

PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

10th - 27th September 2016

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: Chris Doughty

Our tour to Southern California, was a great success. Along the coast, and particularly, at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, the wader passage was in full swing, and we saw an amazing 27 different species of waders, during the tour. We also found a couple of scarce migrants for this area, we saw two Reddish Egrets and a Black Tern. We found a good number of noteworthy birds throughout the tour; which included a Little Blue Heron and a Pacific-slope Flycatcher, in the San Diego area, Least Bittern, Sora, Dunlin, Baird's Sandpiper, literally thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes, Yellow-footed Gull and a large flock of Chestnut-collared Longspurs, at the very memorable, Salton Sea. We saw Nuttall's Woodpecker and Yellow-billed Magpie, at Nojoqui Falls State Park, California Thrasher, at Montana de Oro State Park, and the majestic California Condor, along the Big Sur Coast. We were very fortunate with the weather on both of our pelagic trips, and indeed barely required our seasickness pills, or waterproof clothing. The seabirds were fantastic, and we were extremely fortunate in finding a Northern Gannet, a South Polar Skua, and exceptional numbers of Sabine's Gulls, of which most, were in full breeding plumage. The cetaceans were equally exciting; we saw four gigantic Blue Whales, literally hundreds of Humpback Whales, many of them breaching right out of the water, a splendid Fin Whale, and a large pod of the unusual, and spectacular, Northern Right Whale Dolphins. Inland, in the chaparral, woodland and forests, we managed to find most of the Californian specialities. In Yosemite National Park, we saw Rough-legged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Prairie Falcon, White-headed and Piliated Woodpeckers, Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsuckers, and American Dipper. In the Mono Lake area we saw Sage Grouse, Bonaparte's Gull, Pinyon Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Sage Thrasher and Green-tailed Towhee. At Piute Ponds, we encountered Greater White-fronted Goose, Greater Roadrunner, the spectacular Vermilion Flycatcher, and Nashville Warbler. At our final destination, on Santa Cruz Island, we found the endemic Island Scrub-Jay and the endemic Island Fox, and during the crossing back to the mainland, we saw a pair of Craveri's Murrelets.

We arrived on American soil, in the early hours of the morning, and quickly passed through immigration, at Los Angeles Airport. We then drove to our first birding destination, the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, on the Pacific coast. This coastal wetland was literally teeming with all kinds of wetland birds, including enormous numbers of migratory waders. We found small numbers of Pied-billed Grebes, good numbers of Brown Pelicans, several Double-crested Cormorants, a few Great Blue Herons, several stately looking Great Egrets, and the smaller Snowy Egret, proved numerous. A few Turkey Vultures soared overhead, a solitary Northern Harrier skimmed the reedbeds, a Western Osprey hunted for fish, a couple of Common Gallinules swam in the shallows, along with a wonderful assortment of waders, which included Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Killdeer, American Avocet, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Marled Godwit, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Red Knot, Western and Least Sandpipers and Short-billed Dowitcher. We found large numbers of California and Western Gulls loafing around on sandbanks, with smaller numbers of Caspian, Royal, Elegant and Forster's

Terns. We found a solitary Black Skimmer, the ubiquitous Feral Pigeon, a splendid Belted Kingfisher, a few American Crows and small groups of Savanna Sparrows. We also managed to find, a couple of unusual birds for this area, a pair of beautiful Reddish Egrets and a single Black Tern. Following lunch, a quick look at nearby Huntington Beach, produced good, close looks, at the stunning Heermann's Gull, and a walk along the pier at Huntington Beach, afforded us good looks at a large flock of Clark's Grebes, sitting on the sea, and a few American Herring Gulls, loafing on the pier. At nearby Oceanside, we added Sharp-shinned Hawk, Mourning Dove and European Starling. We then spent the remainder of the afternoon, driving south along the freeway, to San Diego, where we would spend the night, and not far from San Diego, we found a Red-tailed Hawk, hovering along the roadside. Our first mammal of the tour, was the very common, California Ground Squirrel.

We spent the following morning birding at nearby Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, at Point Loma, which at this time of year, can be a good place to search for autumn migrants. Here we saw good numbers of Anna's Hummingbirds, both Black and Say's Phoebes, lots of Barn Swallows, good numbers of Western Bluebirds, a few Northern Mockingbirds, several Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers, a delightful Black-headed Grosbeak, both California and Spotted Towhees, a rather skulking Lincoln's Sparrow, plenty of Dark-eyed Juncos, and a couple of House Finches. Probably, the best find of the morning, was a very obliging Pacific-slope Flycatcher, which was on passage through the area, on its way to its wintering grounds, on the west coast of Mexico. We then did a little birding at the nearby wetland of Famosa Slough. Here we enjoyed good close looks at a number of new birds for the tour, which included Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, American Coot, Black-necked Stilt, Spotted Sandpiper, and best of all, a single Little Blue Heron, this is a fairly regular spot to observe this species, which is an uncommon bird in California. Following lunch, we began the long drive to Brawley, at the southern end of the huge Salton Sea. We made a few birding stops along the way; the first, was at the Wilderness Gardens County Park, new birds here included the attractive American Kestrel, several very beautiful Acorn Woodpeckers, small flocks of Western Scrub-Jays were hanging around the campsite, and Common Ravens were observed flying overhead. Our next birding stop, was at the Santa Ysabel Mission, where we enjoyed watching a splendid White-tailed Kite, and good numbers of Lark Sparrows. While driving close to Mesa Grande, we came to a screeching halt, and this enabled us to watch a large flock of Wild Turkeys, feeding in farmland, very close to the road. Our final birding stop for the day, took place in the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, where we had a quick look at a rather uncooperative, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher.

We spent the next two, very productive days, at the famous Salton Sea. Temperatures here in summer, hover between 35 and 45 degrees Celsius, in the shade, and there is no shade! An over abundance of salt in the lake, the lake is currently 35 times saltier than the Pacific Ocean, combined with frequent algal blooms, causes all too regular, fish die-offs. The heat and the stench, resulting from the algal blooms and the piles of rotting fish, a metre in depth, around the entire 600 kilometres circumference of the lake, can be somewhat confronting! However, the many hundreds of Red-necked Phalaropes, bobbing up and down, on the lake, just a few metres from shore, and the countless numbers of other wetland birds along the shoreline, more than compensates, for this small inconvenience. During our first morning of birding at the lake, new wetland species for the tour included Western Grebe, American White Pelican, Least Bittern, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy Duck, an unusually tame Sora, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, Mew Gull and Gull-billed Tern. New birds in the scrub and trees surrounding the lake, included Gambel's Quail, White-winged Dove, Burrowing Owl, Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, Abert's Towhee, Brewer's and Song Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbird. Following lunch, and a well-earned siesta, additional new birds, around the

predominantly Mexican town of Brawley, included Western Cattle Egret, Eurasian Collared Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Brewer's Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle and House Sparrow. A spot of late afternoon birding at nearby Ramer Lake, produced Ring-billed Gull, a Great Horned Owl, a few Tree Swallows, and a few Desert Cottontails.

On our second full day of birding at the Salton Sea, we slowly worked our way northwards, birding our way, along the western shoreline of the lake. As expected, new birds for the tour were mainly wetland birds, and they included a large flock of Eared Grebes, a few Snowy Plovers, a couple of Dunlins, a flock of half a dozen or so Baird's Sandpipers, and a Yellow-footed Gull. A bird that breeds exclusively along the Gulf of California, in Mexico, and it is a rare visitor to California. We were very fortunate to have a Lesser Nighthawk, fly right past us, in full daylight hours. We also spent a good deal of time watching a very large flock of Chestnut-collared Longspurs, in an area of cultivated fields. This species is a rare, but regular, autumn migrant, through southern California, and a rare winter visitor, in very small numbers. Unfortunately, all had finished molting, into there rather drab, non-breeding plumage. We added a further species of mammal today, a Black-tailed Jackrabbit. We spent the night at Redlands, to the north of the Salton Sea, and to the west of Los Angeles.

The early part of the morning, was spent driving to the coast, north of Los Angeles. Traffic is unfortunately, unavoidable in southern California, and we battled our way through the truly hideous traffic of Los Angeles, arriving at Refugio State Beach, by mid-morning. We concentrated our birded around Refugio Creek, where the willows and eucalypts lining the creek, provided shelter for three new species for the tour. We enjoyed very good, close looks, at a juvenile Cooper's Hawk, which fortunately for us, perched in a nearby tree. A female Western Tanager was observed well, foraging above the creek, and from time to time, an adult male Common Yellowthroat, popped into view. Following lunch, we headed inland a little, and spent the rest of the afternoon, birding at Nojoqui Falls County Park. The birding here was surprisingly good, and new birds for the tour, made appearances at regular intervals. The two main target species here, were two California endemics, and in no time at all, we were enjoying great looks at a Nuttall's Woodpecker, and a small flock of Yellow-billed Magpies. There was also a supporting cast of other new birds for the tour; we found a small flock of Band-tailed Pigeons drinking from a cattle trough, which allowed us to enjoy very good looks at this widespread species. We observed a Loggerhead Shrike, sitting on a fence post, a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, crept along the branches of a large tree, we found a few American Robins feeding on the ground, and we very much enjoyed watching an adult female MacGillivray's Warbler, hunting for insects, in a large tree. Here we also saw several Western Grey Squirrels and a herd of Mule Deer. We waited until it had got dark, and then played some tape of the Western Screech-Owl. Fortunately, a bird responded very well, and we enjoyed great looks at this diminutive species of owl, in the spotlight. We then spent the night, at the very touristy town of Solvang.

The following morning, we continued north along the Pacific coast; our first birding stop, was from the cliffs, at Shell Beach. Offshore, we found large flocks of Sooty and Black-vented Shearwaters, sat in flocks, on the surface of the ocean. While inshore, we enjoyed great looks at a pair of Horned Grebes, many Brandt's Cormorants, and a pair of Black Oystercatchers, and we also saw a Peregrine Falcon flying along the cliff top. Delightful Sea Otters, lying on their backs, on the surface of the ocean, eating sea urchins, was an added bonus. Other new mammals we saw this morning, included a few California Sea-Lions, and a couple of Harbour Seals. Our next birding stop, was just a little further up the coast, at Margo Dodd Park. From the cliffs here, we found a few Pelagic Cormorants, amongst the far more common Brandt's Cormorants. We spent much of the afternoon birding in the Montana de Oro State Park, where we birded along one of the walking

trails. It proved very rewarding, we saw our first Golden Eagle of the tour, which flew directly above us. We found a large covey of California Quail, a couple of noisy Northern Flickers, a pair of attractive Chestnut-backed Chickadees, both Bewick's and House Wrens, the near-endemic Wrentit and California Thrasher, and a female Hooded Oriole. Continuing north along the coast, we arrived at our overnight destination of Morro Bay. We had time to do some birding around the bay, and new birds here, included the diminutive Bushtit, and the particularly attractive White-crowned Sparrow. That evening, we dined along the edge of the bay, and the seafood was sensational.

