

# **CALIFORNIA SPECIALTIES**

**April 21-29, 2008**



*Island Scrub Jay—Brad Schram*

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TOUR REPORT  
CALIFORNIA SPECIALTIES  
April 21–29, 2008

By Brad Schram

The beauty of birds commands our attention. Like fine art, bird study provides self-evident rewards, the time spent requiring little justification. Experience with the birds informs and inspires us, granting joy even as we wish for *more*.

One morning's adventure to Mount Pinos in southwestern Kern County exemplified the adventure of birding. Over 8,800 feet at its peak, Mount Pinos provides mature yellow pine forests (predominantly Jeffrey Pine) and rugged scenery. It also holds many western montane species in its forests and thickets. Among these, the Green-tailed Towhee holds pride of place as arguably the flashiest—a gloriously patterned, painted bird.

Early morning light saturates color; what it did for a responsive pair of Green-tailed Towhees tempts overactive thesaurus use for adequate explanation. Suffice it to say that the scope image of a singing male caused sudden exclamation from more than one appreciative tour member! The strikingly-marked bird sang and postured in gray-green shrubs as Violet-green Swallows cavorted overhead while Mountain Quail called all around.

A Clark's Nutcracker we had been hearing forced itself on our attention by alighting within reasonable scoping distance. One of seven corvids seen on our tour, the nutcracker's personality matches the wild mountain habitats of its choosing. Bold, beautiful, intelligent, and engaging, the nutcracker decided we were less so, taking its leave before we were done with it.

Further upslope we encountered a memorable pair of White-headed Woodpeckers, perched together in a dead pine. They sat quietly as we enjoyed them through binoculars and spotting scope. Western Bluebirds cavorted nearby. Steller's Jays called and flew about. We remained fixed on the woodpeckers, marveling at the characteristic pattern and their tolerance of our movements.

Descending the mountain reluctantly, we retraced our steps down to the scrub-oak, pinon/juniper belt into the mountainous grasslands of Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Stopping at a vantage point granting thirty-plus mile views, we scanned the sky. Before long two California Condors swung into view a mile off! Before all the scopes were in place, we accounted for eight of the huge birds soaring over a distant hill and in and out of an intervening canyon. Western Meadowlarks sang in the grass nearby; California poppies bloomed at our feet—but we paid them less attention than they were due. A half-hour watching condors shot by too soon, and we had miles to go. But we stayed a bit longer, enjoying the spectacle before us. Rare, to be sure, but they are with us again in the wild. May it continue so!

A day started in the San Joaquin Valley, continued with exploration of Mount Pinos, followed by the vastness of condor country, ended in beauty on the cliffs at Shell Beach. We watched sea otters and Black Oystercatchers from the hotel; a Pacific sunset dazzled our seaside dinner. Our April 2008 California Specialties tour provided the *more* birders seek—color, form, song, and variety in magnificent natural landscapes. We look forward to more.

