

BIRDING THE EASTERN SIERRA

30 August – 3 September 2018



Sabine's Gull

© Debbie House

Baird's Sandpiper

© Debbie House

Trip: Birding the Eastern Sierra - Inyo and Mono Counties

Dates: 30 August – 3 September 2018

Leaders: Jon Dunn and Debbie House

Join us for a five-day trip to enjoy early fall in the beautifully scenic Eastern Sierra while birding some of the more productive locations of the region. We will visit a variety of habitats including several important shorebird and waterbird stopover sites, pinyon-pine and Jeffrey Pine-fir forests, deciduous woodlands, and Great Basin sagebrush steppe. We will spend one day studying shorebirds at Owens Lake, a site that supports a significant number of migrants, and has attracted several rarities in recent years including Ruddy Turnstone, Black Turnstone, Stilt Sandpiper, and Little Stint. Migrant passerine hotspots will be visited including Deep Springs College – a notable migrant trap, and known for producing rarities. Local breeding species will also be sought, including Juniper Titmouse, California and Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Pinyon Jay, and Sage Thrasher.

KEY INFORMATION

Price: \$325.00; Participants will be responsible for all meals and lodging. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Best Western Frontier Motel in Lone Pine for Thursday night, and at the Vagabond Inn in Bishop for Friday through Sunday nights.

Trip is limited to 12 participants.

Registration will be online and information will be sent via WFO News email messages.

Physical Limitations: This trip will include some short hikes (approx. 2 miles) at a slow pace on good trails with some uphill, and visits to elevations over 9,000 feet. Please do NOT register if you have any concerns that this may be too much exertion for you.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Thursday, 30 August 2018

We will meet in the lobby of the Best Western in Lone Pine at 5:00 p.m. for an introductory meeting and dinner. If there is time (or light) we can quickly check nearby Diaz Lake for water birds and perhaps a few fall migrants. Night in Lone Pine.

Day 2 – Friday, 31 August 2018

We will spend much of the day carefully checking the various wetlands and water bodies for migratory shorebirds and other waterbirds. In the morning we will be birding in the Owens Lake Dust Control Project area. Owens Lake is the best shorebird location on the east side of the Sierra, and is one of the best in the state since implementation of water-based dust control. Owens Lake was recently accepted into the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network as a site of international significance and we expect to see thousands of shorebirds on our visit. Rarities like Stilt Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Red Knot are possible and we should have an excellent chance of seeing Baird's Sandpiper, perhaps a dozen or more, and hundreds of Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes should be present. In addition to surveying the areas and making careful counts, we will be working through shorebird identification issues. In essence, the time spent at Owens Lake will be a shorebird workshop as it is an excellent location to study shorebirds up close. On our way north to Bishop, if time allows, we will stop near Independence to look for resident California Scrub-Jays. Continuing north, we will stop at Tinemaha Reservoir to see if any terns are present, especially Common Tern. Sometimes Sabine's Gulls are found here too (annual in fall here). Night in Bishop.

Day 3 – Saturday, 1 September 2018

Today we will venture up into the White Mountains spending the morning at Deep Springs College, a renowned location for fall migrant passerines. We should see a wide variety of regular western species, including many flycatchers and a variety of wood

warblers, possibly including rarer species like American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush. Nearly all of the wood warblers recorded for California have been found at one time or another at Deep Springs. Introduced resident Chukars are found here also. Later, if there is time, we might check Oasis in Fish Lake Valley, another migrant location. Later in the day we will venture to Schulman Grove in the White Mountains amongst the ancient bristlecone pines. Here we should see Mountain Bluebird and Pygmy Nuthatch and might find a Juniper Titmouse or Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay on the way up. At any point during the day we might encounter roving flocks of Pinyon Jays. Night in Bishop.

Day 4 – Sunday, 2 September 2018

This morning we will depart early for Minaret Vista above Mammoth. Minaret Vista lies at 9,200-foot elevation on the crest of the Sierra Nevada, and on certain days many migrants follow the ridges. We once saw a Parasitic Jaeger flying over the pass. The scenery alone is spectacular. We'll check a few other locations around Mammoth looking for migrants and residents, notably woodpeckers and Clark's Nutcrackers. Later after lunch we will check Crowley Lake for migrant water birds and breeders like Sage Thrashers and Brewer's and Sagebrush Sparrows. Finally we will check Wildrose Canyon where Plumbeous Vireos, a breeder, should still be present. Night in Bishop.

Day 5 – Monday, 3 September 2018

This morning is flexible, but it will be more local, possibly up at Wildrose Canyon, if we didn't have adequate time the day before, or investigating Birchim Canyon, a migrant location located in Round Valley, just north of Bishop. After lunch the event will conclude.

