ROCKJUMPER
Worldwide Birding Adventures

California

Southern Specialities

5th January to 11th January 2023 (7 days)



LeConte's Thrasher by Lev Frid

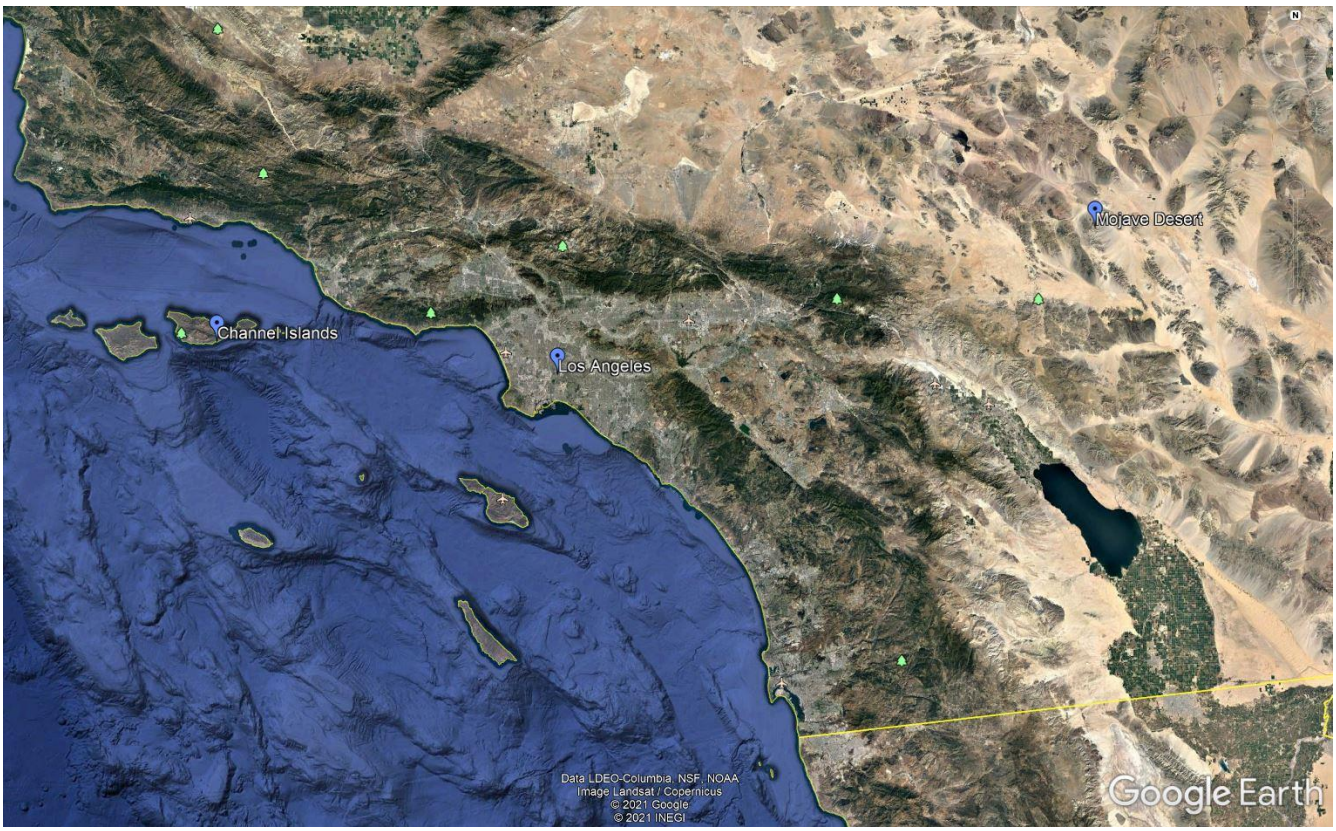
Southern California is the most biodiverse area in the United States. This is explained by the incredible array of habitats in a very small area. During this tour we will visit the edge of the Mojave Desert, seek out the once almost extinct Californian Condor, take a boat ride to the Channel Islands and bird various mountains, wetlands and the Pacific Ocean coast. This will allow us to see a superb diversity of birds and other wildlife and with minimal travel! Boasting one of the best climates in the world, this tour is suitable year-round.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival Day**
Day 2	**Mojave Desert**
Day 3	**Coastal Day**
Day 4	**California Condor**
Day 5	**Mountain Day**
Day 6	**Channel Islands**
Day 7	**Final departure**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Joshua Tree by Luke Tiller

Day 1 - Arrival Day. After settling in at our hotel we will head out in the late afternoon to witness the incredible spectacle of the feral parrot roosts that grace Pasadena. The sight and sound of hundreds of Amazona parrots coming to their communal roosts in suburban Los Angeles is something that must be seen to be believed. Endangered in their native range in Mexico, the Red-crowned Amazon thrives in LA, and though it is the only countable species to be found in these mixed parrot flocks it is fun to try and pick out the handful of other Amazona species that make up these raucous and showy flocks of birds.

