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Subject: [southbaybirds] SCVAS Birdathon: Wandering Kestrels 4-hour
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To: South Bay Birds southbaybirds@groups.io
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Ten of us (Ginger, Melanie, Bill, Kitty, Sue, Sergey, Sergio, Garrett, Gail and me) adventured from Picchetti Ranch, through Stevens Creek Canyon and down to Charleston slough for a four-hour mini-big-day birdathon from 8am to Noon today.

As we trekked together to the pond at Picchetti, the cool morning marine layer kept the forest birds subdued at first, but gradually the sun came out and the birds became lively. We did a lot of birding by ear at first, hearing TOWNSEND'S WARBLER, ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER and others well before seeing them. The flycatcher was a first-of-spring bird for many of us (me included). Some, like BROWN CREEPER, WILSON'S WARBLER and WARBLING VIREO were only ever experienced by ear.

Near the Madrone parking area upstream from Stevens Creek Reservoir, we heard the "chur-reet" call of a CASSIN'S VIREO. A pair of BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS flew around the sycamore treetops near the road. A HAIRY WOODPECKER called and was seen deeper in the forest.

In a parking lot at the corner of Stevens Canyon and McClellan roads we stopped to admire our first-of-day BARN SWALLOW as it sat and sang on a wire and ended up getting RED-SHOULDERED HAWK, HOODED ORIOLE and several suburban birds there. We fleetingly considered registering this productive plot of pavement as an eBird hotspot.

We zoomed through McClellan Ranch where we failed to find the Screech-Owl, but got our only GOLDEN-CROWNED and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS and found the surprisingly elusive CALIFORNIA TOWHEE very soon after dubbing it our "nemesis bird."

At Shoreline Lake we were delighted to find two BLACK SKIMMERS resting on the island. I believe this was a first-of-year bird for everyone on the team and was voted bird of the day by many of us. Both WESTERN and CLARK'S GREBE were on the lake along with the usual suspects (SURF SCOTER). A FORSTER'S TERN flying over the Coast Casey Forebay was a year bird for several of us as well.

Our four-hour tour took us down the Adobe Creek Trail where we ended with a rush of birds: BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, GADWALL, GREAT BLUE HERON, WHITE-TAILED KITE, AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, and finally a NORTHERN HARRIER that appeared over the marsh with seconds to go on the clock.

Notable missed birds were American Kestrel, Hermit Thrush, Savannah Sparrow and any blackbird, but overall we had great success in our speedy tour, totalling 101 species by the end.

As we were packing our cars to leave a juvenile (or 2nd year?) BALD EAGLE swooped overhead as if it had been waiting for our clock to run out before making its appearance. We still greeted it with awe, appreciating its majesty as it soared out of sight.

Barry

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