Notes based on Joe Morlan's Ornithology class lecture December 9th, 2009.
Joe Morlan is not responsible for these notes, any errors or omissions in them are mine.

Common Yellowthroat:
There is a lot more variation than shown in Sibley; there are several different subspecies in CA. The Salt Marsh Yellowthroat or San Francisco Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas simosa* is a California Species of Special Concern.
Species account online: http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=10427
It breeds in freshwater marshes and in swales around the SF Bay Area. Reasonbly common in places like Lake Merced, Rodeo Lagoon.
A small brown bird, they are small and relatively dark. Browner on the upperparts, less green than other subspecies. Their song is not as rollicky as the typical song of other Common Yellowthroats. A famous rendition for the Common Yellowthroat is wichety wichety wichety, a very syncopated song. Here it is more of a weechew weechew weechew, two parted instead of three parted. The call note is fairly distinctive, harsh, low pitched.
They can be quite shy as they probe around in the marshes. Especially in the wintertime when they tend to be foraging down in the bottom of the reed beds they may not be easily visible. More visible in the springtime when the males come out and sing.

Steve saw **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** yesterday at Del Puerto Canyon Road.
They are in the genus *Aimophila*. There are big changes coming in that genus, it may be split up into several genera.
There are two population subgroups.
The ones in the far west, the so called coastal ones, are not really along the coast although there are a few populations right on the coast in Marin County.
The CA birds are darker than the interior birds.
Paler subspecies are found in the deserts of extreme southeastern CA and especially into Arizona where they occupy a rather different habitat from the coastal birds.
Generally considered to be a permanent resident.
It is a very specialized bird and very localized. Normally found only on steep rocky slopes that have a mixture of sagebrush (*Artemisia*) and grass, all three elements (rocks, sagebrush, grass) have to be present. There are vast amounts of habitat that seem like they should support Rufous-crowned Sparrows, but do not have any.
They occur in pairs, never really in flocks. They tend to be very scattered.
There has been a change in the bird's status, particularly in the foothills. When Joe's mentor Van Remsen wrote an insert for Birding Magazine on finding birds on Del Puerto Canyon Road and Mines Road he listed the Rufous-crowned Sparrow as rare. Now it is hard to miss if you know what to listen and what to look for and are in appropriate habitat. Much more common at that site. Joe is not sure about other sites.
The call is a series of descending whiny deer, deer, deer, deer coming from appropriate habitat. They can be very shy and difficult to see but if they are calling you usually can be patient and wait for them. Sometimes a scope is necessary, they are often off in the distance somewhere.
The song is very jumbely, unlike any other sparrow, very much like the song of a House Wren, only short, the House Wren bubbles on and on and on and on. The Rufous-crowned Sparrow sounds just like it but only goes on for five or ten seconds and then the song stops, there is a long pause and then it sings again.
Never any wing bars at all. Eye ring usually reasonably evident. Black malar stripe. All dark bill. Rounded tail tip.

There is a species in Mexico that looks a lot like the Rufous-crowned Sparrow, the **Oaxaca Sparrow** *Aimophila notosticta*. It is found in somewhat different habitat and has not been known to occur further north than Oaxaca.
Jon Dunn saw and photographed what he assumed was the first Rufous-crowned Sparrow for Furnace Creek Ranch, which is in the middle of the desert hundreds of miles from where the next Rufous-crowned Sparrow might be. The bird was in the middle of the golf course lawn.
Apparently Steve Howell saw the photo and said he did not see any reason why it wasn't an Oaxaca Sparrow except that that bird is known to be completely sedentary and has never occurred north of Oaxaca. This has not been submitted. At least not yet. Maybe if there get to be additional records or some indications that the birds show up in a place like Arizona first.

In South America there is a bird called **Rufous-collared Sparrow** or **Andean Sparrow** *Zonotrichia capensis*. It is one of five members of its genus in the world, replaces all four NA species in South America. Very common throughout South America, particularly in city centers where it often is the only bird you see. It has a very interesting song. It has never been recorded in the US, ranges up into southern Mexico.

