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Bird Seed – Its in High Demand

By Lisa Myers

Bird feeders are popping up everywhere and all in the family are enjoying the show. With so many more people feeding birds, it has increased the demand for bird seed all across the nation during this pandemic. We have run out of seed on several occasions over the last 6 months and that inspired us to talk to you about seed - where we get it and what impacts inventory. We are sharing this to remind ourselves that what makes us essential here at the store is a product that is grown from the Earth and is delivered to us using people-power in a world living with Covid. We thank everyone for understanding.

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Welcome to All the New Birdwatchers

We want to start 2021 with a warm welcome to all the new birdwatchers we have met over the past several months. Sheltering in place has people noticing the nature happening outside their windows. Everyday we are introducing folks to the bird world and answering questions to all that are eager to learn. That is why we are here! Our mission is to educate, share adventures, and have fun through the love and experience of birds and nature. With that in mind we want to share a special heart felt email from one of our bird loving families.



Dear Lisa - I just wanted to let you and your staff know that every single day I see people walking down the sidewalk in front of our Campbell house and stop to watch the birds on our feeders. I see grandparents stop and point for their kids to look, and I see kids stop and point out to the grown-ups for them to look. I see people who are walking alone -- who certainly might be lonely -- stop for a while and watch.

In these more limited, “stop and smell the flowers” times, keeping seed available is a tiny little improvement to the quality of life for an enormous number of people; way more than just the number of customers you have. It can be natural for most of us to sometimes question what kind of impact our work has on the world, and I keep being reminded that it’s often bigger than is obvious. Thanks to everyone who works at the store for what you do, and best wishes for a safe 2021.

– Steve (Campbell customer)

Winter Coupon

Mention this coupon and take.

15% off one item



Excludes all food items or seed, sale or consignment items, excursions & optics. Not to be combined with any other offers.

Expires Mar. 31, 2021 #WINTER2021

LOS GATOS BIRDWATCHER

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Sunflower - Most of the sunflower is grown in the Dakotas. Sunflower is also grown locally, but much of what is grown here is sold to farmers as seed. Sunflower “chips” are a by product from whole kernels that get broken. At times sunflower “chips” are imported from South America and even Bulgaria. Farmers did not grow enough for the current demand and the Dakotas experienced rough weather that impacted the 2020 sunflower crops.



Peanuts – Peanuts need a warm climate and are grown throughout the world in tropical countries. Here in the US, Georgia grows about 42% of all the peanut crops, followed by Texas, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Virginia, Oklahoma and New Mexico. Drought, hurricanes and flooding impact peanut crops and at times we cannot get peanuts at all.

Millet – In addition to sunflowers, millet is also grown in the Dakotas. For many people, millet is a food source, so at times the farmers hold out to meet the demand for people food. That bad weather that impacted the sunflower farmers also affected the millet crops.

Thistle – Thistle is imported from India & Ethiopia. Much of the thistle grown is used for oil. Its been a good year for the thistle crop. The only thing holding it up at times was exporting issues.

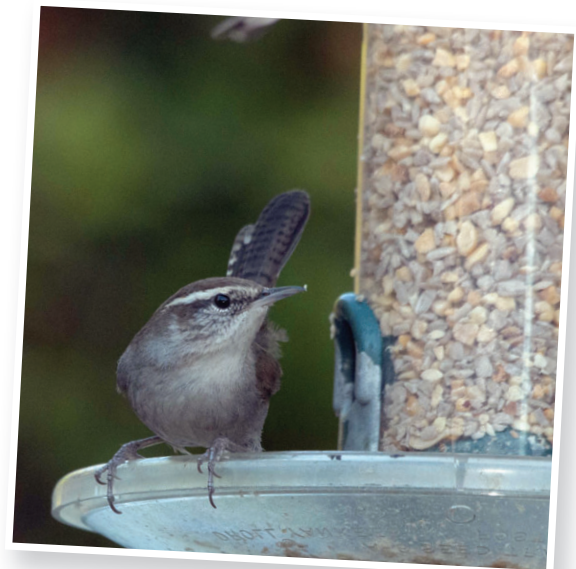
Safflower – Safflower is a plant grown right here in Northern California. Safflower seed is used in both pet and wild bird seed mixes. Safflower oil is used for cooking and to date has been available.

Corn Cobs – Drying corn cobs, cleaning them and removing the ends is labor intensive. When Covid impacts the workforce, corn cobs do not get processed and inventory runs low.

Available Drivers – At times trucking companies had to close because of positive Covid test results. This meant there were not enough trucks or drivers to transport the seed across the country to our suppliers who then package our products and deliver the seed to the store.

