

FIELD TRIP DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE 2008 WFO CONFERENCE

Point Reyes – Full day trip 6AM – 3:30PM

Although it is possible to find rarities in any isolated groves of trees along the outer coast of California, there is probably no better “vagrant trap” for misoriented migrants than the Point Reyes Peninsula in Marin County. The outer point, in the general vicinity of the Point Reyes Lighthouse and nearby dairy farms, is well-known for rare migrants and vagrants and has produced a spectacular list of unusual species. This trip plans to focus on vagrants, but within its 1001 square miles, Point Reyes National Seashore contains a diversity of habitats. Five Brooks Trailhead, White House Pool, Shields Salt Marsh, Limantour, Tomales Bay State Park, Abbott's Lagoon, and Pierce Point Road are other well-known birding areas. Some of these areas may be visited in addition to the outer point depending on weather conditions. Expect seabirds, raptors, shorebirds and migrant landbirds. Some areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available. <http://www.nps.gov/pore/naturescience/birds.htm>

Hawk Hill and Rodeo Lagoon - Full day trip 7AM – 3:30PM

In the fall of 1972, Laurie Binford discovered this excellent hawk-migration lookout in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in Marin County. This lookout is comparable to those in the eastern U.S. and remains the only major fall hawk-watch site yet known for California. It affords a unique opportunity to experience the spectacular phenomenon of raptor migration. Expect to see eight regularly occurring raptor species, but as many as eleven, including Broad-winged Hawk, are possible if weather is favorable. Visit <http://www.ggro.org/> for additional information on the hawk watch. The nearby lagoon attracts ducks, marsh birds, and eastern vagrants and has hosted a family of river otters in recent years. This trip has no handicapped access on Hawk Hill. Restrooms are available.

Half Moon Bay – Full Day Trip 6:30AM – 3:30PM

This coastal San Mateo County town includes Princeton Harbor which is the only protected harbor on the coast between San Francisco and Santa Cruz. During late summer and fall schools of fish often concentrate in the harbor and provide feeding grounds for large numbers of Brown Pelicans, Elegant Terns, and Heermann's Gulls. During this season one or two Parasitic Jaegers may be spotted near the jetties, keeping a watchful eye out for fish-carrying terns. Common Murres and Pigeon Guillemots often are present near the harbor entrance or in the bay beyond, and a few Marbled Murrelets are often found further out on the bay. Princeton Marsh and the mouth of Pilarcitos Creek provide a stop-over point for small numbers of migrant shorebirds and waterfowl. Pectoral Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs as well as rare gulls are possible. Also, we will be on the lookout for a sea otter in the kelp beds. The exposed reef may be teeming with foraging shorebirds, including Black Oystercatchers, Black Turnstones, Wandering Tattlers, Whimbrels, and Surfbirds. Tropical Kingbirds, Palm Warblers and Clay-colored Sparrows occur in small numbers nearly every fall. Nearby Pescadero Marsh offers Common Yellowthroats, Marsh Wrens, Virginia Rails, Soras and the possibility of rare shorebirds. Some areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available. <http://www.explorer1.com/halfmoonbay/bird-refuges.htm>

Presidio – Full Day Trip 6:30AM – 3:30PM

This large park-like area in the northwest corner of San Francisco became a part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1994. Like an oasis in the desert, this green community attracts a wide variety of birds. Red-shouldered Hawks and American Kestrels breed here, and a Peregrine Falcon occasionally flies in for a visit. White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows abound and an occasional White-throated Sparrow may be seen with these flocks. Expect resident species such as Anna's Hummingbird, Downy Woodpecker, Western Scrub-Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Bushtit, Brown Creeper; Pygmy Nuthatch, Northern Mockingbird, Hutton's Vireo, California Towhee, Dark-eyed junco, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin. We may see migrant warblers, tanagers and thrushes as well. Red Crossbills have been recorded at all seasons of the year, often with young. The fall hawk migration can be spectacular and many of the species recorded from the Hawk Hill lookout cross over here. The Presidio includes the newly created Crissy Field Wetland, where cormorants, loons, grebes, Red-breasted Mergansers, Surf Scoters and other ducks are likely. Some areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available. <http://www.sffo.org/SFBirding/Presidio.html>

