

FRIDAY FIELD TRIPS

Friday, September 28

Note: All Field Trips are half day and return by 11am

All trips are by Carpool leaving from the Ventura Beach Marriott Entrance.

Difficulty levels:

Easy—flat ground some walking.

Moderate—walking needed to get to the birding sites, some elevation changes.

Difficult—fair amount of walking with elevation changes.

1FR Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve

Leader: Tony Leukering

The tidal salt marsh here is a rare habitat in southern California. This trip will visit both the publicly accessible part of the reserve and the section that is normally closed to the public. The marsh and adjacent scrubby habitat attracts a variety of birds including waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, and chaparral species. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have become regular here and other rare species have been found here on occasion. Waterfowl are easy to approach and can include Blue-winged, Green-winged, and Eurasian Green-winged Teal (rare but regular). Ridgway's Rail has been found here on occasion and rarities in recent years have included Wilson's Plover, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Eastern Phoebe. There is often a very accommodating Greater Roadrunner here that poses nicely for photos. A spotting scope would be helpful here to scan for birds in the marsh.

Departure Time: 6:15 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 22 miles

Time (one way): 24 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

2FR Wheeler Gorge Campground

Leader: TBA

This campground within the Los Padres National Forest is a popular local birding spot. Just seven miles above Ojai, the flowing creek, montane chaparral, and forested area comprised of alders, oaks, and sycamores attracts species usually found at higher elevations including Mountain Quail, Hairy Woodpecker, and Steller's Jay. It is also a reliable spot for Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Hutton's Vireo, Canyon Wren, and other oak and foothill riparian species. In addition, it has regularly hosted more uncommon species in the fall and winter including Pacific Wren, American Dipper, and Varied Thrush.

Departure Time: 6:15 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): ~22 miles

Time (one way): ~30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

3FR Lake Los Carneros and Devereux Slough

Leader: TBA

The historic old Stow House at Lake Los Carneros County Park has a lush garden of exotic plants and trees worth looking through. Regular western birds such as Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpecker, Hutton's Vireo, California Thrasher, and winter sparrows are common. This habitat can be good for migrants in spring and fall with the occasional rarity being found. A trail around lake is good for viewing the water from different angles to find waterfowl, grebes, egrets and herons. Rails and bitterns are often spotted in the channel and among the reeds from the wooden footbridge at the north end of the lake. Nearby Devereux Slough can be very good for a variety of waterfowl, herons, egrets and shorebirds. Fall and winter are the best seasons for birding the slough and many rare birds have been found here including a White Wagtail and a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher on the same day! The beach at the mouth of the slough provides habitat for Snowy Plovers and a variety of shorebirds, gulls, and terns. The pines and eucalyptus trees around the parking area and entrance road can be productive for migrant passerines. A spotting scope would be helpful here to scan for birds in at the lake and the slough.

Departure Time: 6:15 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 40 miles

Time (one way): 38 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

4FR Lake Piru

Leader: TBA

Lake Piru in eastern Ventura County is a large reservoir set in a canyon above the Santa Clara River Valley. The steep landscape creates updrafts that attracts numbers of raptors and has become an excellent place to observe California Condors in recent years. Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, and Osprey are regular here as are Prairie Falcons and Ferruginous Hawks (latter in winter, but possible in late September). The lake itself harbors a variety of waterfowl and other waterbirds and is a reliable location for Common Merganser and other diving ducks. The chaparral covered slopes, oak woodlands, and riparian habitat harbor a diversity of resident and migrant species where we will have a good chance to find Lark Sparrow, Phainopepla, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Purple Finch, and others. A spotting scope is helpful for scoping birds on the lake.

Departure Time: 6:15 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Day Use Fee: \$13 per vehicle

Miles (one way): 38 miles

Time (one way): 45 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

5FR Wildwood Park and Briar Bluff Open Space Leader: TBA

These locations in Thousand Oaks with cactus scrub and coastal sage scrub, support populations of the threatened California Gnatcatcher that were discovered over the last 10-15 years. Other species we can expect to find include Greater Roadrunner, Costa's Hummingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Cactus Wren, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and more. Birding will be along trails that may be steep or rocky in places. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 27 miles

Time (one way): 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate to difficult

6FR Rancho Sierra Vista and Rancho Potrero Leader: Deven Kammerichs-Berke

Set in the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area, these birding sites have a series of trails that traverse rolling grasslands, chaparral, and riparian corridors. There is a resident population of Grasshopper Sparrows at these locations that we will try to coax into view. Other sparrows are expected here including Lark, Savannah, Golden-crowned, and Vesper. Raptors are also conspicuous with White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier and Red-shouldered Hawk being regular here. Chaparral birds should also be evident with California Quail and Greater Roadrunners being particularly common here (the latter are sometimes friendly, so bring your camera). This site is under-birded during the fall, but several riparian areas could harbor western migrants or vagrants. Birding will be along trails that may be steep or rocky in places. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 25 miles

