

*Santa Barbara Song Sparrow*  
*Melospiza melodia graminea*<sup>\*</sup>

*Delisted, Channel Islands, 1983*<sup>†</sup>

“[T]he song sparrow is one of the most widespread sparrow species in North America. Though its bland plumage has a wide range of variations, its exquisite voice is easily recognized,” even if the one you hear now

sings a song unlike the one in your hometown

who learned to quote

from a needle  
threaded in parent & neighbor notes

embroidering

its leafed out

zone

The Santa Barbara Song Sparrow on the island near my hometown was “common in the wooded canyons” in 1892.<sup>‡</sup>

It was still “the most abundant bird” in 1897.

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*And the land porpoised its back and shifted and islands and cliffs appeared  
and on them gathered bushes, then birds*

∴

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<sup>\*</sup> *Endemic Channel Island subspecies that once inhabited Tchunashngna (Tongva name for this island; Barbareño Chumash name unknown; English name: Santa Barbara Island) until about 1967.*

<sup>†</sup> To note: delisted not because recovered but because presumed extinct.

<sup>‡</sup> Say CP Steator’s field notes.

If you see a streaky sparrow perched on a bush, leaning back, throat open

pink-exposing

stuttering

beads of sound clattering rounded raindrops on a string

a wet sound you can see through, shining

or if it's talking to the frogs & flies

or in flight : purr of wind on wingtips

air so pleased to stroke the feathers it furs

the sparrow's squawk, so much

sparrow . so

∴

“The Song Sparrow sings a loud clanking song of 2-6 phrases [ ... ] with abrupt, well-spaced notes and finishes with a buzz or trill”

(Define a “well-spaced” note from the sparrow's POV, please.)

∴

Each squeak a metal pin

prick in air imploding or

a butterfly's unfolding wings exploding from the beak

What color song?

Tin color.

Straw yellow. See the *yi*

*the yi yi who yeah yeah bee bee*

*Mary yee Mary yee*

(But actually there is no way to transcribe this.)

∴

∴

*And the rabbits came alive in the night and nibbled the slender-flowered phlox,  
the rockcress and barberry, the island chicory, till their cloaks grew long. Ears veined and quivering, long. Sang  
no sparrow song.*

∴

“The Santa Barbara song sparrow was a former resident of Santa Barbara Island, where it was driven to extinction by predation and habitat destruction” (introduced cats) (introduced rabbits). This happened

when?

When we don’t know but the last Santa Barbara Song Sparrow was spotted  
by humans sometime  
around when I was

two

.

two

years after Mary Yee died.

∴

We say we saw/

we didn’t see the bird

The bird saw & heard

us as each foveal cell carrying its droplet of oil

sharpened the colors . the ones

you can’t see .

who

was Mary Yee?

∴

*What Settlers Brought to the Channel Islands*

Feral euro-sheep (*Ovis aries*<sup>§</sup>)

And feral euro-rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Feral cats (*Felis catus*)

Feral goats (*Capra hircus*)

And Black Rats (*Rattus rattus*<sup>\*\*</sup>)

Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*<sup>††</sup>)

And domestic cattle (*Bos taurus*<sup>‡‡</sup>)

And navy live-fire multi-threat training in “littoral warfare, mine counter-measures; electronic [battle]; missile firing; operations in the shore bombardment area, amphibious operations; and Naval Special Warfare” on Kinkipar/San Clemente<sup>§§</sup>

And everything is susceptible now to large “superhot” fires

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<sup>§</sup> themselves now endangered

<sup>\*\*</sup> probably first made landfall in California with the 1853 Middle Anyapakh Islet shipwreck of the *SS Winfield Scott*, a sidewheel steamer bringing goldrushers and other passengers between San Francisco and Panama.

<sup>††</sup> eradicated on Wi'ma, 1993

<sup>‡‡</sup> removed 1998

<sup>§§</sup> May 24-27, 1968: two Channel Island Song Sparrows (a subspecies also endemic to the Channel Islands but different from our sparrow) were spotted on Kinkipar, the last documented pair to be seen there. The Navy website also notes that the island is home to “the San Clemente Island Loggerhead Shrike, which is listed as an endangered species pursuant to the Endangered Species Act.” The shrike was once a predator of the sparrows gone from there.

Mary Yee of the last cluster of children raised speaking Barbareño Chumash, the last

still

alive when I

was born, May 31, 1965, and two months after that

she

died

buried in a catholic cemetery And soon after that the

last sb song

sparro

w was spied

∴

And suddenly I am remembering the sparrow that landed on my finger this summer by the beach  
who opened its fledgling beak and squawked