Weather – Weather impacts crop yields and the hurricanes of 2020 impacted everything in the south & east. The unexpected early snow over Labor Day weekend stopped the trucks from getting through and railways also stopped. Thus, empty pallets filled the store.

People-power – In some facilities there was a shortage in people power. If someone tested positive for Covid the entire facility would close. This meant there was no way to harvest the crops, pack the product, load the trucks or get it to the retailer. Hiring and training new people created logistical challenges.



Bewick's Wren at Seed Feeder
– Ron Machado

We Congratulate Terra, Class of 2020!

Just this past December, Terra, one of our store team members completed her bachelor's degree in Wildlife Conservation Biology from Humboldt State University. This degree has prepared Terra to research different ecosystems and the animal life that lives there. The goal behind the biology will be to advocate for nature and develop solutions.



Terra has worked for the Los Gatos Birdwatcher for seven years and was hired when she was in high school. Once in college her schedule worked around her classes and summer break. When Covid closed Humboldt State, we were happy to have Terra back. She continued classes on line with her Humboldt professors allowing her to finish her degree remotely.

We are very proud of Terra and interviewed her for the Winter 2021 newsletter. The new graduate has a busy schedule between an internship at the Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center in Morgan Hill (WERC) and working at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher.



LGBW: What drove you to study Wildlife Conservation Biology?

TF: I've always been drawn to wildlife. When I was in elementary school I loved the children's nature classes I attended at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher. In middle school I had a chance to attend them again, but as the assist for Ms. Christine. In early childhood I spent a lot of time outdoors in my mom's garden and I spent summers at Walden West's Nature Camp. And when I was a student at West Valley College, an animal bio class sparked further interest.

LGBW: What does the future hold for you now that you have gained your wildlife biology degree?

TF: Right now I plan to continue to work at the store while I gain valuable experience with WERC. My longer-term goal is to look for rehabilitation or zookeeper work. Working with wildlife and providing education to the community is most important to me. That is one of the assets of working at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher. Education is a big part of what we do everyday at the store. Customers come in with questions about birds and wildlife and we can help them.

LGBW: What do you find most appealing about the work of the wildlife biologist?

TF: While I admire the research biologists who spend years in the field studying habitats and nature, my personal goals are more toward education. My interests are directed at working directly with wildlife and the community.



*Continued
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Terra in middle school holding an opossum as she assisted Ms. Christine at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher Nature class.



Let's Go Birding is the tour division of the Los Gatos Birdwatcher.

Let's Go Birding tours get you out of your yard and into different habitats where you can experience a variety of species not found at home.

Because of Covid-19 restrictions and our concern for the wellbeing of our customers, we have temporarily cancelled all bird walks, workshops & classes. We are discontinuing presentations at The Terraces until future notice. We will continue to monitor what is happening in our county and the state. The losgatosbirdwatcher.com website will be the best place to look for updates. We encourage you to continue to enjoy the birds you find in your gardens or get out and enjoy the open spaces found all around the Bay Area. Here are some great resources for birding around the bay, or learning from home.



Santa Clara County Parks

– www.sccgov.org

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space

– www.openspace.org

Peninsula Open Space Trust

– openspacetrust.org

Santa Clara Valley Audubon

– scvas.org/self-guided-field-trips

San Francisco Bay Trail

– baytrail.org

SFBBO Birdy Hours

– www.sfbbo.org/birdy.html

Sequoia Audubon of San Mateo County

– www.sequoia-audubon.org

Photo above: R. Fitzsimons - Monte Bello Reserve

Wisdom By Alvaro Jaramillo

Forward by Lisa Myers – When I recently read about “Wisdom” the Laysan Albatross I asked local birder and friend Alvaro Jaramillo if he would like to share with our birdwatching community what he knows about this magnificent seabird. Alvaro lives in Half Moon Bay and is a biologist, researcher, conservationist and guide. I have known him for many years and it is always fun to trade stories about birds, tours, & people. I had the opportunity to observe a Laysan Albatross while birding 25 miles off the Pacific Coast with Alvaro’s Adventures.

Some of you may have heard about the oldest bird in the world, her name is Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross nesting on Midway Atoll in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. She is estimated to be at least 69 years old! You would think that the story ends there, the punchline being her age, but there is more. First of all, I think that most of us humans, and most mammals would be jealous that Wisdom at 69 looks no older than her 20-year-old neighbors in the colony. Birds are uncanny in that they do not age quite the same way we do, they keep a youthful look forever. Seabirds spend almost their entire lives out at sea and they have very low rates of mortality, and as a whole live long lives. One of the main problems albatrosses have faced were fishing “long lines” that were set in a way that albatrosses often would try to eat the bait and drown in the process. In the last few years a collaboration between conservationists and scientists have been able to determine new fishing methodologies that greatly decrease deaths due to longlines. A welcome change!



