

Docent Circle: Field Notes Week of October 16, 2006

Here is a poem to learn and say with your students:

October gave a party
And leaves by the hundreds came:
The Valley Oak, the Ash, the Walnut
And leaves of every name.
The Sunshine spread a carpet,
And everything was grand.
Miss Weather led the dancing,
Professor Wind, the band.



Adapted from George Cooper

By now you will have heard the melodious, plaintive call of the **Golden Crowned Sparrow** at your home, in the Laguna, and everywhere there are birds. Some describe their call, coming down the scale, as "Oh... dear... me." Sometimes, it sounds like a warped record, other times it is a single note, but always dreamy and endearing!

We suggest that you seek out the Golden Crowned Sparrow on your field trip – it will be easy to find. Or maybe you will hear it first; you can ask your students to listen closely and then look.



Some docents may want to make golden crowns for their students to celebrate the beginning of Fall, marked each year by the return of this bird.

This is a large sparrow, but a small songbird. Notice the golden yellow crown, bordered by black, gray face and chest, with white wingbars. The back is plain brown with black stripes – with a long tail. This bird is about 6-7 inches and weighs about 1.06-1.16 ounces.

This little bird arrives every year around Sept 19 from Alaska, the Yukon and British Columbia, where it has spent the summer nesting and raising young. Some Golden Crowned Sparrows will migrate as far as Baja for the winter, but we are lucky enough to host large numbers of them here in the Laguna all winter long.

One way to tell the difference between juvenile Golden Crowned and White Crowned Sparrows, who flock together, look alike, and arrive at the same time, is the beak. Goldens have a darker beak and Whites have a yellow beak.

What is going on in the Field with wildlife? Watch for big **Yellow Garden Spiders** and **Pumpkin Spiders** (see *Field Note 10-03-05*). Kids love to be horrified by them! This is the time of year when they are spinning their egg sacks.

Watch for **the return of these birds**: Yellow Rumped Warblers, Ruby Crowned Kinglets, Mergansers, Scaup and Grebes.

Bobcat young are beginning to hunt on their own – and with their mother in their first year.

Acorns, anyone? Scrub Jays, Grey Squirrels, Acorn Woodpeckers, Black Tailed deer, field mice, larvae, weevils, people, and pocket gophers (?) are enjoying easy meals these days. Have you ever noticed a foamy substance at the top of an acorn? The foamy, icky stuff forces the cap the cap from the acorn in order to push it off the tree. A weevil or moth larvae is most likely munching away inside the acorn and the tree is attempting to reject this seed.

