Columbus Parkway exit. If you are traveling east on the freeway, you may notice an odd migration and winter. Cormorants, ducks, and gulls fill the grassy slope below the rocky cliff; these are year-round residents. Cormorants, and for Caspian Terns in the spring and summer. Osprey commonly fish along the Strait—watch for these birds to plunge into the water and come out with a fish grasped in their talons. Peregrine Falcons have nested on the Al Zampa Bridge in the past.

DIRECTIONS – (1A. Al Zampa Bridge). Access to both bridges is best by foot or bicycle via the Bay and Ridge Trails. Access the Al Zampa bridge by vehicle from The Dead Fish restaurant parking lot. From Hwy 1-80, exit on San Pablo/Pomona St. and turn west. The Dead Fish restaurant is immediately on the right.

DIRECTIONS – (1B. Benicia-Martinez Bridge). Access to the Benicia-Martinez overlook from I-680 in Benicia, exit at Bayshore, turn left at Bayshore, and left on Park. Follow the signs to Vista Point.

3. Benicia Waterfront

Birding the Benicia Waterfront is best in the winter, and also during fall or spring migration. A walk along either side of the Benicia Marina may offer close views of waterbirds. In the winter at the Benicia Pier, Greater and Lesser scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Surf Scoter, as well as Clark’s and Western grebes are present. American White and Brown pelicans both visit in the summer months. During low tides when the mudflats is exposed, you may find migrating and wintering shorebirds like Semipalmated Plover, Willet, and Western and Least sandpipers. Western, California and Ring-billed gulls may occur at any season, but in winter you may see Herring, Thayer’s and Glaucous-winged gulls.

DIRECTIONS – From I-780, exit on E. 2nd Street towards downtown Benicia. Take this to the end and turn right on E. 8th Street. The then left on E. 1st Street to access the Benicia Pier. From the end of E. 5th Street, there is access to additional shoreline and a small salt marsh adjacent to the harbor.

4. Waterbird Regional Preserve

The Waterbird Regional Preserve is commonly known as McNabrey Marsh to commemorate the tireless efforts of Al McNabrey in the preservation of this important freshwater marsh. In 1988, a spill in this 100-acre wetland filled the marsh with crude oil. Restoration efforts were successful, and the size of the marsh, the mix of open water, and the diverse emergent vegetation now make it a breeding area for many species. Watch for several species of swallow in the spring and early summer as well as Western Bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, and raptors. During the spring and early summer, you may see American Avocet, American Kestrel, Western Kingbirds are here, as well as many species of swallow.

DIRECTIONS – Exit Hwy 4 at Alhambra AVE. Turn south, then turn right (immediately, if you've exited eastbound) onto Franklin Canyon Rd., and make an immediate left into the parking lot.

5. Martinez Regional Shoreline

Martinez Regional Shoreline offers a variety of habitats. The duck pond at the base of Ferry Point is good for waterfowl. Waterfowl numbers and diversity are highest in winter when American Wigeon, Gadwall, Greater and Lesser scaup, Canvasback, Redhead, and Northern Pintail are present. The mudflats and wetlands host Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Willet, and Marsh Godwit, Dunlin, Least Sandpiper and other shorebirds during migration and winter. The tidal marsh on the west side of Alhambra Creek has been recently restored and is a superb place to see the large billed Suisun subspecies of the Song Sparrow, along with Common Yellowthroat and Marsh Wren. Black Rails have been found calling from this area in broad daylight—listen for this rare and incredibly difficult-to-see species from the boardwalk bridge, west of the arch bridge over the creek. Clapper Rails have been seen here, and the more common Virginia and Sora rails as well. Black-crowned Night-Herons roost in the pines at the end of Berrellesa Street.

DIRECTIONS – From Hwy 4 in Martinez, exit at Alhambra Ave. and go north. Turn right on Suisun and left on E. Ferry Street to follow Ferry Street into the park. From I-680 in Martinez, exit at Marina Vista and go west. Turn right on Ferry Street and drive into the park. The Grapenquist section of the park can be accessed by taking Marina Vista (one way) from Ferry Street, turning right on Berrellesa Street and continuing to the end.

6. Mt. Wanda/John Muir Natural Historic Site

The trail leading to Mt. Wanda was a favorite of John Muir, who used to walk it with his daughters, Helen and Wanda, for whom the hilltop is named. Take the walk through oaks, bass, and buckeyes eventually leads to open grassland towards the top, and offers some wonderful views from the Carquinez Strait to Mt. Diablo. Look and listen for oak forest species including Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Western Scrub-Jay, as well as Spotted Towhee, Brown Creeper, Lesser Goldfinch, Western Wood-Pewee, and House Wren. In the grassland stands and riparian zones, Western Bluebirds. During the breeding season Western Kingbirds are here, as well as many species of swallow.

