

# Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



## CALIFORNIA: Grey Whales, Bobcats & Snow Geese

Tuesday 29th January - Friday 7th February 2019

### 3 Wise Birding Clients

**Leader:** Chris Townend with local guides at Monterey Bay, Año Nuevo SP and David Wimpfheimer on Point Reyes

### HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

**Bobcat:** Wonderful views of at least 4 different animals over two days at Point Reyes.

**Snow Goose:** To witness both the sight and the sound of over 8,000 birds on our last morning at Colusa National Wildlife Refuge was a top class wildlife spectacle.

**Ross's Goose:** Small groups in amongst the Snow Geese gave excellent views.

**Grey Whale:** Up to 20 animals seen during our boat trip in Monterey Bay.

**California Condor:** Three birds, including an adult, were seen on the Big Sur coast.

**American Badger:** A difficult mammal to find therefore two different sightings near Olema, on two consecutive evenings was a real bonus.

**Northern Elephant Seal:** A visit to Año Nuevo State Park allowed some fantastic views of males, females and youngsters all interacting just meters away from us.

**Townsend's Warbler:** This west coast speciality was seen on a number of occasions and always impressed everyone with its array of colours!



**Bobcat and Townsend's Warbler were just two of the highlights**

One of our Bobcat sightings from this tour can be watched here: [vimeo.com/317424361](https://vimeo.com/317424361)

## **Tour Summary**

*Northern California is more typically known as a late summer destination for its seabirds and cetaceans. However, during the less visited winter months there are some equally impressive wildlife spectacles to see. These include the Grey Whale migration, thousands of migrating Snow Geese, one of the largest mainland Elephant Seal colonies in the world as well as a great time to see two tricky mammals, Bobcat and American Badger! The coastline around Monterey Bay is great for waders too with specialities such as Surfbird and Black Turnstone and the nearby impressive Big Sur coastline has a good population of the mighty California Condor!*

*We saw a total of 146 species of bird and recorded 20 mammals on this tour.*

## **Tues 29th Jan: ARRIVAL SAN FRANCISCO**

After a mid afternoon arrival into San Francisco airport and a short transfer to the hotel, it was time for some birding! A relaxing late afternoon stroll from our hotel along the San Francisco Bay area allowed us good views of waders, wildfowl, gulls and terns. Highlights included groups of Canvasback, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, a single Blue-winged Teal, American Avocet, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Willet, Western Gull, California Gull and Forster's Terns.

## **Weds 30th Jan: COYOTE POINT - PAL ALTO BAYLANDS - MOSS LANDING**

A morning birding session at nearby Coyote Point produced close views of more waders and wildfowl as well as quality passerines. We then travelled south to explore the Palo Alto Baylands and continued to our final birding session at Moss Landing harbour and beach area. We arrived at our base in Pacific Grove by early evening.

There were many "stand out" species today and plenty of time to savour the quality views. Just some of the highlights were our first Anna's Hummingbirds, fabulously close views of Surf Scoters, Pied-billed Grebes and both Western and Clark's Grebes allowing side by side comparison. The trio of west coast speciality waders gave excellent scope views with Blackish Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone and Surfbird as well as large numbers of busily feeding Western Sandpipers. The first Glaucous-winged Gull, super views of White-tailed Kites, Say's Phoebe, Common Yellowthroat and the distinctive Audubon's Warbler. Plus some nice feeding groups of White-Crowned Sparrow and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Mammal highlight of the day was the Black-tailed Jackrabbit at Coyote Point.

## **Thurs 31st Jan: MONTEREY BAY - BIG SUR**

This morning we headed out to sea, specifically to see the movement of Grey Whales that migrate south to their mating and birthing areas in southern Mexico. After the morning at sea we then spent the afternoon exploring the impressive Big Sur Coast in search of California Condors.

The clear highlight of the day was simply being amongst numerous Grey Whales! The tally for the morning was estimated to be around 20 animals with some great encounters. However, before we had even left the marina we had seen great views of Sea Otters and we had barely ventured beyond the harbour wall when 40+ Risso's Dolphins appeared. They slowly travelled beside our boat for 10 minutes and were equally as exciting as the whales! Of course, we also saw many birds with the beautiful Heerman's Gull, Rhinoceros Auklet and Cassin's Auklet being the best of the bunch. Pacific Diver and both Horned and Black-necked Grebes also performed for us.

Birding at Big Sur was glorious in the late afternoon sunshine, but despite our best efforts we failed to find the hoped for California Condor! Other new birds here included Western Scrub Jay, American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon.

### **Fri 1st Feb: PACIFIC GROVE - BIG SUR - ANDREW MOLERA SP**

A post breakfast visit to George Washington Park was very productive as we ambled around this small but very scenic park. Highlights included the Oregon race of Dark-eyed Junco, Song Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, California Towhee, Hutton's Vireo, Pygmy Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Treecreeper, Red-shouldered Hawk and best of all, a female Townsend's Warbler and an unexpected Hermit Warbler.

After our visit to the park we took the very short journey to visit the Monarch Butterfly Reserve at Pacific Grove. Numbers this year, appeared worryingly low and we managed to see only 150+ butterflies clustered together on the Eucalyptus leaves. Bird highlights here included our first Golden-crowned Kinglet and Steller's Jay. We then travelled back down Highway 1 and along the Big Sur Coast where we were once again on Mission Condor! Frustratingly, just as we arrived at yesterday's same viewpoint, a Condor disappeared over the near ridge! However, persistence paid off and before long we watched three birds fly directly overhead and head north up the coast. Later we watched the same three birds circling and gliding around the blustery coastline giving good scope views.

