

THURSDAY FIELD TRIPS

Thursday, September 27

Note: All Field Trips are full day and return by 5 pm

All trips are by Carpool leaving from the Ventura Beach Marriott Entrance.

Difficulty levels:

Easy—flat ground some walking.

Moderate—walking needed to get to the birding sites, some elevation changes.

Difficult—fair amount of walking with elevation changes.

1TH Frazier Mountain and Mt Pinos

Leader: Lance Benner

Frazier Mountain and Mount Pinos allow easy access to higher elevations in the Transverse Range in northern Ventura County. This trip will start with a visit to a roadside spring on Frazier Mountain that often attracts a variety of passerines including Lawrence's Goldfinch. From there we will continue to higher elevation habitats on Mt Pinos including pine and fir forest, montane meadow, and subalpine limber pine forest. Target species here include White-headed Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Townsend's Solitaire, Thick-billed Fox Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, and other montane species.

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): 99 miles

Time (one way): 110 minutes

Restrooms facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate to difficult (high elevation)

2TH Northern Santa Barbara County

Leader: Wes Fritz

This full day trip will explore a variety of locations and habitats in northern Santa Barbara County and seek out two target birds among others; the Yellow-billed Magpie and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Both of these Pacific species (the magpie a California endemic!) reach the southern end of their ranges in this region. We are planning to visit a private ranch that has spectacular viewing and photographing opportunities for the magpie. The ranchlands, oak savannahs, and oak woodlands in this area support a remarkable diversity of California resident species and should turn up migrants as well. We will also visit riparian habitat that supports Chestnut-backed chickadees and hopefully some migrant passerines. A scope may be helpful for birding the ranchlands and savannahs of the Santa Ynez Valley.

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): ~75 miles

Time (one way): ~80 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes (planned restroom stops will be announced)

Difficulty level: Moderate

3TH Western Antelope Valley and Castaic Lagoon

Leader: Luke Tiller

This trip will start in the western Antelope Valley near Quail Lake where we will spend the first few hours of the morning in the Mojave Desert. Target birds in this area include raptors, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Vesper Sparrow, Bell's Sparrow (*canescens*), and others. We will also check Quail Lake for waterfowl, raptors, and more. While working back to Ventura, the trip will stop at Castaic Lagoon where there will be an opportunity for waterfowl and waterbirds, raptors, and a variety of resident and migrant passerines. A number of rare sparrows have been found here in recent years (American Tree, LeConte's, and Cassin's) so anything is possible. A spotting scope will be helpful for scoping the lakes and open country on this trip.

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Day Use Fee: \$11 per vehicle

Miles (one way): ~88 miles

Time (one way): ~90 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

4TH Tejon Ranch

Leader: Adam Searcy

At 272,000 acres—nearly 422 square miles—Tejon Ranch is the largest piece of private property in California. It straddles a significant portion of the Tehachapi Mountains, creating a critical ecological linkage where the Central Valley, the Sierra Nevada, the Coast Range, and the Mojave Desert mix. In many ways, the Tejon Ranch is a microcosm of California's natural history—a crucible of geographic, taxonomic, and evolutionary biodiversity. The ranch is not open to the public without special permission so this trip will provide a rare opportunity to spend time at this stunning property. The ranch is a stronghold for California Condors, Golden Eagles, and other raptors. Oak woodlands, pine forests, and grasslands will provide a diversity of birding opportunities and species. This will be a special trip. A spotting scope will be helpful.

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 4:00 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): ~81 miles

Time (one way): ~80 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

5TH Gaviota, Refugio, and El Capitan State Beaches:

Leader: Justyn Stahl

These sites provide a mix of coastal scrub and chaparral, willow-riparian habitat and stream and canyon woodland on the south coast of Santa Barbara County. All three hot spots are a must when looking for fall rarities! Each campground is located at the mouth of a canyon along the Pacific coastline where migrant passerines become "trapped" at the edge of the ocean and sometimes linger in the trees and shrubs before continuing south. All three sites have a history of producing many of the rarest birds found in Santa Barbara County during September and October. Regular fall rarities include Palm, Virginia's, Blackpoll, Tennessee Warblers, Clay-colored Sparrow, plus most of the common western migrant land birds. Resident birds typical of coastal scrub include California Scrub-Jay, Spotted and California Towhees, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee at El Capitan. Ocean birds are easily spotted offshore due to the generally calm waters and include gulls, terns, shearwaters and jaegers. A spotting scope would come in handy for sea watching.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:00 PM

