

This month's online meeting featured 13-year-old Calvin who spoke to 20 young birders about his Sapsucker Study.

Calvin begin his talk by describing told Sapsucker species. He told us there are generally believed to be 4 species of Sapsuckers, though some people consider Sapsuckers to be Williamson's and everything else, due to the fact that Sapsuckers tend to hybridize frequently.



Sapsuckers drill small holes in trees to feed on sap.

Sapsucker Holes

- ▶ Woodpecker holes drilled in horizontal lines
- ▶ Tap into the sap of the tree like wells (think like maple syrup)
- ▶ Come back later and eat the sap and any insects that were attracted to the sap and got stuck
- ▶ Not only method of foraging - also flycatches, gleanes, and probes for insects



-Williamson's Sapsucker

Williamson's Sapsucker

- ▶ Rare in LA Basin
- ▶ Range = Western US (Rockies, Cascades, Sierras, and Coast Ranges)
- ▶ Breeding = Mountain pine forests
- ▶ Winter = downslope movement also rarely into well-planted lowland areas
- ▶ Extreme sexual dimorphism (males and females look different)

Male
Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Female
Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Map Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Legend:
■ Breeding
■ Nonbreeding
■ Winter
■ Year-round

-Red-breasted Sapsucker

Red-breasted Sapsucker

- ▶ Most common in LA
- ▶ Range = West Coast (Coast Ranges, Cascades, and Sierras)
- ▶ Breeding = Mountain pine forests
- ▶ Winter = similar, with some downslope movement and also into well-planted lowland areas
- ▶ Two subspecies (north + south)
 - ▶ Northern is more richly colored
 - ▶ Southern is in LA

Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Map Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Legend:
■ Breeding
■ Winter
■ Year-round

-Red-naped Sapsucker

Red-naped Sapsucker

- ▶ Less common in LA
- ▶ Range = Western US (Rockies, Cascades, Sierras)
- ▶ Breeding = Mountain pine forests
- ▶ Winter = downslope and southerly movement also into well-planted lowland areas

Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Map Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Legend:
■ Breeding
■ Migration
■ Winter
■ Year-round

-Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

- ▶ Rare in LA
- ▶ Range = Eastern US and boreal Canada, rare winter visitor to LA
- ▶ Breeding = eastern deciduous forests and boreal forests
- ▶ Winter = southerly movement

