



The Kite Call

Ohlone Audubon Society, Inc.

*A chapter of the National Audubon Society
Serving Southern & Eastern Alameda County CA
Our Mission: To celebrate and protect birds and their habitats in
Southern and Eastern Alameda County
www.ohloneaudubon.org*

Calendar

- May 18 **FIELD TRIP**
Niles Hot Spots
- May 24 **FIELD TRIP**
Lake Chabot Reg Park
- June 7 **GENERAL MEETING**
ANNUAL POTLUCK PICNIC
Lake Chabot Reg Park
- June 12 **FIELD TRIP**
Behind the Scenes
Hayward Shoreline
- Sept 25 **PELAGIC TRIP**
(See field trips for details)

Membership Meeting



Annual Potluck Dinner Installation of Officers

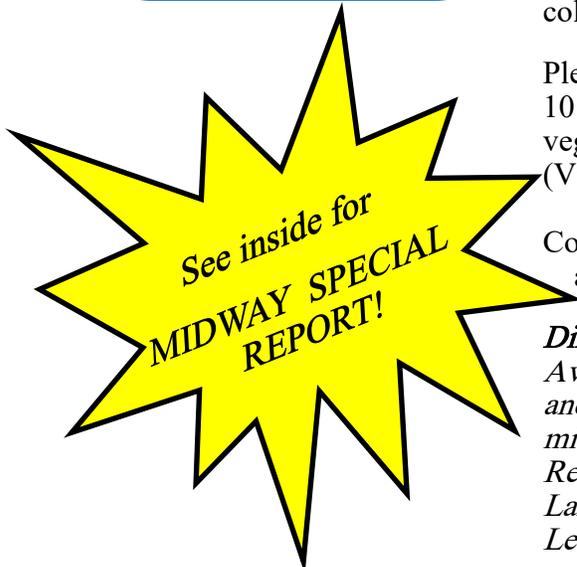
Date: June 7, 2022
Time: Bird Walk: 4PM Setup: 5PM Dinner: 6PM
Location: Lake Chabot Reg. Pk.— Group picnic area near restrooms
17600 Lake Chabot Road, Castro Valley, 94546

Our annual potluck dinner returns and this year it will be held outdoors, with us flocking together at Lake Chabot Regional Park in Castro Valley. Time to catch up with fellow members about birds, happenings, or life, over delicious food. We will also be installing our new Board of Directors for FY 2022-23 (have you voted? See ballot inside). And the infamous Ohlone drawings will return - lots of bird items have been collected in the past 3 years!

Please bring your own table service, utensils, and a dish to share (about 10 to 12 servings) **Last names: A-G:** Entrée **H-O:** dessert **P-Z:** salad, vegetable or side dish. Beverages will be supplied, courtesy of OAS. (Visitors are requested to refrain from alcoholic beverages in the park).

Come early! We have lots of catching up to do and bring your binoculars as there will be a bird walk beginning at 4PM.

Directions: In Castro Valley on I-580 westbound, take the Strobridge Avenue exit. Turn right on Strobridge, right on Castro Valley Boulevard, and left on Lake Chabot Road. The Lake Chabot Marina is about two miles ahead on the right. In Castro Valley on I-580 eastbound, exit at Redwood Road and go left, go left at Castro Valley Boulevard, right at Lake Chabot Road, and follow the directions above. From I-580 in San Leandro, exit at Fairmont Drive and go east (uphill). The marina entrance will be to the left at the bottom of the hill. (Parking fee/EBRPD pass).



Follow us on Facebook!

See updates and photos from our activities that you can share with your friends! Find us by doing a Facebook search for Ohlone Audubon

NEXT MEETING : TUESDAY SEPT. 6, 2022

Niles Hotspots

Wednesday, May 18, 9:00 am- noon

Leaders: Kathy Robertson and Vicki Robinson
katbirdca@aol.com

We will visit several birding spots in the Niles area, along the Alameda Creek channel and adjacent riparian areas, in the hopes of seeing spring migrants and nesting birds, including orioles, warblers, and waterfowl. Pre-registration is not required, and all are welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Meet at Niles Community Park.

