

Merced National Wildlife Refuge



Introduction

Merced National Wildlife Refuge encompasses more than 10,200 acres of wetlands, native grasslands, vernal pools, and riparian areas. The refuge hosts the largest wintering concentrations of lesser sandhill cranes and Ross' geese along the Pacific Flyway. Wildlife are showcased from an auto tour route and four nature trails, which are open daily throughout the year for visitors.

Potential Photography subjects

- Primarily migratory birds including ducks, geese, Sandhill Cranes and others.
- Birds of prey including Bald Eagles, hawks and owls.
- See additional information at: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/merced/species>

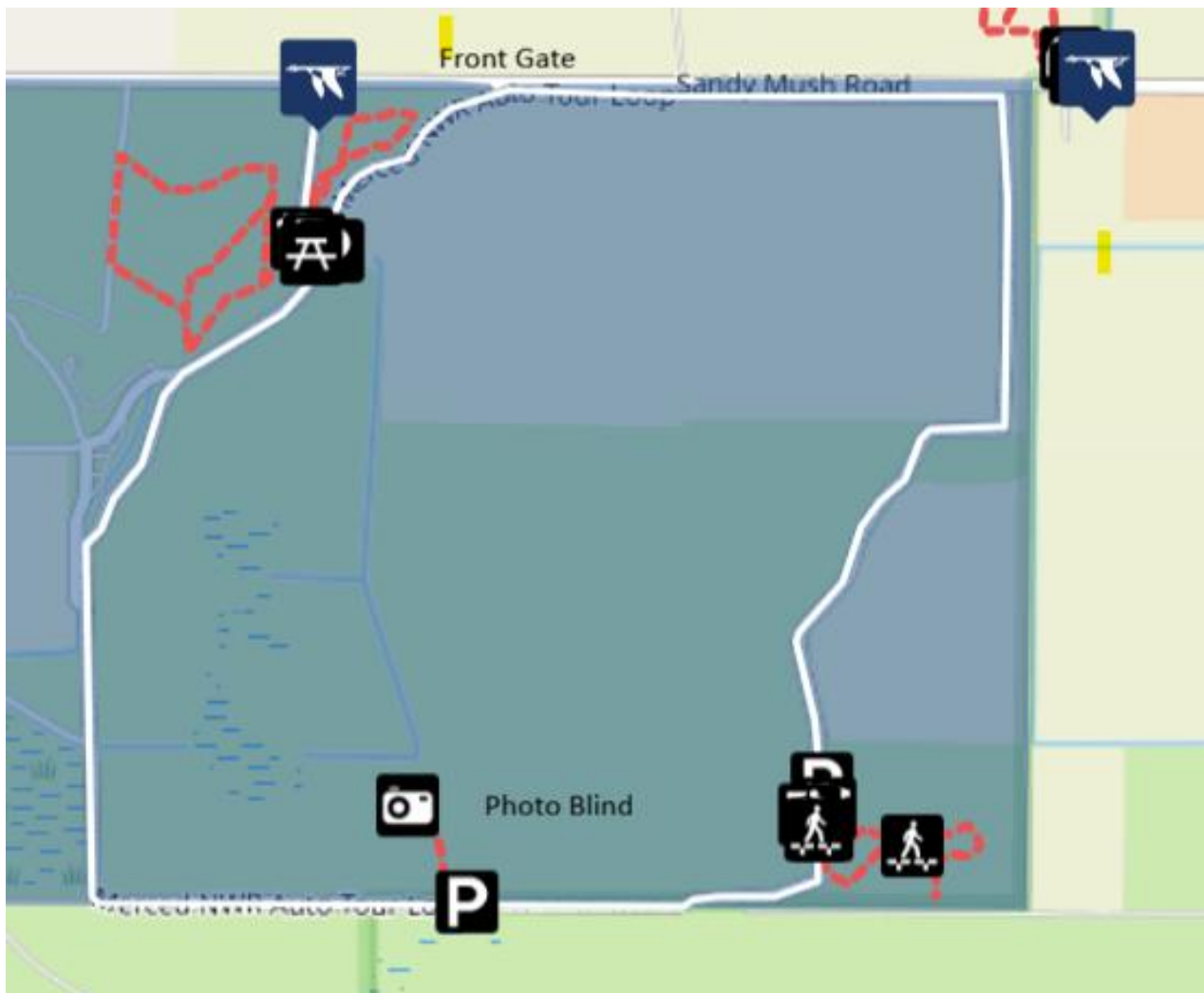
Potential Photography Skills to practice

- Panning birds in flight including takeoff and landing activity.
- Low light techniques and camera settings.
- High speed movement of birds, techniques for capturing and camera settings
- Utilizing the natural environment as artistic background for high quality images.
- Tripod and handheld shooting techniques and advantages of each.
- This subject matter, intelligence on productive sites within the refuge and others to be discussed at February's Program Meeting. Please come with your questions and suggestions.

Trip Logistics

Field Trip Date	February 14, 2026
Costs	No parking fees. Automobile tour format. Parking as required Admission-Annual Income Tax Payment
Carpool Meeting time & location	5:30 AM, Starbuck's at 7658 N. Blackstone, Fresno. Carpool leaves at 6:00 <u>sharp</u> to be at destination by 7:05 AM. Projected time on location is approximately 4-5 hours.
On site Meeting time & Location	7:05 AM, 7658 W. Sandy Mush Rd., Merced CA, 95341 Front Gate coordinates: 37.186042, -120.620332
Gear recommendations	Tripod, wide angle and zoom lenses, extra memory cards
What to bring	Warm clothing, water, snacks, sunscreen, etc. Additional items may be prudent predicated on weather and other conditions
Vehicle movement, observation platforms and tts.	<p>The refuge utilizes a raised roadway (berm) to allow visitors to circumnavigate the grounds. Traffic is one way: Counterclockwise. There is ample room at all places along the course to pull over for photography and/or get out on foot while still leaving space for other passing vehicles. Make sure you provide ample passing space if you stop along the way.</p> <p>There are two observation platforms. One at the NW corner of the tour route and one at the SE corner. There is also a photography blind in the center (marked on map).</p> <p>Toilets and parking are/is located near the observation platforms as described above.</p> <p>Conditions at the Refuge have been unusual this year due to a number of factors. If some of the "star" residents are not on site, there are plenty of other subjects to shoot if you look effectively.</p>

Map



GPS coordinates to front gate: 37.186042, -120.620332