Thank you for your interest in our program to enjoy the beauty of the Panoche Valley and the Inner Coast Range, while seeking out the intriguing winter wildlife frequenting the area. Although the floor of the valley offers the print of both grain-farming and ranching, the latter of the two uses actually contributes conditions that enhance habitat requirements for a number of animal species, including birds of prey and predators such as coyote, weasel, kit fox and badger. Panoche Valley provides conditions suitable to sustain high populations of rodents which the predatory forms hunt and feed upon. The adjacent surrounding foothills contribute yet another suite of wildlife forms to entice the wildlife observer.

Please refer to the map as you follow at the junction of Hwy 152 (the road crossing over Pachecho Pass east of Gilroy) and travel up to Interstate Hwy 5. Follow I-5 (in the direction of Los Angeles) about 24 miles to the intersection of Shields Road (the turnoff to Mercy Hot Springs and the Little Panoche Rd.). We will meet at Shields Road on the west side of the off-ramp above the Interstate (there is a wide shoulder for you to safely pull over) at 9:00 am. Bruce will be waiting for you there. Driving time from Santa Cruz County should be about 1 ½ hours.

We will travel through a spectrum of habitats and viewing locations in this immediate vicinity and then retire up the adjacent New Indria Mine Canyon for our picnic lunch. After lunch we will journey up toward the steppe desert habitat of the Griswold Hills and explore that habitat type until late afternoon.

Participants should prepare for alternatives to winter weather, with provision for cold and/or wet weather if such conditions might threaten on class day. Because the angle of the sunlight in winter is low in the southern sky, one should have sunglasses and a brimmed hat or visored cap. You may also want to bring a binocular or spotting scope. Bring adequate food, snacks and beverage for the full day since there are no food facilities nearby. There will be restroom facilities available at the Bureau of Land Management picnic area at our lunch stop, and facilities at a local bar a few miles up the road.
1. Continue on CA-152 for 1.7 miles
2. Continue straight on CA-152 E. for 28.8 miles
3. Merge onto I-5 S. via the ramp to Los Angeles and continue for 23.6 miles until you reach the intersection of Shields Road, (the turn off to Mercy Hot Springs and the Little Panoche Rd.)