

**Quick Overview** – This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year **Let's Go Birding** led a trip up to the California hot spots of Yuba Pass & Sierra Valley. The route was tweaked from last year & feedback was gathered from folks that have led trips to the area for decades. Birders make a point to get up to these higher elevations to find species only found here this time of year and to experience those that don't make it down to the lower elevations. Located in the Sierra Mountains it takes a few hours to get up there from the Bay Area. Most caravanned up together, but we met a few folks at our first birding spot: The Donner Party Historical Camp site at Alder Creek, located on 89 a few miles from Truckee. The "Donner Party" was here during a long, hard, winter and well, we all know how that ended! We arrived to find it absolutely beautiful with temps in the 70's and clear blue skies. We took time for lunch and then birded the loop trail and found our first of many Western Wood-Pewees. We also had great views of a Green Tailed Towhee heading back to nestlings with a mouth full of food. Before we left we had views of both the male & female Williamson Sapsuckers returning to their nest cavity. A weekend like this involves trying to get through too much fantastic habitat in too little time, so we soon headed for a quick stop in Lemon Valley. Western Meadowlarks, Black Billed Magpies and Horned Larks were found here in addition to a few Killdeer. A hunting Northern Harrier was creating chaos for the Red-winged Blackbirds. We decided to stop at Loyalton's Rotary Park before climbing higher to Sierra Valley. As we hoped, we found the nesting Lewis's Woodpeckers known to be here in addition to Golden Eagles watching us from the ridge above. **conti.....**



### Birds Observed –

Canada Goose	Tree Swallow
Mallard	Barn Swallow
Green-winged Teal	Steller's Jay
California Quail	Western Scrub-Jay
Mountain Quail	Clark's Nutcracker
Pied-billed Grebe	Black-billed Magpie
Double-crested Cormorant	Common Raven
American White Pelican	Chestnut Backed Chickadee
American Bittern	Mountain Chickadee
Great Blue Heron	White Breasted Nuthatch
Black Crowned Night Heron	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Turkey Vulture	Pygmy Nuthatch
Osprey	Brown Creeper (H)
Golden Eagle	Marsh Wren
Bald Eagle	American Dipper
Northern Harrier	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Red-tail Hawk	Western Bluebird
Swainson's Hawk	Mountain Bluebird
American Kestrel	American Robin
Virginia Rail	Hermit Thrush (H)
American Coot	Sage Thrasher
Sandhill Crane	European Starling
Killdeer	Warbling Vireo
Wilson's Snipe	Orange Crowned Warbler
Wilson's Phalarope	Yellow Warbler
California Gull	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Band Tailed Pigeon	Hermit Warbler
Rock Pigeon	MacGillivray's Warbler
Mourning Dove	Wilson's Warbler
Eurasian Collared Dove	Western Tanager
Common Poorwill	Black-headed Grosbeak
Vaux's Swift	Lazuli Bunting
White Throated Swifts	Green-tailed Towhee
Anna's Hummingbird	Spotted Towhee
Calliope Hummingbird	Chipping Sparrow
Lewis's Woodpecker	Brewer's Sparrow
Red-breasted Sapsucker	Vesper Sparrow
Williamson's Sapsucker	Song Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	Fox Sparrow
White-headed Woodpecker	Lincoln's Sparrow
Black-backed Woodpecker	Savannah Sparrow
Northern Flicker	Dark-eyed Junco
Olive Sided Flycatcher	Red-winged Blackbird
Western Wood-Pewee	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Hammond's Flycatcher	Brewer's Blackbird
Dusky Flycatcher	Brown-headed Cowbird
Eastern Kingbird	Western Meadowlark
Western Kingbird	Cassin's Finch
Horned Lark	Pine Siskin
Violet Green Swallow	Evening Grosbeak
Cliff Swallow	House Sparrow
	(H) = heard only

### DONNER PARTY CAMP AT ALDER CREEK VALLEY

In the Fall of 1846, 25 Members of  
The Donner Party became Trapped by an



Images provided by trip participants - More photos on pages 2 – 4. We started our trip on Flag Day. Green Tailed Towhee with a mouth full of bugs heading back to the nest – Brooke Miller / One of many Western Wood-Pewees observed throughout our entire weekend – Brooke Miller / Lewis's Woodpecker returning to its telephone-pole nest cavity at Loyalton's Rotary Park – Helen Daley / One of several plaques sharing the Donner Party history – Lisa Myers



