

A Virtual Trip Along Mines Road, Del Valle Park, and the San Antonio Valley

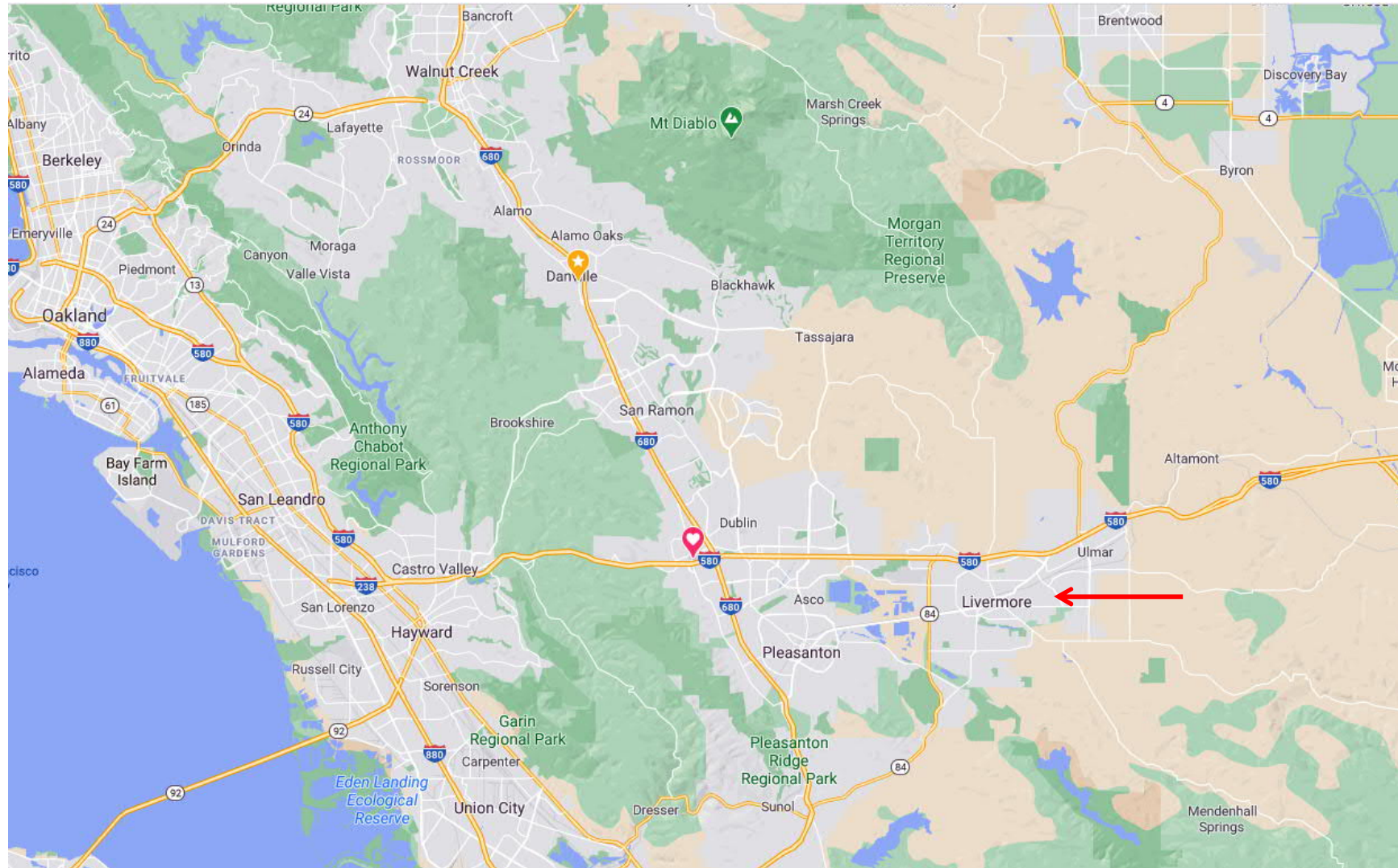
These slides and links to other information are on my website:

<http://diablosteve.yolasite.com/>



Steve Lombardi assisted by Maureen Lahiff

Photos and recordings from Macaulay Library unless otherwise stated
California Quail photo by Jeffrey Thomas, Macaulay Library



Start your trip by driving through Livermore on Livermore Avenue. South Livermore Ave. becomes Tesla Rd. south of town. The Mines Rd. intersection is one mile after the beginning of Tesla Rd.

Target Birds



Phainopepla (male)
Greg Homel, Macaulay Library



Lawrence's Goldfinch
Will Knowlton, Macaulay Library



Lewis's Woodpecker
Ian Routley, Macaulay Library



Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle (both immature)
John Reynolds, Macaulay Library

