



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Slice of California: Seabirds to Sierra I 2019**

Sep 5, 2019 to Sep 14, 2019  
Tom Johnson and Micah Riegner

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, [please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.](#)*



*During the fall thousands of Sooty Shearwaters congregate beyond the crashing waves of the rugged California Coast. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.*

September is a delightful time to bird Central California and this year was no exception. From the Bay Area, we shot over the Sierra and explored the rich habitat diversity that California has to offer, from reedbeds to redwoods, rocky shore to rolling hills, salty seas to tufa towers, and found some remarkable birds along the way. In the Sierra, the game birds stole the show, with Mountain Quail at Donnell Vista, the Greater Sage Grouse at Bodie, and the Sooty Grouse above Lee Vining. It was also a great tour for woodpeckers, with White-headed and Black-backed at the top of the list. Black-footed Albatross, Sabine's Gulls and all three Jaegers appeared for our pelagic trip as did Humpbacks and Northern Right Whale Dolphins well offshore!

As the morning fog dissipated off San Francisco Bay, we scanned Byxbee Marsh for Ridgway's Rail—a bird restricted to Salicornia meadows in the Silicon Valley. It didn't take long before we found one, then two, strutting along the mud: a fine start to a fine week of birding. From Byxbee, we closed in on Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge to check out a juvenile Ruff that was lingering for the past 4 days. The bird was still there, in its warm butternut plumage with crisp hazelnut streaks.

Our second day, we ascended the Diablo Range and traversed the Central Valley to Sonora (not the state in Mexico). The first bird of the day was Yellow-billed Magpie. These fancy corvids barely occur outside the Central Valley, making them one of the only California endemics. At Del Valle Park, we had fabulous views of Golden Eagles sitting on some Gray Pines, and a pair of California Thrashers singing away from a Sycamore. After ascending the Oak Savannah, we entered the Chaparral, a unique biotic community characterized by low, densely packed shrubs. Here we met Bell's Sparrow, a recent split from Sagebrush Sparrow—its sister counterpart on the other side of the Sierra. Bell's has darker plumage and lacks the dorsal streaks of its sagebrush counterpart. After several minutes of waiting, we finally locked onto the bird that alighted atop a shrub, pumping its tail like an Empidonax flycatcher. We had other stops that afternoon for Lewis's Woodpeckers and Lawrence's Goldfinch, two iconic birds of the American West.

Calaveras Big Trees State Park is an astounding place, supporting a grove of Sequoias, some of the largest trees in the world. We perused the grove in the early morning and amassed a hefty list of woodpeckers (7 species to be exact) including Pileated, White-headed, and both Red-breasted and Williamson's sapsuckers! There are probably few places in North America where you can see that many woodpeckers. We also glimpsed a few Pacific

Wrens mouse-ing their way through the understory ferns, occasionally perching out in the open for a millisecond or two. After a delicious Mexican lunch, we spent the afternoon looking for Mountain Quail, a bird we all yearned to see. No luck with the quail, so we returned to Sonora for the night.

The next day proved to be “quailier.” We stopped at a campground on our way to the Sonora Pass and there they were, Mountain Quail crossing the road! At least 7 scuttled through, ducking into the Ceanothus shrubs on the other side. The views were fleeting, leaving much to be desired. Thank goodness we came across them again while we were at Donnell Vista overlook, this time right in front of us on the trail! We watched one strut across the trail, and stand on a boulder before joining the rest of its covey in the drainage below.

The dawn light warmed our chilly backs at South Tufa as we watched hundreds of Eared Grebes on Mono Lake. In the sage flats above the lake we saw a few Sagebrush Sparrows and a loose flock of Pinyon Jays. After breakfast, we worked some of the migrant warbler flocks nearby and visited a spot for Black-backed Woodpecker, a bird I really hoped to see. Like Three-toed, these rather uncommon woodpeckers turn up at burn sites to take advantage of the rich assortment of grubs that proliferate in the dead trees. The site we visited hadn’t burned, but there were quite a few dead trees around. It didn’t take long before Tom heard the soft tapping of a woodpecker. We approached the sound, and there it was, an adult male Black-backed Woodpecker!

