

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRDING TOUR

January 14-21, 2023

A birding tour organized by *Seven Ponds Nature Center & Birding Los Angeles and Beyond*

From one convenient home base we'll explore the coast, mountains, deserts, and Santa Cruz Island, along with a quest for the majestic California Condor!



Join us for a winter getaway tour to sunny Southern California with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Luke Tiller of *Birding Los Angeles and Beyond*. With a base of operations in Pasadena, we'll have access to a number of different habitats as we search out the special birds of Southern California. Our birding destinations will change each day, from coast to urban to desert to mountains. A boat trip to Santa Cruz Island will find us in search of the highly endemic Island Scrub-Jay. A birding trip to Southern California wouldn't be complete without seeking the highly-endangered California Condor. All this and more will make our SoCal tour a birding adventure to remember.

## TOUR ITINERARY

Our daily activities will be flexible based on species we've seen to date and recent bird reports, but the following outline provides a preliminary plan of how we will spend our days. Plans are subject to change if something due to weather conditions and/or road and park closures. Note: the birds mentioned are not intended to be an exhaustive list – just a sampling of what may be found at each location.

**Day 1 - Saturday, January 14 - Arrival Day:** Plan to arrive at our lodging in Pasadena by mid-afternoon. You can fly into LAX or Burbank and take an Uber/Lyft ride to our hotel. We'll have a short meeting for introductions and tour logistics before heading off to dinner. Time permitting we'll go out after dinner in search of established parrots roosting for the evening.



**Day 2 - Sunday, January 15 - Coastal & Urban Birding Day:** We kick off our tour exploring the LA Basin and adjacent Orange County. Here we will explore coastal sage scrub for **Greater Roadrunner**, **Cactus Wren**, and the prized **California Gnatcatcher**. Our other main target for the day will be **Ridgway's Rail**, the southwestern cousin of the Clapper Rail. We will stop at pretty beaches and search rocky shoreline habitats for "rockpipers" like **Surfbird**, **Black Turnstone**, **Black Oystercatcher**, and **Wandering Tattler**. Other targets on the day will include a raft of introduced ABA-countable species, such as **Scaly-breasted Munia**, **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet**, and **Red-whiskered Bulbul**.

**Day 3 - Monday, January 16 - Desert Birding Day:** We'll spend the day on the edge of the Mojave Desert. The Antelope Valley's mix of desert scrub and agricultural land hosts a variety of interesting species. The desert promises both **LeConte's Thrasher** and **Bell's Sparrow** and perhaps **Sagebrush Sparrow**, too. Agricultural land here can hold a spectacular number and variety of birds of prey including highly sought raptors such as **Ferruginous Hawk**, **Prairie Falcon**, and **White-tailed Kite**. There will also be Red-tailed Hawks of many flavors including the chance of **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk**. Other possibilities on the day include **Ross's Goose**, **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Tricolored Blackbird**, **Mountain Plover**, and **Mountain Bluebird**.



**Day 4 - Tuesday, January 17 - Santa Cruz Island Birding Day:** Today we will head out to California's "Galapagos" - the Channel Islands - for the endemic **Island Scrub Jay**. The islands hold a myriad of fascinating and endemic plants, bird subspecies, and animal species including the adorable Island Gray Fox. The trip out to the island is a great opportunity to look for a few pelagic bird species, too, with the possibility of alcids, jaegers, and gulls. Two specialties we might hope to pick up on the trip include **Black-vented Shearwater** and **Scripps's Murrelet**. There is always the chance for cool cetacean encounters from the boat as well.

**Day 5 - Wednesday, January 18 - Mountain Birding Day:** Departing early this morning, we will head to the San Gabriel Mountains. Here we will climb up to as high as 8,000 feet to seek out some of the special denizens that call these peaks home: **White-headed Woodpecker**, **Clark's Nutcracker**, **Mountain Quail**, **Williamson's Sapsucker**, and **Red-breasted Sapsucker**. We will also visit feeders that host **California Scrub-Jay**, **Steller's Jay**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, and more. Chaparral here will contain **Fox Sparrow** (possibly of the local Thick-billed race), **Rufous-crowned Sparrow**, and **Spotted Towhee** among others. It's hard to believe that these peaceful and stunning mountains are just a stone's throw from downtown Los Angeles.





**Day 6 - Thursday, 19 - California Condor Day:** Today we will wind our way north out towards condor country. Among the rolling hills and deep canyon chasms we will search out our main target, the awesome **California Condor**. Back from the brink of extinction, this incredible bird dwarfs those that share the skies with it including Turkey Vultures and Golden Eagles. We will also seek out another local specialty: **Yellow-Billed Magpie**. The oak chaparral in which we find this California endemic should also yield **Wrentit, California Quail, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and Nuttall's Woodpecker**.

