

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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UC **SANTA BARBARA** North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

July 2022



Western snowy plover chick in the southeastern saltmarsh. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

UPDATES

Kids in Nature at NCOS



KIN students water in saltgrass at the outdoor classroom.

Educational field trips to NCOS most often involve some hands-on restoration work and in recent months hundreds of young students have contributed to the planting of the Duttenhaver Outdoor Classroom. With assistance from Cheadle Center staff and UCSB interns, students of all ages are helping plant the bioswale, salt grass lawn, and surrounding areas to be used for nature and science-based activities for years to come. Over 15 classrooms from 9 schools have participated so far in the plant installations, some even from Oxnard and as far away as the Bay Area. Along with planting, they are also engaged with activities learning about birds, food webs, wetland ecosystem services, and more.

Schools that have participated include Isla Vista Elementary School, Adelante Charter School, La Patera Elementary School, Crane Country Day School, Hollister Elementary School, Harding University Partnership School, Synapse School – Menlo Park, Cesar Chavez k-8 - Oxnard, and Orfaea Family Children’s Center.



UCSB students work on digging holes for saltgrass plantings.



KIN students plant native sedges and rushes in the outdoor classroom bioswale.

New Visitor Plaza signs installed



Two new signs have been installed at the NCOS Visitor Plaza detailing the rich history of Chumash ethnobotany practices in the area. Additionally, a new sign has been placed at the beginning of the Marsh Trail reminding all users to leash their dogs to keep sensitive wildlife safe.



FEATURE STORY

Breeding Birds at NCOS



Killdeer chicks forage in a wetland on the NCOS mesa.

One of the main goals of the North Campus Open Space project is to provide habitat for a wide variety of bird species. During the spring and summer months, the value of the habitat on NCOS can be assessed by observing birds that are using the restoration site as their breeding grounds. While Cheadle Center staff conduct a monthly bird survey on NCOS during which breeding behavior is tracked, other site responsibilities take time away from being able to observe all of the evidence of breeding that is taking place on site. This is where our engaged community members and local birders prove to be so valuable, as their many observations are shared with The Cheadle Center and often uploaded to the Santa Barbara Breeding Bird Survey. Which species do you think nest at NCOS?

[This feature story is continued on page 15.](#)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



"Second Saturdays" at NCOS

This month: July 9, 9-12

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more! Meet at 6969 Whittier Drive at 9am. Bring water, sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes and shoes that are suitable for outdoor work.

Thursdays - CCBER Greenhouse Associates



Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the CCBER team from 9:00 - 12:00. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