## Itinerary

- 21 April Meet in the evening at hotel in San Diego, get-acquainted dinner.
- 22 April Bird San Elijo Lagoon trail; J Street Marina, Imperial Beach park and pier; West San Diego Bay; San Diego River mouth. Highlights included fine looks at California Gnatcatcher, blooming chaparral plants along the trail, migrant Western Tanagers and Lazuli Buntings, and a Yellow-crowned Night Heron roosting by its nest—a third repeat of the first nesting pair of this species in California history, and raucous flocks of Elegant Terns.
- 23 April Drive to Kitchen Creek Road east of San Diego, then through the Laguna mountains to Julian and lunch at Santa Ysabel Mission amongst Lawrence's Goldfinches and Hooded and Bullock's orioles. Tamarisk Grove Campground in the Anza-Borrego desert had a few migrants and lovely Black-throated Sparrows were nearby. We then drove to our hotel in Brawley south of the Salton Sea.
- 24 April Birding for the day in the vicinity of the south end of the Salton Sea. Both Ramer and Finney Lakes had a few migrants this morning, but strikingly few water birds. A responsive Black-tailed Gnatcatcher displayed memorably nearby. After much searching at Obsidian Butte a lone Yellow-footed Gull proved difficult by roosting well away from the gull/tern flock in a seam of a lone rock. Migrants in the mesquite around our picnic spot at Sonny Bono NWR made for an interesting mid-day, while shorebirds and Burrowing Owls completed the day's birding.
- 25 April Travel to Maricopa with quick morning birding in Brawley followed by stops at Salton City's boat launch ramp, Covington Park and Big Morongo Preserve. Migrant numbers were unseasonally low in the Morongo Valley, but produced fine looks at a singing Summer Tanager and multiple encounters with the striking Vermillion Flycatchers. Late afternoon birding near Maricopa produced LeConte's Thrasher and Sage Sparrow in wonderful light.
- 26 April Birding along Cerro Noroeste road, Mil Potrero Campground, and the Mount Pinos region. Green-tailed Towhees were cooperative and stunning in morning light, while a pair of White-headed Woodpeckers posed cooperatively on a dead pine for our examination. Surprisingly, Thick-billed Fox Sparrows had not yet returned for the breeding season here. On returning along the Cerro Noroeste ridge we found *eight* California Condors about a mile distant, soaring dramatically in and out of a canyon below, then ascending high above the hilly grasslands of Bitter Creek NWR. We then traveled through the Cuyama Valley where we found a flock of Tri-colored Blackbirds working a grassy field. Evening at our cliff-top hotel at Shell Beach in San Luis Obispo County.
- 27 April Morning birding under gray clouds at Shell Beach near the hotel—a Peregrine Falcon perched nearby in the top of a pine proved to be a morning highlight. Birding at Oceano Lagoon found a couple faded lingering first year Glaucous-winged Gulls and a Greater White-fronted Goose which wintered here.

Oceano Campground produced close-up looks at Allen's Hummingbird and Chestnut-backed Chickadees amongst a small selection of western migrants. A stop at Waller Park in Santa Maria added lingering Cackling and Ross's geese to a surprising day's goose list of five species. A stop at Los Alamos County Park in Santa Barbara County gave us close-up Yellow-billed Magpies for all to admire

at leisure beneath old Valley Oaks. Stopping at an overlook alongside Hwy. 101 gave us 'scope looks at migrating Pacific Loons and Surf Scoters moving up the Santa Barbara Channel.

28 April Our boat trip across the SB Channel produced a few Sooty Shearwaters and Common Murres along with a few quick looks at the virtually endemic Xantus's Murrelets. We found Santa Cruz Island in post card-perfect conditions. Although western migrants weren't found on the island, the Island Scrub Jay teed up for multiple 'scope looks after an initial hour of hide-and-seek. Two pair of these unique birds cavorted about during lunch, giving everyone the looks they desired. The return trip to Ventura Marina brought a few pelagic birds, encounters with Rhinoceros Auklets and knockout looks at Xantus's Murrelets. The display put on by two breaching adolescent Humpback Whales ensures strong memories of the return trip—a half-hour long performance at close range imbedded the image in our minds forever.

29 April Departure for home—after **1261 miles** tour driving distance (plus boat!)

**Code:** 4/10 = this species has been seen on four of ten California Specialties tours

ABD = Anza Borrego Desert

K = Kitchen Creek Rd., SD county

LACP = Los Alamos County Park

MPCG = Mil Potrero Camp Ground below Mt. Pinos

MSY = Mission Santa Ysabel

MV = Morongo Valley

O = Oceano

SDRM = San Diego River Mouth

SDB = San Diego Bay

SEL = San Elijo Lagoon

SB = Santa Barbara

ShB = Shell Beach

SCI = Santa Cruz Island

SS = Salton Sea Region (includes Ramer and Finney lakes)

