



Morro Coast Audubon Society

Serving San Luis Obispo County Since 1966

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA GUIDE



Cerro Alto from the Mouth of Chorro Creek, Morro Bay Estuary.
Photo by Alan Schmierer

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B-1 NORTHPOINT NATURAL AREA

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the junction of Rte 1 and Rte 41 (in Morro Bay), drive north on Rte 1 for 1.8 miles. At the Yerba Buena Street traffic light turn left (west) and then take an immediate right (north) onto Toro Lane. Drive to the end and park. Bird north along the bluff for about 100 yards to where you can see all of the rocky area below and can view north along the coast. *Initial approach is a about 20 feet of sloping packed gravel, then about 100 ft of packed gravel path that appears accessible to all. The trail then gets narrow and turns to dirt for another few hundred feet to the point. The latter is flat, but could be muddy after rain.*

BIRDING: There is usually a raft of SURF SCOTERS here: a few in the summer, many more in the winter. From November to early April this may be the best place in the county to look for WHITE-WINGED and BLACK SCOTERS with the more common SURF SCOTERS. Except for mid-summer the rocks below are good for any of the rock-dwelling shorebirds such as BLACK (and sometimes RUDDY) TURNSTONES and SURFBIRDS. Scope offshore for SHEARWATERS (fall), LOONS, GREBES and ALCIDS (winter).

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B-2 MORRO STRAND STATE BEACH

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the junction of Rte 1 and Rte 41 (in Morro Bay), drive north on Rte 1 for 1.8 miles. At the Yerba Buena Street traffic light turn left (west) and then take the first left (south) onto Beachcomber Drive. Park on the right (west) side just before the road turns abruptly inland onto Java Street. Take the obvious trail that leads to the beach. *The trail starts out down a steep banking, then is relatively flat sand, sometimes deep. For an easier approach, park in the Morro Strand State Park Campground day-use parking lot. Fee required.*

BIRDING: Just as the trail reaches the beach sand there is a seasonal pool. In another 100 yards to the north there is another seasonal pool. If using the alternate fee-parking-lot approach, walk to the beach and go south. When

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present these pools, although small, can sometimes have an amazing variety of species present and easy to view! Look for GULLS, TERNS and SHOREBIRDS. In early October 2006 there was a RUFF, a PECTORAL SANDPIPER, a VIRGINIA RAIL and 3 other species of shorebirds in one end of this 30-foot pool!

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B-3 THE CLOISTERS

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the junction of Rte 1 and Rte 41 (in Morro Bay) drive north on Rte 1 for about a mile to the first traffic light and turn left (west) onto San Jacinto, and then an immediate left (south) onto Coral. In a few blocks you will see a parking lot with *restrooms* on the right. Park there. Walk the paved trail around two sides of the small wetland, and north and south on the trail. *Flat and paved. Easy access to all.*

BIRDING: The wood platform has the best potential for birding although the cattails are rapidly obscuring the view. Year-round it has an assortment of local birds, but winter is best. Locals feed bread to the ducks here, so when birds are seen here they often stay around for weeks or months, like the LEAST BITTERN in 2006 and a SNOW GOOSE and a ROSS'S GOOSE all winter in 2007. Even the SORAS are trained to come out of hiding into full and apparent fearless view to feast on the bread! It is one of the better places (except in winter) to see GREAT-TAILED GRACKLES, as they fly back and forth to the nearby restaurant and market parking lots for food. Occasionally a TRI-COLORED BLACKBIRD is seen with the RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS. There are a variety of breeding and migrant birds in the willows along the trail north and south. The nuttalli race of WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW breeds nearby and is often seen up close on the deck and on the grass.

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B-4 LILA KAISER PARK / MORRO CREEK

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Lila Kaiser Park is immediately west of the junction of Rte 1 and Rte 41 (in Morro Bay) behind the motels. Park on the main road (Atascadero Road, the west extension of Rte 41), in front of the Motels. Walk south on a paved bike trail that parallels Rte 1 and enter the streambed at the foot bridge. During fall migration the streambed is generally dry. One can walk upstream for a short distance to look for vagrants, but soon the streambed gets impassable. Downstream is generally easier and more productive. You will walk past the ballpark into thicker and thicker willows. Conditions are quite variable, from wide open to impassable depending on recent rains and floods. Winter or summer, rain or shine, walking down between the ballpark and the willow edge is easy and may yield a few birds. *Walking upstream and downstream can be difficult due to dense weeds and willows. Usually flowing water in winter and spring. The part along the ball field is flat and easy. An additional word of caution: there is evidence that the creek bed and bridge are used by kids and the homeless.*

BIRDING: A good place in migration and early winter to look for warblers, but the thickness of the vegetation can sometimes make it less than easy birding.

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B-5 MORRO CREEK MOUTH (North)

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the junction of Rte 1 and Rte 41 (Atascadero Road), drive west on Atascadero Road, and turn south on Morro Dunes Road when the road bends. There is a dirt parking lot at the end of the road. *Accessible to all.*

BIRDING: Dependent on creek flow and tides, there is generally a fresh or brackish pool just down the banking from the parking lot, and a marshy area at the up-stream end. This pool is easy to check and can be the best place around to look for SHOREBIRDS, WADERS and GULLS (winter). This is a particularly reliable spot for MEW GULLS (winter) since they feed at the nearby waste treatment plant. Most of the county's rare GULLS have been seen there at least once. BLACK-NECKED STILT, RUFF, PECTORAL and BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS and many other species have been found there in recent years. Also look upstream to the edge of the willows for waders and passerines. AMERICAN PIPITS are often easy to see along the edges in winter.

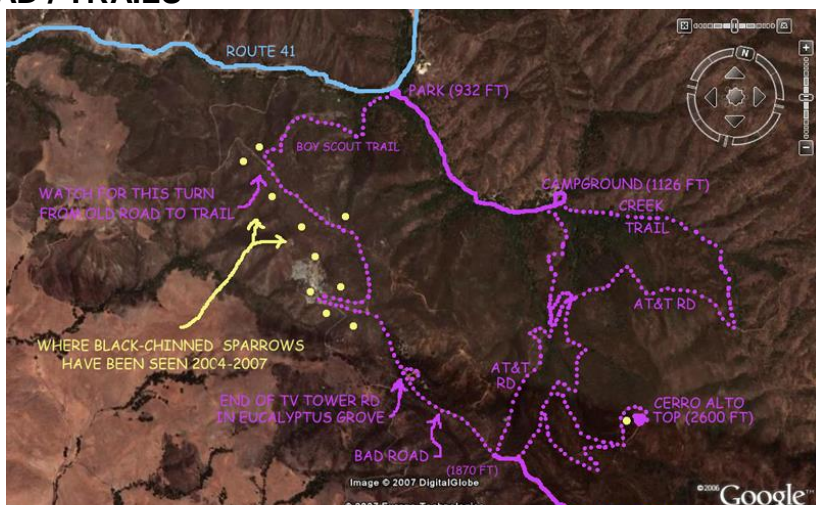
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B-6 CERRO ALTO CAMPGROUND ROAD / TRAILS

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 6](#)) From the junction of Rte 1 and Rte 41 drive east on Rte 41 for just over 7 miles. Turn right (south) onto Cerro Alto Campground Road and park at the first spaces on the right. This is a National Forest fee area. Pay fee (\$5) at sign or leave your Golden Age Pass on your dashboard. The road dead-ends at the campground in just over a mile. There are numerous trails in the area. See [MAP 6](#) for road and trails. See options below for birding strategies.