The following day, was spent travelling northwards, along the coast, towards San Francisco, we drove along what must surely be, one of the most beautiful coastlines, anywhere in the world. Our first birding stop of the morning, was at nearby Cayucos. Here, we enjoyed super looks at a pair of splendid Black Turnstones and several Northern Elephant Seals. For much of the day we travelled northwards along the spectacular coastal highway, known as the Big Sur. As we drove along, we checked every single Turkey Vulture that we saw, for this is a good area to see, the critically endangered, California Condor. Unfortunately, by lunch time, our vigilance remained unrewarded. We decided to have lunch at a cafe, perched right on top of the cliffs. As we were waiting for our lunch to be served, an immature California Condor, drifted right past our dining table, and continued south, along the coast. The lunch tasted much better, for having seen the condor! Continuing north along the coast, we reached the Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, renowned for its impressive groves of Coastal Redwoods, and we were looking forward to birding in them. Unfortunately, it wasn't meant to be. Huge bush fires, burning inland from the coast, had swept through this area a couple of days earlier, and the National Parks Service, had closed the park to visitors, for safety reasons. However, we did do some birding in the carpark, and here we enjoyed good looks at a small number of Black Swifts flying overhead, and Steller's Jays proved to be quite tame, around the picnic tables. We then continued northwards along the coast, to San Carlos, where we would spend the next three nights.

Today was our first full day pelagic out of Half Moon Bay, a little to the south of San Francisco, and it was with eager anticipation that we boarded our boat early in the morning. Fortunately, the weather was kind to us, and a large swell, gently rocked the boat from side to side for most of the day. Before leaving the harbour, we enjoyed a Pacific Loon in flight, a female Black Scoter was swimming around in the harbour, and a couple of Surfbirds, were roosting on one of the breakwaters. Shortly after leaving the harbour, we sailed to a small offshore island, where we enjoyed good looks at the only Northern Gannet, in the Pacific Ocean. This bird has been in this area for seven years and unfortunately, will probably never find its way back to the North Atlantic, from where it originated. Once out at sea, we found good numbers of impressive Black-footed Albatross, a single Northern Fulmar, Sooty Shearwaters were present in their thousands, and there were also plenty of Pink-footed Shearwaters, and even a good number of Buller's Shearwaters. Wilson's and Ashy Storm-Petrels were present in good numbers, as were small flocks of Red Phalaropes, we were very pleased to find a single South Polar Skua, along with good numbers of Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, and a few Long-tailed Jaegers, some of them, in brilliant full breeding plumage. One of the real highlights of the day, were the 500 plus Sabine's Gulls, that were migrating south, in a steady stream throughout the day. There were a few juveniles amongst them, but most, were in dazzling full breeding plumage, it was a real treat. We also found small numbers of Common and Arctic Terns, along with large numbers of Common Murres, and smaller numbers of Pigeon Guillemots and Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets. The cetaceans, were equally as spectacular as the birds. Huge numbers of Humpback Whales were migrating southwards and large numbers of them were breaching right out of the water in every direction, it was a truly spectacular sight. No less than four Blue Whales were also seen very close to the boat, the largest mammal that has ever

existed on the earth. We very much appreciated a single Fin Whale, which showed fairly well. Amongst a large number of California Sea-Lions, sat on a large marker buoy, we found a single Steller's Sea-Lion, and last, but by no means least, we saw a small pod of Dall's Porpoise.

Our second full day pelagic, out of Half Moon Bay, was a little rougher, with much the same seabirds and cetaceans, but in much small numbers. The only new bird today, was a beautiful adult male Surf Scoter, which was sat on one of the break-waters, in the harbour. We did however, very much enjoy a close sighting of a pod of uncommon and very attractive, Northern Right Whale Dolphins, which swam right past our boat. While driving back to our motel following the pelagic, we observed a Red-shouldered Hawk, sat in a roadside power pole.

Most of the day, was taken up by the long drive to Yosemite National Park. We broke the long drive mid-morning, to do some birding at the Frank Raines Regional Park. Unfortunately, it was already very hot, and there was little moving in the park. However, we did manage to find two new species of birds for the tour, the attractive and near-endemic Oak Titmouse and a pair of well-marked Pine Siskins. We arrived at our hotel on the edge of Yosemite National Park, by mid-afternoon, following a short siesta, we did some late afternoon birding, at nearby Bass Lake, at Oakhurst. Here we were pleased to find a migratory Red-naped Sapsucker, a migratory Western Wood-Pewee, a migratory Black-throated Gray Warbler and just for a change, a wintering Golden-crowned Sparrow. Today we also saw a couple of range-restricted Brush Rabbits, and we all enjoyed our first encounter with Coyotes, one of which, ran off, with a hapless California Ground Squirrel in its mouth.

We very much enjoyed our two days of birding in the world-famous Yosemite National Park. We spent much of the first day birding along the incredibly scenic glacial valley, in the centre of the park. New birds for the tour, included nesting White-throated Swifts, a Hairy Woodpecker, several delightful Mountain Chickadees, a couple of Red-breasted Nuthatches, both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. However, the bird we enjoyed watching the most, was a lovely American Dipper, which we watched for a good length of time. We also saw a couple of new mammals today, which included one or two Douglas's Squirrels, and also a few uncommon Uinta Chipmunks.

On our second day in Yosemite National Park, we were thrilled to watch three very uncommon birds of prey. The first, was a Rough-legged Hawk, which was perched in a tree, on the edge of a large meadow. We then saw a beautiful Prairie Falcon, which flew around us, before also perching in a nearby tree. While we were looking at one of the many lakes in the park, a superb adult Bald Eagle, flew right in front of us, and began patrolling the lake. It was also a very good day for observing woodpeckers, we saw the spectacular White-headed Woodpecker, the giant Piliated Woodpecker, was also much appreciated, and our third new species of woodpecker today, was the uncommon Williamson's Sapsucker. We also added Brown Creeper, Mountain Bluebird and Chipping Sparrow. The only new mammal for the tour today, was a Lodgepole Chipmunk.

We spent the following day, birding in and around Mono Lake, North America's oldest body of freshwater. The most distinctive feature at Mono Lake is its strange calcified rock formations – mineral structures which are formed when fresh-water springs bubble up through the alkaline waters of the lake. A little early morning birding at the lake produced splendid view of the uncommon Sage Thrasher, a few Mountain Cottontails, and several diminutive Least Chipmunks. While eating breakfast, in the small town of Lee Vining, we observed a small flock of Lesser Goldfinches, feeding at bird feeders, in the garden of the cafe. Following breakfast we headed to a different part of the lake, and here we found a small flock of Canada Geese, a couple of attractive

Bonaparte's Gulls, in full breeding plumage, and a few Black-billed Magpies. While eating lunch at Lee Vining, we were rewarded with very good looks at the uncommon Clark's Nutcracker. Following lunch, we did some birding in the Inyo National Forest, and here we watched a very large flock of uncommon Pinyon Jays and a small flock of Cassin's Finches. In the later half of the afternoon, we drove high into the mountains, where we spotted a herd of very uncommon Pronghorns, and while admiring them, we found a flock of a dozen or so Sage Grouse, feeding together, on the ground. We then did a little birding in and around the Bodie State Historic Park. Here we added the last new bird of the day, an attractive Green-tailed Towhee. We then drove to the small town of Bishop, for an overnight stay.

The following morning, while driving to the Kern River Preserve, a little roadside birding, produced our only sighting of the Phainopepla. In the preserve itself, we enjoyed prolonged looks at a Ladder-backed Woodpecker and a couple of Marsh Wrens. Following lunch, we drove to the nearby Walker Pass, as we neared the entrance, a Greater Roadrunner, ran across the road. During the heat of the afternoon we walked a trail at the pass, where we enjoyed very good looks at a few Nelson's Antelope-Squirrels. We then drove to Mojave, for an overnight stay.

Early the next morning, we did some birding in the low brush around Inyokern. Here, we were very pleased to find a perched Costa's Hummingbird, still in full breeding plumage, a couple of Verdin's, an obliging Sage Sparrow, and Purple Finch. Later in the morning, we did some birding at the Mojave Sewage Ponds, and here new birds we saw included, a pair of Ring-necked Ducks, a large flock of Horned Larks, a couple of American Pipits, and a few Black-throated Sparrows. Following lunch, we drove to Piute Ponds, not far from the small farming town of Lancaster. This is a man-made marsh, situated on the Edwards Air Force Base. The birding here was very good, and even at this late stage of the tour, we found several new birds. We enjoyed watching a flock of a dozen or so, Greater White-fronted Geese, large numbers of Green-winged Teal, a small flock of Vaux's Swifts, a pair of beautiful Vermilion Flycatchers, right at the northern edge of their range here, we found small numbers of Bank Swallows, flying amongst the hundreds of Barn Swallows, we enjoyed watching a pair of Cactus Wrens, we had good looks at a Nashville Warbler, as well as a few Vesper Sparrows, and a handful of Western Meadowlarks. We then drove back to the Pacific coast, to overnight at the seaside resort of Ventura.

On our final day of the tour, we boarded a fast catamaran out of Ventura Harbour, and enjoyed the one and half hour cruise out to Santa Cruz Island, the largest of the Channel Islands. On the way over, we watched small groups of Short-beaked Common Dolphins, riding the bow-wave of the boat. Once on the island, we did not have to walk very far, before finding our first pair of the endemic, Island Scrub Jay. We added one more new bird to our now, large bird list, we saw a few Rufous-crowned Sparrows. We also found a particularly tame Island Fox, which is also, endemic to this island. On the crossing back to Ventura, we observed two separate Craver's Murrelets, which rounded the tour off perfectly.

SYSTAMATIC LIST

LOONS *GAVIIDAE*

Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica* This attractive species is a common winter visitor, along the coast of California, from breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska. We saw a single bird, in flight, in the harbour, at Half Moon Bay, on both of the pelagics.

GREBES *PODICIEDIDAE*

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* An uncommon resident, which we saw very well, on several occasions.

