

**Quick Overview** – Birding California's Central Valley the first weekend in December has been an annual **Let's Go Birding** adventure. A traditional wintering hot spot for thousands of migratory waterfowl, we are always eager to get out there and see what we will find. For some in the group this was their first time to these wintering habitats. This year we drove directly to the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge where we found thousands of geese comprising of Snow, Ross and Greater White-fronted. Where ever we looked we'd find flocks either sitting in flooded fields or flying in the distance. With the two difference species of white geese so close to each other everyone soon learned how to easily tell them apart. We also found several Bald Eagles and a Golden Eagle; these large raptors flying overhead always get the geese nervous. Red-tail Hawks & Northern Harriers were too numerous to count. By the time we made it to the platform area of the auto tour it was lunch time and the temps were now above 35 degrees! Looking east from the platform we found a few American White Pelicans, a pair of Blue-winged Teals and a Common Gallinule in amongst the other teals, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks. With all these impressive species we can't forget the Passerines. We shared the auto tour with many American Pipits, Yellow Rumps, Crown Sparrows and Western Meadowlarks, and we can't forget the Raccoon that ran past! Before we left we stopped in at the visitor's center where many bought their duck stamp& the ranger then alerted us to a Peregrine Falcon that had just landed outside allowing for great views of this beautiful bird. *Continued.....page 2*

### Birds Observed

Tundra Swans	Least Sandpiper
Greater White-Fronted Goose	Wilson's Snipe
Canada Goose	Killdeer
Cackling Goose	Ring-billed Gull
Snow Goose	California Gull
Ross's Goose	Herring Gull
Mallard	Rock Pigeon
Gadwall	Mourning Dove
American Wigeon	Eurasian Collared Dove
Eurasian Wigeon	Barn Owl
Northern Pintail	Great Horned Owl
Northern Shoveler	Anna's Hummingbird
Bufflehead	Belted Kingfisher
Ring-necked Duck	Nuttall's Woodpecker
Green-winged Teal	Northern Flicker
Cinnamon Teal	Acorn Woodpecker (H)
Blue-winged Teal	Downy Woodpecker
Ruddy Duck	Black Phoebe
Ring-necked Pheasant	Loggerhead Shrike
Pied-billed Grebe	Western Scrub-Jay
Eared Grebe	Yellow-billed Magpie (r)
Double-crested Cormorant	American Crow
American White Pelican	Common Raven
American Bittern	Oak Titmouse
Great Blue Heron	Bushtit
Great Egret	White Breasted Nuthatch
Snowy Egret	Marsh Wren
Cattle Egret	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Black Crowned Night Heron	American Robin
White Faced Ibis	Northern Mockingbird
Turkey Vulture	European Starling
Golden Eagle	American Pipit
Bald Eagle	Cedar Waxwing
Northern Harrier	Yellow-rumped Warbler
White-tail Kite	Orange Crowned Warbler
Red Shouldered Hawk	California Towhee
Red-tail Hawk	Song Sparrow
Ferruginous Hawk	White-crowned Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Peregrine Falcon	Fox Sparrow
American Kestrel	Lincoln's Sparrow
Prairie Falcon	Savannah Sparrow
Sandhill Crane	Dark-eyed Junco
American Coot	Red-winged Blackbird
Common Gallinule	Brewer's Blackbird
Black-necked Stilt	Western Meadowlark
Greater Yellowlegs	House Finch
Long-billed Curlew	Lesser Goldfinch
Dunlin	House Sparrow
	Heard Only = (H)
	In Route = (r)



**Images from our day at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge** Blue Wing Teal – Brooke Miller / Peregrine Falcon – Patty Brown / Mixed flock of geese includes Snow & Ross (can you see the blue-morph Snow?) – Greta Muller / View to the west – Greta Muller / Our Raccoon on the run, Greater White Fronted Geese & Northern Pintail Ducks all by Brooke Miller. *Conti.....page 2*







