



## EARLY WINTER IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA November 11–17, 2013

*Join me this November for a taste of early winter in Southern California. We'll visit the Pacific Coast, Peninsular Mountains, Anza-Borrego Desert, and Salton Sea, exploring some of California's most productive birding hotspots. Expect an abundance of resident specialty birds while we enjoy the arrival of the region's renowned wintering avifauna.*

*Your Host and Guide, Stephen Shunk*

### TRIP SUMMARY

This outstanding week of early-winter birding will take us from the San Diego Coast to the Imperial Valley, between which Southern California exhibits some of the best habitat diversity on the continent. Owing much to its temperate climate, the region hosts a startling number of resident and migrant bird species. San Diego County alone boasts a bird list of nearly 500 species, which translates into world-class birding in all seasons.

We will begin our journey in the Imperial Valley, home of the enigmatic Salton Sea. This giant alkaline lake and the adjacent irrigated farmlands host an amazing diversity of land and water birds. Over 15 species of gulls and terns occur here, and we will look carefully for the regional specialty Yellow-footed Gull. Land birds in the area may include an abundance of Burrowing Owls and Greater Roadrunners, as well as resident Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker, and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. We could see more than 20 species of wintering shorebirds, including Stilt Sandpiper and the handsome Mountain Plover.



*Anza Borrego Desert*

After a couple days at the Salton Sea, we will visit the Anza Borrego Desert. Resident specialty birds of the Borrego Valley include Scott's Oriole, Costa's Hummer, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Gambel's Quail, Cactus Wren, Verdin, and Black-throated Sparrow, as well as the highly sought-after Le Conte's Thrasher. From the desert, we will head into the Cuyamaca Mountains, in search of montane species that will be difficult to find at lower elevations. Some of these resident birds may include Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, and Hairy Woodpecker, as well as possible Williamson's Sapsucker.



*Greater Roadrunner*

Our trip will culminate with the exploration of the woodlands, scrublands, and shorelines along the San Diego Coast. The gem of this region, and our number one target bird here, is the charismatic and highly endangered California Gnatcatcher. In gnatcatcher habitat we may also see resident Cassin's Kingbird as well as a host of California specialties such as Wrentit, Black Phoebe, Red-shouldered Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Nuttall's Woodpecker, California Towhee, California Thrasher, and Anna's Hummingbird. A few specialty waterbirds will also be on the San Diego agenda, including Black-vented Shearwater, Reddish Egret, Little Blue Heron, Royal and Elegant terns, Black Skimmer, Black Oystercatcher, Snowy Plover, Surfbird, and Wandering Tattler.

## DAILY ACTIVITIES

Our tours, in general, are fairly laid back. We will maintain a casual schedule this week, eating breakfast at about 7:00 a.m. each morning and often birding until just before sunset (about 6:00 p.m.). This tour in particular will appeal to birders with a broad range of experience levels. Those with more advanced skills may be able to identify more of the anticipated species, while less experienced birders can be guaranteed excellent looks at many potential life-birds. We are not hard-core “listers”, and we spend plenty of time enjoying bird behavior. Your guide, Stephen Shunk, is a patient, experienced educator, and he will work diligently to help each participant learn bird identification, as well as regional natural history.

This tour is for moderately active people in good health. The weather should allow us to be outside the vehicle for most of each day, with plenty of light walking. We will occasionally walk over rugged terrain, and we could walk up to two miles in a day. However, individual walks will be short and at a “birdwatcher’s pace,” allowing each participant equal chance to view birds from all angles.

The group will travel in a large passenger van or minivan, depending on the group size, and we’ll take a maximum of seven participants, allowing everyone their own window seat. This is a non-smoking tour; we will stay in non-smoking hotels and eat in non-smoking restaurants.

## CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Very comfortable temperatures predominate in November in Southern California, but the daily weather can be quite changeable. We may experience fog, rain, or extended periods of sun, all in one day. You should be prepared to be outside for short periods in rainy weather. Please pack conservatively and try to avoid large pieces of luggage, but do not compromise your ability to be comfortable in a wide variety of conditions out-of-doors.

We recommend that you bring your own binoculars and field guide. You also may bring a spotting scope, although we will have at least one spotting scope available for the group. We also carry an extensive birding library for reference and learning. We encourage you to take photos as souvenirs, but this is not a photography tour. If you wish to focus on photographic opportunities, we ask that you remain sensitive to the group’s needs and the tour schedule. Ensuring that everyone in the group gets their binoculars on a bird will take precedence over shooting photos, and it may not be practical to stop just for photographs.



