

California September-October 2022

Our first long-haul foreign trip for three years. Sarah and I had wanted to go back to California ever since we went to San Francisco, Monterey and the Los Angeles area in 1998 with our children aged six. Our flight from London Heathrow was with Virgin Atlantic, we'd pre-booked all our accommodation - either hotels or self-catering - and our car was booked with Alamo via Holiday Autos.

As well as our previous California trip I'd been to various parts of western USA and Canada, so was already familiar with most of the common birds, but there were still gaps in my species list. New life birds are written in **bold**. Like all our trips this was a general interest holiday with some birding; we visited some well-known sites but a lot of my birding was done in the early mornings or late afternoons near our accommodation, which was usually chosen to be near some open space. This worked out very well – everywhere we stayed I saw special birds, some of them new, within a few minutes' walk.

Wednesday 14 September – San Francisco

We arrived mid-afternoon and took a taxi to the Marriott Vacation Club Pulse hotel in Fisherman's Wharf, enjoying our first American birds from the car: Western Gulls, Brown Pelicans and American Crows.

Thursday 15 September – San Francisco

On previous visits to San Francisco I'd loved birding around the Maritime National Historical Park and Fort Mason, so I was up before dawn to make a pre-breakfast visit there. As I headed to the Fort Mason Community Gardens daylight pushed through the mist and Song and White-crowned Sparrows started singing. The gardens were really good: I quickly picked up California Towhee, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Northern Mockingbird and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. An interesting-sounding call turned out to be from a **Nuttall's Woodpecker** and while searching for that a Yellow Warbler and a Pacific-slope Flycatcher dropped into the bushes. I met another birder there who helped me with some of my ID queries; I gathered that Fort Mason is a fairly reliable migration spot. On the way back to the hotel a Belted Kingfisher was on the Maritime Park's harbour pier.



Golden Gate Bridge from Fort Mason



Northern Mockingbird, Fort Mason Community Gardens

Later we took a bus to the Mission district and then made an obligatory visit to Pier 39, with a look at the California Sea Lions that delight the crowds as they hang out on rafts off the pier.

Friday 16 September – San Francisco to Pacific Grove (Monterey)

Another early morning visit to Fort Mason gave me better views of the Nuttall's Woodpecker, a brilliant bird. The guy from yesterday turned up again, along with 3 or 4 other birders, and he took me to the side of the youth hostel where a Summer Tanager had been for a few days. Here we saw more Yellow Warblers, one of which was a male with red streaks on its front, and a couple of Pygmy Nuthatches in a bottlebrush plant. A couple of Surf Scoters were in the Maritime Park.



Fort Mason Community Gardens, San Francisco



Western Gull, Pier 39, San Francisco

Back to the airport after breakfast to collect our hire car, upgrading from a Small SUV to Standard SUV to get a car with built-in sat nav and a cover over the rear luggage space (most SUVs in America don't have covers, so all luggage is on view). Our first stop on the way to Monterey was Capitola, where we enjoyed seeing the little coloured houses on the beach. There were Heermann's Gulls and American Herring Gulls on the beach as well as the abundant Western Gulls. As we passed Moss Landing a Peregrine and a male Northern Harrier were causing havoc among the clouds of terns and waders. Arriving at our rental home in Pacific Grove the first bird we saw was an Anna's Hummingbird feeding on the red-flowered eucalyptus trees that line the streets.

Saturday 17 September – Point Pinos, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Elkhorn Slough and Moss Landing

A couple of miles west of Pacific Grove is Point Pinos, where there are many parking places overlooking the sea. The first I came to, Acropolis, had about 100 Heermann's Gulls and numerous cormorants including Brandt's and Pelagic as well as Double-crested. At Otter Point there were four Sea Otters close in. Inland from there on Esplanade Drive I found California Scrub-jays and a stunning Townsend's Warbler – a bird I'd only seen once before in Arizona, never ceasing to dazzle me on frequent subsequent encounters this trip. At the Foghorn parking place I chatted to some keen birders, who were hoping for some good sea-watching with the forecast of a storm. Barn Swallows were moving south, as was a flock of 300+ Heermann's Gulls.

We enjoyed walking through Carmel from the shopping area to the beach and on to the Mission. Most of the houses nestle within splendid mature trees and shrubs, so it feels almost like a town in a forest. The birds seemed to appreciate it – we saw California Scrub-jays, **Oak Titmice** and Pygmy Nuthatches as we walked around. After lunch at Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey we wanted to go to Point Lobos but the car park was full and all the spaces on the road were occupied. So we pointed the car in the opposite direction and headed north to Moss Landing.



California Sea Lions, Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey



Red-necked Phalarope, Moss Landing

First we visited Elkhorn Slough, a few miles inland, where a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk caused me a bit of head-scratching as it flew over. Moss Landing was amazing. As far I could tell, the hundreds of terns gathered beside the main lagoon were all Elegant Terns, and there were masses of waders. Most conspicuous were at least 100 Red-necked Phalaropes, with a few Grey (Red) and Wilson's Phalaropes among them. Also on the main lagoon were Marbled Godwits, Willets, Whimbrels, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Greater Yellowlegs and a Knot. Further back were hundreds of Brown Pelicans and a single American White Pelican. Savannah Sparrows kept leaping up from the path and landing further on. A drive down the beach road across the highway gave us good views of more Elegant Terns and Marbled Godwits, as well as a large flock of Western Sandpipers (see record shots at end).

Sunday 18 September – Point Pinos and Asilomar Beach

The guys at the Foghorn place the day before told me the Point Pinos cemetery (across the road from the lighthouse) was the best place to see warblers, so I headed straight there the next couple of mornings. There'd been overnight rain but conditions were pretty good – there were lots more of the red-flowering eucalyptus trees, each with their own Anna's Hummingbirds in attendance, and other small birds moving between them. Over the two days I saw at least 4 Townsend's Warblers, 2 White-breasted Nuthatches and singles of Yellow Warbler, Western Wood-pewee and Brown Creeper. There were 2 Western Bluebirds in the cemetery and another 6 on wires outside. Black-tailed Mule Deer are allowed to roam in the Pacific Grove area and there were several wandering around here. A couple of Black Turnstones and my first **Black Oystercatcher** were at nearby Foghorn.

Because of the forecast the all-day seabird pelagic I'd booked was cancelled. Instead we had a very nice walk beside the Asilomar Beach from the Acropolis parking place down to Asilomar. Most of the coast here is rocky, with a few sandy beaches in between, and we did quite well for waders: Sanderlings, more Black Oystercatchers, Black Turnstones, Marbled Godwits, Whimbrels, 5 Red-necked and a Grey (Red) Phalarope, a Spotted Sandpiper and a Wandering Tattler. Here I saw the only California Thrasher of the trip, singing in a beach-front garden, and also our first California Ground Squirrels – chunkier and spottier than Grey, with a pale nape.

The forecast storm didn't arrive here so we enjoyed a walk round Pacific Grove, deciding that this was a place we could happily live in - except for various barriers such as money and citizenship. It's a lovely old town, most of the individual wooden houses dating back to around 1880 – 1920, with a good collection of shops, restaurants and cafes in the centre.

