



Field Guides Tour Report

SLICE OF CALIFORNIA: SEABIRDS TO SIERRA II 2017

Sep 12, 2017 to Sep 21, 2017

Tom Johnson

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



Our group rose early one day and walked out to the edge of Mono Lake to see the sunrise on the peculiar tufa formations at the lake's edge - oh, and there were birds too: Sage Thrasher, Sagebrush Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, etc. Photo by friendly passerby.

Few routes in North America pack as much diversity into 8 days as we do on this fall Northern California tour. This adventure started out near the San Francisco airport with a circuit of the southwestern part of SF Bay and its rich flats teeming with life. Then we headed over to Half Moon Bay on the outer coast where we searched for coastal specialties and took a day-long pelagic trip that visited both the famous Farallon Islands as well as the continental shelf edge. Following our coastal sojourn, we moved eastward and birded the dry grasslands and oak forests of Mines Road near Livermore before driving across the Central Valley to Sonora. Sonora was our hub for exploring the western side of the Sierra Nevada range, and we watched woodpeckers in the giant sequoias of Calaveras Big Trees SP and searched for (and found!) Mountain Quail near Bear Valley. Cresting the Sierra Nevada over windy Sonora Pass, we dropped down into the desert wilderness surrounding Lee Vining and Mono Lake. From here we investigated the unique biome of this ancient lake, its surrounding sagebrush flats, and the bird-rich pine and spruce forests of the area. Then, illustrating how close all of these amazing habitats are to each other, we crossed the state again in a single day - this time heading west - and ended our last evening together watching Vaux's Swifts go to roost in a brickyard chimney in San Rafael.

Some of the top memories for this trip were the 11 species of woodpeckers we encountered (including Black-backed, Lewis's, White-headed, and 2 sapsuckers), Mountain Quail, good views of both Bell's and Sagebrush Sparrows, the striking Blue-footed Booby on the Farallon Islands, and the exciting day in the Half Moon Bay area with 3 species of eastern landbird vagrants (Philadelphia Vireo, Magnolia Warbler, Tennessee Warbler). Read on for more!

Thanks,

Tom

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

- GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*) – An unseen flock of calling migrants passed overhead during our final morning on the south edge of Mono Lake. [*]
- CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Fairly common at scattered sites throughout the tour.
- GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – A few were mixed in with other ducks, especially on our first day in SW San Francisco Bay.
- AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – Only about four were mixed in with other ducks at Charleston Slough.
- MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread.
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*) – We practiced separating these small ducks from Cinnamon Teal at Charleston Slough on our first day of birding.
- CINNAMON TEAL** (*Anas cyanoptera*) – About 10, mostly female-types, were mixed in with other ducks at Charleston Slough near the Google-plex.
- NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – The most common duck we found in San Francisco Bay. 800 were at Charleston Slough, and 300 more were at Don Edwards NWR.
- NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Migrants had arrived at Charleston Slough and a few lakes in Mono County during our tour.
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Good-sized flocks were at Charleston Slough and Bridgeport Reservoir.
- HARLEQUIN DUCK** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) – A male was paddling around the breakwaters at Coyote Point Park on San Francisco Bay.
- SURF SCOTER** (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – Four were swimming with the Harlequin Duck at Coyote Point Park.
- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – A female was hanging out in Pillar Point Harbor in Half Moon Bay.
- RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – A few of these compact ducks were in ponds near Mono Lake.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

- MOUNTAIN QUAIL** (*Oreortyx pictus*) – We caught up a skulky covey of these highly coveted quail near Bear Valley just below the crest of the Sierra Nevada.
- CALIFORNIA QUAIL** (*Callipepla californica*) – After some brief, poor views near Half Moon Bay, we had great looks at these ornamented quail at Del Valle Regional Park near Mines Rd.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

- GREATER SAGE-GROUSE** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – Spectacular! These fantastic, large grouse were walking around in the town of Bodie during our visit to this historic site. It was almost unbelievable to see them feeding on sage leaves at close range as people strolled by just 3-4 meters away.
- WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Several big groups along Mines Road and at Del Valle Regional Park.

