

Valley Wilds

Volume 25 | Issue 11

A publication of the LARPD Open Space Unit

My Favorite Migrant

Those of you who know me personally may be aware that I am a voracious eater. This predisposes me to be a fan of one of the most beautiful birds to migrate into the park in winter - the Cedar Waxwing. Our local Waxwings actually migrate as far north as Canada in the summer, chasing the ripening fruit and swarms of insects north as the summer days grow

long, but every year they return to Sycamore Grove in late fall and early winter as the Toyon berries ripen. Probably the best place to see them is the Toyon bushes over the Del Valle Regional Trail at Cliffswallow Bridge, but keep any eye out in the nature area and anywhere else with fruit bearing plants.

Many birds have names that make you ask, "Why the heck are they called that?" but not Waxwings! If you can get fairly close to a

mature Cedar Waxwing and look at the ends of the secondary feathers on their wings, you may spot little droplets of a waxy substance on the ends of the feathers. While not actually wax, the plastic like substance is actually a side effect of their fruit-heavy diet. The color in the wingtip wax comes from the carotenoid pigments in the fruit they so love to consume, and can actually vary depending on their diet.

Since Waxwings depend on fruit and swarms of insects that tend to be highly localized and ephemeral, they are most often seen in large flocks. If they find a good source of berries, they are often seen eating so much fruit that they have a hard time flying afterwards. But don't believe the myth - they aren't actually getting drunk. It is just a matter of fruit being mostly water, and dense enough that when they fill their stomachs, throats, and mouths with berries, their mass is so much greater that it impedes flight. It

By Ranger Glen Florey



Photos by Ranger Glen Florey

can be fun to watch Waxwings eating fruit. As some berries are quite glutinous (sticky), sometimes you will see them pass a piece of fruit from bird to bird for a while before one eats it. Waxwings are one of the species of bird that has benefitted most from the banning of DDT as a pesticide. Since they so heavily depend on insects as a food source in the summer, they were often directly affected by the spraying of DDT, because they were hit by the spray and also feasted on insects immobilized by it. Since the 1970s, Waxwing populations have sharply rebounded across the United States.

I have been keeping an eye on the Toyon bushes throughout the park, and so far, they don't seem to be quite be ripe enough for

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Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

4444 East Ave. Livermore, CA 94550
www.larpd.org
Ranger Office: 925.960.2400

Ranger-Led Programs

Programs are generally 1 - 2 hours in length. Unless otherwise noted, programs are free but a \$3 donation per person is requested. A \$7 parking fee is charged at Sycamore Grove Park.

Upcoming Programs



Quick Look:

Turkey Trimmings (RSVP)	Sunday, Nov. 6	10 am
Woodpecker Watch	Sunday, Nov. 6	1 pm
Turkey Time	Sunday, Nov. 13	10 am
Mtn. Bike Skills Clinic (fee/RSVP)	Sunday, Nov. 13	2 - 5 pm
Fall Birds of Springtown	Saturday, Nov. 19	8 am
Autumn Stars	Saturday, Nov. 19	6 pm
Post Holiday Walk	Saturday Nov. 26	10 am

Turkey Trimmings (RSVP)

Sunday, November 6 10 am

Join me today and get your creative (not digestive) juices flowing and make some holiday decorations for your home with turkey inspired crafts. This program is good for all ages. Supplies are limited so sign up early! Reservations required by calling (925) 960-2400. A \$4 materials fee per person is requested.

Ranger Dawn Soles Sycamore Grove Park, Reservable Picnic Area (call for directions)

Woodpecker Watch

Sunday, November 6 1 pm

Pack a comfortable camp chair, binoculars, and maybe some snacks. Your gear will be transported to "Woodpecker Alley," about ¾ mile into the park, and we'll walk to that spot and settle in to watch the acorn woodpeckers go about their business. Canceled if raining heavily.

Ranger Amy Wolitzer Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)

Turkey time!

Sunday, November 13 10 am

Gobble Gobble! Turkeys aren't just on the table, they're also out in our parklands! Join us to learn about wild turkeys and hopefully find some to admire. This will be an easy, slow wander of less than a mile, and will be great fun for both kids and adults. We'll make a Thanksgiving craft too. Canceled if raining heavily.

Ranger Amy Wolitzer Sycamore Grove Park, Arroyo Road Entrance (5049 Arroyo Road)

Special Program: Introductory Mountain Bike Skills Clinic

Sunday, November 13 2 pm – 5 pm

Practice quick stops, tight turns, riding over logs, and more on a fun obstacle course. Then practice your new skills on nearby trails! Open to adults and kids 6+. Children must be accompanied by an adult. \$10 fee per teen/adult participant. One child 13 or under can come free with a paid adult. Register [online](#) or by calling (925) 373-5700.

Naturalist Heather Day Sycamore Grove Park, Arroyo Road Entrance (5049 Arroyo Road)



My Favorite Migrant (Cont'd)

the Waxwings. Keep an eye out, though. By early December, Waxwings will be everywhere, gobbling up so many berries that they can hardly get back into the sky.



