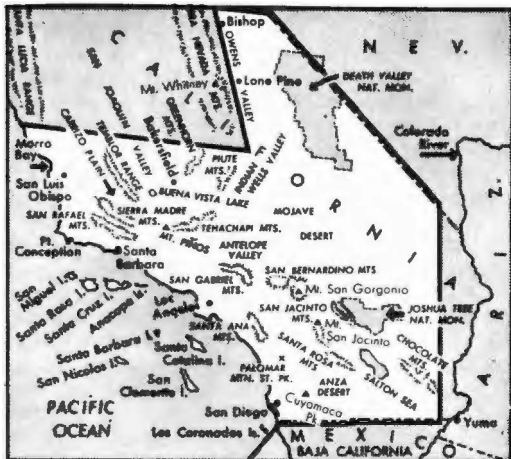


## SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Guy McCaskie

This summer was hot and dry in the eastern portions of the Region, pleasantly warm and dry in the mountains, but relatively cool along the coast owing to prevailing fog. However, the vegetation was more



lush than normal throughout the Region as a result of the heavy rains last winter. All observers reporting from the mountains and the chaparral-covered coastal slopes indicated a good year for most of the nesting birds with many young produced. One exception appears to have been the hummingbirds. Alice Fries, located in San Diego County, commented that all the species occurring in her area were much scarcer than normal, and the Mortons, studying hummers on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, found nesting success among Black-chinned and Allen's Hummingbirds far below normal.

Ocean temperatures were low all summer, hovering around 63-65° F. rather than the normal 68-70°. Fishermen were complaining the waters were devoid of fish, and albacore (a member of the tuna family associated with warm waters) had not appeared by the end of the period. Warm water birds such as Least Petrels were evidently absent, and shearwater numbers were very low. In addition, numbers of Brown Pelicans, Heermann's Gulls and Elegant Terns were lower than usual along the coast, and few birds could be seen feeding in the coastal waters.

The level of the Salton Sea was higher than in any previous year, inundating much of the exposed mudflats and eliminating many areas previously used

for nesting. However, post-breeding dispersal from nesting colonies in Mexico brought the expected species such as Wood Storks to the Sea, and also graced us with an unprecedented number of Roseate Spoonbills.

**LOONS** — Each summer a few loons can be found along the coast, as illustrated by the presence of a Com. Loon at Santa Barbara June 29, an Arctic Loon there July 15, another off San Diego July 25, and a Red-throated Loon at Santa Barbara July 15 and another at Marina del Rey July 21. Most of these summering non-breeding individuals are in winter plumage; however, the Arctic Loon off San Diego and the Red-throated Loon at Marina del Rey were both in full breeding colors.

**SHEARWATERS, PETRELS** — In June Sooty Shearwaters far outnumbered Pink-footed Shearwaters off our coast, as illustrated by counts of 6000 and 1000 Sooties on June 16 & 17 compared with 250 and 100 Pink-footeds on the same days off Oxnard, Ventura Co. By late July total numbers had apparently dropped drastically, but Pink-footed Shearwaters had become the commoner bird as indicated by a count of 70 Pink-footeds and 40 Sooties off San Diego July 25. Only two Leach's Petrels were found off Oxnard June 17, but 40 were seen there July 23, and 375 were counted off San Diego July 25; this suggests a build-up of numbers off our coast in the late summer, a normal trend evident from the fact that this species is often missed on May boat trips yet commonly encountered on September trips. Five Ashy Petrels were found off Oxnard June 17 and others were noted there July 23; this species is known to nest on some of the more northern Channel Is. Numbers of Black Petrels increased steadily after mid-May, and as is normal remained fairly close to shore; only two could be found off Oxnard June 17, but 200 were encountered off San Diego July 25.

