



Ohlone Audubon Society

Extremes of Inyo County

May 23 - 28, 2027

Leaders: Bob Toleno and Juli Chamberlin



Ovenbird – Panamint Springs, California

Birding in Inyo County is all about extremes: from high mountain elevations to the lowest place on the continent; from the snowy peaks of the Sierra Nevada to one of the hottest places on the planet; from mountains with moist aspen and fir forests to peaks with arid bristlecone pine and sagebrush; from the driest saltbush deserts to the wetland willows of the Owens Valley, Inyo County has it all. With such extreme habitats, a wonderful variety of breeding birds nest in the area, some permanent residents, and some neotropical migrants that arrive each spring. We'll visit varied habitats to see many of these birds, some common, and some that breed only in small numbers in this corner of California.

Besides nesting species, late Spring affords an excellent opportunity to see migratory birds passing through the area, as well. As the sun starts to rise each day, birds flying over the desert look down to find a place to rest and refuel, and green spaces in the desert offer the only good stopovers. The natural and artificial oases in Death Valley act as “migrant traps,” and migration period from late May to early June often sees more wandering birds showing up, especially eastern vagrant passerines. Birders from all over California come to Furnace Creek and other desert hotspots to experience this phenomenon.

Tour Itinerary

May 23 (Day 0): Arrive in the town of Mammoth Lakes anytime after 4pm to check in at our lodging. There are lots of great options for dinner in town or at the restaurant in the lodge. Folks can coordinate dinner with other participants or eat on their own. The tour officially starts the next morning.



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch - Aspendell, California

May 24 (Day 1): After breakfast at the lodge, we'll start birding around the Mammoth Lakes area looking for Sierra Nevada species, especially woodpeckers, like Williamson's Sapsucker, Black-backed Woodpecker, and White-headed Woodpecker. Cassin's Finch and Red Crossbill are

targets here, too. Next we'll visit Crowley Lake, where sagebrush habitat meets desert wetland. Sagebrush Sparrows and Sage Thrashers may be present, and a large Bank Swallow colony nests in the sandy cliffs that line the lakeshore. After lunch in Bishop, we'll visit Birchim Canyon looking for migrants, as well as nesting Blue Grosbeak and Black-chinned Hummingbird. Our last stop before dinner will be the tiny town of Aspendell where Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Calliope Hummingbird, and other montane species will be our primary targets, many coming to feeders at the houses in town. After dinner, just before sunset, we'll visit ponds north of town to see Lesser and Common Nighthawks as they begin foraging. We'll sleep the next two nights in Bishop.



Black-backed Woodpecker - near Mammoth Lakes, California

May 25 (Day 2): We'll wake up early and start in Big Pine, where we'll look for Black Swifts. After breakfast in town, we'll drive up into the White Mountains, where we'll spend the rest of the day. We'll visit a number of spots as we ascend, where our main targets will be Plumbeous Vireo, Juniper Titmouse, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Pinyon Jay, Green-tailed Towhee, and if we're very lucky, maybe a Broad-tailed Hummingbird. We'll head higher up into the White Mountains, eventually reaching Schulman Grove, the bristlecone pine forest that is home to the oldest living tree in the world—4,857 years old!—named Methuselah. Targets include Clark's Nutcracker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Dusky Flycatcher, and Mountain Bluebird. Our last stop before dinner will be Joshua Flat, a small Joshua Tree "forest," where Cactus Wren and Scott's Oriole will be targets. We'll return to Bishop for dinner, and we'll sleep again at the same lodging.

May 26 (Day 3): We'll leave Bishop and head south and east toward Death Valley. Our first birding stop will be the tiny town of Independence where some of the best LeConte's Thrasher habitat in California can be found. Bell's Sparrows might be seen here, as well. After stopping at Owen's Lake to look for shorebirds and water birds, we're off to Death Valley, where we'll have lunch and bird at Panamint Springs, hoping for migrants. After lunch, we'll drive to Furnace Creek where we'll check into The Ranch at Death Valley. We'll do a short afternoon walk around the golf course, looking for migrants and rarities.



Greater Roadrunner - Death Valley, California

May 27 (Day 4): We'll start birding just after sunrise, to try and get as much birding in as possible before the heat sets in. We'll walk the grounds and golf course of The Ranch, especially searching for Eastern vagrant passerines. We'll pause for breakfast, then bird the grounds some more. After check-out, we'll spend a little longer in the Furnace Creek area, then continue south toward Shoshone. After checking into our motel, we'll end the day with a walk on some trails around town, looking for Phainopepla, Crissal Thrasher, Bell's Vireo, and Verdin.