Directions: To reach the park from I-880, take Decoto Rd. northeast about 2 miles. Turn right on Alvarado-Niles Blvd. and stay on it for about 2.5 miles (it becomes Niles Blvd.) Turn right on H Street. The park is at the end of H Street. From I-680, take Niles Canyon Rd. (Hwy 84) southwest to Fremont. Cross Mission Blvd. to reach Niles Blvd., and bear right on Niles Blvd. to go through the main part of Niles. Turn left on H Street. The park is at the end of H Street. From Mission Blvd. north or south, turn onto Niles Blvd. and follow directions above.

Field trips continued on page 3

Field Trips

Lake Chabot Regional Park

Tuesday, May 24, 9:00am - noon

Leaders: Rich Nicholson and Kathy Robertson
katbirdca@aol.com

Lake Chabot Regional Park offers a variety of habitats for birding: riparian, grassland, bay-oak woodland, marshy shoreline, and open water. We'll look for spring migrants and nesting residents. We might see Bald Eagles, which have nested at the park for many years. We will walk a few miles on a mostly paved trail with a few moderately steep hills.

Directions: Take Lake Chabot Rd. north from Castro Valley Blvd. for 1.7 miles. Turn right at the main entrance to the park. Meet at the far end of the parking lot. (Note: The upper parking lot, where we usually meet, is closed). Pre-registration is not required, and all are welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Parking fee is \$6, unless you have an EBRPD pass. Free on-street parking is available on Lake Chabot Rd.

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
birding & nature tours



SPECIAL EVENT: PELAGIC TRIP RETURNS!

OHLONE AUDUBON PELAGIC TRIP! SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2022**Join other OAS members on this co-promoted trip with Alvaro's Adventures**

Use this link for full details. Click on the September 25th date.

<https://www.alvarosadventures.com/pelagic-dates-2022.html>

Our annual pelagic trip returns! Alvaro Jaramillo has set up a special trip for Ohlone members to share. Cost is \$185 (due to fuel increases) this year and leaves from Half Moon Bay. Things have changed—there is a new boat this year, The New Captain Pete. The goal is to get offshore into waters off the continental shelf, heading west/southwest. A good time of the year to be out there!

Please read the **excellent** fact sheet at the above link. When registering, please let Alvaro know you are with Ohlone (as he is rebating some of the trip fee back to Ohlone).

Field Trips continued

Behind the Scenes at Hayward Interpretive Center
 Sunday, June 12, 8:30am - noon
 Leaders: Dave Riensche and Maggie Clark
 RSVP: maggielark99@gmail.com

Join us for a very special trip behind the locked gates at the Hayward Shoreline. We will have the opportunity to see the nesting islands with California Least and Forster's Terns, and possibly the Black Skimmers. Early June can also be a good time to see migrating Black Terns here. We will also view the other shorebird summer inhabitants of the shoreline. Scopes will be essential as we want minimal disturbance to the nesters. We will have to go in together so be sure to arrive on time. The trip is limited to 15 participants; you must RSVP to the email address above to join this outing.

Directions: From I-880 in Hayward, exit onto Hwy 92 West toward the San Mateo Bridge, then take the Clawiter Road/Eden Landing Road exit. Go straight through the light (Do not turn onto Clawiter). Make the first left onto Breakwater Avenue. Turn left to stay on Breakwater Avenue. Go all the way to the end of the street, and park parallel to the freeway.

President's Corner

Updated review on Merlin's new bird song ID.



Some time ago I wrote about a new service on the *Merlin* app. Cornell produced an ID service that helped identify birds in the field by song. I have been using it quite a bit lately and I highly recommend you give it a try. If you haven't tried *Merlin* you should. It is produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and is available free for your smartphone. I believe *Merlin* is well on its way to replacing the standard "field guide" and this new bird song capability is a big step. If you already have *Merlin*, it is just a couple

of steps to add it to the app. When you call *Merlin* up, you are offered a "Sound ID" button and if you push that, *Merlin* will start listening for birds. It produces a nice sonogram of the sounds it hears and it will give suggestions of the species it is "hearing". I have been impressed with *Merlin's* ability to pick up songs. Songs that, to me, seemed rather faint and far away are now quickly identified. I've used it to target individual birds that are calling, and also to just find a birdy spot where many are singing and calling and see what *Merlin* comes up with.