**PELICANS, FRIGATEBIRDS** — Brown Pelicans were clearly less numerous along the coast than last year, and Lee Jones, doing much work on the Channel Is., finds that adults tend to concentrate around these islands whereas immatures are attracted to the mainland coastline. At the Salton Sea two or three individuals have been seen since July 7; one on July 15 & 31 was an adult which is most unusual, since virtually all appearing inland are immature. Along the coast an ad. ♂ Magnificent Frigatebird was seen at Seal Beach, Orange Co. July 7 (EC *et al.*) and an immature was near Oceanside, San Diego Co. July 26 (P. Doheny, *vide* GSS); a normal number of reports for July after last year's influx. At the south end of the Salton Sea (S.E.S.S.) single imm. frigatebirds were noted July 7 & 31 (DVT), and another was studied over nearby Finney L. July 28 (J. Morlan, *vide* JVR); this species is becoming a regular late summer visitor to this inland locality.

**HERONS, STORKS** — An imm. Little Blue Heron, a rare bird in California, was constantly at the north end of the Salton Sea (N.E.S.S.) from

June 4 to the end of the period (HK, GMcC); in this time it turned from a predominantly white bird to virtually all blue-gray. The Cattle Egret population at S.E.S.S. continues to increase, and over 3000 birds were in the area at the end of the period; 461 young were banded (20 fitted with green wing tags) at the nesting colony located at the mouth of the New River containing about 600 Cattle and 40 Snowy Egret nests. Snowy Egrets appear to be less successful at the Salton Sea colony now that Cattle Egrets also occupy the colony. They are forced to use those nests on the periphery of the colony, since they start nesting at a later date than the Cattle Egrets, and are consequently subject to a higher degree of nest failure. Two imm. Louisiana Herons at N.E.S.S. July 4 (JF) were most unusual since only two or three others have ever been found on the Sea. As usual a few of the secretive Least Bitterns were seen around the Salton Sea in July, and one or two were also found in the coastal marshes. An Am. Bittern in Tecopa, Inyo Co. July 12 was unseasonable indeed. Wood Storks, first seen at S.E.S.S. June 17, built up to a peak of 582 on July 12 (DVT) and were still quite numerous at the end of the period; this species is a regular post-breeding visitor to the Salton Sea, but now exceedingly rare elsewhere in the Region.

#### —S.A.—

**SPOONBILLS** — The most exciting event of the season was an invasion of immature **Roseate Spoonbills** into the Southwest. In California this species is a casual straggler to the Colorado River Valley and the Salton Sea, with a single sight record near San Bernardino June 20, 1903, and another photographed in the San Joaquin Valley Sept. 24-Oct. 2, 1966. The statement in the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, that it wanders to c. California, can not be verified, and is undoubtedly based on Gambel's vague statement (*Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*, ser. 2, 1:222, 1849) that small flocks had several times extended up the coast even as far as San Francisco.

At the Salton Sea Roseate Spoonbills have only been recorded during the summers of 1927, 1951, 1956, 1966, 1969, 1970 and 1972 with seven on July 29, 1972, being the largest flock reported. This year a single bird along the south shore of the Sea June 14 (DVT) and four at N.E.S.S. June 16 (GMcC) were the first arrivals with numbers building up to 33 at S.E.S.S. and 14 at N.E.S.S. by the end of the period. In addition 16 were counted near Seeley July 1 (GMcC) and one was seen at Finney L. July 21 (SS); both localities in the Imperial Valley.

We had the first reliable coastal records for California this year. Three were at Zuma Beach, L.A. Co. June 20-29 (D & CV, AH *et al.*), then what were probably two of these birds moved up the coast, stopping at Pt. Mugu, Ventura Co. July 4-20 (BB *et al.*) and Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. July 30-31 (BS *et al.*). In addition a single bird was at Laguna L. in San Luis Obispo July 13-24 (FT *et al.*) and another was in Marina del Rey for a couple of days in mid-July (B. Hoffmann, *vide* GSS).