Other species we might encounter this afternoon include Yellow-headed, Lilac-crowned and Red-lored Amazons.

Day 2 – **Mojave Desert.** Day two will see us heading out to the edge of the austere Mojave Desert. Among the iconic Joshua Tree dotted landscape, we will seek out specialist denizens of this desert habitat such as Bell's Sparrow and LeConte's Thrasher. The desert scrub will also host Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike and jaunty Cactus Wren too.

Agricultural land abutting the desert can host both an incredible abundance and variety of wintering raptors including Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk and White-tailed Kite. Other target species that can be more or less common out here depending on the year include Mountain Plover, Mountain Bluebird and Tricolored Blackbird.

We will also keep our eyes open for interesting wintering species like Ross's Goose, Sagebrush Sparrow and Long-eared Owl.



Ferruginous Hawk by Luke Tiller

Day 3 – **Coastal Day.** This day we will start by dipping our toes in the Pacific Ocean. Stops along rocky shorelines will see us



California Condor by Luke Tiller

picking up desirable species like Black Turnstone and Black Oystercatcher. On sandy beaches we will hope to find wintering shorebirds and gulls including Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit as well as Heermann's Gulls and more. Our main morning target will be Ridgway's Rail, a secretive denizen of coastal marshes.

Later in the day we will head to coastal sage scrub habitat to target California Gnatcatchers. We will end our afternoon exploring city parks where we will seek out interesting wintering species like Townsend's and Black-throated Grey Warbler as well as a host of countable introduced birds like Scaley-breasted Munia, Yellow-chevroned Parakeet and Red-whiskered Bulbul.

Day 4 – **California Condor.** This day will see us winging our way north to Condor Country. Here windswept rolling hills and deep canyons provide perfect habitat for soaring birds like the California Condor. These incredible birds are back from the brink of extinction thanks to the dedicated work of multiple agencies, and are an ongoing conservation success story. As well as he condors we might also hope to see a variety of other raptors including Golden Eagle and perhaps even a Rough-legged Hawk.

Further north we will head into oak chapparal habitat where we will seek out our first California endemic: Yellow-billed Magpie. This showy California corvid is a real beauty. Habitat here should also garner us Western Bluebird, California Quail, Wrentit and more.

Day 5 – **Mountain Day.** The San Gabriel Mountains tower over Los Angeles, reaching heights of more than 10,000 feet. Exploring just below these elevations we will uncover desirable montane species including White-headed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker and Cassin's Finch. If we are very lucky, we may even stumble upon the ghost bird of the San Gabriels: Mountain Quail. This ultra-secretive bird is difficult to find at any time of year, but spending time in their habitat at least gives us the chance of seeing one.



Yellow-billed Magpie by Luke Tiller

Other higher elevation species include Steller's Jay, Mountain

Chickadee, Oak Titmouse and a variety of Fox Sparrow subspecies including Thick-billed.



California Gnatcatcher by Lev Frid

Day 6 – Channel Islands. Our final day will see us heading out on the water to California's Channel Islands. These islands are a hotbed of island endemism including a myriad of flora and fauna. Among a collection of endemic bird sub-species, we will seek out our second Californian avian endemic: Island Scrub Jay. As well as the birds, we will also hope to encounter the adorable Island Fox: a gray fox in miniature.

The boat crossings will give us some opportunity to seek out a variety of water birds and cetaceans. We might hope for local specialties including Black-vented Shearwater as well as a variety of potential alcids from Common Murre to Cassin's Auklet. The boat usually stops for any whale activity, so we might hope to find Gray Whales and a couple of dolphin species too. While paused for whales you never know what birds might be associating with them.

Day 7 – **Final departure**. This day will see us heading for the airport where the tour will conclude.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 7;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services.)

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY** flights (see above);
- **Airport transfers before or after the tour;**
- Any additional beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose



San Gabriel Mountains by Luke Tiller

to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:
a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient participants, a small party supplement will have to be charged.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special notes:

- The tour is based in a single hotel, from which we make day trips to surrounding habitat and birding sites.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will begin on the afternoon of day 1 at our hotel in Pasadena with a short afternoon birding outing. The tour will conclude after breakfast at our hotel in Pasadena on day 7. Shuttles, Uber and Lyft transfers to your airport of choice are readily available.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Bob Hope Airport, also referred to as Hollywood Burbank Airport (IATA: BUR), is the main port of entry and departure for this tour. Los Angeles International Airport (IATA: LAX) can also be used, but it is further away from our designated hotel. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**