

## **THURSDAY FIELD TRIP DESCRIPTIONS**

**Thursday, September 8th**

**Note: All Field Trips are full day and return by 4:30 pm**

**Carpools leave from the Prefunction A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Whitney Peak Hotel, Reno,  
Nevada**

### **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

### **List and description of Field Trips for WFO Reno September 2022**

Climate Considerations: The weather in the Reno area in early September is generally excellent with highs in the low 80s and early morning lows in the upper 50s with very low humidity and little chance of rain. However, some of our field trips will go into the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada and Carson Range (some well over 8000 feet) where mornings can be quite chilly and afternoon thunderstorms are possible. So, be prepared for a variety of conditions and dress in layers. Reno sits at 4500 feet elevation and all our trips will be at 4000 feet or higher. The air is thin and dry, and this will affect your ability to do strenuous exercise, affect your rate of evaporative water loss, and increase your susceptibility to sunburn. Wherever you go, be sure to take (and drink!) plenty of water, wear a hat and use sunscreen.

Logistics Considerations: Although there are many great birding spots very close to Reno, in order to reach a wide variety of habitats (and a corresponding variety of birds) some full day trips may require as much as two hours of drive time each way. We provide mileages and driving times for each trip. Please pay attention to this as you register for field trips so that you are not disappointed by the amount of time you spend in a vehicle compared to birding time. Some trips require some uphill walking at higher elevations and we have indicated the difficulty levels for each trip. Keep those in mind in choosing your trips.

Carpools: Vans are always popular with our registrants so we try to provide them whenever possible. This year due to Covid restrictions it seems much safer to have carpools. Masks are not required when outside and six feet apart. Please be open

to either driving and taking other folks along, or being a passenger. In all cases, your leader will try to organize the group into as few cars as possible. Where to assemble cars for carpools will be explained at the field trip mustering area.

**1THU Mason Valley WMA & Lahontan Reservoir** Volunteer Leader: Paul Hurtado

This expanse of managed wetlands and open agriculture supports a wide variety of waterfowl with many species of dabbling ducks present. Expect several stops to view the habitats and bring a scope, if you have one. While early September is too early for most wintering diving ducks, Redhead and Ruddy Ducks should be present as well as a variety of grebes. Shorebird diversity should be excellent with both breeders and migrants (good chances for Lesser Yellowlegs at this time) present. Caspian, Common, and Forster's Tern are all possible plus several species of heron, including American Bittern. Expect good raptor numbers including Swainson's Hawk. Migrant flycatchers such as Willow and Gray may be passing through and good numbers of Say's and Black Phoebes are found here. This is good habitat for the declining Loggerhead Shrike. Among the blackbirds you may find Yellow-headed and Great-tailed Grackles and this is a good time to encounter migrant warblers. There may be a few lingering Blue or Black-headed Grosbeaks as well.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 75 miles

Time (one way): ~ 2hr 10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

**2THU South Shore Lake Tahoe** Volunteer Leaders: Don & Lynn Harriman

In just over an hour, after a scenic drive over the Carson Range, you can be birding at Lake Tahoe, home of the White-headed Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, and so much more. Despite considerable urbanization, the area includes good montane conifer habitat and extensive natural wetlands. We will start at Rabe Meadows (restrooms) to look for waterfowl on the pond and

Mountain and Western Bluebirds in the meadow. With any luck we'll hit the Tahoe Nuthatch Trifecta (Pygmy, Red-breasted, White-breasted) before the day is done. Next stop is Cove East on the Upper Truckee River, where there's always something interesting. Walking a mile plus out to the shore of Lake Tahoe we'll see waterfowl, shorebirds, maybe a Bald Eagle or Osprey, Black-billed Magpie, warblers in the willows, swallows overhead. Listen for Sora, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren. Then it's on to Taylor Creek (restrooms) for more forest, marsh and wonderful Lake Tahoe views. If we haven't seen a White-headed woodpecker, this could be the place; or maybe an Eagle, Osprey or Wood Duck. The final stop will be Upper Truckee Marsh with more spectacular Lake Tahoe views, lakeshore, marsh, meadow, and forest. A number of sparrows are possible here (Song, Savannah nest here, Chipping, Brewer's, Vesper visit on migration). If we've missed anything listed above, we could see them here.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 65 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 5 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

### **3THU Alpine County**

Volunteer Leaders: Linda Pittman

#### **CAPACITY FULL**

A drive through Carson Valley and into California takes you into Alpine County, the least-populated county in the state. A few stops allow one to take in a variety of habitats including grassland, chaparral, conifer forest, riparian, and open water. The grasslands can have good raptor numbers with Prairie Falcon and Swainson's Hawk possible. Say's Phoebes and lingering Western Kingbirds should be present and Mountain Bluebird is possible. The chaparral will hold several species of sparrow with Black-throated is a possibility. Woodland areas host all three nuthatches (Red-breasted, White-breasted, and Pygmy) and Williamson's Sapsucker and Lewis's Woodpecker are here among a good variety of other woodpeckers. This time of year it is possible to find four species of Empidonax flycatchers (Willow, Dusky, Hammond's, and Gray). The area is a good a place to find Pinyon Jays. Riparian areas (especially in the town of Markleeville) should offer great warbler-watching and the stream through town has American Dippers.