TG = Tamarisk Grove Cpgd., Anza-Borrego State Park

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

## BIRDS

SWANS, GEESE & DUCKS: *ANATIDAE*

**Greater White-fronted Goose** (*Anser albifrons*) 3/12 a lingering bird at Oceano Lagoon

Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) 3/12 five at Sonny Bono NWR, **one** at Santa Maria

**Ross's Goose** (*C. rossii*) 5/12 a lingering bird at Santa Maria

Canada Goose (*Branta Canadensis*) 7/12 a nesting pair at ShB

**Cackling Goose** (*B. minima*) 4/12 a wintering bird at Santa Maria appears to be of the Aleutian subspecies *leucopareia*

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) 12/12 a few at Salton City.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) 12/12 a few where expected: SDRM, SS, O.

American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) 7/12 surprising numbers: SEL, SDRM, Ventura

Mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) 12/12 wherever there's fresh water  
Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*) 12/12 SDRM, J St.  
Cinnamon Teal (*A. cyanoptera*) 12/12 SDRM, SS  
Northern Shoveler (*A. clypeata*) 12/12 good numbers at SDRM, SS  
Northern Pintail (*A. acuta*) 4/12 SEL, 4 at SS—unusual on these dates  
**Greater Scaup** (*A. marita*) 3/12 J St. Marina; SS—unusual numbers this winter  
Lesser Scaup (*A. affinis*) 12/12 a few at SDRM  
Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) 12/12 a few at ShB, SB Channel; large flock off  
Prisoner's  
**White-winged Scoter** (*M. fusca*) 3/12 two distant females at Imperial Beach pier  
Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) 8/12 a single bird at SDB  
Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serator*) 6/12 a female SDRM  
Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) 12/12 SS and most fresh water venues

PHEASANTS, GROUSE, and TURKEY: *PHASIANIDAE*

Wild Turkey (*Melagris gallopavo*) 8/12 a couple small groups near Lake Henshaw

NEW WORLD QUAIL: *ODONTOPHORIDAE*

**Mountain Quail** (*Oreortyx pictus*) 11/12 a single bird perched on the ridge at Kitchen  
Creek (good spotting Liz!) provided multiple good 'scope looks. HO at Mt. Pinos  
California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) 12/12 seen many locations, usually from the van  
Gambel's Quail (*C. gambelii*) 12/12 seen frequently around SS

LOONS: *GAVIIDAE*

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) 10/12 eclipse plumaged at ShB, SB  
Pacific Loon (*G. pacifica*) 12/12 flocks flying up the SB Channel, some close  
Common Loon (*G. immer*) 12/12 ShB, SBC

GREBES: *PODICIPEDIDAE*

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) 12/12 a few at Oceano only: surprising  
Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) 12/12 small numbers at SS by historic comparison;  
SDB  
Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) 12/12 SEL, ShB, SS, & SB Channel  
Clark's Grebe (*A. clarkii*) 12/12 Lake Henshaw, SS, Ventura

SHEARWATERS & PETRELS: *PROCELLARIDAE*

Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) 11/12 200 +/- on SB Channel

PELICANS: *PELECANIDAE*

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*) 12/12 Salton City  
Brown Pelican (*P. occidentalis*) 12/12 all along the coast; few at SS where now  
uncommon

CORMORANTS: *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) 12/12

Brandt's Cormorant (*P. penicillatus*) 12/12 ShB & offshore  
Pelagic Cormorant (*P. pelagicus*) 12/12 ShB where nesting on cliffs, & offshore

BITTERNES AND HERONS: *ARDEIDAE*

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) 12/12  
Great Egret (*A. albus*) 12/12  
Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) 12/12  
Little Blue Heron 10/12 seven in SD river mouth channel; rare elsewhere in California  
Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) 12/12 fewer than normal near the Salton Sea  
Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) 12/12 SS, & Oceano  
Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) 12/12 SEL, SS, Ventura  
**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) 2/12 a bird roosting by its nest,  
Imperial Beach

IBISES & SPOONBILLS: *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) 11/12 a few flocks near SS

AMERICAN VULTURES: *CATHARTIDAE*

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) 12/12 daily except the SS and San Diego coast  
**California Condor** (*Gymnogyps californianus*) 2/12 eight birds in the air at Bitter  
Creek NWR thrilled us all!