From the Mono basin we drove east to the ghost town of Bodie, where we spent the afternoon exploring the town and birding the Sage flats. On our way in, we were delayed because a pair of Greater Sage-Grouse was right off the road. On our way out, we came across another 20 birds moving gracefully through the sage, and watched them for several minutes. Check out my video below.

Before the tour I asked Tom about our chances for Sooty Grouse—he said chances were slim and that it has been years since anybody has seen it on the tour. That said, before returning to the coast we spent dawn in the hills above Lee Vining. We drove around a bend, and three Sooty Grouse were frolicking on the road in front of the van! We all slipped out of the van and had marvelous scope views of the birds as they picked through the gravel.

The next day we embarked on the pelagic trip. Onboard were numerous oceanic bird experts: Tom for one, who is the Albatross, as well as Chris Benesh, Alvaro Jaramillo, and Steve Howell, who had just published his Oceanic Birds of the World field guide. As we puttered out of the harbor, Surfbirds and Black Turnstones scampered over the wet boulders. Before we were even out of the bay, we saw our first Sooty Shearwaters: 5,000 of them in a big raft. It was a bonanza! These chunky shearwaters breed on islands in the Southern Ocean and make the journey across the Pacific to the rich waters off the California Current in the fall. As we neared the continental shelf, things got even more exciting as Humpbacks and Pacific White-sided Dolphins made their first appearances. Soon after that some Northern Right Whale Dolphins joined in the mix and there was just too much to look at! We circled back to shore by late afternoon, having seen dozens of Arctic Terns, droves of Sabine Gulls, a couple Black-footed Albatross and a small group of Buller’s Shearwaters.

We wrapped up the tour by birding the coastline down to Santa Cruz, where we saw a lingering Red-footed Booby, Wrentit and some other odds and ends. Oh, and we saw some big trees; I think they’re called Redwoods. Many thanks to all of you for a great week of birding. Tom and I thoroughly enjoyed it, and we look forward to seeing you again soon!

Micah

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#### KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**BRANT (BLACK)** (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) – A very worn bird at Half Moon Bay was probably an oversummering individual.

**ACKLING GOOSE (ALEUTIAN)** (*Branta hutchinsii leucopareia*) – A single bird was hanging out in a flock of Canada Geese at Pillar Point, Half Moon Bay.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*)

**WOOD DUCK** (*Aix sponsa*)

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Spatula discors*)

**CINNAMON TEAL** (*Spatula cyanoptera*)

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*)

**GADWALL** (*Mareca strepera*)

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Mareca americana*)

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*)

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*)

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – We saw a female out at Coyote Point. These are somewhat uncommon at this time of year.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – We saw one lone female our last morning at Pillar Point Harbor.

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

### Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

**MOUNTAIN QUAIL** (*Oreortyx pictus*) – Yay! One of the most sought-after birds of the Sierra. We had great looks at them at Donnell Vista.

**CALIFORNIA QUAIL** (*Callipepla californica*) – We had our best views of one off of Mines Road on our way to Sonora.

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**GREATER SAGE-GROUSE** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – Certainly one of the highlights of the tour. Watched a huge flock moving quietly through the sage brush near Bodie.



**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

*Podicipedidae (Grebes).*

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*) – One swam near the shore our last morning at Pillar Point.

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – These were super common at Mono Lake.

**WESTERN GREBE** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

**CLARK'S GREBE** (*Aechmophorus clarkii*)

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

**BAND-TAILED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – A few flew past us while we were birding in the Sierra, with one perching nicely above us at Calaveras Big Trees.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) [I]

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*)

*Apodidae (Swifts).*

**VAUX'S SWIFT** (*Chaetura vauxi*) – We had brief views of one as it whizzed past us our first morning while birding the Bay Area.