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* This species is a common winter visitors to the coast of California, from breeding grounds, further to the north. We observed a pair of birds just offshore, from Shell Beach.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* A common winter visitor from breeding grounds further to the north. We observed good numbers on a few occasions, throughout the tour.

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* This large species of grebe, is a locally common winter visitor, from breeding grounds, further to the north. We saw a few birds very well, during our time at the Salton Sea.

Clark's Grebe *Aechmophorus clarkii* An uncommon resident, we saw small numbers, both inland and offshore, at scattered localities, throughout the tour. Lieutenant John Henry Clark (1830-1885) was an American surveyor, naturalist and collector. He was a zoologist on the US/Mexican Border Survey (1850-1855). During this survey, he collected the grebe, and two reptiles and an amphibian, which were named after him.

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes* We enjoyed many great looks, on both of the pelagics out of Half Moon Bay, of this impressive and uncommon non-breeding visitor, to coastal waters off the California coast, from breeding islands in the central and western Pacific. This species is classified as Near threatened, by 'Birdlife International'. The population is unknown, but it is thought to be increasing.

PETRELS and SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIIDAE*

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* A single, pale morph bird, was observed well, on the first of our pelagics, out of Half Moon Bay. It is an irregular winter visitor, to the California coast, from breeding grounds, high in the Arctic.

Pink-footed Shearwater *Puffinus creatopus* Large flocks of this species were observed very well, during both of the pelagics, out of Half Moon Bay. In California, it is a non-breeding visitor from three small islands, off the coast of Chile, in South America. This species is classified as Vulnerable, by 'Birdlife International'. The population is unknown, but thought to be stable. The main threats to this species, are the accidental introduction of rats to its nesting islands, and disturbance by humans, at its nesting islands.

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri* We also saw fairly large flocks of this species, on both of the pelagics out of Half Moon Bay. It is an uncommon non-breeding visitor, to the coast of

California, from breeding islands, off the coast of New Zealand. This species is classified as Vulnerable, by 'Birdlife International'. The population is unknown, but thought to be stable. The main threat to this species, is the accidental introduction of predators to its breeding islands. Sir Walter Lawry Buller (1838-1906) was a New Zealand lawyer and ornithologist, and author of *A History of the Birds of New Zealand*. He was a government minister in New Zealand from 1896 to 1899. Although born in New Zealand, he achieved his ambition to go 'home' and so he died in England, a country gentleman. He tried to sell **Rothchild** a specimen of the now extinct, Laughing Owl, for a considerably large sum of money. Rothchild examined the bird and realised that it was a fake, particularly as its tail came from another bird, of a completely different genus! Rothchild pointed all this out publicly and loudly, and Buller was humiliated. Buller collected the type specimen of the shearwater, and **Salvin** named it after him.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* Present in their thousands, during both pelagics out of Half Moon Bay, and during the crossing to and from Santa Cruz Island. It is a common non-breeding visitor, to the coast of California, from breeding grounds in the South Pacific.

Black-vented Shearwater *Puffinus opisthomelas* A small flock was observed offshore, from Shell Beach, and then small numbers were seen close inshore, on the first pelagic, off Half Moon Bay. This species of shearwater, is a common non-breeding visitor, to the Californian coast, from breeding grounds off the west coast of northern Mexico. This species is classified as Near Threatened by 'Birdlife International'. The total population is estimated to be approximately 82,000 individuals, and is thought to be stable.

STORM-PETRELS *HYDROBATIDAE*

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Approximately a dozen or so birds, of this species, were observed on the first pelagic, out of Half Moon Bay. This species is a rare non-breeding visitor to the coast of California, from breeding grounds in the sub-Antarctic. **Alexander Wilson** (1766-1813) was a pioneering American ornithologist, and the first to study American birds in their native habitats. As such, he is often called the Father of American Ornithology. Born in Scotland, Wilson was unfairly imprisoned for libel and following his release in 1794 he emigrated to the United States. From 1808-1813 he published seven volumes of his *American Ornithology*.

Ashy Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma homochroa* We found small flocks numbering up to approximately 40 or so birds, on the first day of the pelagic out of Half Moon Bay, with much smaller numbers on the second pelagic. In California, this is a common breeding species, which nests on islands off the southern coast of California. This species is classified as Endangered by 'Birdlife International'. The population is estimated to be between 3,500 and 6,700 and unfortunately, decreasing rapidly. During the last three generations of birds, there has been a 78% decline in numbers. The main threats to this species are predation of nestlings, pollutants and global warming. Global warming has resulted in consecutive years of abnormal sea-surface temperatures, leading to reduced colony attendance.

PELICANS *PELECANIDAE*

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* A bird of inland lakes, it is a non-breeding winter visitor to southern California, from more inland breeding grounds. We saw small numbers, at scattered localities throughout the tour.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* A resident bird, which was very common all along the coast, with smaller numbers observed on inland lakes.

GANNETS and BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* This species is an incredibly rare vagrant anywhere in the

Pacific Ocean. It normally only occurs in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea. This particular individual, has been sat on the same rock, just outside Half Moon Bay, for the last seven years!

CORMORANTS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

Brandt's Cormorant *Phalacrocorax penicillatus* A common resident all along the California coast, which we saw very well, on many occasions. Johann Friedrich von Brandt (1802-1879) was a German zoologist who explored Siberia. He became head of the Zoological Museum in St. Petersburg, and described several birds from the western United States, including the cormorant, which is named after him. Brandt also wrote the first descriptions of the Red-legged Kittiwake and the Spectacled Eider. He is also commemorated in Brandt's Bat and other animals as diverse as a woodlouse, and a piranha.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* In California, this species is a common resident, both inland, and along the coast, where we saw it very well, on many occasions.

Pelagic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pelagicus* Another common resident, all along the California coast. We saw small numbers, amongst the much commoner Brandt's Cormorants.

HERONS, EGRETS and BITTERN *ARDEIDAE*

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis* An uncommon resident of southern California, we saw a few birds well, during our time at the Salton Sea.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* Another uncommon resident, we saw small numbers, at most of the wetlands we visited.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* A common resident, we saw small numbers in both freshwater and estuarine habitats, throughout the tour. Along the coast, we often found them sitting on seaweed, just offshore, where they were obviously fishing. I have never seen Great Egrets do this, anywhere else in the world.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* A common resident, which we saw very well, on many occasions throughout the tour.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* A rare visitor, to the far south, of coastal California, from breeding grounds in Central and South America. Therefore, we were very fortunate, to observe a single bird, while birding at the Famosa Slough, close to San Diego.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* A rare visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds in Mexico. We were very fortunate to observe a pair of birds in flight, while birding at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles. This species is classified as Near Threatened by 'Birdlife International'. It is estimated that the total population, is between 10,000-20,000 individuals, and increasing.

Western Cattle Egret *Bulbulcus ibis* A locally common resident in southern California; we saw small flocks in farmland, at Brawley and inland from San Francisco.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* This species is an uncommon and localised resident, in southern California. We saw a single, adult bird, very well, in a reedbed, at Salton Sea.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* A common resident throughout southern California, we enjoyed a good number of scattered sightings, throughout the tour.

IBISES and SPOONBILLS *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* A common resident in southern California, we enjoyed scattered sightings, throughout the tour.

SWANS, GEESE and DUCKS *ANATIDAE*

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* This large species of goose, is mainly an

uncommon non-breeding winter visitor, to southern California, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic. We very much enjoyed watching a flock of a dozen, or so birds, while birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* This common species, is resident in central California, and a winter visitor, in southern California. We saw a small flock, of half a dozen or so birds, while birding at Mono Lake.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* A common winter visitor to southern California, mainly from breeding grounds on the prairies of Canada. We saw good numbers at Famosa Slough, close to San Diego, and at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* This is a common winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds, predominantly, in Canada. We observed a small flock of 10 or so birds, during our time at Famosa Slough, close to San Diego.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* A common resident throughout southern California, we found small numbers, at most of the wetlands we visited.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* A common winter visitor, to southern California, from breeding grounds further to the north. We observed small numbers at Famosa Slough, close to San Diego, and then much larger numbers at Salton Sea.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* A locally common resident in southern California. We saw small numbers at Salton Sea, and much larger numbers, at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* A common winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds further to the north. Good numbers were present, at most of the wetlands we visited.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* A common winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds in Canada. We saw good numbers at Famosa Slough, close to San Diego, and then larger numbers at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* A recent split from Common Teal. The Green-winged Teal is a common winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska. We found large numbers while birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* An uncommon winter visitor, from breeding grounds, further to the north. We saw a pair of birds very well, at the Mojave Sewage Ponds.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* A common winter visitor to the coast of California, from breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska. Somewhat surprisingly, we only saw a single bird, however, it was a superbly plumaged adult male. It was sitting on a break-water, in the harbour, at Half moon Bay.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* A rare winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds, along the west coast of Alaska. We were very fortunate to find an adult female, swimming around, in the harbour at Half Moon Bay, during both of the pelagics.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* A common resident, which we saw well, at a number of wetlands throughout the tour.

NEW WORLD VULTURES *CATHARTIDAE*

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* A common resident of southern California, which we observed on most days of the tour.

California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus* This huge species of New World vulture, is a very rare and highly localised Californian endemic. We were indeed fortunate, to observe an

immature bird fly right past us, while waiting for our lunch to be brought to our outdoor dining table, situated on a cliff top, on the Pfeiffer Big Sur Coast. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by 'Birdlife International'. The California Condor has been rare and declining for as long as the species has been known to science. By 1968 the total wild population was estimated at about 60 birds, dropping to around 10 by 1985, and in 1987, when the last few wild birds were captured, the total population was 27 individuals, all in captivity. An intensive and successful captive breeding program, led to the reintroduction of condors at several sites in California, and at the Grand Canyon, in Arizona, in the 1990s. There is now a tiny population of 44 birds, and with ongoing intensive conservation management efforts, the population is expected to increase. The main threat to this species, is lead poisoning, as a result of birds ingesting lead shot, from the carcasses of the dead animals they eat.

OSPREY *PANDIONIDAE*

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* The Osprey, has recently been split into two species, Eastern and Western. The Western Osprey is an uncommon winter visitor to the south coast of California, from breeding grounds, further to the north. We enjoyed scattered sightings, all on the coast, on a few occasions.