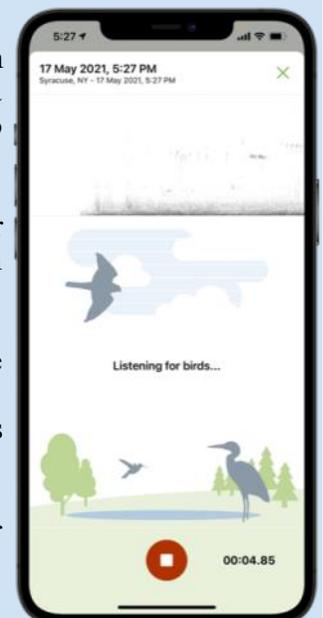
What about accuracy? I don't recommend using *Merlin* as the basis of an identification. It is good for "I know that song but just can't place it" or if you see a bird singing and want to confirm a visual observation. But you shouldn't add a bird to your list just because "*Merlin* said there was a Lazuli Bunting out there."

As to accuracy, my rough estimate is that it gets it right 80-90% of the time. Other experiences may differ. Unless you already know the bird's song, always confirm *Merlin* suggestions visually or it may lead you astray.

Merlin is a great training tool and I think this is where it shines. Often when you are birding, you will hear a song that you think you know but have no way to confirm it. With *Merlin* you can now do that. "I think that's a House Wren". When *Merlin* says yes or no, that is valuable training.

Give the new bird song capability a try. It will improve your ability to identify your birds by song and add enjoyment to your bird walks.

- Bill Hoppes



BIRDING OBSERVATIONS

Spring 2022

By Vicki Robinson

We are ready to say goodbye to our winter residents. The crown Sparrows are moving on, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** have disappeared, and our **Yellow-rumped Warblers** are few in numbers. **Hermit Thrushes** are leaving to be replaced with **Swainson's Thrushes**.



Harlequin Duck

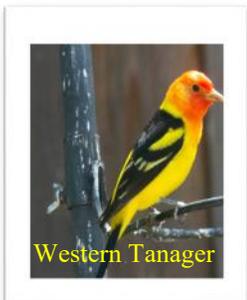
The rare bird generating the most excitement has been a **Harlequin Duck** seen at Coyote Point Marina in San Mateo (in full color!).

Nest building and bird feeding are taking Place everywhere. Look for **Bushtit, Oak Titmouse, House Finch, Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Hooded and Bullock's Orioles, Pacific-slope Flycatchers**—all are nesting in local parks and backyards. A **Hutton's Vireo** was seen at Ardenwood Farm feeding her newly fledged chick. Our local waterfowl, **Canada Geese, Mallards, Wood Ducks** are parading their babies around local creeks and lakes.



Hutton's Vireo

Another year of nesting for our local **Bald Eagles**. Nests and young can found at Del Valle, Ardenwood and Lake Chabot Regional Parks.



Western Tanager

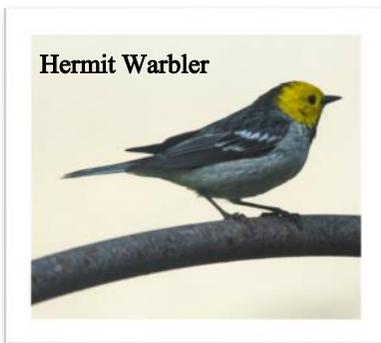


Lazuli Bunting

The most colorful of the spring migrants, **Western Tanager** and **Lazuli Bunting** have arrived along with **Ash-throated Flycatchers, Western Kingbirds, House Wrens, and Black-headed Grosbeaks.** **Warbling Vireos** and **Cassin's Vireos** have arrived and though often hard to see, they can be recognized by their unique calls.



Warbling Vireo



Hermit Warbler

Not to leave out the warblers: **Wilson's Warblers** seem to be everywhere, **Orange-crowned** are plentiful and seen is an occasional **Black-throated Gray.** **Nashville** and **Hermit Warblers** have been reported. **Yellow Warblers** have yet to show up in large numbers, but a few are here.

The migrating hummingbirds, **Rufous** and **Calliope** have been seen at backyard fountains and again at the Pride-of-Madera plants on Garin Avenue in Hayward.



Calliope Hummingbird



Grasshopper Sparrow

Grasshopper Sparrows can be found on grassy hills if you can hike up there and **Chipping Sparrows** have been showing up at unpredictable places.

