

# WINTER SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA JANUARY 24-29, 2010

**LEADER: BRAD SCHRAM**



*Brown Pelican, Photo: Brad Schram*

**COMPILED BY: BRAD SCHRAM**

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.  
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003  
AUSTIN, TX 78746  
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

**WINTER SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**  
**January 24-29, 2010**

**Leader: Brad Schram**

*A week of violent storms in Southern California preceded our tour of San Diego County and the Imperial Valley, causing some anxiety about our possibilities. No worries! We traveled and birded in excellent weather, the air crisp and scrubbed, the landscapes luminous in saturated light. And such varied and dramatic landscapes! Our route stretched from the San Diego coast over the Cuyamaca Mountains, approximately 4,000 feet in altitude at snowy Paso Picacho Campground, through rugged Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, to the Salton Sea at approximately 227 feet below sea level.*

*Leaving Mission Valley in San Diego the first morning, a full day's drive to the Salton Sea over the mountains, through the woods, to the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge Unit One at the Salton Sea we would go. Band-tailed Pigeons perched in live oak savanna along a rural road near the hamlet of Descanso, provoking our initial birding stop. Lark Sparrows and Mountain Bluebirds perched on barbed wire nearby while an Acorn Woodpecker clan cavorted about dead tree stubs. A Red-tailed Hawk flew over, a Northern Flicker called. We had truly begun.*

*Paso Picacho Campground was under a foot of new snow, the parking lot harboring treacherous black ice. Birding would be closer to the road than normal here, but we had wonderful looks at the resident mountain species, as well as two "Gray-headed" Juncos amongst the usual "Oregon" Dark-eyed Juncos resident here. A small flock of Pygmy Nuthatches came to a pine bough just above our heads, and Acorn Woodpeckers worked their granaries in the bark of close pines while a resplendent Steller's Jay scolded our presence. Male Tri-colored Blackbirds foraged close at hand amongst Brewer's at Lake Cuyamaca; a Red-shouldered Hawk perched nearby, and we soaked it all up.*

*Rolling grassland along Mesa Grande Road produced a wintering Vesper Sparrow and two perched Ferruginous Hawks; near Lake Henshaw we found the resident pair of Bald Eagles near their nest before lunch and the drive through the spectacularly picturesque Anza-Borrego Desert. Our birding day ended memorably at Unit One. One hundred Sandhill Cranes foraging at a small pond, then flying off ringing their evocative calls, thrilled the group—but the sight and sound of 20–30,000 Snow Geese erupting from their foraging nearby indelibly etched our memories with the spectacle. A dramatic ending to a dramatic day's travel!*

*A day exploring the south end of the Salton Sea and vicinity gave a taste of the region's remarkable birding possibilities. An unusually cooperative Crissal Thrasher near Finney Lake perched for our inspection; a Peregrine Falcon rested in a dead tree in the shallows, overlooking a smorgasbord of shorebirds and ducks; and two adult Yellow-footed Gulls at Obsidian Butte gave us wonderful looks at this very local species—a trip highlight. Our day ended with a vagrant Zone-tailed Hawk perched on a pole among residences in Brawley, calmly eating a Rock Pigeon, a Gila Woodpecker perched nearby.*

*Our third day began with prolonged looks at a Cactus Wren singing its rollicking song near the hotel in Brawley, and ended on San Diego Bay's Silver Strand in golden afternoon light. On our return to San Diego we drove south to Imperial Beach where we visited a residence fronted by flowering coral (Erythrina) trees. Although arriving at midday when birds were quiet, we managed to find two of the Bullock's Orioles known to be wintering there. A wintering male Allen's Hummingbird in the backyard is an unusual bird here at this time of year—and well-appreciated. All agreed that the stop of the day, however, was the observation deck along San Diego Bay's Silver Strand. The distinctive, very local, "Belding's" Savanna Sparrow inhabits Salicornia tidelands in Southern California—and one came to our feet at the deck. As we watched Brant, scoters, grebes, shorebirds, gulls, and terns with late afternoon sun at our backs, we witnessed an unusual event. A Parasitic Jaeger—rare inside the bay—chased Royal Terns repeatedly, seeking to cause their regurgitation of recently captured fish. The violent twisting and turning of the tail-chases brought exclamations from us—the few privileged to be watching.*