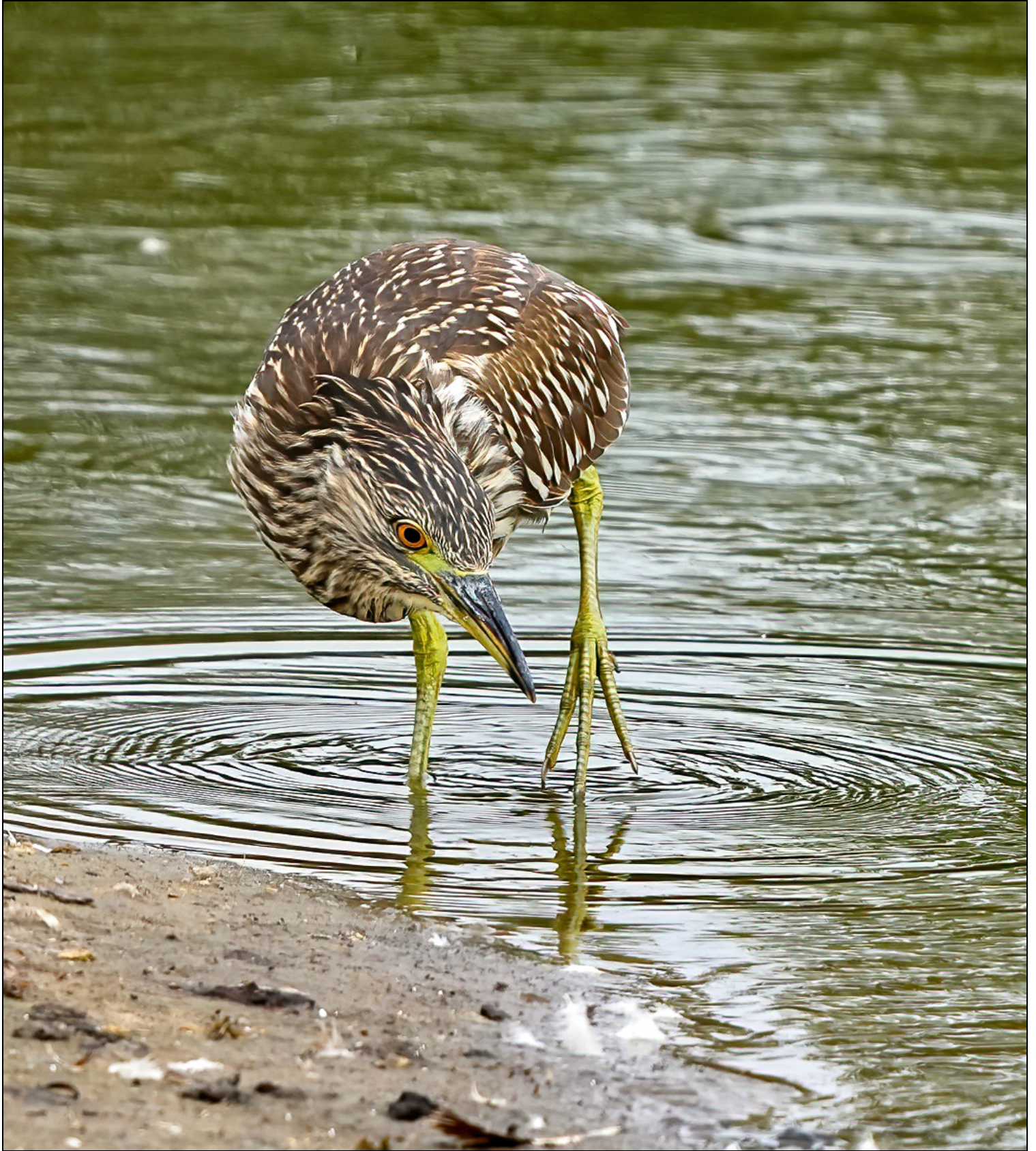
Nature Guide Tour

This month: June 16, 9:30 -11

Come take a walk around NCOS and learn about native plants and animals with a trained Nature Guide.

COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS

We are interested in any observations of wildlife activity on NCOS, as well as plants and landscapes. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu. Thank you!



Juvenile black-crowned night heron at Whittier pond. These birds normally feed between evening and sunrise, avoiding competition with other herons that utilize the same habitat during the day. Photo by Pamela Viale.



