

Birding the Santa Cruz Mountains

Summer birding at Skyline Ridge – July 7, 2007

Quick Overview – The *Let's Go Birding* summer trips are planned around the season's heat and busy schedules. Birding the Santa Cruz Mountains puts us at elevations above '2,000 and with birds we don't often get to see in our suburban neighborhoods. We headed over to Skyline Ridge Open Space because reports were coming in for an (out of range) active, male Indigo Bunting being seen all week. When we arrived we found temperatures in the low 40's and everything draped in cloud cover and fog! But our target bird was the first bird seen the moment we got out of our cars. We then spent the rest of the day walking the trails through various habitats and finding species only found in these areas during the breeding season. The morning was quiet except for the sound of water dripping from the trees. The birds remained quiet until the clouds cleared, but after that the activity increased and so did the song. We spent the entire day walking the various trails throughout this area and watched the different species come to us! We met many other birders out for the day also looking for the recent sightings. It's great to be a birder in the bay area!



Skyline Ridge's Male Indigo Bunting

Picture taken during our day by trip participant Brooke Miller
Many more picture taken during our day can be found on page 2.

Memorable Observations!

- Singing Indigo Bunting was our first bird of the day!
- Ash Throated Flycatcher families heard and observed around every corner
- A lost jogger looking for his car
- Young male buck in the parking lot and newts in Horseshoe Lake
- Comparing Prairie Falcons with American Kestrels
- Belted Kingfisher grabbing a meal
- Two male Western Tanagers as part of the lunch time entertainment
- Lazuli Buntings were a good show for comparison with the Indigo
- Quail tracks on the trail

Total Species Counted for the Day = 53 includes heard only (H)
Birds are listed in the taxonomic order currently recognized by the AOU

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mallard | Nuttall's Woodpecker | Oak Titmouse | Spotted Towhee |
| California Quail | Northern Flicker | Chestnut Backed Chickadee | California Towhee |
| Pied-billed Grebe | Acorn Woodpecker | Bushtit | Song Sparrow |
| Turkey Vulture | Downy Woodpecker (H) | White Breasted Nuthatch | Dark-eyed Junco |
| Red-tail Hawk | Olive Sided Flycatcher (H) | Bewick's Wren | Lazuli Bunting |
| Cooper's Hawk | Ash Throated Flycatcher | House Wren | Indigo Bunting |
| American Kestrel | Western Flycatcher | Winter Wren | Black Headed Grosbeak |
| Prairie Falcon | Black Phoebe | Blue Gray Gnatcatcher | Red-winged Blackbird |
| American Coot | Hutton's Vireo (H) | Wrentit | House Finch |
| Band Tailed Pigeon | Western Scrub-Jay | Western Bluebird | Purple Finch (H) |
| Mourning Dove | Steller's Jay | American Robin | Lesser Goldfinch |
| Anna's Hummingbird | American Crow | European Starling | |
| Belted Kingfisher | Common Raven | Wilson's Warbler | <i>Plus;</i> |
| | Violet-Green Swallow | Western Tanager | A young buck |
| | Barn Swallow | | Newts |



All images were taken during our day on the mountain. Thank you everyone for your contribution to the report!

*Starting with the top left corner we have one of many **Wrentits** enjoyed during our day – Brooke Miller. Morning fog through the oak habitat - Susan Hillyard. **Ash Throated Flycatcher's** were found on every trail with and without begging youngsters – Dora Games. Male **Wilson's Warbler** curiously watching the group – Sonny Mencher. Two male **Western Tanagers** came in close for the group to enjoy – Brooke Miller. **Band Tailed Pigeons** came out for fresh, ripe Elderberry's – Dora Games. Male **Red-Winged Blackbird** keeping an eye on his family below at Horseshow Lake – Susan Hillyard.*