Monday 19 September – Point Pinos, Point Lobos and Moss Landing

After a look round Point Pinos Cemetery and the lighthouse area we went back to Point Lobos. The car park was still full but we were able to park on the road. The point was too far to walk to, but Whalers Cove was closer and we saw some Steller's Jays and Townsend's Warblers in the woods on the way. The predicted storm never happened but it was raining by the time we got back to the car, where a Red-shouldered Hawk was watching us from the top of a telegraph pole. Once again, we turned north on Highway 1 and returned to Moss Landing.

Most of the Phalaropes had gone, but now there were 100+ each of Marbled Godwits and Black-necked Stilts, at least 10 Least Sandpipers (see record shots), a Semipalmated Plover and a Grey (Black-bellied) Plover as well as the birds seen before. I was delighted to get good views of some suspect curlews I'd seen in the distance last time – they were indeed **Long-billed Curlews**, a bird I'd wanted to see for years. Almost equally delightful were a family of Sea Otters that drifted up the Elkhorn Slough on the rising tide.



Long-billed Curlew, Moss Landing



Sooty Shearwater, Monterey Bay whale watching

Tuesday 20 September – Pacific Grove, Monterey Bay whale trip and Point Lobos

For my 70th birthday I was given a whale-watching trip with Go Whales from Monterey Harbour, but before the 9.00 departure I had time to walk down to Lovers Point Park in Pacific Grove to check the birds. There were lots of Brewer's Blackbirds but I suspected Sarah and I had seen a Tricoloured singing the day before, sounding very different from Red-winged. No luck but the park was good: I found a Western Tanager, a Nuttall's Woodpecker, a Townsend's Warbler and an Orange-crowned Warbler in the Monterey Pines as well as a few Anna's Hummingbirds.

The whale-watching trip was great. I'd feared I'd struggle without a specialist bird guide on board but I found myself sitting next to two expert locals, who were most helpful. They confirmed I had indeed been seeing quite a few **Rhinoceros Auklets** and pointed out a couple of **Pink-footed Shearwaters** among the numerous Sooties. I spotted half a dozen Arctic Skuas (Parasitic Jaegers) and also a breeding-plumage **Tufted Puffin** in a distant line of flying alcids. There were Elegant Terns and Red-necked Phalaropes out in the open sea, as well as many Guillemots (Murre). A couple of Humpback Whales and Blue Whale were the cetacean highlights – although my views of these were poor.

We finally made it into Point Lobos in the afternoon, where we had a nice walk around China Cove and Bird Island Overlook with its Brown Pelicans and a variety of Cormorants. In the evening we walked round the corner to the excellent Wild Fish restaurant for a posh birthday meal.

Wednesday 21 September – Pacific Grove and Yosemite NP

Another early morning walk to Lovers Point where today a larger flock of icterids held at least 20 **Tricoloured Blackbirds** with similar numbers of Brewer's. Most were female/immature birds, with more sombre colouring and less obvious facial markings than Red-winged. The few older males didn't reveal their coloured wing flashes but all had decidedly glossy plumage (see record shots).

We drove to Yosemite NP, stopping at San Juan Bautista to see the Mission church and the interesting old buildings around it, and at Merced for lunch (Denny's all-day breakfast – how we'd missed it!) Around the Yosemite Valley Lodge where we stayed we saw Steller's Jays, a Black Phoebe and a Townsend's Warbler. Walking towards the nearby Yosemite Falls in the evening we stumbled across some people watching a female Black Bear with 2 cubs. As we carried quietly along the trail beside the falls river we kept getting more views of the family moving through the river valley. Our best mammal encounter of the trip by far!



Black Bear family, Yosemite Falls River. The best shot I managed!



Red-breasted Sapsucker, Yosemite Valley Lodge

Thursday 22 September – Yosemite NP

It was cold in the morning before the sun rose high enough to get into the Valley. I didn't see much around the base of the Falls apart from a Belted Kingfisher flying overhead, nor in Cook's Meadows, so I tried the deciduous trees and bushes closer to the lodge. Right behind one of the accommodation blocks I found a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** working away at its tree. Never mind that it looked a bit scruffy – it was glorious, and had been on my wanted list for many years. From the balcony of our room, while eating lunch bought in Yosemite Village that morning, we saw a Western Tanager and a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

An afternoon visit to Curry Village, Happy Isles and the Fen Trail was not very productive for wildlife although the displays in the nature centre were good. Returning to the car at the trailhead car park we encountered our first problem: the car wouldn't start. It had been reluctant to start a few days earlier but now it seemed terminal. Eventually after many attempts it did fire up and we drove back to our lodge to ring Alamo. A replacement car arrived towards midnight.

Friday 23 September – Yosemite NP to June Lake

The car they'd sent was a 7-seater Dodge Journey, a gas-guzzling old dinosaur with no mod cons and certainly no sat nav or a cover over the luggage space, but after many complaints we got a refund when we took it back to San Francisco, so no complaints overall. We set off to drive east through the northern sector of the National Park to Lee Vining and June Lake. There wasn't much to see going east on Highway 120 until we reached Olmstead Point, where in the distance we could see the reverse side of Half-dome, with tiny ant-like humans climbing it. After a picnic lunch at Tenaya Lake we stopped at Tuolumne Meadows and had a pleasant walk to the Tuolumne River footbridge, where a Chipmunk posed for us.

We checked in at June Lake and had a good Mexican meal at the Balanced Rock Grill across the road.



Chipmunk, Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite NP



June Lake - the Heidelberg Inn is to the left

Saturday 24 September – June Lake, Bodie State Park, Mono Lake and Grant Lake

We stayed at the Heidelberg Inn, a favourite getaway for the rich and famous in the 40s and 50s. We could imagine the stars warming themselves around the gigantic four-sided open fireplace in the centre of the hotel. It's still a relaxing place in the East Sierra region, overlooking a friendly small town and surrounded by conifer- and sagebrush-clad hills. The first bird I saw, in the hotel car park, was another Red-breasted Sapsucker, along with Steller's Jays and Collared Doves. A short distance along the lane were a couple of Clark's Nutcrackers. Lodgepole Chipmunks (I think) were everywhere.

We arrived at Bodie State Park as the gates opened at 9.00, before most of the visitors but probably a little late to see the Greater Sage-grouse that apparently occur here in good numbers. But there was plenty of bird interest around the site anyway: as well as the ubiquitous White-crowned Sparrows and Brewer's Blackbirds there were Mountain Bluebirds and Say's Phoebes among the buildings, a ringtail Northern Harrier quartering over the sagebrush and a couple of shy **Sagebrush Sparrows**. It was very interesting wandering around the deserted town. As we drove out, a **Sage Thrasher** popped up beside the road and further on a Sharp-shinned Hawk zipped alongside the car.



Bodie State Park



California Gull and Black-necked Grebes, Mono Lake

Next stop was the north boardwalk at Mono Lake. It was disturbing to see how far the water level had sunk in recent decades, but where the water had receded, exposing the remarkable tufa towers, abundant vegetation had taken over and the area was much more attractive than I'd imagined. At the end of the boardwalk we could see thousands of Black-necked (Eared) Grebes in the distant water.