BIRDING: This area is one of the best birding spots around. It is a shaded riparian corridor filled with willows and large oaks. It is especially good in breeding season, but presents a unique birding habitat at any time of year. There are several options for birding the area:



MAP 6

1. A popular option is to park as noted above at the base of the road and walk the paved road. Traffic is generally minimal. *The paved road slopes gently uphill all the way to the campground.* The parking area, despite the traffic noise from Rte 41, is excellent. The road is one of the most reliable spots in the county for BROWN CREEPERS, HOUSE WRENS, MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLERS (along the lower half in the willow areas), and NORTHERN PYGMY OWLS (mid-road area; formerly common, but rather rare as of 2010). CASSIN'S VIREOS and OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS breed along the upper part near the campground. *It is about one mile from the parking spot to the campground. There are restrooms along the road at the campground.*
2. At the campground, one may quit and return to the parking area or continue, following the east side of the creek on a trail that continues (gently up) for another half mile or so through generally the same habitat. MOUNTAIN QUAIL are regularly heard calling, especially in spring, above the last stream crossing, but as anywhere are very difficult to see. The trail then starts to get very steep (see paragraph #3). There is day use parking at the campground.
3. One can turn around here or start up the steep part of the trail. After about a half mile of steep trail, turn right onto the AT&T road / trail. It goes up a short steep area then levels out and goes through dense chaparral, good for FOX SPARROWS from September through April. Some of these are of the "THICK-BILLED" and the "SLATE-COLORED" races. Soon one comes to a trail junction.
4. From this junction one can take a right and return to the campground, or one may hike a steep trail to the top of Cerro Alto Peak (about 2600 ft), with a fantastic view! Proceeding straight on the AT&T trail, however, provides an interesting and less steep alternative to the trail to the top and completes a six-mile loop back to the parking area at the base of the road. This is the route described here: proceeding straight at this junction, continuing on the AT&T road. It dips down a little, then steeply up to a ridge. As the trail gets less steep and passes a gate one enters BELL'S SPARROWS habitat, breeding and wintering (hard to find in winter). Soon the trail tees into a main dirt road; this is TV Tower Road (see [B-30](#), MILE 9.7). One could drive from Rte 101 to this point on TV Tower Road in the past, but as of 2010 TV Tower Road is blocked about a mile south of this junction by a land slide. Turn right (north) on TV Tower Road. Shortly one goes through a grove of eucalyptus trees. Sometimes there are RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKERS along the road.

Keep going **straight** through the grove. Just as the trail leaves the grove, and until the trail leaves the ridge at the Boy Scout Trail, listen for BLACK-CHINNED SPARROWS from April through June. There are generally 6-8 pairs breeding along the ridge here. There are also many FOX SPARROWS of various races along this same area. At one point shortly after the eucalyptus grove, the trail (old road) takes a sharp right around a "hairpin" turn. At the far end of the ridge, as one starts to see the Rte 41 valley approaching, one must look for a trail on the right side of the road. It is sometimes marked with a cairn, and there is a trail sign (missing in 2010) *after* you start down the trail. This is the Boy Scout Trail. It descends steeply, goes past a spring, enters a riparian area, crosses the creek and joins the Cerro Alto Campground Road at the base

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parking lot. The loop from the parking lot up the road, through the campground, up the creek trail to the AT&T Road, to TV Tower Road, north along the ridge and down the Boy Scout Trail is about 6 miles and gains a total of about 900 ft. It passes through a variety of habitats and has beautiful views. *A great birding hike, but it is steep and slippery walking at times! And it is best to have a **map** with you for this loop!*

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B-7 MORRO CREEK MOUTH (South)

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Drive north on The Embarcadero (the waterfront street in Morro Bay). Shortly after passing the power plant and as the paved road turns left (west) toward the Rock (and becomes Coleman), continue straight north on a wide gravel road and drive to the end of the road. *Accessible to all.*

BIRDING: See [B-5](#). This is the same location, but approached from the south; easier to see the marshy creek mouth, but harder to see the pool.

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B-8 MORRO ROCK AREA

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) As in [B-7](#), but bear left on Coleman to the Rock. *Accessible to all, except jetty base view, which is a very short but rocky walk.*

BIRDING: There are a number of excellent places to view birds at "The Rock." Parking just before the rock on the left side of the road is a good central location from which to work. This parking lot is the chief gull-feeding area and thus one of the better areas around to study GULLS up close. In the summer they are mostly all WESTERN and HEERMANN'S GULLS. From mid-October through March any of the western gull species may be present there: lots of RING-BILLED and CALIFORNIA, small numbers of GLAUCOUS-WINGED, a few HERRING and THAYER'S from time to time and, rarely, a GLAUCOUS. Mew Gulls are more much more regular at [B-7](#). Scanning the channel in both directions there is the potential for finding most of the LOONS, GREBES, CORMORANTS, LONG-TAILED DUCKS (some winters), and DIVING / SEA DUCKS that can be expected in the county. The large rock along the shore edge of the parking lot is called "Target Rock" and is used at times to describe the location of a rare bird.

Progressing to the far parking lot, look and listen for CANYON WRENS on the sides of Morro Rock. This is a reliable spot for this rather uncommon and local resident. Several pairs of PEREGRINE FALCONS breed on ledges high on the rock. The outer channel should be scanned, especially in winter. Then walk to the jetty, staying as close to the rock as you can. There is a small area to set up a scope tripod just around a corner that is an excellent vantage point to scan for ALCIDS, especially in winter, and it is often protected from the wind. Direction is sometimes confusing out there; the jetty goes due south from the rock.

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B-9 EMBARCADERO

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) The Embarcadero is the main waterfront street in Morro Bay. *Accessible to all.*

BIRDING: Most of the downtown area is difficult to access and the birds there tend not to be unique. However, the Coast Guard Pier opposite the power plant offers some access and allows views at the strong tidal flow area from there to the Rock. At the south end of the Embarcadero there is a parking lot with water access. Driving from the Embarcadero one block east on Marina Street and one block right (south) on Morro Ave gives one a slightly better view of the bay. Scan the bend in the sand spit for shorebirds, gulls and terns. A BLACK SKIMMER can sometime be found roosting (spring and fall) in that area.

