

Quick Overview – This was the first time **Let's Go Birding** planned a weekend around Half Moon Bay, California. Fall is the perfect time to bird the many hot spots found along this coastal town and I was inspired to plan the tour. Others were also inspired and the trip proved very popular. Reserving enough rooms to accommodate the folks turned out to be the biggest challenge. Fortunately, the Coastsider Inn took care of me, so we were set for Saturday night. We started our birding south of San Francisco at Milagra Ridge. It was a good place to stretch our legs. Damp and foggy, the birds we did manage to see included California Thrasher, both towhees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Hermit Thrush and a Bewick's Wren. From there we headed to the north end of Devil's Slide. This notoriously dangerous section of coastal Highway 1 was recently closed to cars & converted into a trail only open to hikers, runners, bicyclists and outdoor enthusiasts. Our driver Tom dropped us off so we could walk the 1.3 miles down to meet him at the south end. Although the fog was still present, we could see habitat around us plus the ocean waves below. Our first two birds were a Northern Flicker and a Hairy Woodpecker. Along the trail we had a wonderful experience with a Rock Wren. The bird had little concern for all of us enjoying his antics. A female American Kestrel also provided great views, and we all talked about how to ID the three different cormorants found on our coast. It was a great way to spend our morning and we all want to go back. From here we drove to Fitzgerald Marine Preserve where we ate lunch and then put our attention on the songbirds found along the trails. We found a flock of Pine Siskins which was a new bird for some. As we walked the Coastal Trail we ran into a mixed flock which included a Townsend's Warbler, a Red-breasted Nuthatch and several Yellow-rumped Warblers. While we never got to see them, we could hear Pygmy Nuthatch above. After our walk along the bluff we headed to the hotel where we checked-in, unloaded our gear and took a break before heading out to enjoy the raptors & sunset out at Wavecrest.

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Birds Observed –

Canada Goose
Mallard BB
American Wigeon
Northern Shoveler
Ruddy Duck PH
Surf Scoter DS
California Quail R
Common Loon
Red-throated Loon
Pacific Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Western Grebe PH
Eared Grebe PH
Black Vented Shearwater SC
Double-crested Cormorant
Brandt Cormorant SC
Pelagic Cormorant DS

 Brown Pelican DS
Great Blue Heron W
Great Egret PM
Northern Harrier W
White-tail Kite W
Red Shouldered Hawk
Red-tail Hawk
Turkey Vulture DS
Cooper's Hawk W
American Coot
Black Oystercatcher PH
Black Turnstone SC
Whimbrel PH
Killdeer PP
Black-bellied Plover PH
Western Gull
Heerman's Gull
Elegant Tern
Rock Pigeon
Band Tailed Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Eurasian Collared Dove
Anna's Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher PH
Northern Flicker DS
Hairy Woodpecker DS
American Kestrel DS
Black Phoebe
Say's Phoebe
Western Scrub-Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Chestnut Backed Chickadee
Bushtit
Red Breasted Nuthatch
Rock Wren
Bewick's Wren
Western Bluebird (H)
European Starling
Yellow Rumped Warbler
Townsend's Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Spotted Towhee
California 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
Brown-headed Cowbird
Western Meadowlark
House Finch
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow
DS – Devil's Slide
H – Princeton Harbor
W - Wavecrest
SC – Santa Cruz
(H) = heard only
(r) = En route



Images from Saturday – female American Kestrel hunting from the cliff, the group walking Devil's Slide and scanning the Pacific below both taken by Al Lowder / A favorite bird for our weekend, the Devil's Slide Rock Wren preening – L. Myers / The same Rock Wren looking over its domain - Joe DiAndrea
www.letsgobirding.com