*Our last full day of birding took us to Mission Gorge chaparral, Mission Bay mudflats and jetties, La Jolla's rocky cliffs, and the San Diego River mouth's mudflats in the low afternoon light. A Wandering Tattler working the rocks at tide line in La Jolla was a pleasant surprise, while harbor seals loafed on a beach nearby and distant Pacific Loons worked the ocean surface offshore. Surfbirds at the Mission Bay jetty competed with overhead Osprey and a flock of Black Skimmers for our attention in the area. San Diego River's mud flats near the mouth held the day's highlight—a true spectacle of many hundreds of foraging and loafing birds of approximately 30 species. A gorgeous Little Blue Heron stalked just below our overlook; a Red-breasted Merganser flew in from downriver, landing near the heron, then frolicking about madly; both turnstone species foraged around stranded kelp; and curlews, dowitchers, godwits, yellowlegs and peeps, teal, diving ducks, Brant, gulls, and terns went busily about their business. A vagrant Laughing Gull flew in. A vagrant drake Eurasian Wigeon worked the river channel amongst its congeners. A memorable end indeed to our last full day of birding!*

*Before traveling to the airport we spent a couple of hours in the chaparral and riparian of Navajo Canyon and at Mission Dam in Mission Gorge, enjoying wintering sparrows and California's chaparral-adapted species. Then came the short drive to the airport, ending our tour. Come back to California—we just skimmed the surface; a beautiful surface it is.*

## **ITINERARY**

January 24: Meet in the evening at hotel in San Diego, get-acquainted dinner. Evening in San Diego.

January 25: Drive to Brawley through the Cuyamaca Mountains (with a foot of new snow) with stops at Buckman Springs, Descanso, Paso Picacho Cpgd., Cuyamaca Lake, Anza-Borrego State Park (Yaqui Well & Tamarisk Grove Campground), and Unit One at the Salton Sea's Sonny Bono NWR. The Sandhill Crane and, especially, Snow Goose spectacle was a spectacular end to the day. Evening in Brawley.

January 26: Birding Salton Sea vicinity with stops at Finney Lake, Ramer Lake Rest Stop, Red Hill, Obsidian Butte, Sonny Bono NWR Headquarters (lunch), Sinclair Road, and Brawley. The vagrant Zone-tailed Hawk in Brawley put an unexpected punctuation mark on a fine day's birding. Evening in Brawley.

January 27: We birded Cattle Call Park and streets in Brawley early morning, then spent a couple hours in the Worthington Road area west of Imperial in a futile search for Mountain Plovers. We returned to San Diego on Hwy 8, through the magnificent weathered jumble of granite mountains, stopping at Kitchen Creek for a cooperative Rock Wren. Afternoon at Imperial Beach amongst blooming *Erythrina* trees for orioles and hummers, then scoping ducks and shorebirds at the north end of 7<sup>th</sup> St. before driving San Diego Bay's Silver Strand to Coronado and the hotel. A Parasitic Jaeger chasing terns in the bay, sun at our backs, provided an exciting end to the day's driving and birding. Evening in San Diego.

January 28: Starting the day in chaparral at Mission Gorge, we then traveled to Mission Bay where we found a Surfbird on the Mission Bay jetty. A trip to the rocky cliffs at La Jolla produced Black Turnstone and, more notably, a Wandering Tattler working the rocks as Harbor Seals loafed nearby. Following lunch at a Mission Bay marina, complete with Ringed Kingfisher and begging Heerman's Gulls, we drove to nearby Crown Point which gave us many fine looks at shorebirds and ducks along with a flock of Black Skimmers. Day's end at the San Diego River mouth in magnificent light was a delight. Many species of ducks and shorebirds posed, while Little Blue Heron, Eurasian Wigeon, and Laughing Gulls added a bit of the unusual to spice the general beauty before us. Evening in San Diego.