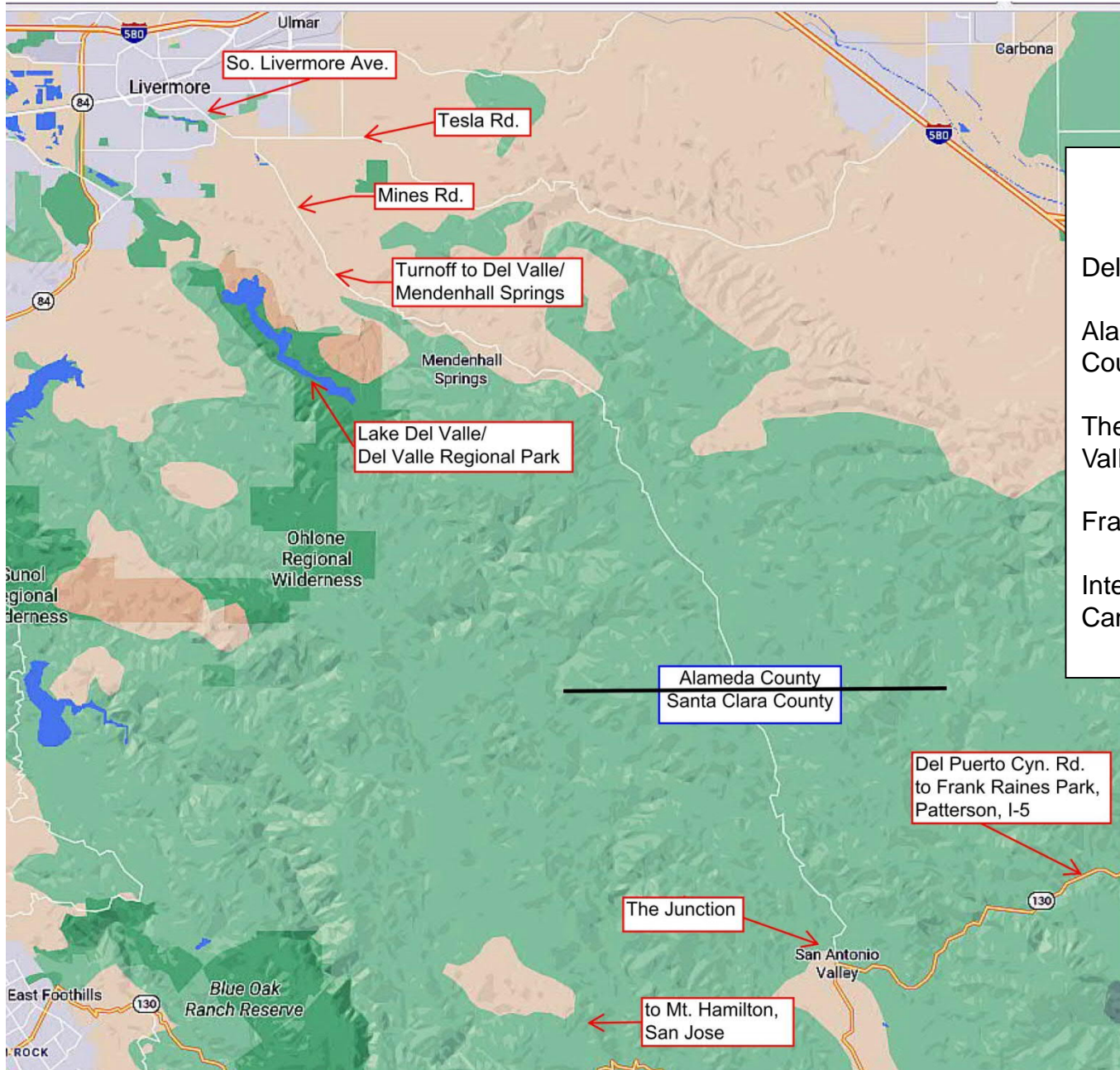


Greater Roadrunner
Nancy Christensen, Macaulay Library

Downtown Livermore



This is First Street looking east toward the flagpole at Livermore Ave. The flag is pointing the way to Mines Rd. The business in front of you is the First Street Alehouse. You might wish to remember this location. We've often been in need of a cold one after spending the day in the Mines Rd. wilderness.



Miles from Mines Rd./ Tesla Rd. Intersection
Del Valle turnoff, 3.5
Alameda/Santa Clara County Line, 20
The Junction (San Antonio Valley/Del Puerto Cyn), 25
Frank Raines Park, 36
Interstate 5 at Del Puerto Canyon, 53

Warnings!

No gas; you must have fuel for 70-100 miles depending on how far you go.
There are gas stations just south of I-580 on No. Livermore Ave.

There are no reliable restrooms/food/water.

Shopping center on the west side of No. Livermore Ave. ½ mile south of I-580, just past Cromwell St. Lucky supermarket has restrooms, opens at 6:00 a.m.
Also, Starbucks, others.

The Junction Cafe is the only public business in the area.

Their hours and the services they provide are fickle.

Don't trust their website. Call before you go or, better still, be self-sufficient.

There is no reliable cell phone service (maybe Verizon service at Junction).

Weekends attract lots of motorcycle and other tourist traffic. Locals drive fast every day.

This ain't a stroll in the park. Be prepared.



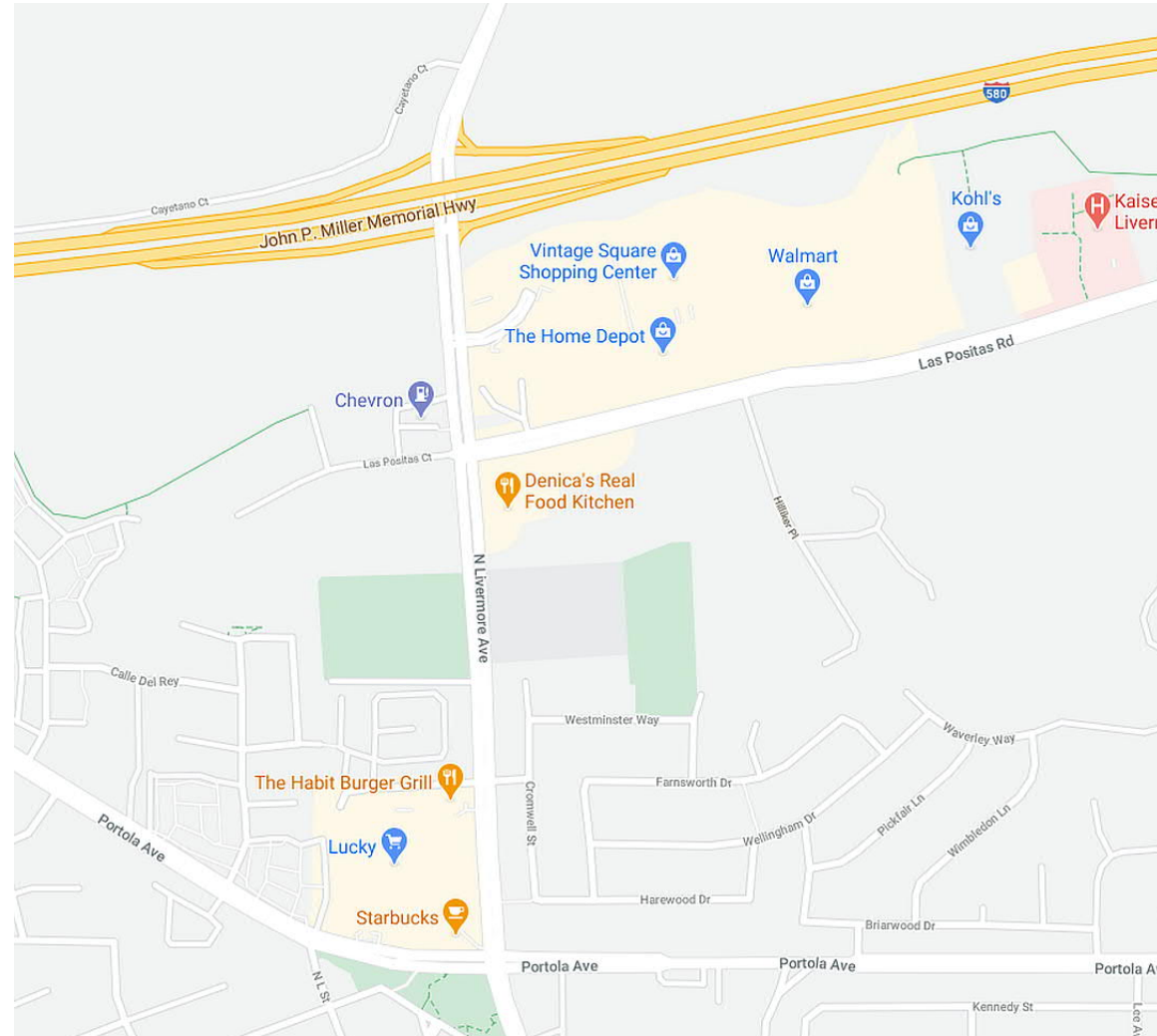
Gas & food just south of the freeway

Food & restrooms at Lucky (opens at 6)

