

Campbell Express

2001 Business of the Year

Cambrian News 46 Years Serving the Community

VOL. 53 NO. 19

Keeping you in touch with your community

May 12, 2004 25 cents



Members of Lisa Myers' bird-watching group gather on a Saturday morning to spend the day at Alum Rock Park (California's oldest and first municipal park) identifying local birds. Back row, left to right are Nick Pappani, Sue & Stan Schneider, Pat Bitton, Harold Fukuma and Tom Edsall. Front are Gary and Nancy Pappani, Kathy Marzolf and instructor Lisa Myers. At day's end the group had viewed some 51 species of birds.

Birding is hobby for those who love outdoors

What is a "birder"? Once called bird-watchers, a birder might be described as a person who is so interested in the life and times of our feathered friends that he/she is willing to spend long hours sitting motionless in distant fields, training binoculars on areas where birds are known to inhabit.

Some birders can be found sitting on a rock overlooking a green lush valley, listening to the mating calls of a variety of birds in spring.

Others are walking quietly through a stand of trees, peering upwards in hopes of spotting an unusual nest.

Birders, according to Lisa Myers are all of those things and more.

Lisa, who has had a lifelong "love affair" with birds, recently turned her hobby into a small Campbell business, "Let's Go Birding". Lisa focuses on the beginning adult birder. In addition to teaching, Lisa gives bird watching tours to interested students, and inventories birds on private estates.

Working with her father, Lisa once ran and operated Campbell based Sanford & Myers Photo Graphic. She remembers vividly as a young girl when she was given her first field guide, "My Godparents knew I was curious as to what were the names of all the birds, so they gave me a guide so I could figure it out." As an adult, she started taking classes in nearby Palo Alto and participating in bird-watching adventures.

According to Lisa there are about 10,000 species of birds in the world. One thousand of those are in North America and on average about 230 species can be found in Santa Clara County. Each year, Lisa is one of many volunteers who, through the auspices of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society participates in "the Christmas Bird Count". During this count, birders go to a specific area assigned to their team and count how many of each species they find. This annual event provides tremendous data.

Weekends Lisa often takes a party of bird watchers on field trips, loaded up with various types of clothing, binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, and backpacks. In between she offers classroom instruction on all aspects of birding—from taxonomy, to migration, and field guides to optics.

Lisa shared that locally there is bird research going on around us all the time. Although not a "bander" herself Lisa explained how volunteers use fine, invisible nets, in order to safely catch, band and release birds. This banding project goes on all year and provides information on migration patterns and population trends.

Birders, she says, often get involved because they have accepted the hobby as a personal challenge to find and identify as many birds as they can. Birders often establish a "life list" of birds they have observed in their life.

In order to add birds to their "life list" birders often travel abroad in order to have opportunities to visit new bird habitats. Birders are usually outdoor people. It's not unusual for hikers to become birders, mainly because they are curious about the many birds they have encountered on the hiking trails.

Birders learn how to identify birds, where to find them, and what sounds to expect from them.

Most visitor centers at state and national parks have displays that include regional birds in their museum areas.

Lisa Myers has been teaching birding class in Campbell's recreation department for several years. She also teaches for Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (and has another class starting in June). She also will be teaching for the city of Palo Alto next fall. Private instruction for those who want to learn about bird watching is also available.

For more information about birds and bird watching, log onto Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society at SCVAS.org or e-mail lisa@letsgobirding.com.