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B-10 "GRASSY ISLAND"

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the Embarcadero drive 2 blocks away from the water on Marina Street and take a right (south) on Main Street. In about 0.7 miles turn right (south) into the Bayshore Village condos and park. *Accessible to all.*

BIRDING: At all but the highest tides there is a large green (salicornia / eelgrass) "island" on the mudflats west of there called "Grassy Island". It is a long distance away even with a scope. Although not an overly "productive" spot, it is worth scoping for the chance of BLACK SKIMMERS (very uncommon in the county; spring and fall).

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B-11 HERON ROOKERY

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 11](#)) From downtown Morro Bay go south on Main Street. About 0.3 miles past (south of) the entrance gate to Morro Bay State Park, there is a dirt pull-off on the right (west) with a small kiosk. A short 50 ft walk. *Flat but may be sandy or muddy.*

BIRDING: A rookery with nesting and roosting GREAT BLUE HERONS, GREAT and SNOWY EGRETS, BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS and TURKEY VULTURES (roosting only).

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B-12 WINDY COVE

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 11](#)) From B-11, drive another 0.1 miles south on the shore road and park in the dirt pull-off. *Accessible to all.*

BIRDING: Not an exceptionally good birding spot, but easy access and worth scanning for SHOREBIRDS, and DIVING DUCKS (winter).

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B-13 NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 11](#)) The parking lot is just a few hundred feet south of B-12 on the shore side. From Rte 1, take the South Bay Blvd exit and drive west. In 0.7 miles turn right onto State Park Drive. Bear left at the fork and go a total of about 1.2 miles to the museum (see [Central Coast State Parks Association-Museum of Natural History, pg 3](#)).

BIRDING: *The Birds of San Luis Obispo County*, an indispensable checklist showing abundance and seasons for all of the county birds, is available at the museum bookstore. The area just outside the museum is good for scoping the estuary. *Paved. 200 ft walk.*

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B-14 MORRO BAY STATE PARK MARINA AREA AND CAMPGROUND

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 11](#)) The entrance to the marina parking lot is just a few hundred feet south of B-13 on the shore side. From Rte 1, take the South Bay Blvd exit and drive west. In 0.7 miles turn right onto State Park Drive. Bear left at the fork and go a total of about 1.1 miles and turn left (south) into the parking lot (see [Morro Bay State Park brochure, with maps on pg 6](#)). *Birding from the parking lot is accessible to all. The trails are flat but may*



MAP 11

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be muddy after rain. The trail on the estuary side may be muddy due to tidal flooding. The campground is flat and accessible to all.

BIRDING: One of the best birding spots on the estuary! The north-west end is good for scoping the deeper water for LOONS, GREBES, BRANTS and DUCKS. The cypress trees here are roosting areas for sometimes large numbers of BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS. Often GREBES and LOONS are seen at rather close range in the boat basin. Trails go from the south-east end out to the point, where there are often large numbers of SHOREBIRDS. The coastal scrub often has wintering passerines. Hundreds of AMERICAN PIPITS (winter) use the salicornia (pickle weed) on the flats as a night roost. In winter many SAVANNAH SPARROWS, including a few "LARGE-BILLED" SAVANNAH SPARROWS, rest in the bushes at the end of the easterly most point (near where there is a beached log) during morning very high tides (maybe with >5.5 ft and certainly with 6.0+ ft tides). Some years one or several NELSON'S SPARROWS have over-wintered in the same area (only one sighting, in 2010, however, since the winter of 2005-6). **Do not crowd the birds there. Do not play tapes. During high tides use rubber boots and stay in the shallow water away from the bushes!**

Walk across the street to the campground. Check the pines and eucalyptus for migrant and wintering warblers. There is sometimes a wintering WHITE-THROATED SPARROW in the camp area near the entrance station. At the far eastern end, just east of the trailer dump station, there is a single large bottlebrush tree near the buildings. This is popular with hummers and warblers.

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B-15a BLACK MOUNTAIN (WEST APPROACH)

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 11](#)) First approach: From **B-14**, is to head back toward Morro Bay and turn right (east) onto Black Mountain Road. Just past the golf course clubhouse bear left. Drive to the end of the road and park. From the parking lot there is a trail to the top of Black Mountain. The top offers spectacular panoramic views of the estuary and the whole Morro Bay area, but has no unique birding.

BIRDING: From the parking lot walk down the road and take any of the trails. These trails lead through coastal sage and pine habitats. WOODPECKERS, migrant WARBLERS, wintering RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES, BROWN CREEPERS and GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS (rare) are often found in the pines. See **B-15b** for the second, and perhaps more productive, approach to the same general area.

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B-15b BLACK MOUNTAIN (EAST APPROACH)

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 11](#)) Second approach: From **B-14** turn right when leaving the State Park Marina parking lot. At the stop sign (South Bay Blvd) turn left. Just before the Rte 1 junction turn left (north) onto Quintana Road. Take the first left (west) onto La Loma Ave. Near the end of the road there are informal parking spaces on the left. *There is about a mile of dirt trails through the pines on this side of the mountain; flat to mildly hilly.*

BIRDING: More pines on this side of the mountain, so better birding. Birds same as **B-15a**.

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B-16 CHORRO CREEK WILLOWS

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Along South Bay Blvd between 0.4 miles from Rte 1 (or 0.3 miles from the State Park Road junction) there is a dirt pull-out on the south side of the road. Park near, but not blocking, the locked gate. *Walk in past the gate on a dirt road that is muddy in the wet season for 0.25 miles as far as the buildings.*

BIRDING: A short walk, seldom birded. The thick willows hold migrant and wintering WARBLERS, but they are difficult to pursue through the thick vegetation. *The road may be muddy in winter.*

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B-17 QUARRY TRAIL (OVERLOOK)

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Along South Bay Blvd 1.3 miles south of Rte 1 (0.7 miles south of State Park Rd) turn into a dirt parking lot on the left (east) side of the road. *Traffic on South Bay Blvd is heavy and the turn can be dangerous.*

BIRDING: There is a complex of trails through this part of Morro Bay State Park. It is mostly grassy mixed with coastal sage habitat. Of particular interest to birders is the informal trail that goes south along the road for about 100 yards up a short steep slope to a flat old quarry area. This provides a good place to scope the flats for DUCKS and SHOREBIRDS at very high tides (>6 ft). Best is early morning.

