

# Santa Clarita CBC

Dec. 29, 2007

## Castaic

Targets: **Waterbirds – this is the best/only spot to see many species of marshbirds, gulls and ducks.**

Key areas:

- Picnic areas (west and east of lagoon) (**Woodpeckers, lingering warblers and other passerines**)
- Lagoon (**Loons, grebes, ducks, geese, Osprey, Vir. Rail, Sora, Least and Spotted sandpipers, herons/egrets, gulls, terns, swallows, Belted Kingfisher, Marsh Wren, Great-tailed Grackle**)
- Reservoir – scope from pullouts along Lake Hughes Rd. (**loons, Clark's Grebe, Common Goldeneye, Surf Scoter, Bald Eagle**)
- Pine groves and chamise scrub along Lake Hughes Rd. northeast of Reservoir (**Mountain Quail, Bell's Sage Sparrow, Rock Wren, WT Swift, Golden Eagle**)
- Sod fields to south - access vic. "Castaic Sports Complex" along Castaic Rd. south side of town (**Geese, Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike**)
- [Castaic Cr. south of Lagoon (access via spots complex)]
  - [alluvial scrub along wash]
  - [cottonwoods and oaks along Tapia Cyn. Rd., incl. picnic area]
  - [sage scrub north end of Charley Cyn. Rd.]

## Santa Clara River *(bird from bike paths along the levees of the river)*

Targets: **Ferruginous Hawk, White-tailed Kite, No. Harrier, Hairy Woodpecker, Tricolored Blackbird, Golden-crowned Kinglet?**

### WEST OF I-5

- Ag fields w. of Vacation Village and along Old Rd. (**Ferruginous Hawk, No. Harrier, Loggerhead Shrike, Horned Lark, Tricolored Blackbird, Mtn. Bluebird?**)
- Vacation Village RV Park along Hwy. 126 – many paths run through riparian forest behind park (**Tricolored Blackbird** in vic.)

### EAST OF I-5

- Riverwalk/Jefferson Apts. – enter west end of development, go to pkg lot at far west end, and walk east along river (**Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, Hairy Woodpecker, snipe**)
- Lower San Francisco Ck.– enter at Ave. Scott and walk along bikepath, east side of creek. (**Horned Lark, roadrunner**)
- SCR Trail at Bridgeport Apts. – enter east end of development and walk west along river (**Green Heron, Orange-cr. Warbler, sparrows**)
- ["Ave. Tibbs" access: north side of river, incl. round hill, RR x-ing, etc.]

## Valencia Parks/Newhall

Targets: **Allen's Hummingbird, lingering warblers/passerines (e.g. Townsend's and Black-thr. Gray Warbler?, Plumbeous Vireo?, Western Tanager?)**

### VALENCIA:

- Valencia Country Club pond (southwest corner of McBean/Magic Mtn. Pkwy)
  - Montecito Condos' "visitor" parking (**Canvasback, Hooded Merg.**)
  - Tourney Dr. (**Townsend's Warbler**)
  - Maintenance Yard (**Merlin, sparrows**)
- New golf course pond along Valencia Blvd. west of I-5 (**Bufflehead, Marsh Wren**)
- College of the Canyons (**Chipping Sparrow, Plumbeous Vireo?**)
- Vista Valencia Golf Club (**Canada Goose, Allen's Hummingbird, Mtn. Chickadee**)

### NEWHALL

- Quigley Cyn./"The Master's College" neighborhood (**BT Pigeon, Pine Siskin**)
- Eternal Valley Memorial Park (**Killdeer, WT Swift, Orange-crowned Warbler, roadrunner**)
- Newhall (Memorial) Park (**Allen's Hummingbird, sapsuckers**)
- [Whitney Cyn.]
- [Hart Park]
- [South Fork SCR Trail – enter either at Magic Mtn. Pkwy. and walk south, or at (northern) end of Newhall Ave. (vic. Hart H.S.) and walk north]
- [Circle Ranch Park/Sump off San Fernando Rd. (sparrows)]

## Walker Ranch/Placerita Cyn.

Targets: **Red-naped Sapsucker, Hutton's Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Fox Sparrow, Townsend's Solitaire?, Lewis' Woodpecker?**