California Condor, Big Sur—Brad Schram

HAWKS, EAGLES, & KITES: *ACCIPITRIDAE*

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) 10/12 SEL, SDB  
Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) 9/12 leader only, SS  
Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) 9/12 a late migrant at Kitchen Creek  
Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperii*) 12/12 MV, ABD  
Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) 12/12 SB & SLO counties  
Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*) 12/12 commonly seen each area but ocean  
**Swainson's Hawk** (*B. swainsoni*) 6/12 3 in ABD, uncommon in CA  
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) 10/12 great overhead at Zaca Sta. Road, SBCo

FALCONS & CARACARAS: *FALCONIDAE*

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) 12/12 seen while driving: SS, Cerro Noroeste Rd.  
Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*) 9/11 a perched adult at ShB in morning light—  
stunning!

RAILS, GALLINULES & COOTS: *RALLIDAE*

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) 4/12 an aggressive bird at Oceano was a real treat for all  
Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) 11/12 Finney Lake, a few  
American Coot (*Fulica americana*) 12/12 ubiquitous where damp, apart from the ocean

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS: *CHARADRIIDAE*

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) 12/12 SS only  
Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) 9/12 a single bird at SS  
Semipalmated Plover (*C. semipalmatus*) 12/12 SDRM & SS  
Killdeer (*C. vociferus*) 12/12 SDRM, SS

OYSTERCATCHERS: *HEMATOPODIDAE*

Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*) 12/12 ShB, and Santa Cruz Island

STILTS AND AVOCETS: *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) 12/12 SEL, SDB, SDRM & SS  
American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) 12/12 SEL, SDB, SDRM & SS

SANDPIPERS, PHALAROPES & ALLIES: *SCOLOPACIDAE*

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) 12/12 SS, ShB  
Greater Yellowlegs (*T. melanoleuca*) 12/12 SDRM, SS  
Willet (*T. semipalmatus*) 12/12 all sea shores, incl. SS  
Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) 12/12 ocean and salt marsh edges, incl. SS  
Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) 12/12 common at SDRM, a few at SS, Ventura  
Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) 8/12 Red Hill SS and Ventura  
Black Turnstone (*A. melanocephala*) 12/12 SDB, ShB—but few  
Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) 8/12 five striking birds at SS—Salton City boat launch  
Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) 12/12 SDRM, SS  
Western Sandpiper (*C. mauri*) 12/12 SDRM, SS,  
Least Sandpiper (*C. minutilla*) 12/12 SDRM, SS  
Dunlin (*C. alpina*) 9/11 SDRM, SDB, SS  
Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) 12/12 SDRM, leader heard only  
Long-billed Dowitcher (*L. scolopaceus*) 12/12 SDB, SDRM & common at SS  
Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) 9/12 a few at SS, gorgeous looks!  
Red-necked Phalarope (*lobatus*) 12/12 few at SS, lower than usual

SKUAS, GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS: *LARIDAE*

Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*) 12/12 SS and a few at SB Channel  
**Heerman's Gull** (*L. heermanni*) 10/12 one adult at Obsidian Butte, SS where rare  
Ring-billed Gull (*L. delawarensis*) 12/12 SDB, SDRM, SS, Ventura  
California Gull (*L. californicus*) 12/12 all salt water, Lake Henshaw  
**Yellow-footed Gull** (*L. livens*) 7/12 a 1<sup>st</sup> yr. bird at Obsidian Butte—a wintering bird  
Western Gull (*L. occidentalis*) 12/12 ubiquitous along coast and SB Channel  
Glaucous-winged Gull (*L. glaucescens*) 12/12 2 at Oceano Lagoon  
Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) 7/12 SDB, SS  
Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) 12/12 common at salt water incl. SS