In the afternoon we drove the June Lake Loop tour, with a stop to overlook Grant Lake, which held lots of American Coots, more Black-necked Grebes and a Goosander (Common Merganser), before heading back to Mono Lake to visit South Tufa. Like the north side, this was really attractive and we had much closer views of the birds. There were a few waders at the lake edge - American Avocet, Killdeer and a couple of Least Sandpipers – and a Ruddy Duck amongst the thousands of grebes and California Gulls.

Sunday 25 September – June Lake and Mammoth Lakes

The lane up from the hotel led through homes with tall conifers in their gardens, an extension of the adjacent forest. In the tops of these I found a feeding flock of **Cassin's Finches** (see record shots), and also had great views of Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Chickadees and Pygmy Nuthatches. We set off early for Mammoth Lakes to avoid the crowds. Along the loop trail around Horseshoe Lake we had good views of a Hairy Woodpecker and at Lake George we saw some more Clark's Nutcrackers, Mountain Chickadees and a Yellow-rumped Warbler but we much preferred the much quieter (and birdier!) area where we were staying.

June Lake and Gull Lake were both within easy walking distance of our hotel. Yellow-rumped Warblers were abundant around the fringes of June Lake, perhaps having only just arrived en masse, with a couple of Yellow Warblers, a Bell's Vireo and an Orange-crowned Warbler among them. Large numbers of Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds were gathering on moored boats. Gull Lake had some American Coots and California Gulls.

Monday 26 September – June Lake, Convict Lake and Crowley Lake

The lane up from the hotel was busier than ever with Clark's Nutcrackers, Cassin's Finches and Pygmy Nuthatches. After enjoying these for a while I headed the other way for a change, up Route 158 towards June Lake Junction.

Not far out of town I heard a thrush-like song coming from the top of a bare conifer. It was still quite dark but its silhouette reminded me of pictures I'd seen of **Townsend's Solitaire**, so I took some photos. I knew that the song and calls were right, and once processed the photos confirmed the ID (see record shots). There were more Cassin's Finches around here too, and at the start of the trail opposite the 'balanced rock' were Pygmy Nuthatches a White-breasted Nuthatch and some Mule Deer.

Heading south on Interstate 395 we stopped at Convict Lake for a walk. The trail round the lake goes through sagebrush and forest, with mountain cliffs beyond. We saw a Yellow Warbler and a Clark's Nutcracker, and more Mule Deer in the outlet stream.



Convict Lake, Mammoth Lakes area



Sunset over Mt Whitney from Lone Pine

We had another brief stop at Crowley Lake, essentially a fishing lake but we were allowed through the gate. In the distance were American White Pelicans and close to shore Shoveler, American Avocets, Black-necked Grebes and a Western Grebe feeding its cute chick, still downy grey.

At our motel in Lone Pine we encountered another upset: emails from Airbnb telling us that our next two accommodations had been cancelled because they couldn't process payments for the second instalments. We had to hastily rebook but because of rising prices and the falling pound it cost us £500 extra. This also was eventually resolved and we got the money back from Airbnb, but we had a stressful time over it. A stunning sunset over Mt Whitney as we collected our Mexican take-away from one of the food carts in town made us feel a whole lot better.

Tuesday 27 September – Lone Pine, Alabama Hills, Mt Whitney and Diaz Lake

We were staying in Lone Pine so that we could visit Death Valley NP, but the park was still closed following the flooding in August that was on world news. But we found plenty of interest nearby so we didn't mind too much. I wasn't expecting to find many birds in the town but close to the motel I saw the only Warbling Vireo of the trip. Tree-lined Roy Rogers Road took me through green fields and at Fairbanks Street (the town and area were a favourite Hollywood location, and still are today; there is a Museum of Western Film History) I was into sage desert. I saw a nice flock of Lesser Goldfinches, a Hairy Woodpecker and a family of California Quails running through someone's front yard.



White-crowned Sparrow, Lone Pine



Mt Whitney through Mobius Arch, Alabama Hills

A few miles west of Lone Pine are the Alabama Hills, used in numerous westerns old and new. We walked the Mobius Arch Trail among rounded granite boulders in the sage desert, some of which had been eroded into weird holes and arches. A Red-tailed Hawk was pursued by a smaller bird, perhaps a Prairie Falcon. A few miles further west took us to the Mt Whitney trailhead where the scene was very different – conifer forest with Steller’s Jays, Oregon Juncos and a Brown Creeper.

A walk along the southern perimeter of Diaz Lake in the afternoon was interesting: a Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) and more Black-necked Grebes were in the middle, with an unidentified phalarope, and in lakeside bushes another Townsend’s Solitaire (see record shots).

Wednesday 28 September – Lone Pine to Isabella Lake

We continued south on the Interstate 395, with the Sierra Nevada range on our right and Death Valley on our left. We tried to get down to Haiwee Reservoir but it was fenced off. We did have a brief walk through the adjacent sagebrush and came across a Desert Tortoise playing dead on the service road. Another Denny’s all-day breakfast in Ridgecrest, then we headed west to Lake Isabella. This sounded like an attractive place to stay but the town of that name is unappealing, apparently existing mainly to serve the hydro-electric business, which must have been struggling as the huge lake was largely dry. Fortunately, we were staying in Wofford Heights, a pleasant residential district sited on a wooded hillside overlooking the lake.

Thursday 29 September – Wofford Heights and Sequoia National Forest

Wofford Heights was definitely off the beaten track but I did very well for birds here. It was like a hot desert forest if that makes sense and near our rental home there was an abundance of birds, many of them noisy enough to be unmissable: Acorn Woodpeckers, California Quails, California Scrub-jays, Mourning Doves, Northern Mockingbirds and ridiculously abundant Ravens. Anna’s Hummingbirds were plentiful and the neighbouring house up the hill had an array of feeders for them. Lark Sparrows were feeding on someone’s front lawn and there were Phainopeplas in the trees.



Anna's Hummingbird, Wofford Heights



California Quail, Wofford Heights

Later we walked round Tillie Creek Campground, a weird place which judging by the overgrown plots must have been more popular in the past before the lake receded. The friendly camp hostess let us wander the extensive site and we saw more Acorn Woodpeckers, California Quails and Phainopeplas plus some Oak Titmice. In the far distance two Northern Harriers were quartering over the lake edge.

One of the reasons we wanted to stay in this area was to visit the Sequoia National Forest. Driving up from the attractive Kern River valley it was disturbing to witness mile after mile of burnt tree stumps, evidently from large fires in 2020 and 2021. We wondered how many of the really large Giant Sequoias would have survived. In fact the fire service had done a great job of protecting them and only one corner of the Trail of 100 Giants had been destroyed. These massive Sequoias really are amazing; the trail starts with the 'Proclamation Tree' - you can walk through its trunk - where Bill Clinton opened the Giant Sequoia National Monument in 2000. Squirrels and Chipmunks were everywhere and we saw yet another Townsend's Solitaire.

