County high school students. The awards go to those whose essays reflect an appreciation and enthusiasm for the environment. These are the students we want to encourage in pursuing careers in the natural sciences. Past winners are studying to become; a Park Ranger, an Environmental Science Manager, a Biologist in Forestry and Natural Resources and many other ecologically oriented studies.

*-Jan Scott, Scholarship Committee Chair*

This year's winners were; 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Max Paris, a senior from Pacific Grove High School, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Jessica Bullington, a senior from Pacific Grove High School, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Marguerite Kise, a senior from Carmel High School.

*Below is the winning essay.*

*How can you, as a high school graduate, become a good steward of Monterey County's valuable and numerous biological resources?*

Throughout my life, I have always been able to find wildlife, no matter where hidden. As a kid, I had memorized my neighborhood, not so much by who lived in which house, but by what birds and other creatures lived in their backyards. When I was eight, my father decided to cut down what he saw as an "annoying, ugly, prickly tree" (which I knew as a holly tree) in our backyard, but I frantically stopped him, pointing out the nest of jays that lived there. I had been watching those birds from my bedroom window for months. Saving that nest of jays is an example of the type of intervention a person can make at an individual level to protect wildlife and other natural resources. The impact of one person can be great if he or she takes care to pay attention to the nature around him or her. On a personal level, I have also been working to maintain my backyard so that all forms of wildlife are welcome. Also, I have encouraged my family to make changes and develop small, daily conservation habits such as composting, timing showers to watch water usage, shopping locally at our Pacific Grove Farmers Market and riding our bikes to get there.

There are also steps that can be taken at a community level as well. Drawing the community together can be a great way to save resources, because the more people trust and rely on each other, the less resources are used up. Volunteering to help with group events like beach clean ups, bird banding, bird counting, elimination of alien plant species in local parks, marking storm drains so that people know not to dump in them, and park trail maintenance are just a few examples of the types of activities that are available for anyone in our community wanting to volunteer. As a good steward of local natural resources, I will volunteer throughout my life to help contribute to such local conservation and protection efforts.

Getting the whole world to hop on the bandwagon towards the new age of bikes is another way that I can help Monterey County. My dad and I have learned how to repair our own bikes, and have even met with others to discuss developing a local bike library, much like the one that exists in Santa Cruz. By looking at examples of programs in other communities, like the bike library in our neighboring town, we can bring new ideas and programs to Monterey County.

At both the individual and community levels, creating an awareness and appreciation of the wildlife and nature in our community is the first step. One of my main tasks as a volunteer at the Monterey Bay Aquarium is to point out to visitors not only the obvious beauty of our ocean community, but also the hidden world underneath the water, and the diversity of life in the tide pools. The survival of our marine mammals, for example, depends on observers looking beyond how cute they are and into their survival needs. Even nature-lovers who think they are helping, mistakenly feed wild animals human food that is harmful to them, or are not careful to stay on the trails that protect vegetation. They are not always watchful about the trash they leave behind. To love nature is to work to ensure its survival. Education for all about our local conservation needs is essential. Only when people stop to take notice will they stop to care about the future of the plants and animals that live there, and work for their protection.

*-Max Paris*

**Even though this year's Birdathon is over, it is never too late to contribute to helping future students in careers that help our planet. You can send donations for next year's Birdathon at any time, or add a donation amount to your membership dues. Donations can be sent to: Monterey Audubon Society ATTN: May-Gong Tenney Scholarship Fund**

## Field Trips

*Field trips are free unless otherwise stated. Times are estimates. Please RSVP leaders at the contact info provided.*

### **Sat. Aug 10- 8am-noon: Elkhorn Slough & Moss Landing shorebirds**

Shorebird migration begins in earnest on the central coast much earlier than our songbird passage. Adult shorebirds returning from the Arctic are present in July and by early August juveniles have joined them. Join us for an exploration of these birds around world famous Elkhorn Slough and Moss Landing: probable stops include the lower Slough around Jetty Road, Moss Landing Wildlife Area & Zmoudowski State Beach. **Meet:** 8:00am Wild Bird Haven for carpooling, or 8:30am at entrance to Jetty Rd off Hwy 1.