KITES, HAWKS and EAGLES *ACCIPITRIDAE*

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus* This attractive species, is an uncommon resident in southern California. We saw a perched bird, on one occasion, while birding at Santa Ysabel Mission.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This magnificent raptor, is an uncommon winter visitor to southern California. We saw an adult bird in flight, at very close quarters, at one of the many lakes, in Yosemite National Park.

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus* This species of harrier, is an uncommon resident and winter visitor, in southern California. We saw it well, on several occasions, throughout the tour. The North American race *hudsonius*, is a likely future split from the Hen Harrier, of Europe.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* This small species of sparrowhawk, is an uncommon resident, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* This species is an uncommon resident, we saw it well, on a number of occasions. William C. Cooper (1798-1864) was a New York conchologist and collector. He was one of the founders of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York. He was also the father of Dr James G Cooper (1830-1902) who worked for the Pacific Railroad Survey in California and for whom the Cooper Ornithological Society is named, as well as a number of birds, in their scientific names. **Bonaparte** described and named Cooper's Hawk.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* This attractive species, is a fairly common resident. We found birds perched on roadside telegraph poles, on two separate occasions. The first, occurred close to San Francisco, and the second sighting, took place close to Yosemite National Park. These birds belong to the brightly coloured and geographically isolated Californian race, *elegans*.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis* This common resident, was seen well, on most days of the tour.

Rough-legged Hawk *Buteo lagopus* This large raptor, is an uncommon winter visitor to California. It is at the extreme southern end of its wintering range in central California, and

breeds further to the north, in Canada and Alaska. We saw it well, on two separate occasions; the first sighting, was of a perched bird, on the edge of a meadow, in Yosemite National Park. The second, was also of a perched bird, which then flew right over us, as we were eating lunch, at Lee Vining.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* In southern California, this majestic species, is a rare resident of mountains, grasslands and deserts, usually far from human habitation. We were very fortunate, to see it very well, on a few occasions.

CARACARAS and FALCONS *FALCONIDAE*

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* An uncommon resident of California, which we saw well, on many occasions.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* In southern California, this well known species of falcon, is an uncommon resident. We saw it well, on one occasion, as it was patrolling along the tops of the cliffs, at Shell Beach, on the coast.

Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus* In southern California, this uncommon species, is both resident and a winter visitor. We enjoyed super, close looks, at a single bird in flight, which then came and perched in a tree, right next to us, while we were walking by an open meadow, in Yosemite National Park.

TURKEYS *MELEGRIIDAE*

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* A common resident, we encountered a few large flocks, during the tour.

GROUSE, PTARMIGANS and PRAIRIE-CHICKENS *TETRAONIDAE*

Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus urophasianus* Very recently the Greater Sage-Grouse, and the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, have been lumped together, and the species is now known simply, as Sage-Grouse. In California, it is an uncommon resident of sagebrush plains in the centre of the state, adjacent to the state of Nevada. We found a large covey, of 10 or so birds, high in the mountains, close to the Bodie State Historical Park.

NEW WORLD QUAIL *ODONTOPHORIDAE*

California Quail *Callipepla californica* This attractive species, is a common resident, and near-endemic of California. We observed several small coveys, during the tour.

Gambel's Quail *Callipepla gambelii* This species is a common resident of shrubby deserts, in the far southeast of California. We found a small covey, which we saw very well, at Salton Sea. Dr. William Gambel (1821-1849) was an American physician, naturalist and collector. It is claimed, that he unfortunately, broke the first rule of natural history, when he named a bird that he had discovered, after himself. While riding along the Santa Fe Trail in 1842, Gambel collected a specimen and labelled it 'Gambel's Quail', apparently believing his friend **Thomas Nuttall**, had already named it after him. However, according to **John Cassin**, he was the one who named it in Gambel's honour. Regardless, of what took place, the name became official, nonetheless. Gambel finding himself short of money, joined the US Navy as a clerk, on the USS Cyane. He served on a number of vessels between 1842 to 1845, and during this time he collected on the Pacific coasts of both North and South America. He studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania from 1845 to 1848, and he decided to set up a medical practice in California, and left by the overland route. He joined a party of the famous 49-ers, on their way to the California Gold Rush. Most of the party died attempting to cross the rugged Sierra Nevada Mountains during mid-winter. He made it across into California, but there he caught typhoid and died.

RAILS, GALLINULES and COOTS *RALLIDAE*

Sora *Porzana carolina* In southern California the Sora is a fairly common resident, passage

migrant, and winter visitor. We observed a single bird extremely well, along the edge of a reedbed, at Salton Sea, where the Sora, is a winter visitor.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula chloropus* A recent split from the Common Moorhen, of Eurasia, all New World birds, are now known as Common Gallinule. In southern California, this species is predominantly a common winter visitor, from breeding grounds in Mexico. We saw a handful of birds very well, in the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles.

American Coot *Fulica americana* This species is a common resident, throughout southern California. We saw it at most of the wetlands we visited.

OYSTERCATCHERS *HAEMATOPODIDAE*

Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani* In southern California, this bird is an uncommon resident of rocky shorelines. We saw a pair of birds very well, on coastal rocks, at Shell Beach.

STILTS and AVOCETS *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* This species is predominantly a locally common resident, which we saw well on several occasions.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* Like the above species, the very attractive American Avocet, is predominantly a locally common resident. Which we saw very well, at many of the wetlands, we visited.

LAPWINGS and PLOVERS *CHARADRIIDAE*

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* This species is known as Grey Plover, in Australia. In southern California, it is a common winter visitor, along the coast. Migrating from breeding grounds, in the high Arctic. We saw well over a hundred birds at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles and a small number at the Salton Sea. Some of the birds, were still showing traces of breeding plumage.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* A common winter visitor to coastal California, and a passage migrant inland. We saw a dozen or so birds, during our time at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles, and a pair of birds inland, at the Mojave Sewage Ponds.

Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* In southern California, this species is an uncommon and highly localised resident, that occurs mainly along the coast, and at the Salton Sea. We enjoyed very good, close looks, at a small flock of four birds, at the Salton Sea. This species is classified as Near Threatened by 'Birdlife International'. It is estimated that there are between 24,000-26,000 birds and unfortunately, they are decreasing rapidly.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* This attractive species, is a common resident, which we saw well on many occasions.

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES *SCOLOPACIDAE*

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds, further to the north. We saw a single bird, at the Famosa Slough, close to San Diego.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata* This rather plain, New World wader, is a common winter visitor to estuarine habitats along the coast of southern California. From breeding grounds, on the prairies. We saw large numbers, at most of the wetlands we visited.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* This large species of wader is a common winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds, in southern Canada. We found small numbers at most of the wetlands we visited.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* The smaller cousin, of the above species. In southern California, it is a common passage migrant and winter visitor, from breeding grounds in the

Arctic. A handful of birds were present at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* This species, is an uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic. Small numbers were present, at the coastal wetlands we visited.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus* This impressive looking wader, is also an uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, to southern California, from breeding grounds, further inland. Small numbers were present at the coastal wetlands we visited.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* Another uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds, on the prairies. We found good numbers along the coast and at the Salton Sea.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* This attractive species, is a common winter visitor, to the coast of southern California, from breeding grounds, in the high Arctic. We saw up to ten individuals, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles. Some of the birds were still in partial breeding plumage.

Black Turnstone *Arenaria melanocephala* This species is a common winter visitor, to the coast of southern California, from breeding grounds in coastal Alaska. We saw small numbers, at the coastal wetlands we visited.

Surfbird *Aphriza virgata* This species is an uncommon winter visitor, to rocky shorelines of southern California, from breeding grounds in Alaska. On our two pelagics out of Half Moon Bay, we saw probably the same pair, roosting on break-waters in the harbour.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* This species is a locally common winter visitor, to coastal areas of southern California, from breeding grounds, in the high Arctic. We saw up to sixty individuals, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* A common winter visitor, almost exclusively to sandy beaches of southern California, from breeding grounds, in the high Arctic. We observed a dozen or so birds in the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles, and a few birds, on a break-water, in Half Moon Bay.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* This species is a common winter visitor to coastal areas of southern California, from breeding grounds in coastal Alaska. We saw very large numbers of birds, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles, and at the Salton Sea.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* This species is also a common winter visitor to coastal areas of southern California, from breeding grounds in the Arctic. Once again, we saw large numbers of birds, but not quite as many as the Western Sandpiper, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles, and at the Salton Sea.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* This species is an uncommon passage migrant in southern California, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic. We were fortunate to find a flock of half a dozen birds, feeding together along the shoreline, at the Salton Sea. **Spencer Fullerton Baird** (1823-1887) was an American zoologist who became a giant of American ornithology. Baird was Assistant Secretary then Secretary (1878) of the Smithsonian Institution. He wrote a *Catalogue of North American Birds* in 1858. The young Baird became a friend of **John James Audubon** to whom he sent collected specimens. **Dr. Elliot B Coues** named the sandpiper after him.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* The Dunlin is a common passage migrant and winter visitor to southern California, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic of Canada and Alaska. We found a pair of birds, feeding along the shoreline of the Salton Sea.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* This species is a common winter visitor to coastal areas of southern California, from breeding grounds in the Arctic. We found large numbers

present at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles, and smaller numbers, at the Salton Sea.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* This species is also a common winter visitor to coastal areas of southern California, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic of Canada and Alaska. We found a single bird, at very close quarters, while we were watching the Sora, at Salton Sea.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* A common passage migrant in southern California, from breeding grounds in Arctic Canada and Alaska. We saw many hundreds of birds around the edge of the Salton Sea, we saw small flocks offshore, during the two pelagics out of Half Moon Bay, we found a small flock at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base, and we saw small flocks on the boat trip to and from Santa Cruz Island.

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* Known as the Grey Phalarope in Australia. This bird is an uncommon winter visitor, to offshore waters of coastal southern California. We found small flocks, totalling 100 birds or so, during the two pelagics out of Half Moon Bay.