Red Crossbills are nomadic and wander widely in response to changes in the cone crops. These birds are largely depending on pine cones. The crossed tip of the bill is used to break open the pine bracts.
The species is a bit of a taxonomic nightmare. In the past a number of different subspecies have been named. The current thinking is that none of those are valid subspecies because none of them have a unique breeding range and several of them have been found to overlap each other during the nesting season with little or no hybridization. It has been suggested that there may be multiple cryptic species within the Red Crossbill complex. Currently they are called types.
Each of these types not only has a different bill size, they have different call notes, too. With a sonogram or maybe a good ear you can tell them apart.
The different bill sizes are an adaptation to different conifer cones. Each crossbill type is associated with one or more different conifer species that it mainly feeds on.
The type that has generally been attributed to the Bay Area is type 4. That is the one that has mostly been recorded in places like Pt Reyes. It is a small billed bird that you are likely to see in Douglas fir. Douglas fir is native to the Bay Area. It has soft cones.
Monterey Pine has been widely planted in the Bay Area, there are whole forests (for example in the Presidio and GGPark). Joe has seen plenty of Red Crossbills in Monterey Pine and he has identified those birds as type 2.
Joe attended an interesting talk about Red Crossbills by Rodd Kelsey at the Central Valley Birding Symposium. After the talk Joe asked him which type of crossbill occupies Monterey Pine. Rodd's response was that they didn't really know that. Monterey Pine is not common enough to be part in any of these studies, it is pretty localized. Joe told him that he thinks we have type 2 crossbills in our Monterey Pines. Rodd Kelsey said that's not known. Type 2 is supposed to be restricted to Ponderosa Pine. Joe sent him photos he had taken at Skyline College and recordings Alvaro had made at Skylawn Cemetery in San Mateo County. Rodd confirmed that those crossbills are type 2 and was very excited to learn about this.
Another type that supposedly regularly occurs in the Bay Area is type 3. It has the smallest bill. In Joe's opinion it may be in the Bay Area only during eruption years. It is a spruce specialist. Spruce also have delicate cones.
(Also see my notes from Thursday, March 5th, 2009 with further information about Red Crossbill including the proposal to split one of the types as a separate species.)

Trogons

Big, bold and colorful tropical birds. They usually have mixtures of red with green or yellow.

Trogons have a toe arrangement that is unique among birds. Their innermost front toe is rotated back. This arrangement is called heterodactylism. Other birds that have two toes forwards and two toes backwards pointing have the outermost front toe rotated back, zygodactylism. The forward pointing outer and middle front toes of the trogons are partly joined.

Trogons are found in Middle and South America, but also in Africa, India and southeast Asia. It is thought that they dispersed 65 million years ago when the northern continents were connected via Greenland. At the time the climate there was tropical. As it got colder in the north the trogons followed the warmer climate to the south where they now live.

Elegant Trogon

Used to be called the Coppery-tailed Trogon.
The name was changed when the bird was merged with other subspecies of the Elegant Trogon that do not have the copper colored tail.

OCCURRENCE

Essentially a bird of Mexico which gets into southeastern Arizona during the summer months and also breeds there. Southeastern Arizona is the only place in the US where it can be found regularly.
Found in reasonably low elevations between 2,000 and 4,000 feet, mostly in canyons and mostly in areas with sycamores. They nest in large cavities in the sycamores. They can often be detected by the loud barking calls given by the adult birds. They can be shy, often sitting quietly on branches for long periods of time and then flying out to feed. They pluck fruit and insects on the wing.
The species was eradicated from those mountains in the first half of the 20th century by egg collectors. Egg collecting was outlawed towards the end of the 1920s. Egg collecting was a science, it was also a hobby, and more importantly to many people it was a business. Museums used to pay a premium for rare species like California Condor, Black Swift or Elegant Trogon.
The Elegant Trogon appeared again in Arizona in the 1950s after most egg collecting had stopped. By the 1960s a few pairs had reestablished themselves in a few canyons in the Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona.
Birdwatchers would go to those special places where the birds had been reported and tried to see them. They found it was too hard. There were only a few pairs and the birds were too shy, the chances of finding them were quite poor. Unless you used a shortcut and played a recording of their call at high volume over and over and over again. The birds would come right in. In the end the birds were driven away from their nesting sites by tape recorders that they could not possibly compete with. They were louder, they were more persistent and they were in the area day after day after day and would not go away like a real trogon would have behaved. Around then the ABA was forming and they established a code of ethics, including the rule that you should not play trogon tapes. Since then there has been actual legislation that protects the trogons against tape playing. Now the species has completely recovered, in southeastern Arizona most of the canyons have birds in them.

Joe recently photographed a baby trogon in Madera Canyon. He heard a very rapid, thin trill, nothing like a trogon. Joe thought it might be some kind of insect. Finally he located a baby trogon sitting on a branch, it still had a very short tail. It kept landing on the ground.

FIELD MARKS
Yellow bill.
Underside of the tail a mixture of white and gray, compare to Eared Quetzal.
Central tail feathers copper colored.
Tail tip flared out at the corners.

Male
Green head and upper parts.
Red belly, separated by a white breast band from the green chest.
The green tends to blend in with the forest canopy.

Female
Duller, browner.
White spot behind and below the eye.

Juvenile
Has wing bars.