Laysan Albatross
Length: 31.1-31.9 inches
Weight: 77.6 – 151.7 oz
Wingspan: 76.8-79.9

Back to Wisdom, she has a link to a singular man that had a huge positive effect on birds, birdwatching and conservation, Chandler Robbins. In addition to being one of the main authors to the “Golden Guide” to birds. Chandler Robbins was also the creator of one of the most important programs for tracking bird populations in the continent, the Breeding Bird Survey. Before we had even invented the term “citizen science” Chandler had created the very thing, using volunteer birders to track breeding bird populations through the decades, and he was also key in the US Bird Banding Program.



Chandler Robbins in the late 1950's banding Laysan Albatross

In 2002 Robbins was on the island of Midway replacing leg bands worn by the Laysan Albatross. These metal bands wear after years of immersion in salt water. Checking the band number, they realized that one albatross had originally been banded by Chandler Robbins himself in 1956, as an adult, meaning it hatched in 1951 or earlier! This made it the oldest bird in the world, and this was “Wisdom.” With new metal and plastic bands, Wisdom could now be tracked without having to disturb her and she returned this year to breed at Midway! Sadly, Chandler Robbins passed away in 2017 at the age of 98. He leaves a legacy of conservation, and field work, and his inclusion of the amateur bird watcher into science, has been huge.

There are roughly 2.5 million Laysan Albatross in the world, most nest in Hawaii and move across the northern Pacific Ocean toward Japan and Alaska to feed. The conservation of the Hawaiian population has been so successful that they are now colonizing out of Baja California, Mexico. The birds we are seeing in California come from this brand new and growing population. What is fantastic is that many have colored plastic leg bands we can read from a moving boat! Each year we seem to see more Laysan Albatrosses in California thanks to this new colony!

If you are keen on trying to see a Laysan or its more common relative, the Black-footed Albatross you can join us on, Alvaro's Adventures, on a pelagic birding trip from Monterey or Half Moon Bay.



Both Laysan Albatross photos taken by Alvaro Jaramillo off the California Coast.

You'll find the 2021 tours dates updated at www.alvarosadventures.com



Banding a Female Duck

Photo provided by the National American Banding Council. For more than 35 years, the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) has been using citizen science to band birds locally at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) in Milpitas. Bird banding provides valuable information that helps us study bird dispersal, migration, behavior, social structure, life span, survival rate, reproductive success, and population growth. To learn more about their program visit SFBBO.org

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LGBW: Describe your favorite species, ecosystem, or organism?

TF: It may be obvious, but birds are my favorite. I think owls are insanely amazing and I love learning about all their characteristics and behaviors. Characteristics like their asymmetrical ears which gives them exceptional hearing. They are also silent when in flight which allows them to sneak up on their prey. They have a unique behavior to regurgitate undigestible food matter in the form of a pellet, pictured here. I have been fascinated by pellets since I first dissected one at a Los Gatos Birdwatcher nature class.

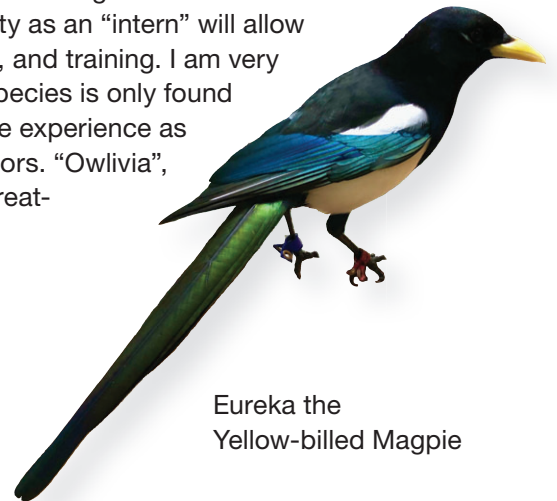
LGBW: Has the Los Gatos Birdwatcher influenced your interest in biology?

TF: Absolutely. The store has been a part of my life for many, many years. How many places can one work where we talk about nature everyday?

LGBW: You have been a volunteer at WERC for three years and you are now starting an internship. What is your most memorable experience there, and how will that change as an intern?