After a very pleasant lunch stop in a local cafe we visited Andrew Molera State Park where we took a walk on the Bobcat Trail. The weather was just about holding off, despite looking ever threatening! Although bird activity was quiet, we still managed to see a few new species before the rain started. These included Purple Finch, Northern Flicker, plus the now familiar Ruby-Crowned Kinglets and Chestnut-backed Chickadees. We then returned to Pacific Grove.

### **Sat 2nd Feb: PACIFIC GROVE - MOSS LANDING - MG DAIRY - SANTA CRUZ**

Another morning visit to George Washington Park was well worth the effort before we enjoyed a compulsory coffee stop. We then returned to Monterey and Fisherman's Wharf for a brief visit and headed north up the coast for a quick look off Marina State Beach. After lunch we spent some time at the Moonglow Dairy to witness the spectacle of Blackbirds! A final visit to Moss Landing gave more opportunities for Sea Otters and birding before we finally arrived in Santa Cruz, in the pouring rain!

Highlights today included a Spotted Towhee in GW Park, our biggest count of Brown Pelicans with 30+ birds, a single Snowy Plover on the beach at Moss Landing as well as more quality waders nearby with Willet, Surfbird, Least Sandpiper and a group of feeding Long-billed Dowitchers. A great selection of gulls included Glaucous-winged Gull and a Glaucous-winged Gull hybrid and of course, more great views of Sea Otters and Common Seals. Moonglow Dairy produced the hoped for "blackbird fest" with excellent views of Red-winged Blackbirds including the striking "bicoloured form" and the all important range restricted Tricoloured Blackbird.

### **Sun 3rd Feb: Año NUEVO SP - CABRILLO HIGHWAY - POINT REYES**

This morning we were up early and after a welcome breakfast we continued our journey north. We travelled along a rather grey and gloomy looking coastline on the Cabrillo Highway to Año Nuevo State Park. An organised walk with one of the park ranger volunteers was very entertaining and the Elephant Seals were very impressive. We also managed to pretty much avoid the rain! We then continued northward, across the Golden Gate Bridge and onto the Point Reyes National Seashore where we were greeted by sunshine and found one of the key target species of the tour!

The highlights today were without doubt the mammals! Visiting the Northern Elephant Seal colony was a real experience and the fact that we were so close to the action was a privilege. The noise from the Elephant Seals and the atmospheric weather all added to the experience. There were seals of all ages and sexes and it was great simply watching the behaviour of the different family groups and the fighting males.

Birds also played a part in the morning with Northern Harrier, White-tailed Kite, White-crowned Sparrow and we finally saw Wrentit, another west coast speciality.

Once at Point Reyes, the sunshine appeared and we took a drive into the key Bobcat area along Pierce Point Road and within 30 minutes, it was in the bag! Many thanks to John who excitedly pointed out an animal sat dozing in the sunshine! We watched this large animal with a scarred nose, assumed to be a male, for a good 15 minutes before it slowly wandered off across the grassland and out of view. Pressure off! The day couldn't have improved much, but the mammals kept appearing and by the end of the day we had also seen our first Coyote and Tule Elk, two beautiful Grey Foxes, a Northern Raccoon and the toughest of all, an American Badger digging in the rain!

#### **Mon 4th Feb: POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE**

Today we were in the very comfortable position of already having seen a Bobcat and so we simply enjoyed a relaxed full day birding around the Point Reyes National Seashore. Though of course we still hoped for another Bobcat sighting!

The day started well as we watched the bird feeders at our accommodation whilst enjoying breakfast. We had great views of White-crowned Sparrows, California Quail, Red-winged Blackbird and two Allen's Hummingbirds that had clearly decided not to migrate south for the winter. Around the Point Reyes area we failed to find another Bobcat but we enjoyed the impressive coastal scenery and had some excellent views of the commoner birds such as Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Western Bluebird, Audubon's Warbler and Black Phoebe. We were also entertained by four separate Coyotes throughout the day. New birds for the tour included Ring-necked Ducks, Cooper's Hawk, American Robin and a Common Barn Owl hunting at dusk. Another try for the American Badger proved successful thanks to John's thermal imaging scope!

#### **Tues 5th Feb: POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE**

Another day spent exploring the Point Reyes Peninsula with our local guide David.

The day started well with the bird feeders giving more views of Allen's Hummingbird and a small group of Northern Band-tailed Pigeons before we headed out along the Limantour Road. Here we added a few new species for the trip including Hermit Thrush, Pacific Wren and Sooty Fox Sparrow. For much of the remaining part of the day we patrolled the Bobcat hotspot areas and had some fabulous encounters with at least three different animals! The first was thanks to Annie's sharp eyes. It was more distant than the previous day, but the scope views were excellent as we watched it patrolling a scrubby area for at least 30 minutes with Tomales Bay as the scenic backdrop. Our second sighting was of an animal walking through tall scrub near the end of the road and was considered to be the same animal as it appeared from the same area. A second, more rufous coloured animal was then seen very close to the road and gave excellent views for a minute or two before it disappeared into a deep gully. The third and final cat was watched in the beautiful early evening light and gave prolonged scope views that were just perfect!