Friday 30 September – Wofford Heights, Kern River Preserve and Lake Isabella

My day started well with finding a third Red-breasted Sapsucker near the house. We stayed local today and visited some sights close to where we were staying. We met another birder along the Nature Trail at Kern River Preserve; he hadn't seen much but on his advice we started to check the cottonwoods and soon found a Black-and-white Warbler, a rarity from the east (see record shots). A Townsend's Warbler and a Bewick's Wren were in the same area, but otherwise the Nature Trail and the Migrant Corner Trail were quiet. From the former campground in the South Fork of Lake Isabella we could see hundreds of Western Grebes along with some California Gulls and unidentified cormorants. A bunch of American White Pelicans were in the distance.

In the afternoon we drove up Evans Road from Wofford Heights to Greenhorn Summit and tried but failed to find Shirley Meadow. We walked along quiet roads beneath large conifers, including some sequoias, but disappointingly didn't see much apart from a few Steller's Jays.

Saturday 1 October – Wofford Heights to Joshua Tree

I made a worthwhile early morning visit to Tillie Creek Campground. It seemed rather quiet compared to our previous visit, but returning to the entrance I saw two Western Tanagers land in a tree, where they were joined momentarily by what looked like an adult/immature Scarlet Tanager (same size, shape, colouring and bill length as the Western Tanagers but no wing-bars). While searching for it I noticed some **Lawrence's Goldfinches** (see record shots). A flock of Bushtits of the grey-headed interior race was moving through shrubs near the car.



Bushtit, Tillie Creek, Wofford Heights



Phainopepla female, Tillie Creek, Wofford Heights

We were able to see the South Fork of the lake from the north side as we headed from Kernville back east towards our next destination. Again, all the birds were too distant to identify properly apart from about 20 American White Pelicans. Our drive took us through the desert towns of Inyokern, Ridgecrest, Barstow and Yermo, where we stopped for lunch. Although I love the desert habitat, I usually enjoyed getting back into civilization after miles and miles of flat aridness. Barstow and Yermo were on the old Route 66 and so we had to visit Peggy Sue's 50's Diner in Yermo for lunch. At first it seemed bigger, louder and zanier than we expected but we pressed on through room after crowded room until we found a table in a quieter section. A waitress came straight away with menus and within minutes I was tucking into a huge, delicious bowl of beef chilli with a corn muffin – proper soul food! It is an original 50s diner and they've tried to keep the menus within the 50s spirit. In the play area/garden outside (probably also dating back to the 50s) were a bunch of scruffy-looking Great-tailed Grackles.

Sunday 2nd October – Joshua Tree and Big Morongo Canyon

Our house in Joshua Tree (in the town of that name, not in the National Park) was, like most of the houses around, situated in the unspoiled desert, with cacti, chollas, Joshua trees and other desert plants right outside the house. There was plenty of birdlife along our road, Latham Trail, and the adjacent Pueblo Trail. A Say's Phoebe greeted me from wires outside the house and a Black-throated Sparrow soon appeared, followed by a family of Gambel's Quails. Mourning Doves were abundant here – perhaps northern birds on their way south for the winter. We also saw Jackrabbits and Cottontails near the house most mornings and evenings.

We decided to leave the National Park until after the weekend, instead heading to Big Morongo Canyon. Just inside the reserve entrance a raptor appeared, circling with wings raised and a prominent white rump, which I took to be a dark Northern Harrier but photos show to be a young Harris's Hawk (see record shots). At the same time an American Kestrel flew into the top of a nearby tree. There were some birders beckoning to us at the Education Centre, where a Black-headed Grosbeak and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak were facing each other across a bird table, playing dead (see record shots). Two Western Tanagers were in cottonwoods nearby. Along the Mesquite Trail we caught a glimpse of a Nashville Warbler and a little later shared a bench with a mother-and-son couple who were watching a damp area where Wilson's Warblers, Yellowthroats and Orange-crowned Warblers kept materializing. After a while they noticed a Red-naped Sapsucker quietly doing its thing on a nearby tree. We realized that to see the birds the best policy is to stop and sit for a while at every bench or viewing platform. The next one was an elaborate seated affair, overlooking another marshy area with low bushes. The first bird to pop out was a beauty: it looked identical to immature Chestnut-sided Warblers I'd seen in NY State, but this seemed unlikely here; however after consulting the Audubon app this was agreed by the other birders who joined us. Further on along the Marsh Trail we found a Bewick's Wren and back at the car park a Black-throated Grey Warbler gave good views – one of the most attractive warblers in my opinion.



Rock Wren, Joshua Tree NP – check out those feet!



Say's Phoebe at sunrise, Joshua Tree

Later we entered the National Park from the West Entrance and walked part of the Maze Loop, where we saw some Rock Wrens, before watching the sun set over the extraordinary landscape.

Monday 3rd October – Joshua Tree National Park

We set off early and entered the National Park in the cooler early morning. Our first stop was for a walk at the Quail Springs picnic area, where a Loggerhead Shrike was perched on a distant yucca. 20 or so White-throated Swifts were belting around the car park for the Hidden Valley Trail when we arrived and on the trail itself we saw Ravens, California Scrub-jays and a Say's Phoebe, although I'm sure we weren't seeing all there was in the great-looking habitat. A Verdin was at the car park for Barker Dam and the trail was productive: the lake was completely dry but the lake bed was moist enough to support a few trees and shrubs which seemed to attract migrants, with birds calling and singing all around, but not readily visible. I saw more California Scrub-jays, a House Wren, a Pacific-slope Flycatcher and an Orange-crowned Warbler.

Unfortunately other birds vanished as soon as they came out so I was left uncertain about a probable Brewer's Sparrow and a vireo that looked like Red-eyed. We stopped at several other places as we did the circuit of the Park; all were interesting and we thoroughly enjoyed the day.



Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Barker Dam, Joshua Tree



Black-throated Sparrow, Latham Trail, Joshua Tree

Tuesday 4th October – Joshua Tree and Big Morongo Canyon to Goleta

I did the Latham Trail/ Pueblo Trail circuit (these are dirt roads with houses and gardens, not actual trails) first thing. I was really pleased to find another Black-throated Grey Warbler in a garden just down the road in Latham Trail, and a Greater Roadrunner flew off a fence and ran off into the desert undergrowth, followed by a Cactus Wren nearby. I had good last looks at Black-throated Sparrows and Gambel's Quails and found a pair of Ladder-backed Woodpeckers at the fruit pods of a Joshua Tree.



Cactus Wren, Pueblo Trail, Joshua Tree



Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Latham Trail, Joshua Tree

Reluctantly we left Joshua Tree but decided to have a last look at Big Morongo Canyon, which was on our way. We had a quick walk around the Marsh Trail and also in the adjacent Covington Park. A Verdin and a female Phainopepla were in bushes before the entrance to the Preserve.

Our route to Goleta (the University area to the west of Santa Barbara) through San Fernando and Simi Valley avoided the worst of the traffic in the Los Angeles area and we had no delays.