*Cuyamaca Mountains*



*Pygmy Nuthatch*



*San Elijo Lagoon, San Diego Coast*



*California Gnatcatcher*

## LODGING, MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

We will spend two nights in the Imperial Valley, two nights in Borrego Springs, and two nights in San Diego. The tour fees below include lodging for single and double occupancy. If you are traveling with a birding partner and wish to share a room, we should be able to accommodate you. If we are unable to place you with a roommate, you will be responsible for the single tour rate.

Your tour fee includes all meals, snacks and non-alcoholic beverages from dinner on Monday, November 11, through lunch on Sunday, November 17. We will eat most meals in restaurants that appeal to a wide variety of food preferences, but it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive diets. If you maintain such a diet, remember that appropriate foods may not be available at restaurants or even in local grocery stores. To prepare for these contingencies you may wish to bring some foods that will satisfy your personal preferences.



We will eat breakfast out on most mornings, although coffee and tea will be always available for early risers in your rooms or in the hotel lobbies. We will also eat most lunches in local restaurants. Dinners will usually be eaten together at casual local eateries, often at dusk. In addition to restaurant meals, we will provide foods and beverages for snacks and meals in the field. One of our goals is to keep you pleasantly fueled and hydrated to help you get the most of your birding days. The survey included in your registration materials asks for your dietary restrictions and preferences. While we cannot honor every food and drink request, the more detailed your response, the better we can serve you.



## TRAVEL ITINERARY

Your tour fee includes transportation from San Diego. Please arrive at the San Diego airport by 2:00 p.m. on Monday, November 11, to allow time for a casual drive to the Imperial Valley. With our last night in San Diego, we will have plenty of time for a full morning of birding on the coast, with an early lunch, and arrival at the airport by noon for 2:00 p.m. or later departures. If you plan to drive to San Diego, we will send you directions to the hotel as the trip date approaches. If this schedule is difficult for you, let us know and we will do our best to help with your travel plans. If you need assistance with travel, we recommend DTR Travel of Colorado: [www.dtrtravel.com](http://www.dtrtravel.com).

Our daily route will follow the itinerary below. However, we may adjust some of our specific birding destinations depending on a number of factors, including tides, local bird reports, weather, and our success at finding certain species. If you have additional questions about the route or certain birding spots, please contact us at your convenience.

### ***Monday, November 11: San Diego to Imperial Valley***

Birding through the farmlands of the Imperial Valley; dinner and night in Brawley.

### ***Tuesday, November 12: Salton Sea and Imperial Valley***

Shorelines of the Salton Sea and surrounding farmlands; dinner and night in Brawley.

**Wednesday, November 13:** *Salton Sea to Anza Borrego*  
West shore of the Salton Sea and into Borrego Valley; dinner and night in Borrego Springs.

**Thursday, November 14:** *Anza Borrego Desert*  
All day in the Borrego region; dinner and night in Borrego Springs.

**Friday, November 15:** *Cuyamaca Mountains to San Diego*  
Birding pine forest and pine-oak woodlands en route to San Diego; dinner and night in San Diego.

**Saturday, November 16:** *Northwestern San Diego County*  
Birding the northern coastline and interior parks; dinner and night in San Diego.

**Sunday, November 17:** *San Diego Coast*  
La Jolla shores, San Diego River, and Mission Bay; return to San Diego airport by noon.



**TOUR FEE**

Your tour fee includes all meals, snacks and beverages from Monday afternoon, Nov. 11, through Sunday afternoon, Nov. 17; lodging at single or double occupancy; transportation from San Diego; permit and license fees; service-related gratuities; and the instruction and leadership of your guide. The fee does not include guides' gratuities, which are never expected but always appreciated based on your satisfaction with our service.

2013 TOUR FEE:	\$2,095 single/\$1,715 double
NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT	\$95
BALANCE AFTER DEPOSIT	\$2,000 single/\$1,620 double

*NOTE: Our tour fees are structured to allow the best possible client-to-guide ratio for an optimal birding experience, with a maximum of 7 participants on this tour.*

*REFUND POLICY: Your deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel your reservation more than 60 days prior to the tour, you will be refunded any payments above your deposit. If you cancel between 60 and 30 days prior to the tour, you will receive a 50% refund of fees paid over the deposit. If you cancel less than 30 days prior, you forfeit your entire tour fee, unless you can fill your space with another birder. If you cancel at any time, your deposit is transferrable to any Paradise Birding tour at any time in the future.*

You may send your non-refundable \$95 deposit to the address below to hold your spot, with the balance due 60 days prior to trip date. For more information, please call or email at your convenience. *We look forward to seeing you in Southern California this November!*

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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