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) 6/12 five of these elegant critters working a pond at the Salton Sea

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) 12/12 SDRM, SS

Royal Tern (*S. maxima*) 8/12 SDRM, SS, SB Channel

Elegant Tern (*S. elegans*) 12/12 SDB, SDRM

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) 12/12 a few SDB

#### AUKS, MURRES & PUFFINS: *ALCIDAE*

Common Murre (*Uria aalge*) 10/12 off Ventura

Pigeon Guillemot (*Cephus columba*) 12/12 Shell Beach, and Santa Cruz Island

**Xantus's Murrelet** (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*) 11/12 SB Channel gave us multiple looks on the water

Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) 9/12 seven on SB Channel

#### PIGEONS AND DOVES: *COLUMBIDAE*

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) 12/12 daily

Band-tailed Pigeon (*C. fasciata*) 11/12 Mt. Pinos, Arroyo Grande (Deer Cyn)

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) 10/12 a few in ABD, SS region

Mourning Dove (*Z. macroura*) 12/12 daily

Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*) 11/12 Brawley

Common-Ground Dove (*C. passerina*) 11/12 SS

Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) 12/12 now countable in California, this bird is rapidly extending its range here—everywhere

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

Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) 12/12 SS a lone bird crossing ahead

#### BARN OWLS: *TYTONIDAE*

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) 4/12 a roosting bird at Sonny Bono NWR

#### OWLS: *STRIGIDAE*

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) 6/12 a bird roosting in open at Finney Lake

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) 12/12 well-seen on roadside dikes near SS

#### NIGHTJARS: *CAPRIMULGIDAE*

Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) 11/12 Brawley

#### SWIFTS: *APODIDAE*

White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatilis*) 12/12 surprisingly, a few leader only

#### HUMMINGBIRDS: *TROCHILIDAE*

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilocus alexandri*) 12/12 at close range at MV

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) 12/12 common in wide range of habitats

Costa's Hummingbird (*C. costae*) 11/12 TG, MV

**Allen's Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus sasin*) 12/12 both resident *sedentarius* on SCI and migratory *sasin* at Oceano

WOODPECKERS & ALLIES: *PICIDAE*

**Lewis's Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes lewis*) 5/12 a single bird in Laguna Mtns, 3 on Zaca Sta. Rd. Surprising and enjoyed thoroughly!

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) 12/12 common among oaks

Gila Woodpecker (*M. uropygialis*) 12/12 Brawley

Ladder-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*) 7/12 MV

Nuttall's Woodpecker (*P. nuttallii*) 12/12 MV, Arroyo Grande, LACP

Downy Woodpecker (*P. pubescens*) 11/12 Oceano only

Hairy Woodpecker (*P. villosus*) 11/12 Mt. Pinos

White-headed Woodpecker (*P. albolarvatus*) 9/12 walk-away looks at MP

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) 12/12 a few only, Kitchen Creek area, SCI

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: *TYRANNIDAE*

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) 9/12 Mt Pinos

Western Wood Pewee (*C. sordidus*) 10/12 MV

Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*E. difficilis*) 12/12 SEL, MV; island sub-species heard on SCI

Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) 12/12 seen wherever there was water & grassland

**Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) 12/12 fine looks in Morongo

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) 10/12 SEL, SS, MV, SCI

Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*) 12/12 SEL, MV

Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*) 12/12 common at roadside in desert and grassland

VIREOS: *VIREONIDAE*

Gray Vireo (*Vireo vicinior*) 10/12 finally very cooperative at Kitchen Creek

Warbling Vireo (*V. gilvus*) 12/12 SEL, SS

JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS: *CORVIDAE*

Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) 12/12 K & Mt. Pinos

Western Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) 12/12 wherever habitat is appropriate