Wednesday 5th October – Goleta and Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens

It felt strange coming into a busy urban area after the peace and quiet of recent weeks, but across the road from our rented apartment was the North Campus Open Space (belonging to UCSB), an area of rough ground and reed-fringed ponds around the top of Devereux Slough. I stopped on the footbridge beside the nearest pond to admire three Black-crowned Night-herons. Birds started to appear in the reeds and bushes: a Black Phoebe, some Scaly-breasted Munias, a fine male Yellowthroat and a couple of Anna's Hummingbirds. A noisy family of Cassin's Kingbirds occupied tall trees nearby, with I think at least one Tropical Kingbird also present, and further on a party of small birds including Oak Titmice, Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Yellow Warbler moved through a line of pines. A Say's Phoebe sat on a fencepost and a strange falcon flew over, marked like an oversized female Merlin.

Our apartment only had a tiny back yard but we could see a huge bottlebrush next door, where there were often two **Allen's Hummingbirds** feeding. We walked to Coal Oil Point through the Open Space and past the largely-dry Devereux Slough, where there were Great White and Snowy Egrets and a Killdeer. Nearby were Acorn Woodpeckers, California Towhees, Oregon Juncos and a Hutton's Vireo.



Allen's Hummingbird, Whittier Drive, Goleta



Scaly-breasted Munia, North Campus Open Space, Goleta

It was misty and cool when we left Goleta but Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens, overlooking the city a few miles inland, was warm and sunny. The gardens are beautiful and informative, and we had good views of a Northern Flicker as well as some Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers. At Goleta Beach there were some Ring-billed Gulls amongst the California and Western Gulls.

Thursday 6th October – Goleta, Lake Cachuma, Solvang, Johoqui Falls and Gaviota State Park

On the way to Solvang we visited Lake Cachuma, stopping first in the Recreation Area which was lively with Acorn Woodpeckers, Scrub-jays, Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmice and a White-breasted Nuthatch near where we parked. The lake was difficult to view from here or from the dam at the north end, but we could see many Western/Clark's Grebes on the water. A **Prairie Falcon** flew over us as we drove to Solvang, its diagnostic black axillaries obvious beside its pale flight feathers.

We enjoyed Solvang with its Danish architectural vibe, and the Santa Ines Mission was particularly pleasant. We found that all these Missions have very attractive, peaceful gardens, often with plentiful birdlife. Here were more Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Bluebirds, Oak Titmice and a couple of Common Grackles – a bird we rarely saw on this trip.

With its tall laurel, sycamore and oak trees Johoqui Falls Park was clearly an important forest area but it was rather quiet in the afternoon. We saw Acorn Woodpeckers, Oregon Juncos and a White-breasted Nuthatch along the walk to the dry falls and a Say's Phoebe at the roadside nearby. As we drove down to the coast we returned to cool, overcast weather which didn't help the look of Gaviota State Park, with its trestle bridge alongside the beach and an unpleasant smell. The latter might have been from the gulls, pelicans and cormorants settled on the closed-off pier, although it smelt more like sewage.



Western Gulls and Brown Pelicans, Goleta State Park



Elegant Terns, Stearns Beach, Santa Barbara

Friday 7th October – Goleta, Santa Barbara and Montecito

I finally nailed a **Lincoln's Sparrow** on the North Campus Open Space, close to the pond near our apartment. By now I'd studied many Song Sparrows and their image was so imprinted on my mind that this bird's different features were obvious, even in my barely three-second view before it hid behind a bush. A Greater Yellowlegs flew over, calling, and even thought about dropping into 'my' pond.

The Mission at Santa Barbara was busy with coach parties, but in the olive gardens beside the car park we found Northern Mockingbirds, Acorn Woodpeckers and Yellow-rumped Warblers among the Stations of the Cross. At least 50 American Crows were on a lawn across the road. We arrived in downtown Santa Barbara before the shops opened (most don't open until 11.00 am) and State Street was quiet – we noticed Anna's Hummingbirds, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Oak Titmice feeding in the roadside trees.

Around Stearns Wharf and the beach and pier there were plenty of birds, including Elegant Terns, Heermann's Gulls, Marbled Godwits, a Great-tailed Grackle and lots of California Ground Squirrels - in a drain culvert - evidently something of a pest in cities. A small pond behind the beach held some American Coots, Black-necked Grebes, Snowy Egrets and a Great White Egret. I recalled seeing Black Skimmers on the beach on our previous visit – such a beautiful city, and with great birdwatching too! We had a look at Butterfly Beach at Montecito before stopping at Andree Clark Bird Refuge. Here were Black-necked Stilts, Killdeers, a Red-necked Phalarope and some Green-winged Teal and Ruddy Ducks.

We still had time when we got back to walk out to Coal Oil Point again, where lots of students were enjoying the evening sunshine. On the way we saw another probable Tropical Kingbird and that giant 'Merlin' flew over again, with a strange lolloping flight action unlike any other falcon I've seen. It was a while before the penny dropped – Prairie Falcon! On pools on the beach east of the Point were some Western Sandpipers and Dunlin, with single Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer and Semipalmated Plover.



Probable Tropical Kingbird, North Campus Open Space, Goleta



Great Blue Heron, Devereux Slough, Goleta

Saturday 8th October – Goleta, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay and Cambria

This morning there was a female/immature MacGillivray's Warbler at the edge of 'my' pond and I had another glimpse of a/the Lincoln's Sparrow. Our first stop on the way to Cambria was at the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary at Pismo Beach. There weren't many butterflies yet but there was another probable Tropical Kingbird on roadside wires where we parked - I should have looked more carefully at kingbirds! San Luis Obispo was another attractive, lively town and the pretty pink-flowered trees in the Mission churchyard were alive with Monarch butterflies and Anna's Hummingbirds.

It felt a lot cooler as we walked along the Embarcadero at Morro Bay, but there were plenty of birds and animals in the estuary – hundreds of Marbled Godwits and Brown Pelicans and almost as many Sea Lions. An Osprey flew over.

Our house in Cambria was on the top of the steep ridge between the ocean and the Santa Rosa Creek which runs alongside the town. Here we were close to the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve - a large chunk of open grassland, chaparral and forest open to the public. On an exploratory walk from our house into the reserve and back along the Santa Rosa Creek Trail we saw Wild Turkeys, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, California Towhees and a Townsend's Warbler.

Sunday 9th October –Cambria and Paso Robles area

Cambria may not have any particular claims to ornithological fame and yet within a mile of our rental home we saw nearly all the birds we'd seen elsewhere along the coast, and some we saw nowhere else. There were two potential lifers I was still keen to find: Wrentit and Yellow-billed Magpie. The chaparral area we'd visited the previous day looked good for Wrentit so I visited this each morning. I never did see or hear one but the area was rich in birdlife. Say's Phoebes frequented the grassy ridge, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks and American Kestrels hung out on the slope and Steller's Jays and Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers were in the trees along with many sparrows including Spotted Towhees.

The boardwalk along Moonstone Beach was good, with a similar range of species to Asilomar Beach at Point Pinos. These included Long-billed Curlews, Black Turnstones, Black Oystercatchers and singles of Whimbrel and Killdeer. Offshore were three Red-throated Divers. Near our house, Shamel Beach had 5 Killdeer and a Snowy Egret.