Gaviidae (Loons)

- RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – Several were foraging in the surf near Half Moon Bay.
- PACIFIC LOON** (*Gavia pacifica*) – One flew past during the pelagic trip, and then we saw a few feeding in the surf with Red-throated Loons in Half Moon Bay.
- COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – A few were along the shore near Half Moon Bay, though there weren't as many loons around as normal for this time of year.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

- PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Scattered locations from Charleston Slough, Del Valle Regional Park, and the Dechambeau Ponds.
- EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Common at Mono Lake and nearby ponds. At least 2 all white individuals showed well at Mono Lake County Park!
- WESTERN GREBE** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Scarce this time - one was just off the beach in Half Moon Bay, and four more were at Del Valle Regional Park.
- CLARK'S GREBE** (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – One was diving off Bayfront Park in Millbrae on our first morning of birding.

Diomedidae (Albatrosses)

- BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS** (*Phoebastria nigripes*) – Perhaps 8-10 of these Hawaiian behemoths sailed up behind our boat along the edge of the continental shelf near the Farallon Islands.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

- NORTHERN FULMAR** (*Fulmarus glacialis*) – We saw two very ratty individuals along the edge of the continental shelf edge during our pelagic trip.
- PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna creatopus*) – Several dozen of these large, slow-flapping shearwaters cruised by us when we were offshore during our pelagic trip.
- SOOTY SHEARWATER** (*Ardenna grisea*) – Our coarse estimate of the massive flocks inshore around Half Moon Bay was 35,000 birds. Incredible!

Hydrobatidae (Storm-Petrels)

- ASHY STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma homochroa*) – We saw two of these dark gray storm-petrels flapping like bats low over the water during our Half Moon Bay pelagic trip.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

- BLUE-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula nebouxi*) – One was interacting with a Brown Booby on the rocks of Sugarloaf on the Farallon Islands during our pelagic trip. This species is typically extremely rare in the US, but this one bird has been living on the Farallones for multiple years.
- BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – One was with the above Blue-footed Booby at the Farallon Islands.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

- BRANDT'S CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) – Very common on the outer coast.
- PELAGIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*) – Good views of several birds on the inshore part of our pelagic trip from Half Moon Bay, and also out at the Farallon Islands. A few also perched up at the Coyote Point Park breakwaters.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Common on many large bodies of water throughout the tour, including the outer coast in Pillar Point Harbor, Half Moon Bay.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Hundreds were along the western edge of SF Bay - the close birds roosting with ducks at Charleston Slough were spectacular!

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Rather ubiquitous along the outer coast.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Common, especially between SF Bay and the outer coast.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common around SF Bay and in the Central Valley.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Common between the SF area and the Central Valley.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – One was at Coyote Point Park.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Scattered sightings around SF Bay, the outer coast, the Central Valley, and even east of the Sierra Nevada at Bridgeport Reservoir.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – About 20 were in the shallows at the south end of Bridgeport Reservoir.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Common and widespread.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – We saw them around SF Bay and also out at Mono Lake where they nest on the bizarre tufa formations.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – A surprising 17 birds were packed in to a few snags in Pescadero Marsh, and we enjoyed watching them interact with each other and a passing Northern Harrier.

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – A juvenile bird soared over in lower Del Puerto Canyon.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – These small hawks circled over at Bear Valley and again along a stream above Lee Vining.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Multiple sightings in the SF Bay and coastal portions of our route.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (ELEGANS) (*Buteo lineatus elegans*) – This colorful subspecies showed nicely, first on the wires along the highway in Half Moon Bay, and again later at the Del Valle Regional Park day use area.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – All over.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

RIDGWAY'S RAIL (SAN FRANCISCO BAY) (*Rallus obsoletus obsoletus*) – One of our very first birds on the tour - we enjoyed seeing this secretive saltmarsh specialist in a small strip of marsh near SFO airport.

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – Several of these small rails were actively running around the small marsh at Coyote Point Park, and then we saw another one even better at Pescadero Marsh.

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – At least one was along the back edge of the small marshy pond at Coyote Point Park.

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – One was at Charleston Slough with coots.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – Fairly common throughout our journey, though nowhere did we see as many as Bridgeport Reservoir (500+).

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Common in SF Bay, with 3 more at Bridgeport Reservoir.