Terns have returned for another year to join our year-round **Forster's, Caspian, Elegant** and the **Least Tern** are here now ready for another year of laying eggs and feeding young. Keep a look out for the rare **Black Tern** that sometimes passes through in May at the Hayward Shoreline.

(All photos by Vicki Robinson)

Conservation

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL

(reprinted from *East Bay Times*, 5/1/22)

Expand, restore Bay wetlands in war against climate change

By Carin High and Arthur Feinstein

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change from the world's scientific community leaves no doubt that we must take urgent action on climate change while we still have a chance to prevent the most destructive impacts to the globe's communities and ecosystems. This report must spur every one of us to look at actions we can take in our region to rapidly reduce emissions and prepare our communities to adapt.

More than issuing a wake-up call, this report offers concrete actions that we can take and emphasizes the valuable role of nature-based solutions that reduce climate change risks, while providing numerous benefits to both our communities and the planet.

One of the most effective nature-based solutions is the expansion and restoration of coastal wetlands. Wetlands not only provide valuable habitat for fish and birds, acting as the base of the marine ecosystem, but wetlands have also been shown to be one of nature's most efficient plant communities for capturing carbon from the atmosphere, trapping organic carbon quicker and better than forests, thus reducing carbon in the atmosphere.

Coastal wetlands also help to buffer our communities from sea level rise, acting as a sponge to capture flood waters before they reach our homes and businesses. In short, wetlands, if protected, expanded and restored, are one of the most valuable ecosystem tools for reducing the impact of climate change.

San Francisco Bay is home to some of the most important coastal wetlands in the Western Hemisphere. However, we have lost up to 90% of our historic wetlands, and those that remain are at risk of drowning as sea levels continue to rise. Significant work protecting and restoring the Bay's wetlands is under way, but the IPCC report should urge us to

rapidly increase the pace and scale of this work. We must protect every acre of wetland habitat from potential development and advance restoration opportunities that allow our wetlands to keep pace with sea level rise. Further, as the IPCC report highlights, we must work urgently to preserve "wetland migration" locations. These are undeveloped areas that will allow wetlands, and all of the species that depend on them, to move inland as sea levels rise. As we speak, hundreds of acres of potential Bay wetland migration sites are proposed for development — most notably the 500 acres of bay lands in Newark referred to as "Area 4" is at imminent risk of development.

Bay Area residents have worked diligently for decades to protect San Francisco Bay and have demonstrated an awareness of the critical role coastal wetlands play in maintaining the health of our bay with the overwhelming passage of Measure AA, creating the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. Now we must all work to ensure that our state and federal governments commit significantly more funding to continue the work of protecting, expanding and restoring San Francisco Bay's wetlands.

With strong political support throughout our region, we can protect existing and future wetland sites and increase funding commitments at the local, state and federal levels. Our bay's wetlands can become a key resource in fighting global climate change and ensuring the continued health of the bay. Working together, we can secure the future of our bay and our communities. But we must take action now.

Carin High is co-chair of the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, a volunteer organization working to protect the San Francisco Bay's National Wildlife Refuge. Arthur Feinstein is vice chair of the Sierra Club California Conservation Committee and Chair of the Sierra Club's Bay Alive Campaign. Carin High is also our Conservation Chair.

***New Members
and Renewals***



*Chris & Gary Bard
Kathleen Boswell
Bruce Brown
Art Carey
Kellie Collier
Julie Gilson
Sundip Hore*

*John Majchrzak
Ann McClure
Dina Oakes
Jim & Tamara Reus
Carlos Stahlhut
Carol & Paul Weicker*

Donations

*Chris & Gary Bard
Joyce Hurt
Ann McClure
Mary Norton
Jim & Tamara Reus
Carlos Stahlhut
Tri-city Ecology Center*



*And in memory of
Richard Matsutani :
Dina Oakes*

Nominations 2022-2023



In accordance with the Bylaws of our organization, the slate of officers nominated for the upcoming year must be presented to the membership, followed by the election of officers to occur at the May monthly meeting. In view of the current situation, the slate of Officers for the Board of Directors 2022-2023 FY is listed below and members will be asked to vote “virtually” or by mail. Other board positions are appointed by the President. Please send your vote (yea or nay) electronically via this link: <https://forms.gle/e8utRYhpCUTF9XGg9> or via our Facebook page or via mail to 1922 Hillsdale St, Hayward, CA 94541.