Unexpectedly, **Yellow-billed Magpie** was one of the birds of the trip. We'd seen some magpies flying over Highway 1 amongst vineyards near Lompoc, presumably Yellow-billed but they didn't look any different. Up close, they looked amazing! I'd seen recent eBird records from the area around Lake Nacimiento a few miles inland, so we set off in that direction. We found ourselves on Vineyard Drive, west of Paso Robles, and stopped under some oak trees outside a winery for shade – the temperature here was 25° Fahrenheit higher than at Cambria. As we walked along a track we listened to the calls of Yellow-billed Magpies on my phone and soon realized we could hear them calling near our car, where they were feeding on acorns. Their calls are very different, and the vivid yellow bill and eye-ring are really striking – especially in the sunshine. There were also some Western Bluebirds on wires near here.



Yellow-billed Magpie, Vineyard Drive, Paso Robles



Red-shouldered Hawk, Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, Cambria

Monday 10th October –Cambria and Paso Robles area

On my early morning walk I peered into gardens on the way back from the Santa Rosa Creek Trail, hoping no-one would report me to Neighbourhood Watch! One place with feeders had a good cast list which included Band-tailed Pigeons and Golden-crowned Sparrows. There was another kingbird on wires here too – I *really* should have looked at it properly!

Today looked to have the best weather for driving the Big Sur Coast Highway although it was gloomy as drove northwards. We stopped first at Elephant Seal Vista, where we had brilliant close-up views of about 100 of the animals on the beach, including some really large males. It was still heavily overcast when we reached McWay Falls, where we found that the trails were closed apart from the one that takes you to the ocean viewpoint. On the way back we noticed a herd of about 30 Zebras near San Simeon; there had been about 50 Elks there on the way up.



Elephant Seal with gulls and terns, Elephant Seal Vista



Arty scarecrows, Cambria

Tuesday 11th October – Cambria

We had a quiet day today, shopping and eating in the quirky, laid-back town of Cambria. There are no chains here – all the shops and cafes are independent – and at this time of year everyone makes fun scarecrows, displayed all through the town. In the afternoon we walked along the Forest Loop Trail in the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve. We did quite well for small birds, seeing about 10 Pygmy Nuthatches, 5 Townsend's Warblers and smaller numbers of Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Brown Creeper. Back at our house I could see five Great White Egrets floating on islands of kelp, amidst cormorants, gulls and pelicans. Band-tailed Pigeons were perched on wires outside, and a Townsend's Warbler was in the Monterey Cypress at the front. Brewer's Blackbirds, White-crowned Sparrows and California Towhees were in adjacent gardens and a couple of Anna's Hummingbirds were at our feeders. This was our last full day in California and it gave us memories to store.

Wednesday 12th October – Cambria to San Francisco airport via Pinnacles NP.

Our flight from San Francisco wasn't until late evening so we had time for a brief stop at Pinnacles NP on the way. This was a chance for us to get everything ready for our flight while keeping an eye out for California Condors passing overhead, which they didn't. It was very warm here and great to see some nice chaparral and rocky terrain and to have last looks at birds like California Scrub-jays.

We arrived back in Heathrow at 4.30 pm the next day after a trouble-free flight.

Conclusion

It was a really enjoyable and relaxing trip (the episodes with Alamo and Airbnb were stressful at the time but we quickly put them behind us). We liked everywhere we went and most of the places we stayed had great birding on the doorstep. We couldn't get over the diversity as we travelled round: we moved quickly between coast, mountain, desert and plains, constantly changing climate and land use. However, it wasn't a cheap holiday: flights, accommodation, car hire, petrol, food, eating out – all were much more expensive than we expected from previous visits, not helped by the low value of the pound, which was almost at parity with the dollar at one stage (it was during Liz Truss's brief tenure as Prime Minister).

I really loved connecting with those charismatic north American birds again. We saw 158 bird species, of which 18 were new for me, which happened to be the 'target' I'd set myself before leaving. Apart from the Yellow-billed Magpie, the new woodpeckers and the other exciting lifers my favourites were the various woodpeckers, the hummingbirds, and of course the warblers. I was surprised how many eastern species we saw: Nashville, Black-and-white and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Common Grackle as well as the out-of-range Harris's Hawk and Tropical Kingbirds.

Birds seen in California, 14th September to 12th October 2022

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/ Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
Red-throated Diver (Loon)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 Moonstone Beach
Great Northern Diver (Common Loon)	-	-	-	1 Diaz Lake	-	-	-
Black-necked (Eared) Grebe	-	-	3,000+ Mono Lake 200+ Grant Lake	20+ Diaz Lake	-	2 Stearns Wharf c10 Andree Clark Bird Refuge	-
Western Grebe	-	-	2 Crowley Lake	-	c200	c100 Lake Cachuma	-
Pink-footed Shearwater	-	2 Whale Watch	-	-	-	-	-
American White Pelican	-	1 Moss Landing	c10 Crowley Lake	-	c30	-	-
Brown Pelican	100+	Abundant	-	-	-	Abundant	Abundant
Double-crested Cormorant	c50	Abundant	-	-	12+	Present	Present
Pelagic Cormorant	-	1 Point Lobos	-	-	-	-	-
Brandt's Cormorant	-	4+ Pacific Grove 50+ Point Pinos	-	-	-	Present	Abundant
Great Blue Heron	3 from Maritime Park	3 Moss Landing 1 Point Lobos	-	-	1 Kernville 1 Lake Isabella	1 Devereux Slough 1 Santa Barbara Mission	1 Cambria
Great White Egret	1 from Maritime Park	1 Moss Landing	-	-	-	1 Devereux Slough 1 Stearns Wharf	5 on kelp in bay
Snowy Egret	-	-	1 Grant Lake	-	-	2 Devereux Slough 2 Stearns Wharf	-
Black-crowned Night-heron	-	-	-	-	-	3 North Campus Open Space 2 Devereux Slough	-
Canada Goose	Present	Common	-	-	-	c20 Goleta	-
Mallard	-	1 Capitola	c30 Grant Lake c20 June Lake	-	-	3 North Campus Open Space Present Stearns Wharf	-
Shoveler	-	-	-	c20 Crowley Lake	-	c30 Andree Clark Bird Refuge	-
Green-winged Teal	-	-	-	-	-	2 Andree Clark Bird Refuge	-

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
American Coot	-	-	c1,000 Grant Lake c20 Gull Lake	-	-	6 Stearns Wharf 6+ Andree Clark Bird Refuge	-
Grey (Black-bellied) Plover	-	1 Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Semipalmated Plover	-	1 Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Killdeer	-	-	2 Mono Lake	-	-	1 Devereux Slough 5+ Andree Clark Bird Refuge	-
Black Oystercatcher	-	5 Point Pinos	-	-	-	-	7 Moonstone Beach
American Avocet	-	50+ Moss Landing	1 Mono Lake	4 Crowley Lake	-	-	-
Black-necked Stilt	-	100+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Greater Yellowlegs	-	3+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	1 North Campus Open Space 1 Coal Oil Point	-
Willet	-	c10 Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Spotted Sandpiper	-	1 Asilomar Beach	-	-	-	-	-
Whimbrel	-	3+ Moss Landing 5 Asilomar Beach	-	-	-	-	1 Moonstone Beach
Long-billed Curlew	-	3+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	5 Moonstone Beach
Marbled Godwit	-	50+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	5+ Stearns Wharf beach	c200 Morro Bay
Black Turnstone	2 Foghorn, Point Pinos	-	-	-	-	-	C30 Moonstone Beach
Wandering Tattler	2 Foghorn, Point Pinos	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Red) Knot	-	1 Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Dunlin	-	-	-	-	-	2 Coal Oil Point	-
Western Sandpiper	-	100+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	5+ Coal Oil Point	-
Least Sandpiper	-	20+ Moss Landing	2 Mono Lake	-	-	-	-
Wilson's Phalarope	-	2+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Grey (Red) Phalarope	-	3+ Moss Landing 1 Asilomar Beach	-	-	-	-	-
Red-necked Phalarope	-	50+ Moss Landing 5 Asilomar Beach	-	1 Diaz Lake (prob)	-	1 Andree Clark Bird Refuge (prob)	-
Arctic Skua (Parasitic Jaeger)	-	2 Whale Watch	-	-	-	-	-
Ring-billed Gull	-	-	-	-	-	1 Goleta Beach	-