TF: As a “volunteer” my main task was to clean enclosures, prepare food/feed, help with examinations, and handle our ambassador animals. These are animals

that came to WERC and because of their injuries could not be re-released. We give them a safe home for life and they help us educate the community. My new responsibility as an “intern” will allow me to be more involved in our ambassador animal care, medical care, and training. I am very excited to get to work with our Yellow-billed Magpie, “Eureka”. This species is only found in California and are related to crows and ravens. My most memorable experience as a volunteer would probably be when I started handling the ambassadors. “Owlivia”, the cute, little Western Screech Owl, and “Luna”, the huge, intense Great-horned Owl - she is just breathtaking.



Eureka the Yellow-billed Magpie

LGBW: Are there any females who inspired you to pursue this field of study?

TF: While at Humboldt I worked with Ruth a zoo-keeper who also did rehab work. And Ashley, the director of WERC. Both of these women are very hard workers and passionate about what they do. And I cannot forget Freddy Howell and Lisa Myers. In all four cases I have been inspired by their drive.



Terra with Luna the Great Horned Owl

From the positive local community impact Terra has had here at The Los Gatos Birdwatcher to her long-term dedication at WERC, we are thankful for Terra’s passion toward the safety and preservation of wildlife as well as her desire to educate the community. Her efforts will certainly benefit society as a whole.

The Los Gatos Birdwatcher hopes to challenge Terra as we ask her to implement her new biology degree with our bird loving community.



Valentine's Day is February 14

If you need ideas for what to get your special Valentines we'd be happy to help. We have all kinds of great gifts for the garden in addition to jewelry, scarves and much more. Giving her a bag of bird seed might just be the perfect way to say I love you!

WORD SEARCH – Bird Habitats

created by Lisa Myers

S U N R D E S E R T C W D
 A A I E M A R S H A H N H
 V E A T S C O W N M A A H
 A T T A N O O U L L P R M
 N A N W I A G A S N A D E
 N L U H A A I S S H R N A
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| BAY | MEADOW |
| BOG | MOUNTAIN |
| CHAPARRAL | OCEAN |
| COASTAL | PLAINS |
| DESERT | PLATEAU |
| ESTUARY | RIPARIAN |
| FOREST | SAVANNA |
| FRESHWATER | SCRUBLAND |
| GRASSLAND | SHORELINE |
| LAGUNA | TUNDRA |
| LAKE | WOODLAND |
| MARSH | |

Services Available from the Los Gatos Birdwatcher

- **Feeder Cleaning** – We want to help you maintain a healthy environment for your backyard birds. That is why we offer this service to clean feeders on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Bring your feeder into the store in the morning and we'll have it ready before closing. While we clean feeders for free we do ask that you consider making a minimum donation of \$5 per feeder to one of the Bay Area charities we support. You'll find collection boxes at the store.
- **Frequent Buyer Program** – Buy 9 of the same seed bags of 20# or higher at full price and get the 10th bag free. Coupons do not apply.
- **Help you to ID your birds** – We can help you ID that mystery bird in your yard. Just take a photo using your cell phone and email it to info@losgatosbirdwatcher.com, or drop by the store and show your photo to our staff.



We invite you to share your photos to our Facebook page and we will provide feedback.

Each Season Brings New Yard Birds – Here are just a few:

HERE ALL YEAR

- Anna’s Hummingbird
- Both Towhees
- Mourning Dove
- Western Bluebird
- House Finch
- Oak Titmouse
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- Jays

HERE FOR THE WINTER

- White-crowned Sparrow
- Golden-crowned Sparrow
- Red-breasted Sapsucker
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Townsend’s Warbler

WILL ARRIVE THIS SPRING

- Hooded & Bullock’s Orioles
- Allen’s Hummingbird
- Black-headed Grosbeak
- Western Tanager
- Pacific-slope Flycatcher

We remain open because we are essential. We thank everyone for allowing us the opportunity to serve you. We continue to wear masks, wash hands and surfaces, help customers keep good social distancing, and keep the air moving in our store.



Townsend’s Warbler male – Patricia Lillich



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

Find us on Facebook and Instagram



Dates to Remember

- **January 18**
– Martin Luther King Day
- **February 2**
– Groundhog Day
- **February 14**
– Valentine’s Day
- **February 15**
– President’s Day
- **March 14**
– Daylight Savings time begins
- **March 17**
– St. Patrick’s Day
- **March 20**
– 1st Day of Spring



Loyal Customer Discount

Mention this coupon and take...

15% off one item

Coupon Expires March 31, 2021

One Coupon per customer please. Excludes consignment items, sales items, excursions and optics. Not to be combined with any other offers.

#WINTER2021

Store Hours

Please visit: www.losgatosbirdwatcher.com

Kings Court Center