Cost: \$30

Day Use Fee: \$10 per vehicle

Miles (one way): 61 miles

Time (one way): ~ 55 minutes

Restrooms: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

6TH Rose Valley, Sespe Creek, Pine Mountain

Leader: Forrest Rowland

Along Highway 33 above Ojai, these locations combine a variety of habitats and birding experiences into a day at mid to higher elevations in the Transverse Range. The Rose Valley was impacted by the recent Thomas Fire, but has a mix of montane chaparral and riparian habitats including two small lakes. Lawrence's Goldfinch is a year-round resident in the valley and this area could turn up anything in migration. Sespe Creek runs along the highway and there are several areas to check for residents like Mountain Quail and Canyon Wren, and a variety of migrants in riparian habitat along the creek. The road up Pine Mountain traverses montane chaparral before climbing to pine and fir forests. This area hosts a number of montane species including Northern Pygmy-Owl, White-headed Woodpecker, Townsend's Solitaire, and more including the potential for rarer visitors.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:00 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): ~35-45 miles

Time (one way): ~40-60 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes - rustic

Difficulty level: Moderate

7TH Hopper Mountain or Bitter Creek Condors

Leader: Brad Schram & Teodelina Martelli

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manages the recovery program for the California Condor and has been successful in the efforts to increase the species population and the number of areas throughout California and neighboring areas that now support the species. When the California Condor declined to perilously low numbers and was eventually removed from the wild, the species was confined to areas centered around the Transverse Range above Ventura. The Hopper Mountain and Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuges are set aside for the protection of nesting and feeding areas for the condor and are not open to the public. We will have the privilege of touring one of these areas with biologists from the USFWS to view condors in their natural habitat. Where we go will depend on where the viewing opportunities are best at that time. Other species we may see include Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, and a variety of foothill grassland species. A spotting scope is helpful on this trip.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 3:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): 38

Time (one way): 80 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

8TH Sepulveda Basin / Hansen Dam

Leader: TBA

The Los Angeles Basin is drained by two major rivers, the Los Angeles and the San Gabriel. During the mid-1900s, both were channelized, and large dams were constructed at regular intervals along their lengths. The open land preserved behind these dams has been devoted to various purposes that could sustain rare flood events with large areas left undeveloped. Though these debris basins were originally intended to be cleared out annually, this was done so infrequently that several have reverted back to their original habitat, providing a glimpse of how the non-channelized rivers would have appeared. Habitat for birds adjacent to these flood control structures include coastal sage, alluvial fan scrub, riparian, and open water, as well as lawns and planted trees. These areas attract a number of migrant and resident species including waterfowl, waterbirds, raptors, and a variety of land birds. We will work to maximize the diversity of species we can find here. With luck, we may be able to find some of the local riparian nesting species although it is late in the season for them (Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, etc).

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 3:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): ~65 miles

Time (one way): ~60 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

9TH Santa Cruz Island Landing and Pelagic Trip Leaders: Dave Pereksta and others

Santa Cruz Island is home to the endemic Island Scrub-Jay and a variety of other island-evolved endemic subspecies (Allen's Hummingbird, Orange-crowned Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, and more). A trip to the island with Island Packers is the only way to see the Island Scrub-Jay! We will leave Ventura via one of Island Packers' ultra-fast catamarans and look for pelagic birds and marine mammals en route to Santa Cruz Island. After a brief landing that will provide us the opportunity to see the Island Scrub-Jay, other island-endemic subspecies, and perhaps wayward migrants, we will return to sea to finish the day with more pelagic birding in the waters surrounding the northern Channel Islands. It will be a great time to look for migrants including shearwaters, storm-petrels, jaegers, skuas, and alcids. Rarities are possible including Brown Booby, Red-billed Tropicbird, Craveri's Murrelet, and more. . It is possible to meet at Island Packers at 1691 Spinnaker Dr, Ventura Harbor rather than at the Ventura Beach Marriot. Please notify Registrar at wfoconference@gmail.com if you plan to meet at the harbor at 6 AM.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$130

