



Rob Fowler 2022 BOTY Winner

The 10th annual Humboldt County Bird of the Year award for rarities spotted during calendar year 2022 was given out April 15, immediately preceding the Godwit Days Saturday keynote lecture. Species were selected based on their rarity in the County, whether they remained long enough to be seen by many people, with a plus if their sighting generated some visitor spending. Judges were Jude Power, Keith Slauson, and Tom Leskiw.

Three of the five nominees were sparrows and the other two were seabirds. In alphabetical order by the bird's common name, the Top 5 were Black-chinned Sparrow, Black Storm-Petrel, Cassin's Sparrow, Nazca Booby, and Nelson's Sparrow.

The winner was Black-chinned Sparrow, which was found on July 2 by Rob Fowler as he was performing the annual Friday Ridge Breeding Bird Survey. This second County record was spotted southwest of Grouse Mountain along Forest Service Route 1.

The runner-up species was a Cassin's Sparrow, found by Greg Gray on October 4 on property managed by the McKinleyville Land Trust that is known as Cha-GAH-Cho. This bird represents the fourth confirmed record for Humboldt.

Nelson's Sparrow took third place. Rob Fowler spied it on December 6 at the Arcata Marsh. It was approximately the eighth Humboldt record and had not been reported in the County since 2001. (Improbably, Tony Kurz found a second Nelson's Sparrow while looking at the bird Rob discovered!)

In fourth place was Black Storm-Petrel. The bird was discovered by Gary Friedrichsen and Ken Burton offshore in the Eel River Canyon on September 19. Although it represents about the 14th County record, the species had gone unrecorded here for 32 years!

Finally, in fifth place was Nazca Booby, a first confirmed Humboldt record. It was found 27.5 miles off Eureka on August 12 by J.D. Paes. (While the judges generally like to steer clear of single-observer sightings, the ID was confirmed by a series of four diagnostic photos.)