

The Birds of Canada de los Osos Ecological Reserve

Contributed by Dave Stocks

2022 was another good year for the birds of Canada de los Osos. It was a great year for those lucky enough to spend time with them! The bird project has two major components. The first is a survey of the reserve to determine which bird populations are present. This varies seasonally. Some birds are year round residents, some come for only the summer and others are winter migrants.

The project is led by Rick Herder. As we began our third year, I asked Rick for his thoughts on what he has found most exciting. This is his response:

“Two of the most notable birds on CdIO are the Tricolored Blackbird and the Lawrence's Goldfinch. The Tricolored Blackbird is on the California Endangered Species list. “Trikes” are wanderers. Their nesting sites are unpredictable and can change year to year. However, Tooth Lake is a reliable nesting site, and they've returned here for breeding for years. They only stay for a few months, then they wander again. The Tricolored Blackbirds are sometimes found in mixed winter flocks with Red-winged Blackbirds and Brewer's Blackbirds.



Tricolored Blackbird

(Photo courtesy of Cornell University, Lab of Ornithology)

The Lawrence's Goldfinch is another wanderer. They may favor an area for several years, then disappear. CdIO has been very reliable for this bird for several breeding seasons. Lawrence's Goldfinches can be found on Jamieson Road leading to CdIO and also far in the back country. It's favorite food seems to be Fiddleneck, which is abundant in CdIO.



Lawrence's Goldfinch

(Photo courtesy of Cornell University, Lab of Ornithology)

This year we found both Rufous-crowned and Grasshopper Sparrow pairs during the breeding season. These are uncommon birds that are also shy and hard to see.

Wintering raptors this winter have included Ferruginous Hawk and Merlin, two birds that migrate long distances to winter in this area. Swainson's Hawks passed through in the late summer, on their way to Argentina. Swainson's have been making a comeback, now breeding in Santa Clara Valley after being gone for almost 100 years. They also breed on the east side of Pacheco Pass. So, someday they may return to CdIO for breeding.

We've recorded 102 species of birds since we started our surveys in the fall of 2021. We've reported our findings in eBird and are slowly building up a bar chart showing their abundance in CdIO." See that chart at:<https://ebird.org/barchart?r=L9084185&yr=all&m=>

The second part of the bird project involves monitoring nest boxes. We have four types of nest boxes: Barn Owl, American Kestrel, Wood Ducks and what we call Bluebird boxes but are inhabited by several different species. All the boxes, except the Kestrel, were occupied by breeding pairs and fledged young. Of particular interest were the Bluebird boxes. The collected information from the boxes is shared with both Cornell University and the California Bluebird Recovery Program. This year we fledged fewer birds than in 2021, but a higher percentage of eggs hatched and resulted in fledglings. In 2021 we had 79 Bluebird eggs that resulted in 43 fledglings (54.4%). This year we had only 51 eggs, but they resulted in 32 fledglings (62.7%). In 2021 we had 298 Tree Swallow eggs that resulted in 148 fledglings (49.6%). This year we had 211 eggs that resulted in 138 fledglings (65.4%). There are several theories regarding the differences that include diurnal temperatures and interior nest box temperatures. 2023 is going to give us the opportunity to test some of these theories.

Another very exciting bird related item concerns Condors. They have been sited in the Pacheco Pass area. Hopefully one day they will be common at CdIO!