

Quick Overview – This was one of the few ½ day trips Let's Go Birding scheduled for 2012. It was designed for folks that can't fit a full day of birding into their schedule. Our birding started in the parking lot when we found ourselves in the middle of a Cooper's Hawk chase after a Rock Pigeon. As the freaked out pigeon hid, the accipiter waited from the roof. We then watched the Coopers Hawk drop to the ground looking for its prey. Within moments a burst of feathers crashed directly through the group as the pigeon fled with the hawk in close pursuit. The hide & seek continued and we headed for Half Moon Bay before we saw who won. Pilarcitos Creek was our first stop. We met more folks here and then headed out along the trail. The weather was spectacular. A pair of Northern Flickers flew in and crown sparrows stayed a pace ahead. We actually spent time talking about a mixed flock of bathing gulls. Yes, that's what I said, we ID'ed gulls! We soon put our scopes on a distant feeder and found Pine Siskins & American Goldfinch taking advantage of the free food. We then headed over the creek and to the ocean where (eventually) all found the many Snowy Plovers hiding in plain view; a lifer for some. Scanning the ocean we found very calm waters and few birds. Only Surf Scoters, distant grebes and a few loons were visible. So to stay ahead of the sunset we moved south to Wavecrest. A Black & White Warbler was observed by a few in the group as they crossed back over Pilarcitos Creek. (A Black & White was reported for the next 2 days in the very same spot.) Once at Wavecrest, White Tailed Kites, Northern Harriers, American Kestrels & Red Tailed Hawks were always within view. The trails were soaked from the recent rains and we had to carefully work our way along. As the sun set we started looking for the owls we knew were there. Our patience finally rewarded, we spotted the white, golden colors of a Barn Owl. It paid little attention to us as it hunted over the fields offering wonderful views. We saw it several times until it was too dark to observe. It was also getting really, really cold. So we ended our adventure with a chorus of Pacific Tree Frogs.



Birds Observed –

- Surf Scoter
- Red Throated Loon
- Western Grebe
- Eared Grebe
- Brandt's Cormorant
- Double Crested Cormorant
- Brown Pelican
- Snowy Egret
- Great Egret
- White Tailed Kite
- Northern Harrier
- Red Shouldered Hawk
- Red-tail Hawk
- Cooper's Hawk
- Peregrine Falcon
- American Kestrel
- Turkey Vulture
- American Coot
- Snowy Plover
- Heermann's Gull
- Herring Gull
- Thayer's Gull
- Glaucous Winged Gull
- Western Gull
- Rock Pigeon
- Mourning Dove
- Eurasian Collard Dove
- Barn Owl
- Anna's Hummingbird
- Northern Flicker
- Black Phoebe
- Common Raven
- American Crow
- Bushtit
- Bewick's Wren (H)
- Ruby Crowned Kinglet
- European Starling
- Townsend's Warbler
- Yellow Rumped Warbler
- Black & White Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Song Sparrow
- White Crowned Sparrow
- Western Meadowlark
- House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- Lesser Goldfinch
- Pine Siskin
- House Sparrow

(H) = heard only
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Images represent the day's birding and were taken by trip participants - House Finch, White Tailed Kite and Red Shouldered Hawk – all Brooke Miller / Cooper's Hawk taken in Campbell at our morning meeting spot – Doug Joo / Mixed flock of gulls at Half Moon Bay's Pilarcitos Creek – Brooke Miller / Pacific Tree Frog coming out after sunset - Doug Joo / The group scoping Snowy Plovers – Lisa Myers / Our California sunset - Doug Joo / one of many Snowy Plovers found along Pilarcitos Creek mouth – Brooke Miller