Indian Creek Reservoir can have a good mix of ducks this time of year and shorebirds if the lake level is low. Bald Eagles are found here regularly and you may luck into a flyby Northern Goshawk.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 70 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: very limited

Difficulty level: Easy

**4THU Carson Lake & Stillwater NWR** Volunteer Leaders: Michael Goddard & Debbie House

**CAPACITY FULL**

The importance of this premier wetland complex is confirmed by its designation as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve, and early September is a great time to visit and enjoy the migrant shorebird diversity. Although the peak of phalarope migration is in August, you should still find both Wilson's and Red-necked here in early September. This trip will consist of several stops to view the wetlands so bring a scope if you have one. Besides the myriad species of shorebirds, the site hosts many duck species (dabblers and divers), grebes, herons, and American White Pelicans. Bonaparte's Gulls should be present. Wetlands support Yellow-headed and many other blackbirds and the variety of habitats here support several species of sparrows including Sagebrush Sparrows. Many side trips (including Carson Lake) are possible and you could spend days here, but your leaders will manage the options as time permits.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 76 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: very limited

Difficulty level: Easy

**5THU Topaz Lake and Walker River SRA** Volunteer Leader: Ben Sonnenberg

This trip may be modified at the discretion of your leader. The drive to Topaz Lake (right on the NV-CA border) will take about 90 minutes, with another hour drive to reach the Walker River State Recreation Area. Along the way to Topaz Lake, we may make some stops in the canyons along Route 338 to try for raptors, Pinyon Jays, Lewis's Woodpeckers, and Juniper Titmouse. Topaz Lake should have a good mix of dabbling ducks, grebes, probably a Caspian Tern or two and a very good chance for Common Loon. If the lake level is low, there can be a lot of shorebird habitat. A scope will be very handy here. Walker River SRA is a seldom-birded area of isolated riparian habitat – just the sort of area that can attract a “fallout” of migrant songbirds.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: Carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 71 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: very limited

Difficulty level: Easy

### **7THU North Shore Tahoe and Martis Valley**

Volunteer Leader: Cliff Hawley

#### **CAPACITY FULL**

This trip will first visit Martis Valley and Martis Creek Lake, then head over to the north shore of Lake Tahoe. Martis Valley/Lake has a mix of chaparral, grassland, pine woodland, marsh, and open water. The lake may have dabbling ducks and perhaps a Redhead. Yellow Warblers and a variety of sparrows (including Vesper and Green-tailed Towhee) breed here, most of which should still be around in early September. Watch for Osprey, Caspian Tern, and, if you really get lucky, a soaring Northern Goshawk. This is a great spot for Mountain Bluebirds and the campground often has Red Crossbills. Depending on time, you may make a detour to the Martis Peak area for Sierra woodland birds, then move on to scan the lake from the north shore. A scope is definitely a plus for this part. Mid-late September is ideal for Common Terns and Sabine's Gull here, but they can be present any time in the month. Parasitic Jaegers have been found here as well. Loons and all three mergansers are possible. If the lake level is low, a small patch of willows on a spit of land here can produce remarkable migrants in fall.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 45 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

**8THU Lahontan Recreation Area and Carson Lake** Volunteer Leader: Kirk Hardie

An expanse of open water at Lahontan State Recreation area can have a variety of waterfowl, grebes, and other water birds. Depending on water levels, there may be plenty of shorebird habitat just in time for fall migration. Shoreline trees could host migrant warblers and flycatchers. Carson Lake includes some outstanding wetland habitat and attracts a large diversity of breeding and migrant shorebirds and waterfowl. Finding double-digit numbers of shorebird species is a good bet here in early September. Virginia Rail and Sora are present and this is a good spot for Loggerhead Shrikes and an excellent mix of sparrows. The wetlands should have lots of blackbirds, including Yellow-headed.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 45 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: limited

Difficulty level: Easy

**9THU Pyramid Lake and Numana Wetlands** Volunteer Leaders: Paul Hurtado & Lauren Harter

**CAPACITY FULL**

This natural desert lake hosts one of the largest colonies of breeding American White Pelicans in the US, and many should still be present in September. Expect an excellent diversity of dabbling ducks and a good chance of finding divers such as Redhead, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck. Common Mergansers are expected and Red-breasted is possible. This is an ideal time for migrant shorebirds and species such as Baird's, Pectoral, and Sanderling are good possibilities. Bring a scope if you

have one. Common Loons should be around and raptors such as Northern Harrier, Osprey, Golden Eagle, and Prairie Falcon are likely. Patches of willows here act as migrant traps, attracting flycatchers, vireos, warblers, Western Tanagers, and occasionally a Blue Grosbeak. A visit to Numana Wetlands should add more passerine diversity to the day.