May 28 (Day 5): We'll start the morning with a walk around the tiny town of Shoshone, exploring the ponds that are managed for the endangered Shoshone pupfish. Our target species include Summer Tanager, Greater Roadrunner, and Gambel's Quail. The town is also a great migrant trap, so we'll also be looking for vagrants here, too. After breakfast, we'll venture to the China Ranch Date Farm where we'll look for Brown-crested Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Lucy's Warbler. We'll end the tour with delicious date shakes from China Ranch.



Black-tailed Gnatcatcher - Shoshone, California

Optional post-tour birding: After leaving China Ranch on May 28, Bob and Juli will be driving about 2.5 hours southwest to California City Central Park in Kern County, a very good migrant hotspot. For anyone who is still especially hyped for more migrant action, we'll be visiting Butterbredt Spring—an absolutely incredible migrant hotspot!—at dawn on May 29. Tour participants who want to join us will find their own room in the town of Mojave on the night of May 28. The next morning, we'll wake up at 4am and, after a quick Starbucks run, drive 45 minutes to Butterbredt Spring. It's really worth waking up early for! Some incredible rarities have been found in late spring, as well as occasional large migrant “fallouts,” where thousands of passerines drop in.

Climate, Pace, & Physical Requirements

The climate will vary widely as we change elevation often. On the first two days, we'll alternate between high elevations (9,800 feet in Schulman Grove) and mid-elevations (4,100 feet in Bishop). Up high, it will be chilly (~55-60F), and the Bishop area will be warm (mid-to-high 80s F). Bring layers so you can change clothing as needed. In Death Valley, it will be HOT. We'll do most birding in the mornings and evenings, and there will be opportunities for necessary breaks. Be sure to bring adequate sun protection for this part of the tour, and a cooler so you can always have cold drinks available.

The pace will be moderate. We will be out birding almost all day every day, and most mornings we'll be getting up very early, especially in Death Valley. We'll always get to bed at a decent hour, though, so everyone can get plenty of sleep. There won't be much hiking—probably no more than a mile or two per day— and the walking we do will be mostly on level ground. We will be driving at least a couple of hours per day as we travel between birding spots, which will give us welcome respite from the heat in air conditioning.



Yellow-breasted Chat - Tecopa, California

Financial Information

FEE: \$975 per person for a shared room; \$1,250 for a private room. Price includes five nights lodging and five days of meals (excluding alcohol), from breakfast on May 24 thru breakfast on May 28. (Any surplus generated by this tour will benefit Ohlone Audubon Society.)

PAYMENT DUE: March 31, 2027

TRANSPORT: Participants drive themselves, but carpooling is encouraged and will be facilitated.

Birds

One asterisk* = harder-to-find species; two asterisks** = very difficult. Underlined species are targets.