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B-18 TURRI ROAD TIDAL PONDS / MUDFLAT

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Turri Road is reached by driving south on South Bay Blvd from Rte 1 for 2.0 miles and turning left (east); or by driving north on South Bay Blvd Rd from Los Osos Valley Rd for 1.9 miles and turning right (east). There is a dirt parking area at the very start of the Turri Road or 100 yards down the road on the right there is a small pull-off. *One birds from near the car: little or no walking.*

BIRDING: High tides leave shallow ponds and mudflats along Turri Road. The best pond is usually the first pond, the closest to South Bay Blvd, but there are others along Turri for about half a mile. In late summer and early fall it is one of the best spots to look for RED-NECKED (common) and WILSON'S (uncommon) PHALAROPES and LESSER YELLOWLEGS (in late summer and rarely in winter). Also a good place to look for SEMI-PALMATED (very rare), BAIRD'S and PECTORAL SANDPIPERS (both rare). A half mile from South Bay Blvd on the side of Turri Rd there is a small pull-off on the left. This is a reliable spot for SHORT-EARED OWLS (fall through spring). In late afternoon hike the trail that goes north from the pull-off for about half a mile through the grasslands. The owls usually appear after sundown, with just enough light to see them. ***Be sure to have a flashlight to get back out the trail in the dark.*** *The trail is narrow and can be muddy.*

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B-19 ELFIN FOREST

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From Rte 1 in Morro Bay, take South Bay Blvd south for about 3 miles to the first traffic light and turn right (west) onto Santa Ysabel Ave. Or from Los Osos Valley Road take South Bay Blvd north to the second traffic light and turn left (west) onto Santa Ysabel. All of the side streets on the right (north) side of San Ysabel from 16th through 12th Streets have access to the Elfin Forest. *The 16th Street access has the best parking, has direct access to the boardwalk, and is generally accessible to mobility-impaired; the other access points start with deep sand paths.*

BIRDING: Coastal scrub species plus access to an overlook to view the estuary. The overlook is the site each fall when local birders do a "big sit", counting as many species as possible from one spot in a 24-hour period. At one time we held the world record of 122 species, and are consistently in the top ten in the world! A scope is needed for birding effectively from this spot. Mid-tide and morning light are best. BLACK RAILS are rarely (very rarely in recent years) heard at night from the overlook. Look for EURASIAN WIDGEONS from here in the winter; most winters from 1-3 are present.

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B-20 AUDUBON / 4TH STREET OVERLOOK

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From **B-19** continue west on San Ysabel Ave and turn right (north) on 3rd Street. In one block, where Santa Lucia turns left, turn right (east) onto a single-lane dirt road and park at the end. *It is an easy 50-foot walk to the overlook; generally accessible to all.*

BIRDING: Provided and maintained by the Morro Coast Audubon Society, the covered deck with benches makes it a comfortable spot to look out over the estuary. Good birding for SHOREBIRDS, DUCKS, BRANT, etc, except during the summer, when it is not very productive. As in all estuary locations, it is tide-dependent; about +2 ft to +4 ft tide is best for most viewing, but there are different birds as the tide changes. SORAS and VIRGINIA RAILS are

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sometimes seen just below the platform. Look for EURASIAN WIDGEONS from here in the winter; most winters from 1-3 are present.

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B-21 BAYWOOD PIER

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From **B-20**, go west on Santa Lucia, which in a few blocks curves left and becomes Pasadena Drive. You will pass a small dirt parking area on the right (west) side of the road giving access to the estuary shore. Except at high tide one can park here and walk to **B-20** from here, or continue to 2nd Street in "downtown" Baywood Park then take a right (south) and park at the paved lot at the south end of the street. *100 ft paved walk.*

BIRDING: Not a major birding area, but worth a quick check of the GULLS and BLUE-WINGED TEALS in winter.

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B-22 AUDUBON / SWEET SPRINGS NATURE PRESERVE

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From **B-21**, continue south along the edge of the estuary via 3rd and 4th Streets to the corner of 4th and Ramona Avenue. From Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos, take a right (north) on 9th Street which, in 5 blocks, curves left (west) and becomes Ramona. Continue west on Ramona for 5 blocks to 4th Street. This *Eastern* entrance/kiosk is the first of three entrances and has one ADA-compliant parking space. (More curb parking is further west on Ramona.) An ADA-compliant trail (diatomaceous earth and then [boardwalk](#)) leads to the eastern viewing [platform/blind](#). The *Central* entrance/kiosk is further west on Ramona. The central approach takes you on an easy but sloping trail to a pond then continues left, with steps over a bridge, to the western viewing [platform/telescope](#). Central also has paths linking to eastern. A *Western* entrance is accessed by driving 100 yards farther west from central and turning right (north) on Broderson. Parking space at the end of that street is limited. Do not block driveways. A short dirt path leads to a flat narrow [boardwalk](#) that ends at the western viewing platform/telescope. *Pets are not permitted in the preserve.* See [MCAS Sweet Springs Nature Preserve](#) for additional information.

BIRDING: The 2 viewing platforms, allowing close views of the estuary, wetlands, and mudflats, are the highlights of this 32-acre nature preserve. Mid-tide generally provides the best viewing. Both platforms are north facing so time-of-day is less important, and they offer views of a variety of SHOREBIRDS, BRANTS (November-April), and various DABBLING and DIVING DUCKS. They are the best place in the county to see BLUE-WINGED TEAL. Look for EURASIAN WIDGEONS in the winter; in most winters 1-3 are present from here to [B-19](#). A "EURASIAN" (*crecca*) GREEN-WINGED TEAL was present one winter.

[TOP](#)

B-23 PECHO ROAD WILLOWS / PECHO MARSH

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the main business district of Los Osos go west on Los Osos Valley Road for about half a mile and turn right (north) on Pecho Road. In a few blocks, at the corner of Henrietta Ave, there is a wooded and rather boggy area with a primitive trail, called "Pecho Road Willows" or "Pecho Marsh" by locals. *This area is very small, the trail often muddy, the willows thick and poison oak present. But the birding can be quite good during migration and in winter. A number of rare birds have been seen here over the years!*

BIRDING: One of those spots where most any passerine could (and does) show up in migration or winter.

[TOP](#)

B-24 SHARK INLET

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the main business district of Los Osos go west on Los Osos Valley Road for about half a mile and turn right (north) on Pecho Road. Take the first left (west), then an immediate right (north) onto Solano. Solano curves left (west) to become Butte. Park near the end. *Walk the sand path or follow the shore for about half a mile to the south most tip of the estuary. The sand is deep and the shore can be muddy.*

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

BIRDING: The trail goes through coastal scrub, past some beautiful wind-sculptured eucalyptus to a small corner of the tidal flat surrounded by marsh grasses/sedges. One of the least-disturbed parts of the estuary. Seldom birded. Mid-tide best.

[TOP](#)

B-25 SEA PINES GOLF COURSE

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From the main business district of Los Osos go west on Los Osos Valley Road for about a half mile and turn right (north) on Pecho Road. Take the first left (west), then an immediate left (south) on Solano. Solano immediately curves right (west) and becomes Howard. Park where it dead-ends. *No walking; just looking from the car-park.*

BIRDING: There are 2 small golf course ponds on the right (north) viewed through a chain-link fence that sometimes have GEESE in the winter, otherwise there is no birding here.

[TOP](#)

B-26 MONTAÑA DE ORO STATE PARK

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 26a-f](#)) From the main business district of Los Osos go west on Los Osos Valley Road. Los Osos Valley Road becomes Pecho Road and curves left (south). Continue to the park entrance. Distances and directions to birding areas in the park are given from the entrance gate (see [California State Parks-Montaña de Oro](#)).