Departure Time: 6:30 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 45 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

**10THU Tahoe Meadows and Spooner Lake** Volunteer Leaders: Nora Livingston

**CAPACITY FULL**

Tahoe Meadows is a high-altitude (nearly 9000 feet) montane meadow with a well-developed willow habitat and a nice boardwalk. These meadows can be a bit quiet in early September but some breeders may well linger here, including Chipping, White-crowned, and Lincoln's Sparrows as well as warblers such as Yellow, Townsend's, Nashville, and MacGillivray's. Orange-crowned Warblers move to these high-elevation habitats after breeding to undergo molt and can be common in September. In any case, this is a good place to find residents such as Clark's Nutcracker and Williamson's Sapsucker. The hike to Spooner Lake is short, but includes some short, steep sections on dirt trails. This hike offers an excellent variety of woodland montane species and is one of the best spots in the state to find Pileated Woodpecker. Other more common woodpeckers here include White-headed, Downy, and Hairy. This is a great place to find all three nuthatches (Red-breasted, White-breasted, and Pygmy). Bald Eagles are often seen around the lake itself.

Departure Time: 7:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 30 miles

Time (one way): ~ 45 minutes

Restroom facilities: limited

Difficulty level: Moderate to Difficult

### **11THU Carson City Area, Silver Saddle Ranch**

Volunteer Leaders: Rob Lowry

This trip will visit some of the best spots in the Carson City area, including Silver Saddle Ranch and the city wastewater plant. A good variety of habitats (riparian, wetland, grassland, and sagebrush) should yield a good species list. Expect waterfowl, rails, shorebirds, and herons (including White-faced Ibis) at the wastewater plant, raptors and sparrows in the open areas, migrant passerines and sparrows in the riparian areas along the Carson River. Pinyon Jay is possible here. This trip includes a shady walk along a good trail by the Carson River.

Departure Time: 7:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 40 miles

Time (one way): ~ 45 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

### **12THU Boca and Stampede Reservoirs**

Volunteer Leader: Scott Dietrich

#### **CAPACITY FULL**

These two California reservoirs and the surrounding areas should produce an excellent variety of birds for the day. The deeper parts of Boca and Stampede should have grebes and maybe a Common Loon. The northern, shallow end of Boca can host migrant waterfowl and shorebirds such as Western Sandpiper and American Avocet. The adjacent open sagebrush can be full of sparrows including Vesper Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee and Brewer's Sparrow. Stampede Reservoir is mostly deep water, but the edges usually attract a Bald Eagle or two. This area is great place to see and hear all three nuthatches and the woodlands here are good for Williamson's Sapsucker and White-headed Woodpecker. A mix of open and wooded habitats north of Stampede can also hold Mountain Bluebirds, Violet-green Swallow, and maybe a lingering Gray Flycatcher. The Little Truckee River corridor between the two reservoirs is a good place for Sierra warblers such as Yellow Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, and possibly a



Nashville or MacGillivray's Warbler. Often Osprey and Belted Kingfisher are seen along the river as well. The woodlands away from the lake are also a good place to listen for Clark's Nutcracker and Red Crossbill. This is good Northern Goshawk country, but you always need a bit of luck for that one.

Departure Time: 7:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 30 miles

Time (one way): ~ 40 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

**13THU Little Washoe and Davis Creek Regional Park**      Volunteer Leader: TBA

The lake should have plenty of dabbling duck varieties plus lots of grebes. The marshes have many blackbirds including Yellow-headed. The surrounding open country is good raptor habitat and both eagles are possible. Davis Creek is excellent for woodpeckers including White-headed and all three nuthatches are here. Expect an excellent mix of migrant sparrows, warblers (possibly including MacGillivray's), and flycatchers. There should also be some Western Tanagers and Black-headed Grosbeaks lingering into September.

Departure Time: 7:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 25 miles

Time (one way): ~ 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

**14THU McCarran Ranch & Vicinity**      Volunteer Leaders: Dennis Serdehely

This Nature Conservancy Preserve along the Truckee River is a great example of what can be accomplished with a concerted effort to restore a riparian system following decades of degradation. The combination of outstanding riverside habitats, some ponds and wetlands, and the surrounding open country guarantees outstanding bird diversity. Expect a variety of dabbling ducks including

Wood Ducks, Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, and a good chance for Spotted Sandpiper along the shores. Hawks including Red-shouldered and Cooper's are regular here and Lewis's Woodpeckers sometimes pass through in early September. Western Wood-Pewees and Say's Phoebes usually linger well into September here and this month is ideal for seeing Loggerhead Shrike. Five species of wren are possible, including Rock and Canyon. Western Tanagers should still be around. Sparrow variety should be good and the warbler diversity in early September can be excellent. This site has records for such rarities as Blue-winged Warbler and Painted Bunting!

Departure Time: 7:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$45

Transportation: carpool

Distance (one way): ~ 20 miles

Time (one way): ~ 25 minutes

Restroom facilities: Limited

Difficulty level: Moderate