Hayward Shoreline – Full Day Trip 6:30AM – 3:30PM

Part of the East Bay Regional Parks in Alameda County, this bayside restoration area has abundant shorebirds, terns, and raptors including numerous records of rarities. Near the headquarters, the eucalyptus and adjacent fennel have attracted many vagrants during the fall and the grassy areas on the restored former landfill may have longspurs. Cogswell Marsh is famous for terns and shorebirds. Species here include Western and Clark's Grebes, Blue-winged and Cinnamon teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Snowy Plover, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Red Knot and Elegant Tern. This trip requires a lot of walking over flat trails. Restrooms only at the parking area.

<http://www.sanlorenzoexpress.com/shoreprk.htm>

Palo Alto Baylands – Half Day Trip 6:30AM -10:30AM

The Baylands Nature Preserve in Palo Alto, Santa Clara County attracts great numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds every fall. Well maintained levee paths and boardwalks traverse the cordgrass and pickleweed marshland and can provide good looks at rails, including the endangered California Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, and occasional glimpses of the furtive Black Rail. Other species found here include American Bittern, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Western Meadowlark, Common Yellowthroat, Marsh Wren, and Song and Savannah sparrows. The nearby Palo Alto Flood Control Basin, Mountain View Forebay and Charleston Slough also offer outstanding birding. Most areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available. http://www.trails.com/tcatalog_trail.asp?trailid=XFA043-059

Redwood Shores – Half Day Trip 6:30AM – 10:30AM

Waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds are the chief attraction here, but land birds and raptors are also present. Hooded Merganser, Barrow's Goldeneye, Blue-winged Teal, Eurasian Green-winged Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, and Peregrine Falcons are all possible. At the Pacific Athletic Club pond, we expect a good variety of dabbling and diving ducks plus shorebirds, gulls, and waders. At the Radio Road ponds we expect American Pipits and possibly Horned Larks as well as water and shorebirds, dabbling ducks, sparrows, warblers, phoebes and Marsh Wrens. The endangered California Clapper Rail has nested in the marshy areas near the sewer plant. Black Skimmers are seen regularly and the trees around the sewer plant attract roosting herons. Some areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available.

Golden Gate Park – Half Day Trip 6:30AM – 10:30AM

San Francisco's Golden Gate Park is among the finest urban parks in the world and has great birding. It is wholly man-made except for isolated oak groves in the eastern part of the park. The park's thirteen small lakes provide habitat for waterfowl and there is enough botanical diversity to attract both resident and migrant landbirds. The park functions as a habitat island, and the avifauna is abundant in species and in overall numbers. The western part of the park offers the richest birding opportunities. Tall flowering eucalyptus trees are full of warblers and Western Tanagers in season. Eastern vagrants begin to arrive in early September and continue to pass through until mid-October. We expect resident Red-shouldered Hawks, Scrub Jays, various flycatchers, warblers, sparrows as well as less common species such as Red-breasted Sapsuckers and Hooded Mergansers. Most areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available.

<http://www.sffo.org/SFBirding/Golden%20Gate%20Park.html>

San Bruno Mountain – Half Day Trip 6:30AM – 10:30AM

San Bruno Mountain is located at the border of San Mateo and San Francisco counties, but lies entirely in San Mateo County. The saddle area between the ridges was established as a state and county park in 1985 and has the best birding habitat on the mountain. The area was once a dairy farm and many cypress and eucalyptus were planted as windbreaks. Today these mature trees provide excellent habitat for resident and migrating birds. A bog and nearby intermittent stream and their accompanying willows provides habitat diversity. In the fall, this area has produced White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. California Quail, California Towhees, White-crowned Sparrows and Song Sparrows are resident. Northern Mockingbirds forage over the grasslands. In the boggy areas Common Yellowthroats defend territory. Unlike other areas on the mountain this walk is level and is ideal for birders of all ages and physical condition. Most areas are handicapped accessible. Restrooms are available.

http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/departement/home/0,,5556687_12313315_12345092,00.html

