

SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, September 29

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.

1SA 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 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

2SA Wheeler Gorge Campground

Leader: Peter Gaede

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

3SA 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

4SA Lake Piru

Leader: John Garrett

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

5SA 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

6SA 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

7SA Sycamore Canyon

Leader: Lauren Harter

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

8SA Rancho Simi and Arroyo Simi

Leader: TBA

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

9SA Ventura Settling Ponds and Ventura Harbor

Leader: Wes Fritz

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

10SA Santa Clara River Estuary and McGrath State Beach Leader: David Vander Pluym

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

11SA Lake Casitas

Leader: Scott Terrill

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

12SA Camino Real Park and Arroyo Verde Park

Leader: TBA

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

13SA Ojai Meadows and Cañada Larga

Leader: Forrest Rowland

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

14SA Fall Warbler Identification Workshop and Field Trip Leader: Jon Dunn

The destination for the Saturday field trip will be determined based on scouting shortly before the conference and will be selected 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. Our conference will take place near the peak of fall warbler migration, but like migration everywhere, numbers of migrants vary from day to day. Still, we can hope to see six to eight species and in any event we will take our time to study the birds carefully and note age and sex differences as well as discuss species differences.

Departure time: 6:15AM

Return Time: 11:00AM

Cost: \$20

Miles (one way): TBD

Time (one way): TBD

Restroom facilities : To be arranged depending on birding site

Difficulty level: Most birding will be done from near a car but some very minimal walking on flat ground may be required.

15SA Youth Program Field Trip—Zuma Canyon Birding and Bird Banding Leaders:

Walter H. Sakai, Elisa Yang & Homer Hansen

The field trip destination will be Zuma Canyon to spend time both birding and learning about bird banding. The bird banding will take place between 7:00 to 9:00 am and will allow attendees the opportunity to observe mist netting and banding processes and engage with data collection/recording. Between 10:00 and 11:00 am we will bird in the same area, with possible species including Nuttall's Woodpecker, California Towhee, Wrentit, Bushtit, and California Thrashers. Walter Sakai has been a Master Bird Bander for 25 years and was a Professor of Biology (ret.) at Santa Monica College for close to 40 years. His emphasis has been to teach and train students how to band birds. His banding work covers a wide variety of habitats and he typically bands around 1000-1500 birds of 60-80 species each year. Wear sturdy shoes and minimize clothing with buttons, velcro, rings, watches, etc. (to avoid getting caught in the mist nets). Note: *This event is planned specifically for the youth scholarship recipients, other youths in attendance at the conference, and parents (as needed for drivers). Youths should plan to carpool with parents or trip leaders.*

Departure time: 6:00 AM
Cost: Free to youths and their parents
Miles (one way): 50 miles or less.
Time (one way): 60 minutes or less
Restroom facilities: Yes
Difficulty level: Easy walking overall.

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

Saturday, September 29

SA-ws1 Workshop: “Identifying birds by their Sounds”

Workshop Leader: Nathan Pieplow

Time: 8:00—11:00 AM

Where: Meeting Room #1

Cost: \$20

Workshop Description: “It is sometimes said that expert birders make 90 percent of their identifications by ear. It is also said that no aspect of birding is more frustrating for the beginner and more difficult to master than voice identification.” So says David Sibley in the introduction to the *Sibley Guide to Birds*, and many birders would agree.

Until recently, most attempts to teach bird sound identification have relied almost entirely on memorization techniques. This workshop will take a different approach. We will work on advanced listening skills, learning how to pay attention to the fine details of a sound. In the process, we will learn a common vocabulary for describing bird sounds. Just as beginning birders learn the different parts of the bird and how to distinguish colors like “buff” and “rufous”, we will learn the different parts of a sound and how to distinguish tone qualities like “burry” and “polyphonic”. We will also study how to visualize sounds and read spectrograms, and we will use these skills to tackle some of the more significant audio identification challenges in the western United States, from *Empidonax* flycatchers to thrashers.

