

# Where To Go Birding In Orange County, CA

Birds are everywhere, if we just know where to look. We can find birds along the beach, at the ocean, in the hills, in neighborhood parks, and even in our backyard. There are over 500 species of birds just waiting for us to watch and enjoy in diverse Orange County, California. Below are some of the many places in Orange County where you can find birds that are resident, breeding, wintering, or migrating. Some are California specialties. Just grab a pair of binoculars and check them out!

## **ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK, LAGUNA NIGUEL (fee)**

Location: 28373 Alicia Parkway in Laguna Niguel near Aliso Creek Road. Parking fee.

Description: This 4,500 acre park consists of Riparian, Coastal Sage Scrub, Oak Woodland, Grassland and even Maritime Chaparral habitats. The 2 year-round creeks offer riparian birding among willows and coast oaks, with trails often flanking each side for easy viewing. There is a frequently inhabited Barn Owl nest box in a meadow. The newly-opened visitor center offers a full diorama, 3D topographic map, and nice restrooms. Regulars include California Scrub-Jay, Greater Roadrunner, American Kestrel, California Thrasher, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Spotted and California Towhees.

Highlights: Blue Grosbeak, White-tailed Kite, Hooded Merganser, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, endangered Least Bell's Vireo, and Hutton's Vireo.

Birder Quote: "Accessibility to such a variety of birding habitats makes Aliso and Wood Canyons one of the most varied locals in OC." - Rick Schaffer.



## **BOLSA CHICA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE, HUNTINGTON BEACH (free)**

Two Locations: North parking lot at 3842 Warner Avenue in Huntington Beach just east of Pacific Coast Highway. South parking lot on the inland side of Pacific Coast Highway at the only signal between Seapoint Street and Warner Avenue. Limited free parking at both lots.

Description: This 1,300-acre saltwater estuary has two small parking lots, a small interpretive center, wooden footbridge, bridge overpass, tern nesting islands and 4 miles of walking trails and scenic overlooks. Very popular with birders and wildlife photographers, and in the top ten for # species in Orange County on eBird.



Highlights: Almost 300 species include California Brown Pelican, Peregrine Falcon, Reddish Egret, Surf Scoter, Belted Kingfisher, and Northern Harrier. Important nesting site for endangered Ridgway's Rail, endangered California Least Tern, endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrow in addition to thousands of nesting Elegant Terns and Forster's Terns.

Quote: "Probably the best and most accessible saltmarsh habitat in the county." - Bruce Aird.

## **CARBON CANYON REGIONAL PARK, BREA (fee)**

Location: 4442 Carbon Canyon Road in Brea near Valencia Blvd and Imperial Highway in the extreme northeast Orange County. Entry fee.

Description: This 124-acre park has an extensive trail system, hidden grove of coastal redwoods, restrooms, tennis courts with trees that attract sapsuckers and Brown Creepers in winter, dam with stones that attract Rock Wren, and 4-acre lake with egrets, herons, cormorants, geese and waterfowl. There is little shade so bring adequate water.



Highlights: Rock Wren, Brown Creeper, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck.

Birder Quote: "Carbon Canyon is one of the least known jewels of the Orange County Regional Park system." and "We did a CBC there recently and had a surprise Cactus Wren and 61 other species!" - Bruce Aird.

## **CASPER'S WILDERNESS PARK, SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO (fee)**

Location: 33401 Ortega Hwy in San Juan Capistrano, 7.5 miles north of I-5 Freeway. Entry fee.

Description: This 8,000-acre wilderness park offers a peek into "old California." Visitors can explore by foot or mountain bike the coastal sage scrub, chaparral, riparian, and oak woodland habitats. The park includes overnight camping, day use areas, staffed Nature Center with amphitheater and a heavily-used bird feeder that is a delight to watch. Be sure to check out the dripping faucet at the end of the paved Casper's Park Road near the closed gate at Bell Canyon (near the old corral and windmill). Mammal evidence on the trails includes coyote, bobcat, gray fox, and mountain lion.



Highlights: Woodpeckers (including Lewis Woodpecker and Northern Flicker), sparrows (including Fox and Rufous-crowned), owls, diurnal raptors, grassland birds, oak woodland birds, migrant warblers, and swallows can be patiently sought and spotted in season. Cactus, Rock and Canyon Wrens are resident; latter two species in further areas of park.

Birder Quote: "Coming here makes me happy." – Maxine Dougan.

