

## **Field Trip Report**

**Gray Lodge & Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge – December 5&6 2009**

Text by Sande Chilvers

Photos Bob Chilvers

### **Leader; Bruce Deuel**

On a cold, wind-whipped day a stalwart group of birders followed leader Bruce Deuel around Gray Lodge on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup> — his 34<sup>th</sup> annual field trip for the Marin Audubon Society! Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese and ducks galore (American Wigeons, Buffleheads, Pintails, Shovelers, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Gadwalls) were in the pond next to the parking lot.



Circling around the pond we were treated to a few blue-morph Snow Geese, Common Moorhens, a Great-horned Owl, White-faced Ibises, and a great many raptors. On one end of the pond River Otters were terrorizing the American Coots. We spotted a Belted Kingfisher nearby and flushed an American Bittern. On our drive toward Sutter Buttes we spied our first Golden Eagle.



Back at Gray Lodge a lingering Technicolor dusk was the backdrop for the evening fly-out of thousands of Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, innumerable silhouetted ducks and Black-crowned Night Herons. Flying in the opposite direction overhead Sandhill Cranes gave their rattling call. In the rushes Red-winged Blackbirds serenaded.

Sunday, December 6, we met in Oroville and birded the levee along the Feather River. Best birds were a female Phainopepla, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, a juvenile Bald Eagle and a juvenile Peregrine Falcon harassing an Osprey over the river. On the river Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes and Buffleheads shared space while a Belted Kingfisher worked the banks. At the Thermalito Afterbay we saw Common Loons, Canvasbacks, Redheads and all five kinds of grebes for these parts. We saw Wilson's Snipes and American Pipits in a field on our way to the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, and an adult Bald Eagle flew overhead. The Arctic wind continued at the refuge and kept the birds away from the viewing platform, but we did see two male Ring-necked Pheasants and, surprisingly, a Yellow-billed Magpie. On the auto tour at the refuge notable birds were Lesser Scaup, a Cackling Goose, another Golden Eagle, more Common Moorhens, a Ring-necked Duck and Tundra Swans. In all, 113 species were spotted by our group. Bruce's Trip #34 for MAS was another successful event, and he made it look easy.



By Sande Chilvers

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