Coyotes also featured prominently with some fabulous encounters of six animals throughout the day. New birds today included a Burrowing Owl thanks to Mike, Osprey, Bald Eagle and a Myrtle Warbler that allowed carefully scrutiny of the subtle plumage differences from the far commoner Audubon's Warbler. All in all, a great day!

#### **Weds 6th Feb: POINT REYES - PAN ABLO BAYLANDS - COLUSA NWR**

Chris and John headed out to the Limantour Road before breakfast and were rewarded with some great views of Hermit Thrush. After breakfast we couldn't resist one last try for Bobcat, though it seemed our luck had been used up! By late morning we started our journey inland towards the Sacramento Valley and Colusa National Wildlife Refuge.

Colusa National Wildlife Refuge is one of six refuges located in the Sacramento Valley Important Bird Area. This part of California holds internationally important numbers of wildfowl during the winter and provides thousands of acres of wetland, grassland, and riparian habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, songbirds, reptiles, and mammals.

It was mostly a travel day but we still managed to see a few new birds. Savannah Sparrow at Point Reyes was new and then the rest of the new birds were at the Colusa NWR during the early evening. Here we saw Great Horned Owl at day roost, a pair of Hooded Mergansers, Greater White-fronted Goose, 150+ White-faced Ibis and Killdeer. However, it was the spectacle of Snow Geese flying overhead at sunset that produced the real wow factor. We estimated around 2,500 birds as they continued flying overhead in the large skeins before we returned to our accommodation.

### **Thurs 7th Feb: COLUSA NWR**

Our final day and one that produced one of the most impressive spectacles of the tour! We spent the morning exploring the Colusa NWR before having to depart at around 12.30 for our journey back to San Francisco airport.

An early morning visit to the Colusa NWR viewing platform produced more great views of the Greater White-fronted Geese, but more significantly an Aleutian Cackling Goose was in with the flock. Other new birds were Buff-bellied Pipit, Wilson's Snipe, a group of 15 Wild Turkey and a surprise find in the form of a Eurasian Wigeon! A visit to a different part of the reserve during late morning and we hit the jackpot with a huge flock of Snow Geese and smaller groups of Ross's Geese mixed in with them. The flock was very close to the side of a dirt road and we were able to get very close by using our vehicle as a hide. Seeing new groups of geese continually arrive with the numbers increasing by the hundred every second was quite incredible! It really was like watching a giant snow storm! The noise from the birds was also a joy to hear and it really was a fabulous sight and sound to remember and a splendid finale to the tour. The posing Marsh Wrens in the nearby ditch were almost completely ignored! However, the final new bird of the trip was also a quality species as we watched a Prairie Falcon mobbing a Northern Harrier just metres from the dirt road.

Sadly, we had to drag ourselves away from this amazing site and we slowly travelled south to San Francisco Airport where this friendly small group went their separate ways and a highly memorable tour concluded.





**Willetts (above) and American Avocet (below)**





**Anna's Hummingbird is resident in California**





**Audubon's Warbler (above) is a resident breeder in California, whereas Myrtle Warbler (below) breeds much further north and is only a winter visitor to California**





**Our first Bobcat sighting at Point Reyes was pretty special**





**Bobcats vary in colour and this more rufous coloured animal was very distinctive**





**White-tailed Kite (above) and male Northern Harrier (below)**





**Blackish Oystercatcher (above) and Surfbird (below)  
were just two of the speciality waders seen**





**Coyotes were commonly seen around Point Reyes  
View over Tomales Bay on the Point Reyes Peninsula**





**Female American (above) and  
male Northern Harrier (below)**





**The breeding colony of Northern Elephant Seals  
at Año Nuevo State Park was an incredible experience**





**Northern Elephant Seals with Western Gulls**





**Western Sandpipers (above) and Least Sandpiper (below)**





**We saw at least 20 Grey Whales during our morning boat trip in Monterey Bay  
These animals were heading south to their winter feeding / birthing area off Mexico**





**Sea Otters gave excellent views in Monterey Bay and at Moss Landing**





**Male Townsend's Warbler (above) and Western Bluebird (below)  
added plenty of colour to the birding!**





The coastline at Año Nuevo State Park (above) and male California Quail (below)