Time (one way): 28 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate to difficult

7FR Sycamore Canyon Leader: David Vander Pluym

The campground and lower part of the canyon is a productive area for fall migrants and some of the more sought-after resident birds in southern California for those from out of state (Nuttall's Woodpecker, Wrentit, California Thrasher, California Towhee). The campground is a legendary vagrant trap and in recent years birders have found Great Crested Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Brown Thrasher, Bay-breasted Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, and other vagrants there. A walk up the canyon should yield Canyon Wren, Rufous-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and other residents and migrants. The non-native Nanday Parakeet is established here and flocks are frequently seen flying up and down the canyon.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Day Use Fee: \$12 per vehicle

Miles (one way): 23 miles

Time (one way): 25 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

8FR Rancho Simi and Arroyo Simi

Leader: Scott Terrill

Rancho Simi Park with its lake, groves of sycamores and pines, and lawns provide an oasis within Simi Valley for waterfowl, waterbirds, and migrant passerines. The park has been a reliable location for Plumbeous Vireo in the fall and winter for over a decade. In addition, Black-and-white Warbler and "Pink-sided" Junco have been found here on multiple occasions and it often harbors locally uncommon wintering species including Red-breasted Sapsucker, Chipping and Lark Sparrows. The adjacent Arroyo Simi is a man-made flood channel that has been left undisturbed to develop bird habitats. It now attracts a number of birds including Green Heron, White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Snipe, and others. While a little early in the season for waterfowl, the park and arroyo regularly host Eurasian Wigeon, Common and Hooded Mergansers, all three teal, and a variety of other species so we will look to see what is there.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 36 miles

Time (one way): 35 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

9FR Ventura Settling Ponds and Ventura Harbor

Leaders: TBA

The Ventura Settling Ponds have recently increased access for birders. This location is now one of the most popular birding sites in the Ventura area. The four treatment ponds are situated close to the ocean and attract a variety of waterfowl, waders, and other waterbirds. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have been regular here of late, and it is also a reliable location for Blue-winged Teal, Green Heron, and Common Gallinule. The willows surrounding the ponds host a

number of resident and migrant species, including the occasional vagrant. The Ventura Harbor and its breakwaters will be checked for rockpipers (Black Oystercatcher, Black and Ruddy Turnstones, Surf-bird, and Wandering Tattler), cormorants (Brandt's, Double-crested, and Pelagic), and other waterbirds. Several hybrid oystercatchers have frequented the harbor for years so we may practice using the Jehl Scale to score them. A spotting scope will be helpful for scanning the settling ponds and the jetties at the harbor.

Departure Time: 6:45 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 3 miles

Time (one way): <10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

10FR Santa Clara River Estuary and McGrath State Beach

Leader: Wes Fritz

The Santa Clara River Estuary and the adjacent McGrath State Beach have long been hotspots for finding migratory shorebirds. The estuary has had a number of vagrants through the years including mega-rarities such as Lesser Sand Plover and Red-necked Stint. The nature of the estuary has changed in recent years since it no longer breaches regularly, but this location is still a reliable location for waterfowl, gulls, terns, pelicans, and shorebirds. Baird's and Semipalmated Sandpipers have been seen here over the last few years and a Bar-tailed Godwit was found on the beach here a few years ago in mid-September. Anything is possible at this location. McGrath State Beach also has riparian habitat that attracts migrants in September. A spotting scope is helpful here for scanning flocks of shorebirds, terns, and gulls.

Departure Time: 6:45 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 3 miles

Time (one way): <10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

11FR Lake Casitas

Leader: TBA

This reservoir north of Ventura is surrounded by native oak and riparian woodlands as well as extensive plantings of pepper trees and eucalyptus within the recreation area that attract a wide variety of birds. Although the lake level has been affected dramatically by drought, birding within the area is productive year-round. Recently, a pair of Bald Eagles has taken up residency and is nesting in a very visible location near the lake. The lake itself also attracts Western and Clark's Grebes, American White Pelicans, and a variety of geese and ducks including Common Mergansers. The weedy shorelines around the lake attract flocks of sparrows and other passerines and has consistently hosted Swamp Sparrow. Raptors found near the lake include Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Prairie Falcon, and Zone-tailed Hawk (rare but regular). Other birds

seen here regularly include Nuttall's Woodpecker, Red-breasted and Red-naped Sapsuckers, Hutton's Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Phainopepla. A spotting scope is helpful for scoping birds on the lake.

