

Wintering Raptors & Sandhill Cranes of San Joaquin County
Birding into the sunset – January 22, 2011 – trip Leader Lisa Myers

People often ask me what is my favorite bird and I always reply, “the Sandhill Crane”. There are only 15 different species of cranes found on five continents and I feel privileged to have the Sandhill Cranes wintering right here in California’s Central Valley. They are a majestic symbol of grace and beauty and are magical to observe in the wild. Every few years **Let’s Go Birding** plans an outing in honor of the cranes and today was that day. Our goal was to view the Sandhill’s at sunset so we started our day in raptor country. Located on the eastern edge of San Joaquin County the open spaces of Flood & Waverly are ideal for wintering raptors and cows!

California has been experiencing fantastic weather for this time of year and today’s temperatures rose into the high 60’s. Out there in the open, dry country we observed many Red Tail Hawks including one dark morph in addition to several American Kestrels & one Ferruginous Hawk. Loggerhead Shrikes were found in several locations in addition to Horned Larks.

We then worked our way directly West via Eight Mile Road where thousands of Tundra Swans had been reported earlier in the week. We took Eight Mile all the way to the end and then traveled the levee road. Although we did not find swans in the thousands we observed several hundred in addition to Snow, Ross’s and Greater White Fronted Geese flying overhead in great numbers. The birds chatting amongst themselves filled the sky with the call of the great outdoors. As dusk approached we went to Woodbridge Road to wait for the Sandhills. As the daylight disappeared you could hear the cranes coming from miles away. Birders and “tourists” lined the road awaiting their arrival. As the sun set the bugling got louder; shorebirds, swans, cranes and geese were all maneuvering for locations amongst the flooded fields. I wish everyone took the time out of their busy days to come out and experience this in their lifetime. In February the cranes along with the thousands of geese and swans will leave for the northern Tundra to raise their young and we’ll have to wait until next year for them to return again so we can experience their splendor.



*Waverly Road cow - taken by trip leader Lisa Myers.
 More pictures can be seen on page 2.*

Species found during our adventure total 50

Greater White-Fronted Goose	White-tail Kite	Rock Pigeon	Horned Lark
Snow Goose	Red Shouldered Hawk	Mourning Dove	American Robin
Ross’s Goose	Red-tail Hawk	Anna’s Hummingbird	Northern Mockingbird
Mallard	Ferruginous Hawk	White Throated Swift	European Starling
Northern Pintail	American Kestrel	Belted Kingfisher	American Pipit
Northern Shoveler	Sandhill Cranes	Northern Flicker	Yellow Rumped Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	American Coot	Black Phoebe	Savannah Sparrow
Double-crested Cormorant	Black-necked Stilt	Say’s Phoebe	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Greater Yellowlegs	Loggerhead-Shrike	Brewer’s Blackbird
Great Egret	Least Sandpiper	Western Scrub-Jay	Western Meadowlark
Snowy Egret	Long Billed Dowitcher	American Crow	House Finch
Turkey Vulture	Killdeer	Common Raven	House Sparrow
Northern Harrier	California Gull	Great Tailed Grackle	

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Memorable Observations!

- Western Meadowlarks everywhere!
- Horned Lark taking a dust bath
- Ferruginous Hawk hunting from the fence line
- Loggerhead's rodent remains on the barb wire
- Every different coloration of Red Tail Hawk
- Thousands of waterfowl flying over Eight Mile Rd.



Let's
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All pictures taken during our day -- Woodbridge Road at dusk -- L. Myers / Sandhill Cranes at Woodbridge -- Ron Wolf / Waverly Road north to Flood Rd. -- L Myers / Sunset from Woodbridge with Mount Diablo in the distance. -- L. Myers / Western Meadowlark -- Tom Grey