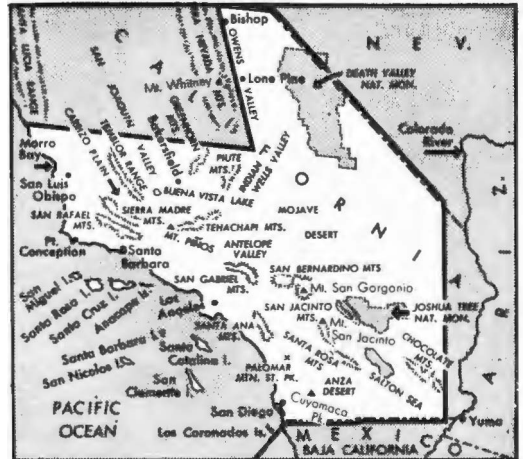


SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION / Guy McCaskie

Many observers felt that breeding birds fared poorly this summer due to the dryness prevalent throughout the area. This was most obvious among the species utilizing the chaparral covered foothills, but also evident in other habitats. However, this summer produced nesting records for two species, Black Skimmer and Hepatic Tanager, not previously recorded breeding in California.



This was a big year for the Pelecaniformes to push north after breeding. There were many more than the normal number of Brown Pelicans on the coast and at the Salton Sea; both Blue-footed and Brown Boobies appeared on the Salton Sea, and Magnificent Frigatebirds were reported along the coast and at the Salton Sea in unprecedented numbers. Other stragglers from the south included Little Blue Heron, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, and Black-bellied Tree Duck, all extremely rare in Southern California.

LOONS, GREBES — A Com. Loon found at the south end of the Salton Sea on June 9 was undoubtedly a straggler from the spring migration. Over 100 Eared Grebes were present on Baldwin L. in the San Bernardino Mts. June 21, but it is unlikely that they bred there since the lake was rapidly drying.

PELICANS, BOOBIES, FRIGATEBIRDS—Brown Pelicans were numerous along the coast after mid-June, with many being young of the year. At the Salton Sea a single Brown Pelican seen on June 13 was the earliest reported, but no more than one or two were noted there during the next four weeks; an influx of birds occurred in mid-July with 40 counted on July 16; the species remained quite conspicuous on the Salton Sea until the end of the period with a high count of 105 made Aug. 12. Prior to this year the largest count of Brown Pelicans for the Salton Sea was 25 (Sept. 6, 1971). This year, as usual, virtually all the birds were imm., but lone ads. were identified July 29 and Aug. 12. Blue-footed Boobies again appeared on the Salton Sea, but unlike last year, did not disperse elsewhere to the north and west. A group of 12 at the north end of the sea (N.E.S.S.) July 22 had increased to 40 by Aug. 5, but this appeared to be all the birds present since virtually none were found elsewhere around the sea. An imm. Brown Booby, first noted at the north end of the Salton Sea July 25 and had been joined by a second Aug. 5, and both were still present at the end of the period. An interesting record is that of an imm. Brown Booby seen standing in an irrigated field near Calexico, Imperial Co. July 15 (Betty BurrIDGE); this is the first report of a booby from the area between the Gulf of California and the Salton Sea.



Magnificent Frigatebird. Salton Sea, Calif. August, 1972. Photo / Guy McCaskie.

Magnificent Frigatebirds appeared in unprecedented numbers along the coast during July and August with an ad. ♀ (the only ad. reported) at Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. July 5-6 being the earliest reported. Additional sightings were made at Imperial Beach (one on July 16, 2 on Aug. 10, one on Aug. 11), San Diego (2 on July 29, 3 on July 30), La Jolla, San Diego Co. (2 on Aug. 8, one on Aug. 9), San Onofre, San Diego Co. (2 on Aug. 9), Laguna Beach, Orange Co. (one on July 24, 2 on July 29-30), Newport Bay, Orange Co. (one on July 27), Huntington Beach, Orange Co. (2 on Aug. 18) Santa Monica, L.A. Co. (one on July 17), Malibu, L.A. Co. (one on July 16, 2 on Aug. 8), Santa Clara R. mouth, Ventura Co. (2 on Aug. 4), Solimar Beach, Ventura Co. (one on Aug. 4), Ventura (one on July 28), Carpinteria, Santa Barbara Co. (one on Aug. 4), Santa Barbara (one on July 9, one on Aug. 1, 4 on Aug. 3), Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. (one on July 23, one on Aug. 4), and Gaviota, Santa Barbara Co. (one on July 13). This gives us 26 sightings involving 39 individuals, but frigatebirds are capable of moving immense distances, so there is no way of knowing how many birds were on the S. California coast. However, this is by far the largest number of reports made in a single year. At the Salton Sea imm. Magnificent Frigatebirds were regularly seen after June 17; single birds were all that were noted until July 25 when three were seen, and these were still present Aug. 12.