**RSVP:** Blake Matheson 831-596-9990 [LammergeierEyes@aol.com](mailto:LammergeierEyes@aol.com)



Short-billed Dowitcher at Moss Landing – Hana Wood



Young Blue Heron eats river monster at Salinas River Mouth  
– Blake Matheson

### **Sat. Sep 21- 8am-noon: Salinas River National Wildlife Area**

This wildlife area located just north of Marina has a variety of birds that are readily accessible a short distance from Hwy 1. With an open expanse of grasslands and marshy/riparian habitat, it is great for various kinds of songbirds, shorebirds and raptors such as Northern Harrier and White-tailed Kite. White Pelicans are regularly seen here too. Rains may change the itinerary if the access road is impassable. **Meet:** 8:00am Wild Bird Haven for carpooling. **RSVP:** Robert Horn 831-372-4608

### **Sat. Sep 28 - 8:30am-noon: Carmel River Lagoon**

The Carmel Lagoon and surrounding area is one of the best wetlands on the Monterey Peninsula. From Peregrines hunting gulls to Snowy Plover to vagrant warblers, this relatively small area has a diverse range of habitat. We will start our roughly 1.5 mile round trip walk from the State Park parking lot and check the beach for shorebirds and gulls. Then make our way over to the “warbler trail” via Cross Hill. **Meet:** 8:30 AM at the Carmel River Lagoon State Park parking area along Scenic Rd. **RSVP:** Cooper Scollan 831-241-1422.

### **Sat. Oct 5 - Early morning-noon: Andrew Molera State Park**

Located 20 miles south of Carmel along Hwy 1, Molera's riparian woodland habitat provides a perfect native bird habitat as well as being a migration stopover and a great location for the rare or unusual vagrant surprises. Bring snacks and water. **Meet:** RSVP Larry & Carole Rose for meet time and location 831-372-2616 [crose@jps.net](mailto:crose@jps.net).

### **Sun. Oct 13 - 8am-noon: West Struve & Watsonville Slough, Pajaro Dunes**

We'll bird for winter waterfowl, sparrows, and other species at West Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough behind the Lee Rd. warehouses. Then, we'll head to Pajaro Dunes South for shorebirds, various winter passerines, raptors, and gulls at the Pajaro River mouth. We'll also be looking for late migrants. **Meet:** 8:00am Wild Bird Haven for carpooling. **RSVP:** Nanci Adams 831-728-5803

### **Sat. Oct 19 - 8am-noon: South Bank Trail to Palo Corona Regional Park**

Recently the Monterey Regional Park District and the Big Sur Land Trust formed a new access trail to the east side of Palo Corona Regional Park that runs adjacent to the Carmel River from its trailhead off of Rancho San Carlos Rd. in Carmel Valley. We will explore this access trail as it winds its way from the Quail Lodge Golf Course area to the east entrance of the park, birding in a variety of habitats from riparian to oak woodland, grassland, and golf park environments. Group limited to 12, carpooling a must as parking is limited. **Meet:** 8am Wild Bird Haven. **RSVP:** Bill Hill 831-624-3300. **NOTE:** If you wish to continue birding inside the Park after the field trip, a permit is required and can be obtained at the Regional Park website: [www.mprpd.org](http://www.mprpd.org).

## Pelagic Trips

*Monterey Bay hosts excellent Pelagic trips for both birds and whales (&turtles!). Although Monterey Audubon does not directly conduct Pelagic trips, we do recommend either of our two local Pelagic trip tour operators:*

**Monterey Seabirds:** 831-375-4658  
[montereyseabirds.com](http://montereyseabirds.com)

**Shearwater Journeys:** 831-637-8527  
[shearwaterjourneys.com](http://shearwaterjourneys.com)



## Events

### **Thursday Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> through Sunday Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>: Monterey Bay Birding Festival**

Designed for both seasoned and beginning birders, as well as outdoor lovers, the festival offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn and appreciate world class habitats such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Elkhorn Slough National Marine Estuary, and Pinnacles National Monument. Specially designed field trips will take participants to Big Sur to see California Condors. Join a pelagic trip by Shearwater Journeys to one of the world's most productive regions for albatrosses, shearwaters, storm-petrels and more. Jump into a kayak and get closer to nature or take a scenic ride at Elkhorn Slough Safari. All field trips are led by top quality, friendly leaders. Online registration will begin May 13, 2013 for each birding event offered a la carte, so you we'll be able to mix and match outings according to personal interests.