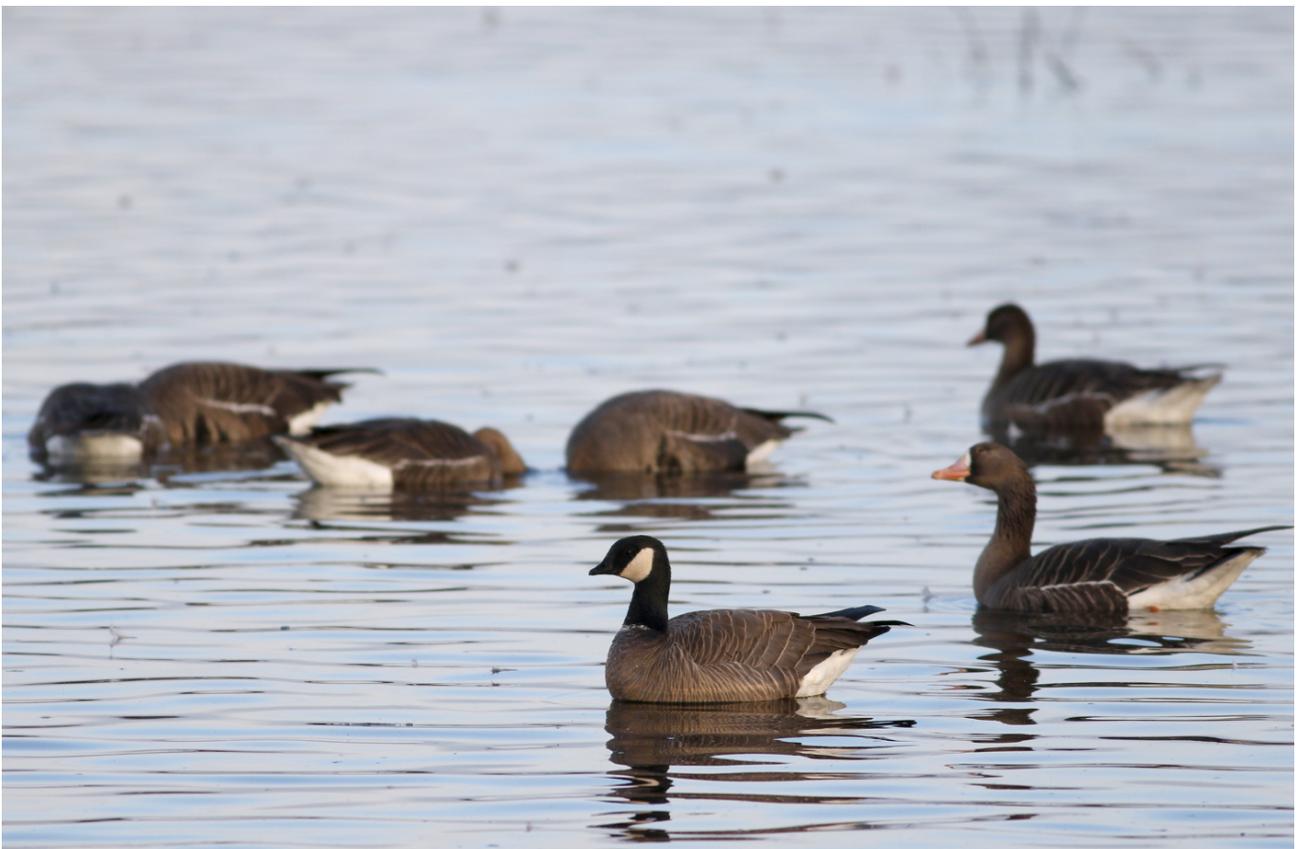


**Buffleheads (above) and drake Surf Scoter (below)**





**Colusa National Wildlife Refuge had hundreds of Greater White-fronted Geese and a single “Aleutian” Cackling Goose**





**Adult Glaucous-winged Gull with American or Arctic Herring Gulls (above)  
and a presumed Hybrid Glaucous-winged Gull (below)**





**California Sea Lions (above) were plentiful in Monterey Bay as were a pod of Risso's Dolphins (below)**





**Clark's Grebe (above) and Western Grebe (below) allowed good opportunities to compare the subtle differences**





**We crossed the Golden Gate Bridge en route to Point Reyes  
The beautiful Heerman's Gull was seen well around Monterey Bay**





**Long-billed Dowitcher (above) Hermit Thrush (below)**





**Marbled Godwit (above) and “Hudsonian” Whimbrel (below)**





**Pacific Divers (above) were numerous in Monterey Bay and Pied-billed Grebes showed well at Coyote Point Marina (below)**





Ruby-crowned Kinglet (above) and the “Oregon” form of Dark-eyed Junco (below)





**Say's Phoebes (above) were common on their coastal wintering grounds and Tule Elk (below) were seen daily around Point Reyes**





**Great Horned Owl (above) Greater White-fronted Geese (below)**





**Greater White-fronted Geese of the subspecies *sponsa* were seen in their hundreds at Colusa NNWR**





**The Snow Goose spectacle at Colusa NWR was quite incredible with numbers in excess of 8,000 birds seen and heard!**





**Snow Geese including a dark morph bird and Ross's Geese (above)  
and a ringtail Northern Harrier (below)**





Snow Geese at sunset

**Conservation Donation** – Following this tour to California 100USD was donated to the Conservation Kids fund. This fund connects the next generation of young adults in California with the environment through the use of photography.

More on this project here: [www.conservationkids.org/what-we-do](http://www.conservationkids.org/what-we-do)

Wise Birding Holidays supports a number of small conservation projects and we are also building donations from most of our tours into one central fund. Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Currently this amounts to around £6,000. Some tours continue to support some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from smaller donations. Please visit our [Conservation News](#) to find out more.

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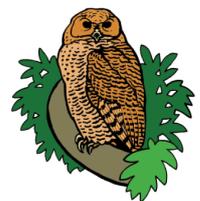
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# Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