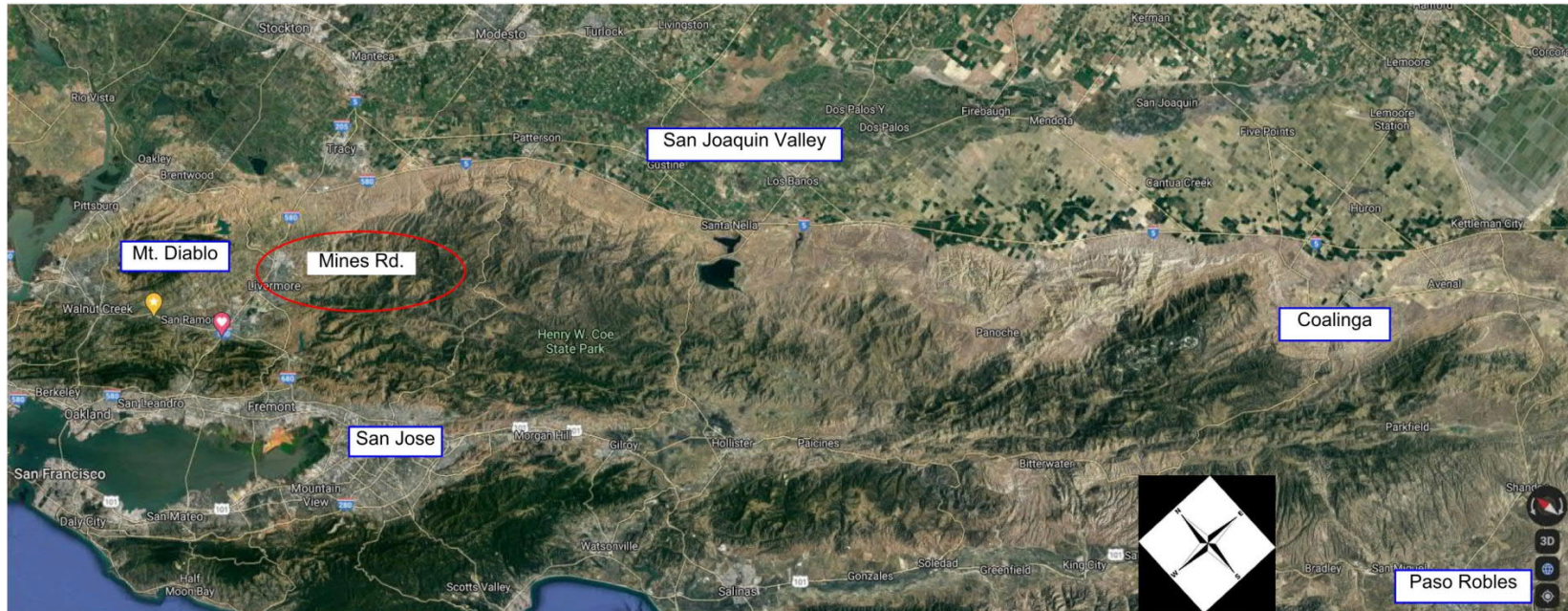
Coffee and fast food at Starbucks and others



