

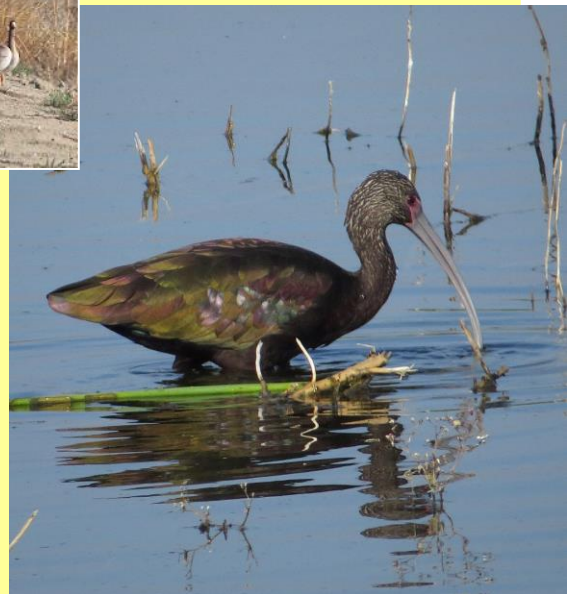
Quick Overview – Every year we look forward to the return of the Sandhill Cranes. They fly down into the Central Valley by the thousands each fall where they will stay until spring. There are several different places you can go to enjoy this species. We decided to return to the Merced National Wildlife Refuge because it had been several years since we had done a trip there. This would also be Freddy's last trip as the store owner of the Los Gatos Birdwatcher. So the trip filled fast as folks wanted to help celebrate her retirement in addition to seeing some great species. It proved to be a beautiful day with clear skies and moderate temps. Our first stop was at the Romero Overlook along Pacheco Pass. While folks checked out the San Luis Reservoir below we had a juvenile Bald Eagle fly directly over our head! We also found Yellow-rumped Warblers feeding in the tree tops. This was a quick stop and we soon headed to Wilson Road and Santa Fe Grade so we could look for the recently reported Vermilion Flycatcher. As soon as we parked we found our bird; a beautiful male. This was a life bird for many on the trip and you could hear the gasp as folks focused on his plumage. We also had a fast flying Merlin cross the road. From here we headed to the refuge. Sandhill Cranes, Greater White Fronted Geese, White-faced Ibis and ducks of many species were found in the first pond. We spent time here eating lunch and counting snipe. We also had great views of a Sora probing for food through the grasses. We then drove the auto tour. When we got to the 2nd boardwalk we found Blue-winged Teal along with Green-winged & Cinnamon Teal. Snow Geese were here too, and American White Pelicans. A Great-horned Owl sat in a distant tree and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were found throughout this area. A few Great Tailed Grackles were a surprise, but they seem to be showing up in many different habitats. The waterfowl and cranes found here will stay until February and into March which gives everyone time to go back for more!

Birds Observed –

- Greater White-Fronted Geese
 - Snow Goose
 - Mallard
 - Gadwall
 - Northern Pintail
 - Northern Shoveler
 - Bufflehead
 - Green-winged Teal
 - Cinnamon Teal
 - Blue-winged Teal
 - Ruddy Duck
 - Pied-billed Grebe
 - Double-crested Cormorant
 - American White Pelican
 - Great Blue Heron
 - Great Egret
 - Snowy Egret
 - Black Crowned Night Heron
 - White Faced Ibis
 - Turkey Vulture
 - Osprey
 - Bald Eagle
 - Northern Harrier
 - Red-tail Hawk
 - Cooper's Hawk
 - American Kestrel
 - Merlin
 - Greater Sandhill Cranes
 - Lesser Sandhill Cranes
 - Sora
 - American Coot
 - Black-necked Stilt
 - American Avocets
 - Greater Yellowlegs
 - Long-billed Curlew
 - Dowitcher
 - Least Sandpiper
- Wilson's Snipe
 - Killdeer
 - Ring-billed Gull
 - California Gull
 - Bonaparte's Gull
 - Rock Pigeon
 - Mourning Dove
 - Great Horned Owl
 - Anna's Hummingbird
 - Nuttall's Woodpecker
 - Northern Flicker
 - Black Phoebe
 - Say's Phoebe
 - Vermilion Flycatcher
 - Loggerhead-Shrike
 - Western Scrub-Jay
 - American Crow
 - Great Tailed Grackle
 - Common Raven
 - Bushtit
 - Bewick's Wren
 - Marsh Wren
 - Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 - Northern Mockingbird
 - European Starling
 - American Pipit
 - Yellow-rumped Warbler
 - Common Yellowthroat
 - Spotted Towhee
 - Song Sparrow
 - Golden-crowned Sp
 - Lincoln's Sparrow
 - Savannah Sparrow
 - Red-winged Blackbird
 - Brewer's Blackbird
 - Western Meadowlark
 - House Finch
 - Lesser Goldfinch



Images of our day: Yellow-rumped Warbler – Tony woo / Vermilion Flycatcher male – Brooke Miller / The group enjoy a Sora at the Merced NWF – Lisa Myers / Sandhill Cranes – Richard Wells. Continued on page 2



Images of our day: Sandhill Cranes flying over pasture, juvenile Red-tail Hawk, Greater White Fronted Geese and White-crown with Golden-crown Sparrows all taken by Tony Woo. White-faced Ibis – Don Bauman / Our ride awaits – Lisa Myers

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