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Hundreds of these fine waders were foraging along the edge of SF Bay on our first day of birding.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus bachmani*) – Our first two were at Coyote Point Park in SF Bay, and then all of the rest were along the rocky outer coast of San Mateo County.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Dozens at various stops along SF Bay.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Three were on the flats at Coyote Point Park.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – These widespread plovers appeared for us several times in the SF Bay area and once in the Central Valley.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (HUDSONIAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – These lovely curlews were mixed in with other shorebirds on the flats at the edge of SF Bay.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – These remarkable large shorebirds hunted small crabs along the mudflats of SF Bay.

MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*) – We saw over 1000 of these big, buffy shorebirds on mudflats around SF Bay.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – One of these locally scarce migrants was on the breakwaters in Half Moon Bay near some Black Turnstones.

BLACK TURNSTONE (*Arenaria melanocephala*) – Rather common along rocky shorelines in SF Bay and especially on the outer coast. We had the opportunity to see plenty of them on the rocky breakwaters in Half Moon Bay.

RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – Around 50 individuals were at a high tide roost at the Foster City Shell Bar in SF Bay. One had a flag on its leg that revealed it had been banded in Nome, Alaska!

- SURFBIRD** (*Calidris virgata*) – On the way out of Pillar Point Harbor on our pelagic trip, we spotted about 8 of these rock-loving shorebirds. On the trip back in, we saw 12 of them even closer than before.
- LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – Fairly common, especially at Don Edwards NWR at the south end of SF Bay.
- WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*) – We found hundreds of these droopy-billed sandpipers along the edge of SF Bay. Biggest counts came at Coyote Point and Charleston Slough.
- SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Common at some sites on SF Bay, where we practiced separating them from Long-billed Dowitchers.
- LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Around 300 were hanging around the pelican and duck flock at Charleston Slough. They even called "keek" frequently for us, confirming their ID.
- RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – A few dozen were offshore from Half Moon Bay during our pelagic trip. We also saw 5 on Mono Lake.
- RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) – We saw five of these pale, stout phalaropes in the offshore section of our Half Moon Bay pelagic trip.
- SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – Just two - one at Coyote Point Park and another in Half Moon Bay.
- WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) – Though it was hard to pick out from the harborside rocks initially, we had good scope views of this long-distance migrant shorebird at the edge of Pillar Point Harbor.
- GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Small flocks along the edge of SF Bay, and a few more in the Central Valley and the Mono Lake area.
- WILLET (WESTERN)** (*Tringa semipalmata inornata*) – Very common in SF Bay, where we saw >1000 between various locations.
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – Less common than Greater Yellowlegs in estuarine habitats around SF Bay, we only saw two of these slender waders at Charleston Slough.

Stercorariidae (Skuas and Jaegers)

- POMARINE JAEGER** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) – One bird that flew past us offshore during the pelagic trip showed the rounded, elongated central tail feathers that gave away the ID.
- PARASITIC JAEGER** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) – Great views as these sea pirates chased Elegant Terns close to shore near Half Moon Bay.
- LONG-TAILED JAEGER** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) – Two brief sightings of these slim, buoyant jaegers during our pelagic trip.

Alcidae (Auks, Murres, and Puffins)

- COMMON MURRE** (*Uria aalge*) – Common offshore during the pelagic trip.
- PIGEON GUILLEMOT** (*Cepphus columba*) – We saw three out at the Farallon Islands during our pelagic trip, but the views were better when we found one at the edge of Pillar Point Harbor and could watch it dive and swim underwater!
- CASSIN'S AUKLET** (*Ptychoramphus aleuticus*) – You had to be quick to catch a good look at these chunky, gray alcids before they flew away from the boat during our pelagic trip.
- RHINOCEROS AUKLET** (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) – Moderate numbers of these puffin-relatives were bobbing around offshore during our pelagic trip.
- TUFTED PUFFIN** (*Fratercula cirrhata*) – Repeated good views during the Half Moon Bay pelagic trip, mostly around the Farallon Islands where they breed.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

- SABINE'S GULL** (*Xema sabini*) – We saw at least one of these offshore migrants during the pelagic trip, but it didn't stick around for long.
- HEERMANN'S GULL** (*Larus heermanni*) – This Mexican breeder was a constant presence in the coastal waters around Half Moon Bay.
- RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – We saw most of ours along SF Bay.
- WESTERN GULL** (*Larus occidentalis*) – Quite common, especially on the outer coast and at the Farallones.
- CALIFORNIA GULL** (*Larus californicus*) – Common and widespread, both on the coast and inland.
- GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL** (*Larus glaucescens*) – One of these gray-winged migrants posed for us on the rocks below us at Pescadero State Beach.
- CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – We saw a few around SF Bay, but the 18 migrants that we saw flying past at the Mono Lake South Tufa were a bit of a surprise.
- COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*) – The birds we saw offshore were probably Common Terns, but we recorded them conservatively as "Commie" Terns (Common/ Arctic Terns).
- FORSTER'S TERN** (*Sterna forsteri*) – Plenty in San Francisco Bay.
- ELEGANT TERN** (*Thalasseus elegans*) – This Mexican breeder is common on the outer coast in autumn. When we arrived back from our pelagic trip in Half Moon Bay, the breakwaters were covered with these terns, and Parasitic Jaegers were busy chasing them around just offshore.
- BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rynchops niger*) – About 20 were mixed in with gulls, terns, and shorebirds at the Foster City Shell Bar.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

- ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Common in towns and cities. [I]
- BAND-TAILED PIGEON** (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – We encountered these handsome forest pigeons on several occasions, though the first ones at Coyote Point were hard to beat.
- EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Quite common around human habitation and farmland. [I]
- MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common and widespread.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

- GREATER ROADRUNNER** (*Geococcyx californianus*) – We ended up seeing two of these scarce cuckoos in the Mines Road area. The first one actually ran at our parked van and ducked underneath the vehicle, apparently seeking some shade. Very unusual!

Strigidae (Owls)

- GREAT HORNED OWL** (*Bubo virginianus*) – One perched for us as we scoped it at a ranch near Mono Lake.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – Due to the heat shimmer during our observation of this bird in an open area near Don Edwards NWR, this was a "Blurrowing" Owl.

Apodidae (Swifts)

VAUX'S SWIFT (*Chaetura vauxi*) – On our final evening together, we visited McNear Brick and Block in San Rafael to see the spectacle of over a thousand Vaux's Swifts swirling around and then heading inside large chimneys to roost. Fantastic!

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – The birds zooming over and screaming above us in Del Puerto Canyon were memorable.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Calypte anna*) – Common around the SF Bay area.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*) – One female-type came in briefly outside the restaurant at our hotel in Lee Vining.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – We heard and then saw these noisy birds at Coyote Point Park and again in Half Moon Bay.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – Three birds interacted aggressively near "The Junction" on Mines Road, and then we saw six migrants flying over at the Donnell Vista.

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – Several were along Mines Road, and it was particularly entertaining to watch the family group stashing acorns in the utility poles outside our rooms at our hotel in Sonora.

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – A lovely, barred female gave us some nice views at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus ruber*) – First, we saw four at Calaveras Big Trees SP. Then, later we had the bizarre experience of seeing one fly from sagebrush flats into the Mono Lake Cemetery!

NUTTALL'S WOODPECKER (*Picoides nuttallii*) – Nice looks at Coyote Point Park and at our hotel in Sonora.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – These familiar birds are among the least conspicuous of the woodpeckers we encounter on this tour. We managed to find them at Pescadero Marsh, Calaveras Big Trees SP, and the Donnell Vista.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – Fairly common in forests throughout our travels.

WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Picoides albolarvatus*) – Stunning, and common in the Sierra Nevada. Calaveras Big Trees SP was an excellent spot for this attractive species.

BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides arcticus*) – A long-staying pair obliged us with a visit at the Inyo Craters south of Lee Vining. These scarce Sierra residents showed off with some very close views. Awesome, and never a guarantee on these tours.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – Common along Mines Road and in the Sierra Nevada.

PILEATED WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – After some tantalizing calling birds in the distance, we eventually saw two in the sequoias at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Several roadside sightings throughout the tour.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – One was at the Farallones, and two more were in Half Moon Bay during our pelagic trip.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus sordidulus*) – One at Dechambeau Ranch; another at the Orange Blossom Recreation Area in the Central Valley.

GRAY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax wrightii*) – One was tail-dipping at Mono Lake County Park.

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax difficilis*) – Our best views of these surprised-looking Empidonax flycatchers came at Pescadero Marsh and the Purisima Redwoods near Half Moon Bay.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – Common, especially in the San Francisco area.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – Common in open lands throughout the tour.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Ours were along Del Puerto Canyon and again at the Mono Lake South Tufa.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

HUTTON'S VIREO (*Vireo huttoni*) – Several nice sightings of this kinglet look-alike between the Peninsula and the Mines Road area.

CASSIN'S VIREO (*Vireo cassinii*) – A vocal and confiding bird showed up in a flock of warblers and nuthatches at the Donnell Vista.

PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*) – This was one of the rarest birds we saw during the tour. This exciting eastern vagrant popped out in the parking lot of Purisima Redwoods near Half Moon Bay, and we were able to document its lemon yellow throat and dark lores with photos. Other birders were able to enjoy our find for the next two days before the vireo disappeared.

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – Migrants were found at several riparian areas throughout the tour.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – A vocal flock of these unique jays streamed past us as we left Bodie State Park near Mono Lake.

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – Common in higher areas of the Diablos and all over in the Sierra Nevada.

CALIFORNIA SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma californica*) – This is the coastal species resulting from the split of Western Scrub-Jay. We saw them repeatedly from the coastal region east to the Diablos and even in the Central Valley.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Common east of the Sierra Nevada.

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica nuttalli*) – This California endemic put on an excellent show at the wineries and pastures of lower Mines Road near Livermore. [E]

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – These enchanting corvids accompanied us at many different locations in the Sierra Nevada.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Widely distributed, though we didn't see any east of the Sierra Nevada.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Common and widespread.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – One flew over calling at Bodie SP. [*]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – One was foraging with other swallows at the Dechambeau Ponds near Mono Lake.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – One passed overhead at the Mono Lake South Tufa.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Ten were at Charleston Slough on our first day; another five were flying in the hills above Lee Vining late in the trip.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Small numbers were scattered around throughout the tour.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*) – Quite common at higher elevations in the Sierra Nevada. We found them overlapping with Chestnut-backed Chickadees at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE (*Poecile rufescens*) – Gray-flanked birds showed nicely west of San Francisco Bay, while chestnut-flanked birds were in the Sierra Nevada.

OAK TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus inornatus*) – Rather common and easy to see well on Mines Road.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSH TIT (*Psaltriparus minimus*) – Flocks of these perpetual motion machines bounced past us at Don Edwards NWR and at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – Common in the Sierra, especially at Calaveras Big Trees SP where we tallied ~35 birds during our walk there.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST) (*Sitta carolinensis tenuissima*) – We found two of this distinctive form of nuthatch at Inyo Craters, east of the Sierra Nevada crest.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (PACIFIC) (*Sitta carolinensis aculeata*) – These were the nuthatches we found west of the Sierra Crest.

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – Quite common on "The Peninsula" between Half Moon Bay and San Francisco Bay.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*) – Common in the Sierra Nevada, but we also found single birds at Coyote Point and Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in the San Francisco area.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – As we paused to take in the vista of Mono Lake at a roadside rest area, a Rock Wren bobbed up and down on the rocks below us.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – We heard this rock lover singing from cliffs framing a stream valley near Lee Vining. [*]

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – Two were at the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve; another was in a riparian zone near Lee Vining.

PACIFIC WREN (PACIFICUS GROUP) (*Troglodytes pacificus pacificus*) – These little, hyperactive skulkers posed nicely for us at the Purisima Redwoods and the Calaveras Big Trees SP.

MARSH WREN (PALUDICOLA GROUP) (*Cistothorus palustris paludicola*) – We heard these skulkers repeatedly and saw them a few times in marshes along San Francisco Bay, the outer coast, and at Mono Lake.

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – Common and widespread at lower elevation sites on our journey.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Clark's Fork had recently been reopened after a forest fire closure. We took advantage of this and scored some nice dipper views (good spotting, Genie!) from the bridge to the campground.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – These little guys were at Calaveras Big Trees SP and Inyo Craters.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – A few of these nervous mini-birds were mixed in with mobbing flocks at several sites in the Sierra Nevada.

Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrentit, and Allies)

WRENTIT (*Chamaea fasciata*) – A few of these bizarre birds came barreling in to check us out on the fringes of Pescadero Marsh on the outer coast.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – Several nice encounters between the San Francisco Bay area and Mines Road.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – Nice views of blue males at Mammoth Mountain and in Bodie.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) – Our encounters with these beautiful thrushes were at the Donnell Vista and Bear Valley.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – Two were at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Fairly common in the Sierra Nevada.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CALIFORNIA THRASHER (*Toxostoma redivivum*) – A pair of responsive birds showed well in chaparral along Mines Road.

SAGE THRASHER (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – Eventually, 3 popped up and showed off their streaks for us.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – We saw this flashy species a few times - once at Coyote Point Park and again later at Orange Blossom Recreation Area.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common and widespread, especially near humans. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – We found these handsome birds late in the tour at our hotel in Lee Vining and also at the Orange Blossom Recreation Area in the Central Valley.

Ptiliognatidae (Silky-flycatchers)

PHAINOPEPLA (*Phainopepla nitens*) – Two of these strange silky-flycatchers were foraging in a clump of mistletoe at the Orange Blossom Recreation Area in the Central Valley.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – This eastern vagrant was in some willows at the edge of Pescadero Marsh where it showed off its green upperparts, white undertail coverts, and short-tailed appearance.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Common and widespread.

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) – Three called back but showed poorly for us from the understory at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Several individuals were along marshy edges around San Francisco Bay and near Half Moon Bay.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – This eastern vagrant warbler popped up while we were sorting through Bushtits at the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve - thanks for spotting it, Hood!

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – We found plenty of migrants in the San Francisco Bay area and on the outer coast near Half Moon Bay.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – A common migrant - we saw lots including 65 at one riparian site near Lee Vining.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – We found these nicely striped warblers on multiple occasions, both on the coast and in the Sierra Nevada.

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga townsendi*) – We found plenty of migrants of this handsome species during the tour - in fact, they seemed to have replaced their Hermit Warbler cousins (which breed here in northern California but must have left on migration).

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) – Repeated good views of these spritely, dark-capped warblers, especially at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – Ours were at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Del Valle Regional Park.

BREWER'S SPARROW (*Spizella breweri*) – After a brief encounter with a migrant in the alpine forest of Bear Valley, we found several more of these gray, long-tailed sparrows in the sagebrush of the Mono Basin.

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – One perched up on a fence at the side of the road through Del Puerto Canyon as we watched from the van.

FOX SPARROW (THICK-BILLED) (*Passerella iliaca megarhyncha*) – These chunky sparrows perched out in the open for us at the Donnell Vista and again in a canyon near Lee Vining.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (*Junco hyemalis*) – Plenty of "Oregon" Juncos showed well for us throughout the tour.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – These migrants with orange bills and pale lores were widespread on both sides of the Sierra Nevada.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (NUTTALLI) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*) – These yellow-billed sparrows are fairly common along the immediate coast around Half Moon Bay.

SAGEBRUSH SPARROW (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) – After our experience with Bell's Sparrow in the Diablos, we were hungry for the sister species, Sagebrush Sparrow. After a bit of trying around Mono Lake, we found a responsive individual that came in and perched for us, showing off its well-streaked back and thin moustache mark. Thanks for spotting it, Karen!

BELL'S SPARROW (BELLI) (*Artemisiospiza belli belli*) – Yowza - this gray-helmeted stunner perched up while vocalizing at close range along Mines Road in the Diablos!

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – One perched up beautifully for us at the Mono Lake South Tufa.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – These were fairly common in open and edge habitats throughout the tour route.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Repeated views in the San Francisco Bay area.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – Several crisply streaked migrants popped up at the edges of marshes in the San Francisco area.

CALIFORNIA TOWHEE (*Melospiza crissalis*) – Quite common in the portions of our journey west of the Sierra crest.

RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROW (*Aimophila ruficeps*) – Lovely, close birds performed really well on Mines Road and then again in Del Puerto Canyon.

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – Excellent views of a confiding individual at the Donnell Vista!

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Widespread and fairly common, especially at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

WESTERN Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – Migrants appeared for us at four widely separated sites during our journey.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) – A migrant gave its "squeaky sneaker" call and showed in the big cypress grove at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – The "Bicolored Blackbirds" showed very nicely at Coyote Point Park.

TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius tricolor*) – Around 150 of these California specialties were mixed in with other blackbirds along the side of the Cabrillo Highway in Half Moon Bay. These were lovely, fresh-plumaged birds - the males still had butter-colored wingbars and pale edging to the upperparts feathers.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – We found a nice smattering of these widespread songsters, including 12 at the Mono Lake South Tufa.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – One flew over us in the evening at the Dechambeau Ponds near Mono Lake.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – Common and widespread.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Scattered sightings, including 80 mixed with other blackbirds along the roadside in Half Moon Bay.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Common and widespread.

PURPLE FINCH (WESTERN) (*Haemorhous purpureus californicus*) – Two were in with the Lawrence's and Lesser goldfinches along Mines Road.

CASSIN'S FINCH (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – Four made a brief appearance in treetops at the edge of the parking lot at Donnell Vista.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – One flew over at Pescadero Marsh near the coast; at least 15 more were at the Donnell Vista in the Sierra Nevada and offered us some nice views. I made recordings of the Donnell Vista birds that show the flight calls are consistent with the Type 3 (or Western Hemlock) call type of Red Crossbill.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – Several flocks along our journey, including on the coast at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and also at our hotel in Lee Vining.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – Widespread small flocks of this familiar western finch.

LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH (*Spinus lawrencei*) – About ten, including a couple of nice males, were mixed with other finches along a small stream on Mines Road.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – We found plenty during our walks through the Half Moon Bay coastal scrub.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Common around human settlements. [I]

MAMMALS

BRUSH RABBIT (*Sylvilagus bachmani*) – A few showed briefly around Half Moon Bay.

NUTTALL'S (MOUNTAIN) COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) – We saw a few around Lee Vining and the edge of Mono Lake.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – A few of these large, long-eared bunnies were seen in open country, both in the Bay area and east of the Sierra Nevada.

LEAST CHIPMUNK (*Tamias minimus*) – We saw these small, long-tailed chipmunks in the open country of the Mono Basin.

LONG-EARED CHIPMUNK (*Tamias quadrimaculatus*) – This was the common chipmunk that we saw in Sierra Nevada forests. Great views at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

CALIFORNIA GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus beecheyi*) – Quite common in many open areas visited on the tour.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – A few showed briefly for us in the Sierra Nevada.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Common at Coyote Point Park along San Francisco Bay. [I]

WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus griseus*) – We saw a couple of these large, gray squirrels run across the road as we were driving through the mature conifers of the west slope of the Sierra Nevada.

CHICKAREE (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*) – Common in the Sierra Nevada, with especially good views at Calaveras Big Trees SP.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – We had some extended views of these large dolphins near the breakwaters in Half Moon Bay during the beginning of our pelagic trip.

PACIFIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*) – One brief sighting near the continental shelf edge.

HARBOR PORPOISE (*Phocoena phocoena*) – A few folks glimpsed these small cetaceans as we left the harbor in Half Moon Bay.

BLUE WHALE (*Balaenoptera musculus*) – Wow! We found about 6-8 of these massive, steel-gray whales foraging offshore south of the Farallon Islands during the pelagic trip. Largest animal in the world!

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) – We had a good show from 15-20 of these familiar, mid-sized whales off Half Moon Bay.

COMMON MINKE WHALE (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) – We had great views of a breaching Minke Whale near the Farallons.

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*) – One ran across the path in front of us at Coyote Point Park.

CALIFORNIA SEA LION (*Zalophus californianus*) – Very common in Half Moon Bay and out at the Farallones, too.

STELLER'S SEA LION (*Eumetopias jubatus*) – These were the large, golden-colored sea lions that we saw at the Farallones.

NORTHERN FUR SEAL (*Callorhinus ursinus*) – Many of these handsome, long-whiskered mammals were sitting up on land at the Farallones at their breeding outpost there.

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

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – These included coastal "Black-tailed" as well as interior Mule Deer when we were east of the Sierra Nevada.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 222 bird taxa and 22 mammal taxa