

# The Teacher's Lounge

## Science, Education, and Vision

This fall, the Education Department at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is hosting the Lab's first student art exhibit, "Textured Birds." The art show, which will be displayed at the Lab's Visitor Center from September through December 2009, will be the culmination of a year's work for these students, who were also following the BirdSleuth curriculum in their science classes at the time.

The "Textured Birds" project began in the fall of 2008, when Phil Kahler, a middle school science teacher at Tualatin Valley Junior Academy (TVJA) and long-time participant in the BirdSleuth program, submitted examples of student paintings for publication in Classroom BirdScope. BirdSleuth staff were impressed with the quality and scientific accuracy of the paintings, and contacted Toni Kahler, TVJA's art teacher and Phil's wife, to see if she and her students would be interested in again extending their science class's bird observations into the art studio.

Throughout the course of the 2008-2009 school year, Mrs. Kahler's students selected focal species from among the Lab's many research and citizen science projects, as homage to the Lab's mission, and created

stunning works of professional-quality art. Eighth-grader Chelsea, who painted the Superb Starling (right), said, "I now care about birds! It's not like they're just there, I actually notice them. It was fun to paint, add texture, mix colors, and do all that with friends." (You can visit the Kahlers' website, [www.tvja.org/science/student\\_artists\\_at\\_work.htm](http://www.tvja.org/science/student_artists_at_work.htm), to find exciting images of the students as they create these beautiful pieces!)

Researchers at the Lab who are deeply involved with the students' focal animals are impressed with the quality of the artwork. Erin Bohman, project coordinator for "Golandrinas de las Americas," calls eighth-grader Nicole's piece on Tree Swallows, "beautiful... accurate and introspective."

By inspiring scientific curiosity and a respect for birds and nature in its students, BirdSleuth can build a passion for excellence that extends into all other aspects of study. As Phil Kahler said, "I really liked how this project fostered an aesthetic appreciation for these birds while inspiring students to wonder about the scientists who are studying them. This melding of art and science, I believe, captured the imaginations of my students and motivated them to care about the conservation of each species."



*Superb Starling*

by Chelsea, Grade 8

Tualatin Valley Junior Academy, Hillsboro, OR

Mr. Kahler

## Workshops!

Teachers: Interested in attending or hosting a BirdSleuth Teacher Professional Development workshop in your area? We welcome the opportunity to share BirdSleuth with teachers. We can customize a workshop or series of workshops for your audience, on a variety of topics relating to inquiry, citizen science, and birds! Visit [www.birdsleuth.net](http://www.birdsleuth.net) to find a list of workshops scheduled near you, or contact us to arrange one.