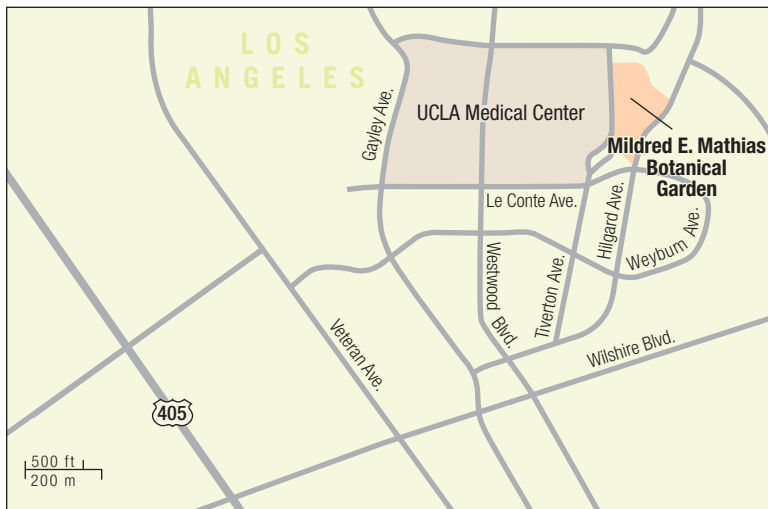


mildred e. mathias botanical garden los angeles, california

34°3'55.83"N 118°26'28.58"W



The Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden is a seven-acre green oasis in the concrete deserts of Los Angeles. From I-405, exit at Wilshire Blvd. and drive east. Turn left on Westwood Blvd., right on Le Conte Ave., and left onto Tiverton Ave. Stop at the parking kiosk and purchase a parking pass for the CHS lot adjacent to the garden.

Tucked away in the southeast corner of the UCLA campus, the Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden is an ideal spot for birding.

This is where I learned to bird. Having had the revelation that, even in the city, birds were all around me, I set out to discover just how many species called UCLA home and to create a website about them. The garden is where I honed my skills: watching, listening, and photographing. The sheer variety of potential experiences has kept me coming back.

On some days, the winding paths and towering trees offer nothing more than quiet contemplation. But on others, they nearly burst with activity: a frenzied Bushtit flock, a mischievous pair of ravens, a rushing Cooper's Hawk, a scolding House Wren, a skulking Hermit Thrush.

Nesting birds include Bewick's Wrens, Anna's Hummingbirds, Bushtits, Cooper's Hawks, and (I strongly suspect) Spotted Towhees. A trio of Western Tanagers stayed the winter one year. And during migrations, ragtag convoys of birds pass through: Lincoln's Sparrow, Rufous Hummingbird, Ash-throated and Dusky Flycatchers, MacGillivray's Warbler, and others.

— Jason R. Finley

Jason R. Finley is a UCLA grad and the webmaster of birdsofwestwood.com. He now lives in Illinois, where he misses the hummingbirds but digs the cardinals.

sites nearby

Ballona Wetlands

Located in Marina Del Rey. Take 405 to Jefferson Blvd., west 2 miles on Jefferson to just past Lincoln Blvd. One of L.A.'s last wetlands. Restored freshwater marsh excellent for birding.

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area

4100 South La Cienega Blvd. in Baldwin Hills. Large park with areas of native habitats. Good for migrants and a variety of other birds.

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AT A GLANCE

Habitat

Wide variety of exotic and native plants (tropical and subtropical), artificial stream and pond, and experimental crops.

Terrain

Some steep and narrow paths. Stairs in places. Perimeter service road and some internal paths are wheelchair accessible.

Birds

Common: Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds, Bewick's Wren, Black Phoebe, Bushtit, California Towhee, Common Raven, Cooper's Hawk, House Finch, House Wren, Lesser Goldfinch, Northern Mockingbird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler. Less common: Common Yellowthroat, Hermit Thrush, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Orange-crowned Warbler, Song Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Townsend's Warbler, Western Scrub-Jay, Western Tanager, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-chevrons Parakeet. Rarities: Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Dusky Flycatcher, Lincoln's Sparrow, MacGillivray's and Nashville Warblers, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Rufous Hummingbird, Western Wood-Pewee, Yellow Warbler.

When to go

Any time of year. Spring and fall hold the most potential for surprises. Mornings best.

Amenities

Picnic tables, benches, outdoor amphitheater. Restrooms, food, and water at medical center.

Access

University garden. Free admission. Hours 8-5 Monday-Friday (8-4 in winter) and 8-4 on weekends. Closed on university holidays.

Tips

Patience and a strategically chosen sitting rock can yield close-up views of hummingbirds bathing themselves in the tiny waterfall at the head of the garden's stream.

For more info

Garden website, www.botgard.ucla.edu. Birds of Westwood, www.birdsofwestwood.com. Los Angeles Audubon Society, www.laaudubon.org.

www.BirdersWorld.com/hotspots