BIRDING: (See BIRDING: in 26a-26g)

B-26a SAND SPIT

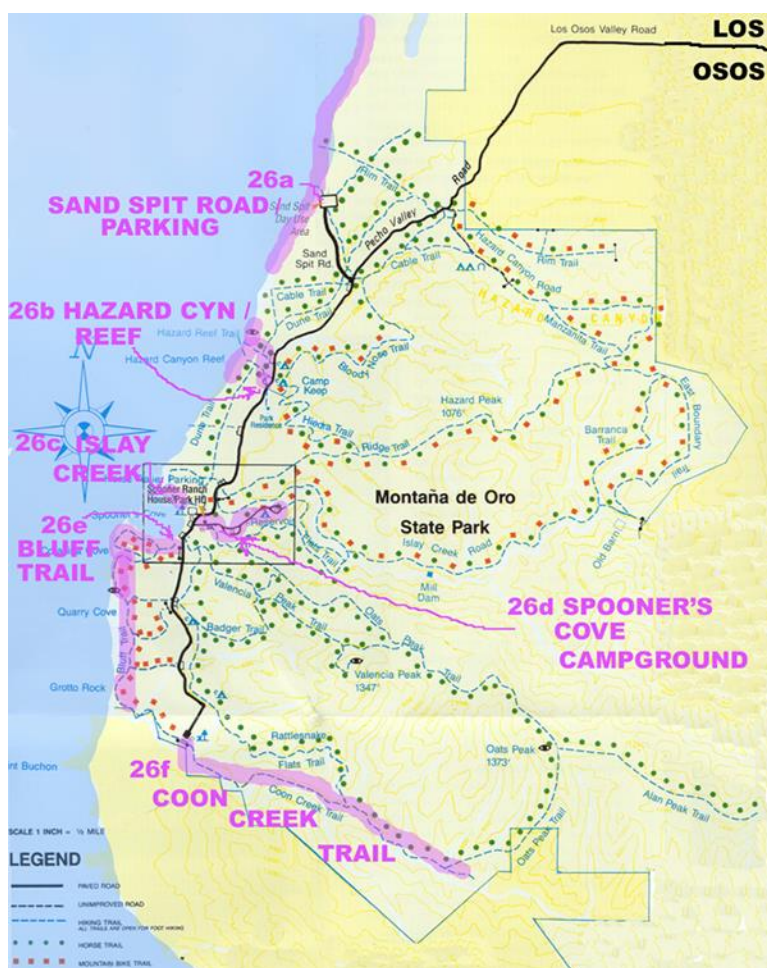
DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive 0.7 miles and take a right (west) on Sand Spit Road. The area around the parking lot is coastal scrub, home to WRENTITS, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS and CALIFORNIA THRASHERS. Take the trail to the ocean. *The trail goes down a number of scattered steps and then into deep dune sand to the beach.* The often-deserted beach can be walked for many miles south or north.

BIRDING: Look for SHOREBIRDS and past the wave-line in winter for rafts of SCOTERS (mostly SURF SCOTERS).

B-26b HAZARD CANYON / REEF

DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive 1.7 miles and park in the marked parking lot. *The trail goes for 100 yards down intermittent steps into a shallow canyon.*

BIRDING: Check the willows in the gulch for WARBLERS in migration and winter. A WINTER WREN is sometimes found in this area also. Walk another 100 yards to the ocean. The shore north is mostly sandy and joins **B-26a** in a half mile or so. At the trail end and south along the shore it is rocky. In winter look for rock-loving shorebirds such as WANDERING TATTLER, SURFBIRD and BLACK OYSTERCATCHER. Be careful, *the rocks can be very slippery and the beach (north and south) is narrow so be careful not to be trapped by the tide.* The sand bluff, a short but steep sand walk that makes up the north edge of the canyon mouth provides a nice vantage point for scoping the ocean for SHEARWATERS and ALCIDS in migration and winter.



MAP 26a-f

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

B-26c ISLAY CREEK MOUTH

DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive about 2.4 miles. Just after crossing a small bridge, park in the large parking lot on the right (west).

BIRDING: Check the beach for GULLS in winter. In migration and winter check the willows along the creek from the ocean upstream as far as you can. The upper part of the area is particularly good, especially when the sun first hits the willows. CHIPPING and CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS have been seen here a number of times in fall, as have some of the more rare migrating WARBLERS. *Short walk in beach sand.*

[TOP](#)

B-26d SPOONER'S COVE CAMPGROUND

DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive about 2.4 miles, just past **B-26c**, turn left (east) toward the campground and park in front of the Visitor's Center. Check the cypress trees for WARBLERS during migration and winter. Walk the road through the two loops of the campground. *Round trip is less than one mile of flat to gently sloping paved road.*

BIRDING: In migration and winter the pines and willows are good for some of the more rare vagrant WARBLERS, PURPLE FINCHES, WOODPECKERS and sometimes GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS. (look and listen for chickadees to find the warbler flocks. Check the SPARROWS around the campsites for FOX SPARROWS (at least 3 races have been seen there) and in some years WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS. CALIFORNIA THRASHERS, WRENTITS and other coastal scrub species are common here. One of the best spots in the area during migration.

B-26e BLUFF TRAIL

DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive about 2.4+ miles, just past **B-26d**, and park along the road on the right. From that spot, a *wide, marked (not wheelchair accessible) trail* follows the sea-bluffs along the south shore of Spooner's Cove and south along the rocky coast. The rocky coast here presents spectacular views, great surf and an amazing display of geology!

BIRDING: In winter all 3 species of CORMORANTS are often found together on the big rock below. PIGEON GUILLEMOTS nest in holes high along the dirt sea cliff, especially the middle part of the north-facing bluff. With care one can photograph the birds returning to their nests, but be very careful near this unstable edge. The point (about 0.25 miles) is a good place to "sea-watch" for SHEARWATERS and ALCIDS. The rocks at the point and along the very scenic shore should be checked for rock-loving shorebirds such as WANDERING TATTLER, BLACK TURNSTONE, SURFBIRD and BLACK OYSTERCATCHER. *From the parking area to the south limit of the shore is about 3-4 mile round trip. Watch for rattlesnakes along the trail in summer, especially in the area between the little foot bridge and the next major bay; they are rather common because of the large number of California ground squirrels.*

B-26f COON CREEK TRAIL

DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive about 4 miles to where the paved road dead-ends. Take the marked trail. It is about 3 mile round trip to the end.