No matter what your level of experience, this workshop will help you listen to sounds more analytically, describe them more accurately, and use them more effectively in identifying birds.

Leader’s Bio: **Nathan Pieplow** is the author of the *Peterson Field Guide to “Bird Sounds of Eastern North America”* and the forthcoming Peterson Field Guide to *“Bird Sounds of Western North America.”* He has been fascinated by birds since his childhood in South Dakota and has intensively studied bird sounds since 2003. He is the founder of the bird sound blog Earbirding.com, one of the authors of the Colorado Birding Trail, and the former editor of the journal *Colorado Birds*. Nathan teaches writing at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

SA-ws2 Workshop: “Sketching in the Field”

Workshop Leader: N. John Schmitt

Time: 8:30AM–11:00AM

Where: Meeting Room #2

Cost: \$20

Workshop description: Improve your observational and identification skills by learning useful tips and techniques to sketch birds in the field. Field Sketching is a great way to document your observations and help you to more accurately describe birds. John will give a presentation on bird anatomy and sketching techniques, then give each participant personal guidance as they make their own sketches. Participants should bring a sketch pad and pencils.

Leader's Bio: **N. John Schmitt** is a life-long resident of California with a life-long passion for natural history with emphasis on birds. After a short stint in the U.S. Army, he participated in both the Peregrine Falcon and California Condor restoration programs. Always interested in bird art, John developed his skills as an illustrator which eventually lead to being able to contribute illustration to numerous publications including the following books: *The Natural History of the White-Inyo Range*; *Birds Asleep*; *Cornell Handbook to Bird Biology*; *Bird of South Asia-the Ripley Guide*; *A Field Guide to Raptors of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa*; *Birds of Prey of the Indian Subcontinent*; *Birds of Peru*; *A Field Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*; *Raptors of Mexico and Central America*; *The 7th edition of National Geographic Guide to the Birds of North America*; and *the Behavior of the Golden Eagle--an illustrated ethogram*. John is an avid birdwatcher and currently resides in California's Kern River Valley.

SA-ws3 Workshop: "Identifying Vireos in California"

Workshop Leader: Peter Pyle

Time: 8:30AM–11:00AM

Where: Meeting Room #3

Cost: \$20

Workshop description: Peter Pyle, co-author of *Identification Guide to North American Birds*, will cover

various aspects of identification, status and distribution, and geographical variation in vireos of western North America. He'll start with a survey of all 13 species that breed in North America, including a discussion of variation by age, sex, and subspecies. This will be followed by exploration of key identification characters, touching on species presenting identification problems in California. Age determination and identification of vireos within the "Solitary Vireo" complex will then be emphasized. Peter has taken a special interest in separating Blue-headed from Cassin's Vireo, discovering that, once age is determined, species determination usually follows. Additionally, Cassin's versus Plumbeous vireos will be examined.

Leader's Bio: **Peter Pyle** has been a member of the California Bird Records Committee since 1997 (off and on, mostly on) and has reviewed many records of White-eyed, Blue-headed, Yellow-throated, Philadelphia and Yellow-green vireos during this period. Peter has worked as an ornithologist and marine biologist throughout the Pacific. During the late 1970's and early 1980's, he worked on the Hawaii and other Pacific Forest Bird Surveys. In 1985, he became a biologist for PRBO on the Farallon Islands, and since 1996 he has worked for the Institute for Bird Populations in Point Reyes Station. Peter is a research Associate at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. He has authored or co-authored more than 160 peer-reviewed papers, four books, and an on-line monograph of the

birds of Hawaii. Among birders and banders, he is best known for his *Identification Guide to North American Birds, Parts 1 and 2*, which includes detailed descriptions of molt and criteria for ageing and sexing all North American birds in the hand and the field. In 2011, he had the fortune of describing a new bird species, Bryan's Shearwater, and naming it after his grandfather.