**GEESE, DUCKS** — As usual a few Black Brant remained through June and July with one at Newport Bay and another near Oceanside on the coast, and at least ten at the Salton Sea. Fulvous Tree Ducks were exceptionally scarce at the Salton Sea this summer and may not have nested at all; on the coast 1-4 were noted on Upper Newport Bay June 30-July 15 (CS) but could well have wandered from nearby Lion Country Safari where this species, along with many others, is on display. Two broods of Gadwall were raised on Camp Pendleton, San Diego Co. (AF), which is quite far south for nesting. It was rather surprising to find up to six ♂♂ Blue-winged Teal at the Salton Sea in June and early July; however, after mid-July all the teal had acquired eclipse plumage and it became impossible to separate any Blue-winged from the numerous Cinnamon Teal. A Wood Duck at N.E.S.S. June 18 was most unusual since it is most rare here even in winter. A White-winged Scoter was seen at N.E.S.S. July 2 (RW) & 21 (GMcC) and another was at Salton City July 1-2 (DVT, RW), and single Surf Scoters were noted at N.E.S.S. July 21 (GMcC) and Salton City July 2 (RW); these birds apparently arrive on the Sea during the spring migration and remain through the summer.

**HAWKS** — A Mississippi Kite was again found at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley June 14 (DDeS *et al.*); whether this was the same bird present there May 21-June 3 or another individual is not clear, but careful searching there June 8-10 failed to turn up any kites. Out of 22 Red-tailed Hawk nests in San Diego County only 12 were successful in raising young (1-3 chicks per nest); most failures were owing to land clearing operations. Red-shouldered Hawks were more successful, for only 2 of 14 nests under observation failed (one abandoned, dead young found below other). An ad. **Broad-winged Hawk** at Deep Springs, Inyo Co. June 12 (DDeS *et al.*) represents the second spring migrant record for California. The only Swainson's Hawk found away from the extreme n.e. portion of the Region was an immature at Brock Ranch near Holtville, Imperial Co. June 30. A few Ospreys were present in s. California as evidenced by 1-2 around Newport Bay throughout July, one seen near Laguna Beach, Orange Co. July 26, one around La Jolla, San Diego Co. all summer, and one at Ramer L. in the Imperial Valley July 14-26. An imm. Peregrine Falcon at N.E.S.S. July 1-2 had probably wandered north from the Gulf of California where a few still breed.

**RAILS** — Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris yumanensis*) are apparently holding their own along the south shore of the Salton Sea with 5-6 pairs nesting in one favored marsh; in addition individuals were heard at N.E.S.S. in July where they were not previously known to occur.

**SHOREBIRDS** — It is always surprising to see fall migrants arriving in the middle of the summer, but each year the earliest shorebirds appear but two or three weeks after the last of the spring migrants leave. Since many non-breeding shorebirds remain

through the summer, observers must use caution. However, these summering birds are usually in non-breeding plumage, whereas the first arriving migrants are still in summer dress, and small "peeps" are rare among them. On June 17 at N.E.S.S. 15 Semipalmated Plovers, 5 Greater Yellowlegs, 4 W. Sandpipers, 10 Wilson's Phalaropes and a N. Phalarope were all judged to be newly-arrived fall migrants, whereas, 10 Black-bellied Plovers, 20 Long-billed Curlews, 10 Whimbrels, 6 Willets, 2 Dunlin and 10 Marbled Godwits were felt to be summering birds based on previous experience at this locality. A week later the first dowitcher had arrived and the number of phalaropes increased to 150 Wilson's and 30 Northern. Similar trends could be shown for any locality in Southern California that attracts shorebirds.

A Black Turnstone at N.E.S.S. July 15 (JF) was most unusual since it is accidental away from the coast. Two Dunlin, always rare in summer, spent June and July at N.E.S.S. Stilt Sandpipers were first noted at S.E.S.S. July 21 when about ten were seen. A Red Phalarope in breeding plumage near Anacapa I. June 16 could have been either a late spring or early fall migrant. A bedraggled-looking individual was at N.E.S.S. from July 14 to the end of the period (GMCC *et al.*), and another was at S.E.S.S. June 24 (RS); this species is very rare away from the coast.