## **CLARK REGIONAL PARK, BUENA PARK (Ralph B. Clark Regional Park) (fee)**

Location: 8800 Rosecrans Blvd. in Buena Park between Beach Blvd. and N. Gilman Avenue. Entry fee.

Description: This 104-acre multi-use park contains a variety of bird-attracting habitats such as eucalyptus groves on the west side (for neotropical migrants), abundant pines (for montane wanderers like Mountain Chickadee), and a large lake (for waterfowl including Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser plus Vermilion Flycatcher). The east side is undergoing ecological restoration and sometimes attracts coastal sage scrub species. For those interested, the Interpretive Center contains a paleontology museum about prehistoric Orange County. Across the street is West Coyote Hills, the last undeveloped parcel of land in northwest Orange County. It is not open to the public; scan the slope for California Quail, California Gnatcatcher, Cactus Wren, Wrentit and more.



Highlights: White-breasted Nuthatch, Vermilion Flycatcher, Mountain Chickadee, California Gnatcatcher, Hooded Merganser.

Birder Quote: “Years ago, I walked this park in late spring at dusk to see fledgling Great Horned Owls peering down from the pines as they woke up and screeched for food from their parents.” – Trude Hurd.

## **CRAIG REGIONAL PARK, FULLERTON (fee)**

Location: 3300 State College Blvd. in Fullerton near E. Bastanchury Road and 57 Freeway.

Description: Craig Regional Park has a large lake, an upland area (pines, sycamores, and Brazilian pepper trees), picnic areas, grassy lawns, athletic field complex, and restrooms. In winter, look through the large flocks of Chipping Sparrows for rarer birds like Clay-colored Sparrow. For a full day’s birding experience, pair Craig Regional Park with Gilman Park which is just across the 57 freeway.



Highlights: Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper (in pines), breeding Chipping Sparrows, Western Bluebird, various sapsuckers (winter only), and waterfowl. The park hosted Orange County’s only Couch’s Kingbird in 2001.

Birder Quote: “Craig Park can be really productive, and if you are of limited mobility, the area on top of the hill around the entrance offers great birding on flat ground.” - Bruce Aird.



## **CRESCENT BAY POINT PARK, LAGUNA BEACH (free)**

Location: From Pacific Coast Highway, take Crescent Bay Drive in the northern end of Laguna Beach. Look for the signal and small brown sign identifying Crescent Bay. Limited free parking fills quickly on weekends.

Description: Overlooks large cove of small sandy beach, rocky areas, and offshore Seal Rock.



Highlights: This is a good location for Wandering Tattler, Surfbird, Black Turnstone, Black Oystercatcher, Whimbrel and Black-vented Shearwater. Large roost on offshore rocks of cormorants (occasionally including Pelagic Cormorants) and pelicans (look on lower ledges and flanks of rocks).

Birder Quote: “The best poor man’s pelagic in the county.” - Bruce Aird

## **CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK (BEACH SIDE), LAGUNA BEACH (fee)**

Location: Adjacent to Pacific Coast Highway between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach. Enter parking areas from traffic lights (from north to south) at Pelican Point, Los Trancos (inland side) and Reef Point. Entry fee.

Description: Upland bluffs covered in coastal sage scrub are home to California Thrasher, California Scrub-Jay, and federally threatened California Gnatcatcher. Beach areas less populated by humans provide habitat for many shorebirds, especially Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Sanderling, and the endangered Western Snowy Plover. During winter, look for Black and Ruddy Turnstones feeding on flies attracted to sea wrack on the sand.



Highlights: Shorebirds and coastal sage scrub birds; good place for Greater Roadrunner, especially in March when they are calling and displaying.

Birder Quote: “A fantastic place to combine a walk on the beach with an intimate birding experience.” – Bruce Aird

Birder Quote: “We like to rent one of the historical cottages and photograph shorebirds all day knowing there is a warm shower and food nearby!” – Trude Hurd

## **CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK (INLAND), LAGUNA BEACH (fee)**

Location: Adjacent to Pacific Coast Highway between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach. Fee parking at Moro Canyon Ranger Station and Visitor Center and at Moro Campground and Day Use Area.