**CALIFORNIA: Birds, Mammals & Reptiles Checklist: 29th Jan - 7th Feb 2019**

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	#	NOTES
1	California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>	1	Recorded on three days around the Point Reyes coastline with a peak count of 40+ birds on the 5th.
2	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	2	This introduced species was seen on two days around Colusa NWR.
3	Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	3	Seen very well around the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) with a total of 15 birds seen on the 7th.
4	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	4	Small numbers seen around the San Francisco Bay area on two days and again around the Colusa NWR with a peak count of at least 8 birds recorded on the 6th.
5	Cackling Goose	<i>Branta hutchinsii</i>	5	A single "Aleutian" birds with white neck collar of the subsp. <i>leucopareia</i> was seen well at the Colusa NWR on the morning of the 7th with Greater White-fronted Geese. The species breeds in the Aleutian Islands and winters in small numbers in California, presumably having travelled with the Greater White-fronted Geese of the race <i>sponsa</i> that breed in SW Alaska.
6	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	6	There are now considered to be at least 7 named subspecies from three different groups differing in size and colour. These consist of the larger <b>Common Canada Goose group</b> , the <b>Dusky Canada Goose group</b> and the <b>Lesser Canada group</b> which include the Cackling Geese. We recorded birds on 6 days and all were considered to be in the larger Common group.
7	Snow Goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	7	A true spectacle and undoubted highlight of the tour was seeing and hearing thousands of birds on our two days at Colusa NWR. We estimated counts of 2,500 heading to roost on the evening of the 6th and then at least 8,000 birds on the morning of the 7th in with some dark morph or "Blue" Snow Geese and numerous Ross's Geese.
8	Ross's Goose	<i>Anser rossii</i>	8	An absolute minimum of 50+ birds in with the huge Snow Goose flock on the morning of the 7th. There were undoubtedly more birds within the flock that we just couldn't see.
9	Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	9	Recorded on two days in the Colusa NWR with counts of up to 450+ birds on the 6th, but no obvious larger darker birds. There are at least 4 different population groups that winter in North America, two of these winter in the Sacramento Valley of northern California. These are the subspecies <i>sponsa</i> (formerly part of <i>frontalis/gambelli</i> ) that breeds in Western Alaska and is distinguished from other subspecies by on average being the smallest of the GWFG group. The second is the subspecies <i>elgasi</i> also known as the <b>Tule Goose</b> . This very small population nests in Cook Inlet, Alaska. It averages the largest and darkest of all subspecies and winters alongside the smallest <i>sponsa</i> . It is more likely to show a yellowish orbital ring. In winter it tends to be found in wooded ponds and small marshes, while the more abundant <i>sponsa</i> feed in agricultural fields.
10	Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	10	Some excellent very close views of numerous birds on four days. See particularly well from, Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey.
11	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	11	Good numbers recorded along the coast and on freshwater pools on seven days.
12	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	12	Small numbers recorded on three days.
13	Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	13	A pair of these impressive mergansers were seen well at Colusa NWR on the evening of the 6th.
14	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	14	Small numbers recorded along the coast on five days.
15	Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	15	Groups of up to 50 birds seen well in the San Francisco Bay area on our first afternoon and again from Coyote Point the following day.
16	Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	16	Counts of 4-6 birds seen on four days around the Point Reyes area and Colusa NWR.
17	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	17	Good numbers recorded on six days throughout the coast.
18	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	18	Small numbers recorded on five days.
19	Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	19	A single male was seen well on our first afternoon birding the San Francisco Bay area.
20	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	20	Small numbers recorded on three days.
21	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	21	A single drake at Colusa NWR on the 7th was an unexpected species.
22	American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	22	Great views of both sexes on four days whilst birding the SFO Bay area and Colusa NWR.
23	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	23	Recorded on five days.
24	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	24	Good counts of 100+ birds at Colusa NWR on the final two days of the tour.
25	Common (Green-winged) Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	25	HBW consider GW Teal a Subsp. of Common Teal. This species was recorded around the SFO Bay area and at Colusa NWR only.
26	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	26	Recorded on four days with particularly close views at Coyote Point Marina.
27	Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	27	Recorded on three days in Coyote Point Marina, Monterey Bay and Moss Landing. At least 4+ birds seen whilst at sea whale watching in Monterey Bay.
28	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	28	Recorded on four days with counts of over 30+ birds in the Monterey Bay / Moss Landing area.
29	Western Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>	29	Recorded on four days including some excellent side by side comparison with the very similar Clark's Grebe. On an additional two days birds were recorded as Western / Clark's and were too distant to identify to species.
30	Clark's Grebe	<i>Aechmophorus clarkii</i>	30	Recorded on three days including some excellent side by side comparison with the very similar Western Grebe. On an additional two days birds were recorded as Clark's / Western and were too distant to identify to species.
31	Northern Band-tailed Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>	31	A relatively common but nonetheless attractive species recorded on three days. A peak count of 12 birds at "Franks' feeders" near Olema.
32	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	32	This very successful introduced species was recorded on five days from Monterey to Point Reyes.
33	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	33	Single birds were recorded on two days at "Franks' feeders" near Olema.
34	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	34	This resident Hummingbird was seen exceptionally well on numerous occasions with birds recorded on four days.
35	Allen's Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus sasin</i>	35	Two birds on the 4th and a single on the 5th at "Frank's feeders" had over-wintered and surviving on the sugar solution provided at the feeder.
36	Virginia Rail	<i>Rallus limicola</i>	36	A bird was heard calling on the 5th on the Point Reyes Peninsula but was in very dense vegetation.
37	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	37	Recorded on eight days.
38	Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	38	Counts of 1-4 birds on four days including the sad sight of a bird washed onto the beach at Moss Landing that was clearly very unwell.
39	Pacific Loon	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>	39	Some great views whilst out on our whale watching boat in Monterey Bay on the 31st with a count of 12+ birds. Mike also saw a bird on the 3rd en route to Año Nuevo State Park.

