



Santa Cruz Bird Club

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10/16/23

To Whom It May Concern,

The Santa Cruz Bird Club (SCBC), a local bird conservation organization of approximately 400 members, is concerned about recent and ongoing construction of the PWS Conveyance Project at the Laurel Street Bridge and its impacts on nesting migratory birds.

The approximately 2 mile urban San Lorenzo River stretch is part of the protected Pacific Flyway, which is vital for the survival of diverse migratory land birds and waterfowl. The importance of this river stretch is evidenced by the high count of 222 species documented in eBird (among the world's largest biodiversity-related science projects), ranking it #14 out of 100 Santa Cruz County hotspots, one of the highest species counts in the county.

The Laurel Street bridge is part of the migratory insectivorous Cliff Swallows breeding habitat. Cliff swallows are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and thus cannot be "taken" or completed nests removed without a permit during the breeding season (2/15-9/1 according to Calif Dept of Fish and Wildlife, CDFW.)* In previous years, both sides of the Laurel St. bridge ledges had up to approximately 50 active nests. Currently, toward the end of construction, there are approximately 15 completed and partially complete nests present from this year's breeding season, a considerable reduction from historical trends. (as documented by Jane Mio).

It is our understanding that this low nest count is due to the PWS Conveyance Project construction, for which we request the following information:

1. Did the CDFW issue a permit for the Project that entailed specific details for addressing the migratory Cliff Swallow breeding habitat/nests actions?
2. Will the Cliff Swallows be able to access their familiar Laurel St. bridge ledges breeding grounds upon construction completion?

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Sheridan, President, Santa Cruz Bird Club,
Jane Orbuch, Conservation Officer, Santa Cruz Bird Club

*For more info visit this University of California link <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/home-and-landscape/cliff-swallows/pest-notes/>