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Birding at the  
Hassayampa River  
Preserve

I had to go to  
town today to get  
faucet parts, since



our bathroom (well, and the kitchen also) faucet leaks. I figured I would do a few errands in town but thought I could sneak out and get away with a few hours at the Hassayampa River Preserve.

I headed down the trail to the river. A gentleman headed my way. He had a very long white beard (but no mustache). He wore a suit coat, a wide-brimmed hat and all dark clothing. We met, and since we both had the trappings of birders, he asked if I had seen anything interesting, which is the universal exchange at popular birding spots.

He had a thick accent, so I asked what his accent was, and he said "German/Dutch," which I interpreted as Pennsylvania Dutch, but he was from Ohio. I asked if he was Amish and he said he was. My mind was working this one over pretty thoroughly.

He said he was a snowbird. An Amish snowbird? An Amish snowbird birder? He had a very expensive pair of Swarovski binoculars around his neck. But he doesn't drive. He said he hires people to drive him around. He was a lot of fun to talk to, I felt an instant affinity with him. I was still working on how incongruous he seemed to me. I asked his name and when he told me, I thought he sounded like he was from Minnesota. We talked horses and the changing world, and then we each set out in different directions in search of birds.

I enjoyed a good hike-about in the pleasantly warmish weather with no rain. While at the car, getting ready to leave, I noticed a car right in the preserve road, just sitting there. It was two gals I had talked to a bit while roaming around. Finally the younger of the two got out and was squatting in the road apparently taking photos.

I hollered up at her "what is it?" and she motioned for me to come up the road. I pictured a gopher snake, as they have a wide temperature tolerance and are often out when it seems pretty chilly. But instead it was this guy, a gila monster. Interesting to see one on the second day of February.