**WHITE-THROATED SWIFT** (*Aeronautes saxatalis*)

*Trochilidae (Hummingbirds).*

**ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD** (*Calypte anna*) – The most common hummer of the tour.

**RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** (*Selasphorus rufus*) – We saw one at the feeders in Lee Vining right before dinner.

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).*

**RIDGWAY'S RAIL (SAN FRANCISCO BAY)** (*Rallus obsoletus obsoletus*) – What a way to start the tour! We had great scope views at Byxbee Park as they foraged out on the mudflats.

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*)

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*)

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

**AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*)

*Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers).*

**BLACK OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus bachmani*)

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Six were hanging out on the rocks at Coyote Point.

**SNOWY PLOVER** (*Charadrius nivosus*) – The final new bird of the tour. We stopped to see them at Half Moon Bay State Beach before going to dinner the last evening.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*)

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).*

**WHIMBREL (HUDSONIAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*)

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** (*Numenius americanus*)

**MARbled GODWIT** (*Limosa fedoa*)

**BLACK TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria melanocephala*) – These striking shorebirds were out on the rocks at Coyote Point and Half Moon Bay Harbor.

**RED KNOT** (*Calidris canutus*)

**SURFBIRD** (*Calidris virgata*) – We saw these rather rotund shorebirds as we motored out of Half Moon Bay for the pelagic trip.

**RUFF** (*Calidris pugnax*) – We had great looks at this rare Eurasian visitor at Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge. It was in crisp juvenile plumage.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*)

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*)

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) – We had one out on the mudflats at Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, where the species is a scarce fall migrant.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*)

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – There were a few golden-spangled juveniles at Coyote Point.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – The most common dowitcher on the tour.

**WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*)

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – We saw quite a few on our pelagic trip out of Half Moon Bay.

**RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – A few were mixed in with the Red-necked Phalaropes well offshore.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*)

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

**WILLET (WESTERN)** (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*)

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*)

*Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers).*

**POMARINE JAEGER** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) – The large robust Jaeger seen on the pelagic trip.

**PARASITIC JAEGER** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – We saw some chasing Arctic Terns on our pelagic trip.

**LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – We saw a few as we got off the continental shelf on our pelagic trip.

*Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)*

**COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) – These were very common during our Half Moon Bay pelagic trip.

**CASSIN'S AUKLET** (*Ptychoramphus aleuticus*) – A few of these grapefruit-sized alcids shot by well offshore.

**RHINOCEROS AUKLET** (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Fairly common on the pelagic trip.

**TUFTED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – We saw two on our pelagic trip. They were molting into non-breeding plumage.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**SABINE'S GULL** (*Xema sabini*) – One of the most striking gulls of the tour. We saw several way offshore on the pelagic trip.

**HEERMANN'S GULL** (*Larus heermanni*)

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*)

**WESTERN GULL** (*Larus occidentalis*)

**CALIFORNIA GULL** (*Larus californicus*)

**GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL** (*Larus glaucescens*) – We had a single individual on our way down the coast on the last day of the tour.

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

**ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisaea*) – Lots were migrating well offshore.

**FORSTER'S TERN** (*Sterna forsteri*)

**ELEGANT TERN** (*Thalasseus elegans*) – These Mexican breeders showed off nicely in San Francisco Bay and in Half Moon Bay.

**BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rynchops niger*)

*Gaviidae (Loons)*

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – We saw one off the coast on our drive down to Santa Cruz the last day of the tour.

**COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – A few were seen on the pelagic trip.

*Diomedidae (Albatrosses)*

**BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS** (*Phoebastria nigripes*) – Woohoo! After several hours offshore, we came across a couple individuals that came right in and landed in front of us.

*Hydrobatidae (Northern Storm-Petrels)*

**ASHY STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma homochroa*) – We had a couple sightings of these California Current endemics while on our pelagic trip.

*Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)*

**PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna creatopus*) – These were fairly common once we got about 10 miles offshore.