South to Mines Rd. and birds



The Diablo Range

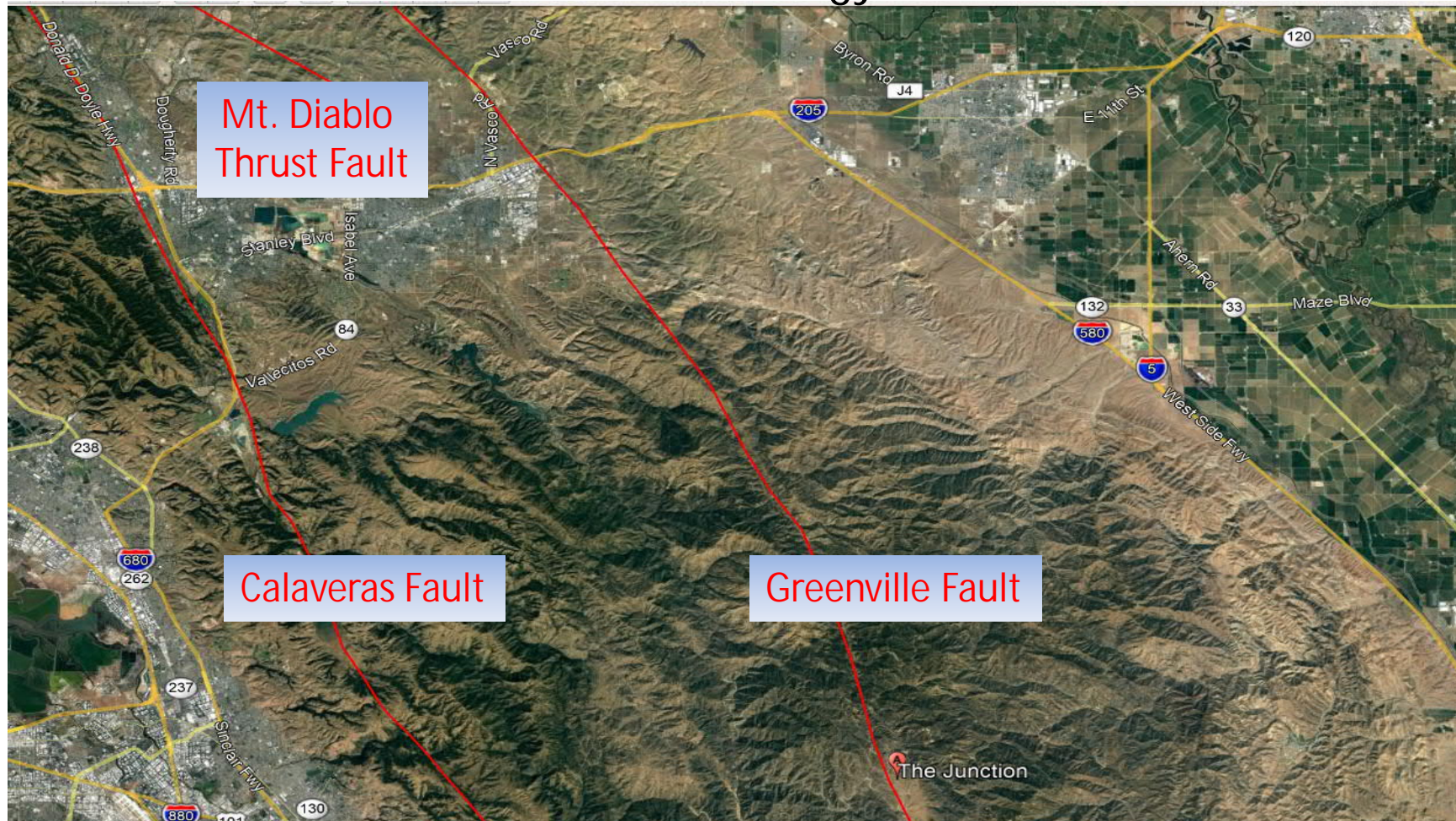


The Diablo Range runs from Mt. Diablo in the north to Cholame (Hwy 46) in the south. It has a reputation for being desolate, inaccessible, and inhospitable. Mines Rd. and the San Antonio Valley are in the northern quarter. Bay Nature published a wonderful article on the range. And Save Mt. Diablo has a number of articles on their website.

<https://baynature.org/article/the-spine-of-california/>

<https://www.savemountdiablo.org/learn/diablo-range/>

Seismology



Mines Rd. generally follows the Greenville Fault. This is one of the four major earthquake faults in the Bay Area. It runs from the San Antonio Valley, along the east flank of Mt. Diablo, and into the Carquinez Strait near Pittsburg.

Murrieta's Well



Yellow-billed Magpies
Dan Hutchenson, Macaulay Library



Yellow-billed Magpie Nest
J. Schmitt, Cornell

Murrieta's Well Winery (now closed to the public) is ½ mile from the start of Mines Rd. You can park outside the gate. It's a handy place to regroup, get out your binos, and start looking for nesting Yellow-billed Magpies in the sycamores.



The first 5 miles of Mines Rd. run through the sycamore bottomland of Arroyo Mocho Creek. Madsen Herefords is at about MP 2. It's a nice place to check the trees for Bullock's Oriole, nesting hawks and magpies, and others.

Bullock's Oriole
Shawn Billerman, Macaulay Library

Red-shouldered Hawk
David Rudder, Macaulay Library



You always know where you are on Mines Rd.
Mileage numbers are painted on the roadway.
Metal milepost signs are also reliable.



At about MP 3.5, continue straight on Del Valle Rd. to go to Mendenhall Springs and Del Valle Regional Park (\$6 entry fee).
You'll go up a long hill. The left turn to Mendenhall Springs is at the top of the hill.
Keep your eyes peeled for Phainopepla and Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Mendenhall Springs



Our birding spot is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the turn off of Del Valle Rd. In spite of the sign, our understanding is that this is a county road and open to the public. We've never been challenged by anyone while birding here. Park on the left just beyond the cattle guard. Look for Phainopepla, Bullock's Oriole, Lark Sparrow. At some point, you'll see (or hear) a Western Kingbird somewhere in this area.



Phainopepla
Ad Konings, Macaulay Library



Lark Sparrow
Joshua Vandermeulen, Macaulay Library



Ash-throated Flycatcher
Brian Sullivan, Macaulay Lib.



Lazuli Bunting
Alix d'Entremont, Macaulay Library

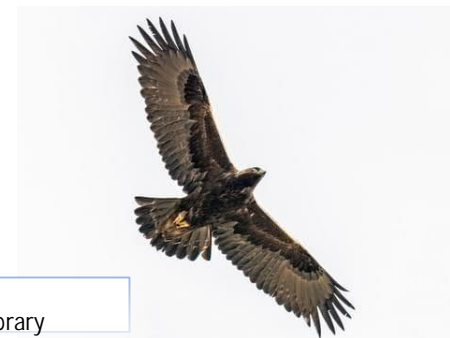


Bullock's Oriole
Shawn Billerman, Macaulay Library



Western Kingbird
Andy Wraithmell, Macaulay Lib.

Here are some likely birds at Mendenhall Springs.
And of course, always watch the sky for raptors.



Golden Eagle
Jeff Bleam, Macaulay Library



More Mendenhall Springs

Walk a few hundred feet up the road from your car to see this nice view of Mt. Diablo. You might see different species here than those where you're parked.

Del Valle Regional Park





White-throated Swift
Liron Gertsman, Macaulay Library



The Bridge at Del Valle Swallows and swifts watching birders



Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Kyle Lima, Macaulay Library



Cliff Swallow
Mike Veltri, Macaulay Library



Barn Swallow
Ad Konings, Macaulay Library



Violet-green Swallow
Jason B. Bidgood, Macaulay Library



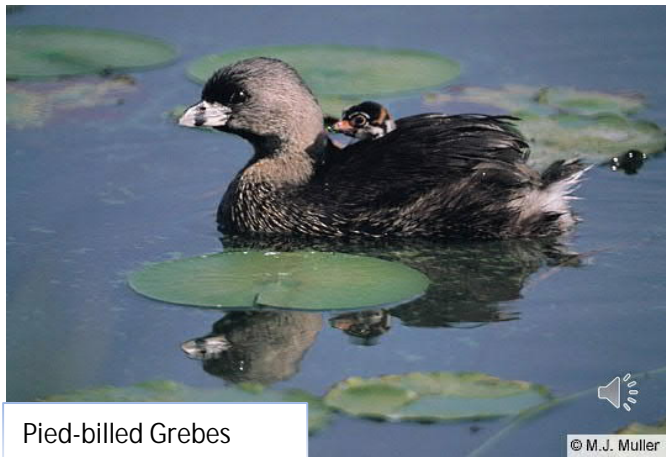
Tree Swallow
Noah Strycker, Macaulay Library



Gadwalls
John Kirk, Macaulay Library



Common Mergansers
George Pagos, Macaulay Library



Pied-billed Grebes



Wood Ducks
Maren Smith, Macaulay Library



Western Grebes
Bill Chen, Macaulay Library



Oak Titmouse
Ken Chamberlain, Macaulay Library

Del Valle Woodland Birds



Acorn Woodpecker
Brian Sullivan, Macaulay Library



Hairy Woodpecker
Jerry Elling, Macaulay Library



White-breasted Nuthatch
Ryan Schain, Macaulay Library



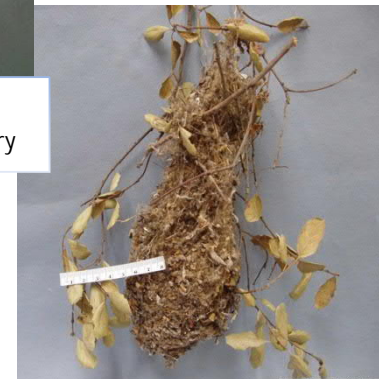
Bewick's Wren
Greg Gillson, Macaulay Library