HERONS, STORKS, SPOONBILLS — An ad. Little Blue Heron was at Oceanside, San Diego Co. June 12-13 (AF *et al.*), a most unusual record since virtually all the previous S. California records are of imm. during the fall period. Another ad. Little Blue Heron was found in the egret nesting colony at the south end of the Salton Sea July 22 (GMCC *et al.*), but there was no indication it was nesting, for it appeared to be alone and was standing apart from the nests. An imm. Reddish Egret at N.E.S.S. July 10 (RW) represents the third record for the sea. In July it was determined that about 500 nests were in use at the egret colony near the mouth of the New R. at the south end of the Salton Sea (S.E.S.S.), and were evenly divided between Cattle Egrets and Snowy Egrets. Least Bitterns were regularly noted in the marshes around the Salton Sea and would appear to be quite common as breeding birds. The first Wood Ibis appeared at the Salton Sea June 12, and numbers built up to about 200 by late July; none were reported away from the south shore of the Salton Sea this summer. A flock of five imm. Roseate Spoonbills was found at S.E.S.S. July 8, 7 were seen there July 29, and 4 were still present Aug. 12 (GMCC *et al.*); this species is a very rare straggler to the Salton Sea known only to have occurred in 1927 (1), 1951 (6), 1956 (4), 1966 (2), 1969 (2) and 1970 (2).

GEESE, DUCKS — This year a few Black Brant spent the summer on the Salton Sea after having arrived during the spring migration; as many as 5 were present at the mouth of the Whitewater R. at N.E.S.S., and 3 remained around Red Hill on the south shore. Most exciting was a group of Black-bellied Tree Ducks around the south shore of the Salton Sea; 4 were seen June 2 & 12 (DVT *et al.*), 2 were found July 29 (SC *et al.*) with one still present Aug. 5 (GMCC *et al.*); it would appear

the birds were present through June and July although they remained hidden most of the time in the vast areas of available habitat. Prior to this year there are only two acceptable records of the species in California, and both are for the Imperial Valley: one shot in the fall of 1912 (Bryant, *Condor*, 16:94, 1914) and one seen June 12, 1951 (*AFN*, 5:308, 1951). Fulvous Tree Ducks bred as usual around the S.E.S.S. and were quite numerous in late July and early August, but most had departed from the area by the end of the period. A Blue-winged Teal at the S.E.S.S. July 8 was unusual for that time of the year. A bedraggled and flightless Harlequin Duck found with the summering scoters at Marina del Rey, L.A. Co. Aug. 14 (KG) had undoubtedly been present for some time, and was very likely the bird seen there on March 3 (*Am. Birds*, 26:655, 1972). As usual a few scoters of two species spent the summer along the coast. Unusual was a White-winged Scoter at the N.E.S.S. Aug. 5, and a Surf Scoter there July 19-29; both these birds had probably been present since the spring migration period.

HAWKS — In this day when our large birds of prey are all apparently declining in numbers it is encouraging to learn that Golden Eagles can nest successfully close to populated areas; a pair raised one young near Duarte, L.A. Co., and another raised two young in the city limits of San Diego. One or two Ospreys were around the Salton Sea during July and August, but these birds are not breeding. An ad. Peregrine Falcon was seen in the San Bernardino Mts. July 4, and an imm. was found at the S.E.S.S. Aug. 5; this latter bird had probably come north from an active area in the Gulf of California.

