

Quick Overview – Birding California's Central Valley the first weekend in December has been an annual **Let's Go Birding** adventure for over a decade, but this would be the first time we did the tour by bus. Hiring Corinthian Ground Transportation Services means no one has to drive except for Tom, and he is a professional. Tom keeps an eye on the road while we all relax, talk about what we see and do some birding en route. For this trip it was a strategic decision to leave the "Bird-aloo" at home because we knew we'd have plenty of rest stops throughout our weekend. This trip filled fast with folks coming from all over the Bay Area so we picked up participants along the way and made our first birding stop south of the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge along Lone Star Road. We stopped to stretch our legs and check out the surrounding farm land. Before we knew it an adult Bald Eagle flew across our path. We also found a Tri-colored Blackbird sitting in a pecan tree with a flock of Red-wings. Soon a local farmer drove up to see if we were OK. He thought our black bus must be lost on our way to the Colusa Casino. Don't ya just love country people! He was thrilled to see we were not lost and that we were all birders out enjoying his part of the world. He introduced himself as Don Bright the owner of Jeffrey's Ranch and said the birds we were checking out were in his pecan trees. With that he pulled out bags of pecans and gave us a great deal on several different varieties. A wonderful start to the weekend and we met a new friend. Next we stopped at the Colusa NWR where we soon found the Falcated Duck that has again returned to the area for the winter. A species from Asia, no one knows how it ends up in Colusa. Soon we drove the auto tour so we could enjoy all the birds before the sun went down. It was a beautiful day with temps in the mid 60's and we were fighting off mosquitos!

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Images from our day; Our bus load of birders enjoying the open space of Jeffreys Ranch 2250 Lone Star Rd. Williams, CA. – Lisa Myers / Wintering Falcated Duck with Greater White Fronted Geese at the Colusa NWR – Brooke Miller / Your graceful leader directing our driver – Joe DiAndrea / Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler & ducks sitting with their Killdeer buddy– both Tony Woo

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Birds Observed

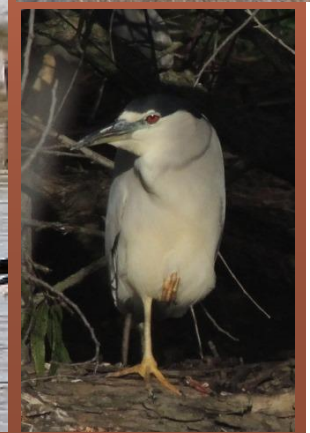
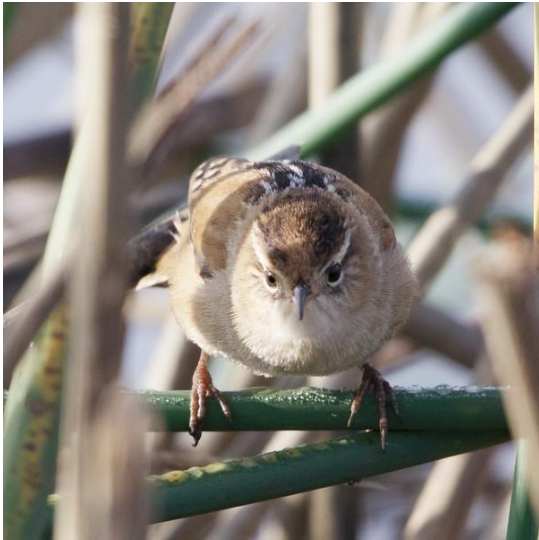
Tundra Swans
Greater White-Fronted Goose
Canada Goose
Snow Goose
Ross's Goose
Mallard
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Eurasian Wigeon
Northern Pintail
Northern Shoveler
Bufflehead
Canvasback
Ring-necked Duck
Green-winged Teal
Cinnamon Teal
Hybrid Teal
Ruddy Duck
Falcated Duck
Ring-necked Pheasant
California Quail
Pied-billed Grebe
Eared Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
American Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Black Crowned Night Heron
White Faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Red Shouldered Hawk
Red-tail Hawk
Ferruginous Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Swainson's Hawk
Sora fly-by
American Coot
Black-necked Stilt
Long-billed Curlew
Long-billed Dowitcher
Least Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe
Killdeer
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove

Barn Owl
Great Horned Owl
Anna's Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Nuttall's Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Acorn Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Lewis's Woodpecker
Peregrine Falcon
American Kestrel
Merlin
Black Phoebe
Say's Phoebe
Loggerhead Shrike
Northern Shrike
Western Scrub-Jay
Yellow-billed Magpie
American Crow
Common Raven
Tree Swallow
Bushtit
White Breasted Nuthatch
Bewick's Wren
Marsh Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Western Bluebird
American Robin
Hermit Thrush
Varied Thrush (H)
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
American Pipit
Cedar Waxwing
Yellow-rumped Warbler
California Towhee
Spotted Towhee
Song Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Golden-crowned Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Red-winged Blackbird
Tri-colored Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
House Finch
Lesser Goldfinch
House Sparrow