Description: The 2,400-acre undeveloped inland portion of Crystal Cove State Park consists of relatively pristine coastal hillsides and canyons dominated by high quality coastal sage scrub and mature riparian habitat in Moro Canyon. Scrub habitat supports a high density of California Gnatcatcher and other common species including Ash-throated Flycatcher, Greater Roadrunner, California Scrub-jay, Bewick's Wren, Wrentit, California Thrasher, towhees, and many others. The riparian habitat is home to Least Bell's vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, and Hooded Oriole. Graded roads up and down the ridges and canyons provide access to interior hills for hikers and mountain bikers.



Highlights: Many coastal sage scrub and riparian species. Large number of species are possible in spring and fall migration but birders tend focus on other coastal parks.

Birder Quote: "Stunning views of coastal Orange County and the ocean, coupled with a wide variety of bird species, make this a fantastic outing for the birders looking for a great hike." - Brian Leatherman

## **ENVIRONMENTAL NATURE CENTER, NEWPORT BEACH (free)**

Location: 1601 16th Street in Newport Beach. Limited free parking.

Description: This small park (also called the ENC) has a beautiful variety of forest habitats including a small section of California Redwoods. There is a nature center, water features, and a winding narrow trail between a high school on one side and residential area on the other. During spring and fall migrations, it is not uncommon to see 5-8 warbler species as well as Bullock's and Hooded Orioles. Regulars include Anna's and Allens' Hummingbirds, California Thrasher, and Spotted and California Towhees.



Highlights: Pacific Wren, Pine Warbler, Purple Finch, Fox Sparrow, Hutton's Vireo.

Birder Quote: "The Environmental Nature Center is one of Orange County's best-kept birding secrets." - Bruce Aird.

## **FAIRVIEW PARK, COSTA MESA (free)**

Location: 2525 Placentia Avenue in Costa Mesa near Adams Avenue and Harbor Blvd. and borders the Santa Ana River. Free parking and restrooms at Placentia Avenue entrances.

Description: This is the largest park in Costa Mesa with 195 acres of open space and natural areas with 13 additional acres of turf and developed areas. There are 5 distinct habitat ecosystems including seasonal vernal pools where more than 120 species of birds can be found throughout the year. The 7 miles of trails for birding and walking range from easy to moderate difficulty. Fairview Park connects with the northern end of Talbert Regional Park and is the gateway to a series of open spaces and parks connecting the mesa bluffs to Santa Ana River and the Pacific Ocean.

Highlights: Vermillion Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, federally endangered California Gnatcatcher, and federally endangered Least Bell's Vireo.

Birder Quote: "A hidden gem of wilderness and birding opportunities in the mist of densely populated central Orange County." – Anonymous.



## **GILMAN PARK, FULLERTON (free)**

Location: 2895 Treeview Place in Fullerton off Rolling Hills Drive between the 57 Freeway and Placentia Avenue. Free parking.

Description: This little neighborhood park has been a superb fall migration spot for the past few years. Surrounded by residential housing, the park includes a small creek, no bathroom facilities, and free parking at both ends. Best birding is in fall during September and October. Neighborhood residents seem to have taken ownership and often ask what birds we're seeing!

Highlights: Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Waterthrush, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Lucy's Warbler and Dusky-capped Flycatcher. Recent rarity includes an American Redstart that returned for several years

Birder Quote: "A good migration day in Gilman Park is hard to beat anywhere in Orange County." - Bruce Aird.





## HEISLER PARK, LAGUNA BEACH (fee)

Location: 375 Cliff Drive just one block off Pacific Coast Highway/Highway 1 in Laguna Beach. Park on-street in metered parking spaces.

Description: This oceanfront park has concrete walkways to the tidepools, gardens that attract hummingbirds and warblers (latter mostly in winter), and offshore rocks that attract gulls and shorebirds. Arrive early; the park gets a LOT of use!



Highlights: This park is especially good for rock-favoring shorebirds: Whimbrel, Surfbird, Black Turnstone and Ruddy Turnstone.

Birder Quote: "The presence of offshore rocks mere yards from the walkway brings gulls and shorebirds in close and can afford great photos." - Bruce Aird.

## HUNTINGTON BEACH CENTRAL PARK EAST (free)

Location: 18000 Goldenwest Street in Huntington Beach between Talbert Avenue, Golden West Street, Slater Avenue, and Gothard Street. Ample free parking lots off each of these streets.

Description: This 350-acre urban park consists of a lake, marshy areas, mowed lawns and lots of trees especially eucalyptus. In winter, the lake is home to a myriad of waterfowl. The fenced Secret Garden (located just downhill from the library) attracts hummingbirds and hummingbird photographers! The library often hosts nesting Great Horned Owls. In the top ten for # species in Orange County on eBird.