It was at Rotary Park that we also found Mountain Bluebirds, Black-crowned Night Herons, Yellow Warblers and California Quail, in fact, the only quail we'd get a good look at during our weekend. Our next destination was the Buttes Resort in Sierra City where owners Mike and Lindy were all ready for our gang. We quickly checked in and were all out on the patio enjoying a BBQ potluck dinner, in addition to scoping out the American Dippers & the Yuba River directly below. A wonderful end to a busy day and soon all were out for the night. Saturday we stayed up in the mountains to bird Yuba Pass and the surrounding areas. Our morning at the pass quickly had us enjoying Cassin's Finch, Hammond's Flycatchers, nesting Hairy and White Headed Woodpeckers plus Lazuli Buntings, Chipping Sparrows, Calliope Hummingbird and much more. Walking the dirt road east of the parking lot we found a Dusky Flycatcher returning to its nest low in a Manzanita shrub. We enjoyed the bird while keeping our distance. An exciting find was a flock of Clark's Nutcrackers that quickly flew through with two landing just long enough for folks to get a clear visual. No matter where we birded we'd run into all the warblers expected for this area. Our lunch stop took us to Sand Pond and lower Sardine Lake. Although beautiful we were in the company of many weekend campers and few birds so we headed to the Bassett's Burn to look for Black-backed Woodpeckers. Moments after we arrived we found a foraging lone female! It was just too easy and a life bird for most. On to the Wild Plum Campground to check out the dipper nest, but we found many children playing in the water below so we left the scene without a dipper visual. We went back to the resort to re-cover from our day before having dinner across the street at the Mountain Creek Restaurant. They took care of our group in plenty of time for us to make it to the vista point by sunset. Although

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The meadow at Yuba Pass was in full bloom with many active butterflies including this Mourning Cloak – Brooke Miller / male Hermit Warbler – Brooke Miller

Dusky Flycatcher & White-headed Woodpecker feeding young at Yuba Pass – Brooke Miller

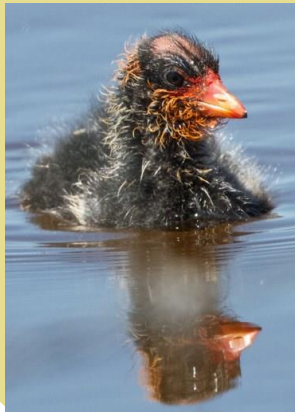
The group checking out Cassin's Finch and a Hammonds Flycatcher at Yuba Pass – Al Lowder / An Evening Grosbeak alongside the road near Bassett's – Helen Daley





Moments after arriving at the Bassett's Burn the group enjoyed a foraging female Black-backed Woodpecker – Lisa Myers / Our target woodpecker – Helen Daley  
Singing Chipping Sparrow – Brooke Miller / The "Birdaloo" caught the attention of many this weekend: they think it a little crazy, but they also thinks it's great - Al Lowder  
The Butte's Resort in Sierra City is a beautiful getaway with beautiful flowers – Lisa Myers / The group enjoying dinner at the Mountain Creek Restaurant – Lisa Myers





(Continued from page 2)....we never found Common Nighthawks, but did have Common Poorwills, a calling Mountain Quail & a view of the valley below. Sunday morning had us up early and on our way to Sierra Valley before heading home. A stop at Bassett's to check out the hummingbird feeders found us no new species so we moved on after a chat with Bob Lewis and his group. Once off the mountain we stopped several times north of Sattly and found Brewer's Sparrows and Sage Thrashers. We also thought we heard a distant Cactus Wren but left without further investigation (as it just could not be so). A turn right on Marble Springs Road had us searching the grasses & horizon. Sandhill Cranes, a Bald Eagle, circling Swainson's Hawks, nesting passerines and a distant American White Pelican all caught our attention. We then heard voices coming over our radios and knew another group was near & soon they passed. We later learned this was Bruce Webb's group. When we came upon them later they shared with us their great find of an Eastern Kingbird just ahead. This species shows up in California every now & then, and was a fantastic, surprise bird for our weekend! We then headed down Heriot Lane where we ate lunch in the company of Vesper Sparrows & farm equipment. Afterward we made one more stop at the Sierraville Cemetery where we found more Sandhills & added Western Bluebirds to our weekend before heading home. Our 650 mile adventure took us to some of California's most beautiful places and **Let's Go Birding** thanks everyone for coming along & taking time out for the birds!

Female Yellow Headed Blackbird in Sierra Valley returning to her nestlings with food – Brooke Miller / The rarest bird of our weekend was this Eastern Kingbird found by the ground ahead of us led by Bruce Webb. When we left it was sitting in a tree next to a Western Kingbird – Brooke Miller  
male Marsh Wren singing near – Greta Muller / newly hatched American Coot following its mother & American Bittern in the grass - Brooke Miller  
Group shot taken in Sierra Valley – Al Lowder / Finding little water throughout Sierra Valley the group takes advantage to bird the wet areas – Julie Bryson