



UCSC DORIS DUKE CONSERVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

June 26, 2020

Dear Open Space Authority Urban Grant Program,

I am writing this letter in support of San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory's (SFBBO's) proposal to plan a facility upgrade that will substantially increase its benefits to the community. As the Program Director of the UC Santa Cruz Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program ([conservationscholars.ucsc.edu](https://conservationscholars.ucsc.edu)) I am particularly excited about the prospect of expanding capacity to support hands-on learning opportunities for young conservation leaders. With the new facility we will be able to have our Scholars visit the station for hands-on learning in conservation science. Some may be inspired to spend eight-weeks in an internship with SFBBO in a funded internship, part of their fellowship experience. Previous Scholars have had transformative experiences interning at SFBBO, highlighting their dedication to education, mentorship, and community service.

SFBBO's Coyote Creek Field Station represents a unique resource in the area. Public banding demonstrations and group visits allow community members, including children, to observe scientific work in action, and offer a rare opportunity to see wild birds in the hand. Volunteers at the station engage in up-close-and-personal encounters with the local ecology, receive specialized training in bird handling and scientific data collection, and contribute to the continuation of a decades-long avian monitoring program. College and graduate students from area institutions such as ours acquire crucial field skills, carry out scientific projects, and importantly discover their identity as scientists at the station. SFBBO has been particularly impactful mentoring Scholars from diverse backgrounds and those identities historically marginalized in the conservation field. Our program, focused on accelerating future leaders of a more diverse and inclusive conservation movement views SFBBO as a close ally in this pursuit.

The proposed planning will center on improvements to Coyote Creek Field Station to increase its capacity to provide these benefits to the community, and will empower SFBBO to center feedback from stakeholders in designing the facility and its future programs. Goals for the upgrades under consideration will include planning a larger, more functional, and more sustainable station building and designing a more accessible demonstration area to facilitate data collection, class demonstrations, and outreach programs. The banding station's location in diverse San Jose, CA with its multiple 2- and 4-year colleges

and research universities makes it well-suited to serving a variety of educational needs, such as forming part of a course curriculum, as a source of undergraduate and graduate skills training, and as a research site. The planning proposed here, which will allow the facility improvements to be extensively informed by consultation with educators and researchers, will ensure that the upgraded banding station is tailored to programs that serve local needs.

I support this proposal as someone familiar with the transformative impact of field research experiences on students. A summer, a few weeks, or even a single morning can change the direction of a young person's career, and inspire countless individuals to conserve wildlife and wildlife habitats. Revitalizing the field station will expand the reach and impact of SFBBO's work, allowing more public demonstrations, interns and students to work at the site. This will in turn raise the visibility of this special gem of a research station in the heart of the South Bay.

In summary, I am excited to voice my overwhelming support for SFBBO's proposal, and my clearest intent to continue building on our collaborations with SFBBO.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abraham Borker'.

Abraham L. Borker, Ph.D

Program Director, Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program ([conservationscholars.ucsc.edu](https://conservationscholars.ucsc.edu))