

## **Martinez Waterfront Parks Field Trip September 18, 2021**

**By Bruce Thomsen**

For the first field trip of the year, we decided to stay fairly close, but out of the two-county area (Napa, Solano). Martinez seemed like a place we all should know something about so we went to Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline, Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline Park and Waterbird Regional Preserve.

At 8:00 we met in the Nejedly Staging Area Parking Lot of **Carquinez Strait Regional Preserve**. The day started very warm and dry. We began hiking on the Hulet-Hornbeck Trail following a seasonal stream that was dry. The habitat we were in was primarily oak woodland with little riparian vegetation despite the fact we were following a stream. There was little activity, but we did see Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Steller's Jay, Yellow-rumped Warbler and a Cooper's Hawk. The trail continued to get very steep for about ½ mile before we crested at the top of the hill in an open grassland. There we were treated to several raptors soaring on thermals; Coopers Hawk, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk and Turkey Vultures. The open space also provided a spectacular view of the Carquinez waterway and the city of Martinez. We intersected with the Rankin Park Trail to return to our vehicles. This trail led us past a cemetery and dropped us off onto a surface street about 1/2 mile from our vehicles.

Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline forms the western boundary of Martinez and runs along the Carquinez southern shoreline for several miles. It is administered by East Bay Regional Park District. Numerous trails are available and parking is free in staging areas. The day we visited was very warm and dry (the end of summer during a drought) with little birding activity.

Next, we visited **Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline Park** in the city of Martinez. There we parked next to the pond by the shoreline. Mallards, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebes, Killdeer, and lots of Canada Geese were on or near the pond. The trail (about 1 mile) was flat with wide gravel or paved roadways through a saltwater marsh with several boardwalks above the wetlands and a nice arched wooden bridge over Alhambra Creek. Marsh Wren, Song and Savannah Sparrows, Black Phoebe, Snowy and Great Egrets, Great Blue and Green

Hérons, and Red-shouldered Hawk, were all present. The day was still warm and a breeze was picking up.

We ended the day at **Waterbird Regional Preserve**. Most of us have seen this wetland driving on I-680 just south of the Benicia-Martinez Bridge, but probably few have stopped. An overlook along Waterfront Rd. provides an excellent view of the wetlands. It was also very windy. A spotting scope would be handy as the area next to the water is fenced off. White Pelicans, Green-winged Teal, Mallards, American Wigeon, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Long-billed Dowitchers, Double-crested Cormorant, Ring-billed Gulls, and Caspian Terns were observed. We ended the day here about 3:30. We did not see as many birds as we had hoped as it was very dry, but we found new areas for future birding.