

Monterey Field Trip October 16-17, 2021 by Bruce Thomsen

For October, Monterey was our choice for an overnight field trip. We met our guide Amanda Preece, at **Jack's Peak County Park**. We couldn't have had a more knowledgeable and personable leader, guiding us around the Monterey Peninsula. Jack's Peak is a Monterey County Park, of 525 acres located just south of the airport and straddling a ridge with views of Monterey and Carmel Valley. The habitat is primarily a Monterey Pine forest, with over 8.5 miles of trails. Weather was perfect, clear, no wind and warm (up to 80 later in the afternoon). We were hoping to find some migrants moving through or arriving for the winter and we found Townsend's Warblers, Hutton's Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Warbler, and Yellow Warbler. Also seen were; Steller's and California Scrub Jays, Northern Flicker, Hairy Woodpecker and Pygmy Nuthatch. The walk through the park was about a mile on established trails with some up and downs a very nice start to the day.

Our next stop was at **Frog Pond Wetlands Preserve** in Del Rey Oaks. This unique preserve in an urban environment is 17 acres surrounding a pond and wetland. Unfortunately, the pond was dry due to the drought, but it still provided interesting birds. Nuttall's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Chestnut-Backed Chickadee, Common Bushtit, Bewick's Wren, Hermit Thrush, Townsend's Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Golden-crowned and Song Sparrows. The trail around the pond was flat and about ½ mile long.

For lunch we headed to **Asilomar**. The parking along Sunset Dr., on weekends is very busy so we parked on the Asilomar Conference grounds. Here we had lunch while viewing Pygmy Nuthatch, Scrub Jays, And Red-shouldered Hawk. After lunch we followed a wooden boardwalk over the dunes to the rocky shoreline, where we saw Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe and White-crowned Sparrows. The weather stayed almost perfect, clear and warm with just a slight ocean breeze. The walk along the shoreline was less than a ½ mile and we saw; Black-bellied Plovers, Whimbrel, Black Turnstones, Surfbird, Sanderling, Willet, Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants, Western Gulls, Herrmann's Gulls And Brown Pelicans.

Our day was not finished as we ended it at **El Carmelo Cemetery, Crespi Pond** and the nearby shoreline. At the cemetery we saw White-crowned Sparrows, more Townsend's Warblers, Anna's Hummingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, House Finch and Lesser Goldfinch. At Crespi Pond we

had a closeup look at a Dunlin that stayed in front of us for several minutes, we also found our first Coot. At the shoreline we followed a pair of Black



Oystercatchers at close range.

The next day on the way home we stopped at **Moon Glow Dairy** to visit **Elkhorn Slough**. Mallards, Ruddy Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Shovelers and numerous shorebirds including; Willet, Long-Billed Curlew, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Spotted Sandpiper, several flocks of Least and Western Sandpipers with a few Dunlin intermixed. (It helped to have gotten the closeup of the Dunlin at Crespi Pond to help with identification.) We saw our first Double-crested Cormorant and large flocks of Brown Pelicans here as well as numerous sea otters.

Our next stop was on the north side of the slough at a **Research Station** with two observation platforms and two ponds (with very little water) on the north side of a levee from Elkhorn Slough. Shorebirds, Egrets, Great Blue Heron, Song Sparrow, and Marsh Wrens were observed.

We weren't done yet. Our last stop was at **Struve Slough** in Watsonville. The slough runs through the urban environment of Watsonville providing refuge for; Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy Ducks, Mallards, Gadwall, American Widgeon, American Avocets, Black-necked Stilt and a large flock of Long-billed Dowitchers, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. The slough is a little difficult to access. The better parking is behind an industrial park off of Harkins Slough Rd. at the end of Westridge Dr. A nice trail runs along the slough.

Finally, home, we could not have asked for better weather and great places to observe birds in the Monterey area. Our guide Amanda has just begun a new job as the resource specialist for Monterey Audubon. We wish her all the best and lucky Monterey Audubon to find her.