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	#	NOTES
40	Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	40	Counts of 1-2 birds on three days including two exceptionally close birds off Fisherman's Wharf.
41	White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	41	Recorded on two days at Colusa NWR and a peak count of 150+ birds on the 6th.
42	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	42	Small numbers recorded on seven days in suitable habitat.
43	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	43	Recorded daily.
44	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	44	Recorded on five days in suitable habitat.
45	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	45	Recorded on four days between Monterey and Año Nuevo SP with counts of just 1-2 birds and then 30+ birds on the 2nd.
46	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	46	Small numbers recorded on six days.
47	Brandt's Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax penicillatus</i>	47	The common coastal cormorant recorded on five days.
48	Pelagic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pelagicus</i>	48	Counts of 1-2 of this small, thin headed species was seen well together with the larger squarer headed Brandt's Cormorant. Some in breeding plumage showed the distinctive white thigh patch.
49	Blackish Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ater bachmani</i>	49	Counts of 2 birds on the 30th at Coyote Point and one on the 31st in Monterey Bay. Previously called American Black Oystercatcher and now considered conspecific with the South American race.
50	American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	50	Great views of 10-20 birds seen well in and around the San Francisco Bay area on our first two days.
51	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus mexicanus</i>	51	This "Black-necked" sub-species was recorded on five days.
52	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	52	Small numbers recorded on three days around the coast.
53	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	53	Two birds on the 2nd at Moss Landing were the only birds recorded.
54	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	54	Counts of two birds at Colusa NWR on both the 6th and the 7th.
55	Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>	55	A single bird at Moss Landing on the beach was the only bird of the trip.
56	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus</i>	56	Counts of 2-3 birds recorded on two days of this distinctive dark-dumped subspecies.
57	Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	57	Great views of this distinctive wader on three days with a peak count of 30+ birds on the 7th near Colusa NWR.
58	Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	58	Another beautiful wader which allowed excellent views on four days.
59	Black Turnstone	<i>Arenaria melanocephala</i>	59	This west coast speciality was seen very well on two days around the coast at Moss Landing and Monterey Bay.
60	Surfbird	<i>Calidris virgata</i>	60	Another west coast speciality seen exceptionally well on two days at Coyote Point and around Monterey Bay.
61	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	61	Small numbers recorded on the coast on three days.
62	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	62	Large groups often mixed in with Western Sandpipers recorded on four days.
63	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	63	Good views on numerous occasions with a peak count of 30+ birds on the 2nd at Moss Landing. Recorded on five days in total.
64	Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	64	Great to see large flocks on numerous occasions with at least 300 birds seen on the 6th at Port Sonoma Marina en route to Colusa. Recorded on five days in total.
65	Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	65	Often difficult to separate from Short-billed Dowitcher in winter plumage but certainly recorded on the 2nd at Moss Landing when close views allowed careful scrutiny of birds and photos. Dowitchers were recorded on four days in total but views often not close enough to id to species, particularly in the Colusa area. Therefore birds were recorded as LBD/SBD.
66	Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>	66	Six birds at Colusa NWR on our final day were the only birds seen.
67	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	67	A bird at Coyote Point on the 30th was the only bird recorded.
68	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	68	Great views of this highly distinctive and vocal wader on five days around the coast.
69	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	69	Counts of 1-2 birds on three days at Palo Alto Baylands, and Colusa NWR.
70	Heermann's Gull	<i>Larus heermanni</i>	70	Small numbers of this very attractive gull were seen well around Monterey Bay on two days.
71	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	71	A commonly encountered species recorded on seven days.
72	Western Gull	<i>Larus occidentalis</i>	72	This west coast speciality was recorded around the coastal areas on five days.
73	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>	73	A common species around the coast recorded on five days.
74	Arctic Herring Gull	<i>Larus smithsonianus</i>	74	Good numbers recorded around the coast on five days. Also known as American Herring Gull.
75	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	<i>Larus glaucooides thayeri</i>	75	Now lumped with Thayer's Gull, this species was recorded at Coyote Point. A single bird seen in flight.
76	Glaucous-winged Gull	<i>Larus glaucescens</i>	76	Some good views of this west coast speciality including both adult and immature birds, as well as some hybrids. Recorded on three days with a peak count of 8+ birds on the 2nd at Moss Landing.
77	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	77	Counts of 1-2 birds during the first couple of days around the SFO Bay area.
78	Rhinoceros Auklet	<i>Cerorhinca monocerata</i>	78	Good views of at least one bird on the sea during our whale watching boat trip in Monterey Bay on the 31st.
79	Pigeon Guillemot	<i>Cephus columba</i>	79	A single bird on the sea during our whale watching boat trip in Monterey Bay on the 31st.
80	Common Murre	<i>Uria aalge</i>	80	Small numbers recorded during our whale watching boat trip in Monterey Bay on the 31st.
81	Common Barn-owl	<i>Tyto alba pratincola</i>	81	A single bird seen at Point Reyes at dusk near the Bear Valley Visitor Centre. The Subsp in N America is <i>pratincola</i> .
82	Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	82	A single bird spotted by Mike on the Point Reyes Peninsula on the 5th was our only sighting of the tour.