GULLS *LARIDAE*

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* In southern California, this incredibly beautiful species, is an uncommon passage migrant, which migrates out in the open ocean, far offshore. It breeds in the high Arctic of Canada and Alaska and winters out at sea, off the Pacific coast of South America. On the first pelagic out of Half Moon Bay, we enjoyed the tremendous spectacle of 500 plus birds, flying south, throughout long periods of the day. Most were in spectacular full breeding plumage. There were far fewer birds, on the second pelagic, and we also saw small numbers at sea, on the boat trip, to and from Santa Cruz Island. General Sir Edward Sabine (1788-1883) combined a successful military career in the Royal Artillery for an incredible 74 years (1803-1877), with notable achievements in physics and astronomy, as well as being an explorer. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1818 and was the Royal Society's Treasurer from 1850 until 1861, and its President between 1862 and 1871. The gull was discovered by Edward's brother Joseph, who named it after his famous sibling, on the expedition in search of the Northwest Passage led by John Ross in 1818. Sir Edward was the expedition's astronomer and Geologist, but as a keen ornithologist, he was also expected to write up the expedition's zoological findings. Sabine wrote the official description of the gull himself.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* This delicate species of gull, is a common winter visitor along the coast of southern California; and a common passage migrant inland, from breeding grounds in Arctic Canada and Alaska. We observed a couple of birds, in beautiful full breeding plumage, at Mono Lake. Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, originally Jules Laurent Lucien (1803-1857) was a nephew of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. He was a renowned ornithologist, both in Europe and the United States. Bonaparte was much travelled and he spent many years in the United States cataloguing birds, he has been described as the 'father of systematic ornithology'. He eventually settled in Paris and commenced his *Conspectus Generum Avium*, a catalogue of every bird species in the world. He died before finishing it, but its publication was heralded as a major step forward in accomplishing one of the most important goals of ornithology: a complete list of the world's birds.

Heermann's Gull *Larus heermanni* In southern California, this very attractive species, is a common winter visitor along the coast, from breeding grounds, further north along the coast.

We enjoyed many sightings, at various sites along the coast, most of the birds, were still in breeding plumage. This species is classified as Near Threatened by 'Birdlife International'. The population is unknown, but is thought to be increasing. Dr. Adolphus Lewis Heermann (1827-1865) was an army physician and naturalist. He was one of many naturalist who came to the attention of **Spencer Baird** at the Smithsonian Institution, and he was assigned to a surveying party for the Pacific Railroad. Heermann was especially interested in collecting birds eggs, and he is credited with coining the term 'oology' for the practice. He retired from the army early, due to illness and died two years later in a hunting accident, when he stumbled and his rifle discharged, killing him. He appears to have looked many years older than he actually was, apparently due to the effects of syphilis.

Mew Gull *Larus canus* This species is an uncommon winter visitor, along the coast of southern California. We saw a pair at Salton Sea, where it is a rare visitor.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* This species is a common winter visitor, to southern California, which we saw well at scattered localities, both along the coast and inland.

Western Gull *Larus occidentalis* This resident species, is by far the commonest gull along the coast of California, where we saw it in the hundreds, all along the coast.

Yellow-footed Gull *Larus livens* This large species of gull breeds exclusively along the Gulf of California, in Mexico, and it is a rare visitor to California, with the exception of the Salton Sea, where it occurs annually, in very small numbers. We were very fortunate to enjoy good, close looks, at one of these birds.

California Gull *Larus californicus* A common winter visitor to coastal California, with huge numbers breeding at Mono Lake, far inland, in California. We observed small numbers, at most of the wetlands we visited, throughout the tour.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* A recent split from the Herring Gull of Europe. This species is a common winter visitor throughout California. We found small numbers, at all the coastal sites we visited.

TERNs STERNIDAE

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* In California, this bird only occurs at Salton Sea, where it is an uncommon summer breeder, in small numbers. We were fortunate to observe a flock of up to 10 birds, at Salton Sea.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* This very large species of tern, is a summer breeder, on lakes in inland California, a common passage migrant and a common resident in the far south of California. We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* An uncommon, and very local passage migrant, throughout southern California. We saw a single bird in flight, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles, and then we saw up to a dozen birds, at the Salton Sea.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* This species is an uncommon passage migrant throughout California, migrating along the coast and also, far out to sea. It breeds mainly in Canada. We observed up to half a dozen birds, on the first pelagic out of Half Moon Bay, and a couple of birds, on the second pelagic.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* This species is a common autumn migrant, to offshore waters, off the coast of California. As the name implies, this species breeds in the Arctic. We observed four birds, far out at sea, during the first pelagic out of Half Moon Bay.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* In southern California, this species is a common winter visitor along the coast, and a common passage migrant inland. We saw large numbers of birds, all

in non-breeding plumage, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles and at the Salton Sea. **Johann Reinhold Forster** (1729-1798) was originally a clergyman in Danzig. He became a naturalist and accompanied James Cook, the famous British explorer of the Pacific Ocean, on his second voyage around the world from 1772 until 1773. This voyage extended further into Antarctic waters than anyone had previously reached. Forster discovered five new species of penguins. However, he gained a reputation as a constant complainer and troublemaker. His complaints of Cook continued after his return and became public, destroying Forster's career in England. He went to Germany and became a Professor of History and Mineralogy. Unpleasant and troublesome to the end, Forster refused to relinquish his notes of the voyage. They were not found and published until almost 50 years after his death.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* This large species of tern, is a common winter visitor to the coast of southern California, from breeding grounds, along the Pacific coast of Mexico. We found small numbers present, at all the coastal areas we visited.

Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* As the name would imply, this is a very attractive species of tern. Along the California coast, it is mainly a fairly common winter visitor, from breeding grounds, along the Pacific coast of Mexico. However, it does breed in some numbers at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles. We found small numbers present at Bolsa Chica, small numbers were also observed in inshore waters on both of the pelagics out of Half Moon Bay, and good numbers were observed offshore from Santa Cruz Island.

SKIMMERS *RYNCHOPIDAE*

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* This very attractive species, is a fairly common resident in the far south, of California, and an uncommon winter visitor, further north along the coast. We saw a single juvenile, at Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, in Los Angeles.

JAEGERS and SKUAS *STERCORARIIDAE*

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* This species is a rare non-breeding migrant, in both spring and autumn, to offshore waters, of the California coast. As its name would suggest, it breeds in Antarctica. Therefore, we were very fortunate, to have good looks at a single bird, during the first pelagic out of Half Moon Bay.

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* In autumn, this species is a fairly common migrant and non-breeding visitor, to offshore waters, along the California coast, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic. We saw half a dozen birds, on each of the pelagics out of Half Moon Bay, plus a couple on the boat trip, to and from Santa Cruz Island.

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* In autumn, this species is also a fairly common migrant and non-breeding visitor, to offshore waters, along the California coast, from breeding grounds in the high Arctic. We saw up to twelve birds on the first pelagic out of Half Moon Bay, half a dozen on the second, and a further half a dozen, on each leg of the boat trips to and from Santa Cruz Island.

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* In autumn, this elegant species is an uncommon to rare passage migrant, well out to sea, off the California coast, during its migration from breeding grounds in Arctic Canada and Alaska, to its wintering grounds in Antarctica. We saw a few of these delightful birds on the first pelagic out of Half Moon Bay, one of which, was still in splendid full breeding plumage, and we saw a couple, on the second pelagic.

AUKS, MURRES and PUFFINS *ALCIDAE*

Common Murre *Uria aalge* By far the commonest alcid off the California coast, where it is both

a resident, and a winter visitor. We saw over a hundred birds, on each of the pelagics, out of Half Moon Bay.

Pigeon Guillemot *Cephus columba* The Pigeon Guillemot is a common resident, along the California coast, where it is very much an inshore species, never occurring far out to sea. We saw up to twenty birds, during the first pelagic, out of Half Moon Bay.

Craveri's Murrelet *Synthliboramphus craveri* During the months of August to October, this species is an uncommon to rare, non-breeding visitor, to the coast of southern California, from breeding grounds, along the Pacific coast of Mexico. I observed two separate individuals, both in flight, during the boat trip from Santa Cruz Island, to Ventura Harbour. This species is classified as Vulnerable, by 'Birdlife International'. It is estimated that the total population is between 6,000-10,000 individuals, and unfortunately decreasing. The main threat to this species is the predation of eggs, chicks and even adult birds, by predators, such as feral cats, rats and mice, which are known to inhabit their breeding islands. **Frederico Craveri** (1815-1890) was an Italian scientist, a chemist and a pioneer in the field of meteorology. He was also an explorer, teacher and scholar, who spent 20 years in Mexico, from 1840 until 1859, travelling and collecting. He obtained the murrelet, which was named after himself and his brother 20 years later, by **Sclater**, although **Salvadori** wrote the description in 1865. The 'F Craveri' Museum of Natural History in Bra, Italy, was founded by Craveri in the brothers' former house and now houses their collections.

Cassin's Auklet *Ptychoramphus aleuticus* This species is both a common resident and winter visitor, to the coast of California. We saw up to 50 birds, on each of the pelagics, out of Half Moon Bay. This species is classified as Near Threatened by 'Birdlife International'. It is estimated that the population is between 250,000-500,000 individuals, and unfortunately, decreasing. **John Cassin** (1813-1869) was a Quaker businessman and the unpaid Curator of Ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, for over a quarter of a century. He is regarded as one of the giants of American ornithology. He described 198 species of birds, many of them from his own expeditions, around the world. In addition to the auklet, he also has, a kingbird, a vireo, a sparrow, and a finch, all named in his honour.

Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata* This is a fairly common breeding resident and winter visitor, to the coast of California. We saw up to 20 birds, on each of the pelagics, out of Half Moon Bay.

PIGEONS and DOVES *COLUMBIDAE*

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* Seen almost daily, mainly in the villages and towns we visited.

Band-tailed Pigeon *Columa fasciata* A common resident of oak and conifer woodlands; we saw good numbers, in the Nojoqui Falls State Park, and in Yosemite National Park.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* This introduced species, is now an abundant resident throughout southern California, which we saw on most days of the tour.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* In California, this fairly common species, only occurs in the far south, where it is spreading northwards, from Mexico. A bird of dense brushland, we saw it very well, on one occasion, while birding at the Salton Sea.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* A common and widespread resident of California, which we saw on almost every day of the tour.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina* An uncommon resident, in the far south of California, which is also spreading northwards, from Mexico. We saw a few birds very well, in and around the town of Brawley.

CUCKOOS *CUCULIDAE*

Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus* An uncommon resident of dry, brushy habitat, in

the far south of California. This rather bizarre looking, but fantastic species of ground-dwelling cuckoo; requires open ground, in order to run down its preferred prey, of lizards and snakes. It is even known to attack and kill rattlesnakes! We enjoyed two separate sightings, of single birds, during the tour; the first, was a quick look, at a bird that ran across the road, in front of our vehicle, at Walker Pass, and the second, much longer sighting, was of a bird walking along a track at Piute Ponds. There was even a Coyote, in close proximity, during the second sighting! This bird was voted 'Bird of the Tour', by tour participants.