Write-ins are also accepted. Please vote by **May 31, 2022**. Thank you.

Slate of Officers for FY 2022-2023

President: Bill Hoppes **Vice President:** Marty Morrow
Treasurer: Gail Ryujin
Recording Secretary: Kathy Robertson
Corresponding Secretary: Jackie Bertillion
Director at Large (2025) Dave Riensche *I accept the above slate of Officers Yea _ Nay _ Write-in _____*

STILL LOOKING. . . HELP Needed!

**Programs—
Zoom or in-person or BOTH!**



-or-



Many members have expressed an interest in continuing our zoom meeting format while others are waiting for our in-person return. Ideally, the hybrid would be perfect. This would entail having our in-person meetings, when safely to do so, as well as zooming the meeting at the same time.

We would love to do this, but we need help! None of us on the current board have the expertise or resources to accomplish this. We need your help!

Please send an email to our president if you can give us a hand. Bill Hoppes has details of what we need.
President@ohloneaudubon.org

Fingers crossed, we can do this and thank you for your help!

IS IT TIME TO RENEW?



Look at your mailing label - it will tell you. A “RENEW?” indicates that this is your last *Kite Call*! A **cmp** means you are chapter membership paid; a **nnmp** means you are a national member only and a “JOIN LOCAL?” on your label indicates that you have joined the National Audubon Society, but alas, **not** your local **Ohlone chapter**.

We would love to have you join us. If you receive your Kite Call electronically, look for a reminder in your email box. To renew or join us please send a \$25 check to :

Pat Gordon, Membership Chair, 1922 Hillsdale Street, Hayward, CA 94541 or thru PayPal on our website

PLEASE CONSIDER AN ELECTRONIC KITE CALL!

We are urging members to switch over to an electronically issued *Kite Call* (but you don't have to!). The benefits are a cost savings to our chapter, in both printing costs and postage. Other benefits include getting it quicker and it is **much more colorful!!!!!! See all of these beautiful photos in color! Also, note that links are live!**

GO GREEN!

Who Is Our Newest Board Member? Doc Quack!



David (AKA “DOC QUACK”) **Riensche**, a Certified Wildlife Biologist, is a Wildlife Biologist II for the East Bay Regional Park District where he has worked for over 33+

years. For 24+ years he has been a member of the Biology Department faculty at Las Positas College, where he teaches courses in biology, ecology, and vertebrate natural history. He is a recipient of The National Association for Interpretation (Region 9) – Outstanding Field Naturalist Award. David holds advanced degrees in both Natural Resource Management and Environmental Education, and an undergraduate degree in Biology (Wildlife).

His current research and habitat restoration efforts are diverse, focusing on the following species and groups: California Least Tern, Western Snowy

Plover, Black Skimmer, Forster’s Tern, Western and Clark’s Grebes, Bald Eagle, Ridgway’s Rail, California Black Rail, Burrowing Owl, California Red-legged Frog, California Tiger Salamander, Western Pond Turtle, Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, San Francisco Dusky-footed Woodrat, Bats, Fairly Shrimp, Central California grassland lizards and small mammals, riparian and oak woodland breeding bird community structure, shorebird nesting population studies, upland gamebirds and waterfowl management. To date, he has published 35 peer-reviewed scientific papers on the species and topics listed above, including over 115 general audience articles on birds, wildlife conservation, volunteerism and environmental education topics.

We are very fortunate to have Dave join our board. Dave was appointed to finish out the Director-at-large position when Sandy Ferreira left us for Idaho. He is now on the slate of officers for the same position, expiring in 2025. Welcome Dave!

The Great Backyard Bird Count



Want to see the results of this year’s 2022 Great Backyard Bird Count?

In a snapshot:

7,099 species of birds identified
192 participating countries
359,479 eBird checklists
298,208 Merlin Bird IDs
141,990 photos added to Macaulay Library
384,641 estimated global participants

Approximately 3/4 of the known world species were reported!