BIRDING: The trail first goes through coastal scrub and a large patch of coffee berry, good for THRUSHES and GROSBEAKS when the fruit is ripe. The trail then goes through dense willows for most of the rest of the way. These dense and dark areas are home to about 12 pairs of resident WINTER WRENS, generally rare in the county. They are easily heard in breeding season, but seen only with patience. In fall and winter they are quiet and hard to lure out of the thickets. There was a resident population of CANYON WRENS part way along the trail where a rocky area is seen just above the trail on the right, but they were not reported in 2009 up to the time of this revision in June of 2010. Please report them if you detect them here again. Although migrant and wintering WARBLERS are present in there, they are usually hard to see. SWAINSON'S THRUSHES and PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHERS are common in the summer; HERMIT THRUSHES and FOX SPARROWS in the winter; WRENTIT any time. One of the best places locally for riparian plants and flowers. *Trail is narrow, with some steps. At times poison oak and stinging nettle encroach on the trail.*

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

B-26g POINT BUCHON

DIRECTIONS: From the park entrance drive about 4 miles, to where the paved road dead-ends. This is the same parking lot as used for Coon Creek. In late 2007 a new area of the park was opened to the public extending the Bluff Trail. The trail is open Thursday through Monday from 8 AM to 5 PM during the summer months (April through October) and from 8 AM to 4 PM during the winter months (November through March). There is a limit of 275 hikers per day. Be there early for the best birding and because it is popular on weekend (see [Point Buchon Trail Map and Reservations](#)). Walk the trail to the mouth of Coon Creek; riparian and with a small beach. Walk to the point and beyond. **This property is owned by PG&E and is subject to [their rules and regulations](#); please read.**

BIRDING: From the knoll at Point Buchon is potentially one of the best "sea-watch" spots in the county for both birds and whales!

[TOP](#)

B-27 EL CHORRO REGIONAL PARK

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From Morro Bay, drive south on Rte 1 for about 7 miles to the second traffic light and take a left (east). From Rte 101, take Rte 1 north for about 5.5 miles and turn right (east) at the first Cuesta College traffic light. There are brown signs marking the turn. Go past the softball field, past the new botanical garden building and park in the second group picnic site parking area.

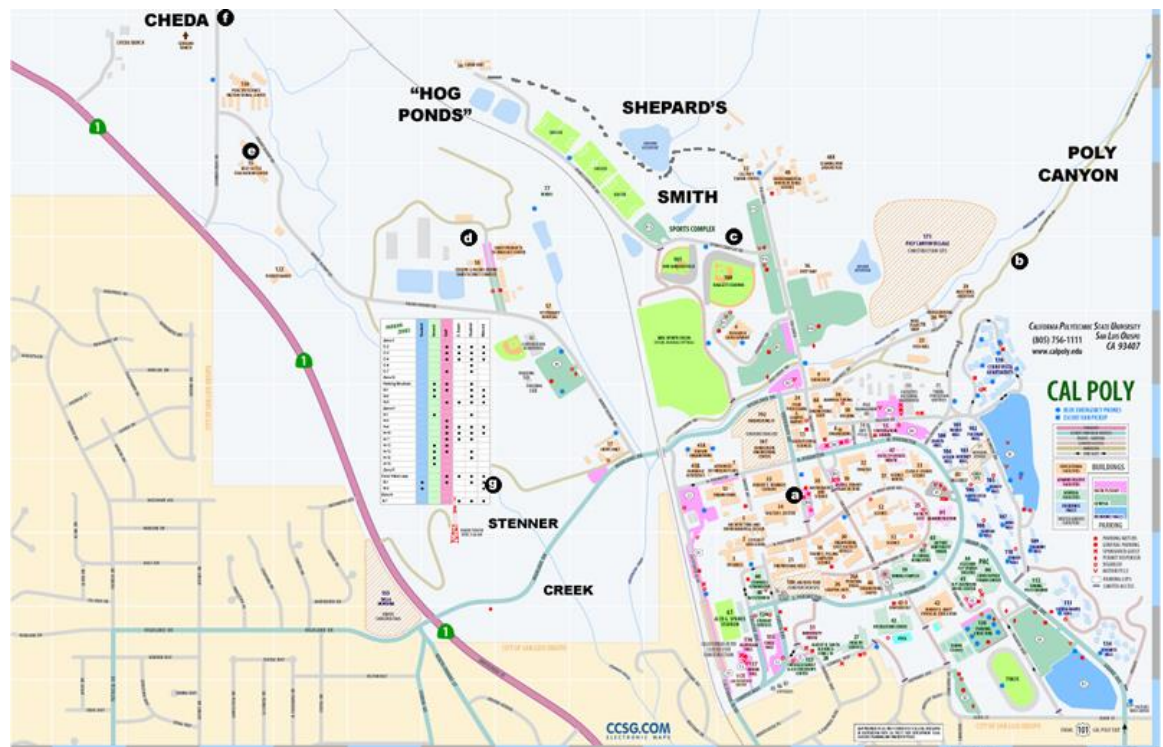
BIRDING: The area represents both riparian and oak habitats, with HUTTON'S VIREOS and OAK TITMICE rather common. BLUE GROSBEAKS and LAZULI BUNTINGS are often seen along the road in the weedy / brushy areas (summer). GOLDEN EAGLES, WHITE-TAILED KITES and other RAPTORS are often seen on the slopes. In winter this is one of the most accessible and reliable spots for RED-BREASTED, and rarely RED-NAPED SAPSUCKERS, in the California pepper trees (the obvious scattered trees with compound leaves and finely-divided leaflets). A "bluebird trail" was established in 2010, with 15 bluebird houses installed. *Mostly flat and accessible to all.* Up-canyon, past where cars are allowed, there are trails through the oaks and to the ridge top.

[TOP](#)

B-28 CAL POLY CAMPUS

DIRECTIONS:

([MAP](#)) (see [MAP 28](#)) From the south on Rte 101, take the Grand Ave/Cal Poly exit, then left (north) at the stop sign onto Grand Ave, which will enter campus in a few blocks. From the north on Rte 101, take the Monterey Street exit, take a right at the top of the exit ramp, and then an immediate left on to Loomis Ave. Take a right turn at the stop sign on Grand Ave and follow it a few blocks to the campus entrance.



MAP 28

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

Note: Parking on weekdays on campus requires a permit that can be purchased at the kiosk as you enter campus on Grand Ave. There are also a limited number of parking meters on campus. Traffic is very heavy and parking is almost non-existent when school is in session. Parking permits are not required on the weekend or campus holidays.

B-28a CENTRAL CAMPUS

DIRECTIONS: Continue on Grand Ave to the "T" intersection with Perimeter Road and take a right, and then another right at Poly Canyon Road. There is a large parking area at this intersection for access to the central campus area and to Poly Canyon. Walk south toward the core of campus and explore the extensive lawn and landscaped areas. *Access to all.*

BIRDING: Flocks of COMMON BUSHTITS and CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEES work their way through campus and should be checked for other species as well. In the winter watch for SPARROW flocks, HERMIT THRUSHES and CEDAR WAXWINGS. The line of California Pepper trees along University Drive in front of the Kennedy Library have produced RED-NAPED, RED-BREASTED, and YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS. A SUMMER TANAGER was present behind the library during the fall-winter of 2009. Listen for CASSIN'S KINGBIRDS calling in the winter.

B-28b POLY CANYON

DIRECTIONS: From the parking lot at the corner of North Perimeter and Poly Canyon Road (see **B-28a**), walk north following Poly Canyon Drive, keeping the transportation yard on your left, and the electric substation on your right. Bear right past the substation and walk around the metal gate at the entrance to Poly Canyon. This dirt road quickly leaves the developed part of campus and follows Brizzolara Creek.