DIRECTIONS – Exit Hwy 4 at Alhambra AVE. Turn south, then turn right (immediately, if you've exited eastbound) onto Franklin Canyon Rd., and make an immediate left into the parking lot.

7. Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline

The Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline includes parks near both Contra Costa and Solano County. The Waterbird Regional Preserve is best in the winter, and also during fall or spring migration. A walk along either side of the Benicia Marina may offer close views of waterbirds. In the winter at the Benicia Pier, Greater and Lesser scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Surf Scoter, as well as Clark’s and Western grebes are present. American White and Brown pelicans both visit in the summer months. During low tides when the mudflats is exposed, you may find migrating and wintering shorebirds like Semipalmated Plover, Willet, and Western and Least sandpipers. Western, California and Ring-billed gulls may occur at any season, but in winter you may see Herring, Thayer’s and Glaucous-winged gulls.

DIRECTIONS – From I-780, exit on E. 2nd Street towards downtown Benicia. Take this to the end and turn right on E. 8th Street. The then left on E. 1st Street to access the Benicia Pier. From the end of E. 5th Street, there is access to additional shoreline and a small salt marsh adjacent to the harbor.

4. Waterbird Regional Preserve

The Waterbird Regional Preserve is commonly known as McNabrey Marsh to commemorate the tireless efforts of Al McNabrey in the preservation of this important freshwater marsh. In 1988, a spill in this 100-acre wetland filled the marsh with crude oil. Restoration efforts were successful, and the size of the marsh, the mix of open water, and the diverse emergent vegetation now make it a breeding area for many species. Watch for several species of swallow in the spring and early summer as well as Western Bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, and raptors. During the spring and early summer, you may see American Avocet, American Kestrel, Western Kingbirds are here, as well as many species of swallow.

DIRECTIONS – Exit Hwy 4 at Alhambra AVE. Turn south, then turn right (immediately, if you've exited eastbound) onto Franklin Canyon Rd., and make an immediate left into the parking lot.
8. Fernandez Ranch

This beautiful area just opened to the public in the summer of 2010. Cross the bridge over Rodeo Creek from the parking area to two trails that offer superb birding. The Black Phoebe Trail to the left borders a riparian woodland then angles uphill as the Whipsnake Trail, giving access to an oak forest. Alternatively, the Windmill Trail to the right of the bridge borders a grassland and a narrow riparian corridor before heading up into the oaks. In the open grasslands, watch for Western Kingbird, Western Bluebird, Lark Sparrow, and Western Meadowlark. Raptors include Red-tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture, and American Kestrel. During the breeding season, the oak forest and riparian habitats are bustling with Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Western Scrub-Jay, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit and White-breasted Nuthatch. Also watch for California Quail, Wild Turkey, Band-tailed Pigeon, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, House Wren, Warbling Vireo, Lazuli Bunting, and Black-headed Grosbeak. During migration, Western Tanager and various warblers, vireos, and sparrows can be found along Rodeo Creek.

DIRECTIONS – From I-80, take Hwy 4 East. Pass the Franklin Canyon Golf Course on your right, and take the unmarked exit (Christie Rd.) just past the golf course and immediately before the railroad overpass. Christie Rd. is a narrow country road; after approximately three-quarters of a mile you will see the entrance to the park on your right. Christie Rd. is accessible only from eastbound Hwy 4. From Martinez, exit at Franklin Canyon Rd. (Exit 3) and return east on Hwy 4.

9. Crockett Hills Regional Park

Crockett Hills Regional Park is an extensive and diverse area of oak woodlands, oak savannas, open grasslands, and chaparral. Two trails in particular offer great birding. The Edwards Creek Trail borders the riparian zone and then enters the oak woodlands. Birds here include common forest species such as Downy and Nuttall’s Woodpeckers, Oak Titmouse, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Steller’s Jay, Western Scrub-Jay, and Hutton’s Vireo. Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Lazuli Bunting are present during the breeding season. In winter, watch for Golden-crowned, White-crowned, and Lincoln sparrows as well as Townsend’s and Yellow-rumped warblers. The lower portion of the Crockett Ranch Trail offers access to similar birds as seen on the Edwards Creek Trail, but once you cross under Cummings Skyway, habitats change to a mix of grassland and chaparral. Look for California Thrasher, California Quail, and Wrentit in the chaparral, and White-tailed Kite, Western Bluebird, and Western Meadowlark in the grasslands. Look for Golden Eagles and Turkey Vultures soaring overhead.

DIRECTIONS – From I-80, exit at San Pablo/Pomona Street Take Pomona east into the town of Crockett. At just over a quarter mile there will be a middle school on your right. Head south on Crockett Blvd immediately east of the school, continue for another quarter mile, and the entrance to the park will be on your right.