Nuttall's Woodpecker
David M. Bell, Macaulay Library



Bushtit
Caroline Lambert, Macaulay Library

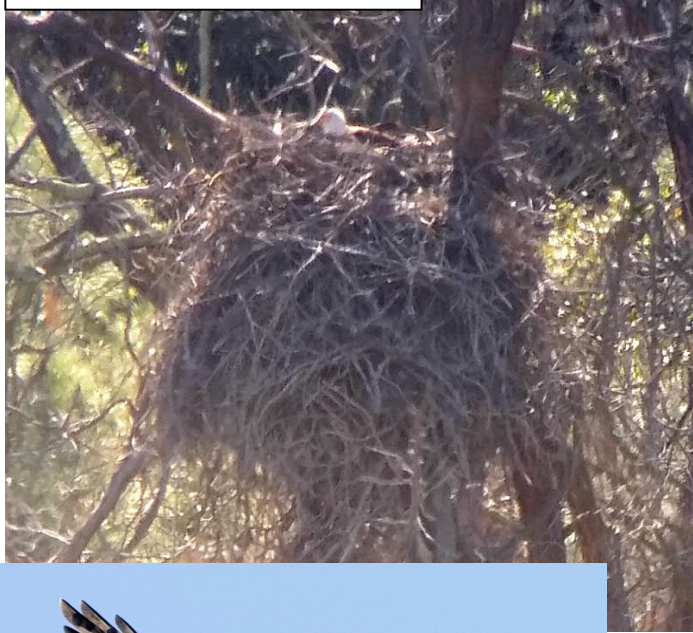


Bushtit Nest
Rene Corado, WFVZ



Bald Eagles
avianvoices.com

Bald Eagle Nest, Alameda County



Red-shouldered Hawk
Carol Lombardi



Osprey



Red-tailed Hawk
Brian Sullivan

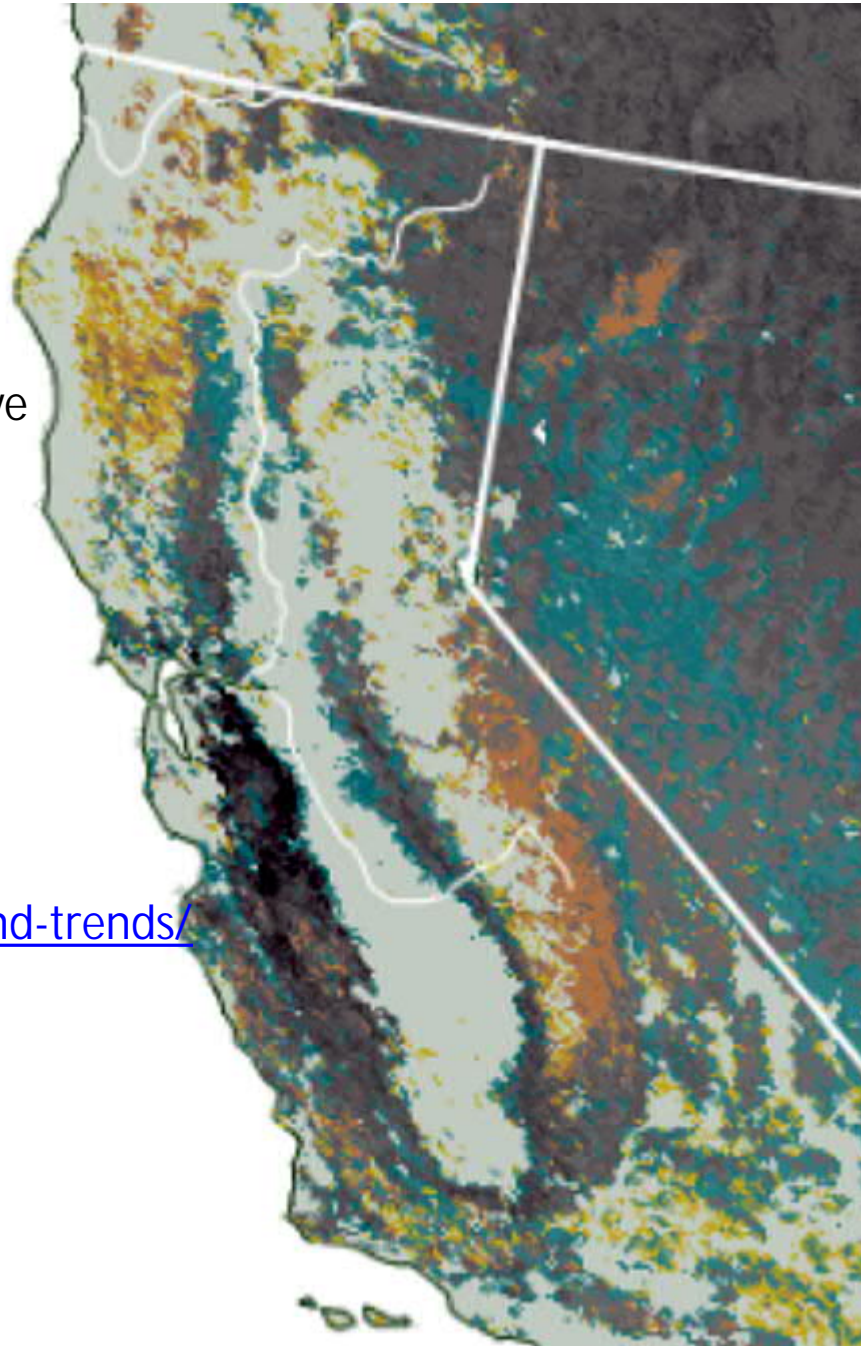
Golden Eagle Abundance

The Diablo Range is reputed to have the highest concentration of Golden Eagles in the world (53 breeding pair/1,000 sq. km.)

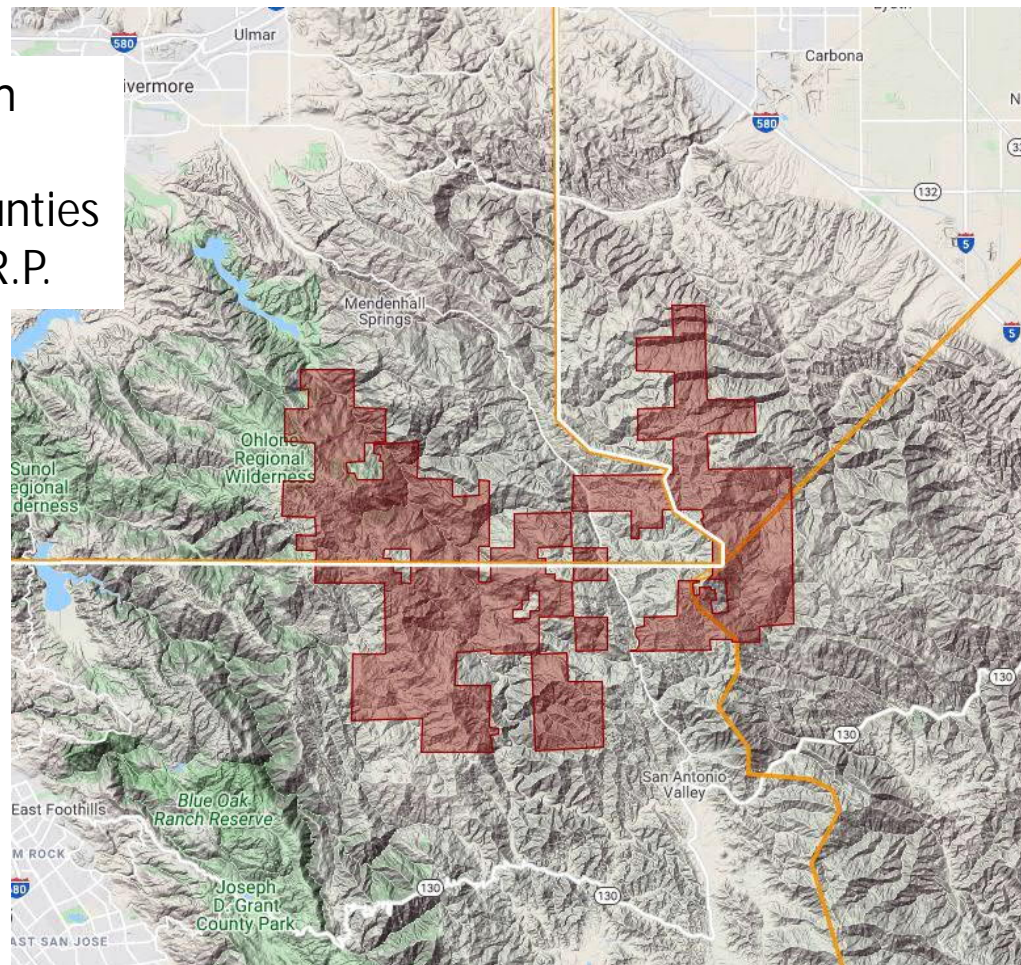
The darkest colors indicate the highest densities.

Abundance map per eBird/Cornell

<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/goleag/abundance-map-weekly>



Map of N3 Ranch
50,000 acres
Portions in 4 counties
Abuts Del Valle R.P.



One of the irritating things about Mines Rd. is that there is almost no public land except for Del Valle Regional Park. The rest is all privately-held cattle land and/or hunting clubs. The huge 50,000 acre N3 Ranch is currently for sale. Several organizations are attempting to buy it in order to make it public.

MP 5.75



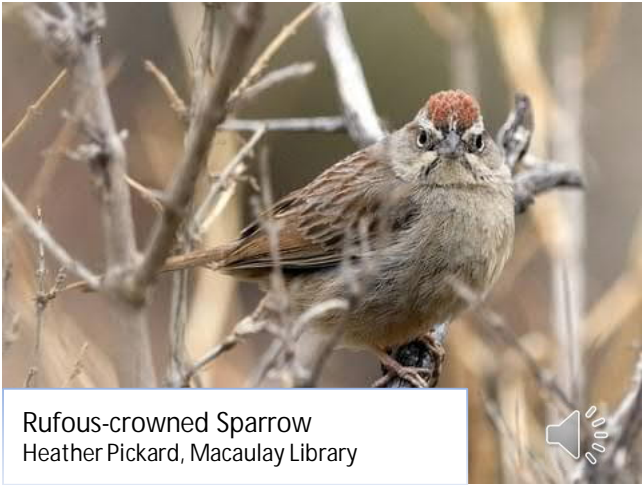
Mines Rd. begins to climb away from the creek at MP 4.8. There are plenty of turnouts where you can stop and bird. This one at MP 5.75 is good for Rufous-crowned Sparrow, California Thrasher, Phainopepla, Lazuli Bunting, and occasional warblers and hummers. With luck, perhaps a Bell's Sparrow.



California Thrasher
Luke Seitz, Macaulay Library



Bell's Sparrow
Steve Bell, Macaulay Library



Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Heather Pickard, Macaulay Library



Rufous Hummingbird
Paul Fenwick, Macaulay Library

Milepost 6.3 to 8.0



Greater Roadrunner
Charles Lyon, Macaulay Library



Western Bluebird
Carol Lombardi



Rock Wren
hawk person, Macaulay Library



Western Meadowlark
Susan Disher, Macaulay Library

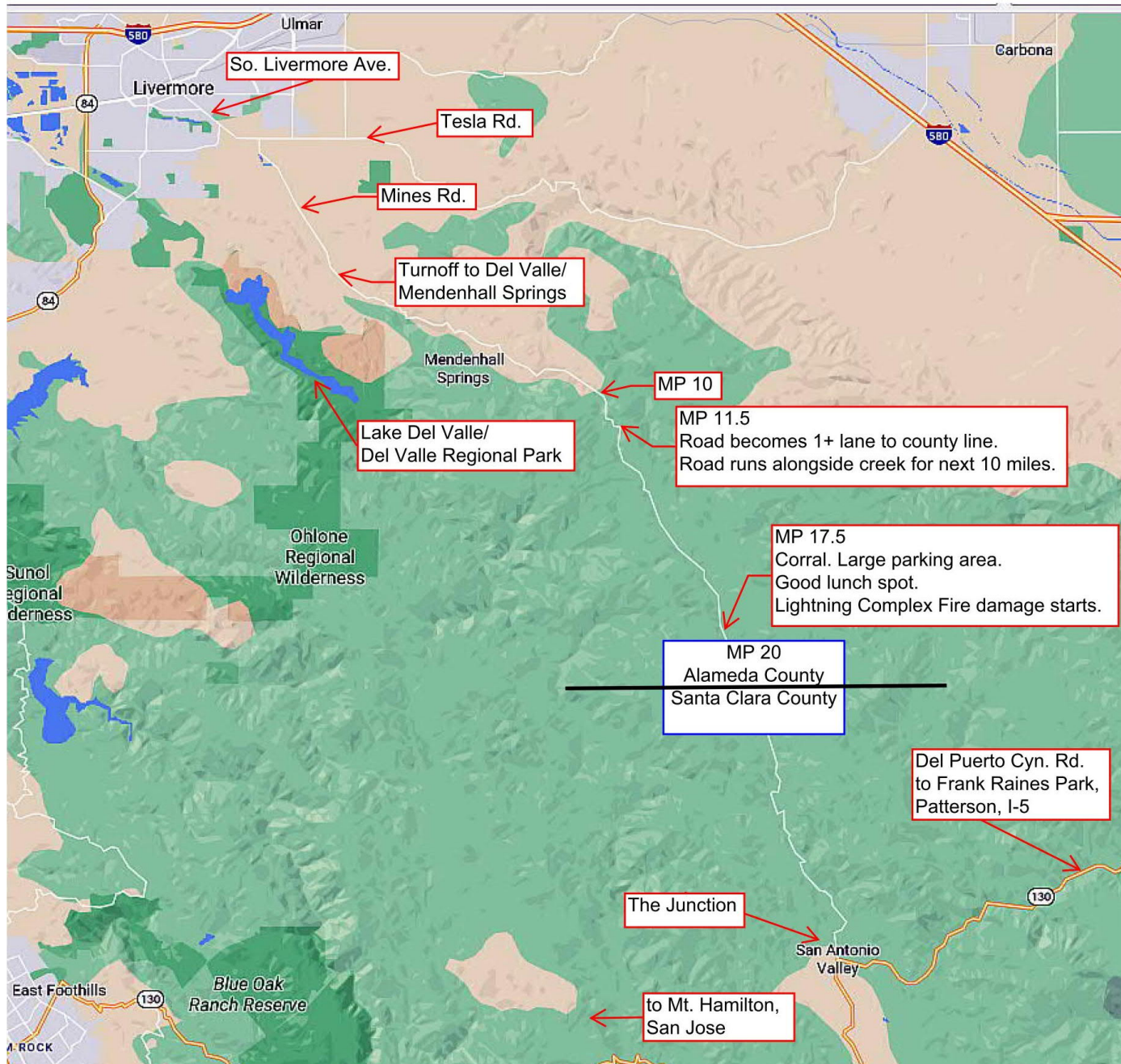


Say's Phoebe
Matt Davis, Macaulay Library

This section is a mix of chaparral and oak savannah. Although seeing or hearing a Roadrunner is a crapshoot, this is probably the best section for them. Look or listen for them in thick chaparral.

MP 6.3 looking north toward Livermore





Fire Damage, April 2, 2021



Upper Mines Rd., MP 11.5+



Turnout
MP 14.6

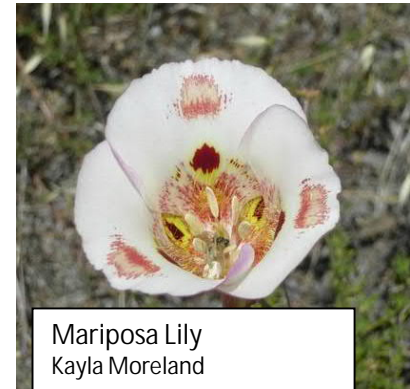


Corral, MP 17.5

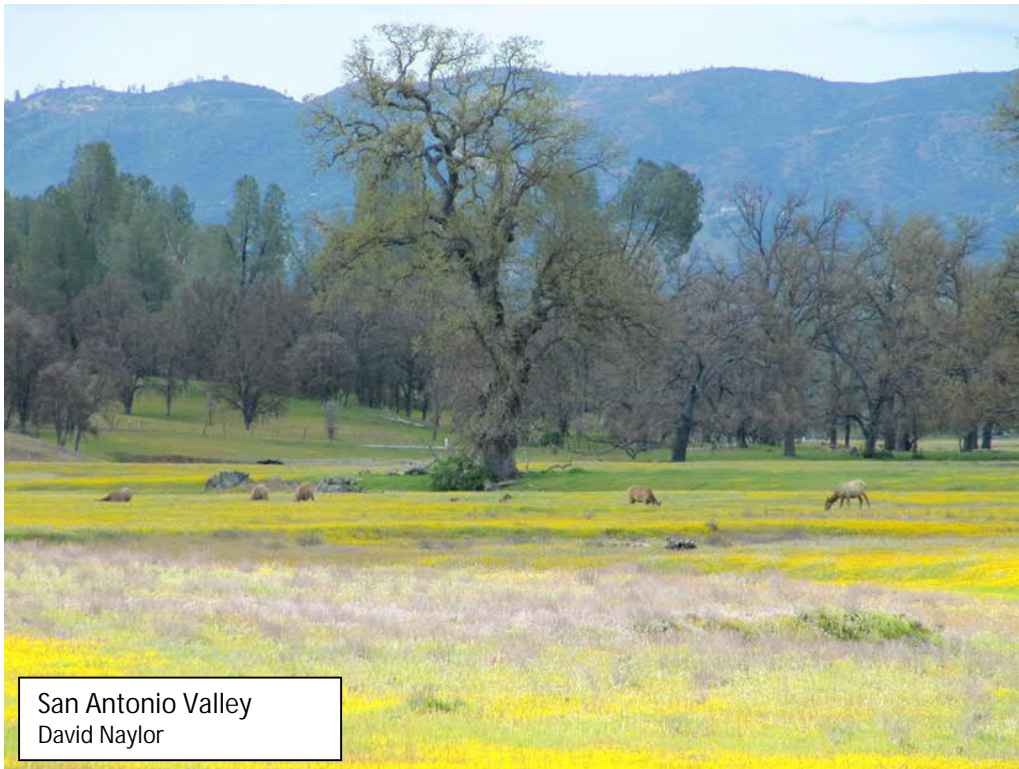
Wildflowers

Springtime is usually good for wildflowers. Grassy hillsides in Del Valle can be covered with mariposa lilies. The roadsides often feature monkeyflower, owl's clover, and lupine. And the flat pastures at the corral (MP 17) and in the San Antonio Valley might be carpeted with goldfields, poppies, and lupine.

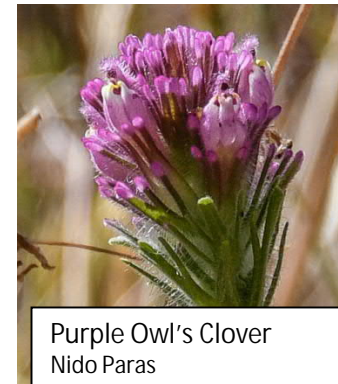
In the San Antonio Valley, watch for tule elk...sometimes moms with calves.



Mariposa Lily
Kayla Moreland



San Antonio Valley
David Naylor



Purple Owl's Clover
Nido Paras



Bush Monkeyflower
Emily Finette

The Junction



Looking Southbound



Looking Northbound

The Junction.

This is the intersection of Mines Rd. and its extension--San Antonio Valley Rd.--with Del Puerto Canyon Rd.

If the cafe is open, stop and buy a soda and use the restroom.

Continue straight on San Antonio Valley Rd. to look for Lewis's Woodpeckers.

San Antonio Valley



Lewis's Woodpecker
Brooke Miller, Macaulay Library

Lewis's Woodpeckers
Start looking ½ mile beyond
Junction. They can be hard
to see from a moving car, so
best to stop and scan the oaks
carefully.



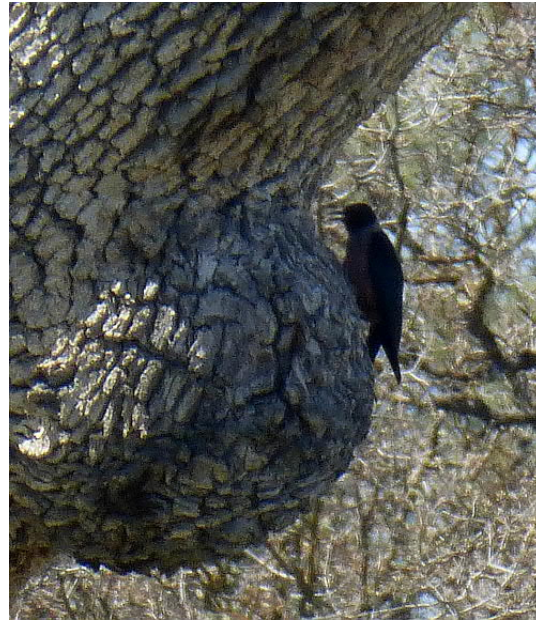
Tri-colored Blackbirds
Brian Sullivan, Macaulay Library

Other San Antonio Valley Birds

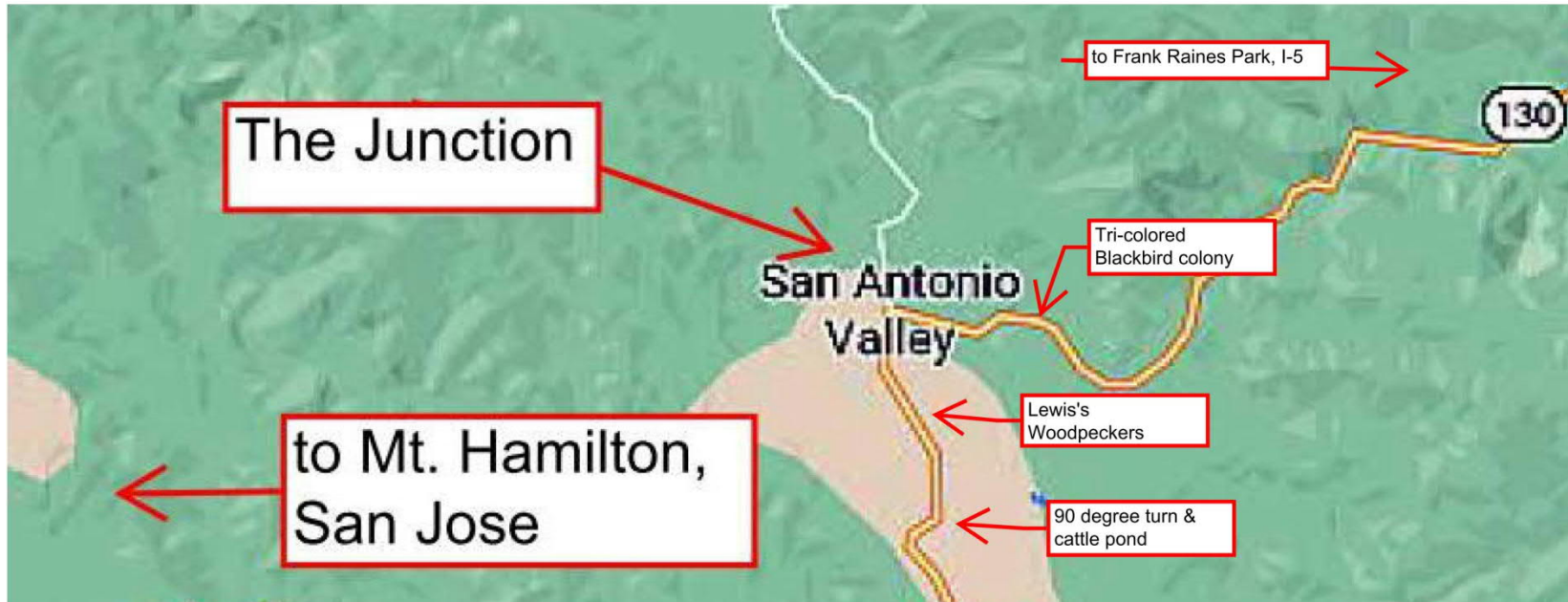
Tri-colored Blackbirds are often in mixed flocks. Stop 1.7 miles from Junction at the 90-degree right bend in the road and scan the ranch land and nearby pond. Wood Ducks? Kingbirds?

San Antonio Valley

Looking for Lewis's Woodpeckers



San Antonio Valley Detail



End of Your Trip?

The San Antonio Valley is a good place to turn around and head home. But if you're not ready to quit, here are a few suggestions:

Continue on San Antonio Valley Rd. another 1.5 miles to a pond with waterfowl (and continue all the way to Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton if you wish).

Return to Junction, turn right on Del Puerto Canyon Rd., and drive 0.6 miles to the large Tri-colored Blackbird colony at the pond. The sound alone is worth it.

If you haven't already seen Lawrence's Goldfinch, continue on Del Puerto Canyon 7.6 miles to Frank Raines Park, where they're fairly reliable in the campground.



Tri-colored Blackbird
Ted Beedy, Macaulay Library



Lawrence's Goldfinch
Will Knowlton, Macaulay Library

Links and References

Bay Nature article on the Diablo Range

<https://baynature.org/article/the-spine-of-california/>

Save Mt. Diablo's website about the Diablo Range

<https://www.savemountdiablo.org/learn/diablo-range/>

Tom Stienstra's Mines Rd. article from the SF Chronicle.

<https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/GetOut-Mines-Road-in-Livermore-3309785.php>

Wildflowers. Blog post with a comprehensive wildflower list and some nice photos

<https://naturalhistorywanderings.com/2010/05/01/mines-road-wildflowers/>

Watershed Maps. Mines Rd. traverses two tributaries of the Alameda Creek watershed. It mainly follows Arroyo Mocho. Then, near the Junction, it crosses a divide and follows Arroyo Valle, the creek that feeds Lake Del Valle.

<https://acfloodcontrol.org/the-work-we-do/resources/#explore-watersheds>

SCU Lightning Complex Fire Map. The 2020 SCU Lightning Complex Fire burned a large portion of the Mines Rd. area.

<https://sccgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c2807e0cad7048a5bb8fffd2b453bece>

Golden Eagle Abundance Map from eBird

<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/goleag/abundance-map-weekly>



"That's all Folks!"

Thanks for joining us.