



## Merced National Wildlife Refuge!

### Winter birding in California's Central Valley – January 16, 2010

This was a day planned around seeing the millions of birds that winter in California's Central Valley. Partnering with the Los Gatos, Wild Bird Center, **Let's Go Birding** was excited to head east to the Merced NWR. It was a clear and crisp morning, but as we drove over Pacheco Pass, we were soon high enough in elevation to see the thick fog below us. It was incredibly beautiful and eventually lifted.

Our first stop was at the Romero Overlook located along the shore of the San Luis Reservoir. The fog was so thick we could not see the reservoir but we did find a Greater Roadrunner hunting in the grasses along the parking lot. What a fantastic way to start the day.

We then headed east through Los Banos and up to Sandy Mush Road. En route we passed a culvert that was active with American White Pelicans, White Faced Ibis and many different species of shorebirds. In the distance a flock of blackbirds numbering in the hundreds erupted from a field as a Peregrine Falcon searched for its next meal. American Pipits and Horned Larks were also feeding in the fields.

Once at the Merced NWR we searched the surrounding habitat from the first platform before starting the five-mile Auto Tour. We added new species with every stop along the route. These lands are absolutely vital to the birds as they provide the habitat needed to sustain them through the winter before they migrate in the spring back north and east to their spring breeding grounds.

### Memorable Observations!

- Starting the day with a Greater Roadrunner
- Adult Bald Eagle flushing thousands upon thousands of geese
- Sandhill Cranes calling and flying overhead in formation
- Wilson's Snipe, really they're right there.
- Black Bellied Plovers in the hundreds
- Northern Harrier not able to get air-borne with its recent kill
- A Blue-Winged Teal!
- Trying to figure out what the naked guy was doing - pishing?



*Shirtless amongst the decoys regardless of the cold temperatures  
Photo taken by trip participant Sonny Mencher. More pictures on page 2.*

### Species found during our adventure total 84

*Birds are listed in the taxonomic order currently recognized by the AOU*

Greater White-Fronted Goose	Snowy Egret	Least Sandpiper	Marsh Wren
Snow Goose	Cattle Egret	Wilson's Snipe	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Ross's Goose	White Faced Ibis	Killdeer	American Robin
Mallard	Turkey Vulture	Black-bellied Plover	Northern Mockingbird
Gadwall	Bald Eagle	Ring-billed Gull	European Starling
American Wigeon	Northern Harrier	California Gull	American Pipit
Northern Pintail	White-tail Kite	Herring Gull	Common Yellowthroat
Northern Shoveler	Red Shouldered Hawk	Rock Pigeon	Yellow Rumped Warbler
Scaup (Romero Overlook)	Red-tail Hawk	Mourning Dove	Spotted Towhee
Ring-necked Duck	Cooper's Hawk	Greater Roadrunner	Song Sparrow
Common Merganser	American Kestrel	Anna's Hummingbird	White-crowned Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	Peregrine Falcon	Nuttall's Woodpecker	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Sandhill Cranes	Northern Flicker	Fox Sparrow
Cinnamon Teal	American Coot	Black Phoebe	Savannah Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Common Moorhen	Loggerhead-Shrike	Red-winged Blackbird
Ruddy Duck	Black-necked Stilt	Western Scrub-Jay	Tri-colored Blackbird
Pied-billed Grebe	American Avocets	American Crow	Brewer's Blackbird
American White Pelican	Greater Yellowlegs	Common Raven	Western Meadowlark
Double-crested Cormorant	Long-billed Curlew	Tree Swallow	House Finch
Great Blue Heron	Long-billed Dowitcher	Horned Lark	American Goldfinch
Great Egret	Spotted Sandpiper	Bushtit	House Sparrow

# A day at the Merced National Wildlife Refuge – January 16, 2010 California's Central Valley



All pictures taken during our day and provided by trip participant Sonny Mencher

- Sandhill Cranes flying in to land
- Greater Roadrunner foraging in the fog
- Snow/Ross's Geese during a distant lift off
- One of many American Pipits
- Loggerhead Shrike along the auto tour
- American White Pelicans in a culvert
- The group birding the Bittern Trail
- A great study on Juvenile Red-Tailed Hawks