Highlights: In spring and fall, birders flock to the park in search of warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, thrushes, gnatcatchers, and other migrants. No matter what time of year, you will see phoebes, egrets, herons and night-herons, hawks, woodpeckers, and maybe an owl or two.

Birder Quote: "HCP East is one of Orange County's premier birding locations." Mark Singer.

## **IRVINE LAKE, SILVERADO (fee)**

Location: 4621 East Santiago Canyon Road in Silverado. Entry fee.

Description: Formerly closed to the general public, this lake facility has extensive parking, water levels that vary depending on rainfall or drought, restrooms near the entrance, and not much shade. Remember to bring drinking water. Winter months are better when numbers of waterfowl and American White Pelican are higher.



Highlights: Raptors include Bald Eagle and Osprey plus songbirds like Painted Redstart, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Vesper Sparrow. Recent rarities include Eastern Phoebe and Mountain Bluebird.

Birder Quote: "The best place in Orange County for viewing Bald Eagles." and "We have seen flocks of Tree Swallows during migration here that completely defied our ability to count!" - Bruce Aird.

## **IRVINE REGIONAL PARK, ORANGE (fee)**

Location: 1 Irvine Park Road in Orange at the end of Jamboree on the north-east side of Santiago Canyon Road.

Description: This 164-acre, highly-used park includes a grove of heritage Oak and Sycamore trees, landscaped turf areas and two small lakes surrounded by coastal sage scrub on adjacent hills. Recreational facilities include picnic areas, pony rides, train rides, paddle boats, and baseball fields.



Highlights: Acorn Woodpecker is resident, and Sapsuckers are frequent during winter. Look for Cactus Wren and federally endangered California Gnatcatcher in coastal sage scrub. Winter rarities include Vesper Sparrow and Varied Thrush. Good location for Lawrence's Goldfinch during migration. Also a good location for several owl species, Lesser Nighthawk and Common Poorwill.

Birder Quote: "Due to its size and different habitats, it's almost like three parks in one. Supports a very large number and variety of birds year-round." - Martin Fee.



## **LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK, LAGUNA BEACH (fee)**

Location: 18751 Laguna Canyon Road near the intersection of Laguna Canyon Road and El Toro. Four different parking locations (called Staging Areas) each with different birding opportunities. Entry fee. Lots fill quickly.

Description: This 7,000-acre wilderness park preserves some of the last natural Southern California coastal hills and canyons. The most prevalent plant community is Coastal Sage Scrub where you might see California Towhee, California Scrub-Jay, California Quail or Greater Roadrunner. Check the rocky bluffs for Red-tailed Hawks and Turkey Vultures. In the oak and sycamore woodlands, you can find Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Wrentit, Spotted Towhee, and Cooper's Hawk. Barbara's Lake (located  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from Nix Nature Center) is the only natural lake in Orange County and hosts Mallard, American Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, Common Yellowthroat and a variety of ducks and other waterfowl.

Highlights: California Quail (year-round), Northern Rough-winged Swallow (spring), and Ash-throated Flycatcher (summer). Say's Phoebe, Fox Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and White-crowned Sparrow arrive for fall and winter seasons. Northern Shovelers on the lake (fall and winter). Northern Harriers and Peregrine Falcons are special surprises on the ridges.

Birder Quote: "Forty miles of trails to explore with binoculars or spotting scopes, from wooded canyons to lake-side views to scrub-covered hillsides – or you can sit on an Adirondack chair on Artists' Pier at the Nix Nature Center and watch the birds fly by." – Laura Cohen.

Photograph by Laura Cohen used with permission.



## **LAGUNA NIGUEL REGIONAL PARK, LAGUNA NIGUEL (fee)**

Location: 28241 La Paz Road in Laguna Niguel between Aliso Creek Road and Crown Valley Parkway. Entry fee. Free parking behind nearby Whole Foods store or at base of Kite Hill.

Description: This 227-acre urban park includes lots of turf, large stocked fishing lake with dirt trail around it and parking spaces, stream, and picnic areas. Birders can easily see 25-70 species depending on the season. The park cut down about 500 trees due to drought & insect pests but is busy replanting and there are still plenty of pines, eucalyptus grove, small oak grove, and riparian areas for birds. Look for Spotted Towhee and Orange-crowned Warbler along the creek and Hooded Merganser around the bridge. Canada Geese are abundant everywhere so drive slowly.