For a complete report go to https://www.birdcount.org/2022-final-results/?utm_campaign=GBBC%202022&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=208934150&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9yDzn9Qvy7pdxbbPTjIXJEY4OXDEC7TiTtwDYCNVHFP4FOBFJac_4JPHpbZYP4pvc3eGINaFqBOeQ8A9_6cQAsO4upg&utm_content=20892982&utm_source=hs_email

Vanishing Bird Talk

Ohlone member and our local award-winning artist extraordinaire, recently gave a talk at the new Hayward Library discussing the connection between her paintings and climate change.

Find this very fine talk on YouTube at
<https://youtu.be/1wcG72qhdKo>



Springtown Preserve Bioblitz

Bring your smartphone and curiosity to help catalog rare species at Livermore's Springtown Preserve!



Sat. May 21, 2022 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM PDT
Springtown Preserve Bluebell & Hartford Ave
Livermore, CA 94551

For more info and to register for this event:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/springtown-preserve-bioblitz-registration-333934536187>



SPECIAL ARTICLE ON THE ALBATROSSES OF MIDWAY ATOLL!

Bob Toleno, our Field Trip Chair, is on a leave of absence from Ohlone, volunteering with the Fish and Wildlife Service for 6 months on Midway Atoll. He sent in this recent report.

The Albatrosses of Midway Atoll

Midway is a tiny coral atoll near the northwestern end of the Hawaiian archipelago. During the peak of breeding season every spring, several million albatrosses make their temporary home on Midway. (As pelagic birds, their true home is, of course, the open ocean.) As you might imagine, that's a lot of albatrosses for two tiny islands that cover less than two-and-a-half square miles!

The most numerous albatross on the atoll is the iconic bird of Midway, the Laysan Albatross. Approximately one million pairs nest here, representing about 70% of the species' total breeding population. Each pair hatches one chick per season that both parents care for. The parents travel thousands of miles to get meals for the chick, usually to the waters off Alaska or Japan. Because a round-trip journey for each parent takes about two weeks, chicks only get fed once per week on average. In addition to the breeding birds, hundreds of thousands of nonbreeding young adults (3-6 years old) come to the islands during this time, where they practice their noisy courtship dances. (In Hawaiian, one name for Midway is "Pihemanu," which means "loud din of birds;" the din is mostly caused by these dancing young adult albatrosses.)



Laysan Albatross



Black-footed Albatross



Black-footed x Laysan

The second-most common albatross on the atoll is the Black-footed Albatross, with about 10,000 pairs nesting each year. Unlike the Laysan, the Black-footed mostly head to the west coast of North America to forage, where they are sometimes seen from boats. These parents still travel thousands of miles to get food for their young, but in a different direction. Very occasionally, a Black-footed and Laysan Albatross will mate, producing uniquely beautiful hybrid offspring. There are currently at least four of these hybrids on Midway.

The third and final species of albatross that sometimes breeds on Midway is the extremely rare and endangered Short-tailed Albatross. Short-tailed were hunted for their feathers almost to extinction in the mid-20th century, reduced to a population of only 50 juveniles by the 1950s. Their population is starting to recover, though, and there are currently a little over one thousand birds worldwide. Just a single pair of Short-tailed Albatross has bred on the atoll for the past decade. Affectionately named George and Geraldine by residents of Midway, the pair is monitored extremely carefully to ensure their health and safety. Though their egg failed to hatch this breeding season, the pair occasionally returns to rest in the location they've nested in the past. A few of George and Geraldine's offspring have started returning to Midway, too, though none of them have yet nested.

(Bird photos by Bob Toleno)

Three Goldfinches

By Bill Hoppes

Whether you are birding in the field or watching feeders during the Big Sit, you are likely to spot a goldfinch. We have three in our area that you could see. One I can usually identify, one gives me trouble, and one is always a pleasant surprise or the result of hard searching. Let's start with the easy one.

Lesser Goldfinch

This species is not only the smallest North American *Spinus* finch, it may be the smallest true finch in the world. That is where it gets “lesser”. But what a boring name! “Smallest in the World!” deserves a better name than simply “lesser”. Our smallest North American hummingbird is the Calliope, a great name, the smallest warbler is Wilson's, also good. The smallest shorebird is the Least Sandpiper, equally boring. Smallest duck, the Green-winged Teal, a good name and the smallest raptor, the American Kestrel another great name. But I digress.

The Lesser Goldfinch was formally described by the American zoologist, Thomas Say (1787-1834), in 1822 for whom the Say's Phoebe was named. Say's Goldfinch doesn't sound too bad to me and an improvement over Lesser. But enough digression, on to identification.