**JAEGERS, GULLS, TERNS, SKIMMERS** — A Pomarine Jaeger off Oxnard June 16 was the only jaeger reported this summer. Single Glaucous-winged Gulls at Anacapa I. June 16 and in Carlsbad June 26 were undoubtedly summering locally; each year a few of the northern gulls remain through the summer. The first yellow-legged Western Gull of the summer was noted on the Salton Sea June 4, but it was not until July that any numbers appeared with 40 found on July 14. A single Laughing Gull on the Salton Sea June 24 was the first noted, and numbers had built up to 75 by July 17. Both the yellow-legged Western and Laughing Gulls are regular post-breeding visitors to the Salton Sea. The only Franklin's Gulls noted this summer were three or four at N.E.S.S. June 16-July 14 and one at S.E.S.S. July 26. It is becoming evident that a few Sabine's Gulls remain off the coast each summer, for this year six were seen off Oxnard June 17 and one more was found off San Diego July 25. Gull-billed Terns appeared scarcer than usual at the Salton Sea, and very few were believed to have nested, owing to the high water level; however, for the first time small numbers were present at N.E.S.S. The first of the fall migrant Com. Terns was noted on the Salton Sea July 21, and one was seen on Baldwin L. in the San Bernardino Mts. July 28. Least Terns nested at most lagoons and inlets along the coast of San Diego County with 302 nests counted at the mouth of the Santa Margareta R.; however, over a third of these failed, owing to predation and tidal flooding. North of San Diego County Least Terns apparently were rare. One or two Least Terns at N.E.S.S. July 1-21 (DVT, SFB, EAC *et al.*) were inland where few rec-

ords exist. Elegant Terns appeared to be more scarce than normal around San Diego with numbers in the hundreds rather than the usual thousands; only 170 were present at the mouth of the Santa Margareta R. in July; 80 was the maximum number found on Newport Bay, but 400-500 were congregated at the mouth of the Santa Clara R. in Ventura Co. About ten Black Skimmers were present on the Salton Sea with three nests located; however, only one of these was successful in hatching two young. A Black Skimmer photographed at Pt. Mugu in late May (R. Baker, *vide* GSS) provides us with yet another coastal record.

**ALCIDS** — A Com. Murre off Marina del Rey July 28 was evidently summering locally, not too surprising considering the numbers reported in May. Two Xantus' Murrelets off Oxnard June 16 and another off Marina del Rey July 28 were the only individuals reported; each year these birds appear to leave the waters close to shore in the late summer either moving farther out to sea or going northward. A Craveri's Murrelet was seen in flight off San Diego July 25 (GMCC).

**OWLS, GOATSUCKERS, SWIFTS** — A well-publicized Flammulated Owl nest was discovered at Buckhorn Campground in the San Gabriel Mts. May 20 (J & DM); two of the three eggs hatched in June and the young were still in the nest July 6, but had fledged a week later. Whip-poor-wills evidently remained in the San Jacinto Mts. all summer, for three were heard calling near Idlewild June 25; this species is suspected of nesting here even though there is no definite breeding record for California. A few Black Swifts were seen around Santa Anita Falls in the San Gabriel Mts. during June and July suggesting nesting at that locality. A Chimney Swift was identified near La Cumbre Peak behind Santa Barbara July 15 (RW), and another unidentified *Chaetura* was seen over the Irvine Campus of the University of California July 7 (CS); past records indicate that Chimney Swifts are the most likely *Chaetura* in Southern California during the summer.

**FLYCATCHERS, SWALLOWS** — An out-of-season E. Kingbird was at Mesquite Springs in Death Valley June 14-25 (DDeS, JVR). A pair of Wied's Crested Flycatchers was feeding young in a nesting cavity at Morongo Valley, San Bernardino Co. July 9; this is the only place in the Region where this flycatcher occurs. For the first time on record Barn Swallows nested in the Imperial Valley, two pairs each raising two broods near Westmoreland in May and July. Purple Martins are on the decline in Southern California, so it is of interest that ten adults and young were over Frazier Park, Kern Co. July 7 and an adult was feeding two young in Monrovia, L.A. Co. July 22.

**THRASHERS, PIPITS** — Most unusual was a Curve-billed Thrasher at Brock Ranch near Holtville June 24 (RS); there are but a handful of records for California (*Condor*, 67:443-444, 1965 and 69:310,

1971) all falling between Oct. 29 and Jan. 25 with a single record for Sept. 6. A completely out-of-season Water Pipit was seen in the San Bernardino Mts. July 14.