Departure Time: 6:45 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Day Use Fee: \$10 per vehicle

Miles (one way): 15 Miles

Time (one way): 21 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

12FR Camino Real Park and Arroyo Verde Park

Leader: Lauren Harter

These areas can be birded in a morning and are an easy way to find many of southern California's resident species. The perimeter of Camino Real Park has a variety of habitats and ornamental plantings that harbor a surprising diversity of birds. Resident Allen's Hummingbirds are easily found here and the tall eucalyptus trees often harbor tanagers and orioles including Summer Tanager and Baltimore Oriole. In 2017, a Scarlet Tanager was found here. Among the many common species here, the park is a great place to find vagrants in late September. Arroyo Verde Park was threatened by the Thomas Fire, but much of the park is still intact including open grassy areas with ornamental sycamores, pines, ashes, and palms. What remains here is still being determined, but the large trees that were spared by the fire are productive for Hooded Oriole and Cassin's Kingbirds. The park also supports a variety of resident species and vagrants are always possible in September.

Departure Time: 6:45 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 5 miles

Time (one way): 10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

13FR Ojai Meadows and Cañada Larga

Leader: TBA

These two popular birding locations support a surprising diversity of birds along the edge of Ventura and Ojai. The Ojai Meadows is being actively restored and includes a small seasonal pond and mix of upland habitats. The pond can harbor waterfowl and other interesting species during migration including Sora, Wilson's Snipe, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Least Bittern has also been recorded here. Cañada Larga is a county road that traverses open grassland habitat with some oak woodlands and riparian habitat. The road is lined in places with pepper trees that can be attractive to sapsuckers, Phainopeplas, and a variety of other species. Birding at Cañada Larga is along the road as the adjacent areas are private property. However, it is still very productive. Birds expected at both locations include California Quail, Greater Roadrunner,

Acorn Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Cassin's Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Bluebird, a variety of raptors, and much more. We will schedule a restroom stop somewhere along the way between the two locations.

Departure Time: 6:45 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): 17 miles

Time (one way): 25 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

FRIDAY WORKSHOPS

Friday, September 28

FR-ws1 Molt Workshop: *"Everything You've Been Afraid to Know and Haven't Wanted to Ask."*

Workshop Leader: Peter Pyle

Time: 7:00AM–11:00AM

Where: Meeting Room #1

Cost: \$20

Workshop description: Peter will begin the session with a PowerPoint trip through the various angles of bird molt, clarifying the tangled historical terminology and presenting the vastly improved H-P (Humphrey-Parkes) system in lay-person terms. He will consider the interactions between bird molt and plumage color, illustrate the fascinating molt patterns of ducks, ptarmigan, alcids, herons, raptors, parrots, passerines, and larger birds that undergo Stafflemauser, and conclude with some thoughts on stable isotopes and molt, molt in tropical birds, and avenues for future research. After a short break, the focus will be on ageing birds in the field using molt limits and other molt-related clues, as illustrated in PowerPoint images. Peter encourages participants to bring images and questions they have on molt, in general or in specific taxa, to discuss with the class.

Leader's Bio: Peter Pyle's knowledge of molt is based on a thorough familiarity with the scientific literature during years of working with the subject, as well as the examination of over 100,000 specimens in museum skin collections. He has published more than 45 scientific papers on molt and his Identification Guides to North American Birds includes detailed accounts of molt in all North American bird species. Peter is currently revising molt and plumage sections for all online Birds of North America accounts.

FR-ws2 Specimens Workshop: *"Preparation of Bird Specimens"*

Workshop Leader: Phil Unitt

Time: 7:15AM–11:00AM

Where: Ventura Beach Marriott for carpooling to Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology at 7:15 A.M. or meet at Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology at 7:30 AM

Cost: \$20

Workshop description: Specimens are as fundamental to ornithology today as they were 100 or 200 years ago. However, the art of making bird skins is a skill that must be handed down from one generation to the next, as from master to apprentice. In this workshop Phil will demonstrate some diverse ways in which research specimens of birds are prepared. He'll talk about the kinds of information recorded during preparation and the ways in which specimens are used for research once prepared and integrated into museum collections.

This will be an excellent opportunity to learn more about birds' external and internal anatomy. He will show how we learn about molt, fat deposition (migration), gonadal development (breeding phenology), parasites, and diet during the process of specimen preparation. Participants can see the different approaches different species and uses require and compare various techniques. If you have experience in skinning birds and would like to work on one with Phil, please notify Phil Unitt (birds@sdnhm.org) by Friday September 15th so he has adequate tools and specimen's ready—even experienced preparators learn from each other.

