

**Final Trip Report – San Joaquin River NWR, walking the Pelican Trail
February 4, 2012 – Trip Leader Lisa Myers**

Quick Overview – This was an exciting day because it was the first time for all of us to bird the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge. Located in Stanislaus County, this open space includes over 6500 acres between Modesto and I-5. Established in 1987 under the authority of the Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Conservation Acts, most of this refuge had been closed to the public, but this all changed with the opening of the Pelican Trail. This 3.5 mile loop takes you through riparian woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands and we all wanted to see what we could find. We spent the morning walking just a portion of the entire trail. What can I say, birders don't move too fast! In the open fields we found Loggerhead Shrikes, courting Northern Harriers, pairs of Red Tailed Hawks and passerines, while the riparian areas were most active with three different species of woodpeckers and Yellow Billed Magpies. Throughout our morning we had Sandhill Cranes flying overhead in addition to Snow Geese, White Fronted Geese and American White Pelicans. Rabbits and coyotes also made the list this day. After lunch we were thrilled to have a Swainson's Hawk circle above; although most winter in Argentina, there is a small population that over winter in the Central Valley. We then moved to the northern part of this refuge to bird from the "Beckwith Platform". It was while in route that we had our first flock of Cackling Geese. Within this distant flock we could see Aleutian Cackling Geese. The habitat restoration of this area has played a major role in the recovery of Aleutian Cackling Geese, a species at one time thought to be extinct. Once at the platform we enjoyed great views of the surrounding farmlands while adding more birds to our list. It was here where we had a female Richardson's Merlin provide fantastic views. I can't end this trip overview without mentioning White Crown Sparrows, because they were indeed the most common bird for our day.



White Crowns Sparrows were abundant throughout our day – Patty McGann / Snow Geese flock flyover – Marti Wright / Hermit Thrush foraging ahead of the group – Patty McGann / Female Merlin off the Beckwith Platform – Patty McGann. More pictures on page 2.

Total Species Counted for the Day = 60 includes heard only

Cackling Goose	Northern Harrier	Downy Woodpecker	Yellow Rumped Warbler
Aleutian Goose	Red Shouldered Hawk	Nuttall's Woodpecker	California Towhee
Snow Goose	Red-tail Hawk	Black Phoebe	Spotted Towhee
Greater White Fronted Goose	Swainson's Hawk	Says Phoebe	Song Sparrow
Mallard	Cooper's Hawk	Western Scrub-Jay	White Crowned Sparrow
Northern Pintail	American Kestrel	American Crow	Golden Crown Sparrow
California Quail	Merlin	Common Raven	Lincoln Sparrow
Wild Turkey en route	American Coot	Yellow Billed Magpie	Fox Sparrow
Pied Billed Grebe	California Gull	Tree Swallow	Savannah Sparrow
American White Pelican	Black Necked Stilts	Bushtit	Red Winged Blackbird
Double Crested Cormorant	Killdeer	Bewick's Wren	Brewer's Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Rock Pigeon	House Wren	Western Meadowlark
Great Egret	Band Tailed Pigeon	Ruby Crowned Kinglet	House Finch
Turkey Vulture	Eurasian Collared Dove	American Robin	Goldfinch Sp.
White Tailed Kite	Northern Flicker	Hermit Thrush	House Sparrow

Birding the San Joaquin River NWR – Feb. 4, 2012



From top left to bottom – All pictures taken by trip participants. Lincoln Sparrow – Marti Wright / Ruby Crowned Kinglet – Patty McGann / Two distant Aleutian Cackling Geese lifting – Patty McGann / Group shot – Lisa Myers / Sandhill Crane flyover – Patty McGann / Dark Morph Red Tail Hawk – Patty McGann / White Crown Sparrow Juv. Tackling a cheese puff – Marti Wright / Downy Woodpecker – Marti Wright