BREEDING OR RESIDENT SPECIES

<i>Canada Goose</i>	<i>Anna's Hummingbird</i>	<i>Cooper's Hawk</i>
<i>Cinnamon Teal</i>	<i>Costa's Hummingbird</i>	<i>Northern Harrier</i>
<i>Northern Shoveler</i>	<i>Calliope Hummingbird*</i>	<i>Bald Eagle</i>
<i>Gadwall</i>	<i>Broad-tailed Hummingbird**</i>	<i>Red-shouldered Hawk</i>
<i>American Wigeon</i>	<i>Virginia Rail*</i>	<i>Red-tailed Hawk</i>
<i>Mallard</i>	<i>Sora*</i>	<i>Great Horned Owl</i>
<i>Northern Pintail</i>	<i>American Coot</i>	<i>Belted Kingfisher</i>
<i>Green-winged Teal</i>	<i>Black-necked Stilt</i>	<i>Williamson's Sapsucker*</i>
<i>Redhead</i>	<i>American Avocet</i>	<i>Red-breasted Sapsucker</i>
<i>Common Merganser</i>	<i>Killdeer</i>	<i>Black-backed Woodpecker*</i>
<i>Ruddy Duck</i>	<i>Spotted Sandpiper</i>	<i>Downy Woodpecker</i>
<i>Mountain Quail**</i>	<i>California Gull</i>	<i>Nuttall's Woodpecker</i>
<i>California Quail</i>	<i>Caspian Tern</i>	<i>Ladder-backed Woodpecker*</i>
<i>Gambel's Quail</i>	<i>Forster's Tern</i>	<i>Hairy Woodpecker</i>
<i>Greater Sage-Grouse**</i>	<i>Pied-billed Grebe</i>	<i>White-headed Woodpecker*</i>
<i>Sooty Grouse**</i>	<i>Eared Grebe</i>	<i>Northern Flicker</i>
<i>Chukar</i>	<i>Western Grebe</i>	<i>American Kestrel</i>
<i>Rock Pigeon</i>	<i>Clark's Grebe</i>	<i>Peregrine Falcon*</i>
<i>Eurasian Collared-Dove</i>	<i>Double-crested Cormorant</i>	<i>Prairie Falcon*</i>
<i>Mourning Dove</i>	<i>White-faced Ibis</i>	<i>Olive-sided Flycatcher</i>
<i>Greater Roadrunner*</i>	<i>Least Bittern**</i>	<i>Western Wood-Pewee</i>
<i>Lesser Nighthawk</i>	<i>Black-crowned Night-Heron</i>	<i>Willow Flycatcher*</i>
<i>Common Nighthawk</i>	<i>Great Egret</i>	<i>Gray Flycatcher</i>
<i>Common Poorwill*</i>	<i>Great Blue Heron</i>	<i>Dusky Flycatcher</i>
<i>Black Swift*</i>	<i>American White Pelican</i>	<i>Western Flycatcher</i>
<i>White-throated Swift</i>	<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	<i>Black Phoebe</i>
<i>Black-chinned Hummingbird</i>	<i>Osprey</i>	<i>Say's Phoebe</i>

Vermilion Flycatcher*
Ash-throated Flycatcher
Brown-crested Flycatcher*
Western Kingbird
Plumbeous Vireo
Western Warbling Vireo
Loggerhead Shrike
Pinyon Jay*
Steller's Jay
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay*
Black-billed Magpie
Clark's Nutcracker*
American Crow
Common Raven
Mountain Chickadee
Juniper Titmouse*
Verdin
Horned Lark
Bank Swallow
Tree Swallow
Violet-green Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Bushtit
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
White-breasted Nuthatch
Pygmy Nuthatch
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher

Rock Wren
Canyon Wren
Northern House Wren
Marsh Wren
Bewick's Wren
Cactus Wren*
American Dipper*
European Starling
LeConte's Thrasher*
Crissal Thrasher**
Sage Thrasher*
Northern Mockingbird
Western Bluebird
Mountain Bluebird
Townsend's Solitaire*
Hermit Thrush*
American Robin
Phainopepla
House Sparrow
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch*
House Finch
Cassin's Finch
Red Crossbill*
Pine Siskin
Lesser Goldfinch
Lawrence's Goldfinch**
Chipping Sparrow
Brewer's Sparrow
Black-throated Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Sagebrush Sparrow*

Bell's Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow*
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Green-tailed Towhee
Spotted Towhee
Yellow-breasted Chat
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
Hooded Oriole
Bullock's Oriole
Scott's Oriole*
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Great-tailed Grackle
Orange-crowned Warbler
Lucy's Warbler
Nashville Warbler*
Virginia's Warbler**
MacGillivray's Warbler*
Common Yellowthroat
Northern Yellow Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Gray Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Summer Tanager*
Western Tanager
Black-headed Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Lazuli Bunting
Indigo Bunting**

MIGRANTS AND VAGRANTS

It's impossible to know which migrants and vagrants might be seen on this tour, but nearly anything is possible. Obviously, none of these birds are guaranteed, but to give you an idea of what could show up, here is a list of migrants and vagrants that have been found at Furnace Creek, Panamint Springs, and Stovepipe Wells in Death Valley during late May and early June over the past five years:

White-winged Dove, Franklin's Gull, Mississippi Kite, Swainson's Hawk, Tropical Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Purple Martin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Swamp Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Bobolink, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Cape May Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Palm Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting

Responsibilities

The tour leaders have made careful plans to provide an itinerary that is safe and enjoyable. However, there are always uncertainties in any outdoor activity, and reasonable care and caution by participants will minimize risks. Neither the Ohlone Audubon Society nor tour leaders will be held liable for any accidents or injuries. All participants in our events are expected to follow the Ohlone Audubon Society code of conduct.

Participants must be members of Ohlone Audubon Society. One-year membership costs \$25 per year.

Participants should be in good health before undertaking the tour. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary. Receipt of payment for the tour by Ohlone Audubon Society will constitute an agreement by the participant to abide by the responsibilities outlined here.