

# **Atlasing at Cotoni-Coast Dairies 2022**

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## ***Submitted to***

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## ***Submitted by***

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## **The Breeding Bird Atlas**

A breeding bird atlas is a comprehensive resource describing what is known about the breeding birds in a region, usually a state or county. Atlases describe the distribution and abundance of breeding birds, when they are nesting, and their local life history in the region of interest. Most atlases are conducted by volunteers and the results of the project are published in a book. The maps and species accounts in an atlas publication are geared toward a variety of users that include birders, land managers, planners, and students—all of which rely on sound information for conservation and management of locally breeding birds.

Field work for a breeding bird atlas was conducted in Santa Cruz County from 1987-1993, and in 2017, the Santa Cruz Bird Club, a 501(c)(7) non-profit, sponsored the field work and publication of an updated atlas for the county. The atlas publication will compare present breeding populations to those documented 30 years ago and will venture predictions on what changes lay ahead. The results of the atlas will be most useful for identifying countywide range extensions and contractions as well as population changes for some species. Field work for the atlas is being conducted across the county by over 100 volunteer birders. This year, 2022, will be the final year of fieldwork, with the results of the project being published in book by 2024.

## **Atlasing Methods**

Volunteer atlasers are trained to interpret breeding behavior and record their observations following standardized guidelines. Prior to participating in the project, atlasers are required to attend at least one training before collecting data.

The atlas project area is a grid of 72 block, each 9 mi<sup>2</sup>, overlaying Santa Cruz County. Atlasers are assigned a block with the goal of confirming breeding for at least 60% of the expected species in that block, which are determined from previous records and the habitats present in the block. Secondary goals are to visit all habitats in the block and go atlasing in as many places within the block as accessible to ensure complete coverage of each block. Atlasers are assigned a block and during their visits in the breeding season, they attempt to find and confirm breeding for all species in the block. Atlasing is much like birding but with a focus on interpreting breeding behavior. [Standardized breeding codes](#) that represent different breeding behavior are used to qualify observations.

Observations are recorded on a provided datasheet that is submitted at the end of the breeding season. For each observation, atlasers record the date, species, a breeding code, and exact location to the nearest 10 meters. Additional notes such as the number of eggs or nestlings in a nest, the height and substrate a nest is placed on, and the approximate age of fledglings are also often recorded. Only presence-absence data is recorded on the datasheet; estimates of abundance are not made.

## **Atlasing at Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument**

Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument (CCD) is a large property that spans three important blocks—6595, 7095, and 7090—in the atlas project area (Figure 1). Access to these three blocks is generally limited to the immediate coast and the town of Davenport. Consequently, there has been no atlasing in the inland areas of these three blocks, which are largely part of CCD. These inland areas have many species that can only be found and confirmed breeding at CCD, making access to CCD this year important for completing fieldwork in these areas.

I am requesting access to the following areas at CCD to search for specific species that cannot be found elsewhere in blocks 6595, 7095, and 7090. See Figure 1 for locations of these four places within CCD.

1. Molino Creek

**Access:** the creek upstream of its crossing with Swanton Road.

**Species:** MacGillivray's Warbler and House Wren likely breed here; both species are very locally distributed in the county. California Thrasher and Wrentit likely breed in the soft scrub near the creek and access here would give atlasers the best chance at confirming these two species in block 6595.

2. Warrenella Road

**Access:** Warrenella Road from Cement Plant Road to 1.5 mi up the road.

**Species:** Grasshopper Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow likely breed in the grasslands along the road; these two species are declining regionally, and the only chance to confirm them breeding in block 7095 would be along this road and in the adjacent grassland. The grassland and forest edge near Warrenella Road also provides the best chance of confirming breeding for White-tailed Kite, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Lazuli Bunting; these three species have restricted ranges in the county and are unlikely to be confirmed breeding elsewhere in block 7095.

3. San Vicente Creek

**Access:** San Vicente Street from end of public road to 1.5 mi up the road

**Species:** Riparian species including Belted Kingfisher, Swainson's Thrush, and Green Heron are likely breeding along this stretch of the creek. This stretch of the creek provides the best opportunity to confirm these species breeding in 7095.

4. Yellow Bank Creek and Grassland

**Access:** Riparian along lower Yellow Bank Creek

**Species:** Numerous riparian species including Allen's Hummingbird, Downy Woodpecker, American Robin, and Wilson's Warbler are likely breeding in the riparian along Yellow Bank Creek. This area is the only place where these species are probably breeding in block 7090. The grassland above the creek corridor likely has Grasshopper Sparrow, which also cannot be confirmed breeding anywhere else in block 7090.

## **Access Request for Cotoni-Coast Dairies**

I am requesting access to the four locations above for the following atlasers between 1 May 2022 and 31 August 2022:

Alex Rinkert (project director)  
Kitty Stein  
Sharon Hull  
Lois Goldfrank

Atlasers permitted to access CCD will comply with all terms and conditions established by BLM. All data collected while atlasing at CCD will be shared with BLM at the end of the breeding season. The Santa Cruz Bird Club and breeding bird atlas project are in good standing with public and private landowners that have given permission for atlasing on their property. We currently have agreements for atlasers to access thousands of acres of privately owned timber harvest and cattle ranching land throughout Santa Cruz County.

**Figure 1.** Three atlas blocks overlapping with Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument and places where access is requested (#1-4).

