

Quick Overview – This was the first time **Let's Go Birding** led a trip to Mono Lake & Yosemite. The trip included 4 days of birding and three nights in Lee Vining. One could stay for weeks in either location and not see it all, so we had our work cut out for us. The carpool came together at the Crane Flat area of Yosemite where we stopped for lunch and started our birding. Clear blue skies, temps in the 80's; it was a beautiful day. Before long we had Steller's Jays, Western Tanagers and heard only Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden Crowned Kinglets, Hermit Warblers and Brown Creepers. With our goal to get to Lee Vining for dinner we continued through the park. At over 8,000 feet in elevation, Olmstead Point is beautiful and breathtaking. With optics you can count the number of people climbing Half Dome. We continued on to the "green bridge" where we had great looks at a Townsends Solitaire and Violet Green Swallows, the first of many swallows for the weekend. A Yellow Bellied Marmot made a brief appearance but few saw him before he retreated. The wildflowers, still in bloom at these higher elevations along Tioga Pass attracted a Rufous Hummingbird. We then dropped down into Lee Vining where we checked into the Lake View Lodge. Many on the trip had never been to Mono Lake, so the landscape all around was a new experience. A BBQ dinner a block away was how we ended our Thursday. Friday morning we were up and out the door to start birding at South Tufa & the surrounding areas along Rush Creek. **Conti...**



Birds Observed –

Canada Goose	Violet Green Swallow
Mallard	Cliff Swallow
Gadwall	Mountain Chickadee
Sage Grouse	Juniper Titmouse
Eared Grebe	White Breasted Nuthatch
Double-crested Cormorant	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Turkey Vulture	Pygmy Nuthatch
Osprey	Brown Creeper
Bald Eagle	House Wren
Northern Harrier	Bewick's Wren
Red-tail Hawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Swainson's Hawk (route)	Western Bluebird
American Kestrel	Mountain Bluebird
Black-necked Stilt	American Robin
American Avocets	Townsend's Solitaire
Spotted Sandpiper	Hermit Thrush
Wilson's Phalarope	Sage Thrasher
California Gull	European Starling
Mourning Dove	Orange Crowned Warbler
Eurasian Collared Dove	Yellow Warbler
Common Nighthawk	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Common Poorwill	Hermit Warbler
Vaux's Swift	Western Tanager
Rufous Hummingbird	Green-tailed Towhee
Red-breasted Sapsucker	Spotted Towhee
Hairy Woodpecker	Brewer's Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Vesper Sparrow
Northern Flicker	Song Sparrow
Western Wood-Pewee	Fox Sparrow
Hammond's Flycatcher	Dark-eyed Junco
Gray Flycatcher	Black-headed Grosbeak
Pacific Slope Flycatcher (H)	Lazuli Bunting
Say's Phoebe	Indigo Bunting
Western Kingbird	Bullock's Oriole
Loggerhead Shrike	Red-winged Blackbird
Warbling Vireo	Brewer's Blackbird
Vireo SP.	Brown-headed Cowbird
Steller's Jay	Western Meadowlark
Clark's Nutcracker	Cassin's Finch
Black-billed Magpie	Gray Crowned Rosy Finch
Common Raven	Lesser Goldfinch
Northern Rough Wing Swallow	House Sparrow
	(H) = heard only



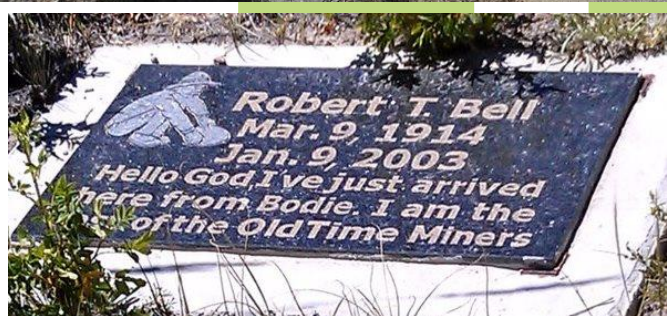
Images provided by trip participants - More photos on pages 2 – 4. Yosemite's Olmstead Point with Half Dome in the distance – Joe Diandrea / Rufous Hummingbird enjoying the wildflowers off Tioga Pass – Brooke Miller / One of several Townsend's Solitaire observed in Yosemite – Brooke Miller / Lunch in Yosemite – Lisa Myers

The views around Mono Lake are breathtaking and can be distracting when one is trying to ID a sparrow flitting low in the scrub. We spent time looking for the birds that call the sage their home and got looks at Brewer's and Sage Sparrows and Sage Thrashers. The Gray Flycatcher was a life bird for many. Once down at South Tufa we found Wilson's Phalaropes in great numbers taking advantage of the Brine Flies. We also talked about phalaropes being a species, like the Spotted Sandpiper that are polyandrous – the males incubate the eggs while the females have many mates. Osprey nests were found in several different locations atop the exposed tufas and California Gulls were everywhere. Cliff Swallows were always found above our heads with a few Violet Greens thrown into the mix. We then took a mid-day break before heading out again to bird new areas. In search of Pinyon Jays we took a loop through their preferred habitat and found Clark's Nutcrackers and Steller's Jays. Vesper Sparrows, a Say's Phoebe and Western Kingbird were part of our afternoon. Folks had time to visit the Mono Lake Committee Information Center to learn more about Mono Lake & the efforts to save it in addition to doing a little shopping. We ended up at the Mobil Restaurant for dinner and most could not believe such a restaurant could exist at a gas station, but it's true! An early dinner put us in fine shape to go bird after dark in search of Common Poorwills & nighthawks. We started again just after sunset as we made a quick stop at the County Park. A walk down the boardwalk found us a leucistic Eared Grebe! Soon we were off to Cemetery Road when we had our first Common Nighthawk fly directly overhead. Before long we had a poorwill fly close by. As it got darker we watched Common Poorwills in the road as they hunted for bugs. We also started to star gaze and called it a night just after the Milky Way came into view. **Conti....**

