2027
Kane County Audubon
S. California Birding Trip

Join Kane County Audubon, a chapter of Illinois Audubon, for an exciting trip to Southern California! We'll bird our way through deserts, over mountains, along the coast and set sail twice. One of the themes for this trip will be constant movement. That means there is only one time when we stay for two nights. Everywhere else is a one-night stay. That allows us to explore many different habitats without backtracking. There will be a lot of driving on this trip.

We'll enjoy two boat trips. One of which will be a whale watching boat with our own private bird guide. Our other boat trip will be to Santa Cruz Island for the endemic Island Scrub Jay. And we'll spend some time at the beautiful Joshua Tree National Park.

We'll visit as many hotspots as possible in quest of everything from shorebirds such as Wandering Tattler, Black Turnstone and Black Oystercatcher to Elegant Tern, exotics like Swinhoe's White-eye, Red-crowned Amazon and Red-masked Parakeet, to California natives like Bushtit, Wrentit, Mountain Quail, California Scrub Jay, Oak Titmouse and if we are very very lucky California Condor.

April 17

Fly into San Diego in the morning. After picking up the van and groceries, we'll hit some coastal hotspots.

Kickoff dinner at 7 pm

Target Birds: Surf Scoter, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Black Turnstone, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Anna's Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Western Gull, Heermann's Gull, Black Skimmer, Elegant Tern, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egret, Black Phoebe, Red-crowned Amazon, Red-masked Parakeet, Black Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Bushtit, Swinhoe's White-eye, Scaly-breasted Munia

Overnight Dana Point

April 18

Our boat leaves at 10 am this morning and it is only a few minutes to the dock so we can have our one and only leisurely breakfast. We'll check out the marina area before we head to the dock for 9:15 to meet our private bird guide and find good seats. The tour lasts about 3 hours, and we hope to see Humpback and Gray Whales, dolphins and hopefully sea birds.

We'll have a quick lunch before we hit the road towards Salton Sea. There are a few stops planned on the way to our hotel in Brawley, about a two hour drive.

Target Birds: Brant, Surf Scoter, Parasitic Jager, Pomarine Jager, Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin's Auklet, Scripps' Murrelet, Bonaparte's Gull, Western Gull, California Gull, Elegant Tern, Royal Tern, Western Grebe, Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Black Storm Petrel, Pink-footed Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Black-vented Shearwater, Cocos Booby, Mountain Quail, Gray Vireo, Vermillion Flycatcher, California Scrub Jay, Wrentit, Canyon Wren, Phainopepla, Lesser Goldfinch, Black-chinned Sparrow, California Towhee, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Common Raven, Violet-green Swallow

Overnight Brawley

April 19

We'll spend a good part of the day exploring around the Salton Sea. The Sea is an accidental lake sitting in the Colorado Desert on the southern end of the San Andreas fault. It's 236 feet below sea level. It was created when an irrigation cut in the Colorado River overflowed in 1905, pouring water into what had been a dry lakebed. This overflow continued for years forming California's biggest lake. It has become an important habitat for migrating birds and also has interesting geological features such as mud pots and mud volcanoes.

Afterwards we'll head to Twentynine Palms and Joshua Tree National Park. If we have time we will take a drive through the park before dinner.

Target Birds: Common Ground Dove, White-winged Dove, Cinnamon Teal, Avocet, Western Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Forester's Tern, Clark's Grebe, Neotropic Cormorant, Snowy Egret, Burrowing Owl, Black Phoebe, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Western Kingbird, Verdin, Lesser Goldfinch, Western Meadowlark, MacGivillray's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler. Townsend's Warbler, Greater Roadrunner, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Abert's Towhee, Bullock's Oriole

Overnight Twentynine Palms

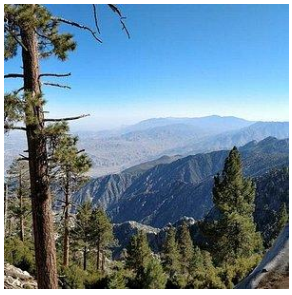
April 20

We'll spend the morning in the National Park and then drive to Idyllwild, a small town in the San Jacinto Mountains about 5,000 feet in elevation.