**Island Scrub-Jay** (*A. insularis*) 11/12 an hour of looking finally produced two birds teed up—then 4 birds during lunch were very cooperative

Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) 4/12 a single bird on Mt. Pinos--early

Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttallii*) 12/12 outstanding up-close looks at Los Alamos

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) 12/12 common on coastal plain and irrigated farm land, except Imperial Valley

Common Raven (*C. corax*) 12/12 interior dry country, desert, and mountains



Yellow-billed Magpie—Brad Schram

LARKS: *ALAUDIDAE*

Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) 12/12 Cerro Noroeste Rd. only

SWALLOWS: *HIRUNDINIDAE*

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) 12/12 Oceano

Violet-green Swallow (*T. thalassina*) 12./12 migrants & common on Mt Pinos

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) 11/12 SEL, SDRM,  
Oceano

Cliff Swallow (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*) 12/12 very common as migrants and breeders

Barn Swallow (*H. rustica*) 12/12 commonly seen migrants; breeding under SCI pier

CHICKADEES & TITMICE: *PARIDAE*

Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli*) 12/12 common in the mountains

Chestnut-backed Chickadee (*P. rufescens*) 12/12 riparian at Oceano

Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) 12/12 Buckman Sprgs. Rest Stop Hwy. 8, K, Mt.  
Pinos, Los Alamos

VERDIN: *REMIZIDAE*

Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) 12/12 desert, where common

BUSHTIT: *AEGITHALIDAE*

Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) 12/12 common in chaparral and oaks

NUTHATCHES: *SITTIDAE*

White-breasted Nuthatch (*S. carolinensis*) 12/12 Laguna Mtns., Mt. Pinos, Los Alamos  
Pygmy Nuthatch (*S. pygmaea*) 12/12 Mt. Pinos

WRENS: *TROGLODYTIDAE*

Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) 10/12 a responsive bird close at K  
Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) 12/12 often heard, less often seen, but com.  
House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) 12/12 coast and mtns.  
Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) 12/12 at Finney Lake & Oceano

KINGLETS: *REGULIDAE*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) 7/12 a late individual at SEL

OLD WORLD WARBLERS: *MUSCICAPIDAE (Sylviinae)*

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*P. melanura*) 12/12 excellent looks near Finney Lake  
**California Gnatcatcher** (*P. californica*) 12/12 well-seen at SEL, fine looks by all

THRUSHES & ALLIES: *MUSCICAPIDAE (Turdinae)*

Western Bluebird (*Sialis mexicana*) 12/12 well seen many places  
Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) 2/12 TG  
Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) 5/12 a calling bird at Oceano  
American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) 12/12 only a few

BABBLERS: *MUSCICAPIDAE (Timaliinae)*

Wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*) 12/12 the voice of the chaparral: SEL, K, Oceano, LACP

MOCKINGBIRDS, THRASHERS & ALLIES: *MIMIDAE*

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) 12/12 near habitation  
California Thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*) 12/12 common in chaparral  
**Crissal Thrasher** (*T. crissale*) 12/12 a single bird at Finney Lake didn't like our looks  
**Le Conte's Thrasher** (*T. lecontei*) 12/12 truly outstanding looks after a bit of work at  
Maricopa—walk-away 'scope views!

STARLINGS: *STURNIDAE*

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) 12/12

WAXWINGS: *BOMBYCILLIDAE*

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) 11/12 a flock overhead at Oceano only

SILKY-FLYCATCHERS: *PTILOGONATIDAE*

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) 12/12 surprisingly few! A single at MV only! Unusual.