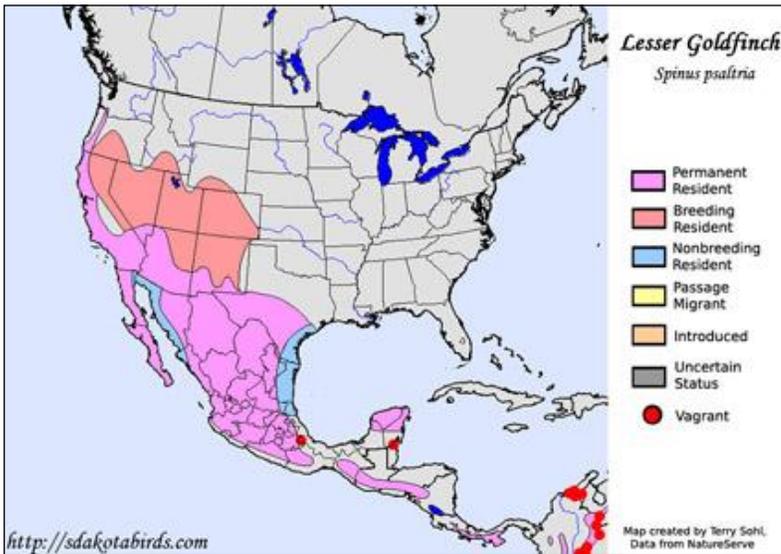


Male Lesser Goldfinch left, note yellow throat and breast, black wings with white wing-bars, green back and black cap. Female on the right, yellow-green but otherwise pretty blah, but note lack of prominent white wing bars.

So lots of small birds out there, how do we know we have a finch. As in most bird identification, we start with the bill. Finches are seed eating birds so we are looking for birds with a short, conical bill, like we see in sparrows, not the long, needle-like bill of warblers, the other yellow birds up in the canopy and in the underbrush. The other thing we are looking for is color. Goldfinches are yellowish green with an un-streaked breast. Finally, they have a strongly undulating flight often described as a “rollercoaster”. This path results from the bird giving a very short burst of wingbeats and rising quickly, then folding the wings into a relatively long free-fall. So a very small bird with yellow-green plumage, a conical bill, and undulating flight. We likely have a goldfinch, how do we know it is a lesser.

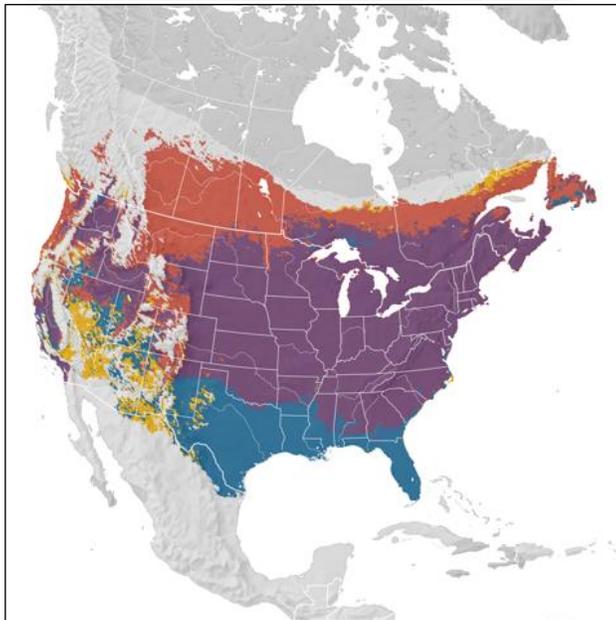
The Lesser Goldfinch is a western bird. It is in our area year-round and its range extends to northern South America. Birds often occur in small flocks utilizing almost any habitat with trees or shrubs, except for dense forest. It is common at feeders and will come almost anywhere with thistle sock feeders. It feeds mostly on tree buds and weed seeds. The nesting season is in summer in the temperate parts of its range; in the tropics, it apparently breeds all-year round. It lays three or four bluish white eggs in a cup nest made of fine plant materials such as lichens, rootlets, and strips of bark, placed in a bush or at low or middle levels in a tree.