Coyote Point – Half Day Trip 6:30AM – 10:30AM

Coyote Point County Recreation Area is situated on San Francisco Bay south of San Francisco Airport and east of the city of San Mateo. The park includes a marina and the Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education. The museum is situated on a wooded hill which juts out into San Francisco Bay providing one of the best migrant traps on San Francisco Bay. Many species of migrant landbirds drop in here early in the morning. The nearby yacht harbor has loons, mergansers, grebes, and diving ducks including a chance for Harlequin Duck. We will check the marsh for snipe and rails, the sand bars for shorebirds in great abundance and the offshore rocks for Black Oystercatcher, Surfbirds and Black Turnstones. Rarities such as Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and Sabine's Gull have been seen here during the fall. This trip is wheelchair accessible. Restrooms are available.

http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/departement/home/0,,5556687_12305989_12313345,00.html

Jasper Ridge – Half Day Trip 6:30AM – 10:30AM

Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, including Searsville Lake, is a unique 1200 acre natural area owned and operated by Stanford University as a biological research facility and is not normally open to the public. We expect 50-60 species including Wood and Ring-necked ducks, Great Blue Heron, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Hutton's Vireo, Nuttall's Woodpeckers and other specialties of live oak habitat. This trip requires a lot of walking. No restrooms.

<http://jrpb.stanford.edu/>

Pelagics – Full Day Trips

Shearwater Journeys will offer two different pelagic trips in conjunction with the WFO meeting, one trip departing from Bodega Bay (north of San Francisco) Thursday, October 9, and one trip departing from Santa Cruz (south of San Mateo) on Monterey Bay on Sunday, October 12. Fall is the peak of the seabird migration and also a great time to see a variety of marine mammals. Seabird possibilities at this time of year include: Black-footed and Laysan albatross (rare-Bodega Bay); Northern Fulmar; Pink-footed, Flesh-footed, Buller's, Sooty, Short-tailed and Manx (rare) shearwaters; Ashy, Black, Least (rare-Monterey), Wilson's and Fork-tailed storm-petrels; Red and Red-necked phalaropes; South Polar Skua; Pomarine, Parasitic, and Long-tailed (late) jaegers; Common Murre; Pigeon Guillemot; Marbled Murrelet (Santa Cruz only), Xantus' and Craveri's Murrelets (both rare); Ancient Murrelet; Cassin's (Bodega is best) and Rhinoceros auklets; Tufted Puffin (Bodega) and a variety of loons, grebes, gulls, terns, and some shorebirds. Marine mammals include: sea otter (Santa Cruz only), California sea lion, Steller's sea lion (Bodega Bay only), northern fur seal; humpback and blue whales; Risso's, Pacific white-sided, and northern right whale dolphins, and ocean sunfish. Each one of these trips offers a unique array of seabirds and marine mammals. Taken together, one could observe a wide variety of wildlife! Leaders, including Debra Shearwater, a WFO Life Member, will accompany each trip. Additional leaders will be announced.

The October 9th pelagic trip departs from Port O' Bodega in the small town of Bodega Bay. We meet at 7:00 am and return approximately 4-5 pm. Parking is free and you will need to bring lunch. It is recommended to spend the night of October 8th in the Bodega Bay area. One cheap place to stay is Bodega Harbor Inn (707/875-3594. Be sure to ask about their refund policy before booking). Departing from Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor on Oct 12th on the north side of Monterey Bay, a very convenient location, our new vessel has a full galley that serves hot food. We will meet at 7 am for boarding, and return 3-4 pm. There is a fee for parking. It is possible to drive to the Santa Cruz trip from the WFO headquarter hotel the morning of the trip. It will be an early morning, though!

RESERVATIONS: Shearwater Journeys is pleased to offer a special WFO DISCOUNT on each trip. The discounted rates are: \$155 for October 9 (regularly \$185) and \$115 for October 12 (regularly \$145) per person, NON-REFUNDABLE FOR ANY REASON. Payment, in advance, by check or money order, will hold your reservation. Please send payments to Debra Shearwater, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024; debi@shearwaterjourneys.com; 831/637-8527. Please include the name, address, phone and email for EACH person in your party, as required by the USCG. See the web site: www.shearwaterjourneys.com for past trip report species lists.