Photo by Ken Thomas via Wikipedia

Race to the Flagpole

Saturday, November 12

Sycamore Grove Park will be very busy the morning of November 12. The "Race to the Flagpole" is staging at Independence Park, running through Sycamore Grove and Holdener Parks, and along the trails in these areas. If you plan to come to Sycamore Grove the morning of this event it is recommended that you park at the Arroyo Road entrance. Be aware there may be traffic delays on Wetmore and Arroyo Roads. All involved trails and parks should be clear of this event by 1:00 pm.

For more race information: <http://www.livermoregranadaboosters.org/events.html>

Ranger-Led Programs (Cont'd)

Fall Birds of Springtown

Saturday, November 19

8:00 am

It's time for our annual feathered migrants' check on the north side of town. Fall/winter ducks and waterfowl can be abundant here, helping to make this one of the best birding spots in the area. This is an easy walk along paved, relatively flat trails. The program will last approximately two hours. Please contact Ranger Patti Cole if you need directions or more information (pcole@larpd.org). Canceled if raining.

Ranger Patti Cole

Marlin Pound Park, 2010 Bluebell Dr.

Autumn Stars

Saturday, November 19

6:00 pm

With no moon in the sky, this is the perfect night to look at autumn constellations. We'll use the new 8-inch reflecting telescope donated by the LARPD Foundation to peer deeper into the heavens than we've been able to on previous star walks. We may even get lucky and witness a few late Leonids meteors. The walk will be approximately three miles, mostly on unpaved trails. Canceled if raining.

Ranger Glen Florey Sycamore Grove Park,
Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)

Post-Holiday Walk

Saturday, November 26

10:00 am

How was your Thanksgiving? Hopefully, you enjoyed lots of food, family, and friends. Now it's time to work off all those calories and say goodbye to family and guests - at least until next month. Come out for a walk as we enjoy the cooler weather, and get ready for round two of our holiday celebrations. This will be about a two-mile walk on flat ground. Bring water and a camera, if you like. Canceled if raining.

Ranger Darren Segur Sycamore Grove Park,
Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)

Learn the Birds

By Ranger Patti Cole

Hey, it's winter migrant time!

While many folks start cocooning at this time of year, birders are lovin' the outdoors.

Every fall, there is a change in the bird species that we find in the Livermore Valley, and just about every place else, too. The summer birds – those that use this region for breeding and raising their young – are heading out of the area for the winter. The winter birds, meanwhile, are checking in.

We do have several year-round resident species but it's always fun to welcome the seasonal migrants. Many birders keep records of when they see certain species, like White-crowned and Golden-crowned sparrows, return to their yards year after year.

This is a perfect time to bundle up, take a walk, and learn the names of some of these winter feathered neighbors. Or, sit in the warm, dry comfort of your home, grab a pair of binoculars (you don't need expensive ones), and get a closer look at the birds that visit your yard.

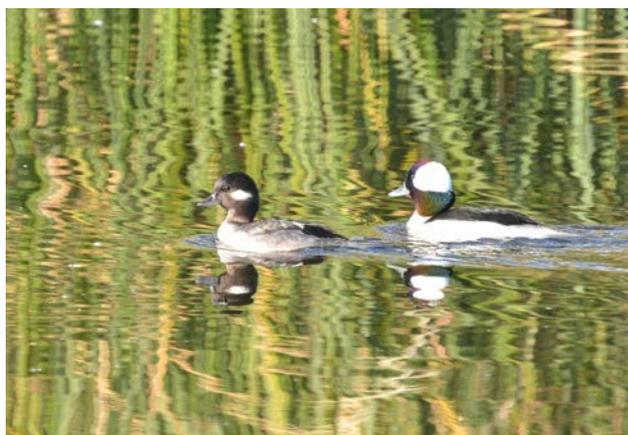
To help you get started, we've included an updated "Birds of Sycamore Grove Park" on the next two pages. This list includes birds seen in the park over the years, however, you may also see many of these birds in your neighborhood or other parks around the Tri-Valley.

So go ahead, embrrrrrace the chilly weather, and enjoy the birds.

We hope you will find the printable bird list on the next two pages useful. And join Ranger Patti for a bird walk in Springtown on November 19 where you will probably see some great winter migrants! (See page 3 for details.)



White-crowned Sparrow
Photo by Ranger Patti Cole



Buffleheads (Female on left, Male on right)
Photo by Ranger Glen Florey



Say's Phoebe
Photo by Ranger Glen Florey

Sycamore Grove Park is open daily from 7:00 a.m. until sunset. There is a parking fee at both entrances.

The park's nearly 850 acres of open space provide opportunities for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, picnicking, nature study and other outdoor activities. There is a group picnic area that can be rented between April and September.

Nature programs, including bird walks, are offered on various weekends throughout the year. Environmental education programs are available to school and community groups on a fee basis.



For information on programs or facilities, please contact the following:
General Park Information/Ranger Office
(925)960-2400
LARPD Main Office/Robert Livermore Community Center
(925)373-5700

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

From cell phone: Call Livermore Police Dept. Emergency Dispatch at (925) 371-4987.

From land line: Call 9-1-1.