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

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) 12/12 a few here and there; subspecies *sordida* on SCI

Nashville Warbler (*V. ruficapilla*) 12/12 K, ABD

Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) 12/12 K, SS

Yellow-rumped Warbler (*D. coronata*) 12/12 commonly seen migrants in desert oases

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*D. nigriscens*) 9/12 a few: SS, Oceano, 1 @ SCI

Hermit Warbler (*D. occidentalis*) 10/12 outstanding looks at a cooperative male in Laguna Mtns.—good spotting Gray

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) 12/12 SEL, SS

Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*) 12/12 SEL, K, SS, Oceano

Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) 9/12 excellent looks at a territorial bird at SEL

TANAGERS: *EMBERIZIDAE* (*Thraupinae*)

**Summer Tanager** (*Piranga rubra*) 7/12 a gorgeous singing male overhead at MV

Western Tanager (*P. ludoviciana*) 11/12 SEL, K, ABD Unusually few for date

SPARROWS: *EMBERIZIDAE* (*Emberizinae*)

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) 10/12 a responsive bird in scope on Mt. Pinos

left us all gasping for superlatives—what a show!



Green-tailed Towhee, Mt. Pinos—Brad Schram

Spotted Towhee (*P. maculatus*) 12/12 common in chaparral and mtn. slopes

California Towhee (*P. crissalis*) 12/12 one of the commonest birds of the tour

Abert's Towhee (*P. aberti*) 12/12 seen frequently by all near the Salton Sea

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) 10/12 MP

Black-chinned Sparrow (*S. atrogularis*) 10/12 good looks at Kitchen Creek

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) 12/12 Cerro Noroeste Rd.

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*) 8/12 wonderful looks at a responsive pair in Anza-Borrego SP, a briefer look at TG  
Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli canescens*) 12/12 the inland *canescens* race seen well at Maricopa  
Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) 10/12 “Belding’s” (*beldingi*) subspecies @ SEL & SD Bay; a grassland race along Cerro Noroeste Rd.  
Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) 12/12 common, incl. Sta. Cruz Island race *clementae*  
White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) 12/12 lingering wintering birds SEL  
Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) 12/12 a few at MP

CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS & BUNTINGS: *CARDINALIDAE*

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) 11/12 SEL, K, SS  
Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) 9/12 a gorgeous, cooperative, male at MV  
Lazuli Bunting (*P. amoena*) 10/12 migrants at SEL, K, ABD

BLACKBIRDS and ALLIES: *ICTERIDAE*

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) 12/12 common  
**Tricolored Blackbird** (*A. tricolor*) 12/12 a flock in Cuyama Dairy—mostly males  
Western Meadowlark (*Sternella neglecta*) 12/12 grasslands  
Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) 11/12 at a dairy near Finney Lake—good spotting Karen!  
Brewer’s Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) 12/12  
Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) 12/12 abundant at SS, spreading fast in CA  
Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) 12/12  
Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*) 12/12 at hotel in Mission Valley, a few elsewhere  
Bullock’s Oriole (*I. bullockii*) 12/12 very few, surprising

FINCHES: *FRINGILLIDAE*

Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) 10/12 Oceano only  
House Finch (*C. mexicanus*) 12/12  
Lesser Goldfinch (*C. psaltria*) 12/12  
**Lawrence’s Goldfinch** (*C. lawrenci*) 12/12 a few pair at MSY, nest-building and gorgeous!  
American Goldfinch (*C. tristis*) 11/12 a few at Oceano and LACP only



Lawrence's Goldfinch, male—Brad Schram

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: *PASSERIDAE*

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) 12/12

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**217 Species**

**1261** Tour miles

**MAMMALS**

Sea Otter  
Coyote  
Mule Deer

California Sea Lion  
Harbor Seal  
California Ground Squirrel  
(nearly ubiquitous)  
Merriam's Chipmunk  
Brush Rabbit  
Desert Cottontail  
Cottontail  
Black-tailed Jackrabbit  
Bottle-nosed Dolphin  
Hump-backed Whale

Variable Checkerspot

**Reptiles**

Fence Lizard  
Desert Spiny Lizard  
Red-eared Slider  
Western Pond Turtle

**BUTTERFLIES**

Anis Swallowtail  
Painted Lady  
Monarch