**BULLER'S SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna bulleri*) – A small flock of these elegant shearwaters showed up towards the end of our pelagic trip.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna grisea*) – Sometimes the most abundant seabird of the California Coast in September - we saw several thousand on our pelagic trip.

*Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)*

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula sula*) – We drove down toward Santa Cruz to see this vagrant individual at Sea Cliff State Beach. It was hanging out on a barrier on a pier, and we enjoyed close views of this seabird from the south.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**BRANDT'S CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*)

**PELAGIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – The smallest of the cormorants we saw.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

*Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**AMERICAN BITTERN** (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*)

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*)

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*)

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*)

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*)

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*)

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*)

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*)

**GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – We had fabulous scope views of a pair perched out on some Gray Pines at Del Valle Regional Park.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus hudsonius*) – We saw one at Shoreline Park the first morning of the tour.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*)

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

**RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (ELEGANS)** (*Buteo lineatus elegans*)

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**WESTERN SCREECH-OWL** (*Megascops kennicottii*) – We saw one roosting in a barn at McClellan Ranch State Park.

**BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cunicularia*) – There were a few out in the field near Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge.

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – We had nice views of a female at Calaveras Big Trees.

**RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus ruber*) – We had several nice views of them at Calaveras Big Trees. They looked so small on those Giant Sequoias!

**LEWIS'S WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes lewis*) – What a great bird! Several were out in the oak woodland during the drive to Sonora.

**ACORN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes formicivorus*)

**BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides arcticus*) – One of my most wanted birds of the trip! We had outstanding views of a couple individuals near Mono Lake.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates pubescens*)

**NUTTALL'S WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates nuttallii*) – Fairly common throughout the tour, especially down near the coast.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates villosus*)

**WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates albolarvatus*) – Another highlight of the trip! We had our best views at Calaveras Big Trees where we watched one flaking off bark of a big Sequoia about 20 feet above us.

**PILEATED WOODPECKER** (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

**NORTHERN FLICKER** (*Colaptes auratus*)

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*)

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*)

**PRAIRIE FALCON** (*Falco mexicanus*) – On our way back to the coast we stopped at the Bridgeport Reservoir and saw a Prairie Falcon swoop in and land on a telephone pole.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** (*Contopus cooperi*) – We had a couple migrants while we were birding in the Sierra.

**WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE** (*Contopus sordidulus*)

**DUSKY FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax oberholseri*) – It was neat to see a pair with fledglings at Inyo Craters.

**BLACK PHOEBE** (*Sayornis nigricans*)

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*)

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

*Laniidae (Shrikes)*

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – We saw one chasing blackbirds at South Tufa, Mono Lake.

*Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)*

**HUTTON'S VIREO** (*Vireo huttoni*) – Several seen in the oak woodlands throughout the tour.

**CASSIN'S VIREO** (*Vireo cassinii*) – There was at least one in every migrant flock we encountered in the Sierra.

**WARBLING VIREO** (*Vireo gilvus*)

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**PINYON JAY** (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – A loose flock streamed by near South Tufa, Mono Lake.

**STELLER'S JAY** (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – Stellar views of this spectacular jay throughout the tour.

**CALIFORNIA SCRUB-JAY** (*Aphelocoma californica*) – Fairly common west of the Sierra.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE** (*Pica hudsonia*) – We stopped for a few flocks in the open meadows east of the Sierra Nevada.

**YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE** (*Pica nuttalli*) – Certainly one of the key birds of the trip! We had our best views along Mines Road on our way to the Sierra. [E]

**CLARK'S NUTCRACKER** (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – We had regular encounters with these noisy corvids in the Sierra.

**AMERICAN CROW** (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*)

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

**VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta thalassina*)

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*)

*Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)*

**MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE** (*Poecile gambeli*) – One of the key members of the feeding flocks in the Sierra.

**CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile rufescens*) – We saw both populations: the chestnut-flanked type in the Sierra and the gray-flanked type along the coast.