OWLS STRIGIDAE

Western Screech-Owl *Megascops kennicottii* An uncommon resident of riparian woodland; a bird responded well to tape playback, close to Nojoqui Falls State Park, allowing brilliant views.

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* This uncommon resident flushed from cover, and flew away from us, on a couple of occasions, when birding at Ramer Lake.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* An uncommon and localised resident, which we saw well, on a few occasions, while birding at the Salton Sea.

NIGHTJARS and ALLIES CAPRIMULGIDAE

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* A common summer breeding visitor, which flew past us, in broad daylight, on one occasion, while we were birding at the Salton Sea.

SWIFTS APODIDAE

Black Swift *Cypseloides niger* We saw birds close to their nesting sites, on two separate occasions. These birds are uncommon summer visitors, to California, their wintering range, is completely unknown. The first sighting took place in the carpark of the Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, and the second sighting occurred, in Yosemite National Park.

Vaux's Swift *Chaetura vauxi* In southern California, this incredibly small species of swift, is an uncommon spring and autumn passage migrant, from breeding grounds, further north along the Pacific coast, and wintering grounds, in Mexico and Honduras. We were very fortunate, to watch a small flock, of a dozen or so birds, flying low, over our heads, at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base. **William Sanson Vaux** (1811-1882) was a Philadelphia mineralogist and archaeologist, who served as President of the United States Zoological Society and Vice-President of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. During his life Vaux acquired an extensive mineralogical and archaeological collection, which he bequeathed to the Academy of Natural Sciences, together with a handsome endowment for their preservation. His friend **John Kirk Townsend** discovered the swift in 1835 and named it in Vaux's honour.

White-throated Swift *Aeronautes saxatalis* This attractive species of swift, is a common resident, in southern California. We saw small flocks in Yosemite National Park, close to their breeding cliffs, and we saw a couple of large feeding flocks, at Walker Pass.

HUMMINGBIRDS TROCHILIDAE

Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna* This common resident, was by far the commonest hummingbird in southern California, which we saw just about everywhere. Princess Anna d'Essling, Duchess of Rivoli (1802-1887) was the wife of Prince Victor Massena, the son of one of Napoleon's marshals. French naturalist **Rene Primevere Lesson** named the bird for her after having discovered the first specimen among several birds collected for Prince Victor's private collection.

Costa's Hummingbird *Calypte costae* This summer breeding visitor, is the common hummingbird, of the deserts of California. It spends the winter months, in Mexico. We saw

a singing male, in full breeding plumage, while birding at Inyokern. **Louis Marie Panteleon Costa, Marquis de Beau-Regard** (1806-1864) was a Sardinian aristocrat and collector, who was also an accomplished amateur ornithologist, archaeologist and historian. He specialised in hummingbirds and had a notable collection. In recognition of this, **Bourcier** named this species in his honour.

KINGFISHERS *ALCEDINIDAE*

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon* This very large species of kingfisher, is an uncommon but widespread resident and winter visitor. We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

WOODPECKERS *PICIDAE*

Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus* This common and conspicuous woodpecker, is absolutely stunning, and was by far the most numerous and widespread woodpecker of the tour. We saw it on almost every day of the tour, and we also observed a great many of their larder trees.

Williamson's Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus thyroideus* We observed a pair of these birds, in Yosemite National Park, where it is an uncommon, permanent resident. **Lieutenant Robert Stockton Williamson** (1825-1882) was an American soldier and engineer. He was assigned to conduct surveys for proposed routes for the Transcontinental Railroad, in California and Oregon. **John Strong Newberry** (1822-1892) an army surgeon and geologist, collected the sapsucker and named it *Picus williamsonii*, believing it to be a new species, in 1857. Only in the 1870s was it realised that *williamsonii* was in fact the male plumage of a species already named by **Cassin** (*thyroideus*).

Red-naped Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis* In the far south of California, this species is an uncommon to rare winter visitor. We saw a single male, particularly well, while birding at Bass Lake; this bird was on migration, travelling from its breeding grounds, further to the north in the United States, and was almost certainly on route to its wintering grounds, in Mexico, where the vast majority of this species, spend the winter months.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Picoides scalaris* This species is a fairly common resident of the deserts of southeastern California. We saw a single adult male, very well, while birding in the Kern River Preserve.

Nuttall's Woodpecker *Picoides nuttallii* This near-endemic, is a common resident of woodlands in the foothills and lowlands, west of the desert areas, where it replaces the Ladder-backed Woodpecker. We had very good looks at this species, in the Nojoqui Falls State Park, and this was followed by a second sighting, at Bass Lake. **Thomas Nuttall** (1786-1859) was an English botanist and zoologist, who collected for Pennsylvania University. He originally went to the United States at the age of 22, in order to fulfil the legal requirements of the estate, which he inherited. He was the basis for the character 'old curious', the naturalist in Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*. He was the first to publish a small, inexpensive field guide to US and Canadian birds. He also wrote *Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and Canada*, in 1832.

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus* This is a common bird of mature forests, which we saw well in Yosemite National Park, and in the Kern River Preserve.

White-headed Woodpecker *Picoides albolarvatus* This spectacular species of woodpecker, is an uncommon resident of mature coniferous mountain forests. We saw three birds together, which we saw very well, while birding in the Yosemite National Park.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* This large species of woodpecker, is a common and widespread resident of southern California, which we saw well on several occasions.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus* We enjoyed excellent looks at a pair of these spectacularly large and uncommon residents of mature hardwood and coniferous forests.

While birding in the Yosemite National Park, were these birds where at the extreme southern edge of their range.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS *TYRANNIDAE*

Western Wood-Pewee *Contopus sordidulus* This rather drab species, is a common breeding summer visitor in California, and also, a common passage migrant, which winters in South America. We first saw this species at Bass Lake and then we saw it at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis* A fairly common summer visitor, breeding in the cool, shady canyons of the foothills of the coastal range. It is also a common passage migrant in California, migrating to wintering ground in Mexico. We saw this species very well, on several occasions, throughout the tour.

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans* A widespread and common resident, wherever there is water. We saw it very well on many occasions.

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* In southern California, this species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor, to the desert areas. It is also an uncommon passage migrant, which winters in Mexico. We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species during the tour.

Thomas Say (1787-1843) was a self-taught American naturalist and zoologist, whose primary interest was entomology. He described over 1,000 new species of beetles and over 400 new insects of other orders. He was the grandson of **John Bartram** and a friend of **Alexander Wilson**. He was appointed chief zoologist of the Jamor S H Long expedition, that explored the Rocky Mountains. Here he discovered several new species of birds, including the phoebe in 1820. Other new birds he discovered included Long-billed Dowitcher, Blue Grouse, Band-tailed Pigeon, Western Kingbird, Rock Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, Lesser Goldfinch, Lark Sparrow and Lazuli Bunting. Say wrote *American Entomology* in 1824 and *Descriptions of the Insects of North America*, which was published between 1817 and 1828, and he also wrote *American Conchology* in 1830. His friend **Bonaparte** described and named the phoebe after him.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus* This splendid species, is an uncommon and highly localised resident bird of wet oases, in desert areas, of the far south of California. Therefore, we were very fortunate to observe a pair of birds, while birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

LARKS *ALAUDIDAE*

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* A common resident of expansive open ground, of barren, sparsely vegetated, areas. We observed a large flock on one occasion, at the Mojave Sewage Ponds.

SWALLOWS *HIRUNDINIDAE*

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* A common summer breeding visitor, and common passage migrant throughout California, which winters in Mexico and Central America. We saw a few birds amongst a huge flock of Barn Swallows, while birding at Ramer Lake.

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* In California, this species is an uncommon passage migrant, passing through only the southeast corner of the state. Therefore, we were fortunate to enjoy good close looks, at a migrating flock, which flew over our heads, while we were birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* This attractive species is a common resident and passage migrant, throughout California, with wintering grounds in Mexico and Central and South America. We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

PIPITS and WAGTAILS *MOTACILLIDAE*

American Pipit *Anthus rubescens* In California, this is mainly a common winter visitor, from

breeding grounds, in western Canada, Alaska and Arctic Canada. We enjoyed good scope views, of a couple of birds, at the Mojave Sewage Ponds.

KINGLETS *REGULIDAE*

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa* This attractive and diminutive species is a common resident and winter visitor. We saw small numbers very well, while birding in Yosemite National Park.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* This much drabber species, is mainly a winter visitor, from breeding grounds in northern Canada. We observed small numbers in Yosemite National Park, and in the desert, at Inyokern.

SILKY-FLYCATCHERS *PTILOGONATIDAE*

Phainopepla *Phainopepla nitens* This elegant looking member of the silky-flycatcher family, is a fairly common resident of mesquite lowlands, in the far south of California. We saw a pair at Onyx, but unfortunately, they were very skittish, and flew off, as we approached them, and we were unable to relocate them.

DIPPERS *CINCLIDAE*

American Dipper *Cinclus mexicanus* In southern California, this very special bird, is an uncommon resident of clear, fast-flowing mountain streams. We were very fortunate, to enjoy super looks at an individual, while birding in the Yosemite National Park.

WRENS *TROGLODYTIDAE*

Cactus Wren *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus* This is a common resident, in the deserts of the far south of California. We observed a pair very well, on one occasion, while birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* This species is a common resident of brushy habitats, which we saw well on a number of occasions, throughout the tour. **Thomas Bewick** (1753-1823) was an English ornithologist and engraver; the best-known English illustrator of his generation. He never saw America but most natural history students, including **Audubon**, knew Bewick's work. Audubon met the elderly Bewick on his first trip to England in 1827 and honoured Bewick in naming after him a new wren, which he shot in Louisiana 16 years earlier. Audubon wrote of Bewick, '*A complete Englishman, full of life and energy, though now 74, very witty and clever, better acquainted with America than most of his countrymen, and an honour to England*'.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* In southern California, this species is a common and widespread resident. We saw it well in the Montana de Oro State Park, and again, in the Frank Raines Regional Park.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris* In southern California, this species is mainly a common passage migrant, from breeding grounds in Canada, and wintering grounds in Mexico. It can be a very secretive and difficult species to see well, particularly in reedbeds, where it breeds. Fortunately, we observed a pair of birds on passage, which showed well in brushy habitat, in the Kern River Preserve.

MOCKINGBIRDS and THRASHERS *MIMIDAE*

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* In southern California, this is a common resident, which we saw very well, on several occasions, throughout the tour.