Leaders:

Jon Dunn is a charter member of WFO, joining when he was 15 and has been a Director of WFO for eleven years. He has authored or co-authored many publications, most notably *Birds of Southern California, status and distribution* (1981) and *Warblers* (1997), both with Kimball Garrett and was chief consultant and now co-author of all seven editions of the NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America. Jon has been a field trip leader for the bird tour company Wings for over 40 years. Jon lives in Rovana in Round Valley, Inyo County.

Debbie House is a biologist for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power with a particular interest in saline lakes, having conducted monitoring of water birds at Owens Lake and Mono Lake for over 16 years. Debbie is a long-time member of WFO and a contributing author to *Western Birds*. Debbie is a keen eBirder and was recently honored nationally for her contributions. Debbie lives in the community of Paradise in Mono County, overlooking Round Valley.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR WFO'S EASTERN SIERRA TRIP

These notes will help you prepare for your trip. Please read them carefully.

DIRECTIONS TO THE BEST WESTERN IN LONE PINE, CA.

Best Western Plus Frontier Motel
1008 S. Main Street, Lone Pine CA 93545
(760)-876-5571

ARRIVING BY CAR: The Best Western is at the south end of the community of Lone Pine, on US-395. Arriving from the south, the hotel is on the right (east side of US-395), approximately 1.0 mile north of the Hwy 136 turnoff to Death Valley. Arriving from the north, the hotel is just under a mile farther south of the one-and-only traffic light in Lone Pine at Whitney Portal Road.

MEETING UP: Please meet in the lobby of the Best Western at 5:00 pm on Thursday night. We will have a brief orientation meeting followed by a group dinner. If you encounter any difficulty, contact Jon Dunn (cell 760-920-5038) or Debbie House (cell 760-920-5460).

HEALTH: Although California presents no real hazards to the visiting birder, there are several factors to consider. On this tour, we will reach elevations of over 9,000 ft., although we will generally be at elevations from 4,000 ft. to 7,000 ft. Insects are not likely to be a major problem, although we may encounter some mosquitos or other biting insects. Mammals, reptiles and other creatures do not constitute a hazard and we actively search for them during the trip. Adequate sun protection and maintaining good hydration are essential in the eastern Sierra due to the elevation and the arid conditions of the region.

CLIMATE: Weather in the eastern Sierra can vary greatly depending on our location, elevation, and current weather patterns. At lower elevations, daytime temperatures may exceed 90° F, while the morning temperature at Minaret Summit could be as low as in the 30's. It will be important to have layers available in order to adapt to conditions. Wind and thundershowers are possible.

ACCOMMODATIONS: We will be staying at standard, comfortable motels in Lone Pine and Bishop.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Guest laundry facilities are available at the hotels in Lone Pine and Bishop.

PACE OF TOUR: This tour will have long days, and involve a considerable amount of driving between birding locations, with over 100 miles of driving likely on a few days. Participants should plan on bringing some of their own breakfast food to supplement that available at the hotels. Participants will also need to pack a lunch to have in the field. The group will meet for dinner at local restaurants. There will be some hiking along trails or roads. Keep in mind that at altitude, even short walks may seem moderately strenuous.

DRESS: Dress will be informal throughout.

FIELD CLOTHING: The following items are basic:

Sun hat

Sunglasses

Light and medium weight shirts

Light and medium weight trousers

Sturdy walking boots / shoes

Cold weather jacket or sweater

Warm cap and gloves

Note: Although we do not plan any rigorous activities, there will be some walking over uneven ground so that adequate footwear is important.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Binoculars (extra pair)

Spotting Scope – a must at Owens Lake

Sunscreen- very important

Water bottle or canteen - *very important; although the leaders will carry extra water*

Alarm clock

Small flashlight / batteries

Day pack

Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)

Insect repellent

Notebook and pencil or pen

Wrist watch

Hand-held family radios

Optional items: pocket knife, eyeglasses (extra pair).

LEADER'S GEAR: The leaders will provide the following:

Ice chest with water

Maps

Spotting Scope (a leader will carry one)

Field library

Basic first aid kit

LUGGAGE: Bring what you need but consider the utility of each item. It is a good idea to affix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

TRANSPORTATION: You will be responsible for your own transportation throughout the trip. We will try to carpool as much as possible, and at a few locations, carpooling will be essential (including Owens Lake). When carpooling, drivers should be compensated at the end of each day.

SMOKING: WFO has a strict non-smoking policy. Smoking is not permitted at any time or any place during our conferences or field trips.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain but birds are difficult to photograph. Although there will be occasions when bird

photography is possible, a birdwatching tour such as this is not the best means of pursuing this aim. "Digiscoping," on the other hand, is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own spotting scope! If you are a serious photographer, please contact us for further information about photographic possibilities. Bring all of your supplies as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need on short notice. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution.

FINAL INFORMATION

Final information with instructions for meeting the group, or any other details, will be emailed about two weeks before trip departure. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions, please let us know. Please direct inquiries to:

Debbie House roadkill23@earthlink.net Cell (760)-920-5460