

Highlights from September 24 bird walk to Chatfield State Park



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Chuck Aid

September 27, 2022



Sabine's Gull (c) Darren Clark

First of all, let's get clear about this Sabine's Gull name. The gull is not named for the Sabine River in Texas but was named by British naturalist Joseph Sabine in 1819 for his brother Captain Edward Sabine who collected bird specimens while on a voyage with Captain John Ross to look for the Northwest Passage. So, then, how does one pronounce this Brit's surname? In 1953, William Henry Waldo Sabine published his *Sabine: The History*

of an Ancient English Surname. William Henry Waldo writes that the correct pronunciation of Sabine is: SAB (as in 'cab') and INE (as in 'wine'), with the accent on the first syllable. W.H.W. goes on to add a note as to how strongly he feels about this pronunciation:

"It is unfortunately necessary to insert here some remarks on the disagreeable practice of pronouncing Sabine as "Sabeen." So far as this compiler knows, no Sabine in England does this, but it is frequently done by other people.... If the people concerned would stop and think the matter over for a while, they might perceive that it would be just as reasonable for them to speak of the 'feen Alpeen cleember who carried a carbeen on his shoulder and a bottle of ween in his pocket."



Green-winged Teal (c) Bill Schmoker

So, all this presents a problem for the American birding community who for the most part seem to have been pronouncing Sabine like "cabin" for many decades. Incidentally, Wikipedia suggests "SAY-bin," if that tickles your fancy. You can decide for yourself which of these paths to follow, the bottom line being that as long as we can communicate with one another we're probably doing okay, right?



Blue-winged Teal (c) Jay McGowan

Now, on to a few of our findings from Saturday. We (I) rushed through some identifications on which I think we should spend a bit more time, starting with the nonbreeding plumage of the three teal species. Green-winged Teal are the smallest of the three having a small thin bill and shorter body. The head is rather uniformly dark with an indistinct dark eyeline. The best feature to look for is the prominent buffy (or cream) streak in the tail. In flight the wings only have a green patch – no pale blue patch. Finally, they are present in Colorado year-round while the other two teal are only here March through October. Blue-winged Teal are about an inch longer, weigh about an ounce more, and have a bit longer bill. The head is lighter and more patterned with a distinct dark eyeline, small white eye-arcs above and below the eye, and a white smudge behind the bill. There's only the slightest light streak through the tail area. In flight, as with the Cinnamon Teal, there are both pale blue and green wing patches. Cinnamon Teal are yet another inch longer, weigh an additional ounce, and have

an even longer more spatulate bill (almost Northern Shoveler-like). Females tend to be paler and warmer while males can have a definite rusty-red tint. The face is plain with no distinguishing features except the male's red eye.



Cinnamon Teal (c) Mick Thompson

Moving on to the terns. There have been four species seen recently at Chatfield. Caspian Tern occurs rarely, Common and Black Terns are uncommon, and Forster's Tern is our most likely. Two of these, the Common and Forster's, can be tricky to tell apart. In breeding plumage, they both have a black cap extending down on to the nape. However, in nonbreeding plumage while the Common retains the black nape the Forster's ends up with only a dark eye-mask and the nape is white.

Lastly, perhaps our best bird of the day was a single Long-billed Dowitcher. In nonbreeding plumage these guys are mostly medium gray. They are stout, hump-backed (just ate a grapefruit), and very long-billed. They also have a light (almost white) supercilium and dull yellow legs.



Forster's Tern (c) Bill Schmoker

Good birding!
Chuck

Chatfield State Park
Sept 24, 2022
Number of Taxa: 47
Number of participants: 12

135 Canada Goose
15 Blue-winged Teal
2 Cinnamon Teal
2 Northern Shoveler
3 Gadwall
29 Mallard
10 Green-winged Teal
6 Pied-billed Grebe
38 Western Grebe
67 Mourning Dove
23 American Coot
27 Killdeer
1 Long-billed Dowitcher
1 Spotted Sandpiper
1 Sabine's Gull
82 Ring-billed Gull
2 California Gull

1 Forster's Tern
28 Double-crested Cormorant
9 American White Pelican
4 Great Blue Heron
2 Snowy Egret
3 Bald Eagle
1 Red-tailed Hawk
3 Belted Kingfisher
1 Downy Woodpecker
5 Northern Flicker
4 Blue Jay
12 Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
10 Black-billed Magpie
4 American Crow
1 Common Raven
30 Horned Lark
70 Barn Swallow
2 American Robin
2 House Finch
5 Lesser Goldfinch
6 American Goldfinch
2 Chipping Sparrow
6 Spizella sp.
1 Lark Sparrow
18 Vesper Sparrow
1 Savannah Sparrow
1 Spotted Towhee
26 Western Meadowlark
12 Red-winged Blackbird
30 Brewer's Blackbird