



Weekend Overview: *Let's Go Birding* schedules a Central Valley birding adventure every year during the first weekend of December, but, where we'll spend this weekend changes from year to year. It may include Colusa and the Sacramento NWR Complex to hot spots around Stockton to the habitats around Merced. This year we birded San Luis NWR, Volta Ponds, Stevinson Ranch Golf Course and the Merced NWR. Located in south Santa Clara County, our first stop of the weekend was in Coyote Valley. So before heading over Pacheco Pass we stopped to look for the wintering Ferruginous Hawk. It was here we also found many White Tailed Kites and feeding herons. This was only to be a quick stop as we soon headed east. Once over the pass and into the Central Valley we stopped at Volta Ponds to find many Great Tailed Grackles, in addition to the American Bittern pictured here. With hunters near birders are only allowed access to a portion of these ponds, but never the less there was a lot to see. The skies were blue and the temps mild and from here we hit the San Luis NWR. After lunch we birded the auto tour and walked a trail and then headed to the Stevinson Ranch Golf Club where we'd spend the night. Located north/east of the Merced NWR the ranch puts us in an ideal location. They also have a full bar and restaurant and the folks took great care of our group. It was during dinner that the rain poured and our evening owl hike was cancelled, but in the morning we all awoke to no rain and the calls of several Great Horned Owls. After a 6:00 AM breakfast the fog had rolled in, but we went ahead and walked the golf course's nature trail. With a large pond and over grown thickets it's an ideal habitat for lots for species and it was here we added many passerines to our list plus a few woodpeckers and dozens of Black Crowned Night Herons. Until the fog lifted much of our birding was by ear. The fog lifted and we moved on to the Merced NWR where we ended the weekend watching hundreds of Ross's Geese flying in from all around to form one large flock. With the storm fast approaching we headed back to Silicon Valley. A thanks goes out to all who took the time to schedule this weekend onto their calendars and to go out and enjoy nature.



*American Bittern hunting at Volta Ponds – G. Pappani
A relaxing walk along Volta Ponds – L. Myers*

Total Species Counted for the Weekend = 87 includes heard only (H)

Tundra Swan	Green Heron	Killdeer	American Robin
Greater White-Fronted Goose	Black Crown Night Heron	Ring-billed Gull	Hermit Thrush (H)
Snow Goose	White Faced Ibis	California Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Ross's Goose	Turkey Vulture	Rock Pigeon	European Starling
Mallard	Northern Harrier	Mourning Dove	American Pipit
Gadwall	White-tail Kite	Barn Owl	Common Yellowthroat
American Wigeon	Red Shouldered Hawk	Great Horned Owl	Yellow Rumped Warbler
Northern Pintail	Red-tail Hawk	Anna's Hummingbird	Spotted Towhee
Northern Shoveler	Ferruginous Hawk	Nuttall's Woodpecker	California Towhee
Ring-necked Duck	Cooper's Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	American Kestrel	Northern Flicker	White-crowned Sparrow
Cinnamon Teal	Merlin	Black Phoebe	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Sandhill Cranes	Say's Phoebe	Lincoln Sparrow
Ringed Neck Pheasant	Sora	Loggerhead-Shrike	Red-winged Blackbird
Pied-billed Grebe	American Coot	Western Scrub-Jay	Tri-colored Blackbird
Western Grebe	Black-necked Stilt	Yellow Billed Magpie	Brewer's Blackbird
American White Pelican	American Avocets	Common Crow	Brown Headed Cowbird
Double-crested Cormorant	Greater Yellowlegs	Common Raven	Western Meadowlark
American Bittern	Long-billed Curlew	Tree Swallow	House Finch
Great Blue Heron	Dowitcher	Bewick's Wren	American Goldfinch (H)
Great Egret	Least Sandpiper	Marsh Wren	House Sparrow
Snowy Egret 	Wilson's Snipe	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	



Memorable Observations!

- Finding the Ferruginous Hawk hunting from the ground in Coyote Valley
- Tundra Swans at San Luis NWR
- Hearing a Sora and watching it work its way across the marsh
- Calling Great Horned Owls in the early morning fog
- Too many Black Crowned Night Herons to count!
- Great observations of a Cooper's Hawk on Sunday morning's walk
- Merlin hunting blackbirds over the dairy in Stevinson
- Ending the weekend with a large flock of Ross's Geese

- *Growing flock of Ross's Geese at Merced NWR – L. Myers*
- *Group shot taken after lunch at San Luis NWR*
- *Black Crowned Night Herons dripping out of the trees along Stevinson Ranch's nature trail – L. Rosser*
- *Sunday morning's walk in the fog along the ranch's nature trail – L. Rosser*
- *Sunday at the Merced NWR as the storm moved near – L. Myers*
- *Great Tailed Grackle & Ross's Goose images provided by Bill Schmoker*



The gang of birders enjoying dinner at the Stevinson Ranch Golf Club – L. Myers