RAILS, SHOREBIRDS — Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris yumanensis*) were heard and seen regularly in at least three separate marshes along the south shore of the Salton Sea, and it is assumed they are holding their own here. The first of the fall migrant shorebirds can always be seen in S. California by July 1, and some species such as the Wilson's Phalarope are present earlier (300 in a flock on the Salton Sea June 25). By mid-August the fall migration is in full swing, and all but the very late migrants are present along the coast. Two Ruddy Turnstones at the Salton Sea July 25 and 3 there July 29 were noteworthy, since the species is rare inland. The first Solitary Sandpipers of the fall were 2 at Goleta Aug. 12. Knots are now considered regular at the Salton Sea during the spring migration period, but are still rare at other times; 5 were seen there July 29, one on Aug. 5 and 3 more on Aug. 8. Baird's Sandpipers have always passed through California during August and September, with good numbers appearing in August; so far some 40 individuals have been reported with most being found along the coast, but records also coming from the San Fernando Valley and Baldwin L. As many as 22 Stilt Sandpipers were regularly seen along the south shore of the Salton Sea after July 29; this species occurs regularly here but nowhere else in California. A Sanderling at the Salton Sea July 25 was the earliest for this inland locality this fall. One or two Red Phalaropes were found along the coast in early August, which is somewhat unusual, but one at the north end of the Salton Sea on July 22 (MSanM) was most unusual.

GULLS, TERNS — An ad. Glaucous-winged Gull at the S.E.S.S. June 17 was late and at an inland locality.



South end of the Salton Sea, California. Photo / Guy McCaskie.

Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis livens*) now occur regularly as post-breeding wanderers to the Salton Sea: 20 on June 17 were the first noted this summer, and 50 on Aug. 12 was the largest count. This "form" of the Western Gull is so different from the two coastal subspecies that it would appear to be a separate species. The juvenile birds are white below, whereas the coastal birds are blackish-brown; *livens* takes only two years to reach adult plumage whereas the coastal birds take three; and the "long call" of the adults is unlike anything uttered by the coastal birds, to give only some of the major differences between *livens* and the coastal Western Gulls.

Laughing Gull, another regular post breeding wanderer to the Salton Sea, was first noted there June 17 and built up to over 300 birds by the end of the period. Franklin's Gulls were continually present at the Salton Sea throughout the period with up to 6 noted at the north end and single birds found at the south end, but all were either second-year birds or ads. in non-breeding plumage, thus the possibility of nesting was eliminated; an ad. in breeding plumage at Baldwin L. in the San Bernardino Mts. June 18 was probably a straggler from the flock present there in May, but an imm. seen there on Aug. 8-10 had to be a fall migrant. A Heermann's Gull at the N.E.S.S. July 19 and another at the S.E.S.S. on the same day were the only individuals of this strictly coastal species of gull to reach the Salton Sea.

Two Sabine's Gulls seen off San Diego on July 11 were reported as "adults in winter plumage" and were probably non-breeding individuals summering in the area. Some 35 active Gull-billed Tern nests were seen at the S.E.S.S. June 17 and others were undoubtedly present, but this is much fewer than formerly occurred here. About 20 pairs of Forster's Terns nested at the S.E.S.S. after having first nested there only two years ago; a colony at the south end of San Diego Bay is the only other locality in S. California where the species nests. It is always puzzling to find Common Terns in S. California during the summer, but they occur regularly in fair numbers around San Diego from mid-June onward, and 15-30 were at the N.E.S.S. during the same period.

BLACK SKIMMER — **Black Skimmers** appeared in unprecedented number on the Salton Sea after having been first recorded there only four years ago. At the N.E.S.S. numbers increased to 4 after having been first noted on Apr. 30, and at the S.E.S.S. as many as 19 were counted after having been first noted Apr. 28. The most significant point about their presence was the fact that some nested; in all 5 nests were found, but only one was successful; a nest found June 17 had been destroyed by high water by July 8, a nest found July 8 and two more found July 22 were deserted, but a nest containing 4 eggs July 8 hatched 3 young July 22 and these young were seen flying Aug. 28 (GMcC *et al.*). This is, naturally, the first breeding record for California and the w. United States. Also of significance was the presence of 2-4 Black Skimmers on the coast at the mouth of the Santa Clara R., Ventura Co. Aug. 6-14 (PG, KA *et al.*) for the species is accidental there.



Black Skimmers. Salton Sea, Calif. Summer, 1972. Photo / Guy McCaskie.