Highlights: Common Gallinule, Green Heron, White-faced Ibis, Western Bluebird, Hooded Oriole, Belted Kingfisher, Magnolia Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Vermillion Flycatcher, phalaropes, swallows, Red-winged Blackbird, and grosbeaks.

Birder Quote: "This park always has a pleasant assortment of birds with a nice surprise nearly every visit. For an added bonus, at the southernmost end of the reservoir, the trail continues past a water treatment facility along a grassy hillside and connects to Crown Valley park and Niguel Botanical Preserve which is a lovely visit as well attracting many bird species." - Cheryl Overend

## **LITTLE CORONA, CORONA DEL MAR (free)**

Location: 3100 Ocean Blvd at the end of Poppy Street (off Pacific Coast Highway) in Corona del Mar. Limited parking. Avoid weekend visits if possible due to crowds.

Description: An intimate little coastal beach accessed by a paved but rather steep walkway to the beach and tidepools. At low tide, walk south along the beach and rocks for great shorebirds. Many seabirds come to the freshwater marsh and its outflow from a protected wooded canyon (not accessible). Arch Rock is a favorite cormorant roost.



Highlights: Look for Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants on Arch Rock.

Birder Quote: "This rock once had a Brown Booby during a Christmas Bird Count!" – Bruce Aird

## **MASON REGIONAL PARK, IRVINE (fee)**

Location: 18712 University Drive in Irvine between Culver and Ridgeline. Entry fee.

Description: This 339-acre urban park features a 9-acre lake, grassy lawns, and recreational areas for softball, volleyball, playgrounds and picnic shelters....and even birds! The lake attracts Pied-billed Grebe and a variety of waterfowl in all seasons; search the Canada Geese flocks for other goose species. On spring and fall mornings, look for large mixed flocks of Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit foraging on the overwatered lawn. The creekbed in back attracts warblers and other spring migrants. Listen at dusk for duetting Great Horned Owl pair.



Highlights: Large shorebirds, waterfowl, migrant warblers in season. Regulars include woodpeckers (Nuttall's, Downy, and Northern Flicker), and Western Bluebird. All-time best birds include Sabine's Gull immature (fall), Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Summer Tanager.

Birder Quote: "This urban park can be surprisingly good for birds, especially in spring and fall during migration." Bruce Aird

## **MILE SQUARE REGIONAL PARK, FOUNTAIN VALLEY (fee)**

Location: 16801 Euclid Ave. in Fountain Valley bounded by Edinger, Warner, Brookhurst and Euclid. Entry fee. Yes, it is one square mile!

Description: This 607-acre urban park has a Nature Area, two fishing lakes, several golf courses, picnic areas, and a large sports complex. Birds are found in the Nature Area and also in the other facilities. Look for waterfowl in the artificial lake in the northeastern corner of the park (Edinger Avenue and Euclid Street.) The highest density of land birds are in the Nature Area southwest of the lake.

Highlights: Numerous Canada Geese and a few Cackling Geese that occasionally winter in the park. One of the best places in Orange County for wintering orioles in trees in the Nature Area.

Birder Quote: "The Urban Natural Area within MSRP is a bird island within the surrounding sea of residential and urban development." – Tom Wurster.



## **OAK CANYON NATURE CENTER, ANAHEIM (fee)**

Location: 6700 East Walnut Canyon Road in Anaheim near the 91 Fwy and Imperial Blvd with access off Nohl Ranch Road adjacent to Anaheim Hills Golf Course.

Description: This 58-acre natural park consists of 3 adjoining canyons, year-round stream, and oak woodland and coastal sage scrub habitats. There are four miles of hiking trails and an interpretive center.

Highlights: White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Oak Titmouse, Bewick's Wren. Also a good location for Vireos.

Birder Quote: "This is a hidden gem. Lots of natural beauty and a great spot to see Orange County birds in their native habitats." Martin Fee.





## **O'NEILL REGIONAL PARK (fee)**

Location: 30892 Trabuco Canyon Road in Trabuco Canyon three miles from the intersection of Santiago Canyon Road and Live Oak Canyon. Entry fee.

Description: This 4,500-acre park has coastal sage scrub, oak woodland, and riparian habitats and includes trails and campgrounds for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. There is a small nature center, butterfly garden, overnight camping, Trabuco and Hickey Creeks, and a stand of yucca-like Nolina. Nearby is the Ramakrishna Monastery, another good birding spot.



