

Breeding Bird Atlas Is Here!

By Jude Power

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Were you an “Atlaser”? Did you roam the Humboldt outback with checklist, map, and binoculars during the summers of 1995 through 1999 to locate and record nesting birds? Or did you contribute something to an atlas fundraiser, allow access onto your private property, or sponsor one of the 68 bird illustrations contained in the book? If so, your 15 minutes of fame is imminent. Come to Godwit Days and see what your contribution has created: the beautiful and insightful *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Humboldt County, California*, published by RRAS.

Authored by John E. Hunter, David Fix, Gregory A. Schmidt, and Jude Claire Power, this 450-page book represents eleven years of planning, field surveys, data analysis, map preparation, discussion, thought, research, and writing. In the end, atlasers found 181 species of birds that certainly or probably nest in our county. This project was truly a community effort, involving private landowners, federal and state land management agencies, professional biologists, and amateur birders. Everyone who played a part is acknowledged.

Both soft-cover (\$30) and hardback (\$50) versions will be available. Fifty copies of a Collector’s Limited Edition, containing a plate of one species hand-colored and signed by the cover artist, Gary Bloomfield, and signed by the four authors, will be available for \$80.

What is a breeding bird atlas?

It is a published compendium of maps that displays the distribution of all bird species found breeding within a given area -- in this case, Humboldt County. In addition to maps, our atlas includes species accounts that describe each bird's habitat preferences and natural history.

How was breeding bird information collected?

Humboldt County was divided into a grid of 5 km x 5 km blocks. Volunteer atlasers surveyed one or more blocks in which they determined which bird species are breeding. Breeding behaviors we looked for included carrying nest materials, feeding young, nest-building, and courtship behavior. These behaviors were used to determine breeding status codes:

CO - Confirmed

PR - Probable

PO - Possible

Why create a Humboldt County Breeding Bird Atlas?

The breeding distribution of birds in Humboldt County was not fully understood and was based primarily on anecdotal evidence collected over a long period of time. The atlas was the first attempt to systematically survey the entire county in a relatively short period of time (5 years) to

provide a baseline of breeding bird data. These data are available to public and private agencies and individuals for land management planning as well as for general interest and recreational use. As of 2005, Breeding Bird Atlases had been completed or were in progress in 13 other California counties. Our atlas is the first to be completed in northwestern California, thus filling a crucial gap in the understanding of breeding bird distribution across the entire state.

Who sponsored the project?

The Humboldt County Breeding Bird Atlas was primarily sponsored by Redwood Region Audubon Society, with cosponsorship by Six Rivers National Forest.