

Merced NWR and Surrounding..... November 16, 2008

Quick Overview – Let's Go Birding schedules upcoming trips months in advance. This means trips don't always correspond to rare bird alerts. This trip was planned around whatever rare species were being seen, but as the day approached nothing really rare was being reported so we decided to go to the Merced National Wildlife refuge because wintering birds were arriving in great numbers. From Santa Clara County we headed up and over Pacheco Pass with a stop at the Romero Overlook. This overlook allows one to see down into the San Luis Reservoir. A singing, California Thrasher was an entertaining bird for the stop as the reservoir was too low for ideal birding. We then headed for the Merced National Wildlife Refuge. Getting to the Merced NWR is part of the fun as frequent stops along the farm roads allow for great bird watching. We stopped for Ferruginous Hawk, a Prairie Falcon, Red Tail Hawks and Burrowing Owls. Once at the refuge we found Snow Geese in good numbers with Sandhill Cranes, Ross's and Greater White Fronted Geese, ducks and shorebirds. We also found some Great Tailed Grackles and we headed home after having fantastic views of a Wilson's snipe. We had an interesting raptor pictured here which caused some confusion as its streaky plumage is not the "normal" type seen around these parts. After asking for input we concluded it was the "Harlan's" race of the Red Tail Hawk.



This was our mystery hawk. It flew in over our carpool and landed on the phone pole. We got out to look at the bird and it flew to the field across the street and disappeared into the grass.

Memorable Observations!

- Fantastic views of a large, soaring Prairie Falcon above our cars
- Enjoying lunch with hundreds of wintering geese and Sandhill Cranes
- Unusually high temperatures meant we were birding in the low 80's!
- Stopping for Cattle Egret on the way home

Total Species Counted for the Day = 66 includes heard only (H)
Birds are listed in the taxonomic order currently recognized by the AOU

Greater White-Fronted Goose	Osprey	Killdeer	Northern Mockingbird
Snow Goose	Northern Harrier	Ring-billed Gull	California Thrasher
Ross's Goose	White-tail Kite	California Gull	European Starling
Mallard	Red Shouldered Hawk	Rock Pigeon	American Pipit
Northern Pintail	Red-tail Hawk	Mourning Dove	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Ferruginous Hawk	Anna's Hummingbird (H)	Song Sparrow
Bufflehead	Swainson's Hawk	Belted Kingfisher (H)	White-crowned Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Cooper's Hawk	Nuttall's Woodpecker (H)	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Cinnamon Teal	American Kestrel	Northern Flicker	Red-winged Blackbird
Ruddy Duck	Prairie Falcon	Black Phoebe	Brewer's Blackbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Greater Sandhill Cranes	Say's Phoebe	Western Meadowlark
American White Pelican	American Coot	Loggerhead-Shrike	Great Tailed Grackle
Double-crested Cormorant	Black-necked Stilt	Western Scrub-Jay	House Finch
Great Blue Heron	Greater Yellowlegs	American Crow	Lesser Goldfinch (H)
Snowy Egret	Dunlin	Great Tailed Grackle	House Sparrow
Black Crowned Night Heron	Sandpiper Peeps	Marsh Wren (H)	
White Faced Ibis	Wilson's Snipe	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Don't forget the Coyote!</i>