Target Birds: Gambel's Quail, White-winged Dove, White-throated Swift, Costa's Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, California Scrub Jay, Oak Titmouse, Verdin, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Bewick's Wren, Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, Phainopepla, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Black-throated Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, California Towhee

Overnight in Idyllwild

April 21



Today we will spend time looking for mountain birds in a variety of hotspots. Our big goal, if we have not already seen it, is Mountain Quail. We'll do some short hikes and visit campgrounds, parks and a lake.

We have an almost 3-hour drive to our hotel for the night so we will hit the road after lunch.

Target birds: Mountain Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Nuttall's Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Mountain Chickadee, Acorn Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hammond's Flycatcher, California Scrub Jay, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, Violet-green Swallow, Bushtit, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Lesser Goldfinch, Spotted Towhee, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Bluebird, Lesser Goldfinch, Brewer's Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle

Overnight Lancaster

April 22

Today we'll start with a 90-minute drive to our only spot for LeConte's Thrasher on this trip.
We'll also look for Golden Eagle. Afterwards, we'll have a short drive to Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge where we hope to find California Condor! We'll leave midafternoon for our 2-hour drive to Ventura.

Target Birds: Golden Eagle, California Quail, California Condor, Roadrunner, Loggerhead Shrike, Bewick's Wren, Bell's Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Lesser Nighthawk, LeConte's Thrasher, Lark Sparrow, White-throated Swift, Anna's Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, California Scrub Jay, Oak Titmouse, Western Bluebird, Lawrence's Goldfinch, California Towhee

Overnight Ventura

April 23

Up and out early this morning for our day trip to Santa Cruz Island, in Channel Islands National Park.

We will get the earliest boat at 8 am. It is about an hour and 15 minutes each way. We'll be dropped off around 9:15 and picked up again around noon. First up is finding the Island Scrub Jay, of which there are only 2,000 left in the wild. This rare bird lives in only one place on Earth - Santa Cruz Island.

Once we find the Jay, we'll take a hike and hopefully find the Island Fox. This fox only lives on six of the eight Channel Islands. Each island population is recognized as a separate endemic subspecies and was almost extinct not long ago, but conservation measures pulled them back from the brink.

Once we arrive back on the mainland, we will have a quick lunch and stop at a few spots in the Ventura area if we did not the night before. Then we have a longish drive of around four hours to our home for the next two nights, San Ysidro.

Target Birds: Surf Scoter, Pigeon Guillemot, Bonaparte's Gull, Heerman's Gull, Western Gull, Pacific Loon, Brandt's Cormorant, Western Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Island Scrub Jay, Common Raven, Bushtit, Spotted Towhee

Overnight San Ysidro

April 24

We have all day to explore southernmost California. We'll see what we are missing and try to fill in any gaps.

Target birds: Cinnamon Teal, Ridgway's Rail, Black Oystercatcher, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, Least Tern, Elegant Tern, Royal Tern, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Western Gull, California Gull, Western Grebe, Cocos Booby, Snowy Plover, Burrowing Owl, Greater Roadrunner, White-throated Swift, Western Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Western Warbling Vireo, Bushtit, Wrentit, Swinhoe's White-eye, California Towhee, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Anna's Hummingbird, Red-shouldered Hawk, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Western Flycatcher, Bushtit, Wrentit, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lesser Goldfinch, Black-headed Grosbeak

Overnight San Ysidro

April 25

We'll have some time to bird today. The airport is very close, and we should get there at 2:30.

We'll try to clean up any missing species or re-visit a favorite spot.

Flights home!

Trip Details

This trip runs April 17 – April 25, 2027. Participants will need to arrive in San Diego by noon on the 17th.

Cost: approximately $2,000 per person. Final costs will be determined once registration is closed, and final bookings are made. This is based on 8 people maximum, excluding John and I. The cost includes all transportation once you are in San Diego, lodging, two boat trips, private guide on the whale boat, entrance fees, snacks and lunches taken in the field, (some lodging will include a free breakfast). All dinners are at your own expense.

Interested? Let Regina know and she will send out registration forms and further details. Then on September 18th at 8 am call or text Regina at **630-715-0428** to secure a place on the trip. First 8 people are on. A wait list will be maintained in case anyone drops out.