Eared Quetzal

Formerly called the Eared Trogon
Name changed due to genetic work and similarities to other birds we think of as quetzals.
Quetzals are large members of the Trogoniformes, the trogon order.
The most famous and iconic of them is the Resplendent Quetzal that ranges in Middle America from southern Mexico to western Panama. It got a tiny head with a big round crest and upper tail covert streamers that are about three times the length of the whole bird. It is found in cloud forest habitat which is under attack from slash-burn agriculture, but the birds have also been under attack by plume hunters.

OCCURRENCE
A very shy bird that is found in the highlands of western Mexico.
A family group was found in Cave Creek Canyon some years ago and since then there have been occasional sightings.
There are a lot of remote high mountains in Arizona, chances are pretty good that tiny numbers of these birds may be breeding in those mountains.

FIELD MARKS
Big, lumpy bird, somewhat larger than the Elegant Trogon.
Name due to small wispy plumes behind the eyes.
Dark bill .
No white breast band.
The underside of the tail is all white.
From the back it almost seems to have a bluish cast including the upper side of the tail.
Rather hunched appearance typical for quetzals.
Female gray on chest.

Kingfishers

Many species worldwide, especially when you get to Australia.
Members of the Roller-order.
Large headed with a heron-like bill for seizing fish which they catch by plunging into the water.
For nesting they excavate a deep hole in a dirt embankment with a fairly large room at the end of the tunnel. No nest is build, the eggs are laid on the bare dirt. They peck at the dirt with their bill, push it back with their feet and sweep it out with their tail.
The outer and middle front toes are partly fused together.

There are a couple of other kingfishers in South America, including the tiny Pygmy Kingfisher and the Amazon Kingfisher, which is in plumage a lot like a Green Kingfisher, only larger. There is at least one sight record of an Amazon Kingfisher from southern Texas, but it was not photographed and there were many Green Kingfishers at the place where it was seen, so there are some questions to the verification of that.
Along the Amazon River, where there are five species of kingfishers, it has been shown that bigger kingfishers eat bigger fish. That is an example of Gauss's law of competitive exclusion, different species of kingfishers divide up the resources according to their bill sizes.

Belted Kingfisher

OCCURRENCE
The only kingfisher that has been found in CA.
They frequently perch on telephone wires.
We sometimes see quite a few, especially in the winter.

FIELD MARKS
Big bushy crest.
White collar.
Rather short, square tail.
Bluish gray coloration on the upper parts.
White patches in the wings show up in flight, white underwings.
Bluish gray breast band.

Female
An additional belly band and flanks of cinnamon brown color.
The cinnamon color on these kingfishers too bright in Sibley, correct color in Nat Geo.

Adult male
No cinnamon brown on the underparts.

Juvenile
Upper gray breast band suffused with a mixture of brown.
Juvenile females also have a reduced brown belly band.
The juvenile shown in Sibley is a female.

VOCALIZATIONS
Loud raucous rattling call.

Ringed Kingfisher

OCCURRENCE
Confined to Mexico with a toehold in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas as far north as Falcon Dam and rarer further north, almost up to Big Bend.
Does rarely occur away from extreme southern Texas.
Hard to get close to.

FIELD MARKS
Much larger than Belted Kingfisher.
Tends to fly higher, perch higher.
Entire underparts cinnamon brown.
Females have a gray chest separated by a white breast band from the red underparts.
Wing linings and undertail coverts red in females, white in males.

VOCALIZATIONS
Loud rattling call sort of like a jackhammer.
Also gives a double note, cack-cack, frequently when flying.

Green Kingfisher

OCCURRENCE
Throughout most of southern Texas.
Occasionally found and may be resident very locally in Arizona.
Generally a very shy bird.
They tend to forage very low, don't perch up in the tops of the trees, perch in willows near shallow streams, do not tend to perch on wires, tend to stay low in the vegetation close to water.
Do not hover or plunge into the water the way the other kingfishers do.
Fly low and fast, they catch minnows near the surface or just plunge in a very shallow manner.
The view that you often get is a "there it goes", you see the tail end disappear around a river bend, or it just zips past you.

FIELD MARKS
The smallest kingfisher found in the US.
The male has a red breast band, in females it consists of green spots.
A lot of spotting on the wing coverts.

VOCALIZATIONS
No loud rattling call.
Very high thin call that sounds like tapping stones together.

Additional Nature Note
One slide showed a Belted Kingfisher eating the larval stage of the **Pacific Giant Salamander**, *Dicamptodon* sp. They have gills in their larval stage. They occur in creeks near Bolinas Lagoon. For example in a canyon just to the north of Audubon Canyon Ranch, Garden Canyon, accessible from the ranch. Go there and turn over a few logs and you might find one.