

Field Trip: Capturing Migratory Birds in the Sacramento Delta

It's the time of year to see migrating cranes and assortment of birds heading south for the winter. The Sacramento delta area is on the flight path for many.

On November 15th, 2024, leaving at 12 noon from Orchard Creek Lodge. We have planned a field trip to visit the following locations.

- Cosumnes River Preserve, Walnut Grove, CA
- Sandhill Cranes - Staten Island, Thornton, CA
- Isenberg/Woodbridge Ecological Reserve - Lodi, CA

All three are within a twenty-mile radius. At the last stop we will be going for photos at dusk and sunset.

Club members Larry White and Nancy Whitaker will share insight about bird species and tips on how they capture the splendor of these magnificent flying creatures.

Parking is limited at these locations. We are advising carpooling. We'll gather at the Orchard Creek Lodge at 11:45am for a 12:00 noon departure.

Lunch/dinner, this will be "out in nature" venue, please bring snacks, sandwich(s), etc. with you.

Please confirm your attendance to jimlhpc@gmail.com More details to follow to those confirming attendance.

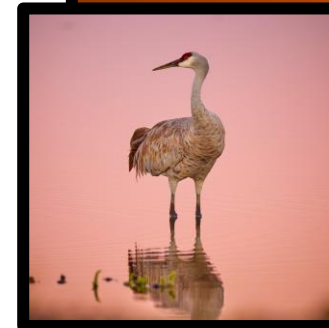


Photo Source: MS
online photo gallery.

Agenda

The following outline provides a general sequence we are planning to follow. However, if you wish to skip a location and concentrate on only one or two you are free to do so. We do recommend trying to be at the last location for the dusk shooting.

1. Cosumnes River Preserve: target time will be 1:15 pm.
 - Larry and Nancy will cover approaches they use to photograph birds.
 - Typical camera settings.
2. Sandhill Cranes Staten Island: target time: 2:45 pm. – 4:00 pm.
 - Photograph cranes, others.
3. Isenberg/Woodbridge Ecological Reserve: target time: 4:20 pm
 - Photograph cranes, others.
 - Ideally, we are photographing birds as dusk rolls in and we can capture them with the setting sun.

Directions To the Locations

1. Cosumnes River Preserve Information

13501 Franklin Blvd, Walnut Grove, CA 95690

Parking Lots and Restrooms are available.

2. Sandhill Cranes - Staten Island Information

23532 N Staten Island Rd, Thornton, CA 95686

[Staten Island – Lodi Sandhill Crane Association](#)