**VIREOS, WARBLERS** — It is evident that Gray Vireos are holding their own around Round Valley in the San Bernardino Mts.; up to four singing males were found there in June and July. A singing Red-eyed Vireo at Scotty's Castle, Inyo Co. June 14 (DDeS *et al.*) was a late spring vagrant, and represents the fourth spring sighting in Southern California. The presence of a singing Nashville Warbler near Big Pines in the San Gabriel Mts. June 14 would suggest nesting, however nesting is unrecorded south of the Sierra Nevada Mts. Lucy's Warblers finally appeared at Morongo Valley in June with one seen there on June 2. A ♂ N. Parula was well studied at Santa Barbara June 12 (J. Hand, *fide* RW); the species is a regular spring vagrant in California. Singing ♂ Hermit Warblers were near Big Bear L. in the San Bernardino Mts. June 10, and at Buckhorn in the San Gabriel Mts. May 31 & June 14; however nesting has so far not been proven in any of the Southern California mountain ranges. A rare straggler for spring was a ♂ Blackpoll Warbler on the Palos Verdes Pen., June 20 (D & R Bradley, *fide* GSS). Singing MacGillivray's Warblers, another species not known to nest in Southern California, were at Buckhorn May 31 & June 14. California got

its second record of a Red-faced Warbler when a singing male was discovered at Buckhorn in the San Gabriel Mts. June 14 (KG, JD, LJ, GSS), remaining in the area all day as if on territory, but not found thereafter; the first was collected in the desert during the spring of 1970 (*Calif. Birds*, 1:145-146, 1970). Single late straggling Am. Redstarts were seen on the Palos Verdes Pen. June 20 and at the Brock Ranch near Holtville June 24.

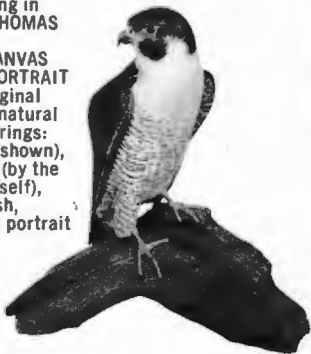
**BOBOLINKS, BLACKBIRDS, TANAGERS** — A Bobolink on Santa Barbara I. July 24 (LJ) must have been utterly lost since spring birds occur only to early June and fall migrants do not appear before September. Great-tailed Grackles probably nested at Ramer L. in the Imperial Valley, for three adults were watched carrying food there July 14. A pair of Bronzed Cowbirds at Jacumba, San Diego Co. June 3 (TT) were well west of their normal range; the female remained until at least June 17. Two pairs of Hepatic Tanagers were present at Arrastra Creek in the San Bernardino Mts. May 26 (LCB) when one bird was seen building a nest; a female carrying food there on July 21 (KG) suggests that nesting was successful. The species is apparently becoming established as a breeding species in these mountains. An out-of-range Hepatic Tanager was seen in Santa Barbara July 16 (RW). Summer Tanagers nested at Morongo Valley, Whitewater Canyon, and at Brock Ranch; one at Deep Springs June 13 (DDeS) was outside its normal range.

**FINCHES, SPARROWS** — A ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak on San Clemente I. June 9 (LJ) was a spring straggler. A ♂ Indigo Bunting at Toll House Springs in the White Mts. July 1 (SFB) was singing as if on territory, and another male near San Diego June 2 (DR) was defending territory and accompanied by a ♀ Lazuli Bunting; the nest of this pair could not be found, but the young were seen off the nest June 10. There is an earlier record for mixed pairs nesting in California (*Condor*, 60: 408, 1958). A ♂ Lark Bunting on San Clemente I. June 10 (LJ) represents the latest spring record for California. Grasshopper Sparrows were found on grass-covered hillsides in the coastal lowlands of San Luis Obispo, Ventura, Orange and San Diego Counties, and were all assumed to be nesting.

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