



Final Trip Report – 6th Annual Central Valley Birding weekend! December 5 – 6, 2009

Solano County, Gray Lodge, the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex and Yolo County.....

Quick Overview – This was a 500 mile road trip to some of the most important waterfowl wintering habitat found within the Pacific Flyway. Millions of waterfowl fly south from Canada and the northern tundra to spend the winter within the 24,000 acres of refuge found in California's interior. We started the weekend east of Fairfield as we tried for Mountain Plovers. It was a cold & windy day and we never found them, but we had great views of Loggerhead Shrikes, American Pipits and raptors including a Prairie Falcon. We worked our way north to Gray Lodge via the Sutter Buttes and stopped along the way for a few friendly horses a Rock Wren, Lark Sparrows and Sandhill Cranes. At Gray Lodge we found thousands upon thousands of waterfowl and large flocks of White Faced Ibis. We stayed here for the sunset before heading west to Willow's via 162. Along this route we observed owls hunting along the road; their images only silhouettes within the headlights. In Willows, the Economy Inn took great care of the group and we had a fantastic dinner at the Highway 99 Steakhouse. Sunday morning was clear and cold at 28 degrees. We were the first to arrive at the Sacramento NWR before the 7:10 AM sunrise. Soon the birds started to move and "THE SHOW" began in all its glory as flocks would lift and the air filled with calling geese and feather down. We found a female Hooded Merganser considered rare for the area. We eventually headed to the Colusa NWR where the lift-offs continued and we found Wood Ducks, just to name a few. We headed home via Sycamore Slough Road adding Acorn Woodpeckers and a 2nd Merlin to our list. Using roads east of 505 we observed flocking European Starlings in the thousands as the sun set. Our weekend ended in Madison, CA where participants went their separate ways and the first few rain drops of the fast approaching storm started to fall. I thank everyone for coming out on the adventure. It's a glorious time of year to experience the birds!



It looks like a Jerusalem Cricket

*Impaled on the barb-wire fence along Flannery near Robinson Roads in Solano County. Most likely killed by a Loggerhead Shrike who will return for this meal later.
Image taken by trip participant Gary Pappani*

Total Species Counted for the Weekend = 98 includes heard only (H)

Tundra Swans	Great Blue Heron	Killdeer	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Greater White-Fronted Goose	Great Egret	California Gull	American Robin
Canada Goose – Common	Snowy Egret	Rock Pigeon	Northern Mockingbird
Canada Goose -Cackling	Black Crowned Night Heron	Mourning Dove	European Starling
Snow Goose	White Faced Ibis	Barn Owl	American Pipit
Ross's Goose	Turkey Vulture	Great Horned Owl	Spotted Towhee
Mallard	Golden Eagle	Anna's Hummingbird	California Towhee
Gadwall	Bald Eagle	Belted Kingfisher	Song Sparrow
American Wigeon	Northern Harrier	Nuttall's Woodpecker	White-crowned Sparrow
Eurasian Wigeon	Red Shouldered Hawk	Northern Flicker	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Northern Pintail	Red-tail Hawk	Acorn Woodpecker	Fox Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Cooper's Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Lark Sparrow
Bufflehead	American Kestrel	Black Phoebe	Lincoln's Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Peregrine Falcon	Say's Phoebe	Savannah Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Prairie Falcon	Loggerhead Shrike	Red-winged Blackbird
Green-winged Teal	Merlin	Western Scrub-Jay	Brewer's Blackbird
Cinnamon Teal	Sandhill Crane	Yellow-billed Magpie	Western Meadowlark
Wood Duck	American Coot	American Crow	Great Tailed Grackle
Ruddy Duck	Common Moorhen	Common Raven	Purple Finch
Ring-necked Pheasant	Black-necked Stilt	Tree Swallow	House Finch
California Quail (H)	Long-billed Curlew	Bushtit	Lesser Goldfinch
Pied-billed Grebe	Long-billed Dowitcher	Bewick's Wren	American Goldfinch
Double-crested Cormorant	Dunlin	House Wren	House Sparrow
American Bittern	Least Sandpiper	Marsh Wren	
	Wilson's Snipe	Rock Wren	



Memorable Observations!

- Flock of Tundra Swans east of 80 near Cordelia
- Golden Eagle flying directly over the cars on 505 as we headed north!
- Undulating flocks of White Faced Ibis at Gray Lodge
- A male Eurasian Widgeon sleeping amongst the flock
- Family of coyotes watching us from afar
- Watching the sunrise and a Least Sandpiper slipping on pond ice
- 11 birdwatchers standing along the road looking for Great Horned Owls!
- 100+ Black Crowned Night Herons roosting along Colusa's auto tour
- Finding snipe well hidden within the landscape
- Running into Mtn. Diablo Audubon on Radio channel 11.22



All images taken by trip participants during our adventure –

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 - Ross's, Greater White Fronted & Snow Geese lifting at Colusa NWR – *L. Myers*
 - Sutter Buttes in the distance with a storm heading in - *J. Diandrea*
 - Feeding friendly horse persimmons near Sutter Buttes – *K. Harris*
 - Raccoon foraging along auto tour – *S. Gore*
 - American Bittern along Sacramento NWR auto tour – *S. Gore*
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 - 7:10 AM sunrise from Sacramento NWR viewing platform – *J. Diandrea*
 - Very hard to see Great Horned Owls along Colusa NWR auto tour – *A. Lowder*
 - Red Shouldered Hawk soaking up some sunshine – *K. Harris*
 - Very busy upside-down Downy Woodpecker – *A. Lowder*
 - Pied-Billed Grebe with eyes bigger than its stomach – *S. Gore*
 - And a memorable shot of a memorable & adventurous group! – *N. Gore & G. Pappani*