"feed

me"

as if it knew I was sparrow-

bound

∴

*a group of sparrows is*

*a flock a chorus a choir*

*a single sparrow a-*

*lone*

*no*

*(zero)*

*sparrow*

*sparrow*

*called*

*a*

*tsip*

*tsip*

*and who*

*brought the cats*

*who*

*the rabbits*

*(who*

*ate the*

*island*

*'s*

*bushes)*  
*who knew*

*to build a nest leeward*  
*side of the brush, against*  
*the winds*

*who*

*was the last*  
*santa barbara song*  
*sparrow*  
*what*

*did she sing?*

*∴*

, —  
,  
hold it , make it —  
name it , break it —  
,  
,  
,

pus fuliginosus, and the eastern gray kangaroo *Macropus pianetus* except for the subspecies *Macropus pianetus lanquianensis*, pending: (1) receipt of additional information requested from the Australian Government on current management practices in each of the five mainland Australian states and the northern territory; (2) development and implementation of a new kangaroo management plan being prepared by the Australian Government; and (3) obtaining firsthand observation of the effectiveness of current management practices as modified by the new management plan. In the interim, careful surveillance of the Australian kangaroo situation will be maintained to assure that the present level of exploitation is not increased and that no other imminent threat to kangaroo populations is implemented or exists. Should any of the conditions above not be met or should they offer substantial evidence that one or more of the three species of kangaroos concerned are endangered now or are imminently threatened with becoming endangered, the Secretary of the Interior will promptly list as "endangered" the species concerned by appropriate amendment published in the *Federal Register*.

Appendix D to part 17, of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations is amended by adding the following species or subspecies to the United States List of Endangered Native Fish and Wildlife:

MAMMALS	
Common name	Scientific name
Utah prairie dog.....	<i>Cynomys parvidens</i>
Northern Rocky Mountain wolf.....	<i>Canis lupus tremulus</i>
Eastern cougar.....	<i>Felis concolor cougar</i>
BIRDS	
Common name	Scientific name
Mississippi sandhill crane...	<i>Grus canadensis pulia</i>
Puerto Rican whip-poor-will.....	<i>Caprimulgus noctitherus</i>
Santa Barbara song sparrow.....	<i>Melospiza melodia grammia</i>
AMPHIBIANS	
Common name	Scientific name
Desert slender salamander...	<i>Batrachoseps arida</i>
FISH	
Common name	Scientific name

IN SUCH PURSUANT AS THE MEMBER VOUCHER or on a temporary basis, unless prohibited by a restriction written into the document designating him as "acting" or unless not legally permissible.

Therefore, pursuant to provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (sec. 701(a), 52 Stat. 1005; 21 U.S.C. 371(a)) and under authority delegated to the Commissioner (21 CFR 2.130), part 2 is amended in § 2.120 by revising paragraph (f) to read as follows:

§ 2.121 Delegation of authority from the Commissioner to other officers of the Administration.

(f) Delegations regarding certification of color additives.—The Director and Deputy Director of the Bureau of Foods, the Director and Deputy Director of the Office of Technology of that Bureau, and the Director and Deputy Director of the Division of Color Technology of that Office and Bureau are authorized to certify batches of color additives for use in foods, drugs, or cosmetics, pursuant to section 706 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

Effective date.—This order shall be effective on June 4, 1973.

[https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/federal\\_register\\_document/FR-1973-06-04.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/federal_register_document/FR-1973-06-04.pdf)

Quintessential Wordsworthian *poiesis* occurs in the silence when the owls do not respond to the boy's song. In the mute dialogue, the poet imagines himself nature again. That which was lost has been found. Nature. But a mute dialogue is an oxymoron. Once language, is introduced, the gap is opened again. The reanimate the moment linguistically is, in Schiller's song after lost nature. The writer's image of nature is created through language. Nature only speaks when in the service of Poetry. This is the pastoral when, if not the eternal. Between the mind and the world, the poet, as poet, is a very simplicity. 'What?' asked one of the pre-eminence of literary theorists of the nineteenth century. Paul de Man: 'There is no doubt that



A fire in 1959 destroyed what was left of the coreopsis forest, the Santa Barbara Song Sparrows' last swathes of habitat.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Surveys in the '70s and years of intensive monitoring in the '90s failed to locate any resident sparrows.



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*Mary Yee's grandson James writes me back*

Fri, Sep 20, 2024, 1:51 AM

*haku haku* Eleni!

Thank you for your email.

It's nice to hear that you were thinking about my grandmother and honored her in your poem. Your reference to poetry inspired me to talk about poetry at our community language class last week. I brought up the idea to community members to use our language and express themselves with poetry.

The word for sparrow is *yo'y* (*yoh-yuh*)

The apostrophe represents a glottal stop, we use the stop in English words/expressions too, such as in the middle of the expression "uh-oh".

Our language seems to have lost many words after the arrival of the Europeans/Americans. For example, we have few words to express the many types of fish in the ocean; there is just one general word that covers many types. The same is true for small birds. It's likely the case that there were formerly much more specific names, and probably a name even for the song sparrow.

Fri, Oct 11, 2024, 1:42 AM

Thank you for asking, Eleni; it's fine if you'd like to use the words in your poem. I would be happy if you just give mention to the '*alapkaswa*' (Barbareño Chumash) language.

And I hope our community members are expressing themselves with poetry in our language by the next time you're in town!

Please let me know when you come.

*kiwa'nan* ('I go now for a short time')

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