Highlights: Purple Finch, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Oak Titmouse, and Band-tailed Pigeon.

Birder Quote: "This is one of the best places in Orange County for Purple Finch."- Vic Leipzig

Birder Quote: "Birding O'Neill Regional Park makes you feel like you are in the wilderness with riparian, grassland, woodland, and pine forests surrounding you." – Pete Gordon

## **PETERS CANYON REGIONAL PARK (fee)**

Location: 8548 E. Canyon View Avenue in Orange near the intersection of Jamboree and Santiago Canyon Road.

Description: This 340-acre park includes coastal sage scrub, grassland, riparian, and freshwater marsh habitats. The 55-acre Upper Peters Canyon Reservoir is home to many resident and migrating waterfowl. The lake and Peters Canyon creek are lined with sycamores, cottonwoods, and black willows. A variety of graded roads and trails exist for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.



Highlights: Canvasback, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, Great-tailed Grackle, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and raptors like White-tailed Kite.

Birder Quote: "My favorite "local" birding spot in Orange County. Beautiful hiking with a large variety of birds within a relatively confined area." Martin Fee.

## **RILEY WILDERNESS PARK, COTO DE CAZA (fee)**

Location: 30952 Oso Parkway in Coto de Caza near Oso Parkway and Antonio Parkway. Fee to enter. Formerly called Wagon Wheel.

Description: This 544-acre park features sycamore and oak woodlands bordering two seasonal streams, coastal sage scrub and grassland habitat. Inside the Ranger Station are interpretive displays and classroom while outside is a one-acre Butterfly Garden of native plants, large deck, and informational bulletin boards.



Highlights: Grassland species such as Western Meadowlark, Western Bluebird, sparrows (including Savannah, Rufous-crowned, Golden-crowned, Chipping, and Lark), Say's Phoebe, Cassin's Kingbird, and Greater Roadrunner. Raptors include White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks and occasional Golden Eagle. Lucky to see Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Lawrence Goldfinch, Phainopepla and Green-tailed Towhee (latter in winter).

Birder Quote: "This is a lightly-used park where I always see or hear something interesting: White-tailed Kite or Northern Harrier soaring over the grassy hills, Western Meadowlarks singing, variety of butterflies on warm days, mule deer, or Barn Owl peering down from an oak." – Trude Hurd.

## **SAN JOAQUIN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, IRVINE (free)**

Location: 5 Riparian View in Irvine with the main entrance off Campus Drive near University Drive. Open daily from dawn to dusk. No fee to park or enter.

Description: This 300-acre freshwater wetland has both deep and shallow water ponds, riparian woodland, 10 miles of walking trails, and a Butterfly Garden and Pollinator's Garden. Number one on eBird for # species in Orange County!



Highlights: 330 species include egrets, herons, American White Pelican, grebes, Osprey, Sora, swallows and Least Bell's Vireo. Nesting birds include Tree Swallow, Western & Clark's Grebes, Black-necked Stilt, Canada Geese, Mallard, Black Phoebe, and more. Fall/winter specialties are Cedar Waxwings (look for toyon shrubs) and Vermillion Flycatcher.

Birder Quote: "One of the best birding locations in Southern California! Birds are up-close and easy to see. We enjoy photographing the Cedar Waxwings and Vermillion Flycatcher in winter." Trude Hurd.



## **SANTIAGO OAKS REGIONAL PARK, ORANGE (fee)**

Location: 2145 N. Windes Drive in Orange is accessed from Santiago Canyon Road. Parking fee.

Description: This 1,269-acre park has an extensive trail network for hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers that connects to Irvine Regional Park and passes below Holy Sepulcher Cemetery. There is a small stream that is lined with willows and sycamore plus a historic stone dam with a pool that may attract songbirds. Birding here is better in spring. The park has experienced several wildfires in recent years and is in recovery so it has probably been under-birded. The orange grove next to the parking lot can be productive if foot access is allowed.



Highlights: Migrant warblers, flycatchers and vireos, other passerines in spring.

Birder Quote: “This under-birded park deserves more attention than it is getting.” - Bruce Aird

## **SHIPLEY NATURE CENTER, HUNTINGTON BEACH (free)**

Location: 17851 Goldenwest in Huntington Beach on the west side (across from Huntington Central Park East) between Slater Avenue and Ellis Avenue. Entrance to free parking lot can only be accessed traveling south on Goldenwest.