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
California Gull	-	4+ Moss Landing sev Whale Watch	c500 Mono Lake 3+ June Lake	c10 Crowley Lake	3+ Lake Isabella	c50 Goleta Beach	-
American Herring Gull	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 Shamel Beach
Western Gull	Abundant	Abundant	-	-	-	Abundant	Abundant
Heermann's Gull	2 Capitola	400+ Point Pinos	-	-	-	50+ Stearns Wharf beach	c20 Shamel Beach 100+ Elephant Seal Vista
Elegant Tern	-	300+ Moss Landing Many Whale Watch	-	-	-	20+ Stearns Wharf beach	-
Guillemot (Common Murre)	-	c100 Whale Watch	-	-	-	-	-
Rhinoceros Auklet	-	c30 Whale Watch	-	-	-	-	-
Tufted Puffin	-	1 Whale Watch	-	-	-	-	-
Mourning Dove	-	-	-	15+ Joshua Tree (Latham Trail)	3 Wofford Heights	Sev Goleta	-
Collared Dove	-	2 Carmel 2 Pacific Grove	10 June Lake	6 Lone Pine 2 Joshua Tree (Latham Trail)	10 Wofford Heights	Sev Goleta	10+
Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove	Sev	Sev	-	6 Joshua Tree (Latham Trail)	-	150+ Goleta pier	-
Band-tailed Pigeon	-	-	-	-	-	-	5+
Greater Roadrunner	-	-	-	1 Joshua Tree (Latham Trail)	-	-	-
White-throated Swift	-	-	-	50+ Hidden Valley, Joshua Tree NP	-	-	-
Anna's Hummingbird	c20 Fort Mason	4+ Pacific Grove 20+ Point Pinos cemetery 3+ Carmel	-	2 Joshua Tree (Latham Trail) 2 Big Morongo Canyon	10 Wofford Heights	3+ State Street, Santa Barbara	6+
Allen's Hummingbird	-	-	-	-	-	4+ Goleta	-
Belted Kingfisher	1 Maritime Park	-	1 Yosemite Falls	-	-	-	-
Acorn Woodpecker	-	-	-	-	6+ Wofford Heights 6+ Tillie Creek Camp Ground c10 Lake Cachuma Recreation Area	1 Devereux Slough 4+ Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens 3 Santa Barbara Mission 4 Solvang 3+ Johoqui Falls	2 Fiscalini Ranch Preserve 2 Vineyard Drive, Paso Robles

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
Red-breasted Sapsucker	-	-	1 Yosemite Valley 1 June Lake	-	1 Wofford Heights	-	-
Red-naped Sapsucker	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
Downy Woodpecker	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 Fiscalini Ranch Preserve
Hairy Woodpecker	-	-	1 Horseshoe Lake, Mammoth Lakes	1 Lone Pine	-	-	-
Nuttall's Woodpecker	1 Fort Mason	1 Lovers Point, Pacific Grove	-	-	-	-	1 Fiscalini Ranch Preserve
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	-	-	-	2 Joshua Tree (Pueblo Trail)	-	-	-
Northern Flicker	-	-	-	-	-	1 Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens	-
Western Wood-pewee	-	1 Point Pinos cemetery	-	-	-	-	-
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	1 Fort Mason	-	-	1 Barker Dam, Joshua Tree NP	-	-	-
Black Phoebe	2 Fort Mason	Many Point Pinos 1 Point Lobos	4 Yosemite	1 Lone Pine	2 Tillie Creek Campground 2 Kern River Preserve	4+ Goleta	Sev
Say's Phoebe	-	-	3 Bodie 1 Mono Lake	1 Joshua Tree (Latham Trail)	-	1 North Campus Open Space 1 Devereux Slough 1 nr Johoqui Falls	1 Fiscalini Ranch Preserve
Cassin's Kingbird	-	-	-	-	-	7 North Campus Open Space	-
Tropical Kingbird	-	-	-	-	-	1 North Campus Open Space	1 prob Pismo Beach Monarch Sanctuary 1 prob Cambria
Loggerhead Shrike	-	-	-	1 Joshua Tree NP	-	-	-
Warbling Vireo	-	-	-	1 Lone Pine	-	-	-
Bell's Vireo	-	-	1 June Lake	-	-	-	-
Hutton's Vireo	-	-	-	-	-	1 Devereux Slough	1 Fiscalini Ranch Preserve
Steller's Jay	-	4 Point Pinos Cemetery 4+ Point Lobos	30+ Yosemite Valley 10+ June Lake 8+ Mammoth Lakes	-	-	-	4 Cambria

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
California Scrub-jay	-	4 Pacific Grove 6 Point Pinos incl cemetery 4 Carmel		3+ Joshua Tree NP 2 Big Morongo Canyon	4 Wofford Heights 7 Tillie Creek Campground	3+ Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens 3+ Lake Cachuma Recreation Area 2 Solvang	3+ Cambria
Clark's Nutcracker	-	-	10+ June Lake 2+ Lake George 1 Convict Lake	-	-	-	-
Yellow-billed Magpie	-	-	-	-	-	3 or 4 probable from car near Lompoc	5+ Vineyard Drive, Paso Robles
Raven	-	2+ Yosemite	1 Mammoth Lakes 1 Convict lake	5 Lone Pine 2 Alabama Hills 3+ Joshua tree	20+ Wofford Heights	-	-
American Crow	Common	Common	Common	Scarce	-	50+ Santa Barbara Mission	Common
Barn Swallow	c20 Point Pinos	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oak Titmouse	-	2+ Carmel	-	-	4+ Tillie Creek Campground	2 Goleta 1 State Street, Santa Barbara 2 Solvang 2 Lake Cachuma Recreation Area	3+ Cambria
Mountain Chickadee	-	-	4+ June Lake 1+ Horseshoe Lake 2 Lake George	-	-	-	-
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	2 Fort Mason	2 Point Pinos Cemetery	-	-	-	-	5+ Cambria
Verdin	-	-	-	1 Barker Dam, Joshua Tree NP 1 Pueblo Trail, Joshua Tree 1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
Bushtit	-	-	-	-	6 Tillie Creek Campground	3 North Campus Open Space	3 Cambria
White-breasted Nuthatch	-	2 Point Pinos Cemetery	1 June Lake	-	-	2 Lake Cachuma Recreation Area 1 Johoqui Falls	-
Pygmy Nuthatch	2 Fort Mason	3 Carmel	3 June Lake	-	-	-	5 Cambria
Brown Creeper	-	1+ Point Pinos Cemetery	1 Yosemite	1 Mt Whitney Trailhead	-	-	1 Cambria