BIRDING: The canyon is a good spot for breeding LAZULI BUNTINGS and RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROWS. Many of the county common birds utilize the riparian and chaparral along Poly Canyon. Also watch for BLUE GROSBEAKS, COOPER'S HAWKS and the occasional YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE near the archway at the "end" of the canyon. **Note:** Poly Canyon continues past the obvious end of the road and is open to the public. You may continue walking past the yellow house and barn and follow the road for many miles through open grassland and riparian habitats. *Walking is along dirt roads and can be strenuous and steep in parts.*

B-28c SPORTS COMPLEX AREA

DIRECTIONS: From the Poly Canyon parking lot, drive back to Perimeter road and take a right, continuing downhill. At the stop sign at Via Carta Road turn right (north) and follow it to the left turn at Sports Complex Road. Park in the small dirt lot on the right, adjacent to the softball field. Climb the wooden split rail fence and walk toward the group of willows surrounding the small Smith Reservoir.

BIRDING: HOODED MERGANSERS and WOOD DUCKS have been seen here. BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS regularly roost here and GREEN HERONS and WHITE-TAILED KITES have nested around the pond. Continue driving along Sports Complex Road and watch the soccer fields for AMERICAN PIPITS. TRI-COLORED BLACKBIRDS have been seen in this area also. After the soccer fields watch for the two small ponds on your left (west) associated with the swine unit. RING-NECKED DUCKS and NORTHERN SHOVELERS are regular in the winter and WOOD DUCKS have been seen here. As the road passes the ponds and begins to enter the wider parking area for the swine unit, watch for a dirt road to the right. Park at the swine unit and walk southeast down the road to Shepard's Reservoir. *About a half mile round trip on a flat dirt road.* Watch for SPARROWS along the weedy roadside. This is a good spot for a flyby GOLDEN EAGLES and other raptors. The reservoir has harbored nesting TRI-COLORED BLACKBIRDS. In the winter CATTLE EGRETS have been found here. The tules and willows around the reservoir can produce a variety of ducks, herons, and land birds.

[TOP](#)

B-28d DAIRY UNIT

DIRECTIONS: Retrace your route back along Sports Complex Road then turn right (south) onto Via Carta, then another right onto Highland Drive. Just past the railroad bridge, turn right (north) onto Mt. Bishop Road, follow it to the Eugene and Rachel Boone Dairy Science complex and turn into the driveway.

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

BIRDING: You may park in the lot and walk around the dairy for large flocks of BLACKBIRDS which can include YELLOW-HEADED and TRICOLOREDS in the fall and winter. BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS are abundant here. Remember that this is a working dairy operation. Please do not disturb the workers or cattle. *The walking is limited and on relatively flat ground, but it can be muddy in winter.*

B-28e "NORTH" CATTLE BARN AREA

DIRECTIONS: From the Dairy Unit parking lot drive back out to Mt. Bishop Road and turn right (north) and follow it for about a mile from the Dairy Unit to the cattle corrals on the left (west) side of the road.

BIRDING: These can be checked for the above-mentioned rarer BLACKBIRDS. Also check the large pasture areas across the street from the corrals for raptors. FERRUGINOUS HAWK can sometimes be found here in winter.

B-28f CHEDA RESERVOIR / NORTH AREA

DIRECTIONS: Continue north on Mt. Bishop Road to the "T" intersection with Stenner Creek Road and turn right.

BIRDING: The poultry unit at this intersection can be scanned for flocks of BLACKBIRDS. The weedy roadside and pastures along Stenner Creek Road have yielded CATTLE EGRETS and BOBOLINK (rarely). Watch for WESTERN BLUEBIRDS, BLUE GROSBEAKS (uncommon) and KINGBIRDS along the power lines and fence lines. As you approach a large railroad bridge over Stenner Creek, watch for a left turn toward the city's water treatment plant, then take an immediate left turn (west) onto a dirt road. There is a small pond at the intersection that should be checked for WATERFOWL. A few hundred yards along this dirt road on the right is the larger Cheda Reservoir. The trees and tules around the pond have yielded CASSIN'S KINGBIRDS and SWAMP SPARROWS. Nesting WESTERN BLUEBIRDS and the much rarer MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS have been seen here. HOODED and BULLOCK'S ORIOLES have been found in the large eucalyptus trees in the summer, and the trees harbor large flocks of YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS in the winter which should be checked for other passerines. *Generally accessible to all.*

B-28g STENNER CREEK

DIRECTIONS: Retracing your route back from Cheda Reservoir, park at the aforementioned railroad bridge over Stenner Creek road.

BIRDING: This dirt road follows the creek and can be productive for BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS, CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEES, and most of the common passerines in the weedy roadsides and sycamores, oaks, and willows along the creek. Check the steep rocky hillsides for RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROWS. At dusk in the warmer months listen for COMMON POORWILLS on the hillsides. This road can also be driven a short way to a small parking area just beyond a wooden bridge over the creek. This is a good spot for OAK TITMOUSE, BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLERS and WARBLING VIREO. The parking area should be used for a turn around, as the road passes private property and ends a few miles past the bridge.

[TOP](#)

B-29 RESERVOIR CANYON

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From San Luis Obispo drive north on Rte 101 from the Rte 1 exit for about 2 miles, and take a right (south) onto Reservoir Canyon Road. Stay right where it forks, and park before the gate.

BIRDING: A trail follows the creek, with oak-sycamore-willow habitat on one side of the trail and oak-savannah with rocky outcroppings habitat on the other side. Particularly good for a VARIETY OF BREEDING BIRDS. LAZULI BUNTINGS are rather easy to find. The grassy/rocky slopes are reliable for breeding RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROWS. A good place to look for breeding BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRDS. *The first mile of trail is somewhat narrow at times and has areas where poison oak encroaches along the sides. It ascends about 250 vertical feet.* The trail then crosses the creek and is in chaparral habitat for the remainder. This part of the trail may have breeding BELL'S and LACK-CHINNED SPARROWS, but this is uncertain due to lack of recent surveys of the area. *This latter section climbs about 500 vertical feet in about half a mile to the ridge top.*

[TOP](#)

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

B-30 CUESTA RIDGE WEST / TV TOWER ROAD

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Drive north from San Luis Obispo on US 101. **Just** before the top of Cuesta Grade (long upgrade with 3 northbound lanes) get in the left lane and with caution make a left turn across the southbound traffic at the protected left turn lane. Go straight across and bear right on the "paved" road. This is TV Tower Road. ***This road is steep, narrow in spots, and very bumpy!*** There are deep potholes that have become ever-deeper over the past few years! It is regularly driven by some locals in sedans, but must be done slowly and with extreme care, and is not advised. Some of the worst parts of the road are at the beginning, so have faith. Watch for mountain bikers, especially on weekends. Another factor to consider is wind. Being a ridge top, it tends to compress the wind. It is recommended that you check weather conditions on the ridge. *One can park at the base and hike this route also, although it is a long hike.*

BIRDING: All that being said (the warnings), it is worth the trip!