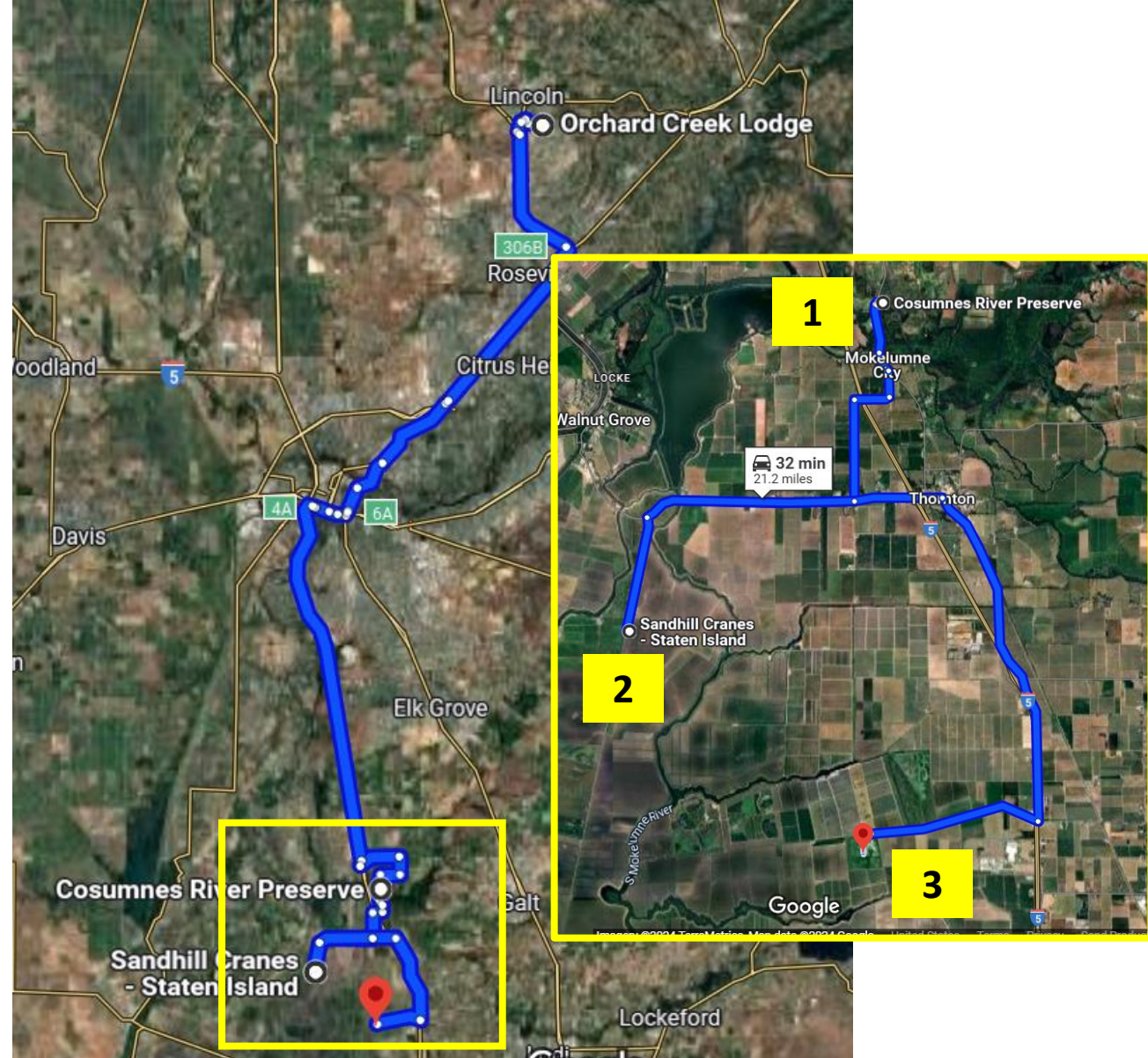
3. Isenberg/Woodbridge Ecological Reserve Information

7730 W Woodbridge Rd, Lodi, CA 95242

[California Wildlife Internet Sales Home](#) (purchase pass at site)

Portable toilets, paved tour trails, a viewing mound at the South Site and a viewing shelter at the North Site are the primary improvements on this property.

There are two accessible parking spaces at the South Site pedestrian gate, and the South Site viewing mound is equipped with a concrete ramp for a wheelchair.



Your FREE GUIDE to the Delta's spectacular Wild Birds

See Thousands of Sandhill Cranes & Tundra Swans, October thru February

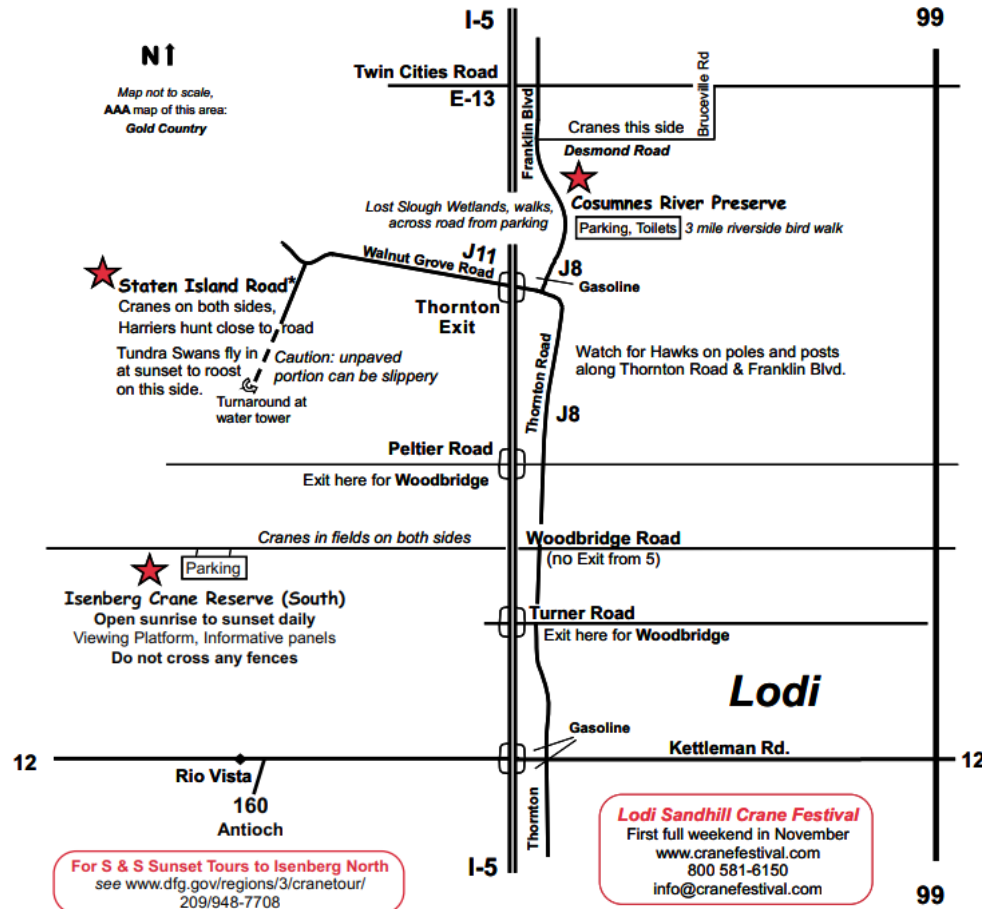
Plus Hawks, Egrets, Herons, White-faced Ibis, Snow Geese and other exotic wild birds, early fall to late spring