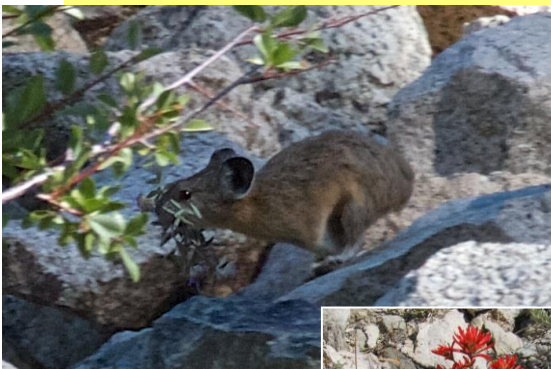


Gray Flycatcher on our way to South Tufa – Brooke Miller / The route down to Mono Lake's South Tufa – Lori Cuesta / Giant Blazing Star wildflowers – Lisa Myers / Wilson's Phalaropes eating Brine Flies – Brooke Millers / Pinyons growing out of a harsh landscape – Julie Bryson / Common Nighthawk caught on the wing on Cemetery Road – Brooke Millers / Enjoying the scenery of South Tufa – Lisa Myers

Saturday we stopped at the Visitor Center and visited the exhibits. Green Tailed Towhees were found just outside. We also went down to the old marina and found woodpeckers which were new for our trip in addition to a Juniper Titmouse. We then stopped by the county park again to try for the reported Indigo Bunting. We found the male as it flew out over the group before disappearing. So we headed for the Historic State Park of Bodie. Traveling over several miles of dirt road will make your fillings loose, but we made it. While at the entrance gate we also got a look at two Sage Grouse! Once inside the park we enjoyed a picnic lunch in the company of Mountain Bluebirds. Folks then got to explore the history found in this old mining town. We also found a pair of nesting American Kestrels on the roof of the mercantile. The male sat atop of the building pictured to the right. It was a whirlwind stop and our next stop had us at the Virginia Lakes Resort where we hoped we'd find the Gray Crown Rosy Finches. It kind of felt like cheating, but we got great looks at them while they visited the feeders found outside the market. We also had great looks at Cassin's Finch, nutcrackers and various species of squirrels. This was a very different mountain habitat than that found around Bodie. So we headed back to our resort to plan our final evening. We kept dinner open so folks could do whatever they wished and then we took a sunset stroll down along the old marina. Brine Flies, gulls a Lazuli Bunting and a snake were part of our walk. This would be our last evening before heading out in the morning. **Conti....**



A building with a lean, plus AI AND an American Kestrel on top (in the circle) – Greta Muller
The weekend's group just outside the Visitor Center / One of two Sage Grouse discovered at Bodie – Brooke Miller / A visit to Bodie's cemetery – Greta Muller / A reflective moment looking inside the old Bodie mercantile while seeing the town's reflection – Joe Diandrea / Gray Crowned Rosy Finch's very much enjoyed at the Virginia Lakes Resort – Brooke Miller



Our goal Sunday morning was to bird the Mono Lake area before heading home so we set out for Lundy Canyon. A beautiful canyon with dramatic views we finally found us both Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers. The beautiful song of the Fox Sparrow made it much easier to find these birds within the landscape. We also got to see a couple of Pikas within the rocky habitat gathering grasses and squeaking from time to time. These little mammals are most closely related to rabbits and are only found in higher elevation, cold climates. The grasses they gathering during the warmer months are eaten during their winter under the snow. As we moved along the canyon we stopped to find warblers, vireos and a pair of Rock Wrens. At one point we ran into a beaver den. Beaver evidence was all around as the tree trunks all had teeth marks. Lundy Canyon was a beautiful place to wrap-up our time in the Mono Lake area and we headed for home back through Yosemite. We drove up to Tuolumne Meadows to have a picnic lunch and took our final walk for the trip. It was early afternoon and the bird activity was low, but we ran across a Hermit Thrush calling from the shadows. It appeared to be a young bird still begging for food. Its begging call was new for us all. From there we left Yosemite and headed for home back to the San Francisco Bay Area. Thank you to all that joined this trip. It was a great adventure!

We found evidence of beavers while birding Lundy Canyon – Al Lowder / Fox Sparrow singing its beautiful song – Brooke Miller / Perched Violet-green Swallow – Joe Diandrea / The group birding Lundy Canyon – Al Lowder / Wildflowers & a wave from Lisa – Joe Diandrea / Lundy Canyon Pika gathering grasses – Brooke Miller