January 29: We birded the Navajo Canyon chaparral and Mission Dam riparian for a couple hours before reluctantly leaving for the airport, ending the tour.

## KEY

SDRM = San Diego River Mouth

SDB = San Diego Bay

SS = Salton Sea Region

Birds in **bold** are unusual for the date or location; birds in ***bold italics*** are rare in the region

## BIRDS

### SWANS, GEESE & DUCKS: ANATIDAE

Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) masses at SS, Unit one and by NWR hdqtrs.

Ross's Goose (*C. rossii*) fewer than Snow Geese at SS, but common within their flocks

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) Common on SDB and at SDRM

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) a few at Cuyamaca Lake

**Eurasian Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*) A drake at SDRM, rare but regular in CA in winter

American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) common at SS, SDB, SDRM, Crown Point

Mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) a few here and there

Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*) SDRM

Cinnamon Teal (*A. cyanoptera*) only a few seen, near Obsidian Butte SS

Northern Shoveler (*A. clypeata*) common at SDB, SDRM, SS, Cuyamaca Lake, etc

Northern Pintail (*A. acuta*) SDB, SDRM, SS

Green-winged Teal (*A. crecca*) common at SS

**Greater Scaup** (*A. marita*) leader only—an uncooperative distant drake at Crown Pt.

Lesser Scaup (*A. affinis*) common from 7<sup>th</sup> St, and SDB generally, also SDRM, Crn. Pt.

Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) La Jolla, SDB

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) Ubiquitous, fresh or salt water

Common Goldeneye (*B. clangula*) a few females from 7<sup>th</sup> St., Imperial Beach

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serator*) one fe. at SDRM especially delighted Bea!

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) SS and most fresh water venues

NEW WORLD QUAIL: *ODONTOPHORIDAE*

California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) Heard often in chaparral, one male posed nicely at Mission Gorge for us all.

Gambel's Quail (*C. gambelii*) Confiding birds at our Sonny Bono NWR picnic site pleased all

LOONS: *GAVIIDAE*

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) a few offshore at La Jolla were difficult with wobbly scope

Common Loon (*G. immer*) in channel at Mission Bay jetty and marina

GREBES: *PODICIPEDIDAE*

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) Lake Cuyamaca and Finney Lake, SS

Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) Crown Pt., SDRM

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) common at SS, SDB

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) Finney Lake, SS, La Jolla, SDB

Clark's Grebe (*A. clarkii*) SD Bay, from 7<sup>th</sup> St.

PELICANS: *PELECANIDAE*

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*) one at Finney Lake (only!)

Brown Pelican (*P. occidentalis*) La Jolla, SDB, SDRM, SS, Mission Bay

CORMORANTS: *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) SS, Finney Lake, Cuyamaca Lake, SDRM, SDB

Brandt's Cormorant (*P. penicillatus*) La Jolla, where common

Pelagic Cormorant (*P. pelagicus*) one swimming just offshore, La Jolla

BITTERNS AND HERONS: *ARDEIDAE*

American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) a bird at Finney Lake flew from below our blufftop vantage to cattails the other side of the lake—great fun!

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) SS, Finney Lake, SDB, SDRM, Crown Pt.

Great Egret (*A. albus*) Virtually anywhere there's water nearby

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) SS, SDB, SDRM

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) one at Crown Point, another just below our vantage point at SDRM

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) flocks in fields here and there at SS

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) only a few seen, Unit One

IBISES & SPOONBILLS: *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) a few large flocks near SS, a group fave

AMERICAN VULTURES: *CATHARTIDAE*

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) all grasslands and in the Imperial Valley

HAWKS, EAGLES, & KITES: *ACCIPITRIDAE*

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) two seen, Mission Bay

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) commonly seen raptor: SS, Lake Henshaw, Santa Ysabel grasslands, Mission Bay

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) Brawley and Mission Gorge

Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperii*) Descanso, SS, Brawley, Mission Gorge

Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) one at Lake Cuyamaca, perched and calling

**Zone-tailed Hawk** (*B. albonotatus*) a bird atop a pole along W 7<sup>th</sup> in Brawley ate a pigeon as we watched! This rare bird in California was known to be in the area, but came as a happy surprise when we actually came across it. A highlight!

Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*) virtually ubiquitous  
Ferruginous Hawk (*B. regalis*) two perched at Mesa Grande Rd. grasslands—lovely

FALCONS & CARACARAS: *FALCONIDAE*

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) very common in grasslands at Lake Henshaw, Mesa Grande Road, SS.  
Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*) two at the Salton Sea  
Prairie Falcon (*F. mexicanus*) a bird over Brawley in the morning, carrying prey while mobbed by starlings  
eluded our attempt at following it. Great bird, too fleeting!

RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS: *RALLIDAE*

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) heard only at Finney Lake  
American Coot (*Fulica americana*) ubiquitous where damp, apart from the ocean

CRANES: *GRUIDAE*

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) approx. 100 at Unit One ending day one gave us sublime views; their calls  
in the air are truly one of nature's great sounds!

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS: *CHARADRIIDAE*

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) SS, SDRM, SDB, Crown Point  
Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) leader only, a distant bird amongst peeps at Crown Point  
Semipalmated Plover (*C. semipalmatus*) SS, SDB, SDRM, Crown Pt.  
Killdeer (*C. vociferus*) SS, Mission Bay

STILTS AND AVOCETS: *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) SS where common, SDB, SDRM  
American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) SS only this trip

SANDPIPERS, PHALAROPES & ALLIES: *SCOLOPACIDAE*

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) SS, SDRM  
**Wandering Tattler** (*T. incanus*) a bird on jetty at La Jolla was a pleasant surprise! Although regular, they've  
become uncommon on SoCal coast in recent years  
Willet (*T. semipalmatus*) Mission Bay, Crown Pt, SDB, SDRM  
Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) SDRM only, fine looks  
Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) hundreds in fields near SS, SDRM. An exciting bird, the long  
probing bill drawing exclamations all-round.  
Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) SS, SDRM, SDB, Crown Pt.  
Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) 6-8 birds at SDRM, a fine addition to the trip  
Black Turnstone (*A. melanocephala*) one at La Jolla (great spotting Mark!), SDRM  
Surfbird (*Aphriza vergata*) a bird close at Mission Bay jetty  
Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) SDRM only  
Western Sandpiper (*C. mauri*) SDRM, SDB  
Least Sandpiper (*C. minutilla*) Unit One, SDRM  
Dunlin (*C. alpina*) SDRM, SDB  
Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) SDRM on mud-flats  
Long-billed Dowitcher (*L. scolopaceus*) here and there at SS

SKUAS, GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS: *LARIDAE*

**Parasitic Jaeger** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) an adult chasing Royal Terns indulging in violent aerobatics along  
the Silver Strand south of Coronado was a trip highlight!  
**Laughing Gull** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) a fly-over at Finney Lake and a vagrant at SDRM  
Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*) SDB, SDRM, Mission Bay—a crowd-pleaser, gorgeous!

Ring-billed Gull (*L. delawarensis*) common at SS, Finney Lake (where foraging in flocks on the asphalt roads), also at SDRM

California Gull (*L. californicus*) SS, common at SDB, SDRM

Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) I called out a first-year bird as it flew overhead at Obsidian Butte, SS

**Yellow-footed Gull** (*L. livens*) two adults at Obsidian Butte! Lovely light, bright birds.

Western Gull (*L. occidentalis*) ubiquitous along coast, none inland

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) SDB, Crown Point

Royal Tern (*S. maxima*) SDB, SDRM, La Jolla, Crown Point

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) a flock of 60 +/- at Crown Point