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* This species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to arid areas of southern California. We were very fortunate to enjoy prolonged, good looks, at

a perched bird, who was sunning himself, in the early morning sun, on the edge of Mono Lake.

California Thrasher *Toxostoma redivivum* This near-endemic, is a common, but difficult to see bird, of chaparral and other dense brush. Fortunately, we saw it very well, at a number of places, throughout the tour.

THRUSHES and ALLIES *TURDIDAE*

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* This attractive species, is a breeding resident, in some of the higher mountains of northern and central California. In southern California, it is an uncommon winter visitor. We saw this species very well in Yosemite National Park and in farmland close to Bodie State Historic Park, in the area where we saw the Pronghorns.

Western Bluebird *Sialia mexicana* In southern California, this attractive species is a common resident and winter visitor. We observed a great many birds, during the tour, unfortunately, most were molting into non-breeding plumage, but even so, they were still attractive.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* This species is a common resident of northern and central California, and a common winter visitor to southern California. We enjoyed good looks at this species in the Nojoqui Falls State Park, and in Yosemite National Park.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS *SYLVIIDAE*

Wrentit *Chamaea fasciata* This near-endemic, is a common, but difficult to observe bird, of chaparral and other dense brushy habitat. Fortunately, we managed to persuade a few birds to show themselves, while birding in the Montana de Oro State Park.

GNATCATCHERS *POLIOPTILIDAE*

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* A common summer breeding visitor, and passage migrant, in California, with wintering grounds in Mexico. We enjoyed a few scattered sightings, throughout the tour.

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila melanura* This species is an uncommon resident, in the far southeast of California, and only occurs in dry, desert scrub. We saw a single bird, not particularly well, in just such habitat, while passing through the Anza-Barrego Desert State Park.

LONG-TAILED TITS *AEGITHALIDAE*

Bushtit *Psaltriparus minimus* A common resident of brushy woodland, we saw a small flock, along the edge of Morro Bay.

TITS and CHICKADEES and TITS *PARIDAE*

Mountain Chickadee *Poecile gambeli* This is a common resident of montane aspen and conifer forests. We saw it very well, on a few occasions, during our time in Yosemite National Park.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee *Poecile rufescens* A common but localised resident, of oak and pine woodlands. We enjoyed a couple of small flocks, of these very handsome birds, in Montana de Oro State Park.

Oak Titmouse *Baeolophus inornatus* This near-endemic, is a common resident of open oak woodland. We observed a pair very well, in the Frank Rains Regional Park, and this was followed by a few good sightings, on one of the trails at Walker Pass.

NUTHATCHES *SITTIDAE*

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* In southern California, this species is a fairly common

resident and winter visitor. We enjoyed very good sightings of this attractive species, while birding in Yosemite National Park.

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis* This species is a common resident of mature forests. We observed it very well in the Najoqui Falls State Park, and also in the Inyo National Forest.

CREEPERS *CERTHIIDAE*

Brown Creeper *Certhia americana* In southern California, this species is an uncommon resident and winter visitor. We only saw it on one occasion, fortunately, we saw it very well, while birding in Yosemite National Park.

PENDULINE TITS *REMIZISDAE*

Verdin *Auriparus flaviceps* This attractive species, is a common resident, in the brushy deserts of southeastern California. We saw a stunning male, at Inyokern.

SHRIKES LANIIDAE

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus* This uncommon resident, is a declining species of open pastures and prairies. We enjoyed several good sightings of this handsome species, at scattered localities throughout the tour.

JAYS, MAGPIES and CROWS *CORVIDAE*

Pinyon Jay *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus* This uncommon and irregular resident, occurs only in pinyon pine forests, and open pinyon-juniper woodland. We were very fortunate to find a large flock of up to 60 individuals, in the Inyo National Forest.

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri* A common resident of coniferous and mixed woodland, which we saw well on many occasions. **Georg Wilhelm Steller** (1709-1746) was a German naturalist and explorer, in Russian service. He studied medicine at Halle, between 1731 and 1734, and was a physician in the Russian army in 1734. He became an assistant at the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg in 1734 and accompanied Vitus Bering on his second expedition (1738-1742) to Alaska and Kamchatka. Between 1742 and 1744 he worked in Petropavlovsk but died on the return journey to St Petersburg. **John Latham**, the English naturalist, first described the Steller's Jay in 1781 based on Steller's detailed journals and on a skin from Vancouver Island collected by Cook's expedition. Steller published a Journal of a Voyage with Bering 1741-1742, and in 1743. **Johann Gmelin** (1748-1804) named the jay in Steller's honour, from Latham's description. Steller also discovered the eagle and the eider.

Island Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma insularis* This species is a common endemic of Santa Cruz Island, where we saw a few pairs, very well.

California Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma californica* A recent split from the Western Scrub-Jay, we observed this common resident, on many occasions throughout the tour.

Black-billed Magpie *Pica hudsonia* A fairly common resident of riparian woodland, along the eastern edge of California. We saw a few birds very well at Mono Lake.

Yellow-billed Magpie *Pica nuttalli* This striking Californian endemic, is till locally common within its limited range. We saw it very well in both the Najoqui Falls and the Montana de Oro State Parks.

Clark's Nutcracker *Nucifraga columbiana* This uncommon resident, occurs in mature mixed coniferous forests, in mountainous areas along the northeastern and central eastern areas of

California. We were very fortunate to have a pair of these birds join us for lunch, at Lee Vining. **Captain William Clark** (1770-1838) was a military man and explorer, who later became Governor of Missouri. The Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804 to 1806 crossed the American continent to the Pacific. Clark was struggling down the canyon of the Salmon River, on the 22nd August 1805, testing out the Indians' warning that it could not be navigated, when he discovered the nutcracker. Thomas Jefferson, who initiated the expedition, had the first specimen sent to **Alexander Wilson**, to write up the official description. Wilson named it after Clark.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* A common resident, which we saw on most days of the tour.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* This much larger species, is an uncommon resident of California. Even so, we did observe it on many days of the tour.

STARLINGS *STURNIDAE*

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* This introduced species was unfortunately observed on most days of the tour.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS *PASSERIDAE*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Another introduced species, which we saw at regular intervals, in the towns and villages.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS *PARULIDAE*

Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata* This species is a common resident and winter visitor, which we saw well, on several occasions during the tour.

Nashville Warbler *Oreothlypis ruficapilla* In California this species is mainly an uncommon passage migrant, from breeding grounds further north along the coast, and wintering grounds in Mexico. We saw a single bird very well at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base, and then we saw a second bird on Santa Cruz Island.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* This attractive species is a common and widespread summer breeding visitor to California, from wintering grounds in South America. We enjoyed a few scattered sightings throughout the tour.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* The Yellow-rumped Warbler is a common resident, breeding summer visitor and winter visitor. We saw it well, on numerous occasions throughout the tour.

Black-throated Gray Warbler *Dendroica nigrescens* This attractive species is a common summer breeding visitor and passage migrant, from wintering grounds, in Mexico. We saw an adult male, particularly well, at Bass Lake and then on the following day, we saw a couple more, in Yosemite National Park.

MacGillivray's Warbler *Oporornis tolmiei* This uncommon and rather skulking species, is an uncommon summer breeding visitor and uncommon passage migrant, from wintering grounds, in Mexico. We were very fortunate to see an adult female, climbing around the branches, of a small tree, in the Najoqui Falls State Park. **William MacGillivray** (1795-1851) was a Scottish artist and professor, who occupied the Regius Chair of Natural History at Marischal College in Aberdeen, in 1841. He grew up on Harris, in the outer Hebrides, and gained extensive knowledge of the fauna and flora of the Scottish highlands, on field trips where he often walked hundreds of miles. He walked to London just to see the bird collection at the British Museum! He has been called 'the first ecologist'. He wrote a five volume 'History of British Birds', which he intended to illustrate with coloured plates based on his watercolours, but the great expense involved prevented him.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* This species is a common resident, breeding summer visitor and winter visitor. We saw it well, on a few occasions throughout the tour.

Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* In California, this very attractive species is mainly a common passage migrant, which winters in Mexico. We saw a small flock of a few birds, while birding at the Salton Sea.

TANAGERS and ALLIES *THRAUPIDAE*

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* This species is a common summer breeding visitor, and a common passage migrant, from wintering grounds, in Mexico. We saw an adult female, very well, at the Refugio State Beach.

BUNTINGS, SPARROWS SEEDEATERS and ALLIES *EMBERIZIDAE*

Green-tailed Towhee *Pipilo chlorurus* This species is a fairly common summer breeding visitor, in high mountain brushland, and a common passage migrant, from wintering grounds in Mexico. We had a good look at a single bird, in the Bodie State Historic Park, just before the snow-storm hit us!

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* This very handsome species, is a common resident in southern California. We saw a few birds very well, in the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, and we also saw this species well, on Santa Cruz Island.

California Towhee *Melospiza crissalis* This near-endemic, is a common resident of brushland, west of the desert country. We saw it very well, on several occasions.

Abert's Towhee *Melospiza aberti* A common but localised resident of desert country, in the far southeast of California. We saw a small flock very well, during our time at the Salton Sea. **James William Abert** (1820-1897) was a major in the US Army and an ornithologist. He graduated from Princeton in 1838, and then entered the US Military Academy. In 1845 he joined Fremont's third expedition, whose assignment was 'to make reconnaissance southward and eastward along the Canadian River, through the country of Kiowa and Comanche'. Fremont (who was obviously no fool) chose to take his main party on to California, and gave command of the Canadian River expedition, into Kiowa and Comanche country, to Abert. The expedition followed the headwaters of the Canadian River through eastern New Mexico and into the Texas Panhandle. In his report Abert described in detail the geology, and flora and fauna of the Canadian Valley and mapped the area. A short time later, he fought in the American Civil War, but soon after the end of the war, he was severely injured in a fall from his horse, which led to his resignation from the army. He then taught English literature at the University of Missouri, until his death in 1897.

Rufous-crowned Sparrow *Aimophila ruficeps* An uncommon resident of chaparral, to the west of the deserts. We saw a few birds very well, on Santa Cruz Island.

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina* This species is a common summer breeding visitor, from wintering grounds, in Mexico. We saw it well, in Yosemite National Park, and in the Inyo National Forest.

Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri* This species only occurs in the far south of California, where it is a fairly common resident, of the high mountains. It is also a fairly common winter visitor, to the deserts of the southeast. We saw a couple of birds very well, on one occasion, while birding at the Salton Sea. **Dr. Thomas Mayo Brewer** (1814-1880) was an American naturalist and ornithologist. Brewer co-wrote *The History of North American Birds* in 1857. He also has two species of mammals named after him.

