

# Marin Audubon Society

## Field Trip Report - Mines Road/Del Puerto Canyon

May 1-2, 2010

Leader: Terry Colburn

### Day 1

Sixteen birders joined Terry Colborn for the annual weekend trek to bird Mines Road on Saturday, followed by Del Puerto Canyon on Sunday. This very popular destination has long been recognized as one of the premier springtime birding areas in the Bay Area to observe a wide array of breeding resident species and neo-tropical migrants. We met at Murrieta's Well Winery, where we located a **Great-horned Owl** in its favorite perch high up in a Cottonwood. Also present was a beautiful pair of **Bullock's Orioles** that gave everyone satisfying looks. Nearby several **Eurasian Collared-Doves** gave their distinct "hoo-hoooo-hoo" call. Along the creek side riparian area near the entrance to the winery, we added **Wilson's** and **Orange-crowned Warbler**. In the oak woodland, a couple of lucky folks picked out a male **Black-throated Gray Warbler**. Unfortunately we were unable to locate the uncooperative migrant.

On Mines Road, we stopped to scope a **Red-tailed Hawk** nest with two downy chicks in it. As we watched, one of the parents returned to the nest with a small mammal, which was quickly devoured by the chicks. We also watched a number of **Western Kingbird**, **Yellow-billed Magpie**, **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, and **Black-headed Grosbeak**.

Several **Wild Turkeys** called from a nearby field, while a small flock of **Cedar Waxwings** dropped in to feed in a small tree directly in front of us, giving us excellent scope views of these handsome birds. Dave "Eagle-eye" MacKenzie was quick to put his scope on a **Golden Eagle** atop a transmission tower. A pair of **Western Tanager** was spotted less than 20 yards away, giving everyone gratifying looks.



Photo Beth Branthaver

We visited Del Valle Regional Park where we quickly spotted **Barn, Tree, Cliff, Violet-green** and **Rough-winged Swallow**. Several **White-throated Swift** coursed directly over the bridge, coming within only a few feet of us. On the lake, we spent time working on the field marks that distinguish **Western Grebe** from **Clark's Grebe**. Dave MacKenzie again spotted another great bird teed up in a Douglas fir,

an adult **Bald Eagle**! An elusive **Warbling Vireo** called directly from a tree above us, but we could only glimpse it as it flitted about before flying out the “back” door. A very cooperative **Swainson’s Thrush** more than made up for the shy vireo. A pair of **Western Bluebird** made sallies for airborne insects from near-by perches. An **Osprey** and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** flew over the lake, boosting our raptor numbers, while we detected the presence of a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** as it called from a perch.

Further along Mines Road we found a **Green Heron**, while a flycatcher went unidentified as it called briefly from a distant branch before going silent and disappearing altogether. A new tenant has moved into the old CDF firehouse quarters and posted No Trespassing signs, eliminating one of our favorite stops to search for **Lawrence’s Goldfinch**.

We enjoyed a great Mexican dinner in Patterson, before heading to our hotel.

## Day 2

On Sunday morning we were greeted with 25 mph winds as we headed up Del Puerto Canyon Road. Our hopes of finding **Grasshopper Sparrow**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** and **Costa’s Hummingbird** were dashed by the persistent winds.



Photo David Wimpfheimer

Further along Del Puerto Canyon we did find **Say’s Phoebe**, **Phainopepla**, **Rock and Canyon Wren**, and several **Ash-throated Flycatchers**. A roosting **Great-horned Owl** at “Graffiti Rock” provided nice in-the-scope views for everyone. We had the good fortune at one stop to get close-up views of several **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** as they first sang, and then landed within ten feet of us! A three-foot Pacific Rattlesnake was spotted as it stretched out on the warm road. Using his snake stick, Terry carefully moved the serpent well off the road as he explained the two cardinal rules when one encounters poisonous snakes. Rule #1, “Never handle a poisonous snake,” and Rule #2, “Always follow Rule #1!”

A stop at Frank Rains Park and the Deer Creek Campground produced nesting a pair of **House Wrens**, as a **Hairy Woodpecker** called from the forest.

At the junction of Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon we headed south down San Antonio Road in search of a couple of species that had eluded us. We had found several **Lewis’s Woodpeckers**, with two birds teeing up a short distance away. A pair of **Wood Duck** was at the far end of their favorite pond. A couple of **Tri-colored Blackbirds** zipped by us as we enjoyed the nice warm sun and no wind! Our last stop gave us our only **Spotted Sandpiper** and two female **Bufflehead**.

At day’s end, a tally of our checklist showed we found 93 species for our efforts.

Terry Colborn  
Leader