

Central Valley Swainson's Hawks! Summer birding, July 19, 2008

Quick Overview – The goal of this trip was a first for **Let's Go Birding**. Instead of *avoiding* the summer heat of California's Central Valley, we drove out in the middle of it in order to find our target bird the Swainson's Hawk. Almost the entire population of Swainson's winter in Argentina, but each spring 100,000's of these buteos make the 3,500 mile migration back to North America. We spent a portion of the day at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife area before working our way up to the Zamora area of 5 & 505. We found Swainson's all along our way and before our day was over we had observed over 20 individual birds. This long distant migrant comes in many different plumages and we experienced many of them. In addition to eating rodents, a large part of this raptor's diet includes insects. We came across a group of 6 Swainson's flying circles around some dragonflies. We watched the Swainson's snatching them right out of the air! With our mission complete we headed back to the bay area, but we were still missing a Central Valley endemic, the Yellow Billed Magpie. So we stopped in the town of Winter's to take a final look. Sure enough, we found a few hanging out at a city park with the locals! Thanks everyone for joining in the hunt and making it a successful day!



Swainson's Hawk image taken by Greg Lasley
Dragonfly image taken by trip participant Sonny Mencher.
Enjoy more of Sonny's images on page 2.

Memorable Observations!

- At 62 inches long and a 108 inch wing span – American White Pelicans are magnificent!
- One juvenile male Yellow Headed Blackbird popped out of the reeds
- We got it – the Bank Swallow sitting among the Cliff and Tree Swallows
- White Faced Ibis all over the rice fields
- A River Otter, so how long can they stay under water anyway?
- From 75 to 100 degrees and back to 75 all in a day of successful summer birding

Total Species Counted for the Day = 45 includes heard only (H) and (R) in route
Birds are listed in the taxonomic order currently recognized by the AOU

Mallard	Swainsons Hawks!	Rock Pigeon	Bank Swallow
Wild Turkey R	Red-tail Hawk	Mourning Dove	Marsh Wren
Pied-billed Grebe	Cooper's Hawk R	Anna's Hummingbird	Northern Mockingbird
Double-crested Cormorant	White-tail Kite	Black Phoebe	Common Yellowthroat
American White Pelican	American Coot	Western Kingbird	Song Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Common Moorhen	Western Scrub-Jay	Red-winged Blackbird
Egret Egret	Black-necked Stilt	American Crow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Snowy Egret	Killdeer	Yellow Billed Magpie	Yellow Headed Blackbird
Black Crowned Night Heron	Distant Peeps	Tree Swallow	Western Meadowlark
White Faced Ibis	California Gull	Violet Green Swallow	House Finch
Turkey Vulture	Caspian Tern	Cliff Swallow	American Goldfinch
Northern Harrier			



All images taken during our day by trip participant Sonny Mencher.



Clockwise – Western Kingbird, Black Widow Spider (in the port-a-potty!), one of the many blooming flowers, American White Pelicans, one of our many Swainson's Hawk, American Goldfinch, White Faced Ibis, one of the thousands of dragonflies encountered all day and a Yellow Billed Magpie. Thank you Sonny!