(Continued on page 10)



Lesser Goldfinch Range Map

American Goldfinch Range Map



Lesser Goldfinch males have a yellowish-green breast and throat, an olive green back, black wings with white wing bars and a black cap. Females are more nondescript. They lack the black cap of the male and are more drab overall. They maintain the yellowish underparts and olive-tinted upper-parts of the male and lack distinct wing bars.

American Goldfinch

The American Goldfinch occurs pretty much across the United States, southern Canada and eastern Mexico. It prefers open country where weeds thrive, such as fields, meadows, roadsides, orchards and gardens. It may also be found in open deciduous and riparian woodlands. The summer breeding range stretches across North America from coast to coast. The American goldfinch is a short distance migrant, moving south in response to colder weather and decreased food supply.



American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*

Range

The range map depicts the boundary of the species's range, defined as the areas where the species is estimated to occur within at least one week within each season. [Learn more](#)

OCCURRENCE

- Year-round
- Breeding season May 31 - Aug 24
- Non-breeding season Dec 7 - Mar 22
- Pre-breeding migratory season Mar 29 - May 24
- Post-breeding migratory season Aug 31 - Nov 30

Note: Seasonal ranges overlap and are stacked in the order above; view full range in season maps.

SEASONS TIMELINE [Learn more](#)



Male American Goldfinch on upper left (in breeding plumage) and female at lower right. Note bright yellow on back compared to green of lesser. Note black of forehead of the American which extends to the nape on the Lesser. In this female, you can just see the hint of a brighter yellow throat. Note the prominent white wing bars that the female Lesser lack. Both sexes look like the female during non-breeding season.

(Continued on page 11)

During the breeding season the male American Goldfinch is a bright yellow bird. It has a black crown that extends part way across the head, not nearly as far as the lesser. Compared to the green back of the lesser, the back of the American is yellow. As in the lesser, it has black wings with white wing bars. The female is overall blah, like the lesser with a couple of differences. It can have a yellowish throat brighter than the lesser, but that is something I can never pick out well in the field. However, it does have prominent white wing bars, lacking in the female lesser. In winter, the males lose their bright colors and look similar to the females.



There is one more flight clue for these two species in addition to their undulating flight. In flight, Lessers have large white wing windows that the American lacks. I have found this to be an excellent cue to id Lessers at all times.

Note the large white windows on the wings of the Lesser Goldfinch (left) compared to the American (right). I have found this a good field mark for Lessers at all times

The two species also sound distinctly different. The American Goldfinch has a very sweet, fast song. It also has a

distinctive flight call usually rendered as “potato-chip” or “perchickity”. The Lesser Goldfinch is much hoarser with a slower song and a somewhat whiny call. I haven’t heard the American enough to make this work for me.

Lawrence’s Goldfinch



Lawrence’s Goldfinch was first described by John Cassin in 1852 and named after American ornithologist George Newbold Lawrence (1806-1895) who conducted bird surveys to support the publication of *Birds of North America* in 1860. Lawrence’s are a Southwestern species of arid habitats. During the breeding season, it heads north through central and southern California. In our area, Lawrence’s are never abundant and occur sporadically from May through October. Best places to spot them include Ed Levin Park, Del Valle Regional Park, Mines Road, Frank Raines Regional Park, and the ranch house at Joseph Grant Park. Lawrence’s Goldfinch is a striking bird. It is a small finch with a gray nape and back and yellow-gray rump. The breast is yellow. Cap and face are black. Wings are dark with bright yellow bars compared to the white wing bars.

Range map of Lawrence’s Goldfinch. It is in our area during the summer breeding season.

Lawrence’s Goldfinch male on left and female on right. Note black face on male and yellow wing bars on both male and female.



Those are our three goldfinches. Lesser is the one you are more likely to see. Focus on the black cap and green back. In flight, the white windows in the wings are very visible. For the American, it is black on the forehead and a yellow back. For the Lawrence’s, it is being in an arid habitat during summer, black around the face, gray back, and yellow wing bars. Females are tougher. In the Lesser, you have an overall greenish bird and the lack of distinct wing bars; for the American, you may see more yellow around the throat, but also, distinct white wing-bars. Finally for Lawrence’s, look for the distinct yellow wing-bars. For Lesser and American during winter, males resemble the females. I have no tips on identification via songs, that is something we both will need to work on.

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