

Central Valley Swainson's Hawks! Summer birding, July 19, 2008

Quick Overview – The goal of this trip was a first for **Let's Go Birding**. Instead of *avoiding* the summer heat of California's Central Valley, we drove out in the middle of it in order to find our target bird the Swainson's Hawk. Almost the entire population of Swainson's winter in Argentina, but each spring 100,000's of these buteos make the 3,500 mile migration back to North America. We spent a portion of the day at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife area before working our way up to the Zamora area of 5 & 505. We found Swainson's all along our way and before our day was over we had observed over 20 individual birds. This long distant migrant comes in many different plumages and we experienced many of them. In addition to eating rodents, a large part of this raptor's diet includes insects. We came across a group of 6 Swainson's flying circles around some dragonflies. We watched the Swainson's snatching them right out of the air! With our mission complete we headed back to the bay area, but we were still missing a Central Valley endemic, the Yellow Billed Magpie. So we stopped in the town of Winter's to take a final look. Sure enough, we found a few hanging out at a city park with the locals! Thanks everyone for joining in the hunt and making it a successful day!



Swainson's Hawk image taken by Greg Lasley
Dragonfly image taken by trip participant Sonny Mencher.
Enjoy more of Sonny's images on page 2.

Memorable Observations!

- At 62 inches long and a 108 inch wing span – American White Pelicans are magnificent!
- One juvenile male Yellow Headed Blackbird popped out of the reeds
- We got it – the Bank Swallow sitting among the Cliff and Tree Swallows
- White Faced Ibis all over the rice fields
- A River Otter, so how long can they stay under water anyway?
- From 75 to 100 degrees and back to 75 all in a day of successful summer birding

Total Species Counted for the Day = 45 includes heard only (H) and (R) in route
Birds are listed in the taxonomic order currently recognized by the AOU

Mallard
Wild Turkey R
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Egret Egret
Snowy Egret
Black Crowned Night Heron
White Faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Northern Harrier

Swainsons Hawks!
Red-tail Hawk
Cooper's Hawk R
White-tail Kite
American Coot
Common Moorhen
Black-necked Stilt
Killdeer
Distant Peeps
California Gull
Caspian Tern

Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Anna's Hummingbird
Black Phoebe
Western Kingbird
Western Scrub-Jay
American Crow
Yellow Billed Magpie
Tree Swallow
Violet Green Swallow
Cliff Swallow

Bank Swallow
Marsh Wren
Northern Mockingbird
Common Yellowthroat
Song Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Yellow Headed Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
House Finch
American Goldfinch



All images taken during our day by trip participant Sonny Mencher.



Clockwise – Western Kingbird, Black Widow Spider (in the port-a-potty!), one of the many blooming flowers, American White Pelicans, one of our many Swainson's Hawk, American Goldfinch, White Faced Ibis, one of the thousands of dragonflies encountered all day and a Yellow Billed Magpie. Thank you Sonny!