**Day 7 - Friday, January 20 - Clean-up Day:** This “extra” day can be used in many ways. If a rarity has been reported during our stay, we can attempt a chase. If there are key target birds still remaining on our

“most wanted” list, we can try to track them down. If there is a place we particularly enjoyed, we can revisit. If our boat trip to Santa Cruz Island was cancelled due to weather, we may be able to reschedule. Lot’s of possibilities and one promise: we will put this final day to good use and finish our tour on a high note!



**Day 8 - Saturday, January 21 - Departure Day:** Plan your departure for any time today. Continental breakfast at the hotel. You are responsible for arranging your own ride to your departure airport. Hotel checkout is 11:00 AM.

## **TOUR LEADERS**



Originally from London, England, **Luke Tiller** of *Birding Los Angeles and Beyond* transplanted to the United States in 2003. As a professional hawkwatcher for ten plus seasons, Luke has been fortunate enough to travel the world to witness raptor migration across North America, Europe and the Middle East. Between 2012 and 2018 he sat on the board of the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), helping to successfully relaunch their tours program.

Luke is currently based in Altadena, California and when not employed as an environmental consultant he works as a professional tour guide for companies including *Rockjumpers, Wildside Nature Tours, and High Lonesome Bird Tours*. As a guide Luke enjoys sharing the wonderful places that he has visited with other people, whether in his own backyard in Los Angeles or further afield. The tours he most enjoys are those that include great birds, beautiful scenery, and some sense of epic wildlife spectacle. Luke says “My work as a tour leader is perfect in that allows me to combine my love of birds and birding with meeting up with interesting people and sharing great natural history experiences.”

**Daryl Bernard** is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. He enjoys organizing trips and tours, and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Daryl has organized and led numerous birding field tours throughout North America, many local birding trips in Michigan, and bird walks for Seven Ponds as well as birding festivals. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in southeast Michigan, and regularly presents birding programs at Audubon clubs, libraries, and birding festivals.



## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Lodging for this tour will conveniently be in one location in Pasadena, California. This central location will allow easy access to a number of birding habitats in all directions, with fairly limited driving necessary.

## **LOCAL TRANSPORTATION**

We will travel in two minivans. Carl Bendorf of *Colorado Birding Adventures* will be along on the tour to help with driving duties, and we'll be sure to mix up our seating each day so everybody gets time in both vans.

## **MEALS**

All meals are included in this tour, from dinner on Day 1 (arrival day) to breakfast on Day 8. Some breakfasts will be provided by our hotel, continental-style, while others will be provided by the trip leader. We will keep the van stocked with various snacks to tide you over between meals. Lunches will be mostly in the field, picnic-style. For dinner each evening we will enjoy a different restaurant near or en route to our hotel.

## **FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

- Tour Fee: \$2,750 per person in double occupancy in Pasadena, California
- Deposit: \$300 (due upon online registration)
- Final Payment Due (\$2,450): December 1, 2022
- Group size is limited to **10 individuals** and early registration is encouraged

### **WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:**

- guide service for six full days of birding – Luke will be with us every birding step of the way
- lodging for seven nights in double occupancy
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
- local ground transportation in two minivans
- boat trip to/from Santa Cruz Island
- all park entrance fees, parking fees, tolls, etc.
- pre-trip information and a post-trip mailing with an annotated list of all birds observed by the group
- eBird checklist sharing (for participants who use eBird)

### **WHAT THE TOUR FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- your airfare to and from Los Angeles, California
- your ground transportation between your arrival/departure airport and our hotel in Pasadena
- personal snacks, additional drinks, and alcoholic beverages
- laundry
- other items of a personal nature
- gratuity for local birding guide services (optional)

**ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN FOR SEVEN PONDS MEMBERS ON  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022 at 9:00 AM**

**ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2022 at 9:00 AM**

Registration for this tour will take place online at [www.sevenponds.org](http://www.sevenponds.org) with a \$300 deposit due at the time of registration. At the Seven Ponds home page, go to Programs then Seven Ponds Field Tours and select the Southern California Birding Field Tour registration button. You should receive an email confirmation upon successfully completing your online registration. Registered participants will be mailed a registration form to return.

For more information, contact Daryl Bernard at (810) 796-3200 or (989) 513-5195 (cell)  
or via e-mail at [dbernard@sevenponds.org](mailto:dbernard@sevenponds.org).

PHOTOS USED BY PERMISSION, COURTESY OF:

Bill Bouton – *Island Scrub-Jay (front page)* · *Yellow-billed Magpie*

Luke Tiller – *California Gnatcatcher* · *Ridgeway's Rail* · *LeConte's Thrasher* · *Island Scrub-Jay (back page)*

Carol M. Highsmith – *Santa Cruz Island aerial view*

Francesco Veronesi – *White-headed Woodpecker*

Phil Armitage – *California Condor*