CAUTION: Cranes are very timid. If you stop your car near them they will immediately move away. Do NOT follow them!

Additional Information

This is another map outlining locations to see the cranes.

To download this map use this link please use the following link: [Lodi Cranes 1.cvx](http://LodiCranes1.cvx)

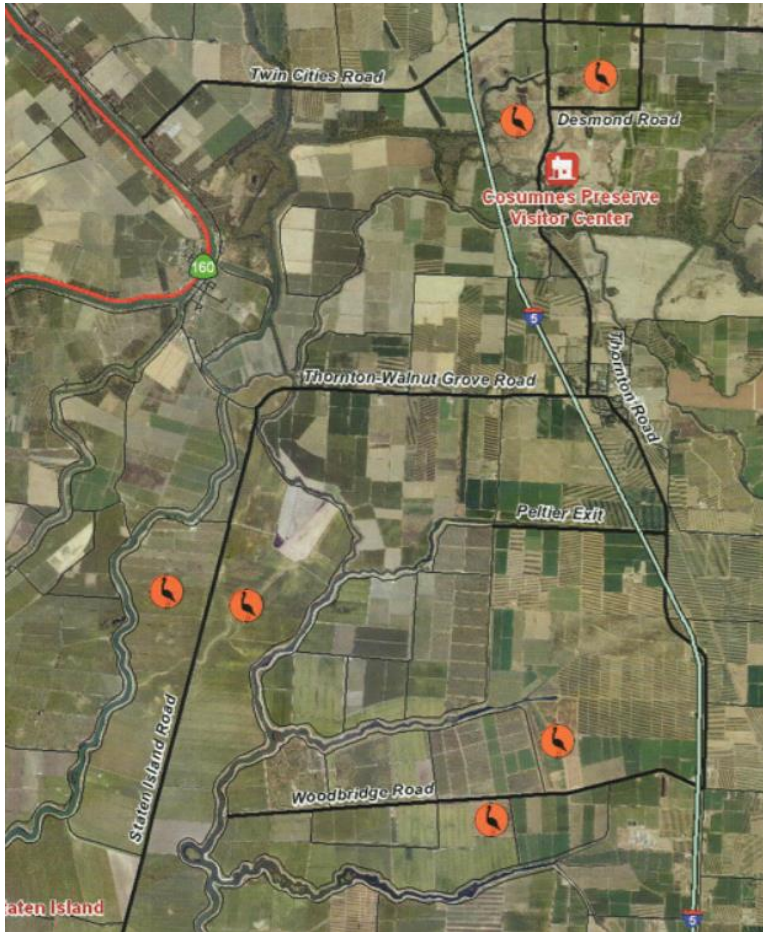


For S & S Sunset Tours to Isenberg North
see www.dfg.gov/regions/3/cranetour/
209/948-7708

Driving Precautions while birding the Delta
Please stay on paved public roads — if it's dirt, you are trespassing
Warning: Oversize vehicles on roads — Dangerous shoulders, especially West end of Woodbridge.
Very Dense Fog possible from Dawn until 10:00 - 11:00 AM, in winter, anywhere in the Delta.
*Staten Island Road is posted 'No Public Access' but this refers only to all side roads and all land.
The main road is accessible for four miles to the turnaround, the first two miles are paved.