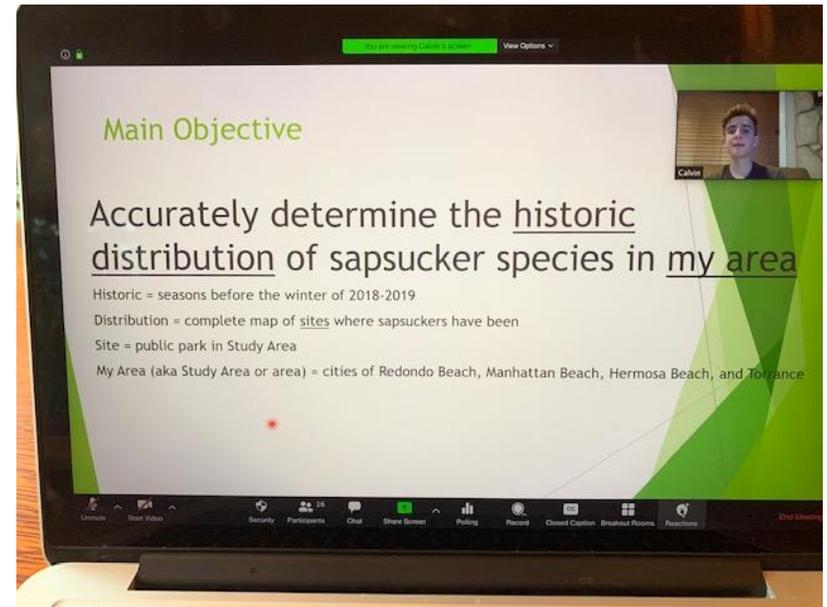
Photo Credit: allaboutbirds.org

Map Credit: allaboutbirds.org

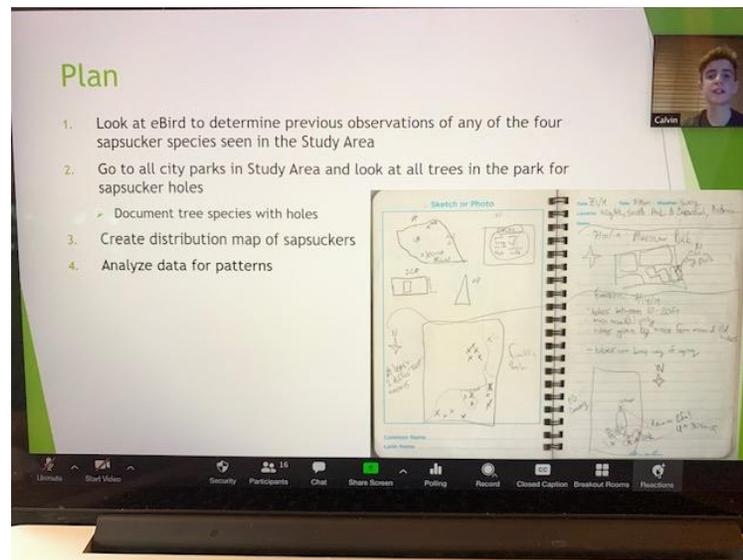
Legend:
■ Breeding
■ Migration
■ Nonbreeding

Calvin developed an interest in Sapsuckers in his neighborhood after seeing reports of them, but never seeing one himself. He also cared about his project because he knew that all species of sapsuckers are threatened by climate change. Since Sapsuckers are not well-documented in his local patch, he wanted to provide documentation on baseline measures. All of this interest lead to a research opportunity!

Calvin set out to design a study in search of Sapsucker holes in all the local parts in his “patch”. His main goal was to accurately determine the historic distribution of sapsuckers in his local patch.



To do this he developed a plan:



Calvin's secondary objectives were to:

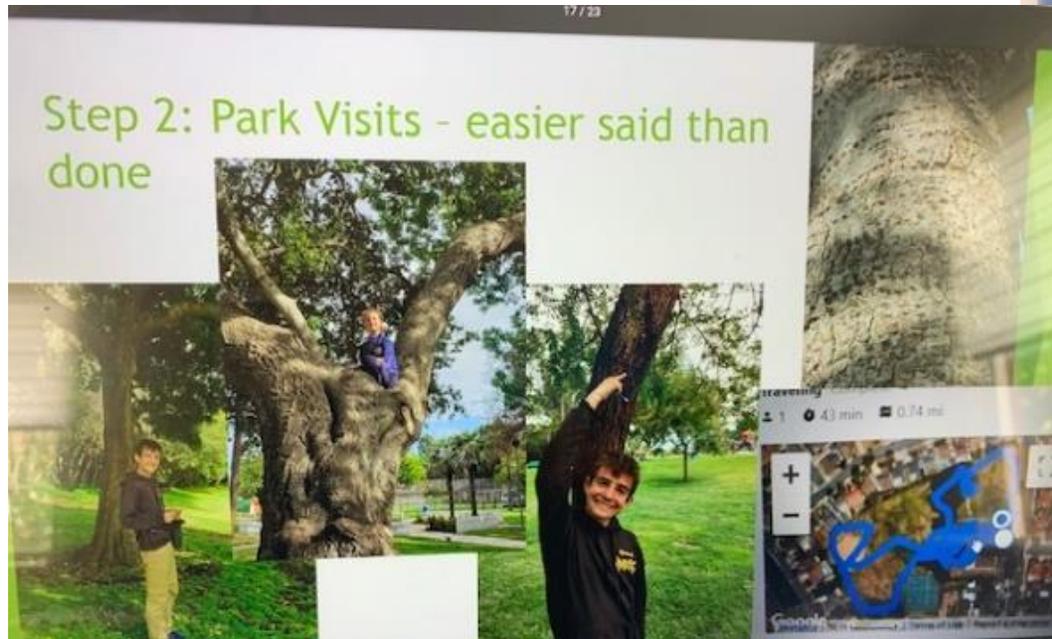
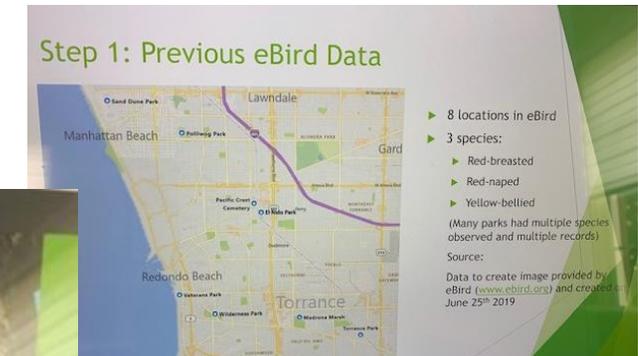
1. Find any patterns in tree species that have sapsucker holes.
2. Determine if his protocol for documenting previous distribution is effective.
3. See if there is any way to easily age sapsucker holes.
4. Look for opportunities for further study.