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83	Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	83	Heard from our accommodation on the 3rd and then seen at Colusa NWR thanks to Annie, with 2 birds seen well in the day on the 6th and 7th.
84	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	84	Recorded on nine days.
85	California Condor	<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>	85	Three birds were seen well on the Big Sur coast on the 1st, including an adult bird.
86	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	86	Single birds on the 5th and 6th around the Point Reyes Peninsula.
87	White-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus leucurus</i>	87	Recorded on five days with day counts of 1-2 birds and some excellent views.
88	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>	88	Some fabulous views on numerous occasions with both ringtails and males seen exceptionally well. Counts of 1-6 birds on eight days with Point Reyes being the hotspot with at least 6 birds seen here on the 5th.
89	Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	89	Single birds recorded on the 30th and 31st at Coyote Point and Big Sur.
90	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	90	This larger cousin of the the Sharp-shinned gave some great views, including perched birds from our accommodation. Single birds were seen on the 4th and 5th and 2 birds on the 6th.
91	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	91	An adult soaring high in the blue sky near Inverness on the 5th was our only sighting.
92	Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	92	This very attractive raptor was recorded on five days with excellent views and typical day counts of 1-2 birds.
93	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	93	A very common raptor recorded on nine days.
94	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	94	Singles of this impressive Kingfisher were recorded on four days.
95	Red-shafted (Northern) Flicker	<i>Colaptes cafer</i>	95	This distinct form of N. Flicker. is give full species status by HBW and we enjoyed great views on a number of occasions. Recorded on five days.
96	Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	96	This noisy gregarious species was seen very well on four days.
97	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	97	Single birds of this miniature version of Hairy Woodpecker were recorded on the 2nd and the 6th.
98	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i>	98	A single bird at George Washington Park on the 2nd was our only sighting.
99	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	99	Some excellent views of this beautiful raptor were enjoyed on seven days with most sightings around the Point Reyes Peninsula.
100	Prairie Falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	100	A bird mobbing a Northern Harrier with recently caught prey was a nice surprise on our last morning at Colusa NWR.
101	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	101	A single bird on the Big Sur coast on the 31st was the only sighting of the tour.
102	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	102	A common species commonly encountered near water and recorded on eight days.
103	Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	103	Regular sightings of birds at their coastal wintering sites with regular counts of 1-2 birds on six days.
104	Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	104	A single bird feeding at hedge of one of the pools at Colusa NWR on the 7th was the only sighting of the trip.
105	Marsh Wren	<i>Cistothorus palustris</i>	105	Heard in the marsh at Colusa NWR on the 5th and then 3 birds seen well in a different part of the NWR on the 7th.
106	Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	106	Good views on two days at George Washington Park.
107	Pacific Wren	<i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>	107	Until recently considered to be just a race of Northern Wren but now full species. A single bird seen at Point Reyes along Limantour Road on the 5th.
108	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	108	A single bird near Colusa on the 6th was the only sighting of the tour.
109	Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	109	Some great views of small groups of birds on five days and a peak count of 30+ birds on the 5th.
110	American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	110	Recorded at Point Reyes only on three days with a peak count of 30+ birds on the 4th.
111	Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus guttatus</i>	111	A single bird was seen by Chris along the Big Sur Coast on the 31st and then by all at Point Reyes on the 5th (2 birds) and the 6th (1 bird). This is the Pacific subspecies.
112	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>	112	Seen very well on two days with the best sightings in George Washington Park.
113	Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>	113	Two birds gave great views at the Monarch Butterfly Reserve in Pacific Grove on the morning of the 1st.
114	Wrentit	<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>	114	This west coast speciality of chaparral and dense brush habitat was typically heard more than seen. Recorded on five days but seen well on the 3rd at Año Nuevo State Park.
115	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	<i>Poecile rufescens</i>	115	A common species recorded on five days.
116	Oak Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>	116	This distinctive "tufted" species was seen well on four days.
117	Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	117	Single birds at George Washington Park on the 1st and at Point Reyes on the 5th.
118	American (Brown Creeper) Treecreeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	118	Two birds in George Washington Park on the 1st and a single bird there on the 2nd.
119	Steller's Jay	<i>Cyañocitta stelleri</i>	119	This vocal western speciality was seen very well at the Pacific Grove Monarch Butterfly Reserve on the 1st.
120	Western Scrub-jay	<i>Aphelocoma californica californica</i>	120	A commonly encountered species recorded on seven days and of the California Subsp.
121	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	121	Recorded daily.
122	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	122	Recorded on six days with typical day counts of 3-4 birds.
123	Common Starling	<i>Sturnas vulgaris</i>	123	This introduced species was recorded on nine days in small numbers.
124	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	124	This introduced species was recorded on four days in small numbers.
125	Hutton's Vireo	<i>Vireo huttoni</i>	125	Two birds in George Washington Park on the 1st and a single bird at Point Reyes along the Limantour Road on the 5th.