Learning About the Area and the “Cranes”

[See the Sandhill Cranes - Cosumnes River Preserve](#)



[Near the Visitor Center \(13501 Franklin Blvd. Galt, CA\)](#)

By foot: The Preserve’s Wetlands Walk and adjoining boardwalk feature is ideal habitat for visiting cranes and waterfowl. Trails are open Sunrise to Sunset.

By car: There is excellent viewing west of Franklin Blvd., along Desmond Road, and beside Bruceville Road (just south of Twin Cities Rd.). The best chances to see the cranes is during dawn and dusk. You may pull off to the side of the road, but please stay off vegetation and do not walk onto the levee. This will scare the birds. Viewing is best done from your car.

Directions from the Visitor Center: Take Franklin Blvd. south and continue onto Thornton Road. Turn right onto Walnut Grove Road. After about 4 miles you will turn left onto Staten Island Road. You will see a large corn dryer on your right and continue down Staten Island road for viewing of the cranes in the pastures and cornfields.

[Staten Island Road](#)

Cranes and other migratory birds are attracted to flooded crop lands on Staten Island. Quite often thousands of birds can be seen flying over Staten Island during the fall, winter, and spring. Look for tundra swans, white-fronted geese, as well as both lesser and greater sandhill cranes.

Please be advised, the “NO PUBLIC ACCESS” sign is in place to make visitors aware that all levees, farm roads, and fields are private land. Visitors may only drive or walk on the main road, which is Staten Island Road. The paved road transitions to gravel approximately 2 miles in and public access terminates after about 4 miles. There is a sign indicating where the public road ends and vehicles may use the turnout by the water tower to reverse their course. The corn harvest occurs in early fall (October) and visitors should avoid wildlife viewing on Staten Island during this time, for safety reasons.

[Woodbridge Ecological Reserve \(AKA Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve\)](#)

The fields managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) regularly attract large numbers of sandhill cranes during the fall and winter. There are several turnouts along Woodbridge Road, allowing the public to safely park vehicles for bird viewing. CDFW offers fall, docent-led tours. Information can be found here:

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-visit/Woodbridge-ER>.

Directions from Staten Island: Go back to Walnut Grove Road. Go east for a short distance, under freeway. See map J8 gasoline is a Chevron with a Subway. Turn right onto Thornton Road. (Frontage Road). Drive on Thornton Road for approximately 4 or 5 miles, then turn right at Woodbridge Road. Travel approximately 2.5 miles to the first turnout on the South side of the road. There will be parking places in the grassy areas.

Types of Birds

- Birds that we may see. We are hoping for Sandhill cranes, which in the past has been in these three locations in large numbers, many 100's. These cranes have a behavior pattern that delights photographers, for at dusk they congregate in the area of Isenberg Crane Reserve, also a part of the Woodbridge Ecological Preserve. Their Fly-in is spectacular, for as the sun sets, they fly-in, in V formation usually, in massive numbers silhouetted against the background of Mt. Diablo.
- Additionally, there are huge numbers of geese, Cackling geese which are smaller than the similar Canada geese. Snow geese have been seen, These birds have possibly migrated from as far away as Alaska, maybe Siberia, and certainly from parts of Canada.
- Generally, we do not use tripods, however with the beauty of the Sandhill fly-in, and the lower light in which we're trying to photograph, Tripods could be good for seeing the birds once they have landed in the marsh-like landing-site (Isenberg Crane Preserve) they frequent. (We are hoping for more water at the Isenberg Preserve).
- At our trip to Cosumnes we (Larry mostly) spotted some unusual (rarely seen) species of ducks, such as Green wing Teals, Ruddy Ducks, and others, Other species are Mallards (a common variety), Coots, Great Egrets, Cattle egrets, Snowy egrets, Great Blue Herons.

Typical Camera Settings

- If birds are in flight, a very fast shutter speed is indicated, perhaps well over 1/2000, also to aid in sharpness, f/11 or higher is needed.
- Typically use the Tv (selection of shutter speed) mode. A fast shutter speed like 1/1250 or faster to start with, It is also a time for you to experiment with your setting.
- Fortunately, the Cranes tend to stand for short or long periods of time and don't tend to Fly off when there are numbers of cars and large grain trucks drive by on Station Island road.
- Lenses - telephoto, zooms are commonly used, especially 100 to 400 or higher.
- If you don't have that, please bring what you have, for the huge flocks of birds is impressive in itself.
- Smart phones can be used to photograph the birds in flight. The cranes typically have a loud and distinctive call while flying, so getting both the video and audio recording is impressive.

