

Birding the hot spots of San Joaquin County November 14, 2009

San Joaquin County comes alive every winter with thousands upon thousands of wintering waterfowl and cranes. It is a **Let's Go Birding** destination favorite and on this day in partnership with the Los Gatos Wild Bird Center we visited the many hot spots of the area. Our first stop was at the Phil & Marilyn Isenberg Crane Preserve located on Woodbridge Road. The flooded fields were filled with ducks, geese and shorebirds. Sandhill Cranes could be seen scattered about all around us. We had a great study on the difference in Canada Geese species as a large flock of "Cackling" Canada Geese flew in and landed. The difference in their size, vocalizations and field marks provided an interesting discussion. At the end of Woodbridge Road we had a long look at a Merlin. This wintering falcon landed on a snag and remained there during our stop. This was a rare opportunity to observe a bird that is often quickly out of site. We also pished out a couple of Lincoln Sparrows and kept running into a Belted Kingfisher which was hunting in the waters found in the levee.

We moved up to Cosumnes River Preserve. A single female Common Goldeneye was a great bird to ID in the middle of the Ring-necked Ducks and teals. Once on Desmond Road we finally had views of the Greater White Fronted Geese. Three American White Pelicans and a handful of Snow Geese were also present. It was here we got to watch two Northern Harriers eating a kill!

We ended our day on Staten Island Road. This dead-end farm road is a birder's paradise. There are few people and lots of birds! As the sun set over Mtn. Diablo we listened to and watched thousands of birds all around us including Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, and White Fronted Geese. We kept finding Wilson's Snipe in the flooded fields. This experience was a first for many and will not soon be forgotten. **This evening spectacle is available to all every sunset through February! I encourage you to go back and enjoy the show.**

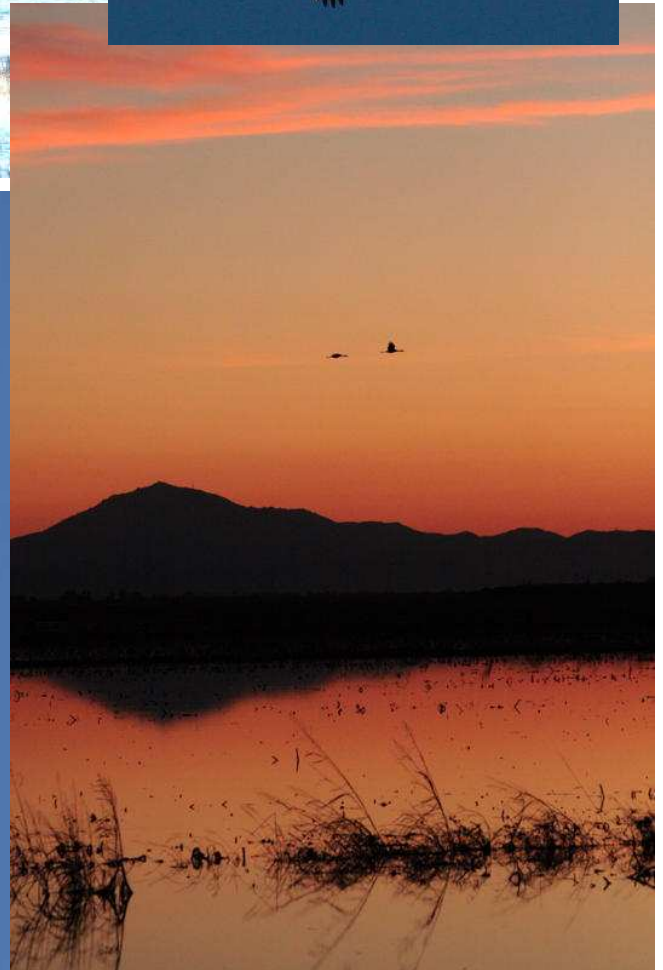
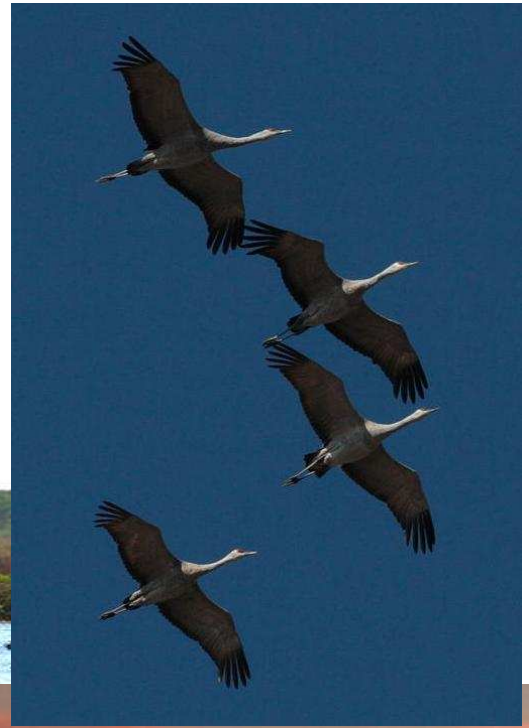
Pictures taken during our day!

Photos provided by trip participant Nate Sanders, there's more on page two.



Species found during our adventure includes heard only (H) Birds are listed in the taxonomic order currently recognized by the AOU

Tundra Swans	Great Egret	Wilson's Snipe	Bewick's Wren
Canada Goose – cackling	Snowy Egret	Killdeer	Ruby Crowned Kinglet
Greater White Fronted Geese	Cattle Egret	Ring-billed Gulls	American Robin
Snow Geese	White Faced Ibis	Rock Pigeon	Northern Mockingbird
Gadwall	Turkey Vulture	Mourning Dove	European Starling
Mallard	Northern Harrier	Barn Owl from car #1	American Pipit
American Wigeon	Red-tail Hawk	Anna's Hummingbird	Cedar Waxwings
Northern Pintail	American Kestrel	Belted Kingfisher	Yellow Rumped Warblers
Northern Shoveler	Peregrine Falcon	Northern Flicker	California Towhees
Bufflehead	Merlin	Downy Woodpecker (h)	Song Sparrow
Canvasback	Cooper's Hawk	Say's Phoebe	White Crowned Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Sandhill Cranes	Black Phoebe	Golden Crown Sparrow
Common Goldeneye	American Coot	Loggerhead Shrike	Lincoln's Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Black-necked Stilt	Western Scrub-Jay	Brewer's Blackbird
Cinnamon Teal	Greater Yellowlegs	American Crow	Red-Winged Blackbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Dowitchers	Tree Swallows	Lesser Goldfinch
American White Pelican	Dunlin	Marsh Wren	House Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Least Sandpiper		



Tundra Swan image provided by Bill Schmoker

*Images on page one – **Song Sparrow** probing items floating on the water's surface. **Western Meadowlark** foraging and vocalizing. **Northern Harrier** female eating prey item. Page two – View of the many birds found at the **Phil & Marilyn Isenberg Crane Preserve** located on Woodbridge Road. **Sandhill Cranes** flying directly overhead. Mount Diablo Sunset from **Staten Island Road** with Sandhill Cranes in foreground. All taken by trip participant Nate Sanders.*