Key areas:

- Robinson Ranch Golf Course; small ponds throughout course (**Ducks, herons/egrets**)
- Walker Ranch
  - East gate (**Mountain Quail**)
  - Waterfall Tr. (**Spotted Owl, Owls at night, Steller's Jay, Hairy Woodpecker, Canyon Wren, Brown Creeper**)
- **SPECIAL AREA (DSC ONLY):** Jato Rd. CSS off Golden Valley Rd. (**Prairie Falcon, Bell's Sage and Rufous-crowned sparrow**)
- [Pond south of Placerita Cyn. Rd. (ducks, raptors)]
- [Placerita Cyn. - check parking lot/picnic area and walk trail through canyon to Walker Ranch]
- [Sand Cyn. Rd. residential good for oak woodland birds – focus on larger oaks and wet areas, esp. irrigated "mini-pastures" and seeps.]
  - [Valley Ranch Rd. and Warmuth Rd. – *may do as a loop* (west side of S. Cyn. Rd.)]

- [Ravenhill Rd. (access via Placerita Cyn. Rd.)]
- [Lost Cyn. Rd., both east and west of Sand Cyn. Rd.]
- [Golden Valley Ranch – walk up fire roads from Placerita Cyn. Rd. (burned 2006)]
- ["Riverpark" – proposed park along south side of river of graded alluvial scrub w/ scattered cottonwoods; access via Soledad Cyn. Rd.]

**Bouquet Cyn.** (*note: edge of circle is large pullout w/ cottonwoods on east side of Bouquet Cyn. Rd., c. 1 mi. above intersection of "Sierra Pelona Rd.", a dirt trail, which also enters from east*)

Targets: **Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Greater Roadrunner; Cactus and Rock wrens, Rufous-crowned Sparrow** (arid scrub on slopes)

Key areas:

- "Central Park" along Bouquet Cyn. Rd. (**Peregrine Falcon**)
- L.A. Co. Proabation Camps (**Mtn. Chickadee**)
- Fields at intersection Bouquet Cyn. Rd. and Vasquez Cyn. Rd. (**Horned Lark, Vesper Sparrow**)
- Clumps of cottonwoods and willows at misc. pullouts along BC Rd. (**Barn Owl, Lawrence's Goldfinch**)
- Riparian area just south of Texas Cyn. Ranger Station, BC Rd. (**Townsend's Warbler, Hutton's Vireo**)
- "Zuni Campground" (**Hutton's Vireo**)
- First 1 mi. of Davenport Rd. from Sierra Hwy. (**Cactus Wren**)

**San Francisquito Cyn. - Upper** (*reachable by going north of Bouquet Cyn. Rd., west of Copper Hill Rd., then north on San Francisquito Cyn. Rd.*)

Key areas:

- First clump of cottonwoods around old ranchyard on west side of rd., and fallow fields just beyond (**Sapsuckers, Horned Lark, Mountain Bluebird, Vesper Sparrow**)
- Broad, sagebrush-rich alluvial scrub along west side of rd. (**Golden Eagle** overhead, **Greater Roadrunner, Loggerhead Shrike**)
- Low buckwheat-grassland CSS on east side of SFC Rd.; reached via Lowridge Rd. up to the ridge (**Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike**).
- Yards on east side of SFC Rd. with large *Pyracantha* shrubs and pines in front yards (**Cedar Waxwing, Varied Thrush? Plumbeous Vireo?**)
- San Francisquito Ranger station (**Sapsuckers, Mtn. Chickadee?**)
- **3 miles** of *riverbottom* from just north of SFC ranger station up to first shooting range on left (sign says "A Place to Shoot Guns") (**Hairy Woodpecker, Purple Finch, Canyon Wren?**)

**Parties:**

1. Castaic Lagoon/Lk. Hughes Rd.:
  2. Santa Clara River - West of I-5:
  3. Santa Clara River - Bridgeport/Riverpark/Ave. Tibbs:
  4. San Francisquito Cr.
  5. Valencia Parks/lakes:
  6. Newhall/Hart Park:
  7. Robinson Ranch/Sand Cyn. Rd.:
  8. Placerita Cyn./Walker Ranch:
  9. Bouquet Cyn./Vasquez Cyn. Rd.:
- [Jato Rd. (private - DSC only)]:
- [Castaic Cr./Tapia Cyn.]:
- [Whitney Cyn.]:
- [South Fork SCR trail]:
- [SCR east/Canyon Country]:

Misc. notes:

Several species of owls are possible within the count circle. Great Horned Owls are common throughout, and should be heard by participants the morning of the count (listen on your way to the car!). Barn Owl is an uncommon resident, most common within suburban areas (also listen for "clicking" or dry shrieks). Western Screech-Owl is resident in oak woodland, and may be found pre-dawn or at night at Placerita/Walker Ranch. Spotted Owl and Northern Pygmy-Owl are resident in very small numbers in the canyons of the San Gabriels along the southern edge of the circle. A special effort may be made for these pre-dawn on Jan. 03, or that evening.

## TOUGH CALLS TO KEEP IN MIND

**Wrentit:** dry, rough trill, like running fingernails across a comb

**Rufous-crowned Sparrow:** A quick "deeeer-deeeer" usu. coming from rocky/grassy slopes with arid coastal sage scrub

**Costa's Hummingbird:** very high-pitched ringing note, rising and then falling

**Allen's Hummingbird:** loud "zeeee-chuppity-chup" gen. heard around flowering eucalyptus

**Marsh Wren:** dry "chet" similar to but sharper and shorter than a Common Yellowthroat's call

**Mountain Quail:** a quiet, liquidy "whoop?" or "poyp?" often given from dense chaparral-covered slopes

**Greater Roadrunner:** Gives a dry clacking (made by the bill) as well as a quiet whimpering "cooo, cooo, cooo" descending slightly in pitch, often compared to a dog.

**Sapsuckers:** a scratchy, descending "kyyyyarrrrrr," rougher than the clear "kyaa!" of a flicker.

**Hutton's Vireo:** a harsh, repeated descending "CHEEE-ur" often heard from deep in oak groves or willow thickets

**Oak Titmouse** can give similar-sounding, repeated calls like "peter, peter, peter, peter" but aren't nearly as rough and scratchy; check all of these out.

**Rock Wren:** a high, repeated, lisping "ki-dii" almost with the quality of a pebble hitting something metal; often heard from rock outcrops

**Sage Sparrow:** a high-pitched, bell-like "tink" note, which always sounds (to me) like my jacket zipper rattling around as I walk; almost always found in dense tracts of chamise chaparral (note: this can be similar to the bell-like call of **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, which is almost always heard overhead as the birds are in flight)

Both **Lincoln's Sparrow** and certain races of **Fox Sparrow** give a loud "TSIP" calls, but are rarely found in the same spots. Lincoln's prefers scrub near water and dense grass and Fox likes dry chaparral-covered slopes with fallen leaves to scratch around in.

**Spotted Towhee** doesn't say "chewink" like some guides say, but give a raspy "Churrr-rrr"

**California Thrasher:** if not calling, will give a smacking "CHUP" similar to but sharper than the mellow "chuck?" of the **Hermit Thrush**

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** gives a "juicy" sounding "tsip?" like sucking in air through your teeth

## OTHER HINTS

In the Santa Clara River Valley, birds are highly concentrated around water in winter, so focus on low, damp spots within your region. If you think you might have some birds in a thicket, stand back a few feet and pish/squeak quietly – you'd be surprised what comes out to investigate. Most of the sparrows you'll see will be **White-crowned**, but the others may be found by investigating each one of these. Note any smaller sparrows within White-crowned flocks, which may be **Song**, **Lincoln's**, **Savannah**, etc. Some rare sparrows, e.g. Brewer's and Vesper, are often seen singly and alone, away from flocks, where others, e.g. **Harris'** and **White-throated**, will be in flocks of White-crowns.

99.9% of the warblers you see will be the "**Audubon's**" form of the Yellow-rumped, which have a distinct "scissors-snipping" call, and white tail spots. The "**Myrtle**" form, rare here in winter, has a much drier call, and a distinct white eyebrow and throat. Pay special attention to anything that doesn't act/look/sound like one of these!