Code of Birding Ethics

- Observe birds quietly. Do not throw things at or chase birds. Do not “thrash about” the bush to flush birds.
- Avoid approaching a nest, or parents at a nest, too closely. Do not handle eggs or young.
- Use tape recorders with discretion to prevent driving birds from their territories.
- Bird in small groups. Walk in a single file line or spread out to prevent damage to surrounding habitats.
- Do not “tree-whack” to arouse cavity dwellers.
- Avoid trampling fragile habitats, especially marshes, grasslands, and wildflowers. Stay on established trails.
- Do not trespass onto private property without written permission.
- Please do not litter.

(adapted from the Audubon Society)



Birds
of
Sycamore
Grove Park

Grebes

- Eared Grebe
- Pied-billed Grebe

Cormorants

- Double-crested Cormorant

Herons, Bitterns

- American Bittern
- Great Blue Heron
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night Heron
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret

Geese, Ducks

- Canada Goose
- American Wigeon
- Barrow's Goldeneye
- Bufflehead
- Canvasback
- Cinnamon Teal
- Common Merganser
- Hooded Merganser
- Mallard
- Northern Pintail
- Northern Shoveler
- Ring-neck Duck
- Ruddy Duck
- Wood Duck

Pelican

- American White Pelican

American Vulture

- Turkey Vulture

Kites, Hawks, Harriers, Eagles

- White Tailed Kite
- Cooper's Hawk
- Ferruginous Hawk
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Swainson's Hawk
- Golden Eagle
- Bald Eagle

Falcons

- American Kestrel
- Merlin

- Peregrine Falcon

- Prairie Falcon

Osprey

- Osprey

Quail, Pheasant

- California Quail
- Ring-necked Pheasant
- Wild Turkey

Rails, Moorhens, Coots

- American Coot
- Common Moorhen
- Sora
- Virginia Rail

Plovers, Turnstones

- Killdeer

Sandpipers

- Common Snipe
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Least Sandpiper
- Long-billed Curlew
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Spotted Sandpiper

Gulls, Terns

- California Gull
- Ring-billed Gull
- Forester's Tern
- Caspian Tern

Doves, Pigeons

- Band-tailed Pigeon
- Rock Pigeon
- Mourning Dove
- Eurasian Collared-Dove

Roadrunner

- Greater Roadrunner

Owls

- Burrowing Owl
- Common Barn Owl
- Great Horned Owl
- Northern Pygmy Owl
- Short-eared Owl
- Western Screech Owl

Poorwill

- Common Poorwill

- Lesser Nighthawk

Swifts

- White-throated Swift

Hummingbirds

- Allen's Hummingbird
- Anna's Hummingbird
- Rufous Hummingbird

Kingfisher

- Belted Kingfisher

Woodpeckers

- Acorn Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Lewis' Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Nuttall's Woodpecker
- Red-breasted Sapsucker

Tyrant Flycatcher

- Ash-throated Flycatcher
- Hammond's Flycatcher
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Willow Flycatcher
- Black Phoebe
- Say's Phoebe
- Western Kingbird
- Western Wood-Phoebe

Swallows

- Bank Swallow
- Barn Swallow
- Cliff Swallow
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow
- Tree Swallow
- Violet-green Swallow

Jays, Crows

- American Crow
- Common Raven
- Scrub Jay
- Steller's Jay
- Yellow-billed Magpie
- Chickadee, Titmouse, Bushtit**
- Bushtit
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- Oak Titmouse

Nuthatch

- White-breasted Nuthatch

 Creeper

- Brown Creeper

Wrens

- Bewick's Wren
- House Wren
- Rock Wren
- Winter Wren

Kinglets

- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Golden-crowned Kinglet

Thrushes, Solitaires

- American Robin
- Hermit Thrush
- Swainson's Thrush
- Varied Thrush
- Western Bluebird

Wrentit

- Wrentit

Mockingbird, Thrasher

- California Thrasher
- Northern Mockingbird

Pipit

- Water Pipit

Waxwing

- Cedar Waxwing

Silky-Flycatcher

- Phainopepla

Shrike

- Loggerhead Shrike

Starling

- European Starling

Vireos

- Hutton's Vireo
- Warbling Vireo

Wood Warblers

- Black-throated Grey Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Macgillivray's Warbler
- Northern Parula
- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Townsend's Warbler

- Yellow-breasted Chat

- Yellow Warbler

- Yellow-rumped Warbler

- Wilson's Warbler

Tanager

- Western Tanager

Cardinaline Finches

- Black-headed Grosbeak

Sparrows

- California Towhee
- Chipping Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Fox Sparrow
- Golden-crowned Sparrow
- Lark Sparrow
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- Rufous-crowned Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Spotted Towhee
- White-crowned Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow

Blackbirds, Orioles

- Brewer's Blackbird
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Northern Oriole
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Tricolored Blackbird
- Western Meadowlark

Cardueline Finches

- American Goldfinch
- House Finch
- Lawrence's Goldfinch
- Lesser Goldfinch
- Pine Siskin
- Purple Finch
- Weaver Finch**
- House Sparrow