**OAK TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus inornatus*)

*Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits).*

**BUSHTIT** (*Psaltiriparus minimus*)

*Sittidae (Nuthatches).*

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*) – These were all over the place throughout the tour.

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST)** (*Sitta carolinensis tenuissima*) – We saw our first ones at Inyo Craters. They sound very different from the coastal form.

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (PACIFIC)** (*Sitta carolinensis aculeata*)

**PYGMY NUTHATCH** (*Sitta pygmaea*) – It was strange to see these in a Eucalyptus grove near Coyote Point. I tend to think of them as a Ponderosa Pine bird.

*Certhiidae (Treecreepers).*

**BROWN CREEPER** (*Certhia americana*)

*Troglodytidae (Wrens).*

**HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*)

**PACIFIC WREN (PACIFICUS GROUP)** (*Troglodytes pacificus pacificus*) – Common but tough to see at Calaveras Big Trees.

**MARSH WREN (PALUDICOLA GROUP)** (*Cistothorus palustris paludicola*)

**BEWICK'S WREN** (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

*Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers).*

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*)

*Cinclidae (Dippers).*

**AMERICAN DIPPER** (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – We saw a couple along the Stanislaus River.

*Regulidae (Kinglets).*

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus satrapa*)

*Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrentit, and Allies).*

**WRENTIT** (*Chamaea fasciata*) – We stopped along the highway to Santa Cruz to call out a Wrentit from the dense coastal chaparral.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).*

**WESTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia mexicana*)

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia currucoides*) – There were a few among the abandoned houses at Bodie.

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*)

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers).*

**CALIFORNIA THRASHER** (*Toxostoma redivivum*) – We saw a pair singing from Sycamores at Del Valle Park.

**SAGE THRASHER** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – We had soul-satisfying views in the sagebrush around Mono Lake.

*Sturnidae (Starlings).*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – One of the most sought-after birds of the trip! [H]

*Bombycillidae (Waxwings).*

**CEDAR WAXWING** (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

*Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).*

**EVENING GROSBEAK** (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) – We saw a female along the Stanislaus River.

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

**PURPLE FINCH (WESTERN)** (*Haemorhous purpureus californicus*)

**CASSIN'S FINCH** (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – A couple of these montane finches were seen up in the Sierra.

**PINE SISKIN** (*Spinus pinus*)

**LESSER GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus psaltria*)

**LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus lawrencei*) – After several frustrating flyovers we locked on a flock preening in some willows at Frank Raines Park in Del Puerto Canyon.

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*)

*Passerellidae (New World Sparrows).*

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*)

**BREWER'S SPARROW** (*Spizella breweri*)

**LARK SPARROW** (*Chondestes grammacus*)

**FOX SPARROW (THICK-BILLED)** (*Passerella iliaca megarhyncha*) – We saw a couple in a willow grove above Lee Vining.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO** (*Junco hyemalis*)

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (ORIANATHA)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*) – These were the dark-lored mountain breeders.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – The orange-billed type seen around Mono Lake. These were arrival migrants from much farther north.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (NUTTALLI)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*) – We saw a couple along the coast, where they are resident.  
**SAGEBRUSH SPARROW** (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) – It was great to see these birds in the sagebrush around Mono Lake. We even saw a juvenile that threw us for a loop at first.  
**BELL'S SPARROW (BELLI)** (*Artemisiospiza belli belli*) – The Sagebrush Sparrow counterpart west of the Sierra. We called one out in the Chaparral on our way to Sonora.  
**VESPER SPARROW** (*Pooecetes gramineus*)  
**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)  
**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*)  
**CALIFORNIA TOWHEE** (*Melospiza crissalis*)  
**RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Aimophila ruficeps*)  
**GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – There were a couple lingering individuals in the Sierra.  
**SPOTTED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo maculatus*)

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).*

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)  
**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*)  
**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Plentiful along the coast.  
**TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius tricolor*) – These slim-billed blackbirds were along Mines Road and also on the coast near Half Moon Bay.  
**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*)  
**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)  
**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