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126	Pine Siskin	<i>Carduelis pinus</i>	126	Small groups around Point Reyes on three days, mostly at "Frank's feeders."
127	Purple Finch	<i>Carpodacus purpureus</i>	127	A single female was seen along the Bobcat Trail at Andrew Molera State Park on the 1st.
128	House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	128	Recorded on three days with counts of up to 5+ birds on the 2nd.
129	Audubon's Warbler	<i>Setophaga auduboni</i>	129	Now considered a separate species to Myrtle Warbler. Birds were recorded on seven days often giving very close views allowing the distinctive yellow throat to be seen compared to the white throat of Myrtle Warbler.
130	Myrtle Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>	130	These Taiga breeding species winter across N America with small numbers wintering in California with the more common resident Audubon's Warbler and therefore allowing good opportunities to compare the two species. Two birds were seen very well on the 5th and a single bird on the 6th around Point Reyes. Myrtle Warblers have a distinctive paler throat and more streaked breast compared to the Audubon's Warbler in winter plumage.
131	Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>	131	This west coast stunning warbler was seen exceptionally well with 1-2 birds recorded on four days. The best views being at George Washington Park and near the SFO Botanical Gardens whilst stuck in traffic!
132	Hermit Warbler	<i>Setophaga occidentalis</i>	132	This uncommon winter visitor was seen very well in George Washington Park on the 1st.
133	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	133	Good views of two birds at the Palo Alto Baylands on the 30th.
134	Sooty Fox-sparrow	<i>Passerella unalaschcensis</i>	134	The Fox Sparrows now consist of four species according to HBW taxonomy: <b>Sooty</b> (Pacific), <b>Thick-billed</b> (California), <b>Slate-coloured</b> (Interior West) and <b>Red</b> (Taiga). We recorded only Sooty with 2 birds on the 5th and 1 on the 6th. This is the most common sp. on the California central coast during winter.
135	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis oregonus</i>	135	The highly attractive and distinct subsp. of the west "Oregon Junco" was recorded on seven days with some excellent views.
136	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	136	Commonly encountered with counts of 10+ birds on seven days.
137	Golden-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia atricapilla</i>	137	Very easily seen during the winter months compared to Summer. We recorded very obliging small groups on eight days.
138	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	138	Recorded on six days and seen very well including the distinctive and tuneful song on a number of occasions.
139	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	139	A single bird on the 6th at one of the cattle ranches on Point Reyes was our only sighting.
140	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	140	Single birds at George Washington Park on the 1st and Limantour Road, Point Ryes on the 5th.
141	California Towhee	<i>Pyrgisoma crissale</i>	141	This somewhat underwhelming west coast speciality was seen well on at least six days.
142	Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	142	These characterful Blackbirds were recorded on seven days and often very tame close to habitation.
143	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	143	Recorded on three days and particularly numerous at Moon Glow Dairy and the Point Reyes Cattle Ranches.
144	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	144	Recorded in large flocks on six days and including the very distinctive "Bi-coloured" californicus race at the Moon Glow Dairy on the 2nd.
145	Tricolored Blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	145	This west coast speciality was seen very well with Red-winged Blackbirds at the Moon Glow Dairy on the 2nd and gave opportunities to see the subtle difference in wing pattern and the cold frosty looking colour tones of females.
146	Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	146	Some good views of this attractive species, particularly around the Point Reyes Cattle Ranches. Recorded on five days in total.
	<b>MAMMALS &amp; REPTILES</b>			
1	Brush Rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus bachmani</i>	1	A single animal on the 2nd near Marina State Beach.
2	Black-tailed Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	2	Great views of an animal at Coyote Point Marina.
3	Common Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>	3	A dead animal was seen near Andrew Molera SP.
4	Eastern Fox Squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger</i>	4	Two of these introduced species were seen around Pacific Grove on the 1st at George Washington Park.
5	Eastern Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	5	Singles of this introduced species were seen on the 1st and the 3rd.
6	Western Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>	6	Mike saw an animal near Año Nuevo State Park.
7	California Ground Squirrel	<i>Otospermophilus beecheyi</i>	7	Far less evident during the winter months with singles recorded on the 1st and 7th only.
8	Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	8	Wonderful encounters of at least 4 animals over two days whilst at Point Reyes. The first sighting was of a scarred male very close to the road along Pierce Point Road on the evening of the 3rd. The other sightings were all on the 5th and involved two different animals that gave prolonged scope views for over 30 minutes. A third distinctive rufous animal showed briefly but very close to the road.
9	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	9	Excellent views and numerous sightings at Point Reyes with counts of 1-6 animals over four days.
10	Grey Fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	10	This very attractive small fox was seen very well at Point Reyes with two animals at dusk on the 3rd and then singles on the 4th and 5th.
11	Northern Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>	11	A single on the 3rd and 3 on the 5th all in the Point Reyes area at night close to main roads.
12	Sea Otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>	12	Fabulous views whilst in Monterey Bay on two days including very close view around Fisherman's Wharf and Moss Landing and also at Año Nuevo SP.
13	American Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	13	A single animal at night on the evening of the 3rd and again the following evening briefly near Olema.
14	California Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus</i>	14	Numerous animals in Fisherman's Wharf on the 31st.
15	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	15	Good sightings on three days with counts of up to 20+ animals at Moss Landing.
16	Northern Elephant Seal	<i>Mirounga angustirostris</i>	16	Fabulous encounters of adult males, females and youngsters at Año Nuevo State Park on the 3rd.
17	Mule Deer (Black-tailed Deer)	<i>Odocoileus hemionus columbianus</i>	17	A commonly encountered species recorded on seven days.
18	Tule Elk	<i>Cervus canadensis nannodes</i>	18	Great views of small groups of up to 10-15 animals around the Point Reyes Peninsula on four days.

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19	Grey Whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>	19	Up to 20 animals seen during our boat trip in Monterey Bay on the 31st.
20	Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>	20	A pretty special encounter with 40+ animals including youngsters just outside Monterey Bay Harbour from our whale watching boat.
1	Western Fence Lizard	<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>	1	A single recorded at our accommodation on the 5th near Olema when the sun appeared!
2	Monarch Butterfly	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	2	Worryingly low numbers this year at the Monarch Butterfly Reserve Pacific Grove. We estimated around 150+ individuals.

# Wise Birding Holidays

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