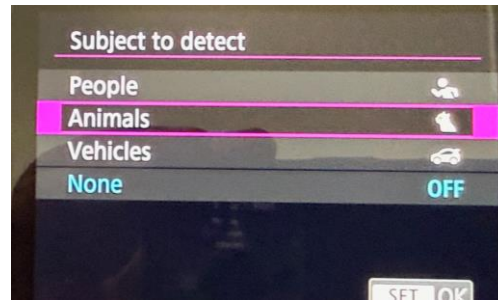
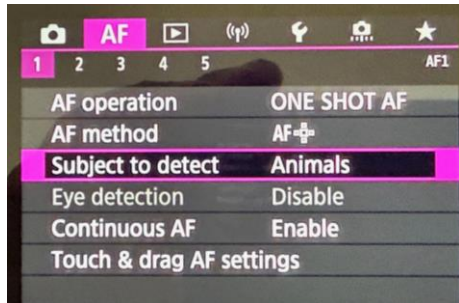
Camera Gear

- Camera – ideally a full frame DSLR/Mirrorless with telephoto lens for close-up (400mm+).
 - Also, mid-range lens for landscape photo ops (50-100mm).
 - Use a lens extender to also increase your lens range. A 400mm with a 1.4 extender will give you a 560mm range. You will lose light so you'll have to make adjustments with aperture, ISO.
- Increase magnification using **Crop Sensor** feature.
 - Some cameras will have this capability to increase magnification.
 - Example on Canon R5 there is a Crop Sensor feature. Normal use is FULL, change 1.6



- Extra Batteries
- Lens cleaning kit.
- If rain in forecast bring protective rain cover for camera.

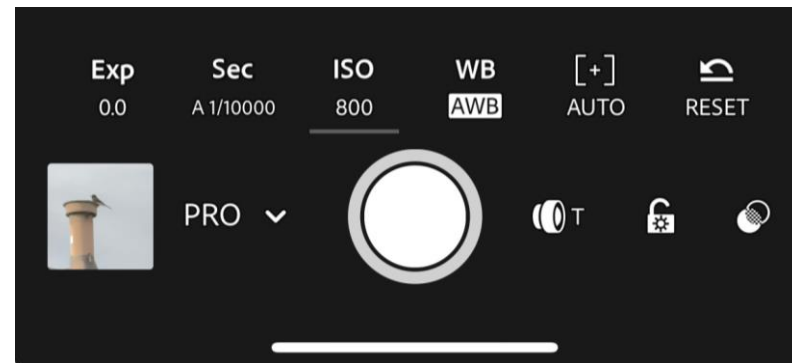
- Focus, some cameras may have auto focus specifically for animals/birds. Following is Canon R5.



- Tripod, this would be more for birds on the ground and you're using a long range telephoto.

Smartphone Photography Tips

- Smart phone can work, but you will be using the telephoto mode. Following are some articles outlining use of smartphone for bird photography.
 - [How to Photograph Birds With a Smartphone | Audubon](#)
 - [How to Take Photos of Birds With Your Smartphone | Lyric Wild Bird Food](#)
 - [Capture stunning bird photos using only your phone | CBC Creator Network – YouTube](#)
- If you have a digiscope or binocular, the articles mention getting an adaptor to connect your smartphone. Some examples on Amazon.
 - [Amazon.com : SUNWAYFOTO BA-43 Cell Phone Adapter for Binocular, Universal Smartphone Mount for Binocular, Compatible with Eyepiece Outer Diameter 38-45mm : Electronics](#)
 - [Amazon.com : smartphone digiscoping adapter](#)
- Take control of your camera to be able to adjust ISO, exposure setting, speed. You may need a third-party app to do this depending on your smartphone. This is Lightroom on my Apple iPhone. As you can see, you have control of Exposure, Sec (time), ISO, White Balance, Auto (tint). The lens, for iPhone there are three, T=Telephone, W=Wide (normal) and UW=Ultra Wide. PRO = file format. If you have a subscription to Lightroom you should be able to download to your phone without any further cost.



What Else To Bring

- Flash-light, depending on your departure from Isenberg/Woodbridge Ecological Reserve – Lodi it could be dark.
- Dress in layers and check the weather report day before. Sunblock, mosquito repellent, hat, sunglasses.
- Bring food and drink. We will not be stopping during the field trip for food or drinks (water, soda). We will have an ice chest. Bring your favorite snacks, sandwich, etc.
- Portable stool/chair.