© Susan T Cook

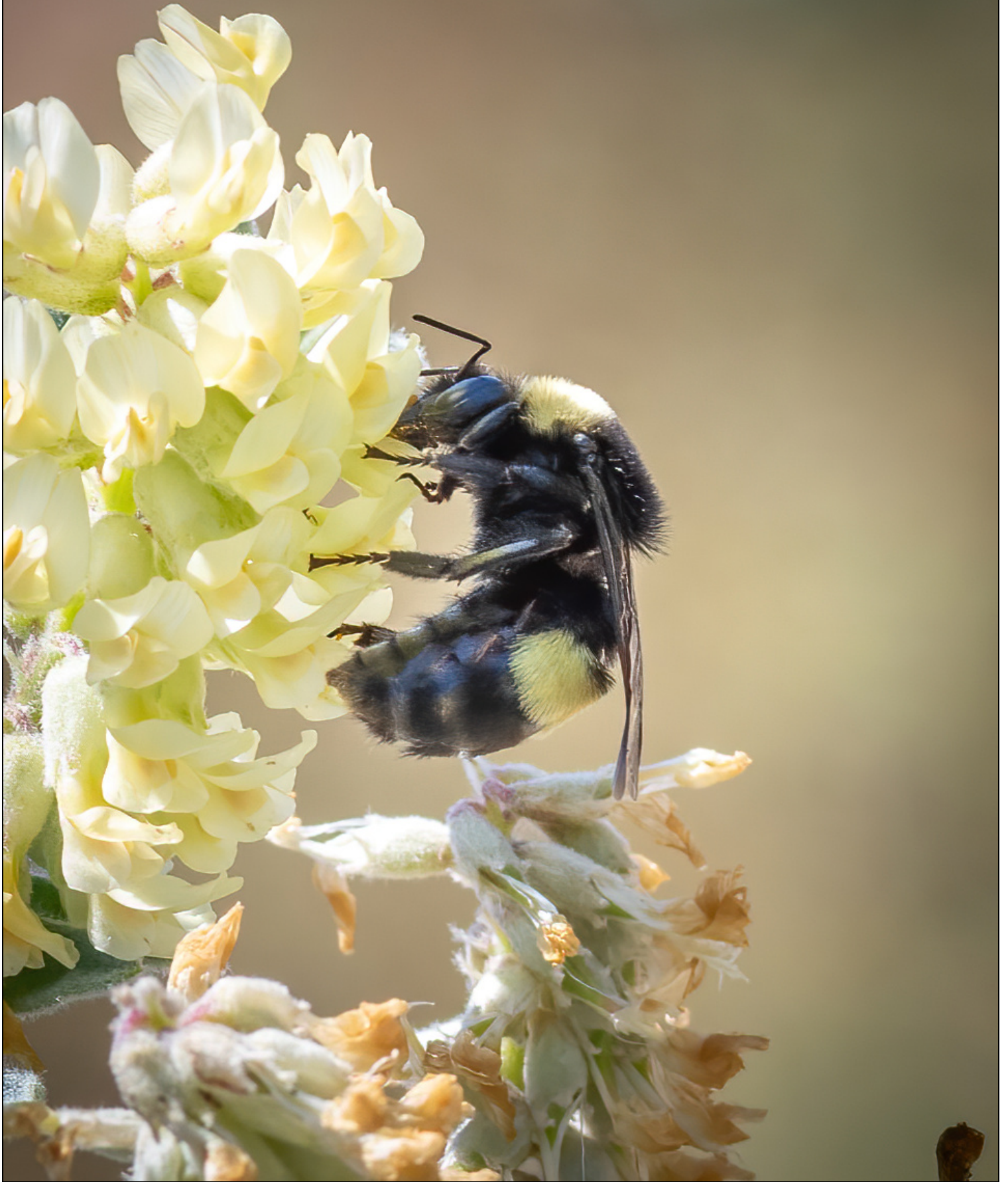
Barn swallows feed almost exclusively in flight and fly lower than many other swallow species, sometimes nearly hugging the ground. Photo by Susan Cook.



Greater yellowlegs walk with a distinctive high-stepping gait while foraging. Photo by Susan Cook.



California bumblebee (*Bombus californicus*) on Ventura marsh milk vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*). Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Crotch's bumblebee (*Bombus crotchii*) on Ventura marsh milk vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*).

Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

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For more information on the
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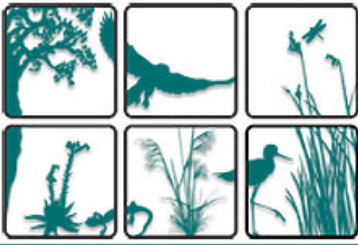
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BREEDING BIRDS AT NCOS



Killdeer chicks forage in a wetland on the NCOS mesa. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

One of the main goals of the North Campus Open Space project is to provide habitat for a wide variety of bird species. During the spring and summer months, the value of the habitat on NCOS can be assessed by observing birds that are using the restoration site as their breeding grounds. While Cheadle Center staff conduct a monthly bird survey on NCOS during which breeding behavior is tracked, other site responsibilities take time away from being able to observe all of the evidence of breeding that is taking place on site. This is where our engaged community members and local birders prove to be so valuable, as their many observations are shared with The Cheadle Center and often uploaded to the [Santa Barbara Breeding Bird Survey](#). The uploaded observations from the 2022 breeding season are shown in the table below.