HUMMINGBIRDS, WOODPECKERS — An albino Black-chinned Hummingbird was fledged in San Pedro, L.A. Co. June 27, but was dead July 3 (*Los Angeles County Natural History Museum). Rufous Hummingbirds began to appear in S. California in late June on their flight south to "wintering grounds", and were quite numerous during July. Allen's Hummingbirds were considered much more numerous around San Pedro, where Shirley Wells has handled 110 individuals since May 1. Migrant birds were moving south in June, but field identification of Allen's Hummingbirds is next to impossible since ad. ♂ Rufous Hummingbirds with entirely green backs do occur (Shirley Wells banded such a bird July 4), and virtually all Rufous Hummingbirds have some green on the upper parts at this time of the year; the only sure method of identification is in the hand when the shape of the tail feathers can be determined. Flickers exhibiting the characters of "Gilded Flickers" were again noted around Cima, San Bernardino Co. during early July, and there is no doubt they regularly nest in the Joshua trees there.

ALCIDS, DOVES, CUCKOOS, OWLS — A Pigeon Guillemot seen at Pt. Mugu, Ventura Co. July 22 was a little outside its normal range. Two Craver's Murrelets, a species that is now being reported regularly since observers have learned how to identify it, were noted off San Diego July 11 (RLeV & EH). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo seen at Kelso, San Bernardino Co. July 5 was most unusual since this is a small clump of trees in a vast

area of desert, and early July is hardly the time to look for migrant land-birds. A White-winged Dove at 4800 ft. on the east slope of the San Bernardino Mts. June 4 was somewhat out of range. Juvenile Saw-whet Owls were seen on Mt. Pinos, Ventura Co. in early July, giving us excellent evidence that the species nests there.

FLYCATCHERS, JAYS — An E. Kingbird at Imperial Beach, July 15 was most unusual for that time of the year. A **Tropical Kingbird** was well described from Morongo Valley, San Bernardino Co. July 29 (BGE) where it was compared directly with the two kingbird species nesting there; this species normally occurs only along the immediate vicinity of the coast during the fall with a few lingering through the winter, but there is a record from near Parker Dam on the Colorado R. for Aug. 16 (*A.F.N.*, 9:46, 1955). An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Kelso July 5 had to be a migrant, but whether it was spring or fall is anyone's guess. Two Steller's Jays remained on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, L.A. Co. throughout the summer; it will be interesting to see if this species will become established in the suitable but man-made habitat present. A Clark's Nutcracker on Mt. Palomar, San Diego Co. Aug. 11 was in an area where it is only a casual straggler.

WARBLERS — Lucy's Warblers are possibly extending their breeding range, for 3-4 pairs nested at Morongo Valley after having been noted there first Mar. 25; 4-5 pairs nested at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley, and 2 pairs nested near Tecopa, Inyo Co. A pair of Hermit Warblers was again noted at Hanna Flats in the San Bernardino Mts. in early June, but a nest must be found before the species can be added to the breeding birds of the area. As usual MacGillivray's Warblers were noted singing, and assumed to be on nesting territory in the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mts. during June, but still no nest has been found.

TANAGERS, GROSBEAKS, SPARROWS — Kim Garrett and Jon Dunn spent much time searching the area around Arrastre Creek in the San Bernardino Mts. for possible nesting **Hepatic Tanagers** after their appearance there in May. On June 18 they were rewarded when the ♂ they were watching flew to a nest high in a yellow pine and fed the brooding ♀; three days later the pair of birds was watched feeding young in the nest, and a fledgling was seen with the ads. July 8. This is the first known nesting for California, although birds may have been nesting in this area in recent years (see *Am. Birds*, 25:907, 1971). Summer Tanagers were reported nesting only at Morongo Valley, where two pairs were present; an imm. ♂ in W. Los Angeles July 5 was out of range. Two rather late spring Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were a ♂ at Arrastre Creek in the San Bernardino Mts. June 21 (GSS, KG, JD), and a ♂ in Glendale, L.A. Co. June 27 (GSS). Lincoln's Sparrows were found to be relatively common around the wet meadows near Big Bear L. in the San Bernardino Mts., close to the southern limit of the species' breeding range.

CORRIGENDA — *Am. Birds*, 26:655 under Blue-winged Teal should read "but a minimum of 18 ad. ♂♂ were reported" not ♀. After the notations pertaining to

Harlequin Ducks the sentence starting "Scoters are rare away from the coast" should read "Surf Scoters are rare."

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