*Parulidae (New World Warblers).*

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*)  
**NASHVILLE WARBLER (RIDGWAYI)** (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla ridgwayi*) – A regular component to the migrant flocks in the mountains.  
**MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER** (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) [**\***]  
**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*)  
**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*)  
**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S)** (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – There were a few sprinkled in the feeding flocks in the mountains.  
**BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga nigrescens*)  
**TOWNSEND'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga townsendi*) – One of my favorite western warblers. We had a few in the feeding flocks in the Sierra.  
**HERMIT WARBLER** (*Setophaga occidentalis*) – Also in the mixed flocks in the Sierra; they are often tricky to find at this date, but we had no trouble due to the excellent mixed species flocks.  
**WILSON'S WARBLER** (*Cardellina pusilla*)

*Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies).*

**WESTERN Tanager** (*Piranga ludoviciana*)  
**BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK** (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) [**II**]

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## MAMMALS

**BRUSH RABBIT** (*Sylvilagus bachmani*) – We had great looks at these adorable rabbits right on the trail at Pillar Point Harbor.  
**NUTTALL'S (MOUNTAIN) COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) – There were a few around Mono Lake.  
**BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT** (*Lepus californicus*) – It was strange to see a whole group of them right above the intertidal zone at Coyote Point.  
**LEAST CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias minimus*) – Fairly common in the sagebrush around Mono Lake.  
**LONG-EARED CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias quadrimaculatus*) – One sat motionless on a Giant Sequoia at Calaveras Big Trees.  
**LODGEPOLE CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias speciosus*) – We saw one scamper with cheeks full of food near Mono Mills.  
**CALIFORNIA GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus beecheyi*) – The most common squirrel of the trip.  
**GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – We had one run by while we were getting out of the van at Sonora Pass.  
**EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – These were introduced to the Bay Area.  
**FOX SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus niger*) – We had our best looks at Del Valle Park.  
**WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus griseus*) – A few crossed the road while we were in the Sierra above Sonora.  
**CHICKAREE** (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*) – Also known as the Douglas Squirrel. We saw one dragging a giant pine cone at Inyo Craters.  
**PACIFIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN** (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*) – These stunners made several appearances on our pelagic trip out of Half Moon Bay.  
**NORTHERN RIGHT WHALE DOLPHIN** (*Lissodelphis borealis*) – Woohoo! One of my most-wanted mammals of the trip. They were mixed in with the Pacific White-sided Dolphins well offshore on our Pelagic trip. See my video footage of them riding the bow of the boat.  
**HARBOR PORPOISE** (*Phocoena phocoena*) – A couple were seen fairly close to shore on our pelagic trip off Half Moon Bay.  
**DALL'S PORPOISE** (*Phocoenoides dalli*) – We had a couple encounters with these striking cetaceans on our pelagic trip.  
**HUMBACK WHALE** (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – Just awesome! We watched a small group of them foraging for anchovies on our pelagic trip.  
**COYOTE** (*Canis latrans*)  
**CALIFORNIA SEA LION** (*Zalophus californianus*) – The most common Sea Lion on our pelagic trip.

**STELLER'S SEA LION** (*Eumetopias jubatus*) – It was nice to compare this big guy with California Sea Lions near Half Moon Bay.

**NORTHERN FUR SEAL** (*Callorhinus ursinus*) – We had brief views of one well offshore.

**HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*) – Common in the harbor at Half Moon Bay.

**MULE DEER** (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

*Other Creatures of Interest*

**OCEAN SUNFISH** (*Mola mola*) – It was super cool to see one of these offshore giants on the pelagic trip.

**MAKO SHARK** (*Isurus paucus*) – As we were heading back to shore, Alvaro spotted a Mako Shark swimming near the surface. We could see its tremendous caudal fin just skimming the surface of the water.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 218 bird taxa and 23 mammal taxa**