Common Name	Observation Date	Breeding Evidence
Say's Phoebe	3 Mar 2022	Nest Building
American Crow	3 Mar 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
Allen's Hummingbird	10 Jan 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
Red-shouldered Hawk	2 Mar 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
House Finch	2 Mar 2022	Nest Building
Common Yellowthroat	16 Mar 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
Killdeer	16 Mar 2022	Nest Building
Lesser Goldfinch	16 Mar 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
Canada Goose	13 Apr 2022	Fledgling under Parental Care
Say's Phoebe	13 Apr 2022	Nest Building
Lark Sparrow	16 Apr 2022	Copulation
Lark Sparrow	15 May 2022	Egg in Nest
Black Phoebe	16 May 2022	Fledgling with Presumed Parent
Western Kingbird	15 May 2022	Not Catergorized
Anna's Hummingbird	13 May 2022	Adult at Nest
Black-necked Stilt	28 May 2022	Fledgling out of Nest--Brancher
Western Bluebird	2 Jun 2022	Cavity Nester Attending Cavity
Lesser Goldfinch	2 Jun 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
Black Phoebe	2 Jun 2022	Carrying Nesting Material
Allen's Hummingbird	19 Apr 2022	Adult at Nest
Dark-eyed Junco	19 Apr 2022	Carrying Food
Cliff Swallow	12 Jun 2022	Visiting Probable Nest Site
Cassin's Kingbird	2 Jun 2022	Feeding Fledgling
Red-shouldered Hawk	13 Apr 2022	Adult at Nest
Western Bluebird	24 Jun 2022	Fledgling under Parental Care
Killdeer	24 Jun 2022	Fledgling under Parental Care
Lark Sparrow	24 Jun 2022	Copulation

This figure demonstrates the value of citizen science, as the majority of the observations uploaded to the breeding bird survey for North Campus Open Space came from community members and birders paying close attention to the wildlife on site.

If you've walked past the North Campus Open Space Visitor Plaza in recent weeks you may have heard the high-pitched calls of two Red-Shouldered Hawk fledglings that have been spending a lot of time in the trees nearby. Although the adult Red-Shouldered Hawks nested off site in a tree across Whittier Drive, these fledglings have frequented North Campus Open Space to hunt and were even observed bathing in the wetland pool adjacent to the new parking lot. As they fly across the site looking for prey, ground squirrels can be heard alerting other nearby squirrels of a potentially dangerous predator nearby.



Red-Shouldered Hawk sitting on a Eucalyptus branch near the Visitor Plaza. Photo by Susan Cook.

One of the more dramatic tales from the 2022 breeding season was observed by vigilant local birder and photographer Susan Cook, who discovered a Western Kingbird nest in the grove of trees along the western periphery of NCOS. She tracked the progress of this nest over her next few visits to NCOS and found it disheveled and empty during her third trip. Thankfully, the breeding Western Kingbird pair were still nearby and were bringing food to a pile of branches below the nest where the chick was sheltering. This chick likely was at an age where it should have still been in the nest, but by the efforts of the Kingbird parents it was able to survive as its calls could be heard coming from nearby shrubs.



© Susan T Cook

Western Kingbird chick. Photo by Susan Cook.



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Western Kingbird chick with parent. Photo by Susan Cook.

Another exciting observation from this year's breeding season is that of Western Snowy Plover chicks utilizing the salt marsh habitat on site to feed and camouflage from predators. This threatened species has been breeding in the dunes of neighboring Coal Oil Point Reserve for decades, but it was hoped that NCOS would expand their suitable habitat for breeding and provide a boost to their population. Unfortunately due to predation, mainly by crows, NCOS is yet to support Western Snowy Plover chicks long enough for them to fledge, but we hope that this may be the year! So far we have observed two Western Snowy Plover chicks foraging in the same small section of the salt marsh for the last week, and this week a new nest was spotted nearby.



This chick's speckled camouflage helps it blend in with the salty margins of the slough, allowing it to survive this flightless early stage of life.



Two Western Snowy Plover chicks foraging on the slough edge as one of their parents stands nearby. These chicks will have to survive on site for about one month before they will develop the ability to fly.



Adult Western Snowy Plover tending her nest adjacent to the Devereux Slough. These nests are typically shallow scrapes in bare ground that can be lined with organic debris found nearby.

A big thank you to all of our community members and local birders that have uploaded their observations to the breeding bird survey this year! Without you many of the exciting observations of this year's bird breeding season would have been missed. The Cheadle Center greatly appreciates all of you citizen scientists and encourages everyone who utilizes our trails to share their wildlife observations to outlets such as the breeding bird survey or by emailing us at ncos@cber.ucsb.edu. Happy birding!





Lark sparrow nest with eggs. Photo by Susan Cook.

This article was written by CCBER Restoration Assistant Oliver Fahrner and edited and formatted for the web by Jeremiah Bender. Photographs are by Susan Cook, Daniel Forseth, and Jeremiah Bender.

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