Cost to Scholars: \$55

Miles (one way): 3 miles

Time (one way): 10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

10TH Pt Mugu Naval Base

Leaders: Scott Terrill

Pt Mugu Naval Base Ventura County at Point Mugu is a working military base and is generally closed to the public. This field trip provides a rare opportunity to access this installation, which is one of the best birding sites in southern California. The centerpiece of the property is Mugu Lagoon; a functioning tidal salt marsh and lagoon system that host an incredible number and diversity of birds. Late September is prime time to scan the lagoon for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and waders. Shorebird numbers can be staggering and the potential for a rarity is great. The lagoon hosted a Tricolored Heron, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Ruff during the fall of 2017. Reddish Egrets are annual and regularly seen at this time of year. Elsewhere on the installation a variety of upland and wetland habitats host numbers of birds including two recent additions to the breeding avifauna of Ventura County; Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and Vermilion Flycatcher. This will be an exciting trip that should yield more than 100 species. However, due to military restrictions there will be no photography allowed...no exceptions! A spotting scope will be essential for scoping flocks of shorebirds and gulls, and sea watching. **Pt Mugu Naval Base is an active military base. As a result, background checks are necessary to obtain access for field trips. Prior to the trip, the Registrar will contact you for additional information to complete this process.**

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 3:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): 17 miles
Time (one way): 20 minutes
Restroom facilities: Yes
Difficulty level: Easy

11TH Santa Barbara Migrant Hotspots

Leader: Peter Gaede

The Santa Barbara area has a number of migrant traps and hotspots that make birding there in late September very exciting if vagrant chasing is your thing. This trip will visit a variety of locations in the vicinity of the city of Santa Barbara where uncommon to rare migrants have been seen in the preceding days. We have the potential to find a variety of warblers, vireos, sparrows, and other wayward migrants, as well as the expected western species.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM
Return Time: 3:30 PM
Cost: \$30
Miles (one way): 30 miles
Time (one way): 30 minutes
Restroom facilities: Yes
Difficulty level: Moderate

12TH Malibu Lagoon & Coast

Leader: Cliff Hawley

Anyone who has watched "Two and a Half Men" has seen aerial views of Malibu Lagoon in nearly every episode. Migratory birds get the same view as they are moving down the coast and this coastal wetland oasis attracts numbers of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, waders, and other water-dependent birds. We should see a flock of Western Snowy Plovers on the beach as well as Elegant Terns and perhaps Black Skimmers. Beyond the lagoon, we will also incorporate a spot for sea watching where we should see Black-vented Shearwaters and other near shore pelagic species. In addition, we will stop in a coastal canyon to look for a variety of resident and migrant species. We will have opportunities to see the Nanday Parakeet that is becoming established along the Malibu Coast. A scope will be essential for sea watching and picking through birds in the lagoon.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM
Return Time: 4:00 PM
Cost: \$30
Day Use Fee: \$12 per vehicle
Miles (one way): 45 miles
Time (one way): 50 minutes
Restroom facilities: Yes
Difficulty level: Moderate

13TH Ventura Migrant Hotspots

Leaders: Mary Freeman

The Oxnard Plain has a variety of natural and unnatural habitats that attract number of migrants during late September, including a variety of rare species. When the conditions are conducive, tamarisk rows host warblers and vireos and are bound to have a few vagrants in late September. The tamarisk rows here are one of the most reliable places for Yellow-green Vireo in California. Local sod fields host flocks of shorebirds, pipits, and Horned Larks, and can include Pacific Golden-Plover, Red-throated Pipit, and other uncommon and rare species. The locations we visit will likely depend on where known birds of interest are located thus far in the season.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 3:30 PM

Cost: \$30

Miles (one way): ~ 15 Miles

Time (one way): ~ 20 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy