Dear Mammoth Lakes field trip participant:

We are looking forward to another great trip to the Mammoth Lakes area. Each year we find approximately 100 bird species. Let’s see if we can match the 115 species we got in 2014! In order to insure a great trip for everyone, here are a few considerations for you to keep in mind.

Weather
The temperatures are likely to be pleasant and rain is unlikely although there is the possibility of thundershowers in the late afternoon. On Sunday morning, June 23, we will rendezvous at a site at elevation 9,300 feet. It will be cold at that elevation even in mid-summer.

Itinerary
A detailed itinerary will be distributed in advance by email. We will rendezvous Saturday morning at 5:15 AM at the Mono County Park just north of Lee Vining. We will loop back to this park around mid-day, allowing carpooling during the first half of the day. In the afternoon, we will bird from Lee Vining south back toward Mammoth Lakes. We’ll stop birding for the day around 4:00 PM.

The next morning we will rendezvous at 5:15 AM at the Minarets Vista Point east of Mammoth Lakes and spend the morning in Devils Postpile National Monument, returning to the vista point after lunch. Carpooling down into Devils Postpile and back would really help minimize the size of our caravan. On Sunday afternoon, we will travel through Mammoth Lakes to the south and conclude the field trip at either McGee Creek or Tom’s Place.

We’ll probably stick pretty closely to the itinerary, but if good birding opportunities arise, we will deviate from it as needed.

Two-way radios
Sea & Sage has a number of hand-held two-way radios and we will try to have one for every car. These can be very useful in case of emergencies, wrong turns, and changes to the itinerary. They also allow the leaders to provide natural history commentary en route. The radios are very simple to operate and we’ll give a quick lesson in their use at the beginning of the trip.

Road conditions
Most driving on Saturday will be on high quality paved roads, although some of them will be steep mountain grades. In a few places we will travel on unpaved (gravel or dirt) roads, but they are no problem for ordinary passenger vehicles. The road in and out of Devils Postpile is paved, but is narrow and winding. Depending on birds and timing, our last drive on Sunday may be up Rock Creek Road to the highest point in the state of California that can be accessed by paved road (elevation 10,000 feet). Fortunately, that climb is relative gradual and not as steep as the others.
Map
The best road map for this area is from AAA auto club. It is entitled “Eastern Sierra Guide Map” and almost perfectly covers the area that we will visit. It shows every road, paved and unpaved, that we will use, and the precise distances along various road segments. It might be worth joining AAA just to get this map!

Carpooling
We urge all participants to carpool if at all possible for this trip. Carpooling has numerous advantages: environmental, economic, and social. It also keeps down the number of vehicles in our caravan making it easier for us to get from place to place and easier for us to park when we get there. Please try to avoid being the only occupant of a vehicle!

Car order
At the beginning of the trip, we will assign each car a numerical position in the caravan. This way, each driver knows for sure which car is ahead in the caravan, which is a great help in keeping the caravan together.

Gasoline
Please assemble on Saturday and Sunday mornings with a reasonably full tank of gas. Fortunately, there are numerous gas stations in Mammoth Lakes, June Lakes, and Lee Vining.

Lodging
There are numerous lodging alternatives in and near Mammoth Lakes. Unfortunately motels in the area are quite expensive. Fortunately, the area has numerous high quality ski-lodge condos with two or three bedrooms that a group of people can rent together, thereby saving money (compared to motels) and staying in near-luxury conditions. One that Vic has used several times is Mountainback at Mammoth, but there are many others.

Meals
For lunch Saturday we will stop at picnic tables at the Mono County Park. On Sunday, we will use the picnic tables at Devils Postpile. It would be a good idea to bring lunch, snacks and beverages with you on both days. For dinner on Saturday night, we often use Morrison’s Restaurant (3516 Main St., Mammoth Lakes) one of the few places up there large enough to take a group our size. They have a long and varied menu. Let’s do an early dinner at 5:30 PM.

Checklist
Nancy Kenyon maintains lists of our birds on each trip and will send you a checklist of the species that we can expect to see on our trip.
Birding opportunities en route to Lone Pine
Nancy will also send a list of sites that you might want to visit en route from Orange County up Hwy 395.

Telescopes
On this trip, there will only be a few occasions when telescopes will be useful, e.g. scanning across Mono Lake. So if space or weight is a consideration, you could consider leaving your ‘scope at home.

Pishing, recordings, etc.
The use of recordings etc. raises a number of issues. We will occasionally use them to attract birds, but we will be very careful to do so without causing any harm to the birds, and we will always make an announcement to the group prior to playing a recording. Check with the leaders before you begin pishing or playing a recording.

Senior Pass
The “National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass” (formerly known as the Golden Age pass) will get a car of four persons into Devils Postpile National Monument.

A request from Vic
My cell phone number is (714) 330-3558; I encourage you to keep it with you during the trip. And I would appreciate it if you would send me yours. Please also let me know what lodging plans you make for Friday and Saturday nights. You can send that information to me directly (not bothering Nancy) at vicleipzig@aol.com.

We look forward to seeing you up there!

Bruce and Vic