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus* This species of sparrow, is a common passage migrant in inland California, and a common winter visitor, in the far south, from wintering grounds, in Mexico. We observed a few birds, while birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* This attractive species of sparrow, is a common resident, in the western half of California, and a common passage migrant, in the interior. We saw

good numbers at Santa Ysabel Mission and at the Frank Raines Regional Park.

Black-throated Sparrow *Amphispiza bilineata* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to arid patches of brush and cactus, in desert country, from wintering grounds in Mexico. We saw a couple of birds fairly well, while birding at the Mojave Sewage Ponds.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* This common and widespread species, is a resident, a breeding summer visitor, and a winter visitor. We saw many along the coast, at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, and we saw others at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* A common and widespread resident, which we saw very well, during our time at the Salton Sea.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii* A common but inconspicuous, mainly winter visitor, from breeding grounds in Canada. We saw it very well on a few occasions. **Thomas Lincoln** (1812-1883) was an American naturalist. He went on a collecting trip with **Audubon** to Labrador, when he was just 21 years of age. During the trip, he shot the bird that now bears his name, it was the only new bird, discovered on the expedition. Back in his home state of Maine, Lincoln became a farmer, and noted abolitionist.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* There is a resident race of this species along the north coast, summer breeding visitors slightly inland, and it is only a winter visitor, in the southern half of the state. It is an attractive bird, which we saw well, on several occasions.

Golden-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia atricapilla* This attractive species, is a common winter visitor to California, from breeding grounds in Canada. We saw a couple of birds very well, at Bass Lake.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* This abundant species, is both a resident, and a winter visitor, which we saw well, on many occasions throughout the tour.

Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus* This species is a rare, but regular autumn migrant, through southern California, and a rare winter visitor, in very small numbers. We were very fortunate, to observe a few large flocks, numbering up to perhaps fifty or so individuals. Unfortunately, all had finished molting, into there rather drab, non-breeding plumage.

SALTATORS, CARDINALS and ALLIES *CARDINALIDAE*

Black-headed Grosbeak *Pheucticus melanocephalus* This very attractive species, is a common summer breeding visitor, from wintering grounds in Mexico. We first encountered this species, in the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, and we also saw it in the Najoqui Falls State Park.

TROUPIALS and ALLIES *ICTERIDAE*

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* This very attractive species, is a common resident throughout California, which we saw well on many occasions.

Brewer's Blackbird *Euphagus cyanocephalus* A very common resident throughout California, which we saw on many days of the tour.

Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus* A very common resident, of the far south of California. Which we saw well on numerous occasions.

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta* A common resident throughout California, we saw a few birds very well, while birding at Piute Ponds, on Edwards Air Force Base.

Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus* This attractive species, is an uncommon summer breeding visitor, to California, from wintering grounds in Mexico. We saw an adult female very well, on one occasion, in the Montana de Oro State Park.

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS and ALLIES *FRINGILLIDAE*

Purple Finch *Carpodacus purpureus* An uncommon resident of California, we saw a pair very

well, at Inyokern.

- Cassin's Finch** *Carpodacus cassinii* In California, this species is an uncommon resident, of open pine forests. We saw a few pairs, while birding in pine forests, in the Inyo National Forest.
- House Finch** *Carpodacus mexicanus* A common and widespread resident, which we saw well, on many occasions.
- Pine Siskin** *Spinus pinus* A common, but nomadic, predominantly winter visitor to California, from breeding grounds in Canada. We found a small flock, while birding in the Frank Raines Regional Park.
- Lesser Goldfinch** *Spinus psaltria* A common resident, throughout southern California, which we saw well, on several occasions.

MAMMALS

- Mountain Cottontail** *Sylvilagus nuttallii* The only cottontail of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where we saw a few, very well.
- Desert Cottontail** *Sylvilagus audubonii* The common cottontail of low valleys, open plains, and foothills. We saw it well, on a few occasions.
- Brush Rabbit** *Sylvilagus bachmani* This species occurs in chaparral and brush, we were very fortunate to observe this species in the Frank Raines Regional Park. The Californian race of this species, is endangered.
- Black-tailed Jackrabbit** *Lepus californicus* This large species of hare, proved to be quite common in the deserts of the southeast.
- Western Gray Squirrel** *Sciurus griseus* A common inhabitant of oak-conifer woodlands throughout California. We saw it very well on a number of occasions.
- Douglas's Squirrel** *Tamiasciurus douglasii* A small tree squirrel which inhabits humid evergreen forests, in northern California. We saw it well on a few occasions, while birding in the Yosemite National Park, right at the southern edge of this mammals range.
- California Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus beecheyi* A medium-sized, ground-dwelling squirrel, which proved very common in the drier areas of California, in some places, it was approaching plague proportions.
- Nelson's Antelope Squirrel** *Ammospermophilus nelsoni* A small species of striped ground-squirrel. This species has a very small range, and is endemic to southern California. We saw small numbers at a couple of places and then they became common at Inyokern.
- Least Chipmunk** *Tamias minimus* Small, alert, ground-dwelling squirrels; chipmunks are very territorial and they are often seen chasing each other, in order to defend their burrows, or food caches. It is the smallest of all the chipmunks, we found large numbers, while birding at Mono Lake.
- Uinta Chipmunk** *Tamias umbrinus* Unlike other species of chipmunk, this one often climbs trees, and also, holds its tail horizontal while running on the ground. We saw a few very well, in Yosemite National Park.
- Lodgepole Chipmunk** *Tamias speciosus* The brightest coloured of all the chipmunks, it inhabits coniferous forests. We saw it well on several occasions, while birding in coniferous forests, in Yosemite National Park.
- Coyote** *Canis latrans* Coyotes are active day and night, and usually hunt alone. Their main prey are rabbits, hares, mice, and ground squirrels. We enjoyed a few very good sightings of this

attractive mammal. Wherever California Ground Squirrels were plentiful, Coyotes were not far away. Populations in the west are increasing, despite trapping, shooting and poisoning, by ranchers.

Island Fox *Urocyon littoralis* This truly beautiful and diminutive species of fox, is only found on the six Channel Islands off the California coast. We enjoyed excellent looks, at a particularly tame individual, at one of the camp sites, on Santa Cruz Island.

Sea Otter *Enbydra lutris* The Sea Otter occurs along the Pacific coast from central California to Alaska. It feeds, sleeps, mates, and gives birth at sea, coming ashore only during severe storms. The Sea Otter swims on its back and often uses a rock as a tool to break sea urchins and abalones on its chest. The Sea Otter nearly became extinct by the early 1900s due to uncontrolled killing for its thick, valuable fur. With protection it is now making a comeback, and it was very pleasing to see that this once endangered species, is now common along the northern coast of California, where we saw it well on many occasions.

California Sea-Lion *Zalophus californianus* This medium-sized species of sea-lion, only occurs along the southern coastline of California, and the Baja Peninsula, of Mexico. We saw small numbers along the coast, and then large numbers on the two pelagics out of Half Moon Bay. We saw them particularly well sat on a very large marker buoy, during both pelagics.

Steller's Sea-Lion *Eumetopias jubatus* This, the largest of the sea-lions, occurs along the Pacific coast, from southern California to Alaska. It is an endangered species that continues to decline in numbers. It is most common in Alaska. We saw a single male on a large marker buoy, amongst a large group of California Seal-Lions, on both of the pelagics out of Half Moon Bay.

Harbour Seal *Phoca vitulina* A wide-ranging species of seal, which occurs on both the Pacific and Atlantic coastlines of North America. It also occurs in Europe, where it is known as Common Seal. We saw small numbers just offshore, off Shell Beach, and we saw small numbers in the harbour, during both pelagics.

Northern Elephant Seal *Mirounga angustirostris* This very large species of seal, spends most of its time at sea, and only hauls out onto beaches, to breed and moult. We observed small numbers very well, along the Pacific coast at Cayucos, where there is a small breeding colony.

Pronghorn *Antilocapra americana* North Americas only antelope. A species of the arid plains of the American West. It can reach over 80 kilometres per hours, and is one of the fastest mammals in the Western Hemisphere, and one of the fastest in the world. At one time, numbers of this species in the United States got down to as low as 21 individuals. With protection it is now making a comeback, and it was very pleasing to see a small herd of this beautiful species, close to Bodie State Historic Park.

Mule Deer *Odocoileus henionus* The Mule Deer lives in the mountains, plains, and deserts of the western United States. It spends the summer months high in the mountains, and retreats to the lowland valleys, during the winter months. We saw good numbers at various localities throughout the tour.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* We saw huge numbers of this species, on the first of the pelagics, they were migrating southwards, and in every direction, these huge mammals where breaching right out of the ocean, it was an incredible sight. We saw smaller numbers on the second pelagic.

Blue Whale *Balaenoptera musculus* Weighing up to 200 tons, this whale is the largest animal to have ever lived, dwarfing even the largest of dinosaurs. Due to over-hunting, at one time

this species was reduced to just 400 individuals, it is still a rare and endangered species. We observed four of these superb creatures, close to our boat, on the first pelagic, and one, on the second. Seeing these whales at such close quarters, was an unforgettable experience, especially the fluking, which is not commonly observed in this species.

Fin Whale *Balaenoptera phrysalus* The Fin Whale, is the second largest animal on earth. It differs from other species of whales, by swimming only on its right side when feeding. Well documented, kill records, kept by the whaling industry, indicate that between 1876 and 1986 over 100,000 Fin Whales were killed for commercial use. It has been protected since 1986, and fortunately, it is now slowly recovering. However, this species is still listed as rare and endangered. We were fortunate to observe a single animal, at fairly close quarters, during the first pelagic.

Northern Right Whale Dolphin *Lissodelphis borealis* This incredibly beautiful species of dolphin, is the only dolphin in the North Pacific, that does not have a dorsal fin. We observed a pod, of a dozen or so, coming up swiftly behind the boat, swimming with characteristic smooth, low leaps, out of the water. In no time at all, they shot past the starboard side of the boat and disappeared out of sight.

Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* We enjoyed a small pod, riding on the bow wave of our boat, during the boat trip out to Santa Cruz Island.

Dall's Porpoise *Phocoenoides dalli* During the first pelagic, we very much enjoyed watching a small pod, of these extremely attractive, and strikingly patterned porpoises.