

Field Trip Report - Mines Road/Del Puerto Canyon
April 16-17, 2011 Field Trip
Leader: Terry Colborn

Fourteen birders needing a good dose of spring birding joined Terry Colborn for the annual weekend trek to Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon Road. This popular destination continues to draw many groups of birders every spring in search of the returning migrants, and local



Great-Horned Owl

resident species. Starting at Murrieta's Well Winery, we had beautiful views of a **White-tailed Kite** as it hovered against a dark gray sky. We located the resident **Great Horned Owl** in its favorite perch in a cottonwood. Also present were several **Eurasian Collared-Dove** giving their distinct "hoo-hoooo-hoo" call. Along the creekside riparian area near the entrance to the winery, we added a singing **Bewick's Wren** and a **Northern Flicker** dining on termites in an exposed oak. We could all hear the introductory note of the recently arrived **Swainson's Thrush**, but were unable to coax the bird into view. A male **Downy Woodpecker** atop a pole was a treat.

On Mines Road, we stopped to pick through a number of birds moving about, including several

pair of **Yellow-billed Magpie** working their nests, **Western Kingbird** and **Wild Turkey**. Our second stop gave us great scope views of a **Great horned Owl** on the nest, with two downy chicks clearly visible. A **Cooper's Hawk** soared high over head.

We visited Del Valle Regional Park where we spent time distinguishing **Western Grebe** from **Clark's Grebe**. As we watched, several **Forster's Terns** hunted over the lake. Eight **Bufflehead** were also present, and we briefly glimpsed an **Osprey** overhead. We walked under the bridge and were treated to a **Bewick's Wren** building a nest at eye-level. We also quickly spotted **Barn, Tree, Cliff** and **Rough-winged Swallow**, while several **White-throated Swift**



Yellow-billed Magpie

zipped about. At the trailer turn-around lot, we scoped the canyon below and found two adult **Bald Eagles**, one of which was on the nest! A pair of **Western Bluebird** made sallies for airborne insects from nearby perches. En route, several **Ring-necked Duck** were spotted on a small farm pond. At the Junction Store, we found a pair of **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, species we have missed in some years. The group enjoyed a delicious Mexican dinner in Patterson, where we spent the night.

On a beautiful, sunny, wind-free Sunday morning we headed up Del Puerto Canyon Road. Our first stop gave us great looks of **Savannah Sparrow**, **White-crowned Sparrow** and a few distant **Horned Lark**. We listened carefully as several birders with very good ears could detect the insect-like call of **Grasshopper Sparrow**, a species that is known to nest in the grasslands near the start of the canyon. Further along Del Puerto Canyon we found a very cooperative pair of **Phainopepla**, and watched as a pair of **Say's Phoebe** tended three young in a nearby nest. At the "Moon Rocks" careful searching turned up a **Barn Owl**. A beautiful pair of **Bullock's Orioles** remained long enough for us to have good scope views. Nearby, a young **Golden Eagle** soared overhead. We had the good fortune at one stop to get close-up views of a cooperative **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** as it sang from its rocky perch. **Rock Wren** and a **Canyon Wren** were spotted, as was a **Green Heron** that flushed from the creek below us. A **Gopher Snake** on the road halted our caravan, until Terry caught the reptile and moved it well out of the way.

A stop at Frank Raines Park and the Deer Creek Campground produced **Nuttall's, Acorn** and **Hairy Woodpecker**. An extremely cooperative male **Western Tanager** provided our photographers with frame-filling shots! **House Wren** and a pair of **Chipping Sparrow** rounded out the visit. Back at the junction of Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon, we headed south down San Antonio Road and found a pair of **Wood Duck** at the far end of their favorite pond. Our last stop gave us a small flock of **Tri-colored Blackbirds** working the horse corral, several **Brown-headed Cowbirds** and a lone pair of **American Wigeon** on the pond. Several participants spotted at the traditional location and found several **Lewis's Woodpeckers**. We tallied 99 species for our efforts.

By Terry Colborn

Photos by Bud Hedrick