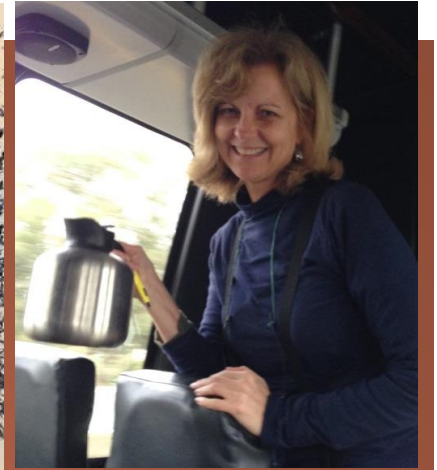
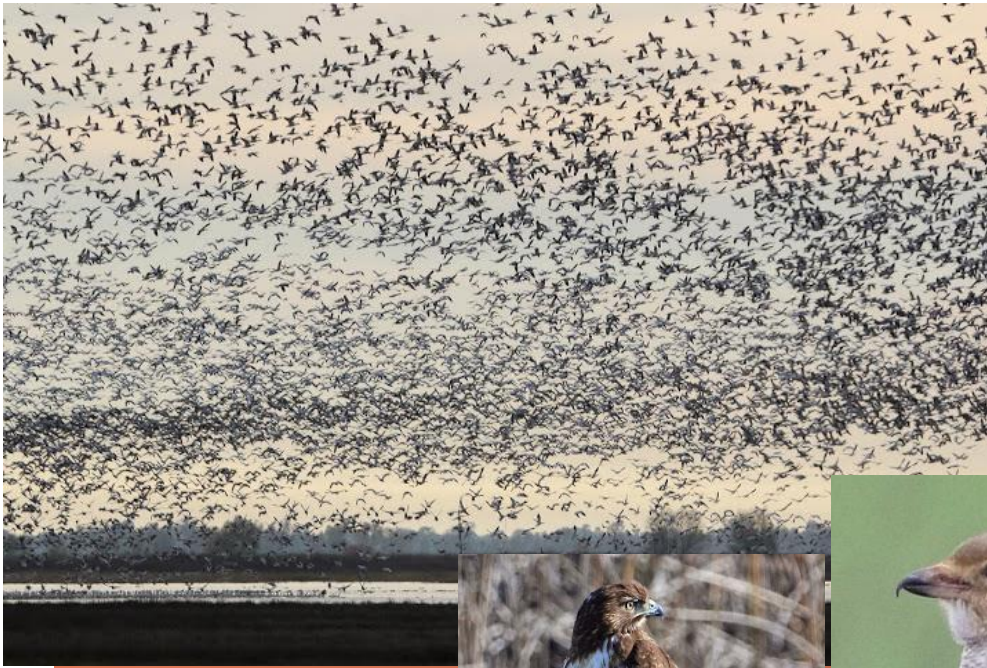
Continued from page 1 – As we birded the Colusa NWR we also saw other great birds like the Eurasian Wigeon, Hermit Thrush & a Swainson's Hawk. There are rumors out there that some Swainson's Hawks over-winter in the Central Valley, but all in all they are rare. We just hoped other birders would re-find it. It has been a drought year for California, but a few days before this trip an incredible storm brought much needed water and everything was wet, clean and crisp. It was getting late in the day so we headed to Sycamore Slough Road to look for owls into the sunset. As the light faded we had California Quails, a heard only Varied Thrush and for the first time on this road, Lewis's Woodpeckers were bugging at the tree tops near some noisy Acorn Woodpeckers. We then had a Great Horned Owl fly out to the edge of an alfalfa field where it was soon mobbed by Northern Harriers not happy about it's presence. The owl flew and ended up on the ground hidden by the alfalfa. Harriers circled above vocalizing amongst themselves. We counted 12 – 15 and none of us had ever before witnesses this type of activity. As it got darker the harriers retreated and we soon observed a Great Horned Owl perched on an irrigation pipe. The entire episode was quite exciting for all. So we headed back to Williams only a few miles away and the Granzella's Inn. This is a great location to spend the night because they have everything for a group of birders from a deli, plus an olive bar plus a restaurant. They even had Barn Owls circling above their parking lot. The morning would bring a new adventure.

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Images from our weekend - Up close to a Marsh Wren, hard to spot Wilson's Snipe and low flying Tundra Swan all photographed by Brooke Miller / The olive selection at the Granzella's deli – Lisa Myers / Group shot / Dark morph Snow Goose – Tony Woo / Black-crowned Night Heron – Joe DiAndrea / Possible hybrid Cinnamon Teal – Brooke Miller.
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Continued from page 2 – Sunday morning Tom was ready for us out in front of Granzella's Inn with a warm bus all gassed up and ready for birders and luggage. We went to the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge and found thousands of geese already moving about the refuge. The sound a flock makes is incredible. I hope everyone gets to experience that in their lifetime. As we traveled the auto tour and then stopped at the platform we added news species with each view. A quick, darting Sora was only seen by a few and a male Yellow-headed Blackbird was a quick fly-by, and a Lincoln Sparrow was too shy for most to see. We also had deer, River Otter and a swimming Raccoon. After birding the morning we stopped into the visitor's center to buy our duck stamps and more. Our picnic lunch out front had us enjoying a Fox Sparrow, American Goldfinch & a Red-shouldered Hawk. Anna's Hummingbirds were taking advantage of the sugar water put out by the rangers. After lunch we decided to go try our luck with the recently reported Northern Shrike hanging out in Tehama County. We arrived to find this great bird exactly where they said he'd be! After all had great looks we headed home but did stop for that herd of sheep and a dark morph Ferruginous Hawk. Thank you to all who put these adventures onto your calendars. I attract the nicest birders. We have a great time, see great birds. I thank you all for being part of the adventure & joy. I look forward to birding with you again.



Images of our weekend – Flocks in the thousands were lifting throughout our visit at the Sacramento NWR – Tony Woo / So how many bird guides serve you coffee? – Joe DiAndrea / We had to stop for some fast moving sheep – Lisa Myers / Red-tailed Hawk making sure no one got past his sign – Tony Woo / Juvenile Northern Shrike & a very distant dark morph Ferruginous Hawk both by Brooke Miller / The group enjoying the Northern Shrike with Lewis's Woodpeckers in the distance trees – Lisa Myers / a view of the wetlands – Joe DiAndrea