Calvin identified 4 study areas in his local patch with a total of 65 parks! Calvin had a lot of work ahead of him, so he broke down his job into steps.

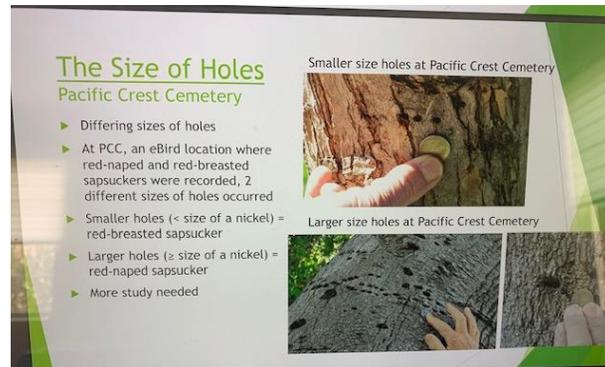
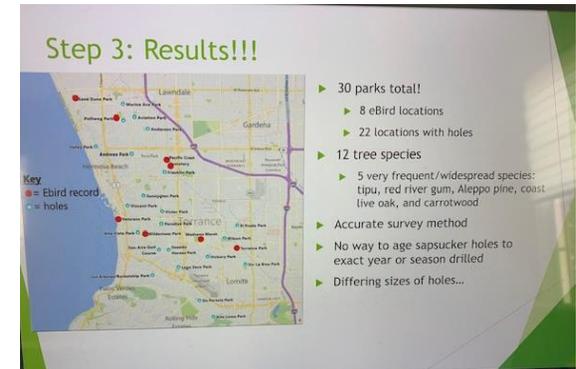
Step 1: Examine prior eBird data for records of Sapsuckers.

Step 2: Visit all the parks. Thanks to his sister, Sama, and his family for helping!



Step 3: Compile the results.

- Calvin was able to find sapsucker holes in 30 parks, of them eBird locations, 22 locations with holes, 12 species of trees, holes were difficult to age to exact year or season drilled, and hole size varied.
- Size of holes seemed to vary by species, and by linking eBird data with the hole size Calvin correlated that smaller holes, those less than the size of a nickel were likely those of the Red-breasted Sapsucker and holes larger than a nickel were likely made by Red-naped Sapsucker.



Calvin concluded that:

- Baseline survey data is now available for Sapsuckers in his area.
- Sapsuckers are more widespread than previously thought.
- Sapsuckers in his patch tended to have tree preference.
- More study is needed to link the size of holes with species and to age the holes.