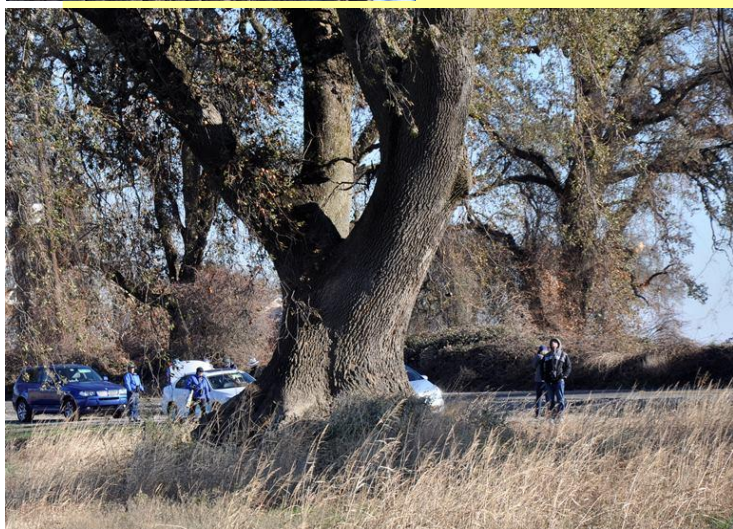
**Continued from page 1** – Saturday evening we stayed in Williams, CA. at the Granzella's Inn. They were all ready for us when we arrived. Granzella's has everything for the birder on the run including a fantastic deli with an olive bar and every kind of food you can imagine. They also have a bar and restaurant and we were soon relaxing by the fire and sitting down to dinner. Sunday morning had us up with the sunrise & temperatures in the mid 20's! (The hunters did not know if we were towing a toilet or a blind, but they were envious.) Colusa NWR was moments away & admittedly, all appreciated following the rules and birding the auto tour from inside the warm cars. Most of the geese had lifted and we worked on the other species that make this area their winter home. Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets & Snowy Egrets were found, but a pair of Cattle Egrets was a nice surprise. A Belted Kingfisher along the channel provided great views. Shorebirds included Dunlin, Least Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts and Long-billed Curlews. Once we completed the loop we all took time for hot coffee and tea before checking out the birds near the restroom and platform. A Bald Eagle fly-by flushed the waterfowl, but those that remained included several Eurasian Wigeon and Cackling Geese. A Wilson's Snipe put on quite a show seemingly oblivious to us enjoying his antics, while a Ruby Crowned Kinglet provided us with a glimpse of its ruby crown. Before leaving we checked out a flock of crown sparrows and also found a Fox & a Lincoln Sparrow. *Conti. on page 3.....*



**Images from our weekend** - Up at sunrise getting the "Birdaloo" ready for the day – Lisa Myers / The cooperative Wilson's Snipe – Brooke Miller / The Ruby Crown Kinglet showing a glimpse of its ruby crown – Brooke Miller / Eurasian Wigeon & one of two Cattle Egrets – Brooke Miller / American Pipit on the ice & the bundled-up group scanning the waters at the Colusa NWR – Lisa Myers  
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**Continued from page 2** – On our way back to the Bay Area we took a **Let's Go Birding** favorite route which includes Sycamore Slough Road. It was here we stopped for lunch alongside orchards, farmland, old oaks and sycamores. This was the first year we found sheep in the surrounding fields and they were joined by many Killdeer & pipits. As we slowly worked our way down this crooked country road we found American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, several species of Woodpeckers plus a Great-horned and a Barn Owl. Raptors were circling over the surrounding fields and we had but a brief look at a Ferruginous. We were working against the sunset so our final stop had us in the company of Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes! Both magnificent birds, this was a wonderful way to end our weekend. Thank you to all that took time out of their holiday schedule to be a part of this December 2013 adventure. I hope you all find time to go back before the birds migrate north to their breeding grounds. Happy Holidays!



**Images of our weekend** – While driving the auto tour we flushed a feeding Red-tail Hawk. It left its duck meal momentarily – Brooke Miller / The group shot was taken by AI before we realized a Great Horned Owl was asleep in the distant mistletoe – Brooke Miller got the close up / We also found a Barn Owl sleeping the day away in the comfort of one large tree – Brooke Miller / Parked on Sycamore Slough Road checking out the tree tops – Lisa Myers / Sandhill Cranes, a pair of Snow Geese with a single Ross's Goose all by Brooke Miller Al and Judy scanning the horizon – Patty Brown