The workshop will take place at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, a 16 mile drive from the Ventura Beach Marriott. Carpool from the Marriott at 7:15 AM or meet group at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology at 7:30 AM. Phil welcomes questions and discussion throughout the workshop.

Leader's Bio: Phil Unitt has served as editor of *Western Birds* since 1986 and as collection manager then curator of the Department of Birds and Mammals of the San Diego Natural History Museum since 1988. He is the author of the *San Diego County Bird Atlas* (2004) and co-author of *Birds of the Salton Sea* (2003), publications in which specimen and observational data are integrated. He has prepared more than 4000 bird specimens, from Calliope Hummingbirds to Common Loons and Canada Geese.

FR-ws3 Data Mining: "Let Me Google That for You"

Workshop Leader: Ted Floyd

Time: 8:00AM–11:00AM

Where: Meeting Room #2

Cost: \$20

Workshop Description: How to find, search and use the ornithological literature on line. We all know that there's a ton—make that a petabyte—of bird data on the internet: eBird checklists, Xeno-Canto audio, Flickr photos and more. Less well known is that a great deal of the older ornithological literature is also online where it is easily searched, easily downloaded, secure and free. In this workshop, we'll learn how to gain access to the old literature—not only those old monographs you've always wanted to track down, but also cool resources you never even knew existed. We'll also discuss the best practices for citing, sharing and archiving the ornithological literature online. This workshop is especially appropriate for students, teachers, writers and editors and researchers and programmers—basically the entire WFO.

Leader's Bio: Ted Floyd: Ted proudly serves as Editor of *Birding*, published by the American Birding Association. He is also the author of various recent and forthcoming bird books and he has published several hundred articles and papers on birds and nature. Floyd has served on the boards of directors of Western Field Ornithologists and Colorado Field Ornithologists and he is a frequent speaker at bird festivals and ornithological society meetings. Ted is the Cal Ripken of eBird with a consecutive-days streak exceeding 4,000 straight days of submitting at least one complete eBird list. He will hold this record until he dies.

FR-ws4 Warbler Workshop: “*Identification of Fall Warblers*”

Workshop includes a classroom session on Friday and a field session on Saturday. Registrants may sign up for the classroom session only or classroom PLUS field session. NOTE: places for field session are limited so register early if you'd like to attend both. If you desire to take both, please sign up under FR-ws4 and 14SA.

Workshop Leader: Jon Dunn

Time: 8:00AM–11:00AM

Where: Meeting Room #3

Cost: \$40 for Friday classroom session PLUS Saturday field session; \$20 for classroom session only. Only 12 participants for the Saturday field trip.

Classroom Session: Jon Dunn will cover various aspects of field identification, status and distribution, and geographical variation in fall wood-warblers of western North America. He will start with a review of the genera of wood-warblers, including a discussion of recent taxonomic changes. He will then use a handful of the most familiar western warbler species to explore patterns of variation by age, sex, and subspecies. This will be followed by a survey of the species, appropriately grouped, that are most often found in the Pacific states—including many vagrant species from (primarily) eastern North America—with an in-depth exploration of key identification characters and occurrence patterns. Images, audio recordings, and specimens will all be used to explore key characters. The classroom session will close with selected problems in identification, status and distribution, geographical variation, and speciation that deserve further attention.

Field Trip: The destination for the Saturday field trip will likely be to park-like habitats within a 20-30 minute drive of the Ventura Beach Marriott—the exact site(s) will be determined within a week of the field trip date to maximize success in finding a variety of species to study. The field portion of the workshop will deal with species identification, ageing and sexing criteria, vocalizations (particularly “chip” and flight notes), and various aspects of behavior. We can expect to see eight to twelve species, but we'll discuss field identification techniques.

Leader's Bio: Jon Dunn is the co-writer and host of the two-video set *Large and Small Gulls of North America* as well as co-author (with Kimball Garrett) of *Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution* (1981) and the *Peterson Field Guide to Warblers* (1997). Jon has a passion for teaching about field identification, status and distribution, both in the field and the classroom. Jon Dunn is the co-author of the seventh edition of the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (2017). He was chief consultant for the first five editions and co-author

with Jonathan Alderfer for the 6th and 7th. Jon was also a co-author with Jonathan Alderfer on *Birding Essentials* (2007), an overview on how to be a better birder. He has been a member of the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Society since 2000, and has served 28 years on the California Bird Records Committee. He has also been on the Board of Directors for Western Field Ornithologists for over ten years. In 2012, Jon was the recipient of the ABA's Roger Tory Peterson Award, given for a lifetime of achievements in promoting the cause of birding. Beyond birds, Jon has a keen interest in history, politics, cinema and Leonard Cohen.