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
Bewick's Wren	-	-	-	2 Big Morongo Canyon	1 Kern River Preserve	-	-
House Wren	-	1 Point Pinos Lighthouse	-	1 Barker Dam, Joshua Tree NP	-	1 North Campus Open Space	-
Cactus Wren	-	-	-	5 Sunset and Pueblo Trails, Joshua Tree	-	-	-
Rock Wren	-	-	-	3 Joshua Tree NP	-	-	-
Townsend's Solitaire	-	-	1 June Lake	1 Diaz Lake	1 Trail of 100 Giants, Sequoia National Forest	-	-
Mountain Bluebird	-	-	6+ Bodie State Park	-	-	-	-
Western Bluebird	-	8 Point Pinos Cemetery	1 June Lake			2 Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens 2 Isla Vista 2+ Lake Cachuma Recreation Area	5 Cambria 2 Vineyard Drive, Paso Robles
American Robin	2 Fort Mason	-	2 Yosemite 2 June lake 5 Mono Lake	-	-	-	-
Northern Mockingbird	1 Fort Mason	-	-	2+ Joshua Tree	2+ Wofford Heights	1+ Santa Barbara Mission	1+ Cambria
California Thrasher	-	1 Asilomar Beach	-	-	-	-	-
Sage Thrasher	-	-	1 Bodie State Park	-	-	-	-
Starling	c20 Fort Mason	c10 Point Pinos 3+ Lovers Point, Pacific Grove	4 June Lake 4 Mono Lake	-	-	c20 Lake Cachuma Recreation Area	10+ Cambria
Phainopepla	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	2 Wofford Heights 4 Tillie Creek Campground	-	-
Orange-crowned Warbler	-	-	1 June Lake	2 Big Morongo Canyon 1 Barker Dam, Joshua Tree NP	-	2 Goleta	1 Fiscalini Ranch Preserve
Nashville Warbler	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
Yellow Warbler	3 Fort Mason	1+ Point Pinos Cemetery	2 June Lake 1 Convict Lake	-	-	2 Goleta	-
Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler	-	-	2 Yosemite c20 June Lake 1 Lake George			6+ Goleta 3+ Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens 3 Isla Vista	3+ Cambria

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
Black-throated Grey Warbler	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon 1 Latham Trail, Joshua Tree	-	-	-
Townsend's Warbler	-	3+ Point Pinos streets 4+ Point Pinos Cemetery 2 Point Lobos 1 Lovers Point, Pacific Grove	-	-	1 Kern River Preserve	1 Whitman Street, Goleta	5 Cambria
Black-and-white Warbler	-	-	-	-	1 Kern River Preserve	-	-
Chestnut-sided Warbler	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
MacGillivray's Warbler	-	-	-	-	-	1 North Campus Open Space	-
Yellowthroat	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	3+ North Campus Open Space	1 Cambria
Wilson's Warbler	-	-	-	3 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
Western Tanager	-	1 Lovers Point, Pacific Grove	1 Yosemite	2 Big Morongo Canyon	2 Tillie Creek Campground	-	-
Black-headed Grosbeak	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	-	-	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	-	-
California Towhee	3 Fort Mason	1 Point Pinos Lighthouse	-	1 Big Morongo Canyon	2 Tillie Creek Campground	1 North Campus Open Space 2 Devereux Slough	15+ Cambria
Sagebrush Sparrow	-	-	2 Bodie State Park	1 Haiwee Reservoir	-	-	-
Black-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	5+ Joshua Tree 2 Joshua Tree NP	-	-	-
Chipping Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	5 North Campus Open Space	-
Savannah Sparrow	-	4+ Moss Landing	-	-	-	-	-
Lark Sparrow	-	-	-	-	4 Wofford Heights	-	-
Golden-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 Cambria
White-crowned Sparrow	Common	Common	Just 1 Yosemite Common June Lake area	Common	Common	Common	Common

	San Francisco	Monterey and Pacific Grove area	Yosemite and June Lake areas	Lone Pine and Joshua Tree areas	Lake Isabella/Wofford Heights	Santa Barbara and Goleta area	Cambria area
Song Sparrow	6 Fort Mason	1 Point Pinos Cemetery	1 June Lake	1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	5+ Goleta	7+ Cambria
Lincoln's Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	1 North Campus Open Space	-
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	1 Fort Mason	c20 Point Pinos Cemetery	20+ Yosemite 1 Lake George	4 Mt Whitney Trailhead	-	6 Devereux Slough 3 Johoqui Falls	2 Cambria
Red-winged Blackbird	-	-	3+ June Lake 4 Mono Lake	-	-	3+ Goleta Beach	-
Tricoloured Blackbird	-	c20 Lovers Point, Pacific Grove	-	-	-	-	-
Brewer's Blackbird	-	c20 Lovers Point, Pacific Grove 4 Moss Landing 1 Carmel 1 Monterey	c20 Yosemite c10 June Lake c20 Mono Lake sev Mammoth Lakes	c20 Lone Pine	-	Several Goleta	c20 Cambria
Great-tailed Grackle	-	-	-	5 Peggy Sue's 50s Diner, Yermo	-	1 Stearns Wharf, Santa Barbara	-
Common Grackle	-	-	-	4 Lone Pine	-	2 Solvang	-
Cassin's Finch	-	-	c10 June Lake	-	-	-	-
House Finch	C40 Fort Mason	common Point Pinos	1 Horseshoe Lake	c10 Lone Pine several Diaz lake several Joshua Tree and NP 1 Big Morongo Canyon	-	Several Goleta	-
Lawrence's Goldfinch	-	-	-	-	5+ Tillie Creek Campground	-	-
Lesser Goldfinch	2+ Fort Mason	2 Point Pinos Lighthouse	-	c20 Lone Pine 3 Latham Trail, Joshua Tree 3 Big Morongo Canyon	-	1 Goleta	2 Cambria
House Sparrow	Several	-	-	Several Lone Pine 2 Latham Trail, Joshua Tree	Several Wofford Heights	Common	Common
Scaly-breasted Munia	-	-	-	-	-	5+ North Campus Open Space	-

Geoff Upton, Southern England
November 2022

Record shots – please let me know if ID is incorrect



Western Sandpipers, beach road, Moss Landing



Least Sandpiper, Moss Landing



Savannah Sparrow, Moss Landing



Tricoloured Blackbirds, Lovers Point, Pacific Grove



Cassin's Finch, June Lake



Townsend's Solitaire, June Lake



Townsend's Solitaire, Diaz Lake



Black-and-white Warbler, Kern River Preserve



Lawrence's Goldfinches, Tillie Creek, Wofford Heights



Harris's Hawk, Big Morongo Canyon



Rose-breasted and Black-headed Grosbeaks, Big Morongo Canyon