#### PIGEONS AND DOVES: *COLUMBIDAE*

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) daily near habitation

Band-tailed Pigeon (*C. fasciata*) Good scope looks at Descanso

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) two in Brawley

Mourning Dove (*Z. macroura*) daily, everywhere

Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*) one bird called twice—"No hope, no hope" predicting our attempts at seeing this little menace, normally easy in Brawley

Common-Ground Dove (*C. passerina*) fairly common in Brawley, common at Sonny Bono NWR HQ

Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) now countable in California, this bird is rapidly extending its range here—everywhere

#### CUCKOOS, ROADRUNNERS AND ANIS: *CUCULIDAE*

Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) thirteen seen in vicinity of SS! Enjoyed by all

#### OWLS: *STRIGIDAE*

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) a lone bird outside its burrow along Sinclair Rd, SS, gave us very satisfying looks

#### HUMMINGBIRDS: *TROCHILIDAE*

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) common in chaparral and around coastal homes

**Allen's Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus sasin*) a wintering male in Imperial Beach, where Uncommon

#### KINGFISHERS: *ALCEDINIDAE*

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) a single bird at a Mission Bay marina during lunch

#### WOODPECKERS & ALLIES: *PICIDAE*

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) common amongst oaks, outstanding close looks at Paso Picacho State Park in the Cuyamacas

Gila Woodpecker (*M. uropygialis*) a few birds in Brawley gave us good looks

Nuttall's Woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*) Mission Gorge, Navajo Canyon, SD

**Downy Woodpecker** (*P. pubescens*) a single bird, strangely at Paso Picacho Cpgrd. I first assumed it would be a Hairy, the expected bird there, but its small bill and small size (notably smaller than pursuing Acorn Wdpr. overhead) declared it. The white breast is uncharacteristic of California subspecies, making me think this bird is a winter visitor from a distant population, in an unusual location.

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) singles seen many places, including Descanso, Finney Lake, Brawley, Imperial Beach, Mission Gorge

#### TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: *TYRANNIDAE*

Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) ubiquitous, all locations and habitats visited

Say's Phoebe (*S. saya*) grasslands: Mesa Grande Rd., Lake Henshaw, SS

Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*) at hotel in Mission Valley and at Crown Pt.

SHRIKES: *LANIIDAE*

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) approx. 7 overall, desert and SS

VIREOS: *VIREONIDAE*

Hutton's Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*) a cooperative bird near Mission Dam our last morning

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS: *CORVIDAE*

Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) one only at Paso Picacho—but cooperative, gorgeous

Western Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) wherever habitat is appropriate

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) common on coastal plain and irrigated farm land, except Imperial Valley

Common Raven (*C. corax*) interior dry country, desert, and mountains

LARKS: *ALAUDIDAE*

Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) Anza-Borrego roadside, and west of Imperial

SWALLOWS: *HIRUNDINIDAE*

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) a few at Finney Lake, SS

CHICKADEES & TITMICE: *PARIDAE*

Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli*) cooperative bird at Paso Picacho

VERDIN: *REMIZIDAE*

Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) a few at Yaqui Well, Finney Lake

BUSHTIT: *AEGITHALIDAE*

Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) Mission Gorge and Navajo Canyon chaparral

NUTHATCHES: *SITTIDAE*

White-breasted Nuthatch (*S. carolinensis*) Singles at Paso Picacho and Mission Gorge

Pygmy Nuthatch (*S. pygmaea*) a small cooperative flock in pines at Paso Picacho

WRENS: *TROGLODYTIDAE*

Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) a responsive bird close at Kitchen Creek

Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*) unresponsive to playback in Mission Gorge at mid-day, calling but distant and heard only our last morning

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) common in chaparral.

Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) singing, skulking birds at Finney Lake

KINGLETS: *REGULIDAE*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) common in oaks and chaparral

OLD WORLD WARBLERS: *MUSCICAPIDAE* (*Sylviinae*)

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*) two close birds at Finney Lake

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*P. melanura*) excellent looks at a single bird near Ramer Lake, good spotting Gavin!

