

Fledgling Four Birdathon Account 2008

The Fledgling Four Birdathon started off with a bump weeks before we were even scheduled to go birding; one of our intrepid Fledglings, Jean, was struck ill by an uncooperative appendix (those darn appendices)! Jean is recovering, but not quite recovered enough to brave a day's worth of exhaustive birding, so Matt Brooks stepped in as a Fledgling proxy; although he definitely has his adult plumage.

We began the day, as all good birders should, with a stop at Bruegger's Bagels™ (shameless plug) to stock up on fuel, and then headed to Madera Canyon. Once again, Continental Elementary School proved well worth the stop. The usual suspects were out in force; Gambel's Quail, Lesser Goldfinches and House Finches, Cactus Wren and White-crowned Sparrows, but so too were the show-stoppers like the Hooded and Bullock's Orioles jockeying for position in a tall eucalyptus and by far the most rewarding was the tree full of 25+ Pine Siskins. All the while, we made sure that our remaining Fledgling (Ruth, new to Birdathon and birding) was able to see the birds that we were rapidly calling out. "See the one that looks like a female House Finch?", "Look at the edge of the wing, see the bit of yellow?", "That's the Pine Siskin!" And Matt started his systematic mission to destroy Ruth's car by leaving his coffee cup on the roof, which promptly spilled down the back and onto the trunk as we pulled out.

A quick stop from there in the grasslands gave us Cassin's Sparrow and Black-throated Sparrow, and Matt falling into and sliding down the passenger-side, front panel of the car; whew, no damage to the car, "Matt, are you alright?"

Madera itself was very rewarding this year too. We all had good looks at the Cassin's Finch, Cassin's Kingbird and Cassin's Vireo (who is this Cassin fella anyway?). The most spectacular were the close-up views of the male Flame-colored Tanager, Matt spitting up a piece of bagel that had dropped into his coffee ("Matt, did you just throw up?" asked Sara), and male and female Elegant Trogons.

Quick trips to Patagonia Lake and Kino Springs got us, among others, the Neotropic Cormorant, various ducks, American Kestrel, Red-winged Blackbird and a Wilson's Snipe, which puddled in the mud while we watched. And Rio Rico was flush with birds; namely, the Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, White-faced Ibis and egrets of almost every description.

We ended the day at the Amado Settling Ponds by gathering a few more ducks; American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler and Ring-necked Duck, plus a Lesser Nighthawk. We finished our Birdathon with a grand total of 132! Not bad for taking our time, having a leisurely lunch in Patagonia (The Velvet Elvis really needs to be open all days of the week, though) and laughing ourselves silly over Matt's antics!