- MILE 1.0 This is generally the first area where there is any parking. From here and along the rest of the trip look for COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRDS (spring, summer), CALIFORNIA THRASHERS, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS, LAZULI BUNTINGS and WRENTITS. Listen April-August (esp. June) for BLACK-CHINNED SPARROWS, although they are more common farther up the road (see mile 6+).
- MILE 1.2 Top of the ridgeline. Spectacular views!
- MILE 2.5 Road fork: "First Antennas/towers" to the right; bear left to continue on the ridge road. The area just before the junction is often good for breeding BELL'S SPARROWS. From April through July they can be heard singing and can generally be found with a little patience. By fall and winter they are silent (except for high-pitched call notes) and can be frustratingly hard to see. They are found all along the rest of the ridge road, especially at the power lines and near the far end, preferring rather low and somewhat open chaparral cover. Also, from this point on to the end of the road look for FOX SPARROWS (late September through early April). These represent a mix of races, but are likely somewhere between 60% and 70% of the "sooty" race with the remainder being of the gray-headed races (perhaps most of these being of the "thick-billed" race). The FOX SPARROWS prefer slightly thicker chaparral cover, but are often found with the BELL'S SPARROWS. Both of these species will perch on the bush-tops with **persistent** "pygmy owl" calls plus "pishing".
- MILE 2.8 Start of the National Forest Service "Botanical Area". From here to mile 5.1 the habitat is dominated by Sargent cypress (*Cupressus sargentii*) and tends to have relatively few total birds. Historically, and then again during the winter of 2009-2010, there have been sightings of TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (extremely rare in the county) along this stretch of cypress. Look and listen for MOUNTAIN QUAIL along here also, especially toward the north end. From mile 4.8 to mile 5.1 there are a few larger trees with an understory of manzanita (major food source of the quail) making it the best area of the cypress to look for the quail. They are heard regularly, especially in the spring, but are hard to see. But sometimes one gets lucky!
- MILE 5.1 Road leaves the "Botanical Area". From here on the birding gets better.
- MILE 5.5 There is a single large oak on the left and a place where one can drive around the tree. Park here and walk the main road ahead. The next quarter mile (under the power line crossing, down to a side road on the right, and then down the side road) is good for BELL'S SPARROWS, FOX SPARROWS (winter) and MOUNTAIN QUAIL (prefers the thick cover of the east slope). At present this spot is the most reliable place in the Morro Bay CBC circle to see these 3 species.
- MILE 5.6 Power line crossing.
- MILE 5.7 Side road on the right (see above).
- MILE 6.0 Large pull-off on the left. Good place to look and listen. From this point on, the chances of hearing/seeing BLACK-CHINNED SPARROWS increases (April-August, esp. May-June when vocalizing more). They like the most open areas of chaparral, which is generally more common on the west-facing slopes and progressively more common as one progresses north along the ridge.
- MILE 7.4 Road fork. Right goes to the "Second Antennas/towers"; left fork goes to a National Forest gate. This gate has been locked since 2009 to keep cars out because there is a rockslide blocking the road

B-MORRO BAY and SAN LUIS OBISPO AREA

ahead. **One can walk past this point, and the road may eventually be re-opened to vehicles.** *The road past this gate gets steeper (downhill) and rougher, but is still OK for most vehicles (should the road re-open).*

- MILE 9.6 Road on the right. This road is gated. It becomes a trail past the gate. In a few 100 yards the trail divides. The right fork takes one to the top of Cerro Alto peak (2600 ft) in about a mile. Fun hike.
- MILE 9.7 Road on the right. This is the "AT&T Cable Road" and goes down to the Cerro Alto Campground (see [B-6](#)). Park here (*should the road re-open*). **The road gets very bad from here to the eucalyptus grove.** This area is one of the best areas on the ridge for BELL'S SPARROWS and FOX SPARROWS. Continuing down the main road (walking), one shortly goes through a grove of eucalyptus trees. Keep going straight through the grove. There are sometimes RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKERS (winter) along the road in the eucs. Just as the trail leaves the grove and to the far north end of the ridge listen for BLACK-CHINNED SPARROWS from April through June. There are generally 6-8 pairs breeding along the ridge from here north. There are also many FOX SPARROWS of various races (late September-winter) along this same area. The good habitat (the far edge of the eucalyptus grove) starts about 0.5 miles from the AT&T road junction car park, and continues for about 1 mile. The ridge trail takes a hairpin turn right at one point. **See [B-6](#), paragraph #4, for a more complete description of this end of the road.**

[TOP](#)

B-31 LAGUNA LAKE PARK

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) Located in San Luis Obispo midway along the north side of Madonna Road. Madonna Road exits Rte 101 in San Luis Obispo or can be reached at a major intersection on Los Osos Valley Road about a mile west of Rte 101. *There is access for all mobility levels there.*

BIRDING: All year, but best in winter. Once inside the park, take the first left and park at the "goose feeding" area. Look for wild GEESE (winter), including a few CACKLING, SNOW, ROSS'S, and GREATER WHITE-FRONTED among the many domestic geese. Anything could show up. Same with GULLS. This is a great place to see gulls up close and to look for rarities. WESTERN, CALIFORNIA, RING-BILLED, BONAPARTE'S, and GLAUCOUS-WINGED are regular (winter). THAYER'S, HERRING and a few unidentifiable gulls might also be found. There is another parking area where the road dead-ends in a short distance. The willows there are good for migrating WARBLERS, the weedy areas for BLUE GROSBEAK (summer) and wintering SPARROWS. The extensive wetland area has AMERICAN BITTERNs (hard to find). The trails through the grassland areas have SAVANNAH and sometimes GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS. The rocky areas have ROCK WRENS. The rocky slopes have RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROWS. The open space and power poles are good for wintering RAPTORS.

[TOP](#)

B-32 PREFUMO CANYON ROAD

DIRECTIONS: ([MAP](#)) From Rte 101 in San Luis Obispo take the Los Osos Valley Road exit and drive west. One block after the 4th traffic light (about 1.6 miles from Rte 101; just past the school on the right), take a left (west) on Prefumo Road.

BIRDING: At a bridge crossing there is a parking area for some general birding. However, the target birds along this road are GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS and OWLS. The GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS are found on the steep grassy slopes after the road starts up a steep area and on up to the first houses at the top of the road. Presence and exact locations vary with cattle grazing. The sparrows like relatively ungrazed grassy slopes with a few taller weeds or bushes for singing perches.

Prefumo Road becomes See Canyon Road as it starts down the south slope toward Avila Beach (see [South County Guide, section C-1](#)). The two roads / canyons provide the best OWLING opportunities in the county. If you plan to look for owls there, explore it by daylight first to note where there are houses tucked away in the trees, and to look for safe pull-offs, which are few in number.

[TOP](#)