THRUSHES & ALLIES: *MUSCICAPIDAE* (*Turdinae*)

Western Bluebird (*Sialis mexicana*) well seen many places; grassland and SS

Mountain Bluebird (*S. currucoides*) a flock of approx. 200 birds along Hwy 111 SE of Salton Sea were in an inaccessible spot, disappointingly—but blue flashes were lovely.

Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) a Mission Gorge bird was uncooperative

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) a flock at the Ramer Lake Rest Stop were the only ones seen.

**BABLERS: MUSCICAPIDAE (Timaliinae)**

Wrenit (*Chamaea fasciata*) the voice of the chaparral: Mission Gorge, Navajo Canyon

**MOCKINGBIRDS, THRASHERS & ALLIES: MIMIDAE**

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) common along coast and in Brawley

California Thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*) fine looks in Mission Gorge, singing at Navajo Canyon

**Crissal Thrasher** (*T. crissale*) a single bird at Finney Lake posed shamelessly

**STARLINGS: STURNIDAE**

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) the ubiquitous sky-rat

**WAXWINGS: BOMBYCILLIDAE**

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) a flock came to palm fruit at Mission Valley Resort each morning; good looks at Ramer Lake Rest Stop also

**SILKY-FLYCATCHERS: PTILOGONATIDAE**

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) common in Anza-Borrego Desert; also Brawley

**WOOD-WARBLERS: EMBERIZIDAE (Parulinae)**

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) singles at Finney Lake mesquite, Sonny Bono NWR HQ, Imperial Beach

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) almost ubiquitous; as Mary Ann said: “If it flits by while you’re watching something else it’s probably a Yellow-rumped Warbler”

**SPARROWS: EMBERIZIDAE (Emberizinae)**

Spotted Towhee (*P. maculatus*) Buckman Springs, Mission Gorge, Navajo Canyon

California Towhee (*P. crissalis*) common in chaparral: Mission Gorge, Navajo Canyon

Abert’s Towhee (*P. aberti*) confiding birds up close at Sonny Bono NWR HQ during lunch and also at Finney & Ramer Lakes.

Vesper Sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*) a single bird in grassland along Mesa Grande Rd. perched obligingly for us to see on a roadside barbed wire fence.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) a cooperative flock at roadside near Descanso

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) “**Belding’s**” (*beldingi*) subspecies at observation deck along the Silver Strand bordering San Diego Bay

Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) a single leader-only bird—possibly “Slatey” form—at Mission Gorge was not cooperative

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) surprisingly few seen, best at the hotel in Mission Valley

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) fairly common in chaparral, at coastal stops, and also at Sonny Bono NWR HQ during lunch

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) at Paso Picacho Cpgrd in the Cuyamaca Mtns. A flock containing two winter-visiting “Grey-headed” Juncos as well

**BLACKBIRDS and ALLIES: ICTERIDAE**

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) here and there, not much time spent on them: Descanso area, Mesa Grande Rd, Salton Sea, Brawley, SD coast

**Tricolored Blackbird** (*A. tricolor*) a half-dozen males with Brewer's Blackbirds at lakeside and perched gave us excellent looks, Cuyamaca Lake

Western Meadowlark (*Sternella neglecta*) Mesa Grande grasslands, Lake Henshaw basin, and fields in Imperial Valley where common

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) seen in almost all habitats

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) abundant at SS, spreading fast in CA

Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) a few small flocks flying by at SS region

Bullock's Oriole (*I. bullockii*) 2 birds, one imm, male, the other adult, at Coral Trees at a home in Imperial Beach

#### FINCHES: *FRINGILLIDAE*

House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) common along the coast

Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*) Mission Gorge only

American Goldfinch (*C. tristis*) a few in sycamores at Mission Dam the last morning proved to be the last species logged on the tour

#### OLD WORLD SPARROWS: *PASSERIDAE*

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) common around habitation along the coast and in Brawley

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***162 Species***