

SUNDAY FIELD TRIP DESCRIPTIONS

Sunday, September 11, 2022

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

All trips by Carpool leave from the Prefunction A, 3rd 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.

1SUN 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 Grackle 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

2SUN Tahoe South Shore

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 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 is 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, and swallows overhead. Listen for Sora, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren. Then it is 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 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

3SUN 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 Phoebe and lingering Western Kingbirds should be present and Mountain Bluebird is possible. The chaparral will hold several species of sparrow with Black-throated 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 woodpeckers. This time of year it is possible to find four species of Empidonax flycatchers (Willow, Dusky, Hammond's, and Gray). The area is 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

4SUN Stillwater NWR & Carson Lake Volunteer Leaders: Michael Goddard and Debbie House

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

5SUN Topaz Lake/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

7SUN North Shore Tahoe & Martis Valley

Volunteer Leader: Cliff Hawley

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

8SUN Lahontan RA & Carson Lake

Volunteer Leader: Ned Bowman

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

10SUN Tahoe Meadows & Spooner Lake

Volunteer Leaders: Don Marsh

Tahoe Meadows is a high-altitude (nearly 9000 feet) montane meadow with a well-developed willow habitat and 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

11SUN Carson City Area

Volunteer Leader: 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

12SUN Boca & 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

13SUN Little Washoe Lake/Davis Creek

Volunteer Leaders: Jon Dunn

Little Washoe Lake should have dabbling duck variety plus numerous grebes. The marshes support several blackbird species including Yellow-headed. The surrounding open country is good raptor habitat and both Golden and Bald Eagles are possible. Davis Creek Park is excellent for woodpeckers including White-headed and all three nuthatches (White-breasted, Red-breasted, and Pygmy) can be found. Expect an excellent mix of migrant sparrows, warblers (Orange-crowned, MacGillivray's, Yellow, Wilson's), and flycatchers. There may 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

14SUN McCarran Ranch & Vicinity

Volunteer Leader: Kirk Hardie

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. 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