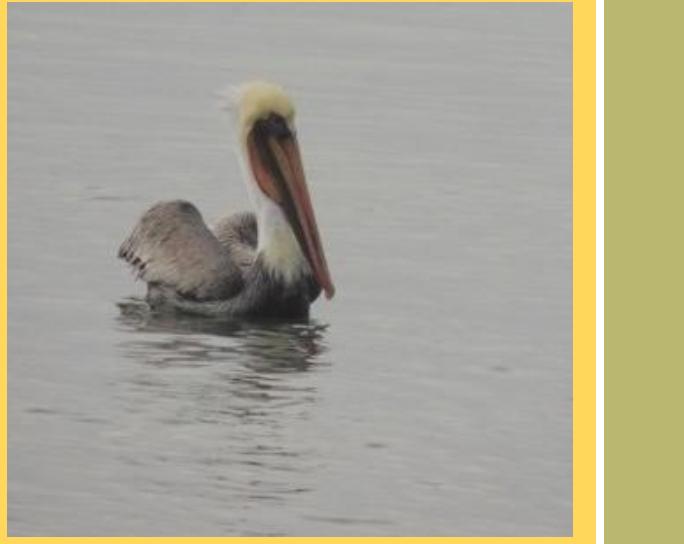
With the sunset only 90 minutes away, as soon as we got off the bus we started looking for raptors. We quickly saw our first of many White tail Kites. The other raptors also found here included Red-Shouldered Hawk, Red-tail Hawk, Northern Harrier and a Cooper's Hawk. It was a beautiful evening and as we walked to the cliff edge we found ourselves in the company of Western Meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrow, a Great Blue Heron and a Say's Phoebe. Just after the sun dropped into the ocean, we observed a Barn Owl coming out to hunt. As he flew out of sight we called it a day and headed for dinner. *Continue to page 3...*



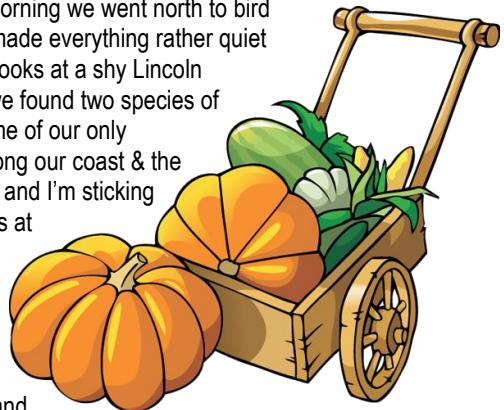
We can always count on our driver Tom from Corinthian Ground Transportation to be ready for us when we are ready to move on to our next location!



Images from our weekend: The group taking a break and having lunch at Fitzgerald Marine Preserve – L. Myers / Walking the Coastal Trail after lunch – L. Myers / The group birding into the sunset at Half Moon Bay's Wavcrest – Joe DiAndrea / One of many Brown Pelican's enjoyed over the weekend – Joe DiAndrea / And our incredibly beautiful sunset over the Pacific Ocean – Joe DiAndrea



October is pumpkin season in Half Moon Bay so we wanted to avoid the crowds. First thing Sunday morning we went north to bird the marshland around Princeton Harbor. It was a rather warm, overcast fall morning. The low clouds made everything rather quiet except for the song of the White & Golden Crowned Sparrows. We also spent time trying to get good looks at a shy Lincoln Sparrow, but the Fox Sparrow was seen by all in addition to the many Song Sparrows. In the harbor we found two species of grebes, and a Belted Kingfisher. A Black-bellied Plover, Whimbrel and Black Oystercatchers were some of our only shorebirds for the weekend. A recent typhoon across the ocean was sending large waves crashing along our coast & the rough seas were leaving little exposed shoreline for shorebirds to forage. Well, at least that's my story and I'm sticking to it! After our morning at the harbor we checked out of our hotel and headed south. Lunch time had us at Pigeon Point where the wind was blowing strong. It played havoc on our overcast day and made it difficult for the sunglass photo shoot happening along the cliff's edge. We did however add Killdeer, Tri-colored Blackbirds and Western Bluebirds to our day. As we continued south we pulled out at a few more locations with our final stop along Santa Cruz's West Cliff Drive. The temperatures here were in the 90's and the ocean was filled with surfers. We also observed Black-vented Shearwaters off shore numbering in the hundreds. A few Black Turnstone's, below on the rocks, were a nice sight and a great way to end the trip. As always, I thank all of you that put **Let's Go Birding** trips onto your schedule. I look forward to designing more birding adventures and I hope you can continue to come out and play.



Sunday photos – Harbor Seal watching us – Joe DiAndrea / Group of Ruddy Ducks & a view of the harbor - L. Myers / Flags blowing in the wind at Pigeon Point Lighthouse – L. Myers / Our wonderful group photo taken by a gal walking by! A Santa Cruz Black Turnstone below on the rocks – Joe DiAndrea Our group in Santa Cruz enjoying the turnstone – L. Myers