Description: Shipley is an 18-acre, gated park that was created to reflect habitat in the area 100 years ago. Because it is only open on certain days, check their website before visiting: [www.shipleynature.org](http://www.shipleynature.org). After years of neglect, Shipley has been restored by volunteers and features a pond, native plants, redwood grove, demonstration garden, plant nursery, and artificial stream. Amenities include restrooms and visitor’s center.



Highlights: House Wren, California Towhee, Song Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat are resident and active year around. Mature live oaks, sycamores, Torrey pines and black willows provide the perfect habitat for a variety of migratory and wintering birds. You never know what you might see.

Birder Quote: “Shipley is the ideal place for beginner and advanced birders to take their time looking for and studying birds in a more confined and less-crowded space.” Lena Hayashi



## TUCKER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND HARDING CANYON, SILVERADO (free)

Location: 29322 Modjeska Canyon Road in Silverado is accessed off Santiago Canyon Road. Limited free parking is popular with mountain bikers.

Description: This small 12-acre wildlife sanctuary underwent new owner management in 2021. Historically, it features a bird observation porch with an abundance of hummingbird feeders and possibility of seeing Costa's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds. There is a small natural history museum and sensory garden. In winter, it is the best spot in the county to study the different sub-species of Fox Sparrow. Behind the nature center is a trail up and then down into Harding Canyon where an underground creek and old stone dam support large oaks and sycamores that attract Hooded and Bullock's Orioles in spring. Hiking up the canyon occasionally yields Rock Wren and rarely, Canyon Wren.



Highlights: Hummingbirds, Fox Sparrow, White-throated Swift (look above the cliffs), Golden Eagle, and orioles. Residents include California Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-breasted Nuthatch. A pair of Golden Eagles nest up-canyon in an area closed to the public but may sometimes be seen in the area.

Birder Quote: "We enjoy photographing the hummingbirds, identifying the Fox Sparrow subspecies, and listening to Band-tailed Pigeons, Acorn Woodpeckers, California Scrub-Jays, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Sitting on the hummingbird porch is a unique experience in our urban county! We hope the new owners will continue this historical tradition." - Trude Hurd

## TURTLE ROCK NATURE CENTER (free)

Location: 1 Sunnyhill Avenue in Irvine near Shady Canyon Drive and Bommer Canyon Road. Free parking.

Description: The 25-acre Turtle Rock Community Park includes good birding opportunities at the 5-acre Turtle Rock Nature Center, lower creek and pond areas, and the plateau which includes desert habitat. Because it is lightly used, the nature center is usually quiet and utilized by birds for the water source and ample cover. There are benches to sit, listen, and observe. Lower sections may be closed due to poison oak growth.



Highlights: Resident species include Anna's and Allens' Hummingbirds, Belted Kingfisher, Black-crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, Cooper's Hawks and warblers. Migratory visitors include Cedar Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, and American Robin.

Birder Quote: "Because of the recycled water feature throughout the community park and nature center, and the proximity to Bommer and Shady Canyon and Quail Hill, opportunities exist to see a good variety of bird species on any given day!" – Amy Litton.

## UPPER NEWPORT BAY ECOLOGICAL RESERVE, NEWPORT BEACH (free)

Location: Access is from Jamboree near Pacific Coast Hwy in Newport Beach. From Jamboree, take Back Bay Drive or San Joaquin Hills Road to the bay.

Description: Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve is 752-acres consisting of salt marsh, mudflat, and marine habitats. Large mudflats with suitable loafing areas above high tide are extremely desirable for shorebirds and waterfowl. Also surrounded by an additional 135 acres of the Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve.



Highlights: Good location for Virginia Rail and Ridgway's Rail, along with Herons/Egrets (including species less commonly found in Orange County such as Tricolored Heron and Little Blue Heron). Federally threatened California Gnatcatcher may be seen in the surrounding areas of coastal sage scrub.

Birder Quote: "One of the top birding locations in Orange County due to the unique habitats present that attract a large variety of both migrating and year-round birds" - Martin Fee.

## YORBA REGIONAL PARK, ANAHEIM (fee)

Location: 7600 East La Palma Avenue in Anaheim along the Santa Ana River between Fairmont and Yorba Linda Blvd. Main entrance on La Palma Avenue between Imperial Highway and Weir Canyon. Entry fee at main entrance but no charge at east end where softball fields are located. Very busy on holiday weekends.