**Contact:** [montereybaybirding.org](http://montereybaybirding.org)

## Meetings & Programs

*Board meetings & Programs are open to the public and held at the Pacific Grove Museum the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month.*

*Board meetings start at 6:00pm followed by educational & informational programs at 7:30pm, preceded by refreshments.  
(Times subject to change. Check online or contact us to see about any changes or agendas)*

### **August 13: Eco-Tourism in Baja California – Trudi Angell**

Join us for an interesting talk on exploring the history, culture and birds of Baja. Trudi Angell was born in Alta California and migrated to Baja California Sur, Mexico in the mid-1970s. First attracted to the peninsula as a kayaker, she spent a number of seasons exploring the coast of the Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) between Mulegé and La Paz. Subsequently, she began the first Adventure Tour Company in Loreto, and over the years has logged more than 3000 sea miles by paddle and sail. In 1986 she visited the mural rock art sites by mule with local cowboys of the region, went home to Loreto, bought a horse, and began to explore the canyons and ridges of the major sierras of the peninsula.

### **September 10: Saving the Unsilvered Fritillary of Chews Ridge – Chris Tenney**

Look at the range of the Unsilvered Fritillary in any recent butterfly field guide and you'll see it represented by a tiny little dot, centered right here in Monterey County, in the Ventana Wilderness near Chews Ridge. Little is known of this attractive, ghost-like nymphalid butterfly, but a team of local University of the Pacific Stockton researchers is attempting to change that. Join us this evening and hear the story of the natural history of this species, much of it new to science, and the dangers threatening its continued existence.

### **October 8: TBD**

Unsilvered Fritillary at Chews Ridge  
– Chris Tenney



## **!!! NOTICE TO MEMBERS !!!**

Dear Members- we have heard your voices of concern regarding some of you not receiving National Audubon membership credit with your National membership dues. There has been a recent change in the format of how we report your National membership that has caused delays in registration. We are in contact with National and rectifying the situation. We assure you that efforts are being made to make sure members receive full membership credit with their dues. If you have an issue with your membership, please contact us either by letter or email (addresses on back page).

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## MONTEREY AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues payable each January

**\$20 1-year Monterey Audubon membership**  
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## Resources

**MONTEREY RARE BIRD ALERT (831) 626-6605**

**MAS website: [www.montereyaudubon.org](http://www.montereyaudubon.org)**

**email: [montereyaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:montereyaudubon@yahoo.com)**

**Monterey Birds book \$5 at monthly programs**

**Monterey Bay Birders listserv:**

**[www.santacruzbirdclub.org/Listservers.html](http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/Listservers.html)**

**Santa Cruz birders: [www.santacruzbirdclub.org](http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org)**

## Sightings

*Recent reports of the more rare and unusual sightings from the Rare Bird Alert*

6/27 **American Redstart** - Andrew Molera Park, 6/23 **Red-necked Grebe** - Del Monte Beach, 6/23 **Blue Grosbeak** - South Bank Trail in Carmel Valley, 6/22 **Indigo Bunting**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** - Andrew Molera Park, 6/21 **Bell's Vireo**, **Willow Flycatcher**, **Bufflehead**, **Greater White-fronted Goose** - Andrew Molera, 6/18 **Brant** - Carmel Lagoon, 6/16 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** - Oak Hills, 6/16 **Cassin's Vireo** - El Estero Cemetery, 6/14 **Black Swift**, **Northern Parula** - Andrew Molera, **Lawrence's Goldfinch** - Pt. Sur, 6/10 **Brant** - Carmel Lagoon, 6/9 **American Redstart** - Andrew Molera Park, 6/9 **Xantus's Murrelet** - Monterey Bay, 6/6 **White-faced Ibis** - Laguna Seca Pond, 6/2 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** - Parkfield, 6/1 **Blue Grosbeak** - Parkfield, **White-faced Ibis** - Bradley, 5/27 **American Redstart**, **Black Swift** - Andrew Molera Park, 5/22 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** - Carmel Valley near Quail Lodge, 5/21 **Black Swift**, **Indigo Bunting** - Moss Landing

## Unusual Visitors

On the evening of June 15<sup>th</sup>, I received a phone call from a resident in Carmel city who found my number through the Audubon website. Fortunately I was home and was able to get his call and try and help with identifying two unknown birds coming to the front door begging for food. The resident didn't know birds super well, but definitely didn't agree with my theory of baby Turkeys. *"Two large pheasant-like brown birds with green necks, as big as a goose, with sticks from their heads and white bellies"*. After telling him flat out I just didn't know, he got his wife to email me a pic for an ID. I was quite surprised at the find and notified the SPCA, where they were going to make an attempt to capture the loitering duo and return them to the owners up the street. *-Chris Hartzell*



Female Peacocks – Carrol Coates