Description: This 140-acre linear urban park (nearly two miles long) is bordered to the south by the Santa Ana River. It features extensive lawns and variety of large native and ornamental trees that attract woodpeckers, flycatchers, vireos, warblers, orioles and sparrows. The adjacent Santa Ana River provides opportunities for viewing shorebirds, gulls, herons, egrets, hawks, swallows and blackbirds. Three large lakes and one small lake connected by streams attract many waterfowl including geese, teals, Wood Duck, Redhead, Bufflehead, and Ring-necked Duck in addition to egrets, herons, Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper and Greater Yellowlegs.

Highlights: Migrant songbirds during spring and fall migration include Yellow-throated Vireo, Gray Flycatcher, Palm Warbler, Northern Parula, and American Redstart. Rarities include Olive-backed Pipit, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Broad-winged Hawk. A female Ruff has returned in late summer to the adjacent Santa Ana River for at least 5 years.

Birder Quote: "A wonderful park with lots of paved trails and shade trees that provide excellent access and good birding conditions for everyone." - Brian Leatherman

## **Offshore (Pelagic Trips and Seabird Lookouts)**

To see birds that live nearly their entire lives on the open ocean, you will need to take a boat trip or observe the ocean from a prominent cliff or pier. Birds of this habitat are the shearwaters (the usuals and the rarer ones), petrels, storm-petrels, albatross, jaegers, skuas, boobies, murrelet, auklet, tropicbird, and more (and maybe some cool looks at whales, dolphins, and seals, too!) Of the whale-watching boats listed here, none offer regular birding tours out into the California Channel but you can charter a boat or attend one of Sea and Sage Audubon Society's trips.

### **CAPTAIN DAVE'S WHALE WATCHING, DANA POINT HARBOR**

Location: 24440 Dana Point Harbor Drive in Dana Point near the Ocean Institute.

Birder Quote: "This whale-watching company offers a variety of charter tours from large, slow-moving boats to fast-moving Zodiac-type boats of various sizes. Their crews are extremely knowledgeable about all sea life, and if you have a particular creature you are looking for, tell them, and they will do their best to locate it. Great customer service." - Bruce Aird.

### **NEWPORT COASTAL ADVENTURES, NEWPORT BEACH**

Location: 309 Palm Street #A in Newport Beach on Balboa Peninsula.

Birder Quote: "This whale-watching company offers charter tours by pre-arrangement in small Zephyr-type (inflatable hulls) boats that hold 8-10 people. They move pretty fast, and the ride can be a bit rough and wet, but if you are targeting a particular bird, this is definitely the way to go. The captain was courteous, and very responsive to passenger suggestions." - Bruce Aird

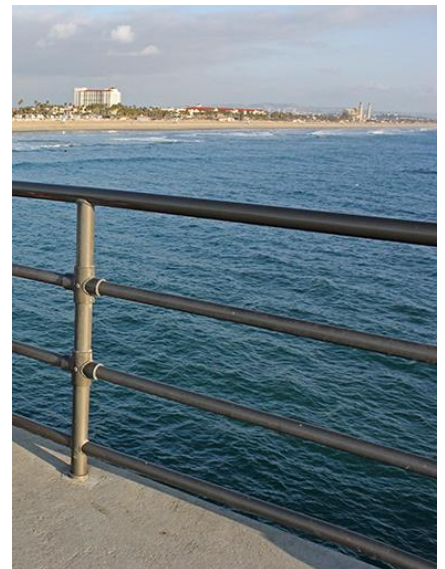
### **HUNTINGTON BEACH PIER, HUNTINGTON BEACH**

Location: Intersection of Pacific Coast Highway and Main Street in downtown Huntington Beach. Free parking on nearby city streets and metered parking lots on both sides of the pier.

Description: This iconic pier is 1,850 feet long, one of the longest piers on the West Coast and has been rebuilt several times due to storm damage. Go early in the morning to avoid crowds and take a spotting scope. Winter is usually the best time.

Highlights: Cormorants, gulls, loons, scoters, grebes may be seen offshore. Scope the shoreline for Sanderling, Willet, Marbled Godwit, other shorebirds and gulls.

Birder Quote: "Usually large flocks of gulls huddle together on the beach. It is a good way to study immature gulls." – Mark Singer.





**Disclaimer:**  
**Remember that birds have wings and use them!**  
**